

David A. Leeming  
*Editor*

# Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion

*Second Edition*

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# Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion

Second Edition

With 96 Figures and 5 Tables

 Springer Reference



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## Preface

The first edition of the *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* was published in 2010 by Springer under the joint editorship of David Leeming, Kathryn Madden, and Stanton Marlan. Since that time, the encyclopedia has been a “living” online project leading to the present second edition under the editorship of David Leeming. Dr. Leeming has taught courses in myth, religion, and literature for many years and has published several books on these subjects, including the *Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, and until recently was Editor-in-Chief of Springer’s award-winning *Journal of Religion and Health*. He is Emeritus President of the Blanton-Peale Graduate Institute, the original sponsor of the encyclopedia.

The *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* grows out of the developing awareness of the need to reintegrate the studies of the mind with those of the spirit. By bringing together the disciplines of psychology and religion, it unites the two areas of thought concerned with the behavior and motivations of human beings and provides a crucial new resource for the collaboration and mutual illumination of these two fields. For those in the study of religion, it offers new tools for understanding the images, structures, symbols, and rhythms that constitute the vocabulary of religious experience. For those in the field of psychology it reveals deep patterns of meaning and practice that inform human culture and the personal identity of millions.

The *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* serves as a valuable and accessible reference work in both electronic and print versions for academic libraries and their patrons and will be of particular use to the growing community of researchers, academics, teachers, clergy, therapists, counselors, and other professionals who are involved in the developing reintegration of the fields of religion and psychology.

David A. Leeming



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<b>Hermes</b>	<i>Lee W. Bailey</i>
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Professor Leeming taught for 8 years at Robert College Lycee in Istanbul, Turkey, before beginning a career at the University of Connecticut, where he taught English and Comparative Literature for 26 years.

For 10 years he worked at Blanton-Peale Institute in New York, first as editor of *The Journal of Religion and Health* (Springer), and eventually as President of the Institute. He was co-editor-in-chief and managing editor of the first edition of Springer's *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion* and is editor-in-chief of this second edition.

### Research

Professor Leeming is the author of many books on mythology, including *Goddess: Myths of the Female Divine* (with Jake Page, Oxford, 1994); *God: Myths of the Male Divine* (with Jake Page, Oxford, 1996); *Myth: A Biography*



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*of Belief* (Oxford, 2002); *Jealous Gods and Chosen People: The Mythology of the Middle East* (Oxford, 2004); *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (Oxford, 2005); and most recently, *Medusa: In the Mirror of Time* (Reaktion, 2013). He is also the author of several biographies, including *James Baldwin: A Biography* (Knopf, 1994).

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## Abraham and Isaac

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The pivotal story of the Akedah (the “binding” of Isaac) occurs in *Genesis 22* wherein God commands Abraham to sacrifice his long-awaited and only son with his wife, Sarah. This divine dictum is considered a test, since at the last minute when Abraham draws the knife to kill Isaac, God sends an angel to stay the sacrifice, and a ram is substituted in place of his son. God rewards Abraham for not withholding his only son from God and therefore passing the test and promises Abraham numerous offspring, guaranteeing Abraham that he will be the “father of nations” blessed by God. It is Abraham’s absolute faith in God that makes him willing to sacrifice Isaac, and it is precisely this strict obedience that renews Abraham’s covenant with God and, in turn, God’s covenant with the patriarch, Abraham (which begins with God’s first call to Abraham in *Genesis 12:1–3*) and his subsequent generations. The *Akedah* constitutes the foundation of the three monotheistic (also called Abrahamic) traditions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. It is Abraham’s near sacrifice of his son that establishes his absolute faith in God while simultaneously defining faith within the context of these monotheistic traditions.

## Qur’anic Significance

In the Qur’an, Abraham is no less a man of faith than in the Hebrew Bible. He is considered to be the first monotheist because he is “sound in the faith” and, thereby, a Muslim (one who submits to God) (3:60). The sacrifice story occurs in Sura 37:100–113. There are two notable differences. First, Abraham learns in a dream that he must sacrifice his son, and he reveals this to his son: “My son, I have seen that I should sacrifice thee” (37:101), to which his son replies, “My father, do what thou art bidden” (37:102). Lastly, the Qur’an does not specify *which* son is to be sacrificed: Isaac or Ishmael, Abraham’s firstborn through his slave, Hagar. Therefore, many Muslims assume that it was Ishmael who was offered for sacrifice, since he was the firstborn. However, according to some Qur’anic scholars, there are an almost equal number of authoritative statements within Qur’anic tradition that consider Isaac the intended victim as there are those that point to Ishmael (Delaney 1998, p. 170).

## Søren Kierkegaard

In one of his most famous pseudonymous works (penned under the name, Johannes de Silentio), *Fear and Trembling* (1843/1983), Kierkegaard uses the *Genesis 22* account of Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac in order to engage in a philosophical meditation on the question of

faith. Although cast within the philosophical tradition, *Fear and Trembling* opens the question of Abraham to the individual and private sphere, thereby adding a psychological component. Kierkegaard was not the first to engage the story of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac philosophically. His writings were a direct response to and critique of those of the preeminent German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).

Like Kierkegaard, Hegel considered himself a pious Christian. Hegel's interpretation of Abraham appears in an early essay, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" (written between 1798 and 1799 and published posthumously), and forms the basis of what eventually matures into Hegel's idea of the dialectic, which he elaborates in his famous *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1977). In his early writings, Hegel declares that "the first act which made Abraham the progenitor of a nation is a disavowance which snaps the bonds of communal life and love" (Hegel 1948, p. 185). For Hegel, Abraham the Jew characterizes "the Jewish multitude" that "wreck[s] [Jesus'] attempt to give them the consciousness of something divine" (Hegel 1948, p. 265). Abraham represents "unhappy consciousness," a term that Hegel later elaborates as "*inwardly disrupted* consciousness" of a "contradictory nature" (Hegel 1977, p. 126). In other words, Abraham as unhappy consciousness doesn't realize the implicit unity that underlies all things. Unhappy consciousness is but the second, unfulfilled step in the dialectical process, which moves from identity to difference to, finally, the identity of identity and difference. As such, unhappy consciousness is imperfect and incomplete, not yet having reconciled and harmonized identity and difference and realized the inherent unity of thinking and being.

Kierkegaard recovers Abraham as the highest and truest man of faith. Kierkegaard considers Abraham to be a "knight of faith" who believes despite reason and demonstrates that faith is a matter of lived experience. Importantly, Abraham also demonstrates that there is in fact a "teleological suspension of the ethical"; in other words, Abraham, the single individual, is higher than the universal, ethical sphere. In this

way, Abraham's act cannot be comprehended by reason alone nor subsumed under the ethical order, which is dictated by reason. In an act of absolute faith, the "knight of faith relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual" (Kierkegaard 1843/1983, p. 75). The individual is higher than the universal. Furthermore, for Kierkegaard, interiority is higher than exteriority. Thus, "the paradox of faith is that there is an interiority that is incommensurable with exteriority" (Kierkegaard 1843/1983, p. 69). Faith, therefore, in its paradoxical absurdity (it is absurd since it cannot be completely comprehended by reason alone) involves a leap into the unknown. And this must be carried out alone by the single individual in the fear and trembling of uncertainty. This act and experience of faith is intimately personal and private.

### Freudian Perspective

Although Freud wrote extensively on fathers and sons, he repeatedly emphasized the significance of the son killing the father, and not the inverse. In *Totem and Taboo*, where Freud discusses the Oedipus complex, the focus is on the son killing the father, even though the Greek story of Oedipus begins with Laius' attempt to murder his son. Freud, however, takes up the myth after these events have transpired in order to bring attention to the later part of Oedipus' life and to his killing his father. Even in *Totem and Taboo*, where Freud attempts to trace the origins of monotheism through an exploration of the primitive, primal horde, it is the act of the sons usurping and sacrificing the father that founds the basis for religion. Freud emphasizes sacrifice, but not of the son. Furthermore, Freud's later work in which he deals with the question of Jewishness and religion, *Moses and Monotheism*, focuses on Moses – not Abraham. The anthropologist Carol Delaney devotes several chapters of her book, *Abraham on Trial: The Social Legacy of Biblical Myth*, to this thought-provoking absence, arguing that Freud's exclusion of Abraham and his omission of the dynamic of fathers killing sons point to "a glaring scotoma or blind spot" in

Freud's work (p. 189). Her study is an exploration of the significance of such a curious absence. Many Freudian scholars and psychoanalysts have attempted to use the Abraham and Isaac story as a corrective to what they consider to be the shortcomings of Freud's Oedipus theory. What Delaney and others possibly overlook is the feminine element that figures predominantly in the Oedipal story and thus underlies Freud's Oedipus complex. This component is not overtly present in the Abraham and Isaac story, and for this reason, perhaps, Freud chose Oedipus over Abraham.

### Jungian Perspective

Jung's most extensive engagement with the idea of sacrifice occurs in his work *The Sacrifice* (Jung 1956, pp. 613–682) and in *Transformation Symbolism in the Mass* (Jung, CW 11, pp. 296–448). From Jung's perspective, sacrifice is an act of the unconscious and "the impulse to sacrifice comes from the unconscious" (Jung 1956, p. 660). From the ego perspective, however, an act of sacrifice is impossible psychologically because the ego cannot decide to make a sacrifice. Rather, "an act of sacrifice takes place," revealing that "a process of transformation is going on in the unconscious whose dynamism, whose contents and whose subject are themselves unknown" (Jung 1956, p. 669). Sacrifice is a mystery and can never be fully understood by ego-consciousness since it is impossible to "derive the unconscious from the conscious sphere" (Jung 1956, p. 670). Thus, the "I" can neither demand nor fully comprehend the sacrifice. Jung argues that, although the conscious may like to consider itself higher than the unconscious, it is the unconscious that is greater than the conscious. In "the act of sacrifice the consciousness gives up its power and possessions in the interest of the unconscious" (Jung 1956, p. 671). The ego unwittingly sacrifices the "I." Read in another way, just as the ego cannot choose to make a sacrifice, the "I" can't do therapy, but therapy, nonetheless, happens. This uncontrolled and absolute giving (which is a relinquishing of the egoistic claim

and therefore not overseen by ego-consciousness), which is a form of self-sacrifice, is a self-possession (the autonomous, transcendental self which includes unconscious components as opposed to the self identified strictly with the ego and consciousness) since the self causes the ego to renounce its claim on behalf of a supraordinate authority and, in so doing, increases self-knowledge. Every advance of the self requires that the ego be sacrificed to something higher than itself, not unlike Abraham's absolute act of giving to God.

### See Also

- ▶ Akedah
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Kierkegaard, Søren
- ▶ Sacrifice

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## Abyss

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### Origins and Images of the Abyss

Abyss from the Greek *abyssos* typically signifies a bottomless or boundless deep. The abyss appears in biblical tradition in several related senses. In the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 1:2, *abyssos* relates to the Hebrew *tēhōm*, which most likely stems from the Babylonian *Tiāmat*, a personification of the primordial deep of waters existent before the creation of the world (NRSV). In Babylonian mythology, *Tiāmat* as the primal sea was personified as a goddess (Jacobsen 1968, pp. 104–108) and also as a monstrous embodiment of elemental chaos (Dalley 1987, p. 329).

The Egyptian worldview had a similar concept in *Nun*. *Nun* referred to the primeval water that encircles the entire world and, from which everything was created, personified as a god. In contrast to *Tiāmat's* goddess, feminine nature, *Nun* was considered to be an ancient god, the father of all the gods, which refers to his primacy rather than literal parentage (Lindemans 2000).

Abyss became identified with *Sheol* and *Tartarus* (Job 41:24) based upon its association with notions of primordial depth and chaos. In Greek mythology, *Tartarus* was the gloomy prison of dishonorable opponents of Zeus. *The Book of Enoch* defines abyss as a place of punishment for fallen angels.

In postbiblical Jewish literature, because of its associations with chaos and death, the abyss became identified as the prison of rebellious spirits and the realm of the dead. By the time of the New Testament writing, the abyss was an abode of demons (Luke 8:31) and Hades (Romans 10:7), where the devil is imprisoned in a bottomless pit (Revelations 20:2). The Gnostics of the first century made abyss, under the name of *Bythus*, into a divine first principle, the source of all existence, thus representing a return to an original unity.

The images of the abyss throughout the Judeo-Christian era traditionally have been symbolic of hell, destruction, or death with the exception of the Gnostic myth which attributed to abyss both the source of life and life's return to this source. The Gnostics, along with their myths, were persecuted and eliminated as being heretical to the canonical truths of the mainline Church.

### Psychoanalytic Perspectives

Contemporary psychoanalyst James Grotstein speaks of the abyssal experience as “the black hole” of nothingness, meaninglessness, and chaos – a “zero-ness” expressed, not just as a static emptiness but as an implosive, centripetal pull into the void (Grotstein 1990, pp. 257–258). Grotstein, from the neoclassical school of Freudian psychology, views the abyss of the black hole as “nameless dread,” an empty matrix and “container” of meaninglessness (drawing from Wilfred Bion 1962, 1967). The abyss or void is associated with the death instinct which prepares us to anticipate and to adapt to the ultimate horror of death. This black hole is the “preperception” of an experience-released anticipation which warns us of the extinction of the psyche.

Grotstein claims from clinical experience that “the minds of patients suffering from primitive mental disorders ... are hypersensitively vulnerable to the detection of randomness and meaninglessness; they often substitute archaic, apocalyptic (meaningful) scenarios in order to prevent their minds from dissolving into the maelstrom of nothingness” (Grotstein 1990, p. 265). Failure to tolerate the gap and its empty nothingness causes a default into “no-thingness...” (Grotstein 1990, p. 273).

Grotstein primarily focuses upon the borderline disorder and psychosis in which the person experiences “a spaceless, bottomless, timeless and yet, paradoxically, condensed, compact, and immediate yielding suffocation anxiety” (Grotstein 1990, p. 281). Truly, psychopathology may prevent an individual from achieving sufficient meaning in the self and object world. A borderline or psychotic

condition might make it impossible for the person to withstand the entropic pull toward nothingness and meaninglessness – ultimately toward chaos (randomness), the traumatic state, “the black hole” (Grotstein 1990, p. 286). Yet, there are nonpsychotic states of being in which a person may experience the void, or “black hole” of nothingness, and return to a world of meaning.

### Alternative Views of the Abyss in Analytic Psychology and Religious Experience

The more typical notion of abyss that has been passed down through history is like the sea; we fear being pulled down into the abyss to our annihilation. Yet, there is something about the abyss, as there is about the sea that exerts a strange pull on us.

There are alternative psychological understandings of the notion of abyss. Two examples of the abyssal experience were manifested in the imagery of Jacob Boehme, a seventeenth-century German shoemaker and religious mystic, and Carl Jung, the twentieth-century Swiss psychoanalyst. Both men gave witness to this layer of existence as not so much the “abyss of hell” but as a symbol of a unitary reality.

Boehme’s abyss, which he called the *Ungrund*, or un-ground, was preexistent, underlying all of creation, even God. Jung’s notion of the Self exists before the beginning of the individual human being and is our ultimate goal in terms of psychological life.

The abyss, for Jung, analogous to the objective unconscious, and the *Ungrund* for Boehme provided for both men a “window to eternity.” Boehme was enabled to see through to the constellated reality of Christ, and for Jung, to the Self; for both, to something that points beyond itself to a transcendent ultimacy.

For Boehme, the abyss is a Self-revealing reality that gives life to the world but is itself a mystery. Spirit meets us as a dynamic reality at the abyss level and points beyond itself. Beyond what we know, we receive glimpses of

“conscious communion or participation in a timeless reality” (Wood 1982, p. 209).

Following a period of melancholia, Boehme allowed himself to be drawn inward to an abyssal state where he discovered a new image of God, fuller and more complete than before. Boehme’s experience inspired in him the production of a profound theme: that of the *Ungrund* (unground), a groundless abyss, a state of pre-being underlying not only all of creation but even God.

### The Ungrund

The *Ungrund* is anterior to God and anterior to being. The *Ungrund* lies in the eye, the core of God and creation (Boehme 1969, 3:1, 16:16), and is eternally a mystery to God because it is what God was before God became conscious of God’s Self. The *Ungrund* is pre-distinction and preexistent and is difficult to characterize except as *ewiges Kontrarium*: the nothing is the all; the emptiness is the fullness. The *Ungrund*, or abyss, contains all antinomies, but all the contradictions are still in harmony because these contraries are only potential and not yet differentiated.

As W. P. Swainson says, “[W]ithin this Abyss is an eternal, bottomless, uncreated Will, or Byss. This Will, or Byss, ever desires to become manifest – ‘It willeth to be somewhat.’ This is only possible in a state of duality or differentiation, for without contrast there could only be eternal stillness, nothing could ever be perceived” (Swainson n.d., pp. 93–94).

The *Ungrund* (abyss) is not the personal creator God but the absolute-in-itself, a moment at the commencement of the divine life and process of self-creation and revelation of being and the divine (Boehme 1965, 1:1).

Boehme’s creation myth articulates a process in which God created God’s self from the abyss through an eternal will. In A. E. Waite’s *Three Famous Mystics*, Swainson describes how God differentiates himself from this abyss: “This Will, or Byss, fashions what is called a Mirror, which reflects all things, everything existing already in a latent or hidden state in the Abyss...[and] makes them visible or manifest. The Supreme

[then] perceives all things in Himself. The dual principle is latent in Him. He is both Byss and Abyss. He could not otherwise know Himself . . . Boehme terms this Mirror the Eternal Wisdom, the Eternal Idea . . . It is the Infinite Mother, the Will being the Infinite Father. . .” (Swainson n.d., pp. 93–95).

When the Will, or the Father, beholds Himself in this mirror, creation becomes active and manifests through the union of the Will and Wisdom: the archetypal Father and the Mother. The abyss for Boehme, then, is a “place” beyond time and space from which emanates all possibilities. All of creation arises from a “breathing out of God’s self” (Swainson n.d., p. 209).

While Boehme’s visions may have followed a disintegrating period of melancholy or psychic disturbance, the visions led to healing rather than disintegration. These were humbling, not inflationary, experiences, which left Boehme with a feeling of awe and gratitude. Boehme’s (1978, p. 209) visions were noetic: his inner-self gives over to divine will and speaking. He exhibited a diminution rather than an inflation of ego.

Themes of opposition – of feminine and masculine, creation and destruction, good and evil, Christ and Lucifer, Ungrund and Sophia, and life and death – abound in Boehme’s map. A comparison of his insight to that of modern depth psychology places him squarely in the realm of analytical psychology and the notion of Carl Jung’s the Self-field where all naturally occurring oppositions of the psyche are encountered, held, and united in harmonic tension.

## The Pleroma

Carl Jung likewise experienced an inbreaking image of abyss, what he called Pleroma, during his 6-year *Nekyia*, or descent into the deeper layers of the unconscious. His experience of the Pleroma was that of a paradoxical nothingness containing all opposites out of which God differentiates himself.

As a culmination of a long-term process of encounter with the deepest layer of the collective unconscious, specifically the psychoid,

archetypal layer, Jung believed that we, potentially, experience something analogous to what, for Boehme, would be a preexistent unitary reality.

Jung’s notion of the archetype as psychoid (Jung 1963, p. 351) alerts us to a notion in which the unfolding of the Self, an archetype that unites opposites and orders our whole psyche, is an innate bridging reality that links the material and psychical and inner and outer in one reality.

Jungian analyst, Erich Neumann describes the Self-field as a preexisting unitary reality that we developmentally emerge from. We find at a certain layer of reality a unitary reality existing beyond and before the primal split (consciousness from unconsciousness) that occurs when our conscious minds develop into a polarized reality. Except in cases of severe trauma or developmental injury, most of us have experienced this unitary reality in some form while we were in the mother’s womb or at a very early stage of development (Neumann 1989, pp. 9–10, 20).

The prenatal egoless totality is associated with an unconscious experience – which can, however, be recalled in later life as a dim memory – of an acosmic state of the world. In this totality there exists a pre-psychic “nebular state” in which there is no opposition between the ego and the world, I and Thou, or the ego and the self. This state of diffusion of the world-soul and the corresponding emptiness of the world is a borderline experience of the beginning of all things which corresponds to the mystic’s experience of the universal diffusion of the unitary reality (Neumann 1989, p. 74).

## Unitary Reality

The pleromatic/abyssal experience of unitary reality is something that is there from our inception. Developmental injuries and specific traumas may impair an individual’s knowledge of this unitary reality, but unitary reality (abyssal reality) underlies all experience. Drawing from Jung (1921, para. 424), the soul is thus like a two-way mirror, reflecting unconscious to ego and ego to unconscious.



The experience of unitary reality is relevant to clinical practice because abyssal experience is radically transforming. A new reality is born to us, offering us a new intrapsychic core, perhaps even restructuring the entire personality in a way the ego can better deal with its context and circumstances, one that enables us to see through to our former origins.

Spirit, from this view, is an a priori reality always in motion, moving toward us, shattering our consciousness, summoning us to receive that which is archetypally present and spiritually actual; as Boehme attests: (. . .) “to wrestle with the love and mercy of God, and not to give over, until he blessed me, . . . *And then the spirit did break through*” (Boehme 1915, pp. 485–487, italics mine).

## See Also

► [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Active Imagination

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C. G. Jung’s development of the dissociative technique of active imagination, the visionary practice of “dreaming with open eyes,” arose out of his early experimentation with paranormal phenomena, especially mediumship, itself a dissociative technique of contacting the dead which traces its provenance to shamanism. His discovery of active imagination led him to associate psychological and spiritual transformation with the autonomous creation and manipulation of images.

## Jung’s Descent into the Unconscious

In December 1913, believing himself to be threatened by a psychosis, Jung overcame his violent resistance to experiencing a series of waking fantasies, which would provide the raw material for the subsequent development of analytical psychology (Jung 1963). In these waking visions, triggered by the suspension of his rational critical faculties enabling conscious receptivity to unconscious psychic contents (Chodorow 1997; Jung 1916/1958), Jung descended to the Land of



the Dead (which he subsequently equated with the unconscious) where he encountered a number of significant *others* in the objective psyche, subjects independent of his consciousness (Jung 1963). He learned to treat the numinous figures of his inner life, Elijah, Salome, the Serpent, and Philemon, an Egypto-Hellenistic Gnostic who later functioned as his inner guru, as objective real *others* and to engage in dialog with them as equals (first verbally and later through writing, painting, and drawing) (Chodorow 1997; Jung 1916/1958, 1925, 1963), thereby discovering a meditative technique for psychological healing and spiritual transformation in marked contrast to the meditative practices of stilling the mind and transcending all images associated with yoga (Jung 1963).

### Active Imagination as Confrontation with the Unconscious

The function of this visionary practice, triggering a dynamic, confrontational exchange between consciousness and the unconscious in which each is totally engaged with the other and activating a stream of powerful, unconscious emotions and impulses, Jung discovered, was to access numinous unconscious images concealed by these emotions and impulses (Chodorow 1997; Jung 1916/1958, 1955–1956, 1963). By consciously dialoging with the flow of images produced by active imagination, Jung learned to transform and control these powerful emotions and impulses, thereby discovering the transcendent function (Jung 1916/1958, 1955–1956, 1963), the union of the opposites of consciousness and the unconscious which he identified with the individuation process, as well as healing himself. However, it is important to remember that, for Jung, it is through the *affect* that the subject of active imagination becomes involved and so comes to feel the whole weight of reality. Numinous images encountered during active imagination are based on an emotional foundation which is unassailable by reason. Indeed, the whole procedure is a kind of enrichment and clarification of the affect, whereby the affect and its contents are brought

nearer to consciousness, becoming at the same time more impressive and more understandable (Jung 1916/1958, 1951, 1952/1954).

Jung was well aware that the practitioner of active imagination unable to maintain a differentiated, self-reflective conscious point of view in the face of unconscious visionary material would be vulnerable to mental illness: either in the form of psychosis where consciousness is overwhelmed by unconscious visionary materials or in the form of conscious identification with numinous unconscious contents leading to possession by them (Chodorow 1997; Jung 1916/1958). However, he insisted that his visionary practice, if approached responsibly by an individual endowed with a well-developed consciousness, could bring considerable rewards. In addition to the strengthening and widening of consciousness itself (Jung 1916/1928, 1916/1958, 1931/1962, 1934/1950, 1955–1956), dreaming with open eyes could enable the practitioner to realize that unconscious contents that appear to be dead are really alive and desire to be known by, and enter into dialog with, consciousness (Jung 1963). If one rests one's conscious attention on unconscious contents without interfering with them, employing the Taoist practice of *wu wei*, just letting things happen, discussed by Jung in his Commentary on *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, it is as if something were emanating from one's spiritual eye that activates the object of one's vision (Jung 1916/1958, 1930–1934, 1931/1962, 1955–1956). Unconscious contents begin to spontaneously change or move, begin to become dynamic or energetic, to come alive. Jung characterizes this process by the German term *betrachten*: to make pregnant by giving an object your undivided attention (Jung 1930–1934, 1935/1968, 1955–1956), a psychological process anticipated by his 1912 dream of a lane of sarcophagi which sprung to life as he examined them (Jung 1963).

These experiences which Jung characterizes as numinous, however, require a vigorous, active, self-reflective conscious response endowing them with meaning and thereby changing them (Jung 1916/1958, 1955–1956, 1963). Here lies the significance of Jung's claim that the dead seek

wisdom from the living in his pseudonymously produced Gnostic poem of 1916, *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, itself the product of active imagination, rather than, as in mediumistic practices, the living seeking the wisdom of the dead. The dead, numinous, unconscious contents, need the living, consciousness, as much as the living need the dead (Bair 2004; Jung 1963; Segal 1992; Welland 1997). This process of continuous dynamic interaction and collaboration between consciousness and the unconscious is expressed by the German term *auseinandersetzung* – coming to terms with, or having it out with or confronting unconscious psychic contents – and is mirrored in Jung’s religious narrative calling for divine-human collaboration underlined by his heretical observation that whoever knows God has an effect on Him in *Answer to Job*, another product of active imagination (Chodorow 1997; Jung 1916/1958, 1952/1954; Welland 1997).

### Active Imagination in Western Religious Traditions

Jung himself alleged the use of active imagination in Gnosticism and alchemy on which he drew heavily in his later work (Jung 1944, 1951, 1955–1956; Segal 1992) and was clearly gratified by Corbin’s research on active imagination in theosophical Sufism (Wasserstrom 1999). However, as Merkur’s recent scholarship tracing the history of active imagination in the West has confirmed, the incidence of this visualization technique in mystical traditions is more widespread and can be found, for example, in Gnosticism, Kabbalah, Sufism, alchemy, and more recent European esotericism, as well as shamanism (Merkur 1993), thus providing considerable support for Jung’s claim that his post-Christian, psychological practice of dreaming with open eyes is analogous to, and can be understood as a detraditionalized form of, spiritual practice fostered by many Western religious traditions during the last two millennia. Merkur also distinguishes between what he calls intense “reverie” states, including Jung’s active

imagination, and trance states. Whereas the latter involve the increasing repression or restriction of ego functions (or consciousness), the former would seem to involve their increasing relaxation and freedom.

### See Also

- ▶ Alchemical Mercurius and Carl Gustav Jung
- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Coincidentia Oppositorum
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Consciousness
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Descent to the Underworld
- ▶ Dissociation
- ▶ Dreams
- ▶ Ego
- ▶ God
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ Healing
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Inflation
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion
- ▶ Jungian Self
- ▶ Numinosum
- ▶ Objective Psyche
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psyche
- ▶ Psychospiritual
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Shamans and Shamanism
- ▶ Transcendent Function
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Adam and Eve

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One of the central features of creation stories in most cultures is a description not only of the

genesis of the cosmos but also of the appearance of the first human beings. Such stories often serve etiological purposes, explaining the origin of the different forms and characteristics of human beings. The Biblical story of Adam and Eve is the most well-known and influential story of human creation and is often used as a “proof text” justifying particular values and models related to family, marriage, sexuality, and gender roles. Yet it is important to remember that creation stories are a form of religious myth. Their importance and meaning do not lie in the literal, historical accuracy of their details, and to focus on such issues misses the level on which their power and truth exists. The Adam and Eve story offers profound theological and psychological insights about human beings’ place in the world and their relationship to each other and to a transcendent dimension of reality. Biblical editors linked the Adam and Eve story (Gen. 2) with the 7-day creation story that precedes it (Gen. 1) as a further elaboration of the nature of the sole creatures who were made “in the image of God.” The famous story of Adam and Eve’s loss of paradise as a result of ignoring God’s instructions has a far more complex message than that disobeying God is bad. Indeed, Jewish tradition takes little notice of Adam and Eve and certainly does not hold them up as the main reason for a flawed human nature. Only later are they elevated to their Christian status as the original sinners.

The multidimensional nature of religious myth makes it impossible to encompass the full meaning of a story in any single psychological interpretation. Nonetheless, psychological approaches to the Adam and Eve story help us to attribute meaning to the peculiar details in this story: a man created from earth, a woman born out of his rib, a tree with forbidden fruit, a seductive serpent, nakedness and shame, punishments and expulsion, etc.

## Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Adam and Eve

From a psychoanalytic perspective, religious myths are expressions of both conscious and

unconscious human struggles, projected onto archetypal figures. Accordingly, one way to look at a story like that of Adam and Eve is to see it as an expression of the struggle between fathers and sons and the ambivalence of their attachments to one another. On the one hand, it emphasizes the importance of the son's subordination and submission to the authority of the father. For Freud, God is both a loving and protective father but also one easily provoked to anger and punishment. He represents the power of the superego to keep instinctual desires under control. Yet the story also contains a thinly disguised expression of Oedipal revolt, not simply in the son Adam's striving to become like God the father through the acquisition of knowledge but also in giving expression, yet simultaneously condemning, the forbidden intimate relationship between mother and son. Such an interpretation is able to make sense of some of the peculiar details of the story and the obvious suppression of a mother figure. Taking the story at face value, Adam has a father but no real mother, and even Eve is born out of a male body. This creation of Eve out of Adam's rib makes more sense, however, as a disguised inversion of their true relationship, for it is out of the bodies of females that males are born and it is only a mother who can rightly call her child "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23). If Eve, who is later called "the mother of all the living," is regarded as the missing mother figure in the story, thereby reconstituting the Oedipal triangle, then the nature of Adam and Eve's sin is thrown into a whole new light. God the father forbids his son Adam the one kind of instinctual knowledge that a father and son should not share. A phallic serpent who tempts Adam and Eve to taste the fruit, a sense of shameful nakedness after the act, and a punishment that highlights female desire, pregnancy, and childbirth all offer a strong subtext of sexual taboos that have been violated in this story. Confirmation of this view may be seen in Adam and Eve's very first act after their expulsion from the garden, their immediate exercise of the new sexual knowledge and desire they have acquired (Gen. 4:1).

Although greater responsibility for the fall is projected onto Eve and indirectly on all women, it is primarily a cautionary tale addressed to sons regarding the danger of challenging the rights and prerogatives of the father. The central characters in subsequent Christian myth can be seen as a reenactment of this same Oedipal ambivalence. This time, however, it is through absolute obedience to the authority of God the father that Jesus, the second Adam, and the Virgin Mary, the new Eve, ultimately displace the father when they ascend to heaven and are seated side by side as celestial king and queen.

### **Jungian Interpretation of Adam and Eve**

Other psychological interpretations of the Adam and Eve story do not see the fundamental tension in the story as related to sexual prohibitions and violations. For many of them, the fall of Adam and Eve describes the difficult process of human growth and development. For Jungians, for example, the garden of Eden is an archetypal expression of primordial wholeness that is both the origin and ultimate goal of human life. At the beginning of human consciousness, there is an undifferentiated unity between the individual psyche and nature, God, and the unconscious. The story of Adam and Eve is an account of the growth of consciousness and the emergence of an ego with awareness of the tension of opposites in human life. Thus Adam is created not as a male, but as the original union of male and female in all human beings. The creation of Eve represents a breakup of the original wholeness of male and female that ideally is still reflected in individual human personality. The serpent is not a dangerous character tempting humans with sin, but rather a symbol of wisdom and the renewal of life. From this perspective, the eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil represents a growth of consciousness that brings an awareness of all polarities and opposites. The couple's self-consciousness about their nakedness describes the inevitable dawning of ethical consciousness and a more mature awareness of gender differences.

## The Fall Story and Psychological Development

In this context, the story of Adam and Eve is not about a tragic mistake that condemns humanity, as traditional Christian theologians have contended, but rather about a difficult but necessary step in the psychic growth of all human beings. Adam and Eve achieve a new level of consciousness, but it comes at the cost of feeling alienated, separated, and expelled from their childhood paradise. While the story is typically viewed as an endorsement of what Erich Fromm has called “authoritarian religion,” in which obedience to divine authority is the cardinal human virtue, it also implies something quite different. Fromm points out that the authoritarian model of religion leaves humans alienated, infantilized, and impoverished by projecting all of their human powers for love, knowledge, and freedom onto an external deity. He insists that such a position contradicts the more humanistic perspectives within the Biblical tradition. At a deeper, more subversive level, the message of the story is to emphasize the painful necessity of breaking free from the security of a childhood that is governed by parental authorities and to assume the knowledge and responsibility necessary to create new relationships, build new families, and determine one’s own path in life. And this, many argue, is not really disobedience to divine command as much as a fulfillment of human beings’ mature spiritual capacity.

In some ways, the Adam and Eve story is therefore a developmental story, describing the struggle of adolescence to separate and individuate from one’s parents. Paradoxically, the process of becoming an adult, i.e., being like God, only can happen through an act of disobedience which challenges the absoluteness of parental authority. And it is a story that emphasizes the centrality of human relationship to realize this process, for it is not good for man to live alone, physically or psychologically.

The story offers no lament that Adam and Eve might have done otherwise and perpetually remained in paradise. Rather, the loss of paradise is inevitable and inescapable, and it enables man

to become a partner with God in the redemption of the broken and alienated dimensions of the world.

## Patriarchal or Feminist Approaches to Eve

It is hard to talk about the Adam and Eve story without considering its complicity in persistent misogynistic elements within Biblical tradition. Such interpretations have constructed women as spiritually inferior, psychologically weak beings who need to submit to their husbands in particular and male authority in general for the good of all. The story has traditionally been used to reinforce images of women as temptresses and to justify the religious, social, and political subordination of women. In the original cultural context of this story, we can also find evidence of patriarchal religious leaders’ efforts to delegitimize religious symbols and ideas associated with sacred images of female power from surrounding cultures. Wisdom-bearing serpents and trees with life-giving knowledge about fertility were likely references to elements of older religious traditions emphasizing connection with the life-giving power of the earth, often symbolized by goddess figures. The Biblical version transforms these elements into manifestations of rebellion and disobedience and implies greater culpability to the female character who first gives in to temptation.

Some recent feminist reinterpretations of this story offer more sympathetic readings of Eve. If the underlying psychological message of the story involves the difficult yet necessary process of growing up, the dawning of conscience, intellect, desire, and sexuality, then it makes little sense to demonize the character who initiates this process. In this reading, Eve is not gullible and weak but rather a strong, decisive, and courageous woman who actively seeks new knowledge and experience. As with other important religious myths, the central characters of this story have been rediscovered and reinvented by modern readers in response to the concerns and issues of our time.

## See Also

- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Genesis](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Original Sin](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)

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## Adler, Alfred

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## Background

Alfred Adler (1870–1937) was an Austrian psychiatrist and recognized as one of the fathers of modern psychotherapy. He was born in Vienna in 1870 and decided at an early age that he wanted to be a doctor in order to “fight death.” He was the second child in a large family and suffered from numerous illnesses as a child. He studied medicine at the University of Vienna and preferred not to treat a client’s symptoms in isolation, but rather considered the whole person, including their social setting.

In 1902, Adler was asked to join a weekly psychoanalytic discussion circle and became an

active member in the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society; other notable members included Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung. However, after 9 years, he and about a dozen other members split from the society over theoretical differences. He went on to form the Society of Individual Psychology, which emphasized the role of goals and motivation in people’s behaviors. Adler developed his theory of *Individual Psychology*, using the word individual to emphasize the uniqueness of the personality. In the year after leaving the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, he published *The Neurotic Constitution*, which outlined his theory.

During World War I, Adler served in the army as a physician and became increasingly aware of the necessity for humans to live peacefully and develop social interest, in which one feels as they belong with others. After the war, Adler’s concept of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* or social interest/social feeling became a central aspect of his Individual Psychology theory. He went on to develop child-guidance clinics throughout Vienna and was the first psychiatrist to apply mental health concepts to the school environment.

By the mid-1920s, the *International Journal of Individual Psychology* had been founded and published until 1937; it resumed publication after World War II. Between 1914 and 1933, Adler published more than a dozen books, including *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*, *What Life Should Mean To You*, *Religion and Individual Psychology*, *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind*, and *Cooperation Between the Sexes*. Due to the rise of Nazism in Austria and similar to other Jewish people of his generation, Adler left Europe and settled in the United States in 1935. While on a European lecturing trip, Adler died suddenly of heart attack at the age of 67.

## Individual Psychology

Individual Psychology suggests that people are responsible for their own choices and the way they deal with consequences. In this theory,



humans are self-determining, creative, and goal directed. When individuals are able to understand their goal in life, they can see the purpose of their own behavior. Adler sees each individual as a unity and viewed all problems as social problems. Adler viewed the answer to life's difficulties as social interest or the feeling of connectedness with the whole of humanity and that each person must fully contribute to society. According to Adler, the true meaning of life is to make a contribution to the community.

In Adler's view, religion was an expression of social interest. His theory of Individual Psychology has religious undertones in that his definition of social interest is similar to those religions that stress people's responsibility for one another. While Adler did not believe in God or in the Bible, he did collaborate with clergyman. His book, *Religion and Individual Psychology*, was coauthored with Revered Ernst Jahn. Adler believed that if clergy had training in Individual Psychology, he would be able to make greater accomplishments in the arena of mental health and hygiene. Adler believed that there are many religious initiatives that try to increase cooperation, and he stated that there are many paths that lead toward the ultimate goal of cooperation.

As compared to other systems of psychology, Individual Psychology and Adlerian psychotherapy have been more open to spiritual and religious issues. The Adlerian position toward religion is most commonly positive, viewing God as the concept of complete perfection. Adler defined God as the human understanding of greatness and complete perfection. As opposed to Freud, Adler viewed God as the conceptual idea of perfection, not as an internalized parental image.

One of Adler's most prominent ideas is that humans try to compensate for inferiorities that we perceive in ourselves. He developed the idea of inferiority complex, as well as the goal of superiority. A lack of power is often at the source of the feelings of inferiority. One way in which religion enters into this is through beliefs in God, which are characteristic of one's attempts at perfection and superiority. In many religions, God is often considered to be perfect and

omnipotent and instructs people to also strive for perfection. The person, who is always striving, is aware that he or she cannot experience such perfection but that having a goal defines life. By attempting to identify with God in this way, people compensate for their imperfections and feelings of inferiority. Adler believed that the idea of God inspires people to act and that those actions have real consequences. One's perspective on God is important because it embodies one's goals and guides social interactions.

Numerous authors have compared Adler's Individual Psychology to Confucianism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Native American religions. In the literature, Christianity appears most frequently cited as having similar tenets with Individual Psychology. For example, there are considerable commonalities between the basic assumptions of Christianity and Individual Psychology regarding the view of humans. Both view individuals as creative, holistic, social oriented, and goal directed and emphasize equality, value, and dignity of humans. A focus within the Christian Bible is on human relationships, with God, oneself, and others and provides guidelines for relationships for living with others. Humans are responsible for caring for one another, emphasized both in the Old Testament and in the teachings of Jesus. Both the Bible and Adlerian psychotherapy emphasize the relationship between spiritual-mental health and social interest. The Bible's decree of love one's neighbor is synonymous with the Adlerian concept of social interest.

Individual Psychology and Buddhism are both based on holism in their understanding of the human mind because they believe there are no conflicts between elements of the mind. Yet, while Buddhism applies holism to understanding the structure of the universe, Individual Psychology recognizes conflicts between the individual and the world. Individual psychology denies the idea of the self as separate from the rest of the individual; no self exists apart from the whole. Similarly, Buddhism denies the existence of the self as such.

The view of human distress can be viewed in corresponding terms from a Buddhist and

Adlerian perspective. In Adler's Individual Psychology, an individual strives toward his or her life goal while inevitably facing specific difficulties in his or her life, referred to by Adler as life tasks. When facing difficulties, the person feels inferior; therefore, striving toward one's goals leads to feelings of inferiority or suffering. Likewise, in Buddhism, three thirsts cause suffering: the thirst for pleasure, the thirst to live, and the thirst to die. In addition, in Buddhism and Individual Psychology, all conflicts are interpersonal and occur between the individual and life events; they both deny intrapsychic conflicts. Life unavoidably produces interpersonal conflicts and these conflicts make an individual suffer. In contrast to Individual Psychology, Buddhism asserts that the awakened or enlightened do not deal with conflict in the world. Through three ways of studying, a person can understand that the conflicts he or she has in life are only illusions.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)

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## Adoption

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The Bible doesn't "speak" to us in words about adoption but conveys great insight through its stories. It teaches us by example. Adoption consists of two parts: the relinquishment of the child by the parent(s) and the adoption of the child by a new parent(s). In the Bible, the relinquishment of the child is always associated with the threat of death to the child. In the first instance, Abraham relinquishes his son Israel to G-d while expecting that it will result in his son's death. In the next story of adoption, the mother of Moses is forced to relinquish him by placing him in the Nile River in order to save him from certain death. In the story of Esther, not part of the actual Bible itself, relinquishment comes about as a result of the death of Esther's parents. In a related example of relinquishment in the Bible, two women appear before King Solomon claiming to be a baby's mother, and when the King threatens to kill the baby by cutting it in half, the real mother relinquishes the baby to the other woman in order to save the child's life. In ancient classical literature this association between relinquishment of the child and death manifests itself in Sophocles' trilogy about Oedipus. Here the relinquishment of the child Oedipus takes place with the expectation of death to the child as a consequence. The thread running through these stories is that the



bond between parent and child is of such primal significance that it can be broken only as a matter of life or death. The Bible does speak to us in words about the attitude toward relinquished orphan children and so does the Qur'an. In the world of Islam, the orphaned child is treated with great love and care. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be unto him) once said that a person who cares for an orphaned child will be in Paradise with him. The Qur'an gives specific rules about the legal relationship between a child and his adoptive family. The child's biological family is never hidden; their ties to the child are never severed. The adopted parents are like loving trustees and caretakers of someone else's child. In the Bible there are references to orphans: the repeated attitude is that they should be treated with special consideration and that it is a blessing to those who care for them. This attitude is manifested in the stories depicting relinquished children who are delivered into loving hands. When Abraham relinquishes his son Israel, G-d immediately sends an Angel to protect Abraham's relinquished son Israel from death and then promises such a wonderful future that all of his family (descendants) will inherit the surrounding lands which were (eventually) named Israel after him. After Moses was relinquished, he was rescued from the Nile River by the Pharaoh's loving daughter who protected him from the Pharaoh's death decree, arranged for his biological mother to nurse him, and raised him to be adopted into the Pharaoh's family. Esther who was relinquished as a result of her parent's death was adopted by her loving uncle Mordecai who protected her from the wrath of the Persian ruler by hiding her Jewish origins. And in the related story about the mother who relinquished her baby to King Solomon's judgment in order to save the child's life, King Solomon gives the baby back to his loving mother. In the Classical Greek story about Oedipus who is bound and abandoned in the wild by his parents, he is found and delivered into the loving hands of King Merope and his Queen and raised as a noble. And what is the outcome one can expect from this loving care of

the adopted child – nothing less than a loving, faithful, and loyal offspring.

These scriptural and classical literature stories teach us that our love and support of the adopted child will be rewarded with the love and loyalty of the child in return. In today's time there is controversy over whether the adopted child should be aware of his adopted status. What insight is shed on this subject by these religious and classical sources? The Qur'an quite clearly spells out in words the view that the child's awareness of his adoptive status is very necessary. The adopted child must retain his/her own biological family name (surname) and not change it to match that of his adoptive family. There can be no doubt or mystery about the adoptive status of the child. The Bible conveys the importance of this awareness again in its stories. Abraham is accepted and his son adopted into the religion of one G-d, Judaism, and this "adoption" is proclaimed to the world and fought for.

Esther is knowingly adopted by her Uncle and raised in accord with her racial and religious roots. She is loyal to her adoptive parent to the point of risking death to please him by confronting the Persian King. And later when the relinquishment of the Jews by genocide from their adoptive home in Persia is sought by the Prime Minister Haman, Esther again risks her life in loyalty to her adoptive father by proclaiming to the King her secret, that she is a Jew.

These stories also illustrate the contrasting effect on the adopted child of adoption unawareness. Moses' adoption was transracial, a Hebrew child in an Egyptian family. His adopted family was the ruling class of the country, while his biological roots were with the enslaved class. We are given the impression that he had no knowledge of his adoptive status growing up until he is regarded as "brethren" by the Hebrew slaves he was supervising. We can surmise that he may have had unspoken conflicts and identity confusion that couldn't be revealed and acknowledged. Moses is portrayed as a poor communicator who struggled with rage in the Bible. At one point he explodes and kills an Egyptian overseer

who was brutalizing some Hebrew slaves. The mixture of anger, fear, and guilt often underlies the many reports of the high incidence of anger in adoptees. The strength of Moses' loyalty to his adoptive family was made evident by his self-imposed exile from Egypt which lasted for as long as the Pharaoh lived.

Not knowing one's biological roots puts one in danger of violating a fundamental human taboo against incest which the adoptee who lacks specific knowledge of his biological roots is subject to. Islam specifically addresses the issue by insisting on clear demarcation between blood relationships and nonblood relationships. The Bible's solution is exemplified in the story of Moses. In his years of self-imposed exile, Moses marries a non-Hebrew, thus avoiding the possibility of incest when he establishes a family of his own.

What do we learn about the road from identity confusion to identity resolution? Moses' identity crisis is resolved and solidified by the recognition of and reunion with and the support of his birth family. This reunion helps him accept himself as a Hebrew and as G-d's spokesman. In his mission to gain the relinquishment of the Hebrews from their adoptive home in Egypt, Moses repeatedly confronts the new Pharaoh of Egypt. Here too the relinquishment of the Hebrews from Egypt is only brought about after their children were threatened with death by the Pharaoh. In this story, the Pharaoh acts on his murderous feelings toward the Hebrews as he tries to prevent their separation from Egypt by ordering the death of the firstborn Hebrew children and later by trying to kill the Hebrews after allowing them to leave Egypt. The Pharaoh's murderous decree against the Hebrews results in the death of his own child and the destruction of his army. We see that the suppression of the adoptee's true identity results in conflict and ultimately destruction to the suppressor.

In the story of Oedipus, we see the consequences of not knowing the true biological identity played out in dramatic fashion. In the story of Oedipus, his adoptive roots are not consciously known to him. He is an unknown

puzzle to himself as exemplified by the problem posed to him by the sphinx: Who is man? We know that his biological parents had arranged for his relinquishment by death through abandonment. We know that out of loving loyalty to his adoptive parents, he had fled them rather than risk their destruction after hearing the Oracle's prophecy that he would kill his father. The inevitable outcome is that he kills his biological father and had an incestuous relationship with children by his biological mother. The incestuous dangers of the adoptee's ignorance of his true biological roots are brought "to life" in this play. The play too adds to the insight that loving care of the orphan by the adoptive parents results in a loving and devoted child, whereas murderous action toward the child brings about a murderous reaction. The lack of conscious knowledge of one's adoptive and biological origins is portrayed here as causing turmoil and conflict in the life of the adoptee.

These ancient insights have also been reflected in the writings of psychoanalyst and adoption specialist Florence Clothier (1943) in "The Psychology of the Adopted Child" who wrote "... the severing of the individual from his racial antecedents lie at the core of what is peculiar to the psychology of the adopted child." "... the ego of the adopted child ... is called upon to compensate for the wound left by the loss of the biological mother. Later on this appears as an unknown void, separating the adopted child from his fellows whose blood ties bind them to the past as well as to the future."

What are the common threads that run through these writings:

1. Adoptive parents who raise their children in a loving way will have loving children who will not destroy them with their aggression.
2. Acting out of primal hostile impulses by parents toward their children begets the acting out of primal hostile impulses toward themselves.
3. Acknowledgement of adoption can help prevent incest.
4. Knowledge of one's true "core" is essential for mental well-being.

## See Also

- ▶ God
- ▶ Oedipus Myth
- ▶ Qur'an

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## Affect

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## Definition

Affect is a term used in psychology to denote the broad field of emotional- and mood-based experience of the human subject and is a concept deployed in the poststructural theory of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and related fields of social and cultural theory, to describe the means of visceral communication which invests the experience of relationship between an organism and its environment with meaning, in the broadest possible sense. Protevi writes, “An affect is that which a body is capable of, and so the affectivity of conceptual personae becomes materially grounded in what Alliez will later not hesitate to call a ‘biology of intellectual action’” (Protevi 2005).

When we consider that affect involves embodied, visceral perception that is intuitively apprehended (Bion), is object relational, and may be both generative of cognition and a product of cognition, or even precognitive (instinctual) or trans-cognitive (integrative), we can understand that affect mediates all experience at both conscious and unconscious levels of awareness

and is an important mediator of all religious and spiritual experience. In *Affect, Religion and Unconscious Processes*, Hill and Hood write:

Insofar as religious experience involves representational worlds, or object relations, affect is hypothesised to play a central role as a mediator (that often is not associated with awareness) of such processes that underlie various behaviours. (Hill and Hood 1999, p. 1018).

## Affect Theory and Integration

For the psychoanalytic psychologist Silvan Tomkins (1962, 1963, 1991, 1992), who developed what has become known as “affect theory,” affect can also be understood as an important factor in motivation, in that it is generative of stimuli and also mediates the complex human biofeedback system in an attempt to sustain homeostasis. The adoption of a religious or spiritual practice can be understood to be motivated by the human need to optimize positive affect and ameliorate negative affect to achieve harmonious biopsychosocial functioning. The need to identify with a positive “Image” for Tomkins is rooted in a need to identify with the beloved parent, who resonates with positive affects such as love, joy, patience, and acceptance. This process of identification enhances optimal development and facilitates highly complex forms of psychological integration dependent on the mediation of ever more subtle affective processes or states. As McGroarty writes: “This also allows for a finer imagination . . . In addition to expanding categories of imagination and perception, this process also may be somewhat therapeutic, in cases where the event under analysis has instigated trauma . . . The feedback system is ultimately geared toward reporting on the progress toward this state [homeostasis], humans are freer than other animals because of the complexity of the Images they hold, and variety of strategies with which they may pursue these images” (McGroarty 2006, pp. 60–61).

It follows that identification with the positive Images associated with spiritually developed or integrated others, whether they are ministers, teachers, gurus, or saints, will be a source of

motivation for adopting religious or spiritual practices or values, because the processes involved enhance the ability of the human affective system to sustain homeostasis when under stress from negative stimuli, and thereby regulate itself harmoniously.

In short, identification with highly integrated persons and aspiring to become like them, by adopting practices that enable affective self-regulation, enhances happiness and well-being. A sense of freedom is also enjoyed by those with a highly developed ability to regulate their own affective states. Spiritual and religious practices are one set of tools available to enhance the development of affective self-regulation, and forms of psychotherapy that deploy elements of contemplative practices in particular have been demonstrated to be very effective in achieving this objective.

### Affect Regulation and Contemplative Practice

Mindfulness-based stress reduction or MBSR (Kabat-Zinn 1990) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy or MBCT (Segal et al. 2002) are two forms of therapeutic affective self-regulation which deploy Buddhist meditation techniques and yoga exercises to enhance affective self-management. They have been demonstrated to be particularly effective interventions in mood disorders such as recurring depression and substance abuse problems, which are often rooted in misguided attempts to use alcohol, drugs, and/or food to regulate emotions and mood.

More recently, a new type of intervention designed to regulate affect called “analytic meditative therapy” has been described by Harrison (2006) as a non-dual psychotherapy rooted in the Tibetan Buddhist practices of Dzogchen and Mahamudra, which enables “relaxed contact with absolute reality and [...] mental healing to occur spontaneously” (Harrison 2006, p. 73) through “contemplative resting in non-dual mental space” (Harrison 2006, p. 73). Such an intervention embraces the tendency of human affect to achieve equilibrium

when given the “mental space” to do so. Certain skills in contemplative discipline are required to create the mental space that enables this to occur.

The above descriptions of the role of affect in the generation and mediation of psychological states, including spiritual and religious experience, are made more interesting by research that demonstrates the converse relationship also exists. Ancient contemplative practices generate and mediate affect in predictable and repeatable ways, with meditation and breathing techniques now being used to enhance psychological well-being as highly effective therapeutic interventions in the field of mental health.

### See Also

- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Esoteric Buddhism
- ▶ Instinct
- ▶ Mindfulness
- ▶ Nonduality
- ▶ Relational Psychoanalysis

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## African American Spirituality

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Spirituality has played a paramount role in shaping the identity of African Americans, permeating many aspects of life. African American spirituality has its roots in African religious traditions and culture (Boyd-Franklin 1989), according to which, people are born spiritual beings, and thus, religion and spirituality are an integrated part of identity. African religion and spirituality have also influenced African culture, education, social life, politics, and economics (Idowu 1992). Overall, African spirituality is very communal in nature as noted by John Mbiti, who said, “I am because we are; and because we are, therefore, I am” (1969: 108). Reflected in this quote is the idea that consciousness of oneself stems from duties, responsibilities, and privileges experienced with others.

### Role of Faith

African spirituality helped those affected by slavery to nurture and promote a sense of community while under the influence of the white slave owners’ European religion (Battle 2006). African spirituality also helped those forced into slavery redefine themselves, find unity, and express inner strength, despite their experiences of oppression. Further, African spirituality

buffered white slave owners’ attempts to destroy African cultural identity. Strength would be drawn from one another in secret meetings as well as through music and dance; the presence of the sacred would be celebrated through songs, beating drums, prayers, and stories (Cook and Wiley 2000). Traditional African concepts of spirituality and religion are interwoven into African American spirituality and are reflected in contemporary African American culture (Wiggins and Williams 1996). For example, a fundamental African spiritual concept that was retained by African Americans is the idea that people live in a religious universe and therefore the whole of a person’s life is deeply religious. This idea includes the belief that one is connected to past, present, future humankind, nature, and God. African spirituality is the legacy of African Americans and is present in African American spirituality and culture today. Likewise, as in African worship, African American worship involves verbal and physical expression that includes the whole body and is expressed in the form of song and dance. Music and spirituality are linked in the African American culture and elements of “spirituals” reveal cultural patterns that have been sustained through the years (Wiggins and Williams 1996). These elements include the use of metaphor, symbolism, and imagery which appear in the form of blues, rap, and jazz (Wiggins and Williams 1996).

### Role of the Church

Still, communalism continues to play a central role in African American spirituality that promotes a collective identity involving psychological and spiritual integration with others and the sacred. African American spirituality also continues to be an integral part of the struggle for liberation from injustices that followed slavery and has become part of the survival system of African Americans in contemporary times (Boyd-Franklin 1989; Wiggins and Williams 1996). This can be seen in the emergence of the Black church in America, for example, which has been integral to the

development of African American religion, politics, and social justice issues. Being one of the first institutions that belonged solely to African Americans, it became multifunctional and was considered a place of refuge in a hostile world (Boyd-Franklin 1989). With time, the Black church, empowered by the communal nature of African American spirituality, would be shepherded by Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who together with the Black church helped give rise to the Civil Rights movement which was focused on eliminating the racial discrimination of African Americans.

Currently, the African American churches continue to have a communal foundation that serves as an extended family where social attitudes, values, and codes of conduct of the church and the family are interwoven (Cook and Wiley 2000; Boyd-Franklin 1989). Most African American churches continue to be representative of the African American spiritual lifestyle by reinforcing the concept that the sacred exists in all things animate and inanimate (Cook and Wiley 2000). This is exemplified in the way that African American churches provide resources such as food, shelter, financial aid, child care, recreation, health care, political action, cultural expression, and mental health services to meet the basic needs of the community (Cook and Wiley 2000). On the whole, African American spirituality continues to be a significant source of strength, hope, meaning, identity, liberation, and forgiveness. It also continues to play a central role in affirming ethnic, cultural, and historic pride (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

### Role of Clergy

Within the African American church, the pastor is viewed as the leader and spokesperson for the congregations. The modern-day pastor is representative of the tribal leaders and/or shamans of African tribes. The African chieftain was responsible for the welfare of his people acting as protector, provider, and counselor. The shaman offered spiritual guidance and was a liaison to the

metaphysical realm. African American pastors have similar duties, serving as providers of spiritual knowledge and motivation, offering guidance to the troubled, and protecting the people. The role of pastor in the African American church is one of reverence whose influence encompasses the church and the family and extends out to the larger community (Cook and Wiley 2000). As in African cultures, religious leaders are perceived as being knowledgeable professionals who are intermediaries between church members and the sacred (Idowu 1992). The pastor sets the moral foundation of the church, and members often look to pastors for help with their problems and needs (Cook and Wiley 2000). It is viewed as a pastor's duty to go to God with prayers on behalf of the individual, family, or community (Idowu 1992).

### See Also

- ▶ [Communitas](#)
- ▶ [Religious Identity](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)

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## African Diaspora Religions

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*African Diaspora Religions*, also known as Afro-American and African-derived religions, refer to a system of sub-Saharan, West, and Central African spirituality that spread throughout the Americas. Many distinct groups were forcibly brought to the Caribbean, Central and South America, and the United States.

Places such as Brazil, Cuba, Hispaniola, Trinidad, and the southern United States witnessed interaction between enslaved people of different tribal affiliations. These exchanges, as well as contact with indigenous practices and European beliefs, led to the indigenization of African beliefs and practices. Practices would differ among the slaves' progeny, yet all maintained a congruent African spiritual orientation.

In this African spiritual orientation, a primal force holds the cosmos in balance and animates all things; there is a supreme, albeit distant being, that is above a pantheon of semidivinities; and semidivinities in turn interact with humans and sometimes depend on them for sustenance. Ancestor veneration is on equal footing with semidivinities, and animal sacrifice and herbal preparations and foods are used for divine protection, to elicit a boon, or to appease a semidivinity or an ancestor. Spiritual rites of passage are necessary and consecrated drums are used to invite spirits to possess followers.

An animistic spirituality, this African spiritual orientation does not readily fit into Western categories, such as the separation between secular and religious practice or between the spiritual and the material. Its concept of time is communal rather than historical (Mbiti 1969). Spiritual practices are blended with daily existence and the material world. In the *Yorùbá* oracular tradition, the material and spiritual powers can be unbalanced and ancestors and spirits speak. The ancestors must be appeased, as they can offer guidance but can also cause a spiritual imbalance, as is the case in Cuban

*Yorùbá Ayoba (Lukumí, or Santería)*. Ancestors can be both deceased blood relatives and individuals within one's spiritual lineage. Spirits can also become attached to an individual, or enthralled, as with the Bantu *nkisi* in Cuba's Congo-based *Palo Mayombe*. Often we see a pantheon of divine spirits who must be cared for and demand action, such as the *orisha* in *Yorùbá Lukumí*, *orixá* in Brazilian Candomblé, and the *loa* of Haitian Vodoun. These semidivinities, who are often personified natural forces or tribal/cultural heroes, can also possess the practitioner and offer guidance, demand an offering, or some action.

The psychologist or scholar of psychology and religion should be open to the fact that practitioners of African diaspora religions embrace an ontology that is radically different from Western concepts of the soul and self. The etiology of persistent individual desires or problems is often attributed to the unmet demands of an attached spirit or ancestor. Psychical comfort is drawn from the understanding that there is continuity and interaction between the living and the ancestors. An individual's personality type is often matched to a deity. For example, if assertive and outgoing, the individual is said to be a *Shango*. The concept of the soul, and the self, is also composite rather than singular (Gonzalez 2010).

Besides New World religious cross-fertilization among the various West and Central African tribes, one can detect Christian, indigenous, and Kardecian *Spiritist* elements. In Brazil and Cuba, *Spiritist* beliefs in reincarnation and the ability to communicate with the dead resonated with ancient indigenous African beliefs in ancestor spirits. Cuban *Ayoba (Lukumí/Santería)*, and Brazilian *Candomblé* and *Umbanda*, while discarding its philosophical underpinnings, adapted the structure of Kardecian Spiritism as a way of communicating with the dead, spirit guides, and as a useful structure to supplant death rites lost with the Middle Passage. Ethnobotany, which can have both African and New World indigenous roots, is employed for both spiritual and physical healings, and for keeping the semidivinities alive and happy. Spirits can be African or indigenous, as with the *caboclos* of Brazilian Candomblé, that possess practitioners.

Oral transmission is the preferred mode for communicating stories, teachings, and ritual preparation and implementation, although in recent years there have been efforts to commit these to writing by priests, scholars, and initiates. These African spiritualities have lost much of the stigma traditionally associated with them as slave superstition, and more recently, newer generations of participants have sought to divest practices of non-African elements, to “purify” them.

African spiritualities include *Candomblé* and *Umbanda* in Brazil; *Ayoba/Lukumí*, the *Abakuá* secret society, *Palo Mayombe*, *Arará*, and *Muertera Bembé de Sao* in Cuba; *Voudon* in Haiti; and *Obeah* and *Orisha/Shango* in Trinidad and Tobago.

### Abakuá

Abakuá (Cuba), with its *Náñigo* priests, is a hermetic, strictly male religious mutual aid society established in nineteenth-century Cuba and directly modeled on its African counterparts, such as the Ekpe in southern Nigeria. *Abakuá* society derives its spirit beliefs from the Efik, Efut, Ibibio, and Igbo people in what the Portuguese called the Calabar region in what is today southeastern Nigeria. Initiation takes place through offering a goat and rooster to the entity *Ekue*. Society secrets and loyalty between members are strictly enforced and preserved unto death. Through the society, permitted because of the *cabildo* system in Cuba, *Abakuá* language, rites, and rituals (excepting human sacrifice) were faithfully preserved. *Abakuá* societies are structured under a king with absolute judicial, marshal, and religious powers. The king is called the *Obon Iyamba*, the custodian of *Ekue*, and presides over tribunals. Benny More and Dizzy Gillespie are said to have been members of this order.

### Arará

Arará (Cuba) of Adja/Fon, Ewe, Mahi, Popo, and other Dahomey extraction, with its *Arará*

*Dajomé*, *Arará Sabalú*, and *Arará Magino* regional variations, is a spiritual system that arrived to Cuba late in the eighteenth century from what is today Benin. Due to contact with Yorùbá spirituality and because of its Dahomeyan background, *Arará* holds many beliefs in common with *Lukumí* and *Vodoun*, including cognate deities, ritual practices, and spiritual possession.

### Ayoba

Ayoba (Cuba) is variously known as *Lukumí*, *Santería*, *Regla de Osha*, and affectionately as *La Religión*. Members prefer to say *Lukumí* or *Ayoba*. *Lukumí* is the abbreviated form of the traditional Yorùbá salutation *O-Lukumí*, meaning “we are friends” – a necessary greeting among slaves who had often been tribal enemies in West Africa. *Lukumí* has the most adherents of any Afro-Cuban religion. *Lukumí* is primarily a Yorùbá-based spirituality. As in *Candomblé*, the two main entangled strands in *Lukumí* are *orisha* (semidivinities) and *egungun* (spirits of the dead) worship. *Orisha* refers to hundreds of Yoruba tribal deities, of which only a fraction survived the Middle Passage (Fig. 1).

Central to Yorùbá, *Lukumí*, and *Candomblé* belief is the ineffable pantheistic concept of *Ashe*, which collectively refers to a divine generative force, essence, existence, grace, knowledge, wisdom, and destiny. *Ashe* coalesced as the Godhead *Olodumare*, and in turn gave rise to all the universe, the *orishas*, and humans. *Ashe* is the presence of the divine in all things. Although ordained practitioners are beholden to *orisha*, they consider themselves monotheists and appeal to *Ashe* in its aspect of *Olodumare* as the governing principle for their religion. As in Brazilian *Candomblé*, the presence of Catholic statuary in *Lukumí* households is traditional and used as visual stand-in for the *orishas* as well as a way to celebrate the Catholic saints’ *ashe* for their help in the preservation of the religion. *Lukumí*, like most African spiritualities, holds that all religions have *ashe* and so have truth. So *Lukumí* allows practicing other faiths.



**African Diaspora Religions, Fig. 1** Lukumi celebration offerings. Miami, FL (Photo courtesy of Church of the Lukumi Babalu-Aye (CLBA))



Many *Lukumí* also consider themselves Catholic but do not mix the two faiths. *Lukumí* and *Candomblé* often also practice Kardecian Spiritism. Christian artifacts, Buddhas, Hindu deities, or artifacts from any religion may be present due to the need to appease the *ashe* of a non-*Lukumí*-attached spirit or spirit guide. *Lukumí* cosmology does not posit a struggle between good and evil, so *ashe* can be redirected for good or ill. Spells for protection or harm can be cast, but care is taken as this action establishes an eternal bond between the individual casting the spell and the target. *Lukumí* believes in reincarnation and an imbalance of *ashe* can also be attributed to a previous lifetime.

The *eleda* or *Lukumí* soul is unique to every person but very unlike the Western concept of the soul. The seat of *eleda* is said to be one's *ori*, which is the *Yorùbá/Lukumí* word for head. *El Meridilogun* refers to the 16-cowry shell form of divination. Dreams, visions, *orisha* possession, and strange occurrences are all regarded as sources of knowledge or advice from deceased blood relatives or spirit guides but, if important, must be checked against a reading of the shells for legitimacy. *El Meridilogun* is the premier diagnostic tool used to ascertain the source of

spiritual or physical malady, economic hardship, and communication with the dead. The *opele* (concave shell "necklace") is used by *babalaos* (*Ifa* priests) to provide quick "yes" or "no" answers to questions. "*Obi*" (quartered coconut) is a quick form of divination used by *Olorishas* (*Lukumí* priests) during rituals to see if an offering was accepted. The *Lukumí* shells and the *Oracle of Ifa* interrogate the spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial requirements for the well-being of the individual. They prescribe ritual action to rectify any imbalance found and offer guidance to the individual regarding how to live.

### Candomblé

Candomblé (Brazil), also known as *Batuque* and sometimes *Macumba*, has the most followers of any Afro-Brazilian spirituality. Although developing separately, *Candomblé* and Cuban *Lukumí* share many elements. It is an animistic Yoruba-based spirituality with elements of Bantu, Ewe, Fon, and Igbo practices. However, divination is more pronounced in *Lukumí*, while spirit possession is more prevalent in *Candomblé* (Wafer 1991). Originating in Bahia and practiced

primarily in Brazil, *Candomblé* has spread to Argentina, Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, and the United States. *Umbanda* is another Brazilian religion of Yoruba provenance that relies more heavily on Kardecian *Spiritist* practice and rejects animal sacrifice during worship.

### Muertera Bembé de Sao

Muertera Bembé de Sao (Cuba) originated among Kongo slaves in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its practices have been incorporated throughout other religious traditions on the island (Dodson 2008). A *bembé*, or “drumming,” uses Kongo-rhythmic sacred drumming to communicate with the spirits along with dance, chanting, spirit possession, ancestor veneration, and consultation. Percussion induces a trance-like state and *bembé* are held to invite divinities to come down and possess dancers and communicate their desires and advice from ancestors. Similar to the *gnanga* in *Palo Mayombe*, the *cazuela*, or cauldron, is filled with sacred items including human bones, rocks, sticks, and animal bones. During *bembé* the *cazuela* functions as a depository for spirits who lay dormant in it until awakened by the drums. Spirits are said to be of three types that include spirits of the dead, ancient divine spirits, and designated spirits who work with specific living human beings.

### Obeah and Shango/Orisha

Obeah and Shango/Orisha (Trinidad and Tobago). *Obeah*, sometimes referred to as *Obi*, or *Obia* is a spirituality of Igbo and Efik West African origin. Similar to American *hoodoo*, *Obeah* includes beliefs in talismans, powerful spells to either ward off misfortune or cause harm, and the working of an evil or lost spirit known as *jumbie*. *Obiama* and *obiama* refer to the sorcerers.

Orisha/Shango is a West African kingdom of Oyo-centric Yorùbá spirituality that was brought to Trinidad by nineteenth-century slaves.

As a Yorùbá-based spirituality, it shares many elements with *Lukumí* and centers on the *orisha* of thunder, masculinity, and sexual prowess known as *Shango*. *Shango* is a Yorùbá cultural hero who was deified; he is associated with lightning and sexual prowess. Ceremonies take place in a small house called a *chappelle* and the *palais* or tent used for healing rituals. Each year a festival for *Shango* is held in Trinidad that highlights offerings, animal sacrifices, and possessed dancers.

### Palo Monte/Palo Mayombe/Kimbisa

Palo Monte/Palo Mayombe/Kimbisa (Cuba), also collectively referred to as *Reglas de Congo* are Central African, Kongo, spiritualities of primarily Bantu origin. *Palo* is the second most populous African spirituality in Cuba after *Lukumí*. *Nganga*, also known by the Spanish word *prenda*, or jewel, refers to the cauldron where the *palero*, or practitioner of *Palo Mayombe*, keeps the *nkisi* spirits and the enthralled spirit. If *Lukumí* is often erroneously referred to as *Santeria* or “saint worship,” *Palo* is often called *Brujeria* or literally “witchcraft.” In either case *Palo* has little to do with either Christian-based satanic practices or keltic religion. The *gnanga* cauldron is filled with sacred earth that is often taken from a cemetery, sticks (hence, *palo*), human remains, animal bones, as well as other charged items and is said to do the *palero*'s bidding. Various spirits are said to inhabit the *gnanga* but each cauldron is dedicated to a specific *nkisi*. The *gnanga* is also importantly inhabited by *un muerto* or spirit of a deceased human, who is never directly related to the *palero*, and there is a symbiotic relationship established between the *palero* and *el muerto*. Divination also plays a role in *Palo*.

### Voudon

Voudon (Haiti), also known as *Voodoo*, shares elements in common with other Yoruba- and Dahomeyan-influenced African spiritualities. The word “*Voudon*” is derived from the

Dahomey Fon language and means “spirit ”or “deity.” Voudon has many cognate deities and practices with *Candomblé* and *Lukumí*, and, due to slavery, a similar pattern of dissimulation of semidivinities as Christian saints is found. *Vodoun* utilizes drumming, initiation, divination, animal, food, and vegetative offering as a way of communicating with semidivinities (*loa*), ancestors, and spirits. A male *voudoun* priest is called a *houngan* and a female priest is called a *mamba*. A *Voudon* temple is called a *houfour*; its *poteau-mitan* pole found at the center serves as a vehicle for the deity to communicate with participants. *Veve*, or patterns unique to a specific *loa* whose ritual is being performed and who is being called upon, is drawn with flour or cornmeal on the floor. The *loa* attach themselves to individuals or families and function as protectors and guides. The *loa* possess participants during drummings and offer guidance or make demands.

In treating followers of African diaspora spiritualities, it should be noted that, for reasons of economy and purported efficacy, adherents of these traditions often seek the advice of a priest or herbalist before or instead of seeking the advice of a physician, psychologist, or financial adviser. Priests or herbalists may recommend the use of herbal concoctions to remedy an ill. Botanicals are individually picked from nature or purchased singularly or premixed at shops that cater to practitioners. Individuals may have attached spirits, spirit guides, or other entities that are seen as either positive or negative influences and that must also be considered during treatment.

## See Also

- ▶ [African Traditional Religion](#)
- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)
- ▶ [Spiritism](#)
- ▶ [Voudon](#)
- ▶ [Yoruban Religion in Cuba](#)

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## African Traditional Religion

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African traditional religion is a debatable subject among scholars of religions in Africa. The expression “African religion” is taken in some quarters to denote the multifaceted religions that now permeate the religious space in Africa. They argue that even though these religions may have been “imported” into Africa in the last two millennia, they have been “Africanized” to the extent that they are qualified to be described as African religion. But instead here we will discuss the archaic traditional religion of the African people.

African religion is like too many other things that emerge from Africa that have been labeled by early European writers (such as Emil Ludwig, A.B. Ellis, P.A. Talbot, Leo Frobenius) with degrading terminologies. Some of these terms that have now been jettisoned include primitive, native, tribe, savage, ancestor worship, and animism. These labels might have come out of their ignorance, due to the problems that have often retarded accurate study of African religion. These include African secrecy, demography, and lack of written scriptures. In spite of this, P. A. Talbot, Geoffrey Parrinder, A. B. Ellis, and Anthony Smith made notable

contributions. Now Africans such as Bolaji Idowu, John Mbiti, Asare Opoku, P. A. Dopamu, and J. Awolalu have set the accurate tone for African religion studies.

## The Anatomy of African Religion

There are basic characteristics of African religion that set it apart from other religions on the continent. African religion has no founder who originated its theology and philosophy. Traditional religion relies heavily on ancient oral accounts embedded in the memories of the people. The religion emerged perhaps out of fear, guilt, and hope for a better earthly existence. Oracular divinities are consulted to guide the people on their theology. African religion is also non-evangelical, since believers are born into their traditions and avoid proselytization.

## Belief System

Writing about African religion in Nigeria, P.A. Talbot says that “The religion of southern Nigeria would appear to be compounded of four main elements; *viz.* polytheism, anthropomorphism, animism and ancestor worship” (Idowu 1973, p. 110). Thus, it would be wrong to refer to it only as ancestor worship, since this only forms one of its major beliefs.

African religion has two sections: major and minor beliefs. The major beliefs are God, divinities, ancestors, spirits, magic, and medicine. The minor beliefs are derived from the major beliefs. These include belief in death, life after death, judgment day, morality, good works, social interactions, and respect for human life.

I agree with Paul Talbot: any religion must have God as the Supreme Being and focal point (Talbot 1926, p. 78). African religion is based on belief in a Supreme Being that controls the affairs of all creatures, having created them and every other thing. However, some western scholars are convinced that Africans have no concept of God. This is wrong. The worship of the high God was not imported but emerged directly in traditional

African religions from the people’s long-standing appreciation of nature and insecurity on earth.

A.B. Ellis wrongly claimed that Africans borrowed the concept of God from Christian and Muslim missionaries who visited the continent to propagate their own traditions (Ellis 1966, p. 231). Also, Emil Ludwig was reported to have said “How can untutored Africans conceive of God? How can this be? Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing” (Kayode 1984, p. 8). Ludwig’s conclusion reeks of bias. It erroneously suggests that God belongs to literate cultures only, and Africans who are illiterates cannot conceive of Him, due to their wickedness.

European writers were apparently misinformed mainly by differences such as the apparent fanatical devotion of Africans to the Minor divinities, the absence of obvious places of worship such as cathedrals and minarets, and lack of written revelations of God. However, Traditional Africans worship the Supreme Being through Minor divinities as a result of honor, fear, and respect. Further, the transcendental nature of God makes it impossible for Him to be confined to space since he is also omnipresent. Bolaji Idowu also argued that revelation of God to Africans cannot be denied since the numinous has the capacity to reveal Himself to man through dreams, visions, nature, and history (Idowu 1973). It is obvious that some of the degrading comments made about the African concepts of God are due mainly to the presumptuous notion of the early writers (armchair and traveler scholars) who are used to monotheistic religion like Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. To justify the existence and worship of God in African religion, there is need to engage in the study of oral traditions, such as names and attributes that Africans give to God. These will demonstrate African total allegiance to the supremacy and control of the Supreme Being, known with many names across the continent. These include Olodumare (Yoruba Nigeria), Mawu (Ewe, Togo and Benin Republic), Ngewo (Mende, Sierra Leone), and Onyame (Akans, Ghana). Underlying all these names is the fact that Africans conceive God as the creator and controller of all human affairs. As Aderibigbe observes,

“He is the Lord of the heaven and earth, the creator of the world and man and the giver of life, light and sufficiency. He is timeless, eternal and everywhere” (Aderibigbe 1997). To traditional believers, God is a reality that is invisible, but whose greatness is incomparable to any other being. He is God of love, compassion, and justice. In fact social justice flows from His essence. God is the transcendent creator and benevolent judge. The belief in God is the bedrock upon which African religion rests.

The traditional African conviction is that God created incorporeal Minor divinities to assist Him in the theocratic governance of the world. They are conceived as children, messengers, agents, and lieutenants of God. It should be noted that the belief in and names of these divinities, even with common features, varies from one society to another. The Yoruba of Nigeria refer to them as Orisa, while Akans of Ghana call them Abossom. Bolaji Idowu submits that: “It is not easy to discuss this element freely for the continent. We have variation from a crowded to a situation where they appear to be scarcely in existence” (Idowu 1973, p. 112). Africans use the Minor divinities as prominent media to reach God. The relations between the divinities and the Supreme Being are manifestations of African culture, where old age and authority are venerated. For example, for any petition of the subjects to reach the king, the chiefs, princes, and princesses act as intermediaries. In the same manner, Africans find it difficult, if not impossible, to approach God directly, so they go through intermediaries – Minor divinities, gods, and goddesses. There are three categories of such divinities: primordial or tutelary divinities, deified humans, and divinities of natural phenomena (such as rocks, lakes, trees, and mountains). These divinities can be ambivalent. The attitude of the divinities is determined by the reactions of their patrons to their demands and needs. When properly propitiated and worshipped with the right elements, the petitions of the worshippers are favored. There are priests and priestesses dedicated to the worship of these divinities who act as officials in their cults. Divinities vary in gender, according to the patriarchal or matriarchal nature of their society.

Female patrons are more prominent in the worship of fertility deities. The shrines and altars of the divinities are often located in a grove and such places are therefore considered to be sacred and are preserved.

The belief in the spirits of ancestors also forms an integral part of African religion, since the people believe that there is the possibility of life after death, which helps overcome grief’s sadness. Observing the cult of the ancestor, H.H. Farmer explains this spirit is one who “stands in peculiarly close relation to the tribe . . . from whom and because he is still in existence, by ties as well . . . by natural affection and biblical piety” (Farmer 1943, p. 129). Africans believe that their ancestors are still relevant to their well-being here on earth. Consequently, the general belief is that communion and communication are possible between the dead and the living and that the spirits have the power to influence or molest the latter. He/she can punish amoral persons and resolve disputes based on historical alliance with the ancestors. However, not all who die will become ancestors. For anyone to qualify for the honor, she or he must procreate, contribute to the growth and development of the society, and then die at good old age. They must also die peacefully and not due to the wrath of any divinity or antisocial activities. This has a psychological and moral influence on people’s behavior. The prominence given to ancestors has made scholars such as Talbot erroneously conclude that the religion could be called ancestral worship. They are spirits, not divinities.

The last of the major beliefs are spirits, magic, and medicine. Spirits are incorporeal beings conceived to have supernatural powers that can aid human aspirations and worries. The spirits live in natural abodes, such as hills, mountains, trees, rocks, or the ocean. The attempt to control nature to do what humans will may have motivated the African belief in magic. But medicine demonstrates nature’s ability to heal physical or spiritual ailments. Herbal formulae can be used to cure or prevent “physical” ailments. But metaphysical ailments need the interventions of spiritual agents such as diviners, divinities, and ancestors. Ancient herbal medicines, such as *Digitalis*,



taken from the plant foxglove and used to treat heart disease since 1785, have for years been taken from traditional peoples such as in Africa and converted to commercial pharmaceutical medications. Now African religious healers are negotiating this exchange more carefully (Goldthorp 2009).

Worship in African religion is rigid and highly ritualistic. It follows set patterns; consequently, the rituals at worship must be strictly followed to achieve the desired results. Africans engage in the worship of God through the divinities and other agents as a response to the intervention of God in their material existence. Worship is also to seek a good heaven after death. The general belief here is that God will judge our morality and value while on earth, and those that are morally upright shall go to “good heaven” and those adjudged to be amoral shall go to the bad heaven. Bolaji Idowu describes a typical worship of God (Olodumare) among the Yoruba of Nigeria as follows:

The ritualistic worship offered to Him takes place in the open. The worshippers make a circle of ashes or white chalk and the circle symbolizes eternity, libation of water is poured on the circle. At the centre of the Circle, Kolanut is placed on white cotton by a priest. He takes the kolanut and slits it, holding the halves firmly between the hollows of his palms; he stretches them up and prays to Olodumare offering the kolanut. The priest then casts the kolanut halves within the circle. Often a white fowl or pigeon is offered in the same way (Idowu 1996, p. 96).

The chief priest is in charge of this ritual that is performed every morning on behalf of Ooni of Ife and all Yoruba people. This process is however dying out, as the Yoruba societies are now becoming cosmopolitan and sophisticated. However, there is still private worship, communal worship, and group worship. The conditions of worship are clear to all adherents of the religion. Ceremonial cleanliness and purity of heart are very necessary psychological conditions. During worship, worshippers seek forgiveness of sin and protection from God and His agents. They also seek material and spiritual blessing. Thus, worship in African religion is to show devotion to God through adoration, admiration, and love for His role in their lives. The ego is to be oriented

toward serving the divine, not based on instincts. Common elements of worship are water, milk, honey, an animal victim (goat, cow, ox, dogs and pigs), maize, kola nut, bitter kola, local rum, among others. The process of worship involves invocation at the divinity’s altar, salutations, prayers for forgiveness of sins, and material and spiritual blessings.

### Transformations in African Religion

In the last four decades, there have been great transformations in the practice of African religion. This is perhaps due to various responses of the believers in African religion to the opinions in foreign scholarship that it is archaic, primitive, native, and savage in features and practices. In concrete terms, African religion has been transformed into a syncretic religion of modern times with the appropriation of all kinds of borrowed elements from modernity, globalization, cyberspace, and social networks. The religion is now popular beyond the continent, especially with Africans in Diaspora in various forms. This is the case with Candomblé (Brazil), Santeria (Florida, USA), and Egungun (Cuba). Although these new forms of African religions are now active in Europe and the Americas, they are not in the pristine forms, as practiced in the African continent.

The influences of Christianity, Islam, and other Asiatic religions have transformed African religion. For example, the Ijo Orunmila traditional religion in Lagos, Nigeria, has “modernized” its liturgy so much as to conform to Christian and Pentecostal trends. It has a choir, hymn book, catechisms, and ritual officials patterned after the Anglican Church liturgy. Godianism is also borne out of political realities during the struggle for independence in Nigeria, with one of the major political parties – NCNC – playing a major role in its formation. In Kenya, there are practitioners of African religion in African Independent Churches. This is also the case in South Africa (Anderson 1993). These new movements appropriate the media, such as radio, to advance the cause of African religion (Fig. 1).

**African Traditional Religion, Fig. 1** Nigerian women carrying offerings to the altar of the river Goddess Osun (Photo courtesy of the author)



In sum, we may say that African religion is a cultural religion that developed out of African culture but in time has been influenced by other religions now predominant on the continent. It may be difficult to point to its pristine origin, but African people are so convinced of its potency and currency that they now robe it with garbs of modernity.

### See Also

- ▶ [African American Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [African Diaspora Religions](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Anthropomorphism](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)
- ▶ [Spiritism](#)

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## Ahimsa

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*Ahimsa* is a Sanskrit term meaning nonharming. It is the supreme virtue in the three great religions of India – Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. It is the first Yama or discipline in Yoga, the first precept in Buddhism, and the first great vow in the Jain moral code. If this discipline or vow is kept than the others will automatically be attained. For example, the Buddhist precepts of truthfulness, non-stealing, control of sexual activity, and avoidance of intoxicating substances are forms of nonharm of both self and other. This nonharming ethic is said to benefit others not only through their ensured personal safety but also by the creation of a peaceful atmosphere wherein others are moved to give up their own hostility. Ashoka (268–233 BCE) was an Indian emperor that used rapacious violence to conquer and enforce his rule killing thousands. He converted to Buddhism and adopted the practice of Ahimsa. The peaceful change that followed forever linked his name with Ahimsa.

The fulfillment of ethical demands removes existing karmic impurities that create suffering and prevents the accumulation of new impurities. Just as nonharming is the root virtue leading to freedom from suffering, violence is the root cause of all suffering. Practitioners are expected to consciously minimize violence as much as is practicable so as to get rid of the violent attitudes of mind which are not suitable for meditation and will make bad karma.

While all three traditions focus on nonharming in daily life, the Jains go to relatively extreme

lengths to avoid harming any creature. Some sweep the ground as they walk so as to avoid stepping on any insects and/or wear facemasks to prevent small insects from injury while breathing. The widespread custom of vegetarianism in India is related to the practice of Ahimsa.

The Indian Mahatma Gandhi utilized Ahimsa as a political tool, through which the Indian Colony achieved freedom from Britain. Other freedom fighters such as Martin Luther King Jr. in the USA successfully applied these principles in the African American struggle for civil rights. While Gandhi was certainly a role model for MLK, there is a pacifist tradition within Christianity also. Christian peace churches such as the Religious Society of Friends or Quakers closely adhere to Jesus's teaching of nonviolence.

The animal rights and environmental movements are modern examples of a growing nonharming consciousness with a positive regard toward life including both individual life forms and the natural world as a whole.

## Ahimsa and Psychology

All three traditions teach that nonharming must be practiced in thought, word, and deed. Nonviolent communication involves speaking truthfully with regard for the other person and listening deeply with compassion.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Buddhist Master, teaches that psychological violence against the self occurs when feelings are held back and pain ignored. Nonviolence involves being present and recognizing one's own pain or despair; otherwise, pain builds and can push one to become caught in one's views or to lash out in anger.

Psychotherapy involves the examination and reduction of violent and other self-harming thoughts and deeds. It involves the generation of compassion toward others who suffer or who have harmed one through the realization that all harm comes from others' pain.

The conscious therapist is the embodiment of nonviolence by maintaining a position of



presence, listening and unconditional positive regard for the patient. It is this therapeutic stance that allows for healing to progress, eventually leading to a lessening of harming activities either internal or external in the patient's life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Akedah

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The Bible story called the “*Akedah*,” in Hebrew, tells of the ending of ritual child sacrifice. It is frequently translated as the “Sacrifice of Isaac,” but the correct translation is the “Binding of Isaac.” Although the word “*Akedah*,” in Hebrew, denotes the bound limbs of an animal prepared for ritual sacrifice, Isaac is not sacrificed.

The events of the *Akedah* are well known. God ordered Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Isaac and Abraham climbed Mount Moriah together and approached the killing place. Abraham carried the knife, really a cleaver used for butchering animals, and the sacrificial fire. Isaac carried the wood to be used later to burn his body in an offering to God. Although Isaac asked Abraham where the sacrificial animal was, he knew that he was doomed; he did not resist when his father bound his hands with ropes, placed him on the funeral pyre, and reached out to slit his throat. Isaac's feet were not bound – he could have run away.

Isaac submitted to his father's desire to kill him, but he was saved when an angel appeared and stopped Abraham's hand. The Lord blessed Abraham and promised to multiply his seed “as the stars in the heavens and as the sand on the shore of the sea” (Genesis, 22, pp. 17–18).

A traditional understanding of the *Akedah* is that God did not want Abraham to kill Isaac because murder is wrong even if God commands it, and God will never again ask for anyone to submit to such a test of faith.

An alternative understanding of the *Akedah* is that it expresses perfect love. Abraham showed God that he loved Him perfectly when he agreed to sacrifice Isaac, and Isaac loved Abraham perfectly when he agreed to allow himself to be sacrificed. The *Akedah* marks the time when literal child sacrifice was stopped; it reveals the beginnings of compassion while it exemplifies God's power and male hegemony.

Abraham thought of sacrificing Isaac, but he did not actually do so. The *Akedah* is an important story for theories of human psychology because it shows the growth of the human psyche as we begin to understand that words are not the same as deeds.

Often people act as though words and deeds are the same; their thoughts can be experienced as crimes, “thought crimes” deserving punishment, which can lead people to feel guilty, anxious, and depressed, even though they have not done anything wrong. One of the many goals of psychotherapy is to help people realize the

difference between thoughts and deeds so that their thoughts and feelings can be examined without blame.

Isaac did not attempt to run away; he acquiesced to his father's apparent desire to kill him. Did he believe he would be saved? Might there be other reasons? Did Isaac feel compelled to comply in order to win his father's love? Maybe he was too scared to run. We meet many fathers and sons in treatment who need to answer these questions for themselves.

### See Also

- ▶ [Abraham and Isaac](#)
- ▶ [Authoritarian Personality](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice of Isaac](#)

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## Alchemical Mercurius and Carl Gustav Jung

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### Alchemy and Mercurius

In alchemy the figure Mercurius has a close association to the substance quicksilver and to the planet Mercury and therefore also to the Greek Hermes. Indeed the term *Hermetic Art* associates directly to this figure.

As a substance, the element mercury exhibits remarkable properties. In Alexandrian alchemy it was used to affect a spectacle of transformation. Specifically, by crushing and heating a piece of cinnabar ore, a metallic vapor was released. This vapor could then be distilled to yield quicksilver. Reheating the quicksilver transformed it into a red-like crystal, reminiscent of the original cinnabar ore. In effect, it portrayed a transformation mystery whereby a piece of earthly matter could undergo a “tortuous ordeal of purification and renewal.” In the animistic worldview of archaic alchemy, it illustrated the idea of a spirit “captured in matter” that could be released and transformed through alchemical operations.

The alchemists also noted the highly reactive and transformative nature of quicksilver. It combined readily with substances such as sulfur, gold, silver, copper, and tin. In particular, it reacted powerfully with sulfur, to the extent that some of the Arabian alchemical systems were even referred to as the Mercury-Sulfur systems (not unlike the Chinese concept of Yin-Yang).

The concept of mercury, in alchemy, was also not restricted to the literal substance of quicksilver. For example, the alchemist Newton writes of any metal in its fluid form as being the “mercury of the metals.” In this view, the elements can be reduced through heating into a primal matter. Through appropriate operations, this primal

matter would then be reconstituted, in a quest to achieve a more “noble” state.

In the alchemical worldview, each metal also has a range of “magical associations.” In this schema, quicksilver associates to the fast-moving and erratic planet mercury. Not surprisingly, it has been associated preeminently to a trickster-like psychopomp as intermediary between the realms of day and night (symbolically, between consciousness and the unconscious).

### Jung and the Alchemical Mercurius

For Jung the chthonic spirit, referred to in medieval alchemy as Mercurius, was a central concern. This figure had a profound influence on his personal and intellectual life. For example, in his personal life while preparing lectures on this figure in 1942, he emotively writes of being “dissolved almost.”

During his presentation on this figure, he expressed exasperation in attempting an articulation. He dramatically complained that “the concept swells dangerously” and “the end is nowhere in sight.” In this lecture he also described Mercurius as “ambiguous, dark, paradoxical, and thoroughly pagan” and as a “symbol. . . compensatory to Christ.” Not surprisingly, he also associated the alchemical Mercurius to the figure of Merlin.

Jung also represented this figure in stone carvings at his Bollingen retreat. On one of the stone walls, he created a trickster face and accompanied this by the astrological glyph of the symbol for mercury. This particular image was done while he was working on the concept of synchronicity. This same glyph also appears centrally, carved in his enigmatic Bollingen stone.

### See Also

- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Synchronicity](#)

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### Allah, The Concept of

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The word *Allah* is simply the equivalent of the word *God* in the Arabic language. It is not an exclusively Islamic or Christian or Jewish term, but rather a Semitic name. Actually, the translation of the biblical scriptures into Arabic mainly uses the word *el-Rab* for the Lord and the word *Allah* for God. For example, the first sentence of the book of Genesis reads, *Feel Bad' ee Khalaka Allahu el-Samawatti wa el-Ard* – In the Beginning God Created the Heavens and the Earth (Genesis 1.1). The expression *Allahu Akbar* (God is greater) is a common phrase, frequently repeated by practicing Muslims in daily life and especially in the call to prayer, to emphasize the greatness and transcendence of God (referred to as *takbeer*). Similarly, the *Fatiha* is used as an opening invocation or citation in the Islamic tradition, *Bismil Laahi el-Rahmaan el-Raheem*, meaning “In the Name of God, the most



**Allah, The Concept of, Fig. 1** The name “Allah” in Arabic. Public domain (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Allah.svg>)

Gracious, the most Merciful.” Therefore, Allah in Arabic is the synonym of the official name of God in other languages. It is important to stress here, however, that the concept and the worship of God vary considerably among religious traditions, faiths, and practices (Fig. 1).

The Middle East region has given birth to three major religious thoughts and cultures: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In many ways, their language and worldview are closely related. Monotheism strongly believes that the creator of life, the organizing principle, and the ultimate reality in the whole existence is God. Traditional theism believes that God is the creator of heaven and earth and that all universes are under God’s divine providence, guidance, and sovereignty. All three prohibit anthropomorphic visual images of the divinity, seeing divinity as beyond human image making, although a few images persist in verbal tradition, such as masculine gender.

### Linguistic Roots

Formally pronounced “Allaahh,” the term is probably a derivative of Al-Ilaah, meaning the Lord or Supreme Divine. So it has roots in the Hebrew tradition where *Elohim* is the plural title for God. This was formed early in time after the transition from polytheistic cultures into monotheistic communities. It may also have roots in Aramaic as *Elaha* and in Syriac as *Alaha*.

Interestingly, *Allah* is never used in plural and has no parallel in the English language; therefore, many manuscripts retain its Arabic form in the translated sacred texts.

Allah is a *name* and a *label* at the same time. It is the act of calling God as the supernatural deity and of referring to God as the one only Lord, with faith and acknowledgment to his existence. With the increased exposure to the Middle East and Islamic worldview recently, many people in the West have been wondering whether *Allah* in Islam is the same as God in Christianity. The global answer is yes! All theistic faiths address God in different terms, labels, and connotations. Each religion has a rich vocabulary to describe the creator. For example, Muslims can address Allah in about 99 different names. Eventually, attributes and titles are plentiful yet the attempts to understand, serve, and relate to the Most High are basically the same.

How people conceptualize and worship God is quite different among and within various religious traditions. That depends on how God is described or revealed in these sacred texts. It also depends on how both lay believers and theology scholars interpret their scriptures, their historical backgrounds, their sociocultural conditions, and their psycho-emotional needs, alone as individuals or together as a community of faith.

### Internalizing the God Concept

The internalization of God-Allah is closely related to the concept of *Imago Dei*, which separates humans from other species and grants them a special privilege within the broader universe. Therefore, God becomes more than a static notion. God becomes an interactive presence, a supernatural agent, and a dynamic reality with intrinsic-extrinsic qualities and clear mental, emotional, and social implications.

Some people perceive God-Allah to be mainly accepting, merciful, compassionate, graceful, and forgiving. Others may perceive God-Allah to be lawful, truthful, judgmental, critical, and demanding. Those qualities and perceptions usually shape the individual’s or group’s

expectations and reflect on their behaviors, attitudes, relationships, and worldview in life. These functions and dynamics are normally amplified by the person's background experiences, mental reasoning, emotional stability, psychological needs, and sociocultural heritage. In a more specific way, it all depends on whether people are more linear or circular in their thinking, impulsive or even in their temperament, accommodating or aggressive in their relational approach, have had positive or negative parent/father figures, possess a black and white mentality, were raised in a moderate or indoctrinated environment, can tolerate grey areas and ambiguity, are able to resolve the developmental identity crises constructively, or is faith part of the problem or solution in their lives.

Some analysts differentiate between the *image* and the *concept* of God-Allah. They bind God image to object-relations theory and God concept to cognitive science and therapy. To our human mind and psyche, the entity of God is an ontological reality unto which we ascribe anthropomorphic characteristics. This is an attempt to comprehend the reality of God and to make the divine image similar to our selves. Some thinkers argue that God concepts must comprise both naturalistic and nonnaturalistic properties. Virtually, such processes tend to be regulated by a host of psycho-spiritual factors and sociocultural mediators.

Both Biblical and Quranic psychologies (*Ilm el Nephiss*) highlight the significance of the divine imprints and the image of God-Allah in all humans. Though they use different terminologies and explanations at times (soul, mind, spirit, psyche), the underlying principle is basically the same: human beings have the ability to act rationally and relationally, introspect and self-analyze, enjoy responsible free will, experience wide range of emotions, and think about thinking (metacognition).

Some non-Arabic-speaking Muslims learn to recite verses and say prayers in the original Arabic form. Some of them even learn to read the Quran in Arabic. However, all Muslims believe that the Quran was fully inspired and written in the highest forms of the Arabic

language, reflecting a spiritual dialect and a heavenly language as its source.

According to some experts in the cognitive science of religion, in order to internalize the God concept successfully, a number of features must be included, like intuition and counterintuition, global intentional agencies, operational knowledge and wisdom, powerful interventions in the physical world, and ability to inspire the mind and motivate the attitudes as well as the behaviors. Certainly, people's core beliefs about the reality of God-Allah and the nature of the Divine Agent have significant ramifications on their mental health and interpersonal relationships, not only during pleasant seasons but also especially in times of need, crisis, or uncertainty.

### Misreading and Misconception

Historically, there have been two areas of tension around the concept of God-Allah among the world's major religious ideologies. The first one is a religio-spiritual tension – Is the one Yahweh-Elohim in Judaism the same as the Triune Person of God of Christianity or the same Allah in Islam? How about the manifestations of the Divine in Hinduism and Buddhism? Actually, with the many branches of each religious thought and tradition, the contrast and distinction of God's nature and role become even sharper.

Several groups have frequently accused each other of being theologically inaccurate, mixing truth with error, and accommodating heresy. However, larger and moderate groups have constantly reached out to each other and established friendly encounters and interfaith dialogues. In fact, and through the ages, people of various religious backgrounds have lived and worked together, celebrated life, and created bonded communities. Only skewed and fundamental groups have caused damaging schisms.

The second area of tension is sociopolitical – How individuals or groups understand their ethno-political affiliation, articulate their mission and ideology, or fight for their causes and rights depend on their underlying structures, emotional

needs, and personality preferences. Often a doctrinal cover or a religious profile is used to justify a social action and movement. That will greatly appeal to the faithful masses of believers. Thus, theological themes can be used to conceal sociopolitical agendas and polished godly rhetoric can be used to justify doctrinal politics. However, the more serious scenario takes place when someone executes a mission involving destruction and harm because they believe that is their private mandate from God-Allah. That is the ultimate distortion, when aggression, hurt, trauma, and atrocity are committed in good conscience. Radical movements interpret the Divine Will in skewed ways so to give themselves permission to attack or even kill others, who belong to opposing camps – and, at times, they die in the process, gaining the privilege of martyrdom for the final cause. Thankfully, many moderate voices and scholars are raising awareness and calling for detection of early symptoms of rigidity, indoctrination, and fundamentalism. They are succeeding in defusing fanatic views and extreme hermeneutics of the Holy Scriptures. Eventually, they are projecting Good Will within and among major denominations and, therefore, help repair the damage and gradually prevent the abuse of religious themes, texts, and traditions.

### Everyday Use of Allah

In many warm cultures, the casual use of the term and name of Allah is very popular. It is frequently used as part of the interaction repertoire and communication skills, like in personal greetings and social exchanges. It also occurs in public speeches and political discourses, especially during any significant event or ceremony. The mention of Allah is associated with a wide range of expressions conveying safety, blessing, health, strength, comfort, protection, best wishes, and prosperity.

In public life, high-ranking officials freely mention God-Allah. It is not unusual to hear the title in business, politics, academia, and other circles. For example, in some society in the Middle East, the mention of God is actually

expected, both in formal and informal settings. The sharp division between what is secular (state/society) and what is sacred (religious tradition/spirituality) basically does not exist.

Some of the expressions commonly used in Arabic are *Allah Maak* (God be with you). It is a form of a salutation as well as a wishful prayer for divine company before taking off on a journey or simply when saying goodbye after visiting together. *Inshallah* (God willing or as God wills) is mentioned when people are planning, agreeing, or hoping for future events. *El-Hamdallah* (thanks be to God) is a common response for personal inquiries like “How are you?” “How is your family?” or “How was your trip?” *Masha Allah* (how wonderful) implies fascination with what God has created, done, brought about, or bestowed on others. These include a newborn baby, a new house, a grown young adult, or a major accomplishment. It is used to acknowledge a new establishment, as part of exclamation remarks and pleasant exchanges. In more Islamic societies, this longer greeting is often used: *Alsalaamu Aleykum wa Rahmatu Allah wa Barakatu* (Peace be upon you with God’s Mercy and Blessings).

In conclusion, the word *Allah* has both a theological connotation and an everyday application. It is rather unique in its roots and heritage yet it has many parallel terms and titles in several old or new languages. Though it refers to the same divine reality and supernatural being, as a creator and sustainer of life, its concept, interpretation, expectation, and implication for areas related to worship, service, doctrine, and practice vary considerably among the communities of faith.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anthropomorphism](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Intuition](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Personal God](#)



- ▶ Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism
- ▶ Sufi Psychology
- ▶ Worldview
- ▶ Yahweh

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## Allport, Gordon

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Gordon Allport (1897–1967) was widely recognized as a major contributor to the emerging discipline of psychology in the United States during many of its formative years, in which the scientific status of psychology was widely debated and challenged. Our focus in this brief biographical study will be to employ Allport’s own reflections of himself as a “maverick” (Allport 1967a, p. 9) both in his view of the

proper object of study for psychology and of appropriate methods of investigation. His contrarian nature is evident in his refusal to adopt a psychology congruent with the more narrowly defined experimental interests of what was emerging as mainstream American psychology conceived as a natural science.

## Life and Career

Gordon Allport was one of four sons born to a country doctor, John Edwards, and to a pious Free Methodist mother, Niettle Wise. He was born in Montezuma, Indiana, but the Allport family soon moved to Glennville, a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio. While Gordon was the youngest of four boys, he was most heavily influenced by the second eldest son, Floyd, 7 years his senior, whose career in psychology mirrored Gordon's, only insofar as Gordon would rebel from the experimentally based positivism championed by Floyd and mainstream American psychology.

Allport's biography is inexorably linked to Harvard University's effort to define psychology in positivist terms. Entering Harvard in 1915, Gordon studied social ethics and psychology. Gordon took Hugo Münsterberg for experimental psychology while his brother, Floyd, was a doctoral student of Münsterberg's and an instructor in the course. The influence of Münsterberg and his brother was to raise serious doubts in Allport's mind as to the methodological propriety of an exclusive focus upon experimental methods in approaching psychology as a scientific discipline. Sixty years later, obviously unpersuaded by the experimental psychology taught him as undergraduate at Harvard, Gordon noted that elevating the laboratory-based experiment to the gold standard in psychology had obvious limitations.

Even if the experiment is successfully repeated there is no proof that the discovery has wider validity. It is for this reason that some current investigations seem to end up in elegantly polished triviality – snippets of empiricism, but nothing more (Allport 1985, p. 68).

In 1919 Gordon graduated from Harvard, the same year his brother obtained his doctorate.

He accepted a 3-year appointment in Constantinople, Turkey, at a Christian school, Robert College, where with the primary responsibility for teaching English, although he taught sociology as well. At his brother's urging, Gordon applied for and received a fellowship for graduate psychology at Harvard. He petitioned but was denied the right to delay acceptance of the fellowship. He thus decided to leave Robert College, fulfilling only one year of the 3-year contract. These circumstances led to a confrontation with Freud widely commented upon by both Allport himself (Allport 1967a, p. 8) and his major biographer (Nicholson 2003, pp. 68–70).

Gordon's youngest brother, Fayette, was serving on the US Trade Commission in Vienna. Gordon decided to visit him before his return to Harvard. Knowing that Sigmund Freud also resided in Vienna, Gordon requested a meeting with him and received a positive response in writing. Upon meeting with him Allport was shown Freud's office and then the meeting slid into an awkward silence as the two sat facing each other. Attempting to initiate a conversation, Gordon told of his experience with a small boy on the train who apparently exhibited a strong dirt phobia. Instead of entering into a conversation based upon this incident, Gordon was taken aback by Freud's response: "And was that little boy you?" (Allport 1967a, p. 8).

This experience, like that of Münsterberg's efforts to persuade Gordon of the merits of experimental methods, solidified another of Gordon's contrary views. Freud's comment persuaded Gordon that psychologists would do well to explore and give full recognition to manifest motives before probing unconscious ones – setting him in a lifelong opposition to the other major trend in American psychology, psychoanalysis (Allport 1967a, p. 8).

Arriving at Harvard's graduate program in psychology, Gordon was already convinced of the limitations both of the experimental method and of psychoanalysis. Influenced by his parents and Middle America's focus upon character, Gordon was delighted to learn that his mentor, Herbert S. Langfield, was open to alternative methodologies. Gordon's doctoral dissertation



was on character scientifically approached or, in what was to become Allport's lasting contribution to psychology, the study of personality. Indeed, the major biography of Gordon Allport to date is titled appropriately, *Inventing Personality* (Nicholson 2003).

Upon obtaining his doctorate, Allport applied for and received a Sheldon Traveling Scholarship when he spent one year studying in Germany and one year studying in the United Kingdom at Cambridge University. Each of these years solidified Allport's contrarian ways in that he became convinced that psychological study of persons was both important and could not be adequately approached by the theories and methods that characterized mainstream psychology. He became committed to the individual person as ontologically fundamental for psychology. He returned to Harvard in 1924, having accepted a lectureship in social ethics. He taught what many consider the first course in personality at any American university. He was also laying the foundation for what was to become the first textbook in personality, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (Allport 1937) which was thoroughly updated as *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (Allport 1967b), published in the year of his death.

Allport's contrarian views led him to sense he had no future in the Harvard psychology department, dominated by positivism and experimentalism. He thus accepted an appointment at Dartmouth College in 1926 where he taught introductory, social, and personality psychology. However, as his reputation in the newly established field of personality grew, Harvard enticed him back. In 1930 he left Dartmouth for Harvard, where he completed his career.

Gordon Allport's return to Harvard exposed the success of his contrarian views. Harvard psychology, dominated by the positivist experimental psychology of Münsterberg, was followed by William McDougall's instinctive psychology. Nationally psychology at Harvard was diminishing in reputation in the face of the acceptance of more personality-oriented interests championed by Gordon Allport. Deciding to seek an American psychologist, to give students exposure to the emerging field of personality,

Harvard made an offer to Gordon Allport for a tenure track position. Gordon was as an admittedly compromise choice after Harvard decided, in the words of E.G. Boring who chaired the search committee, "to give up trying for the great" (quoted in Nicholson 2003, p. 167). Allport returned to Harvard with assurances that his contrarian views would be respected. In what is perhaps an ironic Oedipal twist, Gordon Allport triumphed over the psychologies of both Freud and Münsterberg. He went on to chair the department from 1936 to 1946. In 1946 he cofounded the Department of Social Relations at Harvard, a triumph for his contrarian views. This newly formed department was committed to an eclectic, contrarian view that the scientific study of persons could be achieved by anyone trained in "sociology, anthropology, statistics, or some other discipline" (Allport 1967a, p. 19). The department eventually was disbanded in 1972, due in Allport's view to the inability to develop a common basic language for the department's interests (Allport 1967a, p. 19). Perhaps this can be cited as Gordon Allport's major failure to establish his contrarian views. However, his successes overshadowed this one failure. He was President of the American Psychological Association (1939) and of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (1944), a group which anticipated and continues interest similar to the Harvard's Department of Social Relations. Likely the most prestigious award Gordon Allport received was the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award of the American Psychological Association just three years before his death.

### **Allport's Lasting Contrarian Contributions**

If Harvard settled for hiring Gordon Allport after a concession to abandon the search for the great as noted above, Allport's reputation, while high, perhaps can also be seen as not great. Among personality psychologists he is overshadowed by Freud and even among those who hold the organism as ontologically fundamental, he is

overshadowed by behaviorists such as B.F. Skinner and J. B. Watson. Still, Allport's reputation is strong but it is less strong than it might otherwise be simply because so many of his contrarian views have become normative in American psychology whose fragmentation is great enough to disallow any one framing of psychology to have total dominance. Here, we will cite five of Allport's lasting contrarian views, each successfully entrenched in one fragment in the mosaic that is contemporary American psychology.

First, personality psychology is firmly established as an area of specialization that, despite its methodological, statistical, and psychodynamic varieties, cannot be reduced to any one of these. Indeed, Allport can be seen as both the father and critic of modern trait theories such as the five factor model (John and Robins 1993). He is father of accepting the identification of basic traits as essential to the study of personality, but he is critic in being suspicious of the sophisticated statistical treatment of data in what can be seen as a pseudo-objectification in an effort to minimize intuition in the study of persons.

Second, Allport's insistence that motives can be assessed in the terms of their contemporaneous functioning, irrespective of their historical origin, has largely counted for the demise of the dominance of excessively psychodynamic views of unconscious motivation. The exploration of manifest motives (Allport's response to Freud) and the exploration of personality traits outside of the laboratory context (Allport's response to Münsterberg) are well established. Allport's insistence that motives can become functionally autonomous (Allport 1966) is a lasting contribution to the dynamic nature of personality that unlike psychoanalysis emphasizes conscious strivings and intentional motivations.

Third, Allport's endorsement of alternative methodologies is nowhere better expressed than his insistence of the study of single cases. Opposing nomothetic data (based upon group average) to idiothetic (ideographic) data (based upon a single person) contrasts positivistic scientific methods that focus upon statistical evaluation of experimental data with humanist methods that seek to understand persons in terms of the

meaningfulness of their lives, assuring that psychology as home in the humanities as in the sciences (see Hood et al. 2009, pp. 483–484). Late in his life, Allport published *Letters from Jenny* (Allport 1965) an extensive analysis of a series of letter from a single person, long used by Gordon as a basis for course lectures.

Fourth, Allport produced classic texts focused upon a single issue illuminated from a variety of perspectives. Perhaps no text illustrates Allport's contrarian views better than *The Nature of Prejudice* (Allport 1954). It is hard to classify this book as merely psychology, sociology, anthropology, clinical psychology, or any other singular discipline. It brings to bear all that the social sciences can muster to explore a phenomenon of central importance to society in the terms of the contrarian goals both of the department of Social Relations and of the Society for the Study of Social issues (both chaired by Allport).

Finally, a major contribution totally ignored by some of Allport's biographers (e.g., Nicholson 2003) is Allport's concern with religion. *The Individual and His Religion* (Allport 1950) is arguably next to William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902–1985) the most influential text in the resurgence of the American Psychology of religion that began in the 1960s. Ironically, like his trait theory, his distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for religious activities led to over decades of exclusively measurement-based studies that Allport would only reluctantly applaud (Hood 1998).

A massive empirical literature emerged based upon Allport's distinction between motivations for being religious. Allport famously distinguished differences between extrinsic motivation (in which an individual *uses* his or her religion) and intrinsic motivation (in which an individual *lives* his or her religion). The distinction between different motives for being religious highlighted for Allport both the negative qualities of religion, largely associated with extrinsic motivation, and the positive qualities of religion, largely associated with intrinsic motivation. Linking his study of religion to his study of prejudice allowed Allport to explore how religion both produces prejudice when extrinsically motivated and

reduces prejudice when intrinsically motivated (Hood et al. 2009, pp. 404–426).

That psychology should study intrinsically motivated religion as one value in which mature personalities can achieve a meaningful integration is something that Allport would more than simply approve. It is associated with some of his earliest publications in psychology (Allport and Vernon 1933). While religion is but one unifying philosophy of life, Allport believed intrinsically motivated religion was a major exemplar of the way in which a mature personality could be fully realized. Religion also affirmed Allport's nonreductive approach to the person as ontologically fundamental. This is perhaps his most strongly held contrarian view and is what led him justify his concern with his lifelong study of personality at Harvard with the simple phrase, "I am the departmental mystic" (Nicholson 2003, p. 183).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ James, William
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Altered States of Consciousness

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Altered states of consciousness (ASC) can be very profound and life-changing experiences to the religious believer. For example, conversion, testimony, and revelation can all be seen within the context of ASC. An altered state is a subjective reality in most religious experiences and can be identified across all religions and cultures (Bowen 1998). However, the psychological study of these seemingly important human experiences can be difficult. Even finding an agreed upon definition of ASC is challenging. Despite this challenge, in the scientific study of religion, ASC can be defined as experiences interpreted by the experiencer as an encounter with a reality that is other than ordinary (Geels 2003). Using this definition, mystical experiences may be considered a type of ASC. For a religious believer, having an ASC or mystical experiences may be the defining moment for their understanding of and motivation toward life. Many of the world's religions are sustained by and even created through reported instances of ASC. As a consequence of the centrality of ASC to a religious believer, understanding the

circumstances in which these states arise is important for articulating the psychological influence of religion on a believer's perceived reality and behavior (see Randolph-Seng and Nielsen 2009).

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Conversion](#)
- ▶ [Revelation](#)

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## American Buddhism

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## Current Popularity of Buddhism in the United States

Contemporary Buddhism is one of the strongest and perhaps subtlest catalysts for change in United States history, soon to equal, if not surpass, the role of both Christianity and Judaism in the shaping of American religion, philosophy, values, culture, and identity – even, perhaps, American politics and economics. It is a new *basso continuo* of change in America, finding expression not only in direct religious practices but interpenetrating both intellectual and popular culture.

Like one of its central metaphors, the diamond net of Indra, which consists of a necklace of diamonds, each of which is connected with every other diamond, is separate and yet within each diamond is every other diamond; American Buddhism consists of many highly varied *sanghas* (local groups) whose common root is in the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha of third-century BCE India and has now interpenetrated every aspect of American culture. It is found in common images in marketing (the Dalai Lama on Apple computer); in music (e.g., Philip Glass, Buddha Bar); in movies such as *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997, Director Jean-Jacques Annaud. The movie was based on the true story of Heinrich Harrer with the Dalai Lama from 1944 through the invasion of Tibet by China in 1951), *Kundun* (1997, Director Martin Scorsese. Based on the Dalai Lama's life from childhood to adulthood), or *Matrix* (1999, Directors Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski), Richard Gere; in psychology (the plethora of books on Buddhism and psychotherapy); philosophy (*The Monk and the Philosopher: a Father and Son Discuss the Meaning of Life*, 2000 by Jean-Francois Revel, Matthieu Ricard with John Canti, translator. New York: Random House); science ([www.neiltheise.com](http://www.neiltheise.com), accessed 6/19/09, the Dalai Lama's *The Universe in a Single Atom*, 2006); education (Naropa Institute, the rise of departments on Buddhism in universities and seminaries); restaurants (Zen Palate); bars (Zen, West Hempstead, NY); and politics (former governor of California, Jerry Brown). Buddhist thought may be found indirectly in some of the most popular movies such as *Star Wars* (1977, a movie, Director George Lucas), *The Matrix* (1999, above), *The Lion King* (1994, a movie, Directors Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff), and *Pocahontas* (1995, a movie, Directors Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg).

After a growth of 170 % between 1990 and 2001, according to the American Identity Survey, Buddhism has become the fourth largest religion in America with at least 1.5 million members (after Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), approximately 7 % of the population.

Its beginnings, however, were subtle and small.

## Early History of Buddhism in the United States

Buddhism first came to America, as many religions move, through commerce and trade. The first American merchant ship, the *Empress of China*, which reached Canton in 1784, was the first of many American merchant ships, often members of the East India Marine Society, which brought Buddhist statues and artifacts along with silk, lacquer ware, furniture, and porcelains back to America.

In literary and intellectual circles, Asian religion appeared in Benjamin Franklin's *Oriental Tale* (originally titled "A Letter From China"; Franklin 1905–1907, pp. 200, 204, 205, 207–209), in the writings of Joseph Priestley, the letters of John Adams to Thomas Jefferson, and most notably in Hannah Adams' *Dictionary of All Religions* (1817/1992). Dissatisfied with the Christian bias in all the existing reports of other religions, Ms. Adams sets about to present other religions in the world in a more objective light. Using a Romanization of the sound of the Chinese character for Buddha, Ms. Adams wrote, "The most predominant sect is that of *Foe*..." (Tweed and Prothero 1999, p. 55).

The direct contact with actual Buddhists on American shores came with Chinese immigrants who began to arrive around 1820. Their number increased considerably beginning with the California Gold Rush of 1849, such that, by 1852, there were some 20,000 Chinese in California. Within a decade, nearly one tenth of the California population was Chinese. The first Buddhist temple in the USA was built in 1853 in San Francisco. By 1875, there were eight such temples. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which forbade the importation of any more Chinese laborers, stalled further immigration from China. Chinese Buddhism remained primarily a practice among the Chinese until the second half of the twentieth century.

Chinese Buddhism has grown enormously in the USA in the past 50 years. Largely a monastic group, the "City of Ten Thousand Buddhas" was established by Hsuan-Hua in Talmadge, California, in 1959. It continues as the headquarters of

the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. In 1978, the Hsi Lai Temple was established outside Los Angeles. Today there are over 125 Chinese Buddhist organizations in the USA, and they comprise an eclectic combination of different Buddhist schools, including Ch'an, Vinaya, T'ien-t'ai, Tantra, and Pure Land traditions. This eclectic approach may be found also in the Vietnamese Buddhism that came with the many immigrants from the war in Vietnam and the Korean Buddhists who came in the last 50 years.

It was Japanese Buddhism that, from its first appearance, sought to engage non-Asian Americans. Its arrival may be dated from the *World Parliament of Religions*, which was held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Among the participants was Shaku Soen, a Roshi who would return to America 10 years later to promote Rinzai Zen Buddhism.

The Pure Land School of Japanese Buddhism sent missionaries, Shuye Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishijima, to San Francisco in 1898, to establish the Buddhist Mission of North America. In spite of the Japanese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1924, by 1931, they had established 33 temples.

With the United States' occupation of Japan after World War II, however, a qualitative leap was made by two gifted American soldiers who subsequently devoted their lives to the study and practice of Japanese culture and religion: Philip Kapleau, an American who learned about Zen as a court reporter for the War Crimes Trials, returned to the USA to found a Rinzai Zen training center in Rochester, New York, and Donald Keene who established a department of Japanese Studies at Columbia University.

These efforts by Americans coming back to bring Zen to other Americans were matched by the advent of three Japanese Zen masters: Taizan Maezumi Roshi, who established the Zen Center of Los Angeles in 1967; Shunryu Suzuki who founded the San Francisco Zen Center; and Soyu Matsuoka Roshi who established the Chicago Buddhist Temple in the Soto Zen tradition. At about the same time, though not an official Zen master, Daisetzu Teitaro Suzuki, through his prolific writings and teaching at



Columbia University, made Zen Buddhism well known throughout America, especially in academic circles. Suzuki's work achieved its greatest recognition in his last years in America, 1950–1958. Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, who first came in 1962, brought an integrated approach of both the Soto and Rinzai Zen traditions, as had Taizan Maezumi Roshi.

With the efforts of these teachers, Zen Buddhism sprouted exponentially during the 1960s, as American counterculture went through a revolution that, through a combination of dissent against the growing war in Vietnam, rebellion against entrenched authorities in both politics and education, the death of God movement, the hippie movement, and the experience for many of hallucinogenic drugs with its mind-expanding (and sometimes destructive) effects, opened a path for nontraditional, non-Western religion.

The most recent entry of Buddhism into the United States is the Tibetan. Although there had been Tibetan Buddhists in the USA before, the great influx of Tibetans was prompted by the Tibetan holocaust in which Chinese Communists invaded Tibet and tried to extinguish its religion. Many people, including the Dalai Lama, went into exile at that point, to India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sikkim, and America.

The other Buddhist tradition that has grown considerably in recent years, due to the instability of Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma (Myanmar), is the Theravadan tradition. Because of the influx of immigrants from those countries, many temples have sprung up in major American cities. Like their predecessors from China and Japan in the earliest days, they tend to settle into their respective ethnic communities and focus on the needs of the newly migrated.

### **Ongoing Interactive Impact Between Buddhism and American Culture**

Although one may easily discern clear differences in the history and development of the Buddhism that came with immigrants from Asian countries, both recent and distant past, and the

history and development of the Buddhism that grew with primarily Euro-American converts, there are several other developments that resist such a dichotomizing perspective.

While the references to Buddhism's presence in American pop culture above may be superficial (a designation which postmodernism would not deem negative), there are other developments that suggest Buddhism's influence is a major factor in American cultural change:

1. One of the main conditions that prepared American soil to be receptive to Buddhism was the flourishing of psychology and psychotherapy in the culture at large. Although the number of people who themselves entered into personal psychotherapy might be relatively small, from the 1960s on, the idea that the human mind was largely responsible for how people behave, that that mind was itself highly conditioned (from both depth psychological and behaviorist perspectives) and a source of unknown powers for creation and destruction (the unconscious), and that attention to the mind's assumptions and conditioning could bring healing and transformation made Buddhism a natural fit, because of the central role of mind in every aspect of the Buddhist quest for alleviating suffering. Buddhism, with its central admonition to look within for the source not only of one's problems and existential questions but for their resolution, entered American culture like a fish takes to water.

Psychology and Buddhism became twin partners engaged in the process of transformation. The number of books and conferences dealing with them as mutually enhancing as well as significantly different practices is incalculable. It set the stage for a global, not just American, evaluation of the relation between psyche and spirit. Prompted, to take just one example, by American, Japanese, and British psychologists, there have now been two International Conferences on Buddhism and Psychotherapy in Kyoto. There are now entire training programs in psychology at Buddhist institutes and universities, and Buddhism has come to be recognized as offering a model of mind that deserves to be

included in the curricula of training programs for psychotherapy and chaplaincy:

2. Although Jesuits had been deeply engaged in the study and practice of Buddhism in Japan for hundreds of years, and a Jesuit wrote one of the most comprehensive histories of Buddhism in English (Dumoulin), it is reasonable to say that the birth of Buddhist/Christian dialog as a mutual exchange between equals, rather than an exercise in polemic or condescension, was prepared in both a broader (larger audience) and deeper (as a dialog between Buddhist and Christian monks) way by the Cistercian monk, Thomas Merton. Moments before he died in Bangkok, Thailand, ending his only trip to Asia with his talk on "Marxism and Monastic Perspective," Merton urged that the dialog between Buddhism and Christianity be continued across national, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. It has been continued since his death through a variety of forms and forums, including at least two events at Merton's own monastery, the Abbey of Gethsemani in Bardstown, Kentucky. The dialog was broadened to include other Christians and Buddhist groups and lay people as well as monastics through the Society for Buddhist/Christian Services, which holds biannual conferences ever since. The impact of these dialogs continues to shape not only emerging consciousness among Buddhists and Christians but has created a much more comprehensive attention to all religions, leading many to prefer to speak of spiritualities rather than religions. Buddhist is thus a catalyst not only for Buddhist/Christian dialog but also for religious/spiritual consciousness in Americans generally.
3. It is perhaps not possible to tell the story of Buddhism's explosive growth among converted Buddhists without a reference to the war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s. Although America was deeply divided by the war and torn apart within over its worth, it unquestionably served to alienate many Americans from everything that was considered to be its cause – the establishment in

political, economic, educational, and religious leadership. Among that alienated group, many found common cause and common mind with Buddhists in opposing the war, working for immigration and resettlement of displaced Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians and conducting campaigns for peace. Led preeminently by a Zen Buddhist priest, Thích Nhất Hạnh, Engaged Buddhism emerged not only in America but also around the world as an effort to raise consciousness and create change. It is distinctive within Buddhism in its emphasis on taking the personal transformation of consciousness that comes from meditation and reflection and shifting it to social consciousness and action for social change. It continues today as a powerful movement advocating for ecology, education, and political and economic reform, as well as opposing war. It is significant within America especially in offering a uniquely Buddhist approach to consciousness raising and public confrontation and finds expression through the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Berkeley, California, and its journal, *Turning Wheel*.

4. The surge in Buddhism since the 1960s happened at the same time as the rise in women's consciousness, the concern for women's rights, and the political, literary, and economic critique of patriarchy. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Buddhism has become not only a catalyst for American change but has itself been changed by the feminist movement, challenged to look at and change its own long-entrenched patriarchy within Buddhist texts and hierarchies. Among others, Rita Gross and Stephanie Kaza have been on the forefront of integrating a feminist perspective into Buddhist thought and practice from the academic side. Enkyo O'Hara, Joan Halifax, Eve Marko, and Myotai Treace, among others, have themselves not only been ordained but received full transmission and authorization to teach and have developed their own sanghas.

With a critical analysis of patriarchy now clearly on the table of American Buddhism, the questioning of other aspects of patriarchal assumptions continues apace, with respect to

understandings of gender identity and sexual orientation. Buddhism shares with Christianity, Judaism, and Islam a checkered history of views on homosexuality and transgender issues. As the gay and lesbian (and later, bisexual and transgender) liberation movement followed the civil rights movement for African Americans and the women's rights movement, so Buddhism in America finds itself changing its traditional assumptions about sexual differences (cf. work of Roger Corliss).

These four developments within American Buddhism are not experienced or shared with all Buddhists in America. Some immigrant Buddhists coalesce into islands of self-protected and self-sustaining communities, focused on the preservation of forms of language, culture, and religious practice, as they knew it on their native soil. Their children and grandchildren deal constantly with the often excruciatingly complex issues of assimilation and acculturation within America, often setting generations in conflict with severe fragmentation over authority and the challenges of a pluralistic America. We have grown, however, beyond the simple dichotomy of immigrant versus converted Buddhists into much greater complexity.

There are two small examples of what may open in the future: the first is the small book written by Eric Liu, former Clinton speech writer, *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker*. Liu traces in great depth his own struggle as a second-generation Chinese to come to terms with his father and the culture his father left behind, forcing the son to forge a new identity and bring his learning into the emerging American culture. This kind of personal reflection is a heart-warming and thought-provoking model of how one might struggle with all the issues of how to reclaim pieces of tradition and bring what remains valuable into the future. The second example is in a course taught by Dr. Paul Knitter, Paul Tillich Distinguished Professor of Systematic Theology and World Religions at Union Theological Seminary in New York, called "Double Belonging." Knitter makes the case for people who practice in two traditions and maintain them simultaneously without

reducing one to the other nor rejecting one in favor of the other. This is one model for how to live between now and some as-yet-undetermined future form.

Although it is not possible to predict how these many movements within and outside Buddhism will affect its future in America, one may safely say that, consonant with the pluralism that pervades every dimension of American life, it may be more appropriate to look for the continuing varieties of Buddhism than to assume any reduction in its complexity. If it so emerges, American Buddhism will thereby be both profoundly Buddhist and profoundly American.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Amita Buddha

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The name “Amita” comes from the Sanskrit Amitabha and *Amitayus*, translated “Boundless, or Infinite Light and Life.” The Chinese is (阿弥陀佛) *A Mi Tuo Fo*, the Tibetan is *O-pa-me*, the Korean is *Amit'a Bui*, the Vietnamese is *A-di-da Phat*, and the Japanese is *Amida Butso*. He became in China and Japan especially, the supreme personification of the *Dharmakaya*, the highest enlightenment and the supreme beauty of infinite love, not one of many Buddhas but of Buddhahood itself (Malalasekera et al. 1961, p. 434). He was not conceived of as a god. He was a man who became an awakened Buddha in the traditional manner (Malalasekera et al. 1961, p. 438). Mahayana Buddhism believes that many awakened Buddhas can exist simultaneously, not just in past and future.

## Pure Land

Amita is the leading Buddha of Pure Land (or Ultimate Bliss) Buddhism, practiced primarily in China and East Asia, and is spreading worldwide. The Pure Land is a marvelous transcendental western paradise of gold, gems, flowers, perfume, music, and numerous Buddhas. It is the goal of devotees of Amita to develop a Pure Land consciousness, to improve this life and prepare to go to the Pure Land at death. This can be achieved in various ways, by repeating a mantra of the Amita with faith many times, thereby strengthening one's character and the tendency to do good deeds, and by meditating.

## History

Historically, the earliest surviving evidence of Amitabha comes from the stone pedestal of an Amitabha statue discovered near Mathura, near Delhi (which was a major source of Buddhist sculpture) dated 104 CE, making it the oldest document of Mahayana Buddhism (Pure Land). Commentaries on Amita were written by masters of most every school of Chinese Buddhism. The earliest known sutra mentioning Amitabha, which is said to have begun the practice of Pure Land Buddhism in China, is the translation into Chinese of the *Pratyutpanna-samahi Sutra*, by the monk Lokaksema during the later Han dynasty (Lokaksema). A major shrine is on Lu Shan [Mt. Lu]. This was begun by Hui-yuan (334–416 CE), who founded an Amita Buddha group there in 402 CE, called Bai-lian-she. They practiced meditation based on the *Pratyutpanna Sutra*. It was on Lu Shan that the post-Liberation revival of Buddhism began in 1923 (Welch 1968, p. 55) (Fig. 1).

Amita temples are commonly built in conjunction with the goddess Guanyin, who is closely associated with Amita Buddha (Chen 1964, pp. 341–342). But in ancient Amitabha tradition, no women were allowed in his realm unless they were reborn as men (Malalasekera 1961, p. 435). In Chinese Daoism, Amita-fo is also considered by some to be the incarnation of *Laotzi* (老子). Some see early versions of Amita-fo imported



**Amita Buddha, Fig. 1** A MI TUO FO (Amita Buddha) (Courtesy of Wan Fo Chan Si, in Liaoning Province, at <http://www.wanfochansi.com/>)

from lands far to the West, others argue that it was brought from India, and others say that the concept of the Pure Land has been embedded in Chinese consciousness for thousands of years (Hsien 2000). After centuries of development in China, Amita Buddhism spread to East Asia, notably in Japan in the eighth century, when many temples were built in Kyoto.

## Art

In paintings, mandalas, and statues, the bodhisattvas *Guanyin* (or *Avalokitesvara*) and *Da Shi Zhi* (大勢至) “Great Power Comes” are Amida’s two important assistants. The three together are called “the three saints in the Western Paradise.” Mandalas such as the eighteenth-century “Larger Sutra Mandala” portray Amita in the center in his characteristic seated

meditative position, with the various elements of the Pure Land Western Paradise surrounding him. Large temples commonly housed numerous impressive statues (Taira 1961). In some images of Amita, he is standing on a lotus, with a halo around his head, holding a lotus or jar of royal unction, with a small swastika on his chest. This image, reversed, was taken by some warlike twentieth-century Europeans who horribly distorted its original compassionate meaning. Amita art expanded to include images of the terrible punishments of Hell, as well as the blissful wonders of the Pure Land paradise. A colossal bronze outdoor statue of the meditating Amita, 50 ft high, was cast in 1252 in Kamakura, Japan, and called the Daibutsu or “Great Buddha” (LaFarge 1887).

## Texts

A primary text in Sanskrit is *The Larger Sutra on Amitayus*, or *The Infinite Life Sutra*, in one of the Buddha’s past lives, when he was called the Buddha Lokeshvararaja. During the time named “The King of Freedom of the World” (世自在王), a king heard the Buddha’s teaching and then became a monk named Dharmakara, or in Chinese, *Fa Zang* () “The Container of Dharma.” The Buddha told him to create a realm, by his own efforts, where sentient beings could find utmost happiness. He took 48 vows, among which the eighteenth is the crucial one:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters who sincerely and joyfully entrust themselves to me, desire to be born in my land, and call my Name, even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment. Excluded, however, are those who commit the five gravest offences and abuse the right Dharma (*Larger Sutra*, Part 1, 268, 48 Vows, 18).

and he also swore:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, sentient beings in the lands of the ten quarters, who awaken aspiration for Enlightenment, do various meritorious deeds and sincerely desire to be born in my land, should not, at their death, see me appear before them surrounded by a multitude of sages, may I not attain perfect Enlightenment (*Larger Sutra*, Part 1, 268, 48 Vows, 19).

This scene has been recorded by many Buddhists in different times and places. This monk Dharmakara/*Fa Zang* became the major Buddha named Amita Buddha. Since then whoever wants to become a Buddha can get his help.

The *Amitabha Sutra* or *The Smaller Pure Land Sutra* is another primary text in Sanskrit. It is a description of the Buddha speaking to a huge crowd of distinguished Gods and spiritual leaders. He described in detail a Buddha realm of Ultimate Bliss, or Pure Land to the West, which in China is the direction of spiritual wonders, where resides the Amitabha Buddha, who teaches the Dharma with excellent blessings. He says that there are Buddhas as numberless as the Ganges sands, such as the “Measureless Life Buddha” and the “Pure Sound Buddha” (*The [Smaller] Amitabha Sutra*).

In the third primary sutra, *the Amitayurdhyana Sutra*, Amita prescribes a threefold goodness: (1) support your parents, serve and respect teachers and elders, be compassionate, and abstain from injury; (2) take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, fulfill all the moral precepts, do not lower your dignity, and do not neglect the ceremonies; and (3) give your whole mind to enlightenment, deeply believe the karmic law of cause and effect, study Mahayana doctrines, and encourage others to do the same (Malalasekera et al. 1961, p. 436).

## Practices

Reciting the name of Amita with a sincere heart is the primary practice, but doing it for others is more meritorious than doing it for oneself. Accumulating merits is a path to the Pure Land, and in an ancient tradition, merit can be transferred to the dead. The highest goal is to become one with Amita.

*Amita Buddha* has another 37 names, among which there are 12 names connected with light, such as immeasurable, incomparable, joyful, pure, inexpressible, and all-pervasive. But Amita is generally called “The Buddha of Boundless Light” and “The Buddha of Boundless Life.” Whereas

Shakyamuni Buddha is seen as a teacher, Amita is seen as a savior who gives faith.

*Amita* is not just the name of a Buddha but also a mantra, practiced not only by Buddhists but also commonly used as greetings by Buddhists and non-Buddhists in China. It is a kind of blessing, wishing that others may have boundless light and boundless life. It has such an unfathomable power that people can escape from more than a thousand disasters when they hear the name just once. That is why people are encouraged to read his name.

## Expansion from China

In Japan, widespread Amita Buddhism may be called *Jodo-Shinshu* or *Shinran*. Shinran (1173–1262) was a very important leader of what is now the largest Buddhist denomination in Japan (Malalasekera et al. 1961, p. 438). He forbade followers from praying for personal interests or temporal welfare. The faithful are to turn all difficulties over to the Buddha. *The Collected Works of Shinran* are primary Japanese sources. The mantra practice is called *Namu Amita Butsu* (“Adoration of the Amita Buddha”) or, in brief, *nembutsu* (Ryukan 1997b, “Major Expositions”). The simple practice of chanting such mantras gives Pure Land a wide appeal and contrasts with the more abstract and challenging paradoxes of other branches of Buddhism, such as Zen’s “Nothingness.”

There is a debate about whether calling the name Amita just once, even at the moment of death, is sufficient to attain birth into the Pure Land or whether one must call the name many times in life to achieve birth in the Pure Land. One answer is that many-calling is only the accumulation of single-calling, for death may strike at any surprising moment, even after one calling (Ryukan). The proper attitude is one of gratitude, service to Amita, free of selfishness and pride.

## Psychology

There are numerous fruitful books on Buddhism and psychology. Psychotherapists who have also

practiced Buddhism, such as Mark Epstein M.D., have expanded far beyond Freudian nineteenth-century materialism. They explore the similarities of psychotherapy and Buddhist practices. Both seek to bring to consciousness feelings that block healing or enlightenment, not always from childhood, but often in relationships. Buddhist meditative practices – silent listening and mindfulness – are similar to therapeutic nonattachment from neurotic emotions, learning to stand back and observe them, rather than identifying with them. These and other themes are explored by many. Epstein's focus is on humiliation, thirst, release, nowhere-standing, remembering, repeating, and working through (Epstein 1995).

Therapy in a rationalist society involves opening to intuition and a faith in finding an authenticity. This may overlap with the Buddhist opening to transcendence, discovered in visions, mandalas, mantras, and ethical guidelines. Amita chanting could be seen as a therapeutic practice of focusing the deeper mind on a refined higher self to detach the ego from neurotic habits of feeling. Taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha could be likened to therapeutic commitment in psychotherapy, except with a transcendent purpose.

From a Jungian analytic or archetypal view, when caught in neurosis or suffering, one must first have or develop an ego strong enough to stand back and watch unconscious material coming up, rather than being overtaken by it and identifying with archetypal images, such as Jesus or the Buddha, and losing a sense of one's human limitations. Then in psychoanalysis, one encounters unconscious feelings in dreams, fantasies, errors, or symptoms. This brings hidden feelings to consciousness, and can lead toward the ego's serving the Self – the experience of archetypal divinity. Here Jung wrestles with the paradoxes of the Eastern extreme of identifying with the “non-ego,” the divine, or “becoming Amita Buddha,” and the Western extreme of identifying with the overly rational, conscious ego and denying the reality of the transcendent Self. The former may seem to allow “jumping over” feelings into the wonder-filled

transcendent. The latter imagines the ego to be in control, free of unconscious or transcendent influences. Jung, and many Asian thinkers, rejects either Western absolutizing the ego or Eastern negating the ego. Rather, Jung seeks to direct the ego toward guidance from the Self, the archetypal experience of the transcendent divinity, as in Amita Buddha. “The ego needs the self and vice versa” (Jung 1979, Vol. 11, para. 961). One might say: “Keep your feet on the ground and your head in the clouds.”

The Buddhist priest, university professor, and Jungian analyst Mokusen Miyuki says that the Amita meditative and chanting practices focus the mind on the Buddha. Jung saw religion as rooted in an experience of the numinous, as in rituals. So rituals such as chanting of the name of Amita (“*Namo Amitabha*”) – “Adoration to Amitabha”) can produce experiences of the numinous which can reorganize one's psyche away from egocentric focus toward sincere participation in the higher Buddha mind and thereby overcome suffering: “. . . the ego functions in conjunction with the self in creating a state of constant renewal and enrichment” (Miyuki 1994, p. 142). Miyuki agrees with Jung that this is not to dissolve the ego, but to let the ego be guided sincerely by the numinous Self or Buddha-mind, via the ego-Self axis or Dharma-gate, leading to birth of a stronger ego within in the uplifting, larger Pure Land consciousness.

According to Buddhism, everyone inherently has the Buddha nature – cosmic Light – in oneself. But during incarnation, the Light is typically clouded by all kinds of desires, such as crude greed, sex, and pursuit of wealth and fame. So if people read in Chinese “*Na Mo a Mi Tuo Fo*” (Devotion to Amita Buddha) or chant *Amita Buddha's* name sincerely in any language, their unconscious will be activated and vibrate together with Amita's power in the universe. Their soul will be full of the liberating Light that frees one from ego's base desires, attachments, and suffering. They will become more sincere, happy, and enlightened and have a long life in this incarnation. They will be born into the transcendental, blissful, Pure Land consciousness.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Guanyin
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions
- ▶ Mandala
- ▶ Mantra
- ▶ Psychotherapy

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## Amplification

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Amplification is Jung’s signature method for identifying and accurately applying mythic, historical, cultural, and universal analogies to unconscious material of a collective nature. This can foster engagement with deeper resources in the personality, facilitating individuation. The idea developed as a part of his general study of associations and their dynamics, as when applied to dreams, fantasies, delusions, or hallucinations. In exploring such material as the fund of personal associations becomes depleted yet considerable psychological energy remains with an image, Jung recommended employing parallels from history and culture that drew upon the patterns in the collective unconscious such as myths, legends, folklore, fairy tales, and alchemy. This became a part of his method for identifying understanding emergent symbolic material, as in dreams.

## Brief History of the Idea

Although Jung had discussed the use of comparative material from cultural sources in his



Fordham University lectures on “*The Theory of Psychoanalysis*” in 1912 (in Vol. 4) and published an extensive study demonstrating the use of such material in *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* (first published in 1912, later revised to form the text of Vol. 5), it was not until 1914 in a lecture to the Psycho-Medical Society of London, published under the title “*On Psychological Understanding*,” that he introduced ideas which would more clearly develop into the theory of archetypes in conjunction with the method of amplification (Jung 1915, Vol. 3, pp. 388–424; see n. 12). It may be that a full separation from Freud’s influence, which occurred in 1913, was required before Jung could fully elaborate his own unique approach. In the 1914 article, Jung argues for a constructive as opposed to reductive method, leading to a noncausal, synthetic approach with prospective understanding that “build up towards an unknown goal.” From the start, he linked amplification with complex processes that will culminate in his formulation of individuation.

By the time of his “*On the Psychology of the Unconscious*” in 1917 (in Vol. 7), Jung speaks explicitly of the method of amplification with a dream example comparing the causal-reductive and the synthetic-constructive approaches, including the use of imagery from the I-Ching. He demonstrates the psychological relevance and benefit of amplifying dreams with symbolic understanding. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Jung frequently used this method in a practical manner in his various seminars.

In 1935 Jung gave five lectures at the Institute of Medical Psychology (London’s Tavistock Clinic) (see Jung 1980, Vol. 18). After acknowledging the feeling of not knowing that is inherent in any real contact with unconscious material, Jung explains how he proceeds, drawing upon his earlier researches in the word association experiment. “I adopt the method of the philologist, which is far from being free association, and apply a logical principle which is called *amplification*. It is simply that of seeking the parallels” (Jung 1980). He continues with the importance of understanding the context of each image in a dream for any overall interpretation, seeking

“what tissue that word or image is embedded in. That is *amplification*.” For Jung, this differentiates his approach from Freud’s, which he feels “is seeking the complexes,” whereas he is “looking for what the unconscious is doing with the complexes.” The shift towards identifying operational dynamics in psychic processes considerably broadens the scope and utility of this method. Parenthetically the 38-year-old W. R. Bion, who at this time was unpublished, is known to have been in the audience along with his patient Samuel Beckett who was greatly impressed by Jung. Bion went on to become a renowned psychoanalytic theorist whose work included exploration of mystical states. His work contains many echoes of Jung’s comments, and his followers often employ myths in their explorations of unconscious contents.

In his 1944 treatise *Psychology and Alchemy* (Jung 1953/1968, Vol. 12), Jung includes an extended discussion of a series of dreams of a young man whom we now know was the Nobel laureate in physics, Wolfgang Pauli. The longitudinal use of amplification with such a dream series provides a fuller appreciation of the value of the method in the context of an observed individuation process. “As manifestations of unconscious process the dreams rotate or circumambulate round the center, drawing closer to it as the amplifications increase in distinctness and in scope” (Jung 1953/1968, Vol. 12, p. 34). The center for Jung is, of course, the transpersonal self. In this text, he also firmly locates the method in the alchemical tradition of transformation of substances: “The method of alchemy psychologically speaking is one of boundless amplification. The amplification is always appropriate when dealing with some obscure experience which is so vaguely adumbrated that it must be enlarged and expanded by being set in a psychological context in order to be understood at all” (1953/1968, Vol. 12, p. 403). From Jung’s perspective, the alchemist’s purpose in employing such a method was to bring out the hidden value in the rejected, unwanted, base aspects of life. Amplification thereby serves to orient consciousness to matters of deep importance that might be avoided if only viewed superficially.

From the late 1940s until the end of his life, Jung expanded his view of amplification to include both the method of active imagination and the feeling function. In his 1947/1954/1969 essay “On the Nature of the Psyche” (in Vol. 8) speaking about active imagination, he notes that it does not involve “a *reductio in primam figuram*, but rather a synthesis . . . a kind of spontaneous amplification of the archetypes” (Vol. 8, p. 403). Inclusion of a more profound valuing of subjective experience, a feeling response, rather than relying only on scholarly researches to reveal the connection to the deeper layers of the psyche is seen in his 1958 essay “Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth” (Jung 1970, Vol. 10). There Jung remarks: “The symbolical or ‘amplificatory’ approach produces a result that looks at first like a translation back into primitive language. And so it would be, if understanding with the help of the unconscious were a purely intellectual exercise and not one that brought our total capacities into play. In other words, besides its formal mode of manifestation the archetype possesses a numinous quality, a feeling-value that is highly effective in practice” (Jung 1970, Vol. 10, p. 646). Thus, in his fullest expressions of this method, Jung requires the whole person to partake of the action for it to be psychologically substantive.

There have been numerous developments in Jungian method over the years. In particular, articulating the cultural layer between the personal and the archetypal aspect of the unconscious has been an important refinement – see especially, Henderson (1993) and Singer and Kimbles (2004).

### Contemporary Utility of Amplification

Various clinical and cultural implications stemming from the analytic method amplification have been noted over the years by Jungians. Some of the more important are:

1. Recognition of patterns of psychological life which are forming, be it in an individual or in a society. In the language of the contemporary science of complexity, systems which can self-organize to produce forms and behaviors operating at a level above that of the component parts, and not found in their component, but only coming into being through the field of interactions between the components, are termed emergent. Amplification can facilitate psychological emergence drawing attention to and focusing psychic energy on just those nascent patterns most relevant to life.
2. Providing a more richly textured narrative background for a life, helping a person discover aspects of being which live in myth. For the disenfranchised elements of the personality, this can offer a helpful link to the consciousness as well as to the broader human community. The method thus allows a pathway for engagement with archetypal energies, at the core of complexes which comprise the personality. Making unconscious processes more ample through the adroit use of analogies renders these processes more available to examination; see, for example, Samuels in *Post-Jungians Today* (Casement 1998). In applying this method, care must be taken that narcissistic elements which can become dangerous, as through inflation, are not excessively activated, but that there should be a relativizing of the ego and a metabolizing of any identifications with the self.
3. Deciphering the potential significance of unconscious productions such as symptoms and dreams through a comparative process. This can provide valuable orientation with diagnostic and prognostic value, which can help in determining a course of treatment or intervention. For an example, see remarks by John Beebe on the “case of Joan” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jung* (Young-Eisendrath and Dawson 1997) regarding a patient’s suicide wish to “. . . jump in a river” as a kind of urge towards baptism, or spiritual renewal through immersion in unconscious processes, which addressed this use of amplification. Beebe integrates the religious ritual dimension of the impulse with clinical thinking by suggesting it may point to a need for a period of regression, with less organization or verbalization available to patient and

therefore the possible use of artistic forms of expression to sustain engagement; a period of quiet containment as dissolution forces breakdown the old structures. Note that in the clinical setting, actual amplifications are often not shared explicitly with the analysand. As with Jung's later thoughts on active imagination and "spontaneous amplification," reverie, as explored by psychoanalysts such as Thomas Ogden, may itself be seen as a form of amplification, especially when used to explore an interactive field, to make the exchanges occurring within it more available to consciousness. The psychoanalytic literature does not touch, however, on the notion of reveries linked with the collective unconscious, which is one way of looking at myth.

4. Shedding light on archetypal processes occurring intersubjectively as well as intrapsychically, within an interactive process as Jung indicated in his essay on *The Psychology of the Transference* (Jung 1946, Vol. 16). The analytic field may manifest in metaphoric or symbolic form in an emergent process, as when a psychological content becomes activated for both partners in an analysis. These often have a synchronistic feeling as in Jung's famous story of the woman who dreamed of a piece of jewelry in the shape of a scarab beetle, and in the process of the analysand's telling of the dream, Jung caught a similar beetle inexplicably trying to come into his office window and later amplified the figure of the beetle in terms of Egyptian rebirth narratives, which were relevant to the case. Once in a secured, symbolic field (Goodheart 1980), amplification can thus support a mutual playfulness at the root of creativity.
5. Provides a more expansive model of the psyche, allowing inclusion of cultural processes. This can form a basis for understanding unconscious aspects of social, political, religious, aesthetic, historical, and even scientific discourse. While the use of symbolic forms always derived from a cultural and historical context, there is most likely a biological predisposition to generate these forms (see Pietikainen (1998) and responses).

There remains the need to more fully trace out the cultural evolution, including disjunctions, and variations of these forms.

6. Helps to identify the scale-free network qualities of the field of the archetypes of the collective unconscious thus allowing contemporary research on networks to be applied to Jung's model of the psyche. For ease of comprehension, consider the World Wide Web which is just such a network, with sites connected by hyperlinks: the pattern of nodes (sites with few links) and hubs (sites with large numbers of links) together with their lines of connectivity. These networks have self-organizing properties which foster resilience of the overall network to removal of nodes. Psychologically this offers new insights into both the resilience of defenses in analytic work and the possibility of stabilizing new relations between the ego and the unconscious which develop during such work – for an initial discussion of this, see Cambray and Carter (2004), Chapter 5.

### See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Analogy (Islamic)

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Analogy (Islamic) or *qiyas* is the fourth source of Sharia (Islamic Law). In case of the lack of direct text, from the Quran or Hadith, on any contemporary issue, making judgment based on analogy is permissible by Sharia. Analogical reasoning can be deduced from a known Islamic judgment and then applied to the unknown problem within

the Islamic model of the Quran, Hadith, and the Islamic consensus. This means that the Quran and Hadith can be further analyzed and extended from a primary known issue (*asl*) to a new problem (*fara'*) if there is a common cause (*'illa*) for both problems.

Example: drug abuse and wine drinking are both not permitted by Sharia although they are two different problems. The first was not known in the early days of Islam and it was not mentioned in the Quran or Hadith. Analogically speaking, since drug abuse has the same effects of alcoholic abuse (Loss of Consciousness), which is forbidden in the Quran and Hadith, therefore, drug abuse must be banned by law as well.

## See Also

- [Sharia](#)

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## Analytical Psychology

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## Introduction

Analytical psychology is based on the works of C. G. Jung (1875–1961). The term was first used by Jung when he left the psychoanalytic community around Freud in 1913, to describe a new psychological science with the aim of exploring the unconscious and its relationship with the conscious. The symbol-creating function of the psyche cannot be understood and used for the process of personal development without the conscious. In the course of life, the individual can go through a process of individuation enabling him/her to achieve his/her innate potential and thus give meaning to his/her life.

Jung studied medicine (M.D. in 1900) and underwent additional training in psychiatry (1905) at the Swiss Burghölzli Clinic. His close

relationship with Freud lasted from 1907 to 1913. After the painful break from Freud, he underwent several years of auto-analysis, and in 1921 he published his/her work *psychological types*, which formed the basis for an independent psychological school of thought, analytical psychology. In the first 30 years of life, he laid the foundation for his/her extensive psychological oeuvre, dedicating himself in the second half to the study of topics from history, religion, and cultural history which strengthened and differentiated his/her theory (Stein 1998). Throughout his/her life he devoted himself to the exploration of the question if and how religious and mythical experiences can be investigated by empirical scientific methods.

### The Nature of the Self

Although, to cite Murray Stein, Jung has designed a map of the human soul, it is the development of the Self which is at the center of his/her explorations of the soul. His concept of the Self is fundamental for the differentiation from other schools of psychoanalytical thought, in that it forms the basis and the goal of human development. The core element in the process of individuation, which is central to his/her psychoanalytical approach, is the unfolding and development of the self. Man is to become what he is meant to be.

Jung's concept of the Self is different from self-concepts of other psychoanalysts as, e.g., Kohut, primarily regarding the idea of transference. This means that the Self is situated outside the individual psychic field, which it defines but in which it is not contained. Not the "I-am-(my) self" is meant by this concept, but rather something incomprehensible, unperceivable, and greater than oneself. The Self forms the primeval basis for the communality of the subject with the world, with the basic elements of being. Subject and object I and other are connected in the Self in a common field of structure and energy (Stein 1998).

"As an empirical term, the Self defines the totality of all psychic phenomena in human

beings. It expresses the oneness and wholeness of the total personality (. . .); it comprises that which can be experienced and that which cannot be experienced or cannot yet be experienced. (. . .) In as far as wholeness, which consists of both conscious and unconscious contents, it is a postulate, and it is essentially transcendent (. . .). As there are, in fact, phenomena of the conscious and the unconscious, the Self as a psychic totality contains a conscious as well as an unconscious aspect. Empirically the Self becomes manifest in dreams, myths, and fairy tales in the figure of the "superordinate personality" like a king, hero, prophet, and redeemer or as a symbol of totality as, e.g., the circle, quadrangle, *quadratura circuli*, and cross. Inasmuch as it represents a *complexio oppositorum*, a union of opposites, it can also appear as a union of two as, e.g., the interaction of yang and yin in the Tao (. . .). It thus confirms itself as an archetypal concept which is different from other concepts in that it takes a central position through the significance of its content and its numinosity," (Jung 1921/1995, CW 6, § 891).

### The Numinous

The numinous corresponds to the God-image in the individual. The archetypal character of the numinous manifests itself in different symbols which occur across all cultures and express the relationship between the numen and human beings in again and again similar ways (e.g., mandalas, crosses). Jung therefore postulates that man is in essence religious and that religion is a native form of expression or attitude of the psyche. In his/her work, there are, however, no personal statements regarding his/her faith. "One might then say that the term 'religion' denotes a particular attitude of a consciousness which has been altered by the experience of the numinous" (Jung 1939/1995, CW 11, § 9). This numinous, the inexpressible, mysterious, and at the same time terrifying, is that which is particularly moving or touching in the perception of the self. It is the perception of wholeness which transcends

conscious reality. As the numinous reflects this divine character, the self corresponds to the God-image or “a God in us.” However, Jung makes a clear distinction between the question of the existence of God and the God-image:

It is, of course, due to the perpetual commingling of object and image that one cannot understand the difference between “God” and “God-image,” and therefore believes to be speaking of God – to be explaining “theologically” – when speaking of the God-image: Psychology as a science is not entitled to call for the hypostatization of the God-image. Nevertheless, consistent with known facts, it needs to anticipate the existence of a God-image. It is therefore (...) understood that (...) the God-image corresponds to a specific psychological complex of facts and thus represents an important element and a basis for work, yet the question as to the nature of God is not to be answered by psychological science (Jung 1928/1995, CW 8, § 528).

Reflected in the Self and in the symbols of the Self are thus human experiences with the Divine, although neither of these permits any conclusions regarding the nature of the Divine.

### **The Self-Regulating Psyche and the Role of Symbols**

Analytical psychology assumes that the function of the Self is to hold the dynamic totality of the psychic system together. If, for example, symbols of the Self occur in dreams, this may be seen as a compensatory act of the psyche aimed at healing a psychological crisis in the conscious. In the totality of the Self, opposites like good and bad and light and shadow are united. The perception of this totality expresses the wish for psychic union of the opposites in a synthetic third, which constitutes a decisive factor in the process of personal development. The principle of opposites and enantiodromy is based on the concept of self-regulating psychic mechanisms. The psychic energy expressed in the striving for individuation is directed towards the achievement of wholeness and is controlled and driven by the Self as

a transcendent center outside the psyche. It is therefore not the ego which is responsible for the process of individuation, but the compensatory function is the deciding factor. The self-regulating function of the psyche implies that the unconscious counterbalances the one-sided tendency of the conscious. “For all excessive processes compensations are made immediately and inevitably” (Jung 1947/1995, CW 16, § 330). It is primarily the repressed or other unconscious contents which – in the presence of excessive one-sidedness – irrupt into consciousness in the form of dreams, images, or irrational actions (like the famous Freudian slip). As a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious serves the symbol which is created by the transcendent function.

In the symbol, which has a central role in analytical psychology, different aspects are “thrown together” (the Greek root *symbálllein* signifies to throw together): antithetical contents (conflict, polar aspects), conscious and unconscious (transcendent function), past and future (myths and dreams), form and content (image), and inner and outer (projection). Areas or aspects which are (can) actually not (be) directly related are connected with each other in different constellations through the symbol so that something new, a third, is created, i.e., the symbol. The development of the symbolic attitude is therefore of crucial importance in the process of individuation. The transcendent function enables the emergence of a symbol. It is the capability of the psyche to unite pairs of opposites in a synthesis, where something new is created. The transcendent function connects the unconscious with the conscious: a creative relationship develops in which the transition from one attitude to another becomes possible. Symbols and archetypes are the vehicles of the transcendent function.

### **The Role of the Ego**

The symbol-forming function of the soul – and thus the compensatory function – can become effective only if it is comprehended by the ego,

i.e., the symbols have to be understood and integrated with the help of the conscious. The ego should be in a compensatory relationship with the self, and a so-called “Ego-Self” axis (E. Neumann) should be formed. This Ego-Self axis illustrates the dynamic relationship between the ego and the self. Neumann assumes that the ego dissociates itself from the Self at the beginning of and during the first half of life, increasing consciousness develops, and a center of consciousness in the form of an ego-complex arises. According to Jung, the essential part of the individuation process occurs in the second half of life, which is marked by a backward movement of the ego to the Self, characterized by the broadening of consciousness and integration of the personality. Although the concept of dissociation of the ego from the Self advanced by Neumann has lost in importance in the light of more recent findings of developmental psychology, the Ego-Self axis is nevertheless helpful in understanding the self-regulating function of the psyche. An identification of the Ego with the Self would, for example, be an indication either of inflation or of psychotic delusions of grandeur.

The Ego in analytical psychology is the center of the field of consciousness and is also understood as the ego-complex. It is characterized by a high degree of continuity and identity with itself. “The ego-complex is a content of the conscious as well as a prerequisite thereof, because I am conscious of a psychic element, in as far as it is related to the ego-complex” (Jung 1921/1995, CW 6, § 810). The ego is a part of the total personality and the prerequisite of our ability to experience and reflect the world and ourselves. The ego is not a creation of our conscious wanting, but transcends it. Environmental factors have a role in ego formation and can be described by Winnicott as “facilitating environment.” From today’s perspective, the ego or ego-complex, like all complexes, is formed in early infancy as the result of attachment relationships; in later life, other relationship experiences also contribute to the formation and alteration of the ego-complex.

## Complexes and Archetypes

Jung viewed complexes as more or less unconscious psychic contents held together by an identical emotion and a common core of meaning, the archetype. He understood a complex as an unconscious focal point of psychic processes, charged with a high degree of negative or positive emotional energy. A negative complex may be caused by a deeply felt emotional experience, a psychological trauma, or negative childhood experiences. Complexes may also be seen as “split off components of the psyche” (Jung 1934/1995, CW 8, § 204), which, if they have not yet become conscious, may cause psychic disturbances in the unconscious. Jung demonstrated the effectiveness of complexes with the help of the association experiment, which he had developed further. The presentation of complex charged words can produce changed reactions, as well as a galvanic skin response. Today, complexes are understood as the dynamic compression of internalized relationship experiences, capable of changing and developing throughout life. Complexes can be compared with other psychological models as, e.g., Stern’s representations of interactions generalized (RIGS) or the internal working models developed by Bowlby. Analysis focuses on the elucidation of these complexes: they are brought to consciousness, emotionally worked through and processed. The symptoms of a complex can be understood and interpreted symbolically. This enables the release of the psychic energy bound in the symptoms, the psychic equilibrium and inner balance can be reestablished, and an instant of personality integration occurs.

Complexes always have an archetypal core. Comparable to complexes, archetypes are a central building block of analytical psychology. Based on Kant’s concept of the a priori, Jung postulates the existence of an a priori in all human action and thought, an “innate and therefore preconscious and unconscious individual structure of the psyche” (Jung 1939/1995, CW 11, § 151). These preconscious structures cannot be described; they are a type of unconscious predisposition to act in a certain human manner.

They have no concrete contents and are therefore to be understood as shapes or “primordial images,” which are passed on from generation to generation of humans. “Visible” contents are added to the archetype through individual experience. Archetypes in addition to the self, which is frequently described as the primary archetype, include the animus and anima, the shadow, and the persona. Neurobiologic findings have contributed to a somewhat changed understanding of the archetype. Today it is preferred to view archetypes as “image schemas, early developmental mental structures which organize experience while themselves remaining without content and beyond the realm of conscious awareness. . . . The image schema would seem to correspond to the archetype-as-such, and the archetypal can be equated with the innumerable metaphorical extensions that derive from image schemas” (Knox 2003, p. 96). They represent mechanisms which serve to organize experience in the human brain. In addition, they also appear to be unconscious “representations of dynamic patterns of relationship between self and other” (Knox 2003).

### The Collective Unconscious

At first glance the described new perspective appears to render access to Jung’s essential construct yet more difficult, in particular, because it has an important role in considerations from a religious perspective, i.e., the collective unconscious, which Jung differentiates from the personal unconscious. However, recent research in developmental psychology has demonstrated the phylogenetic endowment of newborn infants with regard to communicative abilities. The collective unconscious represents the deepest layer of the human psyche, which is formed from universal archetypes and instinct-based forces and is identical for all humans.

“We can differentiate a personal unconscious that comprises all acquisitions of personal existence, i.e., what has been forgotten, repressed, subliminally perceived, thought, and felt. In addition to these personal unconscious

contents, there are other contents, which do not derive from personal acquisitions but from the congenital possibility of psychic functioning per se, namely, from the congenital brain structure. These are the mythological aspects, motifs, and images, which can develop at anytime and anywhere without historical tradition or migration. These contents I describe as the collective unconscious,” (Jung 1921/1995 CW 6, § 919f).

The collective unconscious reveals itself primarily in myths and fairy tales, whose analysis enables access to archetypal contents and appears primarily in dreams, literature, art, and culture. The language of the unconscious is symbols and images, because they exert a powerful influence on the conscious, in particular with a view to their numinosity. The psychological unconscious is further ascribed a tendency towards finality, which finds expression in the teleological principle. Within the framework of the individuation process, the individual might succeed in grasping the finality of the unconscious from the individual perspective, enabling him to experience his/her own actions and life as meaningful. To a degree determined by itself, the ego is thus forced to comply with and understand the demands of the Self. This individual striving for meaning can therefore be understood as religious.

### See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Complex](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Ananda

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Ananda was one of the main disciples of the Buddha. He served as his personal attendant and occupies a similar place in Buddhism that the Apostle John does in Christianity. Both were very close to their Lord in a personal as well as spiritual way. As such, Ananda wielded much influence in the First Buddhist Council, immediately after the death of the Buddha (544 BCE). Because of his close relationship to his teacher, he is the source of many of the stories told in the canon of scripture known as the Sutras (Skt.) or Suttas (Pali). Of all the qualities attributed to him, good memory was one. Service to others was another. His name means “bliss.”

## See Also

► [Buddhism](#)

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## Androgyny

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Plato's *Symposium* addresses the subject of human nature (*anthrōpinen physin*) in its former state (*palai hemōn physis*) (189D). According to



the speaker, Aristophanes, there were not two but three “kinds” (*ta genē*) of humans: male (*arren*), female (*thēlu*), and an equal combination of both male and female (*ampheterōn*) (189D). In this third type, male and female are joined into the form (*eidos*) of one unity, *androgynon* (189E). This *androgynon* is quite vital, which, according to Aristophanes, threatens the gods who thus split the form in half, creating the separate forms, male and female. Each has only a portion of the original vigor and is therefore no longer a concern to the divine patriarchy. Aristophanes says, this “man-woman” nature has ultimately been vanished (*aphanistai*), and Aristophanes himself appears to devalue it by referring to it as a “thing” (*auto*). Other notions of androgyny also occur. The ancient Gnostic text *Interrogationes maiores Mariae* quoted by Epiphanius of Salamis (d. 403 CE) tells of Jesus producing a woman from his side. The image symbolizes Christ as the Anthropos, the Second Adam who is both male and female after the way of the first, hermaphroditic Adam (cf. Gal. 3.26–28; Matt. 22.30). In Hindu Vedic traditions, the androgynous Original Man Purusha, who “as large as a man and woman embracing,” divides his self to create husband and wife (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* 1.4.3; cf. *Aitareya Upanishad* 1.1–14; *Atma Upanishad* 1–3). In the Cabbalist tree, King David is associated with the tenth sefirah *Malkhut*, the feminine aspect of judgment. She is *Matronita*, the Grand Lady of the cosmos. She has a special affinity for the left side, being referred to as the gentle aspect of wisdom. Within the history of the Church, the eleventh to thirteenth centuries show particular interest in the androgyny of Christ. The Cistercians are especially noted for a reworking of the symbol of Jesus and the integration of the feminine aspect. Anselm the theologian and Archbishop of Canterbury (1033–1109 CE) writes: “But you, Jesus, good Lord, are you not also a mother? Are you not that mother who, like a hen, collects her chickens under wings?” (Anselm of Canterbury 1940–1961, Prayer 10 to St. Paul, 3:33, 39–41). The French abbot Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153 CE) in his series of sermons on the Song of Songs refers to the

refreshing sweetness and perfume of the breasts of Christ the Bridegroom. They are “better than wine, but smelling sweet of the best ointments” (Bernard 1987, Sermon 9.4). According to Jung, the separating into male and female sets up a pair of opposites and makes consciousness possible. It manifests latent symbolism and unconscious processes as compensation response to external, conscious condition of undifferentiated unity (Jung 1969, p. 204 ff.). Jung also equates the duplex figure to the Anthropos as the idea of wholeness and unitary being which existed prior to human beings and represents the end-goal of human life. As Anthropos, the androgynous figure occurs as the essential, governing archetype and “organizing principle of the unconscious, the quaternity, or squared circle of the self” (Jung 1969, p. 204).

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Plato and Religion](#)

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## Angels

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The word comes from the Greek *angelos*, a translation from the Hebrew *mal'akh*, meaning

“messenger.” In the major Western religions, angels are ministering spirits and guardians of the supreme deity and serve as messengers and intermediaries between the divine and human realms. They act as extensions of the divine will, reveal divine truth, watch over the world, and guide souls to their postmortal destiny.

The motif of attendants upon the supreme deity who also serve as messengers and intermediaries between heaven and earth is widespread. In Chinese and Japanese religions, there are ministering spirits and divine messengers whose role is similar to those in the West. The ancient Mesopotamians depicted giant winged genies as divine ministrant and guardian spirits. In Zoroastrianism there are six spiritual entities that attend the chief deity. In Hinduism the *angiris* are the messengers between gods and men. The function of a *Boddhisattva* in Buddhism is comparable to that of an angel. Hermes and Iris, both with winged sandals, are the divine heralds in Greek mythology. The messengers of the Celtic Otherworld often appear in the guise of swans. But not all winged entities are angels. Wings indicate swiftness (the winged sandals of Hermes and Iris) and the ability to function in the air and by analogy in the realm of the spirit. The winged Nike represents the spirit of victory and is not an angel, i.e., a messenger.

In the Bible, angels appear as wingless young men. Only the Seraphim and Cherubim are winged and not human in form. Until the thirteenth century, angels were depicted as adolescent males. The late Gothic romantic ideal of beauty led to the feminization and etherealization of the angelic form. In popular belief, angels are divine or semi-divine creatures entitled to be worshipped in their own right. They are sometimes equated with daemons, fairies, elves, jinn, etc. that are amenable to human manipulation and used in magic. The notion of a personal guardian angel developed in the second century CE. probably influenced by various religious and folk beliefs in protective ancestral guardians or spirits.

*Judaic:* Angels appear often in the Bible as messengers and protectors. The most striking representation of angels as intermediaries between the divine and human realms is Jacob’s dream of

the ladder reaching from earth to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it and God standing at the top of the ladder. An angel stayed Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, wrestled with Jacob and named him Israel, and appeared in the midst of the burning bush to Moses. The Seraphim, fiery, serpentine, six-winged angels, surround the throne of Yahweh. The Cherubim, four winged and four faced, bear his throne and were depicted on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant. A Cherub was posted east of Eden to prevent human beings from returning and eating also of the Tree of Life. Satan, also called Lucifer, led a rebellion against Yahweh and was cast down from heaven to the earth with his host of rebellious angels. Two angels are named in the Bible: Michael (“like God”), warrior leader of the angelic hosts, and Gabriel (“man of God”), who interpreted Daniel’s vision. When sent as messengers, the Biblical angels appear as young men. Two other angels appear in the Apocrypha: Raphael (“God has healed”), guide of physicians and travelers, and Uriel (“fire of God”). Seven archangels are mentioned in the apocryphal Book of Tobit, and in postbiblical Judaism, especially in apocalyptic literature, seven angels, sometimes called archangels, lead the heavenly hosts (First Book of Enoch).

*Christian:* Angels play a significant role in the New Testament. Gabriel announced the conception of John the Baptist to his father, Zacharias, and the conception of Jesus to Mary. Angels appeared to shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem to announce the birth of Jesus. Angels appear with Christ at the Second Coming and play a significant role in the Last Days described in The Revelation. Later Christian writers, particularly Pseudo-Dionysius and Justin, developed elaborate hierarchical schemas of angels, describing their roles and attributes. One such ranking consists of nine orders: Seraphim, Cherubim, thrones, dominions, virtues, powers, principalities, archangels, and angels. The nine orders are divided into three choirs, emphasizing the symbolism of the Trinity (3 × 3). The first choir contemplates God, the second governs the universe, and the third executes the orders of the superiors. Clement of Alexandria, under



Hellenistic influence, thought angels control the course of the stars and the four elements (earth, water, fire, air).

*Islamic:* When Allah created Adam, he asked the angels to prostrate themselves before him, all did except Iblis (Satan). For this sin of pride, Iblis was banished from heaven and became the enemy of mankind. Angels revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad, who fearing he was possessed by jinn was about to throw himself off a cliff when Jibril (Gabriel) appeared and confirmed him as a prophet. Angels surround the throne of Allah, record the good and evil deeds of human beings, intercede with God on their behalf, escort the soul at death, reward the good, and punish the wicked. In Islamic tradition, there are four orders of angels: four throne bearers, the Cherubim who praise Allah, four archangels, and a host of lesser angels. The archangels are Jibril, the revealer; Mikal (Michael), the provider; Isra'il, the angel of death; and Israfil, who places souls in bodies and sounds the trumpet at the Last Judgment. Malik is the angel in charge of hell. In popular belief, there are also female angels, the *huris*, who provide male Muslims with erotic delight in paradise (they are similar to the Hindu *apsaras*).

## Commentary

From the Freudian perspective, angels are wish fulfilling fantasy creations of the protective, caring, and guiding aspects of the parental imago. As attendants and guardians of the male supreme deity, they represent aspects of patriarchal power. As messengers and intermediaries, they are internalized voices of parental authority and function as the superego, rewarding good and punishing evil behavior. The rebellion of Satan and his host of angels and their banishment from the deity's presence dramatizes the consequences of opposing the parental will. The Cherub with a fiery sword placed at the entry to the Garden of Eden protecting the Tree of Life refers to the patriarchal threat of castration and annihilation aimed at regressive incestuous impulses for a return to the womb. The "sons of God" who had intercourse with the "daughters of men" probably refer to the original

band of brothers who killed the primal patriarch and usurped his sexual prerogatives. The angelic announcements of various Biblical conceptions is a "spiritualization" of parental sexual activity and perhaps an attempt on the part of both parents and children to see birth as a unique and special ("blessed") event.

From the point of view of Jungian psychology, angels are manifestations of the various characteristics and functions that belong to the transpersonal archetype of the self or are attributes projected onto it by human beings, e.g., power, protection, intelligence, narcissism, pride, and the source of life and death and of good and evil. As messengers, they represent attempts on the part of the self to convey information to ego consciousness that otherwise would not be understood or apprehended. Their manifestation in human form allows for an empathic connection and makes the messages they convey comprehensible to human beings. As intermediaries between the divine and human realms, angels are attempts on the part of the transpersonal unconscious to maintain a relationship with human consciousness and to participate in the personal and temporal world. For example, it is noteworthy that angels prevented the sacrifice of Isaac, renamed Jacob Israel, appeared in the burning bush to Moses, announced the birth of Ishmael and of Jesus, and revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad. In *Genesis* (6: 2ff), there is mention of "the sons of God" who took "daughters of men" for wives and fathered children who "became mighty men. . .of renown." The divine or semidivine birth of a hero is a universal motif. It depicts, so to speak, the desire of the transpersonal self to have intercourse with the human realm and incarnate in the three-dimensional world. In strictly psychological terms, the motif portrays an impetus on the part of the transpersonal psyche to realize itself in ego consciousness. In this regard, the role of Satan (also called Lucifer, literally, "light bearer," Isa. 14–21) in the three dominant Western religions is significant. The banishment of Satan and his rebellious angelic host from heaven to the earth is also an incarnation motif. (The banishment to hell is Milton's poetic license and based on The Revelation where that occurs at

the end of the world.) This “fall” of the angels precedes that of Adam and Eve and must be viewed as a preconscious foundation for the formation of a conscious human ego structure.

### See Also

- ▶ [Abraham and Isaac](#)
- ▶ [Adam and Eve](#)
- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Religions](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Gardens, Groves, and Hidden Places](#)
- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Qur'an](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)
- ▶ [Visions](#)
- ▶ [Zoroastrianism](#)

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## Anima and Animus

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Terms introduced by C. G. Jung to describe certain functions of the human “soul” (*anima*, Latin). *Anima* names the feminine unconscious factor in a man, while *animus* applies to the

corresponding masculine factor in a woman’s unconscious. Noting the frequency with which he encountered such contra sexual figures in the dreams of his patients, Jung theorized that every individual is born with the potential for both sets of gender characteristics, but – under the influence of genes and socialization – only one set is developed consciously, leaving the other latent in the unconscious. Because dreams tend to “compensate” for an inevitable “one-sidedness” in conscious attitude, archetypal images of the opposite gender are common in dreams.

### Gender Relations

Jung described the “masculine principle” as *logos* (the tendency to trust logic and verbal formulations) and the “feminine principle” as *eros* (the tendency to trust emotional connections and relatedness) (Jung 1959, p. 14). A *logos*-oriented man will undervalue relational skills and feeling values, including his own. In the unconscious, however, they have numinous power, for they belong to the archetypal realm of goddesses and film stars. The situation with the *eros*-oriented woman is similar but opposite, with *logos*-characteristics numinous in the unconscious: male figures with fascinating verbal and intellectual qualities. When the two meet romantically, they tend to project their mythically idealized inner figures upon one another, making disillusionment inevitable when they discover that their partner is a poor match for the projection. When this happens, each partner will suffer from the limitations of the other’s undeveloped side: the man’s touchy, undifferentiated feelings and the woman’s stereotyped thinking.

Ultimately, however, *anima* and *animus* are essential for psychological transformation, where the disillusionment of projection failure may become the beginning of wisdom. Unconscious contents become known when one catches oneself in the act of projecting them; and few opportunities to do so are as unmistakable and personally painful as erotic conflicts.

With enough presence of mind to recognize a projection for what it is and “withdraw” it – in the sense of acknowledging it as one’s own – one begins to become acquainted with anima or animus as unconscious potential. While an unrecognized contra sexual archetype will draw an individual into one unsatisfying encounter after another, an anima or animus that has become known will function intuitively to supply the formerly missing perspective and complete an understanding of the world and of oneself. This integration of the contra sexual archetype is known in myth as the hierosgamos (Greek for “wedding of the gods”). It leaves one more adequate for mature relationships and more capable of effective engagement with both the inner world and the outer.

### Mediation: Ego and Self

Discussions of anima and animus that become fascinated with gender differences tend to overlook the fact that, at bottom, the anima/animus syzygy (or “pair of opposites”) plays the same role in every psyche. It mediates between ego and “self” (Jung’s name for the wholeness of our being, including both conscious and unconscious elements). The oppositeness of their gender reflects their personification of an inner world that is largely opposite to and compensatory for limitations in the conscious attitude. The allure of anima and animus figures, whether seen in visions or in a flesh-and-blood partner, inspires interest in unknown aspects of self and world and mobilizes psychic energy, drawing the individual into life and opening up a deeper and more compelling inner world.

Always lurking behind anima and animus is the self they mediate. As the most powerful and significant force in the psyche, self is the God of one’s inner world. From the psychological perspective, therefore, Tao, Brahman, Christ, Buddha, Atman, and the like are projections of the self, while from the theological point of view, the self is that aspect of the human psyche that God uses as the “dark glass” through which divine revelations are possible.

### Religious Dimensions

The numinosity of the godhead is an essential attribute of anima and animus, for the mediator reveals the presence of the greater being and glows with its splendor. This is the reason mystics – historically, those who have published accounts of their experiences have been overwhelmingly male – typically speak of their love of God in erotic language; why in the Kabbalah the nearest *sephira*, or “sphere of divine manifestation,” is the feminine Shekhinah (“Divine Presence”); why Rumi and many of the Sufis rhapsodize over a divine Beloved they experience as a supernatural woman who entangles them in her black tresses; why Roman Catholic nuns describe themselves as “brides of Christ”; and why devotion to Mary the Mother of God and to Muhammad’s daughter, Fatimah the Resplendent, are so important in their respective religions.

### See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Eros](#)
- ▶ [Feeling](#)
- ▶ [Hierosgamos](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Logos](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Animal Spirits

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In bygone religions, beliefs that divinities could take animal form were common. Indigenous tribal shamans wore ritual animal masks, heads, and skins. This was because the world was seen as full of spirits – ancestors, ghosts, demons, and deities. Reincarnation meant that spirits, deities, and humans could easily appear in animal form. Ancient religions thus express empathy with animals. Empathy is a major factor in psychology and religion (Rifkin 2009). The Jungian analyst Andrew Samuels says:

The self is the primary source of phenomena such as empathy. . . . Empathy is a form of psychological interpenetration, a deep link between people; the mother-infant relationship is both a special example of this and a model for empathy throughout life. (Samuels 1985, p. 99)

This is well recorded in ancient Egyptian religion involving animals. The original cosmic egg was laid by an Ibis. Thoth was pictured as a man with an Ibis head (Patrick 1972, pp. 22–23). The goddess Hathor took the form of a calf (the Hebrew Golden Calf) or a cow who nursed Horus. Isis wore a crown with cow’s horns, disc, and a vulture (Patrick 1972, p. 33). Isis was known also as a kite, an eagle-like bird with large wings. Her son Horus appeared as a falcon (Patrick 1972, p. 39). The great god Ra is pictured as a falcon-headed human with a sun on his head (Ions 1965, p. 43). These symbols show a great deal of religious human-animal empathy.

Carl Jung wrote extensively of animals as archetypal, mythic images of human souls and their part in nature. He was very empathetic with people and nature (Jung 1979, Vol. 20, p. 247). He reminded us of the role of the dove as Diana, Mary, Aphrodite, and the Holy Spirit. He saw in dreams and myths many animals such as the fish as Christ and the butterfly as psyche. The serpent he saw in many dreams and myths was highly symbolic, full of unconscious mystery and fear. The mythical animals such as the resurrected phoenix, the unicorn that can be tamed when he lays his head in the Virgin’s lap, and the shadowy Western dragon that must be slain are highly symbolic (Jung 1979, Vol. 20, p. 57–75). The collective unconscious is full of animals. Externally, humans bond empathically with certain animals, living out unconscious archetypal dramas with them, from pampered pets as maternal baby images to galloping horses as ego’s power images.

But on the other hand, the official scientific worldview rejects empathy, replacing it with “projection,” for it has severed human “subjects” from nature’s “objects,” striving to break the human-animal empathetic bond. When Descartes and others postulated that animals feel no pain, for they are machines, this slammed the door to human-animal empathy (Rosenfield 1941/1968). Most animals in the industrial worldview are now seen as beasts to be dominated or eaten, in a theoretically “objective” world wiped clean of spirits. Consequently, huge “factory farms” raise chickens, turkeys, cows, and pigs in crowded, filthy, and ruthless conditions, processed as part of the industrial model of factory “efficiency” without any regard for their feelings, needs, pollution, or place in nature.

Peter Singer wrote early critiques of this treatment of animals (Singer 1990). We are now seeing increasing criticism like this of this system as pollution, unhealthy for animals and humans, concealing costs to keep prices down, and cruelty to animals. Jeffrey Masson, a psychoanalyst, says that our eating habits cultivate a massive denial of the animals at the other end of the fork: “We want steak, but don’t want to hear about the slaughterhouse” (Masson 2009, pp. 15–16). One wonders

whether we have relegated more animals to *sacrifice* for the abundance of food in industrial society. Should we *care* about all this? The question is important as world population grows and humans rapidly expand and destroy natural animal habitats.

Scientists are showing that there is a real threat of increasing extinction for many animals, due to problems such as habitat loss, toxic chemicals, and climate change. Many of these creatures are very important to the maintenance of earth for humans, such as keeping the soil and water capable of growing food. But we may be in the midst of the earth's sixth mass extinction. According to one scientist, Richard Pearson, who wrote *Driven to Extinction*, an estimated nearly 20,000 species of animals and plants are at high risk of extinction in the wild, such as 25 % of mammals, 13 % of birds, and a shocking 41 % of amphibians, such as frogs. Crucial functions of creatures are threatened, such as bees that pollinate food for us. The health food and animal rights movements are shifting collective consciousness toward more ecological, healthy low-fat diets, and less cruel treatment of animals. Does this shift in consciousness have a religious component?

Human empathy appears as we anthropomorphize or project our feelings on animals, as we do for gods. But we must carefully distinguish between this artful play and accurate understanding. Children easily do this, loving and cuddling pets and enjoying books and films such as *The Lion King* about animals enacting human and animal dramas with archetypal themes such as the myths of Joseph, Moses, and Macbeth (Allers and Minkoff 1994). Mythic, artistic explorations show a great deal of empathy and projection of human feelings onto animals. But more empathetic scientific observation of animals is expanding our understanding of them much farther than before. Each species has its instinctive patterns, and once we get past our pattern of domination and understand their needs, abilities, ecological role, sensitivities, and feelings, we can interact better, see anthropomorphism as art, and increase our empathy and respect for their inherent value in cooperation with science. These psychological shifts could become ethical and spiritual commitments.

One voice for more empathy and respect for animals is Alexandra Morton. She worked with orca whales at Sea World but was distressed that the newborn calves died. So she turned to studying orcas in their natural habitat. She learned that each group has a female in the center of the pod, with her younger female relatives swimming around her. The males swim farther away and come in mainly to mate. But she saw that the newborn calves had to be shown where to nurse their mothers by the other females, since the mother's nipple is concealed by a flap. She realized that without this social network, in a confined tank for human viewing, the newborns were not able to locate their food and thus died. So she left Sea World for an area in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Vancouver, Canada, where Orcas gather. She respectfully studied and recorded them, and they did not flee her.

One day she and her husband took their son in their boat out to see the whales. Suddenly, they found themselves surrounded by fog, and, without a compass, they had no idea which direction to go home. This was dangerous. Then a number of orca dorsal fins surrounded them, all pointing the same direction. So they steered their boat in that direction, and the orcas led them to their waterfront cabin (Morton 2002, pp. 112–15). This is a remarkable example of animal empathy. Those huge orcas knew that she was not going to hurt them, they realized the trouble, they knew how to show her the way back home, and they *wanted* to help her. What does that say? If such dangerous animals have such empathy for humans, should we have more empathy for them?

Jeffrey Masson is a psychoanalyst who turned to studying animals. He tells the story that before he knew much about elephants, he approached one in their habitat. It spread its large ears out and charged him. Luckily he was able to run away and hide in the tall grass before being killed (Masson 1995, pp. xiii–xiv). So much for naively sentimentalizing animals. Obviously, it is essential to protect ourselves from animal attacks. After studying them, he learned the essential sign of a bull elephant attacking: it flaps its ears. Masson has now written nine books on the emotional lives

of animals, exploring such feelings as fear, hope, love, friendship, grief, sadness, joy, rage, dominance, cruelty, compassion, rescue, shame, beauty, and even justice and a religious impulse. Humans and animals share a great deal psychologically, and perhaps spiritually, he shows.

Jane Goodall studied chimpanzees in Tanzania and wrote fervently against the behaviorist philosophy, which required numbering animals as if they were objects, not naming them, to avoid emotional involvement. But Goodall showed that animals do have feelings. She began naming the chimps. This was an important step toward a new empathy with animals. Goodall demonstrated that chimps have feelings – love, parenting, pouting, and many others. But she does not romanticize chimps – when she had her own baby at her jungle camp, she protected him from the aggressive male chimps by having him sleep in a cage (Goodall 1988, pp. 83–84). Yet she has high principles: rejoice that we are animals, respect all life, be humble, not harmful toward animals, learn from them, teach children to respect and love nature, be wise stewards of life, and value and preserve nature (Goodall 2002). These guidelines point to more empathetic, ethical, and spiritual relations to animals. Major Western religions have few teachings like this, but these views are spreading. Now we know that human and chimp genes are about 98 % the same (human) Goodall says:

... we are not the only beings with personalities, reasoning powers, altruism, and emotions like joy and sorrow; nor are we the only beings capable of mental as well as physical suffering (Goodall 1999, p. 93).

When Goodall came to the religious question, she knew that humans have the cognitive ability beyond chimps to articulate questions such as purpose in life. But then she turned to her non-verbal feelings about religion. After a visit to Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, she wrote that the visit:

... helped me to realize that the spiritual power that I felt so strongly in the wild and beautiful world of the forest was one and the same with ... the days when I used to spend long hours in ancient cathedrals (Goodall 1999, p. 94).

Goodall got it. While we work on trying to understand animal communications, most of them are nonverbal. This means we have to change ourselves and increase our own empathetic abilities to read nonverbal languages. Rub a friendly horse's neck to show respect. Watch a flock of geese fly in formation across the sunset. These are moments when the spirits of both humans and animals can attune to our common wondrous spirituality. Through empathy, without superstition or sentimentality, perhaps we can experience the divine spirit in animals.

### See Also

- ▶ Animism
- ▶ Anthropomorphism
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Sacrifice

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## Animectomy Complex

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### Terminology

Term coined by American psychologist William Herbert Sheldon, Ph.D., M.D. (1898–1977). Though better known for his theory of and work with somatotypes, Sheldon wrote a book on a psychological approach to religion, education, and medicine entitled *Psychology and the Promethean Will* (1936). Despite demonstrating the influence of William James, the book appeared soon after Sheldon’s pilgrimage to Europe in 1934–1935 where he studied the psychophysiological work of Ernst Kretschmer, conversed with Sigmund Freud, and spent considerable time with C. G. Jung discussing the theory of psychological types. The “animectomy complex” was coined not only “in good-natured appreciation” but also for “poking good-natured fun at” the Freudians for “their utterly delightful castration complex” (Sheldon 1936: viii, 200).

Sheldon asserts that the word “animectomy” follows in the somewhat “vulgar” practice in medicine to mint neologisms from an admixture of Latin and Greek terms. In this case, the Latin *anima* (soul) is paired with the Greek *ectomy* (cut off). Sheldon’s definition of animectomy is “amputation of soul.” His primary concern seems to have been that psychology, if it already had not done so, was in danger of losing its soul,

a fact echoed in the last several decades by John Sanford and James Hillman. That Sheldon should compare his neologism to the Freudian castration complex is interesting, for animectomy literally means “castrated soul.” The Greek *ectomy* derives from ἐκτομάζω (*ektomazō*), *I castrate, cut off, excise*, and it is occasionally used to refer to the circumcision of women. Unlike the castration complex, however, the animectomy complex is “merciful and fatal” (Sheldon 1936, p. 200).

Diagnostically, the animectomy complex is dissociation from feeling-awareness, in other words, the soul. For Sheldon, *soul* means oneness, unity, union between inner wish and outer reality. In his psychological theory, Sheldon mapped out five levels, or panels, of consciousness, the lowest being that of material relations (economic consciousness) and the highest being feeling-awareness or aesthetic consciousness. It is a dissociation from this highest panel consciousness that constitutes his animectomy complex, a dying back of the brain.

In other words, what Sheldon refers to is neither a physiological or anatomical construct nor is it a metaphorical reference to regression to the reptilian brain. Rather it is a kind of complacency on the part of human beings who find it easier not to see and feel simultaneously a meaning and thus truly perceive and understand the world. This is not *Psychodaiktes*, the epithet of Dionysos as destroyer or killer of the soul. Neither is it *psycholethros*, the death of the soul. The animectomy complex is the end or loss of aisthesis in a person’s life, and it is with this loss that Sheldon is concerned and that he opposes with the need of Promethean will.

### Influences

Sheldon’s (1936) work is influenced perhaps more by Jung’s *Psychological Types* (1921/1971) than he admits. Both draw from similar resources, including Carl Spitteler’s prose epic, *Prometheus and Epimetheus* (1881/1931). In the long run, Sheldon’s view is that if we continually

practice routing out conflict and/or error, we will ourselves undergo an animectomy complex. We need conflict. In fact, it would even seem that we need error, too, in order to function and grow into the level of aesthetic feeling-awareness, to grow into soul to the extent that in order to understand what suffering others are experiencing, we need to experience or undergo something of an amputation/castration/circumcision of soul. In other words, it is suggested we pass through a symbolic dismemberment – if not death – that encourages, permits, and fosters psychic rebirth. This is related to the *Ascent of Mt. Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul* of St. John of the Cross from a religious vertex. From a psychological one, it is also related somewhat to what W. R. Bion has termed the experience of O, the godhead or the unknowable ultimate reality that is an existential difficulty that must be passed through as a *rite de passage*, a *communitas* in its own right, in order to experience psychic rebirth.

There is something to be said for the experience of a psychic death in order to reap the benefits of a rebirth of wholeness within the self. In fact, Lawrence Staples (2008) in his book *Guilt with a Twist: The Promethean Way* suggests that we must eat the forbidden fruit and bear guilt if we are to grow, steal the fire, and accept the punishment for bringing its knowledge to others. Again, this goes straight to Bion's differentiation between "knowing about" and "becoming *being*" in his discussions concerning O. Bion argues that from the start, we've had this injunction from the deity in which thinking and knowledge (K) is forbidden. This is precisely what Jung was looking for in *Psychological Types* and Sheldon in *Psychology and the Promethean Will*. One could use the analogy of the computer reboot, even a complete shut-down and restart.

### **Polemic, Prosthesis, and Reconciliation**

Sprinkled throughout *Psychology and the Promethean Will*, as well as given a fair-sized portion, is somewhat polemical writing on what Sheldon terms "waster culture"—loud,

monotonous music; art that fails to transform the beholder (one thinks of similar mild fulminations in Castoriadis (1999/2007) with regard to art and institutions in this vein); and philosophy that has lost its brotherly love for wisdom. Today such waster culture is apparent in the proliferation of MP3 players, text messaging, multitasking cellular telephones, gothic and other subcultural pursuits, and reality television programming. If anything, Sheldon's polemical style is meant simply to grab our attention and shake us out of uncritical apathy, much as Freud (1913/1950) attempted to do with his critiques of the caricature of religion, art, and philosophy.

If an animectomy complex is, as Sheldon defines it, a repressed fear of the amputation of soul, then reparations via psychology would be mere prostheses, attachments, or applications via proposition and projection. The cognate of prosthesis, *prothesis* (placing in public), is not quite helpful either, for this would perhaps lead to the individual's melting or dissolving back into the collective slipping into repression or unconscious, what Sheldon, following William James, called the dying back of the brain.

As to a sense of psyche as psyche becoming unconscious, Slater (2008) draws our attention to our predilection for keeping psyche at bay, which he notes is a "dislocation of psychic disturbance from psychic ground" (2008: 352). The animectomy complex is psychic numbing, absenting feeling-awareness, or aisthesis, in the face of suffering and trauma – in short, dissociation.

Even if one were to experience this "animectomy complex" as Sheldon suggests analysts do, this very well could be akin to Giegerich's (1988/2005) call to sublimate our psychologies at the risk of crossing the threshold into madness. The amputation of soul, let alone its loss, is a caricature of psychology inasmuch as Freud (1913/1950) suggests that obsessional neurosis is a caricature of religion, hysteria is a caricature of art, and paranoid delusion is a caricature of philosophy. The point being that amputation or castration of soul pushes us into critical thinking about the place of psyche in



psychology. Psychology must show itself the barriers on which it can exercise its liberating power, thus doing more to help it to a better and more critical understanding of itself.

John Sanford (1929–2005) has articulated the disappearance, indeed the amputation of soul, from psychology. “Look in any dictionary or encyclopedia of psychology and see if there is a definition of *soul*. If there is one, it will only be a perfunctory one. The soul has gone out of modern psychology... almost” (Sanford, personal communication, October 11, 1992).

It is a valid point. Even Hillman and Ventura (1992) argue that in the 100 years since its inception, psychotherapy is not helping to improve our world. Their critique occurs only because psychotherapy demands, even wants, at least a questioning, at most a hearing. The overstimulated postmodern information age in which we live seeks instant gratification, band-aids, less infrastructure, and pills and elixirs to cure one’s ills and ailments. Depression, for example, is no longer the purview of the exponents of the talking cure; instead, we are continually bombarded with televised messages and magazine advertising sponsored by drug companies, insurance firms, and their lobbyists, who do not want time spent working through depression but rather desire the process sped up with medicines because depression is now considered a medical problem rather than a symptom of repressed psyche.

We face the problem of continuing horizontal splitting of psychology into cognitive, behavioral, neurological, abnormal, and the like, let alone within traditionally recognized Freudian, post-Freudian, Jungian, and post-Jungian psychologies. We suffer an over-willingness to medicate, due in part to this horizontal splitting. Perhaps in certain instances whereby the working through complex psychological issues in such a climate of overstimulation and rapidly advancing technology, medicines are not only useful but necessary; however, they are not the panacea the consuming public is proffered. The medicines do not help us arrive at the core or root of the problem. In all this over- and

understimulation (or its deadening/numbing), there seems to be an eradication of time for reverie, reflection, meaning-making, and myth building required to make the journey toward wholeness. It would seem that the hearty endorsements of insurance companies to use more drugs than long-term “talking cure” therapy are only prostheses for amputated souls, and there is very little hope for castrated psyches, if this indeed is the impetus of meaning intended by Sheldon.

Perhaps what is called for is a reconciliation of the differential aspect of the promethean and the regenerative aspect of the epimethean. In this way, one progresses away from dying at the back of the brain (the comfort zone of merely knowing about) toward the aesthetic of becoming being. It is psychologically legitimate to accept a criticism of psychology as a negative of the negative in order to present a true positive, not unlike the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, but mere distinction between horizontal splitting of the field and its caricature in public and private practice leads to nothing more or less than further nonobservance and repression of psychic phenomena. Even if it is perhaps good to put into practice the idea maintained in the apocryphal book of the Old Testament known as Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of ben Sirach) that leisure is necessary for the development and praxis of wisdom, we do well, as Jesus ben Sirach does, neither to discount nor dismiss and marginalize those for whom dying at the back of the brain is in fact their rightful function and place in life.

The animectomy complex presupposes that we no longer throw our hat in the ring with the notion that the gods have become our diseases. If these gods are in fact no longer *absconditus* but *absentia*, what happens to the voice of the symptom? Is it forever cast heroically into the darkness where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, or have we simply lost the ability to deal with the amputation of soul from a vertical perspective? In other words, without Eros there is no Psyche. Without symptom there is no divisibility. Without divisibility we suffer from the dying back of the brain.

So we need the courage to realize the unavoidable necessity of the death to be died by our frame of mind (Giegerich 1988/2005, p. 230). It is this that mellows us so that rebirth of the aesthetic panel might occur.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychological Types](#)

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## Animism

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## A Modern Tool: Tylor

“Animism” is not a religion. It is a theoretical construct that attempts to explain a wide range of religious beliefs and practices. It is a modern concept, a by-product of the theoretical dualistic division between subject and object, grouping together religious beliefs that breach or confuse that division. Originally defined as the erroneous attribution of life or soul to inanimate objects by primitive people, “animism” was developed as a major category in “primitive” religions, a “minimum” definition of natural religion by E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) in his 1871 six-volume, *Primitive Culture*. Today a “new animism” is developing along quite different, more ecological lines.

Traditional beliefs grouped under this concept originally included the view that a person’s or animal’s shadow, breath, blood, liver, heart, or eye holds their soul. Animals have souls, and all of the earth and sky is full of souls. Some are reincarnated ancestors, some are friendly spirits, and some are hostile ghosts. One’s shadow-soul could be devoured by a crocodile. Eating an animal’s liver could transfer some of that animal’s qualities to you. Animals or things seen in dreams or visions are believed to have souls. At the moment of death, the eerie experience of seeing a life turn into a corpse suggests to many the departure to an afterlife of a soul (*anima*) that once animated or gave life to the body. A tree may be seen as requiring placation before it can be cut, since it has a soul. Stones and gems may have souls. Ghosts and spirits of the dead are believed to populate the world and need magic, sacrifices, or food to keep them alive or satisfy their potentially dangerous tendencies, such as revenge for a wrongful death.

The ontological sources of the world, such as “Mother Earth” or the origin of a species of life may be perceived as souls in the world. Tylor contrasts animism, in which the soul is the origin of life, with materialism, in which matter is the origin of existence (Tylor 1871, I: 453).

## Evolution of Religion

Tylor argued that animism is the childish, primitive, lower, savage origin of all “higher” religions, in his scheme of the evolution of religion from an amorphous animism through more differentiated polytheism to anthropomorphic monotheism, all at war with science. R. R. Marrett, in his 1909 *The Threshold of Religion*, proposed an even earlier phase of undifferentiated “preanimism” or “animatism” (similar to electricity) that preceded animism. This reductive evolutionary scheme, promoted by others, such as Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, was often implicitly or explicitly seen as part of the August Comte’s 1822 positivist attack on religion as an early phase of illusory beliefs he called “fetishism,” that theoretically faded away in the triumph of rational modern science. Arnold van Gennep in 1909 called it “dynamism.”

## Metaphysics

Tylor and others presented their schemes as “laws” of science, but they were heavily laden with metaphysical assumptions. When Tylor speaks of animism as “extranatural interference and causeless spontaneity” (Tylor 1871, I: 3), he assumes that we know completely what nature is and what it excludes. When he speaks of “inanimate objects,” he is picturing the world through the Cartesian lens of the subject/object metaphysic. Speaking of “cause,” he assumes that this is a universal principle that is omni-explanatory, and religion is a cognitive error. This is heavy-duty metaphysics, inflated by the narrow horizons of nineteenth-century positivist confidence in science. It is a nexus of

a major ontological feud between archaic cultures and modern industrial society. Believing that souls inhabit the world outside human minds is essential to “animism,” and believing that *no* souls inhabit the world outside the human mind is essential to the scientific worldview.

Attempting to make sense of the reports from cultures newly discovered by European global travelers, Tylor’s theory of animism did explain, for example, that funeral rites requiring the deaths of the wife, weapons, food, and servants of a powerful man had some crude form of reason and practical value. Within their worldview, all these souls [*animae*] were going to heaven to serve their master’s soul. But to Tylor this kind of reason was finally subjective superstitious nonsense to be disposed of by the presumed progress of new scientific knowledge and more advanced races’ higher morality that respects human life.

## Survivals

Tylor was Oxford’s first Professor of Anthropology when he retired in 1909, but his assumptions were soon eclipsed by more functional anthropology, which stressed social functions of religion rather than evolutionary progress, and psychoanalytic psychology, which saw the unconscious and symbolic side of archaic religions, rather than the early rational, practical side.

Tylor did see that animism survives in modern times, both in indigenous people’s tribal customs, such as sun-worship and divination, and in “higher” cultures’ superstitions, such as medieval witchcraft, spiritualism, and games of chance. He believed, as did many, that contemporary “savage” practices are survivals from archaic times, so they allow us to reconstruct past animism. But Tylor was generally criticized for seeing archaic religions as too intellectual and rational, rather than emotional and intuitive.

After René Descartes proclaimed “I think therefore I am,” which helped shove previous intuitions of “animist” soul-in-the-world aside as subjective irrationalities, these intuitions were sometimes happily dismissed as

superstitions and sometimes retained as mystical phenomena. The Romantics kept open a peek at soul-in-the-world. Nineteenth-century spiritualists maintained communion with what they saw as departed souls still in the world.

In the shadow of apparently triumphant industrialism, some contemporary indigenous people still hold to the archaic ontology when they say things such as “that mountain has spirit . . . ask Mother Nature to spare you some meat . . . worship the land, the ground and the stars and the skies, for they are the ones that have spirits. They are the mighty spirits which guide and direct us, which help us to survive” (Trimble 1986, pp. 24–47). Some cultures, as in Asia, still believe that eating a shark’s fin, rhino’s horn, or tiger’s penis, for example, can transfer some of that animal’s soul – aggression or sexuality – to you at dinner. “Bush meat” from African monkeys is still prized at some European restaurants. This demand is the source of ongoing bloody damage to wild animals. Children’s teddy bears, pets, and toys and people’s homes and hometowns may be said to have souls. Such enduring childish or “primitive” practices indicate that the nineteenth-century evolutionary scheme that attempted to leave “animism” in the dust of developing rationality in technological cultures was not as triumphal as some believed.

One might detect elements of animism in major religions. Anthropomorphism in general contains elements of animism, seeing generalized numinous powers as persons. In Christianity, the incarnation of Christ could be seen anthropomorphically as an embodiment of the religious instinct. Seeing certain literalist beliefs as the devil may be seen as animist. Seeing gods as fathers, mothers, animals, or any earthy form may be seen as a form of animism. Statues, icons, paintings, dancers, and all the many ways that spirituality is embodied may be seen as animism today. The Eastern Orthodox Christians have made a refined distinction in their debates about the presence of the divine in icons. The “essence” of God cannot be known in an icon, but the lesser “energy” of the divine may be felt. Giving spirits “spirit houses” as in Indonesia or setting out rice balls as food for ancestors in

a domestic shrine in Asia is animist. Animism survives, however refined, today, but not without continuing opposition.

## Depth Psychology

Modern depth psychology has also edged toward the perception of souls in the world. On the one hand, it helped rationalism strip the world of soul with its important theory of “projection.” This theory describes well how we all see out in the world what is actually rooted in unconscious dynamics. Sigmund Freud borrowed this concept from nineteenth-century culture, where theatrical *Camera Obscurae* at carnivals frightened people with tricks making pictures or actors seem to be spirits hovering in a dark room (Bailey 1988). Similarly the “magic lantern” (now called the “slide projector”) was widely used by traveling performers to astonish and frighten people across Europe (Bailey 1986). Ludwig Feuerbach used the concept in 1841, saying that “The personality of God is nothing else than the projected personality of man” (*Die Persoenlichkeit Gottes ist die entäusserte Persoenlichkeit des Menschen*) (Feuerbach 1957, p. 226).

The key German word “*entäusserte*” translates “externalization,” not “projection,” but Feuerbach’s English translator George Eliot used the term “projection.” So when Freud adopted the concept in 1895 (the same year that the movie projector was invented by Edison and others), “projection” became a strong psychoanalytic image for withdrawing soul from the world, while it helped patients discover their inner lives rather than imagine their souls only in the world. While a healing concept, it also helped strip the world of animism and soul.

## Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud opened psychology up to the meaningfulness of the unconscious psyche as a healing factor, and the importance of symbolic language for psychology, but he retained key

elements of nineteenth-century materialism, such as the subjective interiority of the psyche, dynamics such as projection, and the view of religion as an infantile illusion. In psychoanalysis, the transference/countertransference relation in therapy has evoked much heated debate about the presence of crude, infantile, refined, or even transcendent presences in the analytic container. Some see it as a necessary element in therapy, others do not. Some allow for it to become actively erotic, others do not. But it is at least analogous to animism in its unconscious perception of psychological and spiritual dynamics in the analyst-client interaction field, sometimes infantile, sometimes shadowy, but rarely missing in such an intimate alliance, for it provides an externalization of key unconscious dynamics to be worked out, as animism does in religion.

## Carl Jung

Carl Jung adopted many of Freud's psychoanalytic discoveries, such as the meaningfulness of the unconscious psyche, but rejected Freud's focus on sexuality as central and his denigration of religion. He also opened his "archetypal" depth psychology, however hesitantly, a step further toward "animism." First, Jung developed his theory of the collective unconscious, which moved psychology out of a narrow subjectivism. This expanded the psyche into a deeper and wider sense of soul in the human community and history. He also elevated mythology to a symbolic language of the collective unconscious, giving traditions such as alchemy a positive meaning denied since the Enlightenment. He also showed how myths and dreams echo each other, both coming from the collective unconscious. A key therapeutic practice is to take the motifs of a dream (e.g., virgin girl) and search for parallels in archaic myths (e.g., Virgin Mary), thus amplifying and externalizing its meanings with historical and anthropomorphic depth.

After Jung's transforming near-death experience in 1944 (Jung 1961/1971), which opened him to a more cosmic sense of the soul's journey, Jung became even more mystical and worked on

uncovering the deeper meanings of traditions such as alchemy. The ancient and medieval alchemists wrote about transforming base materials such as lead into treasures such as gold, and Jung realized that they were talking in code language about their own soul transformations, for example, transforming depression and death into a treasure, the "philosopher's stone." These were in part "projections" from their inner lives onto outer matter, but Jung shifted closer to "animism" and religion. In the alchemist Khunrath he reads: "It is the Aqua Permanens, eternally living." "The 'radical moisture' is animated . . . by a fiery spark of the World-soul, for the spirit of the Lord filleth the whole world" (Jung 1963, CW XIV: para. 50).

Jung concluded his extensive alchemical explorations with the term "*mysterium coniunctionis*," meaning "Everything that happens, however, happens in the same 'one world' and is a part of it. For this reason events must possess an *a priori* aspect of unity, though it is difficult to establish this by the statistical method" (Jung 1963, CW XIV: para. 662).

Although Jung sought to retain his Kantian subject/object epistemology and his role as scientific psychologist rather than theologian, toward the end of his life, he repeatedly tiptoed across the border between subjectivist psychology and a mystical sense of the oneness of the world (*unus mundus*) that allowed for a refined "animism" and religion.

Jung also saw many archetypal constellations, as between parents and children, as forms of participation mystique, Lucien Levy-Bruhl's term for Jung's sense of the wholeness of archetypal collective attractions, repulsions, and identifications as with tribe, society, religion, or nation. "The all-embracing womb of Mother Church is anything but a metaphor, and the same is true of Mother Earth, Mother Nature, and 'matter' in general" (Jung 1963, CW X: 64–71).

One form this paradoxical struggle took was Jung's concept of synchronicity or "meaningful coincidence," outside the narrower laws of causality, such as extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, or precognition. Once a patient was discussing a dream of a golden

scarab (a symbol of rebirth), and at that moment, a very similar scarabaeid beetle (rose-chaffer) flew to the window (Jung 1963, *CW* VIII, 843).

Jung's critics call these explorations 'mysticism,' and in them one might see elements of "animism." The later Jung did acknowledge that he stretched the boundaries of modern science. However, the many mysteries in areas such as physics' subsequent explorations of dark matter have become the topics of postmodern questioning of the certainty of science, for which Jung was a precursor. Moreover, Jung never lost his strong ego and ability to step back and analyze the mysterious depths of soul-in-the-world that he uncovered.

### James Hillman

Of Jung's successors, James Hillman pressed forward the issue of soul-in-the-world farther. In *Revisioning Psychology*, Hillman devotes an entire chapter to "Personifying or Imagining Things," where he criticizes the subjectivist view of defensive projections "out there" being withdrawn back "in here" and seen as merely fictional or imaginary, understandable only for the irrational: children, primitives, or the insane. He challenges this metaphysical assumption pervading psychology, and instead seeks to "penetrate the interior realm of animism, for we are in search of anima, or soul" (Hillman 1975, p. 3). This metaphysic is the real defense, he argues, against the psychic power, not as allegories under the rule of reason, but of vital, autonomous animated images. Against this religious and psychological literalism, he urges being in the world and experiencing it as a psychological field. The ancient Greeks did this when they personified the psychic forces in culture such as fame, insolence, timing, hope, ugliness, friendship, modesty, mercy, peace, and in the world as dawn and night. This poetic language is necessarily mythological but must be rescued from its rationalist prison and released to free the soul to experience the vitality of the inner and outer worlds. Hillman says: "Subject and object, man and Gods, I and Thou, are not

apart and isolated each with a different sort of being, one living or real, the other dead or imaginary. The world and the Gods are dead or alive, according to the condition of our souls" (Hillman 1975, p. 16).

While these worlds of night and hope are within us, we also live within them. The epidemic of depression in our society, Hillman says, may well be not simply personal problems but feelings of collective grief and helplessness about the way industrial society has ravaged the world with pollution: "I know now that a great deal of the depression I suffered in Los Angeles was due to the effect of the smog. . . (1992, p. 82)." Avoiding literalism, we must also see through varieties of soul-in-the-world to the deep mysteries that they disclose, the one collective world below the ordinary particulars of life – the *anima mundi* – soul of the world. This is a de-literalized, radical, and highly refined form of the old "animism."

### Thomas Moore

Thomas Moore is another archetypal therapist in the Jungian tradition who presses forward the phenomenon of soul-in-the-world. In *Care of the Soul* he says, "Our felt relationship to things" in a soul-ecology "wouldn't allow us to pollute or to perpetrate ugliness. We couldn't let a beautiful ocean bay become a sewer system for shipping and manufacturing because our hearts would protest this violation of soul" (Moore, 270). *Anima mundi*, he says, is not a "mystical philosophy requiring high forms of meditation, nor does it ask for a return to primitive animism" (Moore, 281). It involves simply a cultivating and feeling the arts of life with depth – art, music, food, and gardens. This shift is needed to care for our souls more fully, to balance the one-sided rationality that industrial society demands.

In *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life*, Moore goes further and explores "enchantment," as when one walks in the woods and feels transported by the wonder and may even imaginatively feel the inward voices of the trees and waterfalls speaking. From the farm spirit to garden paradises, Moore urges industrial



societies to reawaken ancient songs in the heart of nature spirituality to head off our ecological suffering with a radically new openness to the mysterious and enchanting depths of nature.

Many other thinkers are exploring these same themes from various angles. Martin Heidegger offers a powerful and influential new ontology of Being-in-the-world (*dasein*). Jane Goodall has shifted animal studies toward accepting the souls of animals rather than behaviorally treating them as machines. Graham Harvey is writing about a new animism, as *Animism: Respecting the Living World*. Thomas Berry is exploring a *Universe Story* that integrates theology and nature. The old animism was a way of clearing the world for industrialism of the very soul that the new animism is reawakening, but as it develops, the new animism will engage in a dialogue with science and religion that will change both.

## See Also

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Synchronicity](#)

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## Anthropocentric View

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The anthropocentric view is a human-centered ideology. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are all religions that are considered to have a strong anthropocentric view. This owes to the origin mythologies shared among these religions that claim all of creation was created by God for the use of humans, as in the Biblical *Genesis*:

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'

God blessed them, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'

God said, 'I have given you every plant bearing seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food' (Gen 1:26–29).

In the anthropocentric view, humans are the favored children of the creator. This is in contrast to other religions such as Buddhism, which doctrinally ascribe a favored status to all beings, as in *The Lotus Sutra*:

I cause the Dharma rain to rain on all equally,  
never lax or neglectful.  
When all the various living beings  
hear my Law,  
they receive it according to their power,  
dwelling in their different environments. . . .  
The equality of the Buddha's preaching  
is like a rain of a single flavor,  
but depending on the nature of the living being,  
the way in which it is received is not uniform,  
just as the various plants and trees  
each receive the moisture in a different manner  
(Watson 2000, pp. 46–47).

Philosophical movements, such as the Deep Ecology movement, which are expressed through radical environmentalist and animal-rights movements, favor a "biocentric" or even "earth-centric" view, in which the entire ecosystems are seen as the primary placeholder of importance. In such a view, humans are only important as one factor in an interconnected web of relationships.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)

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## Anthropomorphism

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Anthropomorphism is the portrayal of the gods and spiritual powers beyond and in the world as having human appearance and qualities. It critically reverses the saying that "humans were made in the image of God" to "the gods were made in the images of humans." Theriomorphism is the analogous portrayal of spirits in animal form. Anthropomorphism is an ancient, widespread aspect of religion, evident in statues of gods and goddesses as if they were human, as in Egypt (Osiris), Greece (Aphrodite), or India (Krishna). They may blend human and animal images, as in animal-headed human figures. The Roman orator Cicero (106–43 BCE) complained of the "poisonous honey of the poets, who present us with gods afire with rage or mad with lust, and make us the spectators of their wars." But he concluded that "we must admit there are gods," due to innate ideas of the divine (Cicero 1972, pp. 87–88). A critical view of anthropomorphism may criticize the former "poisonous honey" and debate the latter "innate ideas of the divine."

Anthropomorphism is an issue that combines both ontological and psychological elements. It appears in both natural and cultural contexts. All have thick layers of mythic expressions. (1) Ontological anthropomorphism appears in both transcendent, heavenly theologies such as Zeus and immanent nature religions such as the Pueblo Kachinas (Kachina). Many combine the two, as with Ishtar, Babylonian goddess of





**Anthropomorphism, Fig. 1** Hindu Hanuman, illustrating anthropomorphism Calcutta, 1882 (Art from Wilkins 1882)

fertility, who lives at least part of the year in the heavens with other anthropomorphic deities and descends to the underworld of death. (2) Human psychological drives or archetypal images also provide ripe opportunities for mythic anthropomorphism, from heroes (Superman) to lovers (Helen of Troy) and enemies (Satan). (3) The tendency to personify powers of the cosmos and nature continues in the names of planets (Jupiter), hurricanes (Katrina), and animals (Hanuman, the Indian monkey-headed god (Fig. 1)). (4) We find the urge plentifully in cultural artifacts – puppets (Pinocchio), dolls (Barbie), and machines (android robots – The Terminator). Theologically, the questions are whether the gods are “nothing but” finite human images, whether the ultimate cosmic reality is in any way analogous to images of our planet’s life forms, whether humans can participate in a portion of the energies of the divine, or whether we can know nothing of the divine through human images. Psychologically, are anthropomorphic images inevitable? Ontologically are they necessary?

Ontologically, the question is whether or not anthropomorphic images are accurate expressions of the ultimate reality that they seem to signify. Is God really fatherly? This cannot be

proven, so in religion believers must acknowledge their faith or, if more forceful, press their orthodoxy and literalism, either tolerantly or intolerantly. Psychologically, the question of the role of imagination in perception and cognition is central, whether in strict literalism or poetic metaphor. The psychology of the unconscious since Freud (1974) helps to see anthropomorphism theoretically as an unconscious tendency that is an inevitable psychic dynamic with its own patterns, as in dream symbolism where a human represents a dynamic, such as sex or moral guidance. Freud, however, while showing the inevitable and meaningful nature of unconscious symbols, saw them as distortions of psychological reality and tended to interpret images narrowly to fit his theory of the sexual predominance of unconscious drives – guns as male genitals, boats as female, etc. Oedipus and Narcissus are the classic Freudian mythic anthropomorphic images. His theory of projection, rooted in Feuerbach’s 1841 critique of God, offers a strong theoretical basis for understanding anthropomorphisms as symbolic externalizations of inner dynamics, such as threatening Oedipal fathers seen in society (teachers), myths (villains), or religious authority figures (God). Can anthropomorphism be fully rejected? Should it be? These questions have been answered in a cluster of five types of arguments: the arguments that interpret anthropomorphism as disposable, necessary, analogous, personifications, or presence.

### The Disposable Argument

Anthropomorphism is inevitable but unnecessary, in this argument, because it is disposable entirely in the scientific method’s rigorous epistemology of eliminating subjective additions to objective reality, which excludes any religion. Scientific efforts to disenchant the world attacked the attribution of human qualities to nature in order to clear the way for a more rational analysis. Zeus no longer throws thunderbolts from the heavens when science can give a better and fear-reducing explanation. Galileo’s rejection of the cosmology of an earth-centered universe was so controversial

because it attacked the parochialism of the anthropological assumption that humans are the center of the cosmos. Nineteenth-century anthropologists such as Edward Tylor culminated the modern attack on anthropomorphism in animism, stripping the world further of whispers of the sacred (Tylor). Anthropomorphism is seen by most scientists as an outdated, distorting primitive regression of children, poets, and madmen, which has been replaced by scientific method that requires its distortions to be removed from the real world, truly known only by scientific method. The epistemology here assumes that imaginative language and its symbols have no valid part to play in rational, scientific knowledge and that religious language can be stripped of its primitive layer. Some call anthropomorphism a “pathetic” fallacy, referring to the “pathos” (Greek for suffering) or passion in the images supposedly clouding reality.

But anthropomorphism has not entirely left the scientific stage. Scientists debate this issue in animal ethology, for example, where some name the elephants, chimps, or whales that they study. Jane Goodall (Goodall and Bekoff 2002) names her chimps and Katy Payne (1998) names her elephants, describing mothers, aunts, and bulls, using family analogies, blended with detached scientific analysis. They develop empathy for them and even hint at a sense of the sacredness of their existence, threatened by poachers. Those who oppose such empathy may number the animals they study to prevent empathic anthropomorphizing. But can animal behavior be understood at any depth without making analogies to our own animal feelings? Astronomers still anthropomorphize planets with names of ancient gods – Venus, Mars, and Jupiter – and physicists describe aspects of dark matter as “machos” and “wimps” (Greist). The best efforts at “objectivity” have not succeeded at eliminating all anthropomorphism from science. Unconscious remnants or conscious empathy has not been shed and perhaps cannot or should not be shed. The unconscious is difficult to eliminate in thought, and ethical considerations such as empathy for animal suffering may make some anthropomorphism ethically valid.

The ancient worldwide anthropomorphic principle of sacrifice was based on the portrait of divinities that required to be fed by sacrifices of valuables such as cattle, in order to bestow on humans their gifts, such as children, food, or military victory. The gradual ethical humanization of Western religions stopped this practice. Human sacrifice was rejected in the story of Abraham almost sacrificing his son Isaac, for example. Then Jewish animal sacrifice finally stopped in 70 CE, when the bloody sacrificial practices of the second temple, destroyed by the Romans, gave way to more humanistic local synagogue rabbinical teaching. Christians interpreted Jesus as the “last sacrifice” to God to atone for human sin.

The disposable argument still influences theologians in a different way. Rudolf Bultmann sought to demythologize the New Testament, not just to reveal the true historical events, but to strip away the anthropomorphic mythic accidents of its environment and translate it into abstract existentialist categories for a purer theology (Bultmann). The myth of the Messiah becomes faith in the freedom to live an authentic life. Today some biblical scholars, such as the “Jesus Seminar” group, continue the nineteenth-century effort to find the historical foundation of the Bible by eliminating as many mythic symbols as possible (Jesus Seminar). They assume that the only valid language of faith is historical, not imaginative. The problem with this approach is that it is unable to rid itself of its own embedded imaginative language.

Gender is a sore point here, when feminists accuse scientists of reserving true scientific objectivity to the male psyche and charge theologians with still referring to God as “He,” thus retaining the father myth of God. Feminists are experimenting with using images of God such as mother, friend, or lover (McFague). Others see in science an anthropomorphic assumption that human rationality, through scientific method, is capable of knowing it all. This is called “Scientism” (Stenmark 2001). But despite its successes and empirical testing, it may be that science is able to know only a narrow range of existence and, by ignoring the rest, distorts its

picture of the whole of reality, as expressed by our images of flawed android robots and crises such as global warming. The disposable argument depends upon conscious knowledge and neglects unconscious anthropomorphizing.

Iconoclasm, or “image smashing,” is a cultural and religious attack on images, especially of the divine. Judaism built iconoclasm into the Ten Commandments, saying “no graven images” were allowed of anything in heaven or on earth, perhaps reacting to their experience in Egypt, where anthropomorphic and theriomorphic divinities were so numerous. Similarly Islam rejects human and animal images in its art and allows only calligraphy and plant forms. Theoretically iconoclastic Roman Catholic churches are full of frescoes, paintings, and statues of Jesus, Mary, and saints. Protestants discarded numerous visual images and decorations in churches, so much that Calvinist churches were described as having only “four walls and a sermon,” stressing the “Word” rather than the visual image. All, however, use verbal, literary images profusely in their faiths – God as warrior, liberator, king, harsh judge, merciful, and, above all, male and fatherly. Buddhism stands out among highly anthropomorphic Eastern religions for its theoretical rejection of anthropomorphism, although in practice Buddhists use many images, such as statues and painting of Buddhas such as Amita Buddha in China. Also Buddhism’s acceptance of the widespread Asian belief in reincarnation retains a sense of transmigrating spirits pervading all sentient beings. The iconoclastic view that anthropomorphism is disposable neglects the unconscious or unacknowledged role of imagery in culture.

### The Necessary Argument

Anthropomorphism is inevitable and necessary, some argue, because its imaginative forms are a functional part of perception, knowledge, and religion. It provides necessary organizational frameworks that reduce chaos and fear. Imagination is a part of the way we think, and how can we

avoid thinking in metaphors from our environment? For most who think this way, there is no divinity behind the images. Here anthropomorphizing is a type of imaginative projection into the world that is a necessary way of stabilizing the world. The supposed objective world cannot be fully known, only the “marked” world of meanings. They are subject to critical analysis and change, but are not all disposable. Astrological anthropomorphisms, for example, can be withdrawn as erroneous projections, but certain symbols, such as scientist-heroes, are needed to stave off chaos, fear, and despair (Sierksma).

In Holland, Fokke Sierksma (1956) thought that anthropomorphic gods, such as a lawmaking, loving fatherly God, are needed to complete the *terra incognita* beyond the world ruled by ego. They are needed subjective gap fillers in a world whose depth below the subject-object divide finally eludes us. But he believes that God is dead. These psychological and theological constructs can be modified by critical thought.

Stewart Guthrie (1993) argues that anthropomorphism pervades perception for good reasons. We are predisposed, shows cognitive science, to see the human form and qualities everywhere, and the more organized these “faces in the clouds” are, the stronger perception is. The more we see what we expect to see, in familiar images and categories, the clearer and more certain knowledge or religion seems. But comfort is not a function for anthropomorphism because some images, such as Satan, are frightening. For Guthrie, anthropomorphism is the very core of religious experience, and any religion that seeks to eliminate the gods is not a religion. For Guthrie there is no real god – the clothes have no king. This position gives more importance to anthropomorphism, but psychologically, it seeks to keep the world ruled by cognitive ego-consciousness, theoretically in control of all its worldly imaginative projections.

The problem with this view is a lack of critical flexibility. The familiarity of the frameworks makes them seem unchangeable. In technological culture, the solution to problems is too often imagined to be just more technology in the same framework (reenforced by science fiction

anthropomorphisms), not a reexamination of the assumptions of technology itself, such as the domination of nature. Much anthropomorphism is taken literally, especially in religion. Fundamentalist religions claim patriarchal privileges, because God or an incarnation of God is male, and literal views of creation and social roles because it says so in the holy text. This blocks the critical flexibility of reforming outdated anthropomorphisms. Also, mainstream religions that allow some critical adaptations need to ignore old parts of the sacred text, such as slavery and patriarchy. This selective neglect can become embarrassing, as when critics point out the pervasive violence in major religious texts, which become blessings on bloody nationalisms (Nelson-Pallmeyer).

### The Analogy Argument

Theism is the major religious expression of the divine with human qualities. While most believers talk as if the anthropomorphic images of the gods were literally true (e.g., God the Father), philosophers and theologians have wrestled with how this could be. Maimonides argued that God is absolute and without anthropomorphic qualities, but organs such as the heart are metaphorically used to describe God in similes to awaken a sense of “His” higher spiritual reality. The Neo-Platonic principle that by *participation* the divine intelligible world descends into the material world influenced many, notably the Christian Eastern Orthodox, who struggled with whether the divine is present in their icons and concluded that earthly forms can convey the “energy” of God, but not the “essence.” Very influential has been the ancient principle of *analogia*, expressed by Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite, who wrote that creatures have the capacity to receive divine ideas, but only by analogy, or in proportions, not giving complete knowledge of God. Hugh of St. Victor wrote that the world is a book written by God, and many saw in nature the signature of God. The Roman Catholic principle of *analogia entis*, or analogy of being, is the acknowledgement

that human images are analogies, proportional images of the vast mystery of being itself. Thomas Aquinas wrote that human qualities such as goodness are figurative and limited in proportion to God’s goodness (O’Brien 1981; Walker 1985).

In India the *Rigveda* (Anonymous 1981, pp. x, 90) describes the creation of four social castes – brahmanic priests, warriors and government officials, shepherds and merchants, and servants – from the body of the anthropomorphic Purusha, a sacrificial personification of the world soul. Thus, the entire caste system is justified on an anthropomorphic analogy. Later Vedantic gurus mingle anthropomorphisms such as Ishvara (Brahman with qualities) and Brahman as the ground of all physical experience but stress the underlying oneness of all existence in Brahman (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957, p. 507).

The subtle quality of the analogy principle makes it difficult for theistic traditions to avoid anthropomorphism. Even sophisticated theologians cling to literalisms such as the maleness of God and Jesus or the Brahmanic priestly tradition to justify a male-only priesthood. Again, unconscious anthropomorphism may overcome the best of intentions in this position.

### The Personifications Argument

Anthropomorphism can also be seen as a robust type of imagination, which is acknowledged to be a full partner in knowledge and faith, a valid epistemology of the heart that is essential to a full life. In archetypal psychology there is an argument that when anthropomorphic (or theriomorphic) images become fascinating in society, nature, culture, or dreams, they are inevitable and necessary, but not literal, archetypal personifications of the soul with important messages. They should not be seen as completely disposable or suitable for conversion into an abstraction such as “the father archetype.” One should, especially in psychoanalysis, explore the meaning of these images, for they bring important messages from the personal and collective unconscious. In imaginative conversation with these figures, one may,

for example, realize that one has outgrown their childhood image of their father, may be able to forgive him his flaws, and thus release painful self-judgments, anxiety, or depression. This helps free religions of fatherly anthropomorphisms as well.

Such working with anthropomorphic images of psychic dynamics does not take the personifications literally, or translate them into conscious theories, but imaginatively engages them as meaningful expressions of real psychological forces. There is a paradoxical involved empathy yet an ability to stand back and withdraw from the drama, think about it, and integrate it into daily life. This takes a strong yet imaginative ego able to relax and journey into the “underworld,” play with personifications without being overcome, and return to ordinary ego-consciousness.

This theory does not seek to follow overly conscious, literal scientific methods, but is used in psychotherapy, where symbolic unconscious dynamics behind conscious life are discovered and brought to the surface for conscious reflection. Archetypal theory, originating with Carl Jung, explores the depths of the collective unconscious and helps see the meanings of the unlimited range of anthropomorphic images that form an inevitable part of the soul, but do not cancel religion. Archetypes are unconscious, collective psychological patterns on a continuum with biological instincts. How, for example, does the psyche experience terror and evil? Jungians emphasize the strong role of shadow figures, often anthropomorphic, mythic images of evil: Satan, Hitler, villains, monsters, beasts, Frankenstein, and the terrifying, repressed “other.” For Jung they show that in analysis one typically confronts the secret shadow (e.g., bad parent) and hopefully finds a treasure in it (e.g., good parent). Each archetypal pattern has its shadow. The lover Jung described as the *anima* (a man’s dream mother, lover, or shadow witch) and the *animus* (a woman’s dream father, lover, or shadow beast). Contemporary archetypal feminists let goddess images express the wide range of feminine roles (Bolen; Young-Eisendraith and Dawson 1997).

Jung emphasized the central, regulating role of the Self archetype, which he saw as an image of

psychological divinity with innumerable symbols, such as the abstract mandala circles, animals (lion “kings”), nature (mountains, precious stones, and metals), and humans (avatars, incarnations, prophets priestesses, innocent children). This symbolic flexibility in expressing divinity opened many doors for theology, notably the feminist goddess explorations and ecological nature spirituality (Jung 1953–1978, Vol. 9, Pt. 2, Chap. IV “The Self,” para 43–67).

Archetypal theory offers a valuable way of seeing anthropomorphism, free of naïve or dogmatic literalism, reductive scientism, or excessively cognitive ego-centered consciousness. It allows for anthropomorphic symbolism, but at the same time, it sees it as a kind of poetic, mythical play of the soul that can be made conscious only partly but is subject to critical analysis and change. So God the “father,” for example, is a useful way to express that aspect of divinity, but it is incomplete. The great mystery of the infinite divine cannot be reduced to one-half of this planet’s human reproductive system and its mental styles. The beauty of the goddess in all her spectrum of powers and the unspeakable wonder of the universe and earth’s rainbow of preverbal forces – stars, stones, mountains, lakes, animals, plants, etc. – can also be seen as expressions of the numinous immensity, not just those aspects that can be symbolized by an anthropomorphic fatherlike God (Jung 1953–1978).

The post-Jungian analyst James Hillman (1975) emphasizes the value of “personifying” or imagining. He rejects the “disposable” theory of anthropomorphism for being nominalist by denying the natural validity of imaginal experiences. Personifying respects images as they appear in gods or mythic figures. Much as an author’s fictional characters develop their own realities, personifying is an immediate receptive experience. It is a way of being in the world and feeling the world as a numinous, soul-filled psychological field. Ancient Greeks and Romans personified psychic powers such as hope, timing, night, and ugliness, not as unreal illusions, but as images of real phenomena. Athens had altars to friendship, modesty,



mercy, peace, victory, and fortune. When such powers are not given their imaginative due, they may become illnesses, Jung stressed. Personified images have feeling tones and can be cherished or may reveal shadowy truths under the covers that need to emerge. Plotinus, Michelangelo, Vico, and Blake all saw the necessity to personify mythic perspectives to understand the soul's intentions. Distinct from the dead world of industrial society, personification lets the world speak. Moonlight becomes love, dream villains demand attention and transformation, and gods offer salvation from suffering. Personifying is natural and only demythologizing is unnatural, Hillman argues. People may fear a personified world as a child fears the dark, but befriending the stories as imaginative expressions of deep forces of the collective soul is transforming, like a child's security doll or popular adult heroes who conquer evil. Anthropomorphism may be a necessary way of charming fearful strangeness out of the world.

Gods symbolically express deep and powerful collective forces that are inevitably experienced as human in appearance and qualities, but at the same time, if not literalized, they can be taken into the imaginative psyche for what they can provide. The monotheistic God is not a literal father, but the father-ness of "his" image offers an image of life-giving, nurturing, and loving moral guidance. Conversely, the goddess offers "her" life-giving, nurturing, and loving moral guidance with a different emotional tone, perhaps dancing rather than fighting. Many-armed gods express their many manifestations. These autonomous images are both in us and we are in them. They reduce the hard-nosed, literal influence of cognitive ego-consciousness and draw us into their enchanting world under the surface of control. We can interact with their different aspects and be transformed by them, practicing karate, dance, love or forgiveness, as they suggest. This process of soul-making requires faith in their powers, not as literal people out there or back then, but as personified soul-in-the-world. This is a difficult but stimulating challenge for industrial consciousness and theism.

## The Presence Argument

The most abstract theoretical response to anthropomorphism goes beyond iconoclasm and personification to an affirmation of the mystical presence of an impersonal ultimate reality, not a thing because it is the source of all things, beyond yet within – *neti, neti*, not this, not that, say the *Upanishads*. This *theologia negativa* points to the divine darkness, the cloud of unknowing, the deep mystery beyond all human images and knowledge. Some speak of a pure consciousness, difficult to perceive and articulate, subtle and quiet, but deep enough to transcend various religions and provide a foundation for the many images and theologies. Meditation is their common practice. Eastern traditions more readily differentiate between higher and lower forms of religious practices. In Hindu Vedanta, the absolute is impersonal, and personalist theism and *bhakti* devotion are seen as a lesser practice. South Asian traditions commonly distinguish between conventional truth and absolute truth. Be still and know, say Buddhists such as Thich Nhat Hanh. The Zen monk meditates with an anthropomorphic statue of the Buddha yet seeks nothingness. Find your own face before you were born, they say, and find ways of speaking of the great mystery that are original and authentic for you. This is a difficult challenge. This path is atheistic, in the sense of denying (but tolerating) the need for theistic personal images in the quest for ultimate spiritual reality (Thich Nhat Hanh).

This position acknowledges that for most people, images of divinity are inevitable and necessary, but for those who undertake deeper practices, the masks of the gods fall away and an ineffable, powerful experience of ultimate reality emerges that is beyond words and pictures. This "apophatic" position sees images as useful approximations but disposable earthly images that must be set aside. Images of "light" are common here or, philosophically, abstractions such as being, presence, emptiness, or Buddha Mind.

Plato sought to purge philosophy of anthropomorphic Greek gods with his abstract ontology of

being, but he also told many myths, such as a creator god (Plato 1961, *Timaeus* 69b). Michel de Montaigne summed up a long debate, writing that:

The least-known things are the fittest to be deified; wherefore to make gods of ourselves, like antiquity, passes the utmost bounds of feeble-mindedness.... But to have made gods of our condition, the imperfection of which we should know, to have attributed to them desire, anger, vengeance, marriages, generation kinships, love and jealousy, our limbs and our bones, our fevers and our pleasures, our deaths, our burials - this must have come from a marvelous intoxication of the human intelligence (de Montaigne 1575/1958, p. 383).

Nineteenth-century religion scholars envisioned an evolution of religions from naïve animism and anthropomorphism, as with the Egyptian gods with animal heads, upward to an iconoclasm that purified religion into a more abstract theistic god that retained personal qualities. But such a preliminary evolutionary schema is not valid, given the continuing multiplicity of religious forms today. Mystics commonly stand for the “presence” position, emphasizing cosmic mystery and the importance of the presence of ultimate reality found in experience, over theorizing. Meditation, near-death experiences, and visions are common ways that this ineffable presence is experienced.

Buddhism is noted for its emphasis on simply sitting quietly in meditation, cultivating mindfulness and clearing the mind of worldly distractions, awaiting the appearance of the unnameable. Images such as statues of the Buddha, incense, robes, and traditional monastic practices, especially meditation, are central, but the awakening cannot be forced by form. Poetic, original, and paradoxical names such as “the sound of one hand clapping” are honored as creative approximations, but not dogmatic concepts that harden cognitively and lose their energy. The bottom drops out of the ordinary ego and compassionate energy floods the humble practitioner who is grasped by a power beyond anthropomorphic representations.

One aspect of this approach is sometimes the attempt to leap over the passions, emotions, and

grief of the normal ego and transcend them, rather than wrestle with them, as in psychoanalysis. Equanimity in the face of suffering, indulging in neither pleasure nor pain, is the goal, in contrast to the Western post-Freudian encounter with the unconscious soul on the way to transcendent peace. Some, such as Jung, say that, no matter how spiritual, any effort to leap over the passions is mistaken.

Anthropomorphism is a natural and strong human way of trying to make sense of the world. Some embrace it, consciously or unconsciously. But it can interfere with the search for truth and needs critical detachment to prevent its limiting control of thought or belief. Critics who seek to eliminate anthropomorphism entirely should acknowledge the difficulty of knowing nature and ultimate reality behind the images of unconscious mythic dramas. Psychological personification and meditative wisdom point beyond literalism and abstract rationalism to poetic and pre-linguistic experiences that may ring with echoes of a far but near power.

## See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)

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## Antichrist

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## Introduction

Antichrist, at the most basic level of understanding, is simply any opponent of Christ or, more commonly, *the* ultimate final opponent of Christ. This figure embodies all that is antithetical to Christ, Christ's teachings, and Christ's salvific action in the world as Christians understand these concepts. While based in a few rather obscure passages of Christian scripture, the concept of Antichrist and accompanying narratives and descriptions about Antichrist's identifying characteristics, deeds, and context have developed in a long and rich tradition from the earliest days of Christianity.

Antichrist is mentioned as such only once each in two of the three epistles of John in the Christian New Testament. However, Christian theologians from very early on began associating Antichrist with the Beast described in the scenes of final judgment in the Apocalypse of John (also known as the Book of Revelation), as well as with apocalyptic imagery in the Hebrew Scriptures book of the prophet Daniel, and with brief apocalyptic moments in each of the four canonical Christian gospels. The main



thrust of the Antichrist story is that in the final years of life as human beings know it on Earth, Antichrist through his charismatic powers of deception will come to hold sway over the affairs of humankind for a period of 7 years. At the end of this period, Antichrist will ultimately be defeated by Christ and condemned to eternal torment in the lake of fire, after which all people, living or dead, will be subject to final judgment and either eternal reward or punishment for their earthly deeds and faith (or lack thereof). Adele Yarbro Collins relates Antichrist imagery to a primeval “combat myth” of cosmic struggle between good and evil at both the beginning and end of the world.

The earliest influential expansion of the Antichrist legend beyond scriptural accounts was originally entitled *A Little Book on Antichrist*. This tenth-century work by the French Cluniac abbot Adso describes the figure’s identifying characteristics and context in detail. Many later writers continued to embroider upon the legend, bringing the Antichrist narrative to a level of detail on par with that of the vitae of many important Christian saints. Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202) developed a three-phase system of the final days in which Antichrist would reign over the last few years of human life on earth, and Dante’s *Inferno* associates Antichrist with those who have committed the sin of simony, i.e., selling ecclesial office for profit. The Antichrist narrative gained peak traction during the Protestant Reformation, when reformers such as Wyclif, Hus, and especially Luther hurled the polemical language of Antichrist at their religious opponents, primarily the papacy.

Further developments of the Antichrist legend in the modern period have been more subdued; yet the legend still carries weight, particularly with American Christian fundamentalists. The Zionist movement in the state of Israel has been associated with aspects of the apocalyptic narrative of Antichrist in the writings of Hal Lindsey (*The Late Great Planet Earth*) and of Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye (the *Left Behind* series of novels, films, and television shows). Important modern literary and filmic treatments of the figure of Antichrist include Dostoevsky’s Grand

Inquisitor in *The Brothers Karamazov* and Roman Polanski’s adaptation of the Ira Levin novel *Rosemary’s Baby*. The figures of Sauron and Saruman in Peter Jackson’s adaptations of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* trilogy also function as important.

Antichrist figures in the popular imagination, as do horror-genre versions such as Stephen King’s *The Stand*.

## Description

Antichrist is characterized primarily as a deceptive figure whose main danger is his charismatic ability to lead some, but not all, faithful Christians astray. The reign of Antichrist over human affairs in the coming period of “end-times” will be marked by persecution, oppression and tyranny, and by various “signs of the times,” including war, earthquake, famine, and disease. Antichrist has been specifically identified by contemporaries with various tyrannous figures in history, including Antiochus IV, Nero, Henry II of England, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, Pope John XXII, Napoleon Bonaparte, Benito Mussolini, and Saddam Hussein, and collective figures such as “the Jews.” Interestingly, Adolf Hitler appears less often in contemporaneous Antichrist rhetoric than does Mussolini; the careful interpreter of biblical and developing Christian Antichrist mythopoetics in any age would not have failed to note that Antichrist is traditionally associated with Rome, Babylon, and Jerusalem and not with the barbarian lands to the north. In other strands of the tradition, Antichrist is geographically associated in more general terms with Empire, in which case the Third Reich is a classic example of intuitive free association with this aspect of the legend.

Other figures associated with the Antichrist legend and mythos include a messianic Last World Emperor whose rise to power is a harbinger of the arrival of Antichrist; the Beast or seven-headed dragon, who is often equated with Antichrist, in whole or in part; the figure of the False Prophet, who serves as Antichrist’s public relations associate; and Gog

and Magog, who are variously identified as specific figures or, alternately, as regions from which Antichrist may come; during the Cold War era, American Antichrist discourse often identified Gog and Magog with the nation of Russia.

The figure of Antichrist exists in a matrix of tensions. Various readings and interpretations of the figure have emphasized either a more symbolic or a more literal understanding, an understanding of Antichrist as either an interior tendency within the human psyche or an external enemy, a collective or an individual understanding, and so forth. An important distinction must be made between Antichrist and Satan. Antichrist is a powerful and charismatic *human* opponent of God. Satan, while also powerful and charismatic, is characterized in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptures as a celestial opponent of God, specifically a fallen angel. Conversely, Antichrist will ultimately be defeated by Christ, but the actual death blow might be dealt by Christ's agent the archangel Michael, allowing the figure of Christ himself to never be associated directly with the irredeemable downfall of any human person.

### Psychological Significance

Religious historian Bernard McGinn has characterized Antichrist as a "projection of irrational fears about enemies." The historical use of the Antichrist legend to demonize enemies, delineate boundaries of identity, and understand rapid and frightening cultural change is thoroughly documented in theological and, to a lesser extent, psychological and historical literature. The figure of Antichrist has often been used as a rhetorical device to mobilize the faithful in defense of orthodoxy or toward renewal of community life. Antichrist language often appears in the context of communal conflict or anxiety about powerful charismatic leaders both religious and political, such as the pope (Great Reform and Reformation periods) or the emperor in various moments of consolidation of civic power in the Western and Christian world.

The call to watchfulness and mobilization on the part of believing Christians occasioned by the proximity of Antichrist may provide meaning and stability in times of crisis, uncertainty, and fear. Certain aspects of contemporary secular rhetoric also partake of some aspects of apocalyptic and/or Antichrist imagery, such as current fears regarding global warming and all-out nuclear warfare; while the groups and individuals engaged in public and private discourse on these concerns do not necessarily identify specific contemporary figures as Antichrist, the emotional appeal to a dualistic system, in which one group is destined for salvation and the other associated with the ultimate enemy, is at least occasionally a feature of such discourse. An internalized Antichrist, by contrast, does the psychological work of explicating the human impulse toward evil thoughts and actions and the existence of evil in the world. For at least some Christian believers, the figure of Antichrist is important in the context of divine intervention in human history and only makes sense when coupled with a linear and progressive (or anti-progressive) understanding of history. The figure of Antichrist is used as a way of defining deviance and policing the boundaries of acceptable behavior, as well as imbuing quotidian human affairs with cosmic significance. Manifestations of Antichrist rhetoric may be identified by such common markers as polemical language; prophetic utterances describing the future; popular anxiety, stress, or strife, often denoted by persecution complexes or actual persecution; purposeful targeting of suspect groups by those who believe themselves persecuted, which can include parties from either or both sides of a specific conflict; and parodies of the main tenets of the vitae of the figure of Jesus Christ.

Jung characterized Antichrist as a personification or manifestation of the essential shadow side of, rather than simply a privation of, that which is good. Thus, ignoring or refusing to confront the existence of evil personified by Antichrist as a component of that which is good can be just as psychologically damaging as ignoring the good itself. For Jung, the figure of Christian is "parallel to the psychic manifestation of the self";

therefore, Antichrist is the self's shadow-side manifestation. This paradox is necessary because for Jung, light and shadow must be in balance in human self-understanding to ensure the psychological health of the whole person.

While Freudian psychology does not necessarily deal specifically with an Antichrist figure, elements of the conflict between Eros and Thanatos tend to be present wherever Antichrist themes are drawn into public and religious discourse. Robert Fuller has characterized Antichrist language as an outward manifestation of human fears of strong emotions, pleasures, and lusts. Emotions are channeled through religious symbolism and in symbolic terms, helping the individual and community to deal with otherwise unacceptable feelings and behaviors. Antichrist embodies that which is taboo, becoming a demonization of hidden or unconscious desires and externalizing the struggle against seductive ideas and disloyal thoughts. Additionally, the scatological and erotic components of Antichrist rhetoric point toward a possible developmental-psychology understanding of the figure of Antichrist.

Bruno Bettelheim has suggested that the dark, erotic, and/or violent aspects of children's fairy tales serve a vital developmental purpose in slowly acclimating juvenile minds to the real terrors of the world outside the nursery. Given the titles and styles of certain important historical Antichrist, such as Adso's *Little Book on Antichrist* or the 1521 Reformation pamphlet *Passional Christi und Antichristi*, it is possible that Antichrist legend has historically been a component of the religious and psychological developmental education of children.

The often conservative and even reactionary uses of Antichrist rhetoric seem to imply that Antichrist language might be useful to communities that find themselves in cultural opposition to intellectual trends, whose truth claims are subject to cognitive dissonance with modern scientific and technological understandings of the physical world. That Antichrist will ultimately be defeated reassures the Christian believer that God is in control of human affairs and that in the end evil will not prevail.

## Jewish

While a discrete figure identified as the ultimate human opponent of God has not been an important part of Jewish tradition, the Jewish figure of *Armilus* also draws upon the apocalyptic imagery in the book of the prophet Daniel. However, no such figure appears in Jewish writings before the *Second Temple period*, and Armilus is not attested to by name before the seventh century, appearing in the *Targum* to Isaiah. There he is described as the *offspring* of a coupling between Satan and a beautiful stone statue of a female human being. In the Midrash, the eschatological role of Armilus is to slay *Messiah ben Joseph*, after which he himself will be slain by *Messiah ben David*.

## Islamic

Similarly, the Islamic figure of the *Dajjāl*, while functioning in similar ways to the figure of Antichrist in Christianity, perhaps carries rather less weight in Islamic traditions than the Antichrist figure does in the Christian imagination. The *Dajjāl* does not appear in the Qur'an, but develops in the *hadith* or sayings concerning the prophet Mohammed. The *Dajjāl* figure is a false last prophet, a bizarre human monster who attempts to lead the Jews in conquest of Islamic lands but is ultimately defeated, usually by Jesus.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Angels](#)
- ▶ [Anti-Semitism](#)
- ▶ [Apocalypse](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Dragon Slaying](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Eschatology](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jerusalem](#)

- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Orthodoxy
- ▶ Prophets
- ▶ Revelation
- ▶ Rome
- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Symbol
- ▶ Zionism

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(grudging) inclusion in the Christian community. According to the Nazis, however, faith (or the lack of it) is utterly irrelevant. The Jews' hereditary or "racial" characteristics loom so large in the Nazi imagination that someone's theological frame of reference simply does not matter. Thus in Nazi Germany, you could be an ardent Catholic or Protestant. But if you had one Jewish grandparent, you were labeled Jewish and were to be transported to Auschwitz in due course.

Though the Nazis thought of Jews as "Semites," the truth is that Jews are not a "race" any longer. Indeed, when the term "anti-Semitism" was first coined in by Wilhelm Marr in 1879, it was already an anachronism. Long ago, Jews were in fact a Semitic people, as our common language, Hebrew, attests. But the phrase that occurs so frequently in our liturgy, *Am Israel* – "the people of Israel" – no longer refers to a discrete ethnic or racial group. It now refers to a community of believers that is as racially diverse as Christendom or the Muslim *ummah*.

One reason that Christian anti-Semitism is so baffling is that Jews and Christians have so much in common. One conviction we share, rooted in Genesis, chapter 1 (verse 21), is that each and every human being is made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). The practical upshot of this belief is our shared emphasis on the oneness or unity of the human species, on the one hand, and on the worth and singularity of each and every human being, on the other. In addition, Judaism and Christianity converge impressively in their emphasis on the virtues of justice and mercy, and their desire to foster a truth-loving disposition among the faithful.

Another core conviction we share is the virtue of *courage*, which both Christians and Jews associate closely with another trait, namely, *faith*. Jews and Christians claim that their faith gives them the courage needed to live a life based on justice, mercy, and a truth-loving disposition or to continually aspire to live in harmony with these values when we fail, as we all do, from time to time. In addition to courage, we place considerable emphasis on two other virtues, fidelity and humility. A synonym for fidelity is faithfulness,

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## Anti-Semitism

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## Christian and Nazi Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism (or, as some say, Judophobia) is an amorphous but remarkably persistent form of religious and racial prejudice. While some scholars trace it to pagan sources (Manetho, Tacitus, Ovid, etc.), most stress its Christian origins. Generally speaking, Christian anti-Semites believe that Jews, unlike Christians, are a distinct "race," with specific "racial characteristics," such as darker skin and hair; a large, hooked nose; and a grasping, materialistic, and decidedly tribal outlook on life that is the opposite of the noble Christian ideal, which aspires to spiritual universality. It is because Jews allegedly possess these odious (physical and spiritual) characteristics that they reject Jesus as the Messiah and are responsible for his Crucifixion. Nevertheless, some anti-Semites say Jews can redeem themselves and overcome their hereditary guilt by renouncing their ancestral faith and embracing Jesus as their savior. If they do, they are saved and worthy of



which carries the implication that those who are unwavering in their loyalty to their God are also full of faith. So, for Jews and Christians alike, courage, fidelity, and humility are virtues which pivot around the central experience of faith.

Why do Judaism and Christianity share these core convictions? Because they were rooted in the religious environment that Jesus grew up in. Nevertheless, many Christians still subscribe to the mistaken idea that Jesus first taught or inspired this kind of faith, while the Jews were lacking in these attitudes and sensibilities, being robotically enslaved to “the law.” This persistent fallacy is subtly anti-Semitic and when coupled with the claim that the Jews are collectively responsible for the death of Jesus, constitutes the core of Christian anti-Semitism. That being so, it is important to stress that the habits of the heart that pious Jews and Christians share today were simply Jewish in the first instance. The gospels are strangely silent on Jesus’ religious education, but he must have absorbed these ideas with the very air he breathed and probably from some of the same Pharisaic rabbis the New Testament roundly condemns for their lack of realism, generosity, and spiritual authenticity. That is what most scholars believe, anyway (e.g., Crossan 1996).

The belief that the Jews are collectively responsible for the death of Jesus may have been brewing for a century or so before it was finally published in 167 CE by Bishop Melito of Sardis. This claim was not formally repudiated by the Catholic Church until the Council of Trent (1545–1563). As subsequent history attests, however, this important declaration of principles had little impact. In response to Kristallnacht – in which the Nazis terrorized the entire Jewish population, killed almost 1,000 Jews and transported another 30,000 to concentration camps, in Germany and Austria on November 10, 1938 – Pope Pius XI began composing an encyclical condemning anti-Semitism, but this was canceled by his successor, Pius XII, presumably to protect the Catholics living under Hitler’s power from retaliatory measures he might have taken. As a result, it was not till after World War II, at the second Vatican Council (1962–1965) that the

Catholic Church reiterated its stand on this matter and started serious efforts to combat anti-Semitism in its own ranks.

Meanwhile, according to many historians, Kristallnacht, which foreshadowed the horrors of the Holocaust, was timed – at least in part – to coincide with Martin Luther’s birthday on November 10. Despite the refreshing philo-Semitism he espoused in 1523, when he published “*That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew*,” Martin Luther (1483–1546) was bitterly disappointed by German Jews’ persistent refusal to join his Church and became bitterly anti-Semitic. Indeed, he explicitly called for violence against Jews in tracts like “*On Jews and Their Lies*” (1543) and many public speeches toward the end of his life (Horkheimer and Adorno 1941; Burston 2007).

### Anti-Semitism and Islam

A similar trajectory can be traced in the career of Muhammad (570–632). Though the founder of a new religion, rather than a Christian reformer, Muhammad initially bade his followers to pray in the direction of Jerusalem, in honor of Abraham, and started preaching in Arabia full of proselytizing zeal and good will toward Jews, which turned sour as he grew older, issuing in frequent bursts of anger and occasional campaigns of violence (Medina in 625, Khaybar in 628). Consequently, there are passages in the Koran which revile Jews and some which can plausibly be interpreted as providing religious sanction for jihad against them, simply for being Jews. That said, in 638, after the death of Muhammad, Muslim rulers invited Jews back to Jerusalem – against the wishes of the Christian Patriarch. With a few notable exceptions, Muslim rulers were more tolerant of Jews than Christian rulers were until the 1880s, when pogroms in Russia and elsewhere in Eastern Europe prompted the first wave of Zionist settlers to settle in Palestine. Ever since then, Muslim anti-Semitism has intensified and become intricately intertwined with anti-Zionist sentiments and beliefs and a widespread tendency to Holocaust denial.

Nowadays, when Christian anti-Semitism has abated somewhat in the West, radical Islamists continue to communicate and cooperate with left and right wing extremists to keep the whole sordid thing going.

### Anti-Semitism and Psychoanalysis

Anti-Semitism had a profound impact on the history of psychoanalysis. The young Sigmund Freud had his heart set on becoming a research neurologist, but was deterred from that goal in 1885 by the quotas set on the number Jewish University Professors permitted to teach by ordinances passed by Vienna's notoriously anti-Semitic city council member, Karl Lueger, who became mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910. Lueger was an ardent Catholic whose ideas and activities contributed mightily to Freud's anti-Catholic animus. Had it not been for Lueger's civic ordinances, Freud might never have traveled to Paris to study with Charcot, and psychoanalysis might never have been created (Frosh 2005).

Somewhat later, in 1907, Freud "anointed" C. G. Jung, the son of a Swiss minister, as his heir apparent, provoking anger and consternation among his (mostly Jewish) followers, because he thought that Jung's growing stature in the world of medical psychiatry would deflect anti-Semitic criticism of psychoanalysis as a "Jewish science." These hopes were short lived. The relationship between Freud and Jung dissolved in mutual anger and disappointment in 1913, and after World War I, Jung started to characterize Freudian psychoanalysis as a "Jewish psychology" in racist journals (Adams and Sherry 1991; Samuels 1991). After World War II, Jung angrily rejected the charge that he was anti-Semitic, though it was not merely Freudians who thought so. Erich Neumann, one of Jung's closest followers, and a Zionist as well, broke with Jung in the early 1930s because of his involvements with National Socialism. In *Eclipse of God*, Martin Buber accused Jung of neo-pagan tendencies that are predicated on a hostility to monotheism and to Judaism in particular (Buber 1952).

In retrospect, like many highly educated Protestants of his era, Jung harbored both philo-Semitic and anti-Semitic tendencies. However, his struggle with Freud, and Freud's rigidity on matters of theory and practice, probably tipped the balance of his sympathies in a predominantly anti-Semitic direction for many years (Hogenson 1983; Burston 1999).

Quite apart from its impact on the lives of notable theorists in the field, anti-Semitism has been an object of study for several generations of psychoanalytic theorists. In 1938, Freud published *Moses and Monotheism*, which purported to explain anti-Semitism as a result of sibling rivalry and Freud's phylogenetic fantasy of the primal parricide. However, as ingenious as it was, Freud's book was highly speculative and simply could not account for the devastating ferocity of the Nazi onslaught. Many questions remained, and in 1946, Ernst Simmel edited an anthology entitled *Anti-Semitism: A Social Disease*. More recently, in 1988, W. Bergmann published *Error Without Trial: Anti-Semitism in Psychoanalysis*. Meanwhile, just before World War II, the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research launched a psychoanalytically informed study of European anti-Semitism which was full of probing philosophical reflection, but utterly oblivious to the religious/theological underpinnings of anti-Semitism in the premodern world. This project culminated in the creation of the "A" (or anti-Semitism) scale in Adorno's monumental study, *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). According to Adorno et al., anti-Semitism is highly correlated with religiosity and pro-fascist tendencies among Americans in the Cold War era. Left wing anti-Semitism, which dates back to Marx's infamous essay "On the Jewish Question" (1845) – and which has grown enormously since 1967, in conjunction with Islamic fundamentalism – was not even mentioned in this context.

Anti-Semitism is a baffling, protean, and extremely resilient phenomenon – one that is not likely to disappear any time soon. While no single theory to date can account for all its diverse manifestations, everyone interested in psychology and religion ought to ponder its meaning and origins for themselves.

## See Also

- ▶ Buber, Martin
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Nazism

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## Anxiety

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Anxiety is a common condition that presents in multiple forms and affects emotional, cognitive, physical, behavioral, and relational states. It includes feelings of uneasiness, worry, fear, apprehension, nervousness, and distress and also longing, aching, and yearning. Anxiety may also involve difficulty concentrating, ordering thoughts, speaking, and erratic conduct. A natural reaction that prepares one for responding to perceived dangers, anxiety can serve a protective function. Chronic or severe anxiety causes emotional distress, obsessive thinking, compulsive behaviors, relational struggles, and generalized restlessness. Anxiety often coexists with depression, and these exacerbate one another. Similar to depression, sources of anxiety, its effects, and its relief may be psychological, physiological, or religious in nature.

Studies indicate that approximately 13 % of adults between the ages of 18 and 54 suffer from an anxiety disorder (NIMH 2004). Other studies indicate that between 25 % and 33 % of the population will experience significant anxiety-related problems (Terra Nova Television 2002). A survey of primary care physicians conducted in the late 1990s found that 33 % of office visits were prompted by some type of anxiety (Hallowell 2001). Studies have shown further that anxiety disorders affect women (30 %) at higher rates than men (19 %) (Crowe 2004), although this disparity likely reflects underreporting by men. Anxiety disorders, like depression, affect adults over the age of 65 at higher rates than younger populations (NIH 2003; NIMH 2004). Anxiety among older adults is often associated with decline in health, functioning, independence, and economic stability; role loss; and increasing numbers of interpersonal losses.

There are 12 types of anxiety disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2000).



The most common include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, specific phobia, and social phobia. Agoraphobia, which involves anxiety about places or situations from which fleeing is perceived as difficult or embarrassing, is not an anxiety disorder per se, but rather is associated with other stated anxiety disorders.

Anxiety differs from fear. Fear is tied to an identifiable source of perceived danger, such as a specific person, object, or situation. Anxiety lacks a specific source. It involves a pervasive, yet objectless or vague, threat to one's well-being (May 1996). Most people find it easier to manage fear than anxiety. Because the source of fear can be identified, one may avoid, compensate for, or exert some control over it, whereas because the source of anxiety remains somewhat uncertain, one lacks a sense of control. Anxiety also differs from worry. Although anxious persons often worry, this is only one effect of anxiety.

## Psychoanalytic Theory

This theory began with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). He placed anxiety at the center of human motivation, experience, and psychological difficulty. His most mature theory held that anxiety arises when one feels helpless in the face of a perceived threat (Freud 1959/1989). This happens first in infancy, with the threat of losing the primary caregiver and what that person provides, including food, warmth, and comfort. As a child matures, anxiety involves threats of losing the caregiver's love and affection. Eventually, the basis of anxiety broadens to include threats of bodily injury and of losing the love or appreciation of other significant people. Childhood anxiety becomes a basis for anxiety throughout life. Present threats, as well as awareness of future ones, cause one to reexperience the helplessness known in past dangers. Anxiety signals the need to marshal adequate resources to fend off the new (or future) threat.

Freud distinguished between three kinds of anxiety (real, neurotic, and moral or social) but also points to the close relationship between

anxiety and fear. *Real anxiety* is essentially fear. It is based on an identifiable threat posed by an external object or situation. *Neurotic anxiety* has to do with something unknown and that needs discovering. Freud thought that psychoanalysis demonstrates neurotic anxiety's basis in threats posed by internal drives, such as the desire for a sexual affair or seeking inappropriate control in a relationship. *Moral or social anxiety* relates to one's conscience and social expectations. This anxiety remains largely concealed from awareness by adhering to moral and social customs and expectations and also by avoiding (repressing) unacceptable urges, thoughts, or behaviors. One may experience anxiety tied to all of these simultaneously.

Alleviating anxiety through psychoanalysis involves creating a safe environment that fosters identifying causes of anxiety without concern for disapproval or judgment. Deepening awareness of anxiety's sources and expressions, and reworking one's relationship to them, helps to control anxiety's effects.

## Interpersonal Theory

This was developed by the psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) in the mid-twentieth century. He expands Freud's principal focus on the individual's internal world (instinctual impulses, wishes, and fantasies) to include interpersonal engagement and its role in personality formation, and psychological health and problems.

Several assumptions guide Sullivan's theory. First, personality formation occurs *as* one engages interpersonally. Beginning in infancy, personality forms and emotional life operates according to interactions (communication) with significant others. How primary caregivers respond to the infant's basic needs is paramount. Mental stress follows from inadequate communication, not only in early years but throughout life. Second, anxiety is what impedes communication. As anxiety increases, communication breaks down. Third, individuals in relationship contribute to a shared interpersonal field, so that interactions between two or more persons affect each individual.

Anxiety arises *not* from within us per se but as a condition of our interpersonal field. It begins when a child senses an emotional disturbance in her caregiver that alters responsive interactions and prevents meeting the child's basic needs. The child "catches" the caregiver's emotional disturbance, which is interpreted as a form of anxiety, and internalizes it. The child becomes anxious. Trying to be responsive, the "disturbed" caregiver brings the anxiety "closer" to the child and increases anxiety for both of them. The child acts to alleviate this shared anxiety by seeking the caregiver's approval. Striving for approval leads to becoming what parents and others want as opposed to whom one wants to be. Although seeking approval leads temporarily to feeling more secure (non-anxious), this eventually exacerbates anxiety. Anxiety in childhood has lasting effects, for the same dynamic process reoccurs throughout life.

Like Freud, Sullivan placed importance on helping anxious persons explore sources of anxiety in therapy and especially on increasing understanding of how anxiety relates to interpersonal relationships and conduct aimed at meeting others' needs and expectations. Relieving anxiety involves learning new ways of responding that focus on meeting more of one's own needs and expectations.

Sullivan also advocates for therapists nurturing anxious people interpersonally, with the goal of increasing their sense of security. Greater security fosters increased self-esteem and helps rework anxiety-laden interpersonal patterns in a nonthreatening environment.

## Cognitive Theory

This theory locates the source of anxiety in one's thoughts and thinking processes. It was proposed by the psychiatrist Aaron T. Beck (b. 1921) in the late 1960s. He observed that depression and anxiety arise from certain patterns of thinking. These patterns consist of negative assumptions and beliefs. With depression, beliefs have to do with one's value, talents, and successes. With anxiety, beliefs involve the inability to remain secure

amid potential threats. Beliefs informed by operative cognitive patterns come automatically and only subsequently provoke emotions or affective states associated with them. How one thinks about experiences, including how information is processed, determines how one feels. Beck suggested that anxiety, like depression, can be alleviated by becoming aware of operative cognitive patterns and learning to replace them. "Cognitive therapy" involves identifying and internalizing less depressive and anxiety-laden cognitive patterns.

Beck recognizes the close relationship between anxiety and fear, but he understands the relationship differently than Freud and Sullivan. Beck calls anxiety a "fear episode" that involves an appraisal of a dangerous situation. Appraisal begins as a threat enters awareness and one immediately evaluates its potential for harm and considers resources to fend it off. This process suggests that fear involves a cognitive process. One must *think* about the danger. If assessment determines a lack of protective resources, fear gives rise to anxiety, which is the *emotional* process (feeling state) that follows from being afraid (the thought process). Thinking about a threat (fear) precedes feeling anxious about it. The cognitive component of fear gives rise to its affective one, namely, anxiety.

Since anxiety is a response to fear of perceived danger, as opposed to the cause of it, therapeutic efforts should not focus on anxiety itself. The focus should be identifying, understanding, and diminishing the fear that prompts the anxiety response by changing operative cognitive patterns. This involves working on how one appraises the fear that eventuates in anxiety.

Gary Emery (b. 1942) develops Beck's principles of cognitive therapy and applies them to anxiety disorders. Emery's view of "cognitive restructuring" involves education around five matters: (1) enhancing self-awareness; (2) modifying negative imagery; (3) modifying the affective component tied to anxiety (how it feels) to lessen its severity; (4) modifying the behavioral component tied to anxiety, especially avoidance; and (5) restructuring assumptions about three major life issues: acceptance, competence, and control (Beck and Emery 1985).

## Religious Perspectives

*Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855)*. The Danish philosopher and theologian called anxiety “spirit sickness.” It follows from awareness of freedom, which is given by God, and the discovery that this may be used in limitless ways.

The biblical account of “the fall” (Genesis 2–3) demonstrates that Adam was the first to experience freedom and its possibilities. Adam acted against what God had commanded, and in doing so, Adam discovered his freedom. This discovery prompted anxiety over the ability to choose. Adam could choose what he desired but was forbidden, or he could choose otherwise. Either way, he exercised freedom. Adam’s choice, moreover, actualized the opportunity for sin, which existed in the state of anxiety (Coe 1985). Therefore, original sin followed from weakness as opposed to defiance (Marino 1998). One cannot defy what one does not know, and Adam did not know between good and evil before he was presented with a free choice and made it. But Adam does not relinquish responsibility for the choice that led to sin. He could have made a different choice in his state of anxiety.

Adam discovered further that one’s own freedom and choice correspond with those of others’, including God. Kierkegaard suggests that our greatest anxiety involves awareness that God is free *not* to choose us.

Anxiety has a paradoxical quality. It involves desiring what one fears (Kierkegaard 1837), and thus it involves much ambivalence (Coe 1985). This quality of anxiety recalls the Apostle Paul’s description of his own struggles, “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15).

Kierkegaard suggested that anxiety plays an invaluable role for human beings. Though painful, it quickens one to faith. Anxiety remains necessary for the Christian life. It reminds one of a need for Christ, and it helps one make choices appropriate for a life faithful to Christ (Gouwens 1996). In this view, anxiety cannot be treated in the clinical sense, but it can be understood as a gift that promotes faith and reliance upon God. This understanding assuages the

destructive effects of anxiety that follow from a fear of being rejected by God.

*Paul Tillich (1886–1965)*. A philosopher of religion, Tillich called anxiety an ontological condition, specifically “self-awareness of the finite self as finite” (Tillich 1951, p. 192). Going beyond Kierkegaard’s view, Tillich differentiated between *existential anxiety*, a basic, universal type tied to being, and *neurotic or abnormal anxiety*, which issues from basic anxiety and has specific features. Existential anxiety, which all people experience, has its source in the awareness of the possibility of nonexistence or “threat of nonbeing.”

Set in human beings’ limited and dependent natures, existential anxiety tends to transform itself into fear. It seeks an identifiable and concrete object of which to be fearful, as opposed to remaining in a state of uncertainty. Unlike anxiety, there is a resource for fear, namely, self-affirmation and corresponding courage. Courage defends against despair by “taking anxiety into itself,” such that anxious persons must cultivate “the courage to be” (Tillich 1952). This courage for self-affirmation in the midst of threats to the self comes principally from God, whom Tillich refers to as the Ground of Being. Abnormal anxiety follows from severe existential anxiety that has not been diminished by courage and, instead, has turned into despair.

Existential anxiety receives Tillich’s primary attention. Universal in scope, it has three principal expressions. These include anxiety of death and finitude, anxiety of meaninglessness, and anxiety of guilt and condemnation (anxiety of sin). These interact and sometimes merge. Existential anxiety is overcome in authentic relationships with God and other people, which foster the courage to be.

## Physiological Considerations

Anxiety often has physiological sources and effects. Like depression, physiological factors can help produce anxiety or derive from it. Physiological factors in anxiety relate to neurobiology, including how genes, hormones, neurotransmitters, other brain chemicals, and

brain structures and functions interact with various body systems. Persons with anxiety disorders tend to have highly sensitive anxiety triggers. Minimal potential threats to their well-being prompt significant changes in neurochemical and hormone levels, and they cannot prevent an acute anxiety response from fully activating. Along with different types of psychotherapy, especially cognitive and cognitive-behavioral approaches, treating anxiety often involves medications that help maintain appropriate levels of two principal neurotransmitters, norepinephrine and serotonin.

### See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Kierkegaard, Søren
- ▶ Original Sin
- ▶ Sullivan, Harry Stack

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### Apocalypse

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“Apocalypse” is a transliteration of the Greek work *apokalypsis* meaning “to uncover or disclose.” Within the Judeo-Christian tradition, it means the specific ways in which God reveals himself or herself to humans. Prophecy, in turn, is the form of our access to that apocalypse, though some scholars have distinguished the prophetic from the apocalyptic traditions. In prophetism, it is argued, we are called to a change of heart, to repentance in the present, to a new way of living. It is a call to efficacy and a challenge to change so that we can avoid catastrophe. In the apocalyptic, or the already determined future, hope is deferred, which is why it is so often associated with the poor, the brokenhearted, the oppressed (Buber 1954/1957, pp. 192–207).

In that revelation that defines the apocalyptic, human history ends as God becomes fully immanent. In most (but not all) such myths, great violence is associated with this transition from the human to the divine. World-ending notions – the hallmark of apocalypse – are thus at the same time grim and profoundly hopeful. Endings are by definition beginnings. Out of violence comes redemption, renewal, hope.

In the Christian story, Jesus returns after apocalypse. This is a central message in His teachings, as, for example, in the Gospel of Matthew, when He describes (24:6–30) the “wars and rumors of war,” how “nation shall rise against nation” and “there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes,” how “they shall deliver you up to be afflicted” and “there shall be great tribulation,” even “the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,” but for the faithful who survive, there “shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven” in great power and glory. Fundamentalists rely on a specific version of this general story, one that is more closely based on a close interpretation of the Book of Revelation, the last and dramatic book in the Bible. In it a sequence of events leads from the Rapture, through Tribulation, to the story of His millennial rule following the great battle of Armageddon, past a second great battle of good and evil and into the glorious making of the new heaven and the death of death itself when Satan and sinners are cast onto the lake of fire.

The apocalyptic energizes all forms of contemporary fundamentalism, including most noisily the Christian but also importantly the Jewish and Moslem traditions. These themes include the ambivalent struggle of all fundamentalisms with modernity (which is a very different thing from a rejection of the modern project), a tendency to create social and cultural enclaves that are in a sense open on one side, an exceedingly patriarchal attitude toward women, an attitude toward texts that always moves toward literalism, often but not always an evangelical outreach, and a sense of apocalyptic doom that involves a new relationship toward violence. The general

principle is that fundamentalists radically alter the faith traditions out of which they emerge but in their extremities themselves share more in common than they would ever like to admit. There is even a fundamentalist mind-set, which embraces rigid dualistic thinking, is totalistic or absolutist, moves all too easily toward a paranoid style, lives within a frame that lends it a special relationship to the divine, embraces either an actual or a potential for violence and the dispensing of the evil other, and is always apocalyptic. The fundamentalist always and absolutely yearns for the radical end of this world that will be transformed in a firestorm into some image of final redemption, peace, and eternity.

Apocalyptic ideas, however, are rampant in American culture and by no means restricted to religious fundamentalism. Everywhere there are images of Armageddon and the end, from Homer Simpson who works fitfully for the local nuclear plant to Schwarzenegger’s “Terminator,” to the banal *Left Behind* series (LaHaye and Jenkins 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000a, b, 2001a, b, c, d, e, 2004a, b). Sometimes, a genius like Don DeLillo explores apocalyptic themes in ways that bring new meaning to old forms. In *White Noise* (1985), for example, a professor of “Hitler Studies” moves through traumatic history to nuclear threat, and in *Mao II* (1991) the narrator joins the cultic frenzy of the Moonies with immersion and death in Beirut terrorism of the 1980s. Some of our most perceptive contemporary philosophers are equally drawn to the power of the apocalyptic. How can they not notice it, since it defines the most terrifying and yet sublime levels of contemporary existence? It is not surprising a new shelf of books on 9/11 has appeared filled by Jacques Derrida in 2003 (*The Work of Mourning*), Paul Virilio in 2005 (*Ground Zero*), and Giovanna Borradori in 2004 (*Philosophy in a Time of Terror*), among many others.

Hope lies in the idea of totalistic redemption. Our own successful nineteenth-century experience of abolitionism would have been inconceivable without its apocalyptic undertow, as I have argued in *Apocalypse* (Strozier 1994).

In Christian theology, as Catherine Keller has argued (1997: xi-xiv), people as diverse as Daniel Berrigan and liberation theologians from Allan Boesak, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, and Pablo Richard read the Book of Revelation as a call for the oppressed to overthrow the world in their own image. Lois Ann Lorentzen (1997), in turn, describes the apocalyptic nature of the environmental activism of Earth First!, and one could add that of PETA and the very interesting and hopeful movement of anti-globalists among young people all over the globe. Even on the less psychologically stable fringes of this movement, among the millions of those who feel they either have been abducted by UFOs or have faith in the truth of the phenomenon, the feeling among many, as the late John Mack (1995) of Harvard described it, alien beings outside of our familiar Cartesian world are attempting to save us from our path of destruction toward collective death. Finally, people such as the German theologian, Jurgen Moltmann (1993), in *The Theology of Hope* argues for a renewal of Christian eschatology in his read of Revelation, and Catherine Keller (1997) argues passionately in *Apocalypse Now and Then* and in many subsequent essays, that the Book of Revelation is a text of hope, filled with dark and ominous images, especially against women, but that the wild and poetic flux of end-time images must be yoked toward our salvation.

But nor can we ignore the malevolent power of the apocalyptic and its role in the creation of “atrocious-producing narratives,” as Robert Jay Lifton (1973, p. 65) has put it. The Book of Revelation is in this sense a very dangerous text. It is filled with images of blood running up to the bridles of the horses, of seals opening to death, of trumpets blowing violence, and of vials pouring forth destruction in three great sequences of sevens, each linked forward and backward at the end points of destruction. Revelation is a story of biblical genocide, with God acting, in the words of James Jones (2006), as a “Divine terrorist.” There is a logic to our aspirations toward sacred, apocalyptic redemption. Dispensing of the other in collective ways, something we call

genocide, grows out of an intensely felt idealistic and moral commitment to make the world better, as Lifton has argued (1961, pp. 433–437). People commit individual violence for all kinds of idiosyncratic reasons, but it is the deeply idealistic goal of changing history, of correcting it, of purifying it racially and ethnically that leads to genocide. And for the most part, those who carry out exterminatory projects feel they are acting on behalf of a messianic goal or on behalf of God’s end-time purposes in the world or some variation of these motivations.

The text of Revelation is presented as a dream, which is why John writes it in the past tense, and it moves quite logically from the release of great violence at the hands of an angry God to final redemption in Chapters 19 through 22. Revelation is also a survivor narrative, for the text proves simultaneously the death and torment of the other and the salvation and redemption of the elect. There are, of course, many survivor narratives, and some can become paradigmatic of the hopeful for all time. But in the apocalyptic as we know it from the Book of Revelation, the survivor narrative gets corrupted and turned into violence as it gets totalized or turned into an absolute story of redemption.

Apocalyptic or endist narratives, however, are not one thing and certainly are not restricted to the book of Revelation but have themselves evolved historically, from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* in the thirteenth century BCE to the early Zoroastrians some six centuries later, to the author of the book of Revelation, John of Patmos in 95 CE, and to Joachim of Fiore (1135–1202) in the Middle Ages. But in no way have apocalyptic ideas emerged more importantly than in our recent historical discovery of the ultimate power of destruction with nuclear weapons and increasingly with other biological agents. Nuclear and other ultimate weapons have changed us psychologically and spiritually in ways we are just beginning to understand. We do not need God anymore, as we have since the beginning of culture, to carry out the end. The agency shifts. Ultimate power of destruction, which along with creation is the essence of God’s divine power, is now in human hands.



## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Fundamentalism

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## Apollo

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One of the most important of the Greek gods, Apollo was the son of the high god, Zeus, and the Titan, Leto. Apollo's twin sister was Artemis. Apollo was the god of light and reason. He was associated with music and the other arts. By defeating the Python, a mythical relative of the old Mother goddess at Delphi, Apollo became known as Pythian Apollo. His defeat of the old power, like his overruling of the same power represented by the Furies at the trial of Orestes for matricide, establishes him as the symbol of patriarchal order at the center of the classical Greek worldview. That order was based on the mind rather than emotion, on reason, moderation, balance, and form as opposed to what was seen as the old chthonic chaos. If the old female power was of the earth and its mortality, Apollo's was of the sky, heaven, and its eternity. In his attention to social order, Apollo's concerns are not with individual worth, but with “higher values.” To quote mythologist Walter Otto, “The sense of his



manifestation is that it directs man's attention not to the worth of his ego and the profound inwardness of his individual soul, but rather to what transcends the personal, to the unchangeable, to the eternal forms" (Otto 1954, p. 78).

"Know thyself" was Apollo's motto. As Sophocles's great Oedipus plays remind us that motto does not refer to deep individual searching but to a public grappling to a sense of one's place in a larger world of divine and social priorities and realities.

The killing of the Python is crucial to the psychological identity of Apollo. The Python, as the representative of the earth goddess Gaia, the first deity to emerge from Chaos "in the beginning," has contact with the depths of the underworld, representing for us the chaotic unconscious. She is the logical victim of the god who takes over the Pythian oracle at Delphi and represents intellect, analysis, and consciousness. In today's world Apollo stands out on one hand as the anti-depth psychologist, concerned not with the inner self but with learning one's place in society. In another sense he *is* the model of the process by which the unconscious is "conquered," brought to the light of day, and of the ego in complete control over the demands of libido and superego.

## See Also

- ▶ [Apollonian and Dionysian](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)

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## Apollonian and Dionysian

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Since Friedrich Nietzsche discussed the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy in his *The Birth of Tragedy*, the dichotomy has been extensively applied by philosophers, theologians, and especially by literary critics to discussions of an essential conflict between two human impulses or ideals symbolized by Apollo and Dionysus in Greek mythology.

Terms generally applied to Apollo are reason, order, intellect, form, moderation, and consciousness. It was Apollo, the god of light, who defeated the primordial goddess-empowered Python and installed himself as the source of oracles at the sacred precinct of Delphi. The defeat of the Python represents the classical Greek patriarchal culture's defeat of the old chthonic and chaotic goddess power of Gaia, the firstborn of Chaos in the Greek creation myth.

Dionysus was associated with the earth and the world rather than the sky and the heavens. He was, like Apollo, a son of Zeus but only a marginal Olympian. He was the "Mad God," associated with ecstasy and chaotic emotions. Dionysus is the god of the grape, of drunkenness.

It has become usual to suggest in various contexts that both the Apollonian and the Dionysian impulses need to be celebrated and kept in a state of balance. A work of art that is all form and no emotion is by definition inferior. The same could be said of a marriage or an athlete's approach to sport. Nietzsche, in his discussion of tragedy, recognized the necessary tension achieved by the presence of both the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Scholars remind us, in fact, that Dionysus and Apollo in ancient Greece were not necessarily seen so much as opposites as parts of a whole. In fact, as Apollo spent part of the year at Delphi – the navel of the Earth – Dionysus spent the other part there.

In terms of human psychology, the Apollonian aspect of our psyches is that which emphasizes order and self-control. That side is balanced by the Dionysian need to experience the emotional depths. Apollo, the god whose motto is “Know thyself,” is the ego overcoming the chaotic elements of the unconscious so that an ordered, sane life can be lived. Dionysus is the need to delve into that unconscious and to experience its chaos before true individuation or wholeness can be achieved. As Dionysus descended to the Underworld and returned, the voyager into the unconscious can hope for a rebirth into an Apollonian self.

### See Also

- ▶ [Apollo](#)
- ▶ [Dionysos](#)

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## Apotheosis and Return

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### Monomyth

According to Joseph Campbell’s monomyth model of the hero-quest in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, there is a variety of ways in which a quest can end. The quest does not proceed at all for the person who steadfastly refuses the call to adventure. The hero may die at various points, especially during descent to the underworld. At the climax of the quest, apotheosis may occur as the hero transforms to a god. If the

quest story completes the monomyth cycle of events, the hero experiences a return to society which may prove difficult. Reintegration to the familiar world of family, friends, and ordinary everyday reality is hard on both sides, for the hero who has experienced the life-changing events of the quest and for those who have remained at home with little or no idea of what the hero has undergone.

### Religion

In terms of religious experience, the equivalent to the hero’s difficult return is to be found in life after conversion. Religious conversion involves the overthrow of previously held values, beliefs, and attitudes. Having gone on this religious hero-quest and gained their spiritual treasure, converts are then likely to face the difficulty of rejoining a society that either does not comprehend or is actively hostile towards their transformation, unless they choose to renounce their earlier social and familial ties altogether. Full reintegration is not possible, as it would entail renouncing the spiritual insights gained in conversion. Remaining true to those new spiritual beliefs may well mean encountering persecution. The convert’s sense of assured meaning and purpose in life can be found particularly vexatious when it clashes with a well-established faith that the convert once subscribed to: of such clashes are martyrdoms made.

### Boundary Issues

An equivalent to hero-quest apotheosis can be found in religions that seek for enlightenment. As Campbell discusses, in Mahayana Buddhist belief the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara chooses to remain on the threshold of apotheosis until all sentient beings attain the state of enlightenment. Enlightenment is apotheosis not in terms of physical transformation but in attaining a godlike state of wisdom. According to the practitioners of Voodoo, the gods mount their human carriers without transforming them in rituals which

might be understood as temporary apotheoses. Another form of apotheosis is the divine vision to which the lives and writings of mystics in many religious traditions bear witness. While apotheosis is usually a permanent transformation from mortal to divine in myth, in religious experience it is described as a temporary union of deity and human. The three religions of the book, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, are wary of apotheosis, despite their wealth of mystical writings. Part of this wariness about claiming even temporary unity between god and human derives from the Old Testament deity's denunciation of other deities. In Islam, the mystical Sufis have long been persecuted as heretics. Among Christians, wariness of apotheosis stems in part from the bloodstained history of heresy, in which devout practitioners of theologically divergent faiths each calling itself true Christianity persecuted and attempted to annihilate one another. Theological battles raged, and lives were lost, over the question of whether Christ was true man who experienced apotheosis and became god at some time during his mortal life, or true god who only appeared to be a mortal man, or simultaneously true god and true man. It was this latter doctrine that became Medieval Latin church orthodoxy in the Nicene Creed, ruling out apotheosis as an interpretation of Jesus' life and death.

## Psychology

Psychologists are likewise wary of claims of apotheosis. Those human beings who assert their divinity in the secular Western world are likely to be diagnosed as mentally ill and to have their symptoms controlled with drugs. Jung warns of the dangers of inflation, which he defines as occurring when a human being identifies too closely with an archetype. The problems of return from the hero-quest and reintegration into society are well-recognized issues in psychotherapy. The person seeking therapy, understood as engaging in inner quest work to examine, recognize, and alter destructive patterns of behavior, may well succeed in self-transformation, profoundly

altering understandings of self and the world, changing beliefs, attitudes, and values. On their return, these heroic venturers into the depths of the psyche are likely to behave very differently towards their families and friends. They may be welcomed with approval or rejected, even persecuted, and they may find that they can no longer live in the old way, stay in the same relationships, keep the old friendships alive, or slot back into their jobs. Whether the difficulties come from within or without, once a person has deeply changed in psychotherapy, complete reintegration into the old ways of living is no longer possible. For the therapy client as for the mystic and the quest hero, the end of the process can bring active persecution or lonely suffering along with joys beyond the imagination of those who have not traveled that path.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)

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## Archetypal Cultural Psychology

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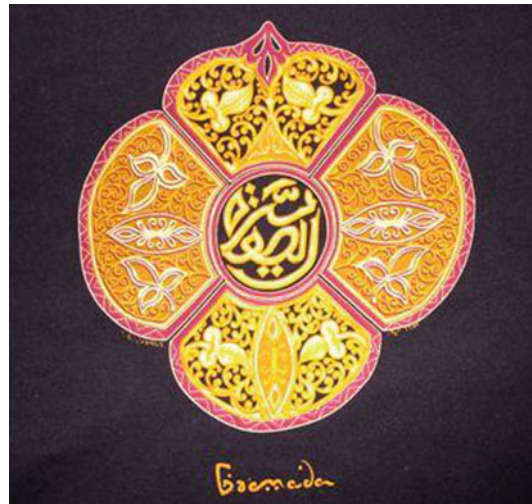
The analysis of culture using Carl Jung's archetypal theory, as distinct from clinical practice, is widespread. Following Freud, he directed

thinking in the wholly new path of looking at the unconscious factors not only behind individual but also behind collective cultural phenomena, from religion to gender. He rejected Freud's excessive emphasis on sexuality and his rejection of religion, that Freud called an illusory infantile father complex. As Jung developed his theory of the collective unconscious, he saw more archetypal themes in culture.

Jung saw that *myths* are not just illusory fantasies to be disposed of by rational thinking, but are highly symbolic. As Freud had seen deeply into the Oedipus and Narcissus myths, Jung saw the deep meaningfulness of patients' dreams and fantasies and flung open the doors to interpreting all myths. He looked into astrology; Greek myths such as Hermes the trickster; Roman myths such as Mars, God of war; feminine Sophia as gnostic wisdom; and mythic figures such as magicians, witches, and animals. He saw the gods as not just metaphysics, but as psychic factors, and sometimes as illnesses. Extending Jung's insights, Joseph Campbell (1949) wrote the popular *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Maureen Murdock (1990) wrote *The Heroine's Journey*, Clyde Ford (1999) wrote *The Hero with an African Face*, Carol Pearson (1986) wrote *The Hero Within*, and David Leeming (1998) wrote *Mythology: the Voyage of the Hero*. Archetypal views have made a strong impact on myth studies (Walker 2002).

An in-depth archetypal analysis of *The Grail Legend* was undertaken by Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz. Von Franz wrote several important books that blazed the trail of the archetypal analysis of folklore, such as *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*, (1970a) *Creation Myths*, (1972) Apuleius' *Golden Ass*, (1970b) which includes the nugget text on Eros and Psyche, and projection in *Projection and Re-Collection in Jungian Psychology*, (1980) Susan Rowland (2010) wrote a survey of *Jung and the Humanities*, David Tacey (2001) wrote *Jung and the New Age*, and many studies of the mandala have been published (Fig. 1).

Jung's culminating mythic insights, following his 1944 visionary near-death experience (1961), were to open the doors to alchemy. He showed it to be not just pre-chemical mumbo jumbo, but to



**Archetypal Cultural Psychology, Fig. 1** Arabic mandala symbolizing Allah as the center of Islam (Granada, Spain, photo courtesy of the author)

be mystical, mythical language of alchemical adepts projecting their soul transformations into matter symbolically: *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage), metals, *prima materia*, salt, and Saturn, for example. He saw the transformation of Saturn's psychic lead or excrement – shadowy depression and old age – into the treasure of gold's divine self (Jung 1979, Vols. 12, 13, 14). This reinforced his major therapeutic insight that shadow archetypal images, when processed, can reveal a treasure, personally and culturally.

Authentic *religion* for Jungians is not discovered in logic, tradition, or dogma, but in *experiences* of the self in dreams, visions, culture, and nature. One of Jung's patients, a secular Jewish girl, had repressed her grandfather's being a Hassidic Zaddik (mystic). She thought this to be irrelevant, until Jung explained: "You have your neurosis because the fear of God has got into you. This struck her like a bolt of lightning." He told her that he had a dream of her as a goddess, and beneath her surface was the making of a saint. He awakened the numinous self in her, and in a week her neurosis was gone (Jung 1964b, pp. 138–40).

Religions are ways of integrating the collective unconscious into consciousness. Jung portrayed the central archetypal self, symbolized

as the mandala and many other ways, as an archetypal psychic aspect of divinity that regulates struggles. The goal of the ego is to serve the higher purposes of the self, individually and culturally, as Edward Edinger (1973) stressed.

Jung interpreted religions as collective mythic constellations. Gods can be seen as psychic factors – compassion, justice, or war. This important move frees religion from blind literalism, dogmatism, and fundamentalism that must be taken on faith. Numinous primordial psychological images become revelations. He moved beyond the subjectivist error of Freud, stuffing it all into subjective psyche as illusion. And Jung says that Nietzsche's cry that "God is dead" brings inflation. Despiritualizing the world exaggerates ego's illusions of power, so former demons become cultural monsters, like world wars. Plus, the archetypal femininity of Mary should be added to the Christian Trinity to start balancing the patriarchal imbalance (Jung 1979, Vol. 11, para. 122–24).

Jung struggled with the problem of the biblical Job, as a mythic image of the problem of *Evil*. Job's dilemma is: why do we suffer, if God is supposed to be omnipotent and benevolent? Judaism and Christianity could not adequately solve this by splitting divinity into pure goodness in Heaven and Evil in the Devil. He saw Christ as an example of the self humanized and overcoming suffering, as the answer. But Christianity is not enough. Christianity failed to deal with WWII, because it was an eruption of powerful repressed pagan divinities, mainly Wotan in Nazi culture. Jung's "heresy" was that God has a shadow – it is the world's suffering, too often in the name of some god (Jung 1979, Vol. 11, para. 408–09). Religion absorbs shadow elements, such as suffering, death, authoritarianism, war-mongering patriotism, and oppression of femininity. These are shadows of God. This imbalance is now being shifted with the development of democracy, goddess theology, women pastors and priests, and the re-enchantment of the world – seeing sacredness in nature. But suffering will never be fully overcome in this mortal world. War especially still needs work. James Hillman (2004) said this in *A Terrible*

*Love of War*. War, he says, is normal, inhumane, sublime, and religious.

Jung explored the psychology of many world religions – Buddhism and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the *I Ching*, Taoism's *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, Gnosticism, and the Hindu Ramakrishna, Kundalini, and Tantra. John Dourley (1984) wrote a challenging book, *The Illness that We Are: A Jungian Critique of Christianity*. David Miller (1975) wrote *The New Polytheism*, showing the many gods at work under the surface collective monotheism. Mircea Eliade drew on archetypal theory for his major studies of world religions (1958).

On *gender*, Jung reintroduced the Chinese yin/yang view of gender, that there is some male in every female (*animus*) and some female in every male (*anima*). The cultural impact of this archetypal pattern helps deconstruct gender stereotypes. Jung explored many themes that became major issues subsequently in feminism. Many Jungians have written gender studies, such as Erich Neumann (1955), who wrote *The Great Mother*. Ann Ulanov (1971) wrote *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology*. Ann and Barry Ulanov (1994) wrote *Transforming Sexuality*. Robert A. Johnson wrote *He*, (1989) *She*, (1976) and *We*. (1983) Jean S. Bolen (1984) wrote *Goddesses in Every Woman*. Robert Moore and Douglass Gillette (1990) wrote *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. Robert Hopke (2001) wrote *Jung, Jungians and Homosexuality*.

Jung the psychologist could not avoid dabbling in psychological side of *philosophy*. He saw the Kantian view of the rationalist *a priori noumena* (such as time and space) more psychologically as archetypal instincts and *phenomena* as both symptoms and the collective images and myths that take form in culture (Jung 1979, Vol. 11, p. 840). He could see through the materialist presuppositions of rationalism, but he only began to let go of the Cartesian inside/outside metaphysics of psychology as he went through his alchemical studies. He was fascinated with Levy-Bruhl's participation mystique as a way through this dilemma. He devoured Nietzsche's works as a way into the Dionysian passionate madness and power instinct



of Western culture. Jung relished *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and the Superman in Western ego. He agreed with Nietzsche's vision that the cultural God is dead. He explored Plato, whose forms, like the theoretical perfect circle, are background to Jung's *a priori* archetypal psychological instincts and patterns, but with more feeling. He found allies in Plutarch, Pythagoras, Schopenhauer, and Bergson. Jung found parallel themes in phenomenology, such as the intentionality of existence, returning to experience, and hermeneutic interpretation (Brooke 1991). David Ray Griffin (1989) edited a comparison of archetypal psychology and process philosophy in *Archetypal Process*.

On technology seen archetypally, Robert Romanyshyn (1989) wrote *Technology as Symptom and Dream* and Lee Bailey (2005) wrote *The Enchantments of Technology*.

In the cultural realm of *art and literature*, Jung saw in many artists such as Dante, Goethe, Wagner, Joyce, and Picasso, the creative workers with dreamlike images and myths emerging from deep in the soul. This frees art from being an accessory to materialism, to a being guiding force in the soul's expressions of archetypal forces. Dante shaped the medieval Christian vision of the afterlife world. At the end of the era of industrialism, Jung in 1932 saw the maddening genius James Joyce's *Ulysses* as a boring surface exploration of modern consciousness – its creative, insane, boring “grotesque objectivity.” He rudely insulted expectations of common sense, with his “spiritual nihilism,” Nietzschean “backside of art,” “sheer negation,” and “a consciousness detached from the object,” where nothing happens and no characters go anywhere. Jung saw in it a hopeless “atrophy of feeling that does not shrink from any depth of absurdity of cynicism.” He cried: “O *Ulysses*, you are truly a devotional book for the object-besotted, object-ridden white man!” (Jung 1979, Vol. 15, ch V, paras. 163–203, *Ulysses: A Monologue*).

And Picasso, oh, Picasso, the brilliant bad boy of modern visual art. Jung's psychological view of him as another artist who discards the outside world to picture the rumbling unconscious of 1932 and later – the ugly, sick, and grotesque, as

in the major critique of the first airplane bombing of civilians, *Guernica* – the doomed and decaying industrial world dissolving into despairing fragments. Picasso's journey to the underworld brings back the spiritual, the harlequin, the mothers, and the lovers but also the bull man, the bestial image that “gives you the creeps,” bursting the shell of the premodern brain (Jung 1979, Vol. 15, ch V, paras. 204–214, Picasso).

Jung's deep exploration of the collective unconscious shows that industrial culture's mankind suffers from a remarkable lack of introspection. “He is blind the fact that, with all his rationality and efficiency, he is possessed by “powers” that are beyond his control. His gods and demons have not disappeared at all; they have merely got new names” (Jung 1964a, p. 71).

## See Also

- ▶ [Alchemical Mercurius and Carl Gustav Jung](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Astrology and Mandalas](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Dreams and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Edinger, Edward](#)
- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Gnosticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Hero with an African Face](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Job](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Feminism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Phenomenology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and the Red Book: Liber Novus](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Modern Mythology](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Near-Death Experiences](#)
- ▶ [Post-Jungians](#)
- ▶ [Ulanov, Ann Belford](#)
- ▶ [Von Franz, Marie-Louise](#)

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## Archetype

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*Archetype* is one of Jung's two "signature concepts" according to the Jung scholar, Sonu Shamdasani, the other being the collective unconscious with which it is closely linked. Jung states that the collective unconscious is the part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that unlike the latter it does not owe its existence to personal experience. Whereas the personal unconscious



consists for the most part of *complexes*, the content of the collective unconscious “is made up essentially of *archetypes*” (Jung 1959, p. 42).

Jung first used the term “archetype” in 1919 in his paper “Instinct and the Unconscious”. He states that there is good reason for supposing that the archetypes are the unconscious images of the instincts themselves, in other words they are “*patterns of instinctual behaviour*” (Jung 1959, p. 44). He goes on to say, “There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life” (Jung 1959, p. 48). In Jung’s model, the unconscious rests on a spectrum with the archetype at the ultraviolet end and the instinct at the infrared end. These struggle and intermingle with each other in the unconscious to form units of energy and motivation that manifest in ideas, images, urges, and strivings. From this it may be deduced that the psyche is located in the space between instinct and archetype, matter and spirit, the body and the transcendent mind. “Psychologically, however, the archetype as an image of instinct is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives” (Jung 1960, p. 212).

Jung combined his reworking of the problem of instinct with “Plato’s high valuation of the archetypes in his theory of forms, which was maintained through to medieval philosophy, the archetypes had been reduced by Kant to a few categories” (Shamdasani 2003, p. 242). Jung frequently relates his writing on archetypes to Plato’s “eternal, transcendent forms” (Jung 1959, p. 33).

Jung went on to distinguish between “the archetypic representations, and the archetype itself, similar to Kant’s *das ding-an-sich* (the thing-in-itself) which is irrepresentable” (Shamdasani 2003, p. 260). Kant’s theory of knowledge divided human cognition into what it could grasp, viz., the phenomenal world and what it could not, which he termed the noumenal world – the a priori, timeless, spaceless, and causeless entities both within and outside the psyche. Jung linked Kant’s thinking on the a priori entities to his theory of archetypes.

The *archetypic* or primordial image, as it was first called by him, is frequently met within mythology and the great religions. The irruption of these archetypic images from the unconscious

into the conscious realm may be viewed as the basis of religious experience and of the need for the mysterious and symbolic that underlies the quest for what Jung calls *individuation*. As Jung states, “When. . . modern psychotherapy once more meets with the activated archetypes of the collective unconscious, it is merely the repetition of a phenomenon that has often been observed in moments of great religious crisis” (Jung 1953, p. 36).

The analytical psychologist, Anthony Stevens, says, “Jung took the term ‘archetype’ from the *Corpus hermeticum*. . . where God is referred to as the archetypal light” (Stevens 2006, p. 79). “With his theory of archetypes operating as components of the collective unconscious, Jung sought to define the living bedrock of human psychology” (Stevens 2006, p. 74). The analytical psychologist Murray Stein’s definition of the term archetype is that *typos* means stamp and *arche* means the original or master copy.

## Bipolarity of the Archetype

An important influence on the bipolarity of Jung’s concept of the archetype was the pre-Socratic thinker, Heraclitus, with his concept of opposites and *enantiadromia*, a psychological law that denotes running contrariwise so that eventually everything turns into its opposite which is an archetypal way of behaving. Jung’s theory of opposites states, “True opposites are never incommensurables; if they were they could never unite. . . God himself (is defined) as a *complexion oppositorum*” (Jung 1960, p. 207).

Archetype and instinct are also opposites as follows: “Archetype and instinct are the most polar opposites imaginable, as can easily be seen when one compares a man who is ruled by his instinctual drives with a man who is seized by the spirit. . . They belong together as correspondences. . . they subsist side by side as reflections in our own minds of the opposition that underlies all psychic energy” (Jung 1960, p. 206). The archetype is spirit and Jung goes on to state that “The essential content of all mythologies and all religions and all isms is archetypal”

(Jung 1960, p. 206). As can be seen, both archetype and instinct are deeply implicated in religious and spiritual questions which Jung affirms as follows: “Confrontation with an archetype or instinct is an *ethical* problem of the first magnitude” (Jung 1960, p. 208) (original italics).

Another pair of archetypal opposites, *anima/animus*, is relevant here as follows: “The archetypal images that link the self and ego-consciousness form a middle realm, which Jung calls *anima* and *animus*, the realm of soul. In Jung’s view, polytheistic religions stem from and represent the realms of the *anima* and *animus*, while monotheistic religions base themselves on and point to the self archetype” (Stein 1998, pp. 102–103) (original italics).

Spirit and instinct were united in symbolic form in the archetypal form of the alchemical *hieros gamos* or higher marriage of opposites. “. . . the symbolic has the great advantage of being able to unite . . . incommensurable factors in a single image. With the decline of alchemy the symbolical unity of spirit and matter fell apart, with the result that modern man finds himself uprooted and alienated in a de-souled world” (Jung 1959, p. 109).

### The Phenomenological Approach to Archetype and Religion

The group of scholars that gathered together under the leadership of Jung at Eranos included the Romanian-French historian of religion, Mircea Eliade. He was a phenomenologist who was interested in uncovering the archetypal structures and pattern of religious life. In his writings on religion (*Patterns of Comparative Religion* 1958; *The Myth of the Eternal Return* 1954; *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* 1964), he recognized a basic division between traditional religions such as the archaic cults of Asia, Europe, and America and the historical religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The chief element in the former is the depreciation of history and the rejection of the profane, mundane world, combined with an

emphasis on actions and things that repeat and restore transcendental models. Only those things that participate in and reflect the eternal archetypes through which cosmos came out of chaos are real in this outlook. The mode of expression in this model is in consequence repetitive.

Post-archaic or historical religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam tend to see a discontinuity between God and the world and to locate the sacred not in the cosmos but beyond it. These hold to linear views of history in the belief that the meaning for humankind is worked out in historical process which is seen to have a purposeful plan. For this reason, the historical religions have been monotheistic and exclusivist in their theologies.

The following statements from Jung demonstrate his archetypal approach in relation to Eliade’s writings on religion: “The life of Christ is understood by the Church on the one hand as an historical, and on the other hand as an eternally existing, mystery. . . . From the psychological standpoint this view can be translated as follows: Christ lived a concrete, personal, and unique life which, in all essential features, had at the same time an archetypal character” (Jung 1958, p. 88). He says Catholicism “gives the archetypal symbolisms the necessary freedom and space in which to develop over the centuries while at the same time insisting on their original form” (Jung 1958, p. 465). And “. . . archetypal situations only return when specifically called for. The real reason for God’s becoming man is to be sought in his encounter with Job” (Jung 1958, p. 397).

### Criticisms and Revisions of the Theory of Archetypes

Jung’s theory of archetypes has been the object of criticism from many sources including the French structural anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss, as summed up in his statement that it is possible to “dispose of theories making use of the concept of ‘archetypes’ or a ‘collective unconscious’” (Lévi-Strauss 1996, p. 65). He accuses Jung of

attempting to find universal *contents* in his concept of archetypes, but as the analytical psychologist Wolfgang Giegerich says of Jung's later thinking, "He (Jung) is no longer concerned with any substance, any entity...he simply expresses the abstract notion of the oppositional *structure* or *form* of the psychic...*What* the opposites are is here not said, and it cannot, should not be said in the context of this late work (*Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry Into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*), because this would be a relapse into the substantiating style of thought that this title has long left behind" (Giegerich 2006).

Brief summaries of the views of two writers, the analytical psychologists, George Hogenson and Jean Knox, whose work represents major revisions of archetypal theory, will be reproduced here. Lack of space inhibits elaboration of the important work of other writers in this area such as the analytical psychologists Joe Cambay, who views archetypes, as well as various other key aspects of Jung's approach, as emergent properties from the complex interaction of the psychic system with the world; and Patricia Skar, who takes a similar line and goes on to suggest archetypes are the early products of developmental self-organization and should be considered to be a special category of complex.

George Hogenson asks the key question: What architecture of mind is best suited to underwrite the theory of archetypes? His conclusions are that cultural patterns encoded in the genome "what most Jungians would recognize as archetypes" (Hogenson 2003, p. 108) are not and point instead to a *less a priori* structure of the mind. This is based on his study of robotics and dynamic systems theory whose "research paradigms conflict with the notion that strongly innate or *a priori* internal representations of the world are necessary to explain complex behaviour" (Hogenson 2003, p. 109). Hogenson's interest in Baldwinian evolution (named after the psychologist, James Baldwin) is succinctly expressed by Terence Deacon, Professor of Biological Anthropology and Linguistics at the University of California at

Berkeley, who is quoted by Hogenson as follows: "Baldwin proposed that by temporarily adjusting behaviors or physiological responses during its lifespan in response to novel conditions, an animal could produce irreversible changes in the adaptive context of future generations. Though no new genetic change is immediately produced in the process, the change in conditions will alter which of the existing or subsequently modified genetic predispositions will be favored in the future" (Hogenson 2003, p. 110).

Jean Knox points to the convergence in recent times of cognitive science, neuroscience, and psychodynamic theory in recognizing the self-organization of the human brain whereby genes do not encode complex mental imagery and processes but "...instead act as initial catalysts for developmental processes out of which early psychic structures reliably emerge" (Knox 2004, p. 4). Furthermore, "Archetypes are not 'hard-wired' collections of universal imagery waiting to be released by the right environmental trigger" (Knox 2004, p. 4). Instead, archetypes as emergent structures play a key role in psychic functioning and symbolic imagery. The way archetypes have often been portrayed is that there is information stored in a genetic code waiting "like a biological Sleeping Beauty, to be awakened by the kiss of an environmental Prince. This...is frequently implicit in discussion about archetypes, in Jung's own writings and in that of many former and contemporary analytical psychologists" (Knox 2004, p. 5). The gradual emergence of archetypes in analysis may enable the coming into being of the capacity for symbolization.

All the writers included in this last section are critical of any notion of archetypes as innate or "hard-wired" into the genes in their revision of Jung's theory of archetypes.

### See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Arhat

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In Buddhism, the term (Skt.) “arhat” (Pali “arahant”) refers to a person who has achieved realization or enlightenment, having attained a state of nirvana. It is the model for spiritual development in Theravada Buddhism, one of three branches of contemporary Buddhism, also known as the southern transmission, because the tradition went southward from India to Sri Lanka, then to Thailand, Burma, Laos, and Cambodia. In the Mahayana and

Vajrayana traditions, the model of the arhat is replaced by the model of the bodhisattva.

The arhat is a fully realized being and upon death they do not return to the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, the samsaric wheel of life. One attains this state through much dedication and effort, probably across many lifetimes. The earliest Buddhist scriptures, the *Tipitaka*, recount stories of how many of the monks who studied with the Buddha attained arhatship during their lifetimes.

There are four stages over which the already advanced practitioner reaches the final stage of release from the wheel of life. The “stream-enterer” is the first stage, the “once-returner” is the second, the “never returner” the third, and the arhat the fourth stage. In the experience of stream entering, the person is sufficiently well along in the path to actually taste the direct experience of (Skt.) nirvana or (Pali) nibbana. But the experience is fleeting because the mind-stream is not completely purified of the obscurations of attachment. As the mind is purified, the person achieves the degree of stability in the enlightened state of mind that they are only needing one more lifetime to complete the process, and in the non-returning stage, if one is reborn at all, it is into one of the higher realms, and for the arhat, the achievement occurs in this lifetime.

For many lay Buddhists in the Theravada tradition, it is recognized that to achieve enlightenment one needs to be able to devote much time to meditation. As a lay person, a “householder,” one cannot realistically hope to achieve that goal. What one can strive for is to gain sufficient merit over the course of this lifetime to have a better reincarnation next time and perhaps then to be able to release attachment to worldly things and focus on spiritual progression. By treating other sentient beings with “loving-kindness” (Pali “metta”) and above all by supporting the ordained sangha of monks and nuns through offering, one can gain much merit.

The basic means of achieving enlightenment is through the practice of meditation. In contemporary Theravada Buddhism, this involves the

practice of vipassana (Pali) or insight meditation. This style of meditation is particular to Buddhism and is found in all three branches, Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. In the latter two traditions, it is known as shamata, or calm abiding meditation. Vipassana is described in the Mahasatipatthana Sutta, part of the Tipitaka, or “three baskets” of Buddhist scriptures in the Pali language (Thera 1962).

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)

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## Ascension

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The ancient world understood the earth to be suspended within the larger *kosmos* consisting of various concentric realms. The whole order was perceived to be spiritually alive, its vastness creating anxiety among the ancients. Plato says that human beings existed as mere puppets having only a small portion of reality (Plato, *Laws* 804B, 644 D-E). Marcus Aurelius wrote that the activities of humans are “smoke and nothingness” and the rewards of life vanish “like a passing bird” (M. Ant. 10.31; 6.15; 5.33; 10.10). This sense of alienation and the notion of the inferior nature of immediate existence

created a desire to separate from the material world and ascend into the purer, celestial realm. Plato’s *Phaedrus* tells of the soul’s longing to spread its wings for upward flight to attain to god. In its fallen state it beholds beauty on earth making it desire the “true” beauty of the divine. It cannot attain this however, resulting in unending anguish (*parakinōn*, 249D). In his *Contra Celsum*, Origen of Alexandria (185 CE–ca. 254 CE) refers to Celsus’ discussion of the seven stages or “gates” of the soul’s ascent associated with the ancient Mithras cult of Persia. The stages are like a ladder at the top of which is the golden gate of the sun and divine union. Each gate corresponds to one of the solar planets. The soul travels through each of the gates from the realm of the lower world to the higher realm of the gods (VI.22). The initiate looks directly into the rays of the sun to see a youthful deity, “beautiful in appearance, with fiery hair, in a white tunic and a scarlet cloak, wearing a fiery crown” (634–35). The ascension symbolizes the movement from the darkness of the unconscious realm into the light of consciousness. According to Jung, passage through the planetary spheres releases one to become free from characterological traits and compulsion specified in the horoscope and of which one is born: “he has won the crown of victory and become a god” (Jung 1963: 230). Compare “The Angelic Liturgy” and the seven stages of angelic ascent to view the throne of God in the Dead Sea Scriptures (11 QShirshab). In a letter to the church in Corinth, Paul speaks of being “snatched away” (Greek, *harpagēta*) into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12.1-5; cf. the *Apocalypse of Paul* 3). The Old Testament pseudepigraphic writing 1 Enoch tells of the ascension of Enoch: “the winds were causing me to fly and rushing me high up into heaven. . .and I came into the tongues of fire” (14.8-9). Compare *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *Testament of Abraham*, *3 Baruch*, and *Ascension of Isaiah*. A consideration of ascension should also note its opposite, which is descending. Homer’s *Odyssey* speaks of the cave sacred to the nymphs that are called Naiads and the two doors, one toward the North Wind by which persons go

down and the other toward the South going upward and is the “way of the immortals” (*athanaton hodos*) (XIII.104–114). Porphyry (232–305 CE), the disciple and editor of the Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus, likens this cave to the grotto of Zoroaster in the mountains near Persia. Souls journeyed down into the generative potencies of the cave to be ascended into the way of immortality (Porphyry 1917, p. 2).

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Plato on the Soul](#)

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self-sacrifice in order to deepen and advance spiritual development. Asceticism is particularly pronounced in monastic orders. Ascetic practices vary from the passive (e.g., fasting, renouncement of desires) to the active (e.g., self-flagellation or, at the extreme, martyrdom). Most asceticism calls for moral choices and an austerity of lifestyle (the latter being quite counterculture in the USA today). In general, asceticism is intended to fulfill one or more of the following functions: control of appetites and sense pleasures, detachment from materialism and even from relationships, awareness of mortality and impermanence, gratitude for divine blessings, expiation for sins, and identification with the suffering of others (e.g., with the Passion and crucifixion of Christ).

In psychotherapy and spiritual direction today, the question to be addressed is the healthfulness of ascetic practices, or lack thereof. This discernment must explore the consequences on the reality plane as weighed against the spiritual benefit expected in the spiritual realm. Questions must include: Is the individual likely to be hurt now or in the future? Will others potentially be hurt? In the current days of awareness of terrorist mentality, the meaning and consequences of all acts of self-sacrifice must carefully be discerned. Also of concern is the matter of motivation, along with the question of whether a specific act of self-surrender is life giving or essentially destructive. Ascetic practice can be very beneficial to the spiritual aspirant as long as the motivation and consequences are appropriate, not ego driven and not destructive to self or others.

### See Also

- ▶ [Crucifixion](#)

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## Asceticism

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All the major world religions have recommended, at some point in their history, various practices of



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## Asexuality

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In psychological and spiritual academic circles, there remains considerable disagreement over the term asexuality. Often the confusion involves whether one's behavior or identity distinguishes asexuality. Most definitions of asexuality have two dimensions in common – the absence of sexual orientation (asexual by orientation) and/or a pronounced lack of sexual interest or behavior (asexual by behavior). The first dimension involves people who are asexual by behavior such as celibates and virgins. These asexual by behavior individuals may or may not have low sex drive. This fact is especially true with those who have chosen to live an asexual lifestyle as part of a spiritual journey reporting an otherwise normal libido. Likewise, virginity alone is not a prerequisite for asexuality since many individuals who are asexual by behavior have engaged in sex in the past but have no current interest in or plans to engage in additional sexual behavior. Chaste ordained clergy and vowed religious are overrepresented in this asexual by behavior group due to the nature of their vocation.

The second dimension of asexuality involves those who identify as having no discernible sexual orientation whatsoever (asexual by orientation). For these individuals sex is not a priority in their personal endeavors. This indiscernible sexual orientation can be difficult for some to understand since popular culture assumes that all human behavior is driven to some degree by the need for sexual gratification and/or reproduction. A common misperception is that individuals who are asexual by orientation share distaste for human intimacy and social bonding. Individuals with an asexual orientation are not necessarily isolationists; in fact, many of these individuals often report a strong desire for close, romantic relationships. Some individuals who are asexual by orientation engage in romantic relationships

which could even be sexual at times; and while these relationships may be oriented to a specific gender, these relationships are not intentionally sexual in design. Partnered individuals who are asexual by orientation are invested in the romantic or companionship rewards of the relationship, not sexual gratification. Moreover, these asexual by orientation individuals who are involved in romantic relationships often need to negotiate sexual behavior as a condition of continuing the relationship with their partners. Despite agreeing to participate in sex in order to keep their relationships, these individuals claim they have no sexual orientation because the motivation for being in relationship is explicitly asexual in nature. Many of these asexual by orientation individuals in romantic relationships choose to de-emphasize the sexual nature of their relationships by defining the relations as either heteroromantic or homo-romantic (as opposed to heterosexual or homosexual).

The temptation among outsiders to the asexual community is to find asexuality somehow aberrant – they must be hiding something or afraid to commit to a sexual orientation or maybe they were sexually abused at a young age in which case their asexuality is the product of trauma, not an inherent component of their personality. These misplaced ideas about asexuality are rooted in ethnocentric ignorance. While the personal histories of some asexual individuals may contain trauma or internalized fear of labeling, this is not true for all persons who identify as asexual as is the case with clergy and vowed religious who chose an asexual lifestyle. Modern science has yet to determine a definitive causal factor for the spectrum of sexual orientations. Moreover, since a person's sexual behavior may not always be congruent with his or her sexual orientation, confusion about these two dimensions of asexuality – behavior and orientation – is understandable.

A separate dynamic related to asexuality has to do with the level of sexual distress that asexual individual experience. Sexual distress can be defined as anxiety related to sexual thoughts or behaviors. Sexual distress is often experienced by persons who have chosen an asexual lifestyle as a vocation, though this is not always the case.



For celibates and ascetics, spiritual practices such as fasting, meditation, hard work, and prayer are thought to be critical in reducing one's sexual distress. Sexual distress among monastics has not yet been measured and leaves untested the assertion that strict spiritual practice in ascetic life reduces sexual distress. Individuals who are asexual by orientation engaging in romantic relationships also experience sexual distress relating to obligatory sexual behavior with their partners. Since the choice to abstain from sexual behavior for these individuals is not necessarily spiritual in nature, it is not clear if spiritual practices are an effective means of reducing their subjective levels of sexual distress. This is contrasted with nonreligious individuals who are asexual by behavior in that these individuals report lower levels of sexual distress. These lower levels of sexual distress are likely related to the individual's sense of control over the decision to live an asexual lifestyle for purely personal reasons.

Asexuality is difficult to operationalize from outside the community. Researchers should use a broad definition in their research that includes but is not limited to an absence of sexual desire, a lack of sexual orientation, and intentional abstinence from sexual behavior. Research into human sexuality has only recently begun the process of understanding the human inclination toward asexuality; much remains to be studied and understood. For those who are sexually abstinent for religious reasons, faith and spiritual practices are essential to channel one's sexual energies into spiritual development and a deeper connection with the Transcendent. Hence, spirituality can catalyze and nourish asexuality, yet spirituality and asexuality are not inextricably linked to each other. Given the variety of reasons for and expressions of asexuality and the complexity of an asexual orientation, asexuality as a lifestyle and an orientation remains fertile ground for psychological and spiritual research.

## See Also

- ▶ [Intimacy](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)

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## Ashtoreth

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Ashtoreth was a goddess in the ancient Near East who appears several times in the Bible, with different versions of her name. Biblical texts spoke of the “Queen of Heaven,” perhaps referring to Ashtoreth, the only other major goddess mentioned. Ashtoreth is recorded in the Ras-Shamrah texts discovered in 1930–1933 in the land called Ugarit in biblical times, on the Mediterranean coastline, north of Israel, now in Syria. In one myth she is goddess of the sea and of fishermen and the wife of the god Baal. Fragmentary surviving texts say about her: “Homage to

the Lady Asherah of [the Sea], Obeisance to the Progenitress of the Gods, (So) [she] will give a house to Baal like the [g]ods” (Pritchard 1958, p. 97). She is portrayed being a fertile source of life. Ashtoreth was related to similar goddesses of nearby cultures, such as Astarte of Phoenicia and Ishtar of Babylon, who also spread to other cultures.

When the Hebrews migrated into what is now Israel from about the eleventh century BCE, they mingled with existing cultures, mainly in Caanan and Phoenicia, and adopted their gods and goddesses. Ashtoreth was one of these, mentioned often in the Jewish Bible, the Tanakh. The ancient Israelites, like all cultures of the time, including Egypt where they had recently been, had polytheistic religious practices, believing that spirits filled the world and the deities assured health, good weather, food, children, and a good life. In a unique turn, the priests and prophets of Israel struggled for centuries against these other deities, to orient the Hebrews to Yahweh as the only god, the monotheistic Lord of Israel, who had been revealed to Moses. They were opposed to these other gods’ practices, especially relating to fertility (Fig. 1).

Like many people around the world, people fervently believed that these gods and goddesses were necessary to the fertility of the earth, including farms, herds, and people. So people had a view of sexuality, as a natural part of the spirits of the world’s reproductive systems. This had led to sexual practices that offended the Israelite priests and prophets, that they scorned as “sacred prostitution.” So for centuries the struggle between Hebrew priests and prophets against the other religions continued.

Some Hebrew kings welcomed the neighboring popular gods and goddesses into the kingdom and built shrines and temples to them. Often the temple of Yahweh was also a temple to other gods and goddesses, such as Ashtoreth. “Solomon followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Phoenicians” (I Kings 11:5). Some Hebrew kings such as Ahab in the ninth century married believers in goddesses, such as Jezebel, who with Ahab promoted goddesses such as Ashtoreth.



**Ashtoreth, Fig. 1** Alabaster, Paris, The Louvre Museum. From Necropolis of Hillah, near Babylon. Bronze Age to Classical times. Ancient Near Eastern Goddess of the divine power behind life systems, with various names in different cultures. Symbolized by the new moon. She was called Ishtar in Babylon, Astarte in Egypt and Phoenicia, Astarte and Ashtoreth in Israel. Her name is veiled in some translations of the Torah, since she was a pre-monotheistic goddess. (Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtoreth>; <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/ashoreth.htm>; Photographer Marie-Lan Nguyen (2006) Public Domain; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Statuette\\_Goddess\\_Louvre\\_AO20127.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Statuette_Goddess_Louvre_AO20127.jpg))

King Ahab... “took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Phoenicians...” (I Kings 16:31). King Manasseh “bowed down to all the hosts of heaven and worshiped them... The sculptured image of Asherah that he made he placed in the House [of the Lord]” (II Kings 21:7).

Another factor in this struggle was that in developing monotheism, one gender choice had

to be made for the one god, and that was male. So a male-dominated culture developed in Hebrew monotheism, and the women lost the direct access that they had to the divine through goddesses such as Ashtoreth. They did not want to let go of this divine channel of feminine power. When the prophet Jeremiah confronted those who worshiped “the Queen of Heaven,” they protested:

Thereupon they answered Jeremiah – all the men who knew that their wives made offerings to other gods; all the women present, a large gathering; and all the people who lived in Pathros in the land of Egypt: We will not listen to you in the matter about which you spoke to us in the name of the Lord. On the contrary, we will do everything that we have vowed – to make offerings to the Queen of Heaven and to pour libations to her, as we used to do, we and our fathers, our kings and our officials in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty to eat, we were well-off, and suffered no misfortune. But ever since we stopped making offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pouring libations to her, we have lacked everything, and we have been consumed by the sword and by famine. And when we make offerings to the Queen of Heaven and pour libations to her, is it without our husbands’ approval that we have made cakes in her likeness and poured libations to her? (Jeremiah 44:17–19).

But over the centuries, monotheism took root and the goddesses were suppressed. With this religion male authority grew, blessed by the one male Lord. So today the three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – have supported patriarchal cultures. But now things have changed, as women have gained the rights to education and birth control, and now in countries with the freedom of religion, the women’s rights movement is exploring a revival of ancient goddess traditions of many kinds.

If we read carefully, the biblical account of Jacob, son of Isaac in Genesis 28, was a time of polygamy, when a man could have more than one wife. To avoid his marrying a Caananite girl, Jacob was sent by his father Isaac to marry a relative. He went east to Haran, now in Syria, to marry a cousin – a daughter of Laban, his mother’s brother. Jacob met Rachel as she was

watering her sheep, and he kissed her. When her father Laban met Jacob, he hugged his relative Jacob. To gain the hand of Rachel Jacob offered to serve him for seven years. But after the seven years, Laban sneaked Rachel’s older sister Leah into the wedding bed in the dark, and they were united, for he wanted to marry his eldest daughter first. But since Jacob loved Rachel, they also made love, and married after another seven years, and had Joseph and Benjamin. This was not unusual, in the time of polygamy, for Jacob to marry two sisters, Leah and Rachel. He also had children with their maidservants Zilpah and Bildah. Jacob and Leah had eight children, including Levi and Dinah. He and Rachel had two: Joseph and Benjamin. With the maids Jacob fathered three more, including Dan. The early patriarchal societies were pretty relaxed about sexuality. (Yes, this is in the Bible, in Gen. 29–30)

Now what is left out here? In these early days before monotheism took hold, did these women worship a goddess? The biblical references to Ashtoreth and the Queen of Heaven say “yes.” Anita Diamant explores what it might have been like. In her 1997 historical fiction *The Red Tent*, she proposes that the women had a red tent, away from men, where they went monthly for the “full moon.” They talked with each other about what they could not say in public: gossip, the secrets of sex, dreams, stories like the beginning of the world, oracles, that their father Laban mistreated them like slaves, about how he had five wives, and almost gambled one, Ruti, into slavery (Diamant 1997, pp. 84–86), about miscarriages, childbirth (Diamant 1997, p. 62), the midwife’s stories (Diamant 1997, p. 107), the pain of seeing some babies die early, and about Jacob and his god El. They ate three-sided cakes, drank wine, cried, sang, and discussed the women’s medicines like drinking fennel tea as a contraceptive (Diamant 1997, p. 65).

They did ceremonies for the girls who had their first blood: massaged her, applied henna, perfume, eye makeup, fed her cakes and wine, sang to her, conveying their pride in her new

womanhood (Diamant 1997, p. 171), and did goddess rituals to ease her entry into lovemaking (Diamant 1997, pp. 172–73). They shared stories of the goddesses, such as the Babylonian Inanna who married Dumuzi, (Diamant 1997, p. 81), the holy tree where Zilpah made offerings to her little goddess statue, Nanshe (Diamant 1997, p. 89), and the sacred household gods, goddesses, the teraphim, and the Queen of Heaven (Diamant, 1997, p. 169). These are important psychological ceremonies for the women, and their goddesses symbolized the ultimate source of their womanhood. The archetypal image of the Queen of Heaven understood their needs, feelings, suffering, and pride. Being a red-blooded woman was not shameful and embarrassing in that Red Tent.

Today's womens' powerful archetypal experiences expressed in Diamant's book have expanded in the documentary DVD "Things We Don't Talk About: Women's Stories From the Red Tent," directed by Isadora G. Leidenfrost (Leidenfrost 2012). The ancient goddess is granting her powers and gifts to women sharing in her archetypal experiences. Feminist psychology is gaining goddess stories and rituals for women to directly access the divine.

## See Also

- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Femininity
- ▶ Gimbutas, Marija, and the Goddess
- ▶ Goddess Spirituality
- ▶ Hindu Women Gurus
- ▶ Inanna/Ishtar
- ▶ Lilith
- ▶ Matriarchy
- ▶ New Polytheism
- ▶ Rites of Passage for Girls
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Sacred Prostitution
- ▶ Sex and Religion
- ▶ Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views
- ▶ Spectrum of Religions
- ▶ Women and Religion

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## Asian American Pastoral Counseling

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Asian Americans (the term "Asian Americans" does not include Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islander groups) constitute 6 % of the US population according to the 2010 Census, a 46 % increase from 2000 to 2010. Asian Americans are the fastest-growing group of all racial groups including Latinos. With more than 30 ethnic subgroups and more than 40 spoken languages and dialects, Asian Americans are extremely diverse in population demographics, socioeconomic issues, and mental health needs. About 60 % of Asian Americans are foreign-born and nearly three out of four speak a language other than English at home. The six largest Asian American subgroups include Chinese (3.8 million), Filipino (3.4 million), Indian (3.2 million), Vietnamese (1.7 million), Korean (1.7 million), and Japanese (1.3 million) (Asian American Center for Advancing Justice 2011). Among ethnic groups, South Asian Americans are the fastest growing in the country.

Mental health issues among Asian Americans are complex and vary significantly based on

factors such as immigration history, family separation, trauma experienced from war, immigration and employment status, and educational attainment. For example, Asian American youth in general consider suicide more often than their African American and White counterparts; Asian American women older than 65 years or older have the highest suicide rate. Many Southeast Asian groups such as Vietnamese, Cambodians, Lao, Hmong, and Mien have experienced war trauma or torture from political turmoil and have shown significantly higher incidents of post-traumatic stress disorder. Disparities in mental health care continue to be serious problems for Asian Americans in comparison to European Americans, including (1) limited access, (2) poor assessment and inadequate treatment, and (3) limited research (New Freedom Commission on Mental Health 2003; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001). For these reasons, the President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health concluded that the "current mental health system has neglected to incorporate, respect or understand the histories, traditions, beliefs, languages and value systems of [this] culturally diverse group" (2003, p. 49). Pastoral counselors can potentially make unique and significant contributions to improve Asian American mental health.

### Limited Access to Mental Health Care

Both practical and cultural barriers contribute to limited access to mental health care for Asian Americans (Speller 2005). Practical barriers include a high rate of uninsurance: one in six Asian Americans do not have health insurance; there are also significant ethnic group differences where approximately 30 % of Koreans and 22 % of Vietnamese are uninsured (National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association, n.d.). Uninsured persons are less likely to seek professional health care due to high cost and no support structure to help them find help. Also, there is a limited availability of culturally appropriate and bilingual mental health care providers. When these services are available, mostly in

cities with high concentrations of Asian Americans, the care providers are limited in number and are overwhelmed by the demand for service. Manderscheid and Henderson (1998) estimated that 70 Asian American mental health care providers serve 100,000 Asian Americans, only one-half the number of mental health care providers in comparison to European Americans. Asian Americans at times lack awareness of mental health-related issues and of available in-language public resources, thus contributing to their underutilization of mental health care services. Further, because over 21 % of Asian Americans are linguistically isolated, many of the available public resources offered are not useful because they are offered only in English.

Cultural barriers also prevent Asian Americans from seeking psychological and emotional help. East Asian conceptions of psychological illness substantially differ from Western conceptions. Many East Asian Americans have been significantly influenced by the worldviews of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Hong and Domokos-Cheng Ham 2001). These worldviews emphasize "emotional self-control, humility, filial piety, family recognition through achievement, and the integration of the mind and body" (Speller 2005, p. 71; also see Sue and Sue 2008). Emotional or mental problems are viewed as resulting from personal weakness in discipline or will power. Receiving a formal DSM-IV-TR diagnosis therefore is interpreted as a serious threat to one's personal and familial identity. Upon receiving a DSM-IV-TR diagnosis, the dropout rate from treatment significantly increases (Speller 2005). When addressing serious mental health symptoms, many Asian Americans resist taking psychotropic medications because these medications are viewed as poison (Peng 2008). Asian Americans tend to somatize their psychological symptoms and would prefer to consult with physicians rather than psychiatrists or counselors. They may resort to culturally acceptable expression of their emotional distress as lacking Taoist chi and consult with indigenous forms of treatment such as herbal treatments or acupuncture. They may also spiritualize their emotional or psychological distress, seeking



assistance from their religious leaders rather than mental health professionals. The social stigma attached to mental disorders contributes to delay in help-seeking, poor treatment outcome, premature termination of care, and withholding of family or community support for many Asian Americans.

### **Poor Assessment and Inadequate Treatment**

With enormous diversity among Asian Americans, these groups also demonstrate diversity in expressing their mental distress, which can lead to misdiagnosis. Lopez (1989) identified two kinds of therapist diagnostic biases when working with ethnic minorities: overpathologizing bias and minimization bias. Diagnostic tools designed for the US “general” populace are also questioned for their efficacy or cultural relevancy when used with Asian Americans. Many of these tools are unavailable in Asian languages. Use of translators also raises serious questions for diagnostic validity. Therapists’ preformed perceptions about Asian Americans as “model minority” or “refugees,” for example, may prevent therapists from making an accurate diagnosis. Treating Asian Americans as a monolithic people can be gravely misleading in assessment and make it difficult to establish collaborative therapeutic alliances. Misdiagnosis leads to inadequate treatment and poor therapeutic outcome.

Sue and Sue (2008) point out that in working with ethnically diverse clients, therapists must equip themselves with three core competencies: (1) “therapist awareness of one’s own assumptions, values, and biases”; (2) “understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients”; and (3) “developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques.” They highlight the following East Asian values or conceptions as significantly bearing upon the therapeutic work: collectivistic orientation, hierarchical relationships, parenting styles, emotionality, holistic view of mind and body, and academic and occupational values (Sue and Sue 2008). Sue and Sue (2008) also point out the importance of paying

attention to immigrant family experience such as conflicts between parents and children due to differential levels of acculturation. Therapists should also pay attention to how many Asian Americans perceive therapy as a foreign and often highly threatening concept. Asian Americans generally prefer that therapists take an active and directive role in therapy. Structuring the therapy session and providing clear guidelines about the therapy process and interventions are likely to produce positive outcomes. Asian Americans tend to prefer solution-focused therapeutic approaches including cognitive-behavioral therapy (Chen and Davenport 2005).

### **Limited Research**

The President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (2003) emphasizes that the lack of research on ethnic minority mental health is a problem. A report issued by the Surgeon General (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001) points out specific research-related issues on Asian American mental health. First, classifying Asian and Pacific Islander Americans as one racial/ethnic category has been damaging to the provision of appropriate resources for these diverse communities. Having done so, researchers know little about “the rates of mental illness, access to care, quality of care, and outcomes of treatment for different groups of Asian Americans”; furthermore, such political grouping obliterates a wide range of sociocultural, historical, and psychological differences that exist among Asian American groups “and constrains analyses of the interethnic differences in mental illness, help-seeking, and service use” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2001, p. 112). Second, Asian Americans aggregated appear to achieve educational, occupational, and economic success and show low rates of certain health problems. However, the aggregated data unhelpfully promote a “model minority” stereotype that is oftentimes promoted by mainstream journalists and policy makers to justify lack of resources specifically for Asian Americans. Third, insufficient research data are

available on how Asian American symptom expressions relate to the DSM-IV-TR diagnostic categories. Examples include what DSM-IV-TR identifies as East Asian “culture-bound syndromes”: Chinese “neurasthenia” and Korean “hwabyung.” Finally, little research is available on Asian American acculturation, Asian American age-based mental health issues, suicide, refugee mental health, utilization of mental health services, and appropriateness and outcomes of mental health services.

### Asian American Pastoral Counseling

Although the pastoral counseling movement has its origins with predominantly European American Protestant communities starting from the 1930s, pastoral counselors are uniquely positioned to serve Asian American mental health needs. Pastoral counseling is understood as “spiritually grounded and psychologically informed care, counseling, and psychotherapies” based on “holistic understanding of human life as spiritual, biological, psychological, social and cultural” (American Association of Pastoral Counselors 2010). Many East Asian Americans would more favorably accept this holistic view of human life than the Western clinical view of a split between the mind and body. Pastoral counselors can function much more flexibly than other therapists who may be bound by the third-party payment and accompanying requirements. Pastoral counselors can also provide pastoral care, if necessary, in collaboration with other clergy partners and can also address mental health-related issues.

Many pastoral counselors have already established collaborative partnerships with religious communities although they tend to be Christian. They are likely to have greater access to religious communities, which many nonreligious therapists do not have or in which they feel restrained because guidelines for working in such settings are not well established for therapists. A psychoeducational approach to Asian Americans has been a preferred service modality. These religious communities readily provide venues and an audience for preventive

work, a high priority for communities that lack professional therapists. In rare cases, a religious congregation can transform itself to directly serve those with severe mental health needs (e.g., see Religion & Ethics Newsweekly Public Broadcasting Service, June 22, 2012). Pastoral counselors must prioritize working with religious leaders and educating them about critical Asian American mental health issues.

The challenges for pastoral counselors in working with Asian Americans include how pastoral counselors may reach out to non-Christian Asian Americans. According to a nationwide Pew Research Center (2012) survey, Asian Americans have contributed to the religious diversity in the US religious landscape during the past decades. Among Asian American adults, Christians are the largest religious group (42 %); “the unaffiliated” are second (26 %); Buddhists are third (14 %); Hindus (10 %), Muslims (4 %), Sikhs (1 %), and other religions (2 %) followed thereafter. Such a challenge also exists within Christian communities. Asian American Christians tend to be conservative and evangelical (e.g., Rah 2009) while pastoral counselors tend to be much more liberal in theological outlook. These theological differences may impinge upon the therapy outcome and process in significant ways. The therapist and client may experience conflicts over such issues including the importance of human agency versus the authority of the Bible, the role and the status of women, the importance of individuation versus family obligations, homophobia, and same-sex marriage.

The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) provides important frameworks to address communities of color in their *Statements on Anti-Racist Multicultural Competencies* (American Association of Pastoral Counselors 2010a). According to AAPC, pastoral counselors are to commit to carry out “clinical practice that is intentionally inclusive” and to hear the pains of those “who have been historically, intentionally, and systemically excluded and disadvantaged.” Pastoral counselors are to see themselves as soul healers whose essential function includes pursuing “social justice and democratic ideals in which all persons are regarded as having equal worth



regardless of identity markers, including but not limited to race, gender, age, sexual orientation, difference in ability, religion, language, and cultural or national origins.” They additionally affirm the commitment to “appreciate human diversity as a gift, not a barrier, and engage in the practice and training of pastoral counseling in order to serve peoples from diverse backgrounds by acquiring the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed for competent clinical practice.” These frameworks may also be used as a foundation to build upon in addressing the diverse mental health needs among Asian American groups who have been neglected in research and care.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Chakras
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Confucianism
- ▶ Dalai Lama
- ▶ Guanyin
- ▶ I Ching
- ▶ Meditation
- ▶ Migration and Religion
- ▶ Nirvana
- ▶ Om
- ▶ Shinto
- ▶ Taoism
- ▶ Zazen
- ▶ Zen

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## Astrology

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Along with alchemy, astrology is one of the cornerstones of the traditional cosmological

sciences. In a popular sense the word astrology refers to the study of the influence of stars, planets, and other heavenly bodies upon terrestrial events. The belief that celestial bodies influence or control events upon earth, including the inner life of human beings, is exceedingly ancient and is found in virtually all civilizations and cultures. It is more accurate, though, to understand astrology as an extensive symbolic language that permeates traditional cosmological thought far beyond the question of stellar “influences” upon earthly life. Traditional cosmology tends to understand the earth and sky as a single integrated system or even as a single living organism, in which case the planets are the “organs” of the cosmos. There are Western (Hermetic), Indian (Vedic), and Chinese systems of astrology, among others.

While astrology was often regarded as a priestly and divine science in ancient times, it has tended to be marginalized in the perspectives of the monotheist faiths because it is perceived to compromise the absolute nature of the Divine Will. These faiths have been keen to insist that the planets are not gods and that the predetermination of events is subject to Divine Will and not the outcome of mechanical cosmological forces. In the Middle Ages many Churchmen, including Popes, were practicing astrologers, but in more recent centuries (especially since the Reformation), astrology has tended to be cast as an “occult” science – or even one of the “black arts” – and so antithetical to orthodox religious faith.

In ancient texts astrology is inseparable from meteorology and weather prediction but it is also linked with character analysis and the determination of human temperaments. The notion that mental disease is caused by or is associated with the configurations of stars and planets is also age-old and has left its mark in modern languages in terms such as “lunatic” (one driven mad by the moon).

Belief in astrology persists in modern times in spite of the scientific revolution and the fact that the entire premise of astrology as it is usually formulated – nonphysical and subtle or spiritual causal forces – violates the most basic tenets of

the scientific paradigm. In fact, it is arguable that belief in astrology has never been so widespread and popular as it is today. Countless people “follow their stars” in astrological columns in magazines and newspapers, and there is a vast industry of astrologers offering consultations and “readings” to paying clients.

Much of this takes the age-old form of soothsaying and prognostication – the prediction of coming events – but in the modern context, much of it may take a more diagnostic form with the astrologer offering psychological and character analysis from the study of a horoscope (natal chart) drawn up for the client’s time and place of birth. Since the nineteenth century, there has been a strong movement to resituate astrological theory and practice away from the traditional methods of deterministic prognostication (called horary astrology) toward an understanding of astrology as a type of ancient and occult psychology with a corresponding emphasis upon natal astrology (the astrology of individual’s births).

The most important proponent of this shift was Carl Jung who argued that astrology and alchemy were premodern forms of the psychological sciences and who was even known to consult horoscopes (nativities or natal charts) of his patients in the belief that this could reveal aspects of their personality and especially their unconscious motivations. Jung (1962) said that “astrology represents the summation of the psychological knowledge of antiquity”, and regarding its use in clinical practice added “I must say that I very often found that the astrological data elucidated certain points which I otherwise would have been unable to understand” (Jung 1948).

Jung attempted to provide a scientific basis for the use of astrology in psychology by advancing the theory of synchronicity which he styled as an “acausal connection principle” and more generally in his theory of the collective unconscious. According to Jung and the many astrologers who have followed him, the planets and stars (Zodiac) represent universal principles reflected in aspects of human psychological makeup. There is thus a *correspondence* between

the heavens and the structure and contents of the human psyche. For example, it is supposed that planets that are situated below the horizon at the time of birth (and so are in the lower half of a horoscope) represent forces and motivations of which the native (patient) is not usually conscious. If, for instance, the planet Mars (traditionally the planet of the war god) is below the horizon and in a position considered to be “afflicted” or detrimental, then the native may be subject to violent and unpredictable rages over which he/she has little control. It is then supposed that knowledge of one’s horoscope can provide self-insight and offer solutions to psychological problems.

Jung regarded the horoscope as an adjunct to more conventional modes of psychological analysis and a useful tool for therapists. The development and systemization of this basic proposal has been pursued by many astrologer/psychologists since Jung, most notably by Dane Rudhyar who adapted aspects of the so-called humanistic school psychology (Carl Rogers, Rollo May et al.) to astrology. For him, the horoscope (natal chart) is a map to be used for the exploration of the complex inner world of drives and functions that together constitute the complete psychological organism. The publication of Rudhyar’s *The Astrology of Personality* in Rudhyar (1936) was a milestone in psychological astrology. Carl Rogers published his *Client-Centred Therapy* in 1951. In the 1970s Rudhyar extrapolated Rogers’ ideas to what he style as a “transpersonal astrology.” His *Person-Centred Astrology* was published in Rudhyar (1972). In this work he redefines astrology as a language of symbols to be deployed as a diagnostic tool in the quest for psychological wholeness, integration, actualization, and personal fulfillment.

These ideas were further developed by such astrologers as Marc Edmund Jones, Robert Hand, Michael Meyer, and Richard Idemon and have done much to change the face of contemporary astrology. In the United States today, there is an Association for Psychological Astrology directed

by Glenn Perry and staffed by men and women who are both practicing astrologers and qualified psychologists. The organization offers master’s and doctoral degree programs.

The enthusiasm of psychological professionals and therapists for astrological tools, however, has waned since the 1970s – astrology has been psychologized far more than psychology has been astrologized – and one cannot really speak of a legitimate conjunction of the two disciplines. Despite its popularity astrology is still regarded as a fringe or pseudoscience, while psychology, especially in the last 30 years, has sought fuller legitimation as an empirical, mainstream science and has been eager to shed its associations with quackery. Astrologers have tried to legitimize astrology (as “astrotherapy”) by presenting it as akin to or as an adjunct to the psychological sciences, but it cannot be said the association has been endorsed in kind by most psychological professionals.

### See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Synchronicity](#)

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## Astrology and Alchemy

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Alchemy and astrology are complementary disciplines. Sister sciences seen as the precursors to chemistry and astronomy, respectively, their practitioners also consider them arts. They posit a universe where consciousness and matter are one. Alchemy relied upon astrology; astrology does not need to incorporate alchemy.

Astrology is the older discipline; some of the oldest written astrological references are Mesopotamian and go back to approximately 1800 BCE (Britton and Walker 1996, p. 42). It is an interpretive art as well as a science. The science of astrology is the observation and charting of the sky. The configuration of the planets is an objective fact based on geometric calculations, set up for the day, minute, and location of a person's birth. The universal element, the sky on a given day, is made personal through connecting it to earth through the time and location. This creates the wheel of the 12 houses of astrology, which determines exactly how the sky on a given day will manifest for whatever question is asked. This can be related to many different things: a person, business, country, or question.

Astrological work is most importantly the interpretation of the meaning of the configurations charted. The study of astrology involves memorizing the different archetypal meanings of the different elements of astrology: planets, signs, houses, and aspects (the geometric relationships between the planets). The art of astrology is in the synthesis and interpretation of these in relation to the subject at hand. The stars and planets have set orders and sequences. The meanings of the signs and planets have been consistent for thousands of years in western and eastern (Jyotish/Vedic) astrology. One conceptualization of astrology is that it shows how we internalize and

individualize the greater whole of life symbolized by the planets and signs. However it is conceptualized, it is about an external, orderly, a priori process made internal.

Alchemy is the inverse. In alchemy, the order has to be pulled from within the process. Alchemy is mysterious in that there is no order that is observable from the outside; even deciding what substance is chosen to begin the transformation is cloaked. Practitioners had to experiment to find this out; work with dream and revelation was just as important as scientific experiments in guiding the alchemist.

Alchemy is about process and transformation. The physical work in alchemy literally involves transforming substances from one thing to another. The goal is to obtain a substance that has the ability to transform: the philosopher's stone. However, the journey to obtain this is a transformative journey in itself, effecting psychological and spiritual change. The central metaphor of alchemy, the transmutation of lead into gold, is a metaphor for the refinement of one's being.

The planets and signs hold great archetypal significance for alchemists. In terms of correspondences, each planet has a metal associated with it; in alchemical formulation, the metals from the planets are spun from the cosmos into the earth. Alchemists used astrology to time their alchemical work, determining when to initiate a process. This allowed the alchemist the maximum alignment with the energies he/she sought to transform. These are the correspondences of the planets and the metals:

- Sun: gold
- Moon: silver
- Mercury: mercury
- Venus: copper
- Mars: iron
- Jupiter: tin
- Saturn: lead

In addition to the above, the seven basic alchemical stages defined by Edward Edinger in *Anatomy of the Psyche* have correlations to astrological archetypes.

The stages Edinger chose are Calcinato, Coagulatio, Solutio, Sublimatio, Mortificatio, Separatio, and Coniunctio.

Although alchemy is no longer in the forefront of modern consciousness, the archetypal power of the imagery and themes resonates psychologically as Jung and many Jungians have explicated. However, the connection between astrology and alchemy is still alive, and the maxim of “As Above, So Below” can be observed in contemporary times by studying astrology, as well as in dream imagery, and themes and experiences of individuals.

People who have certain astrological themes highlighted in their charts natively or in a particular stage of their life will have characteristics and/or experiences correlating with the qualities of alchemical stages.

The astrological correlates along with the physical definition of the alchemical stages, examples of imagery, and psychological themes are as follows:

#### *Calcinato – Mars, Pluto, Fire*

- *Chemical Process:* The intense heating of a solid to remove water and all other constituents that will volatilize. What remains is a fine, dry powder.
- *Images:* Fire, Burning, Hell, Purgatory, Wolf, Lion.
- *Psychological Themes:* Desire, Passion, Power, Attachment, Envy, Anger, Integrity.

#### *Coagulatio – Earth, Saturn, Moon*

- *Chemical Process:* The turning of vapor or liquid into a solid state. Cooling, or evaporating, or a chemical reaction which can create a new compound.
- *Images:* Body, Eating, Crucifixion, the Fall, Incarnation, The World of the Senses, Sex, Clothes (The body is the clothing for the soul).
- *Psychological Themes:* Embodiment, Object Constancy, Dealing with Reality, Containment, Limitation, Time and Space.

#### *Solutio – Water, Neptune, Moon*

- *Chemical Process:* A solid is turned into a liquid.

- *Images:* Water, Ouroboros, Swimming, Baptism, Bath, Flood, Dew.
- *Psychological Themes:* Compassion, Fusion, Idealization, Dependency, Addiction, Selflessness.

#### *Sublimatio – Mercury, Jupiter, Uranus, Air*

- *Chemical Process:* The material is turned into air by volatilizing and elevating it. The solid, when heated, passes directly into a gaseous state and ascends to the top of the vessel, where it resolidifies on the upper, cooler region.
- *Images:* Flight, Heights, Towers, Radio Stations, Jacob’s Ladder, Cosmic Ladder, Angels, Birds.
- *Psychological Themes:* Detachment, Objectivity, Dissociation, Grandiosity, Observing Ego.

#### *Mortificatio – Pluto, Saturn, Mars*

- *Chemical Process:* None.
- *Images:* Blackness, Feces, Rotting, Smells, Mutilation, Overflowing Toilets, Worms, Pollution, Resurrection, Rebirth, Growth, The Nigredo. The blackness is brought about by the slaying of something, usually the dragon, but often the king, the Sun, or a lion.
- *Psychological Themes:* Mourning, Loss, Ego Death, Depression, Hatred. The death and transformation of the ruling principle within.

#### *Separatio – Saturn, Uranus, Mars, Libra*

- *Chemical Process:* The prima materia is thought of as a confused composite of contrary substances that require separating out. The substance when heated will separate out into a volatile part which vaporizes and one which coagulates. A composite is separated out into orderly parts.
- *Images:* Swords, Knives, Logos, Compasses, Measurement, Numbering, Weights, Divisions.
- *Psychological Themes:* Separation/Individuation, Discrimination, Discernment, Schizoid States, Splitting.

#### *Coniunctio – Sun, Venus, Whole Chart, Saturn in Libra*

- *Chemical Process:* Two substances come together to create a third with different

properties. In particular, molten metals and the formation of amalgams by the union of mercury with other metals.

- *Images*: Marriage, Sexual Intercourse between the Sun and Moon, Love.
- *Psychological Themes*: Integration of the self into a whole, Individuation, Maturation.

**Acknowledgement** The seven basic alchemical stages defined by Edward Edinger in his book *Anatomy of the Psyche* are reprinted with permission from Open Court Publishing Company, a division of Carus Publishing Company, Peru, IL, USA. ©1985 Open Court Publishing Company.

## See Also

- ▶ [Astrology](#)
- ▶ [Astrology and Mandalas](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Astrology and Mandalas

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“Mandala” is the Sanskrit word for circle. The basic structure of a mandala is extremely simple. It is a circle. The circle encloses a sacred space, thought to include both the circumference and the center. When you see it on a page, it creates an inner and an outer space. It starts to become elaborate when it is concentric, or when a quadrated form is placed in or through it, as seen in [Fig. 1](#). This sacred circle is found everywhere, in the sun, the moon, a flower, a face, an eye, and so on. The mandala with a cross shape in it is a classic form. The combination of quadration with the circle establishes a relationship of opposites. The four directions of the cross fix the endless movement of the circle, which has no beginning or end. It is a symbol for the eternal whole, which transcends time and space. From this foundation, it is elaborated upon in multitudes of ways, creating meditative devices the world over.

The cycles of life – day and night and the regular returns of the seasons – define the circular motif in our viscera. Juxtapose this with the linear experience of time and aging or the quadrated experience of the equinoxes and the solstices – and the circle with a cross – becomes imbedded in our very bones.

An astrological chart is a mandala.

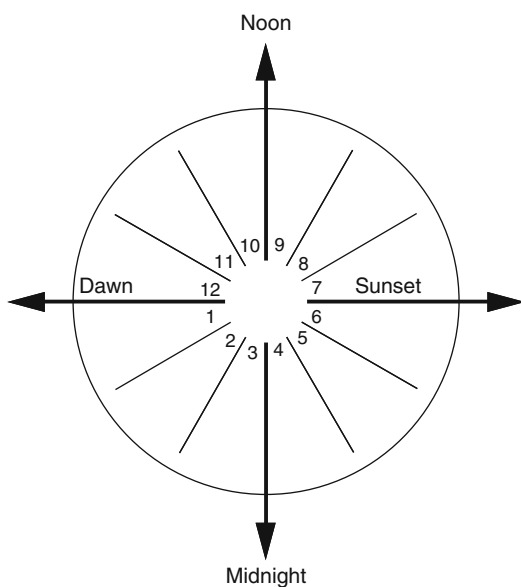
Its foundation structure is a circle with a cross. Two axes, horizontal and vertical, anchor the chart; then two more axes are drawn, creating the full astrological wheel of 12-pie-shaped houses ([Figs. 2 and 3](#)).

To understand the significance of the cross within the wheel, note the horizontal line in the chart. It is symbolic of the horizon line. This is where the rising sign, or the ascendant, determined from the day, minute, and location of someone’s birth, is placed. The sign on the ascendant is the section of the sky containing the





**Astrology and Mandalas, Fig. 1** A mandala with quadrations (Artist: Patricia M. Bowers)



**Astrology and Mandalas, Fig. 2** The basic structure of an astrology chart, the wheel of the houses

constellation coming up over the horizon at the day, minute, and place of someone's birth.

It organizes the signs on the wheel, which are placed on each axis called a house cusp, in

a counterclockwise direction. The astrological houses rule different areas of experience and also represent different dimensions of the psyche. The basic meanings and archetypes of the houses are given below.

The Houses:

1. Self-Projection, Body, Beginnings: The Divine Spark/Divine Child
2. Self-Worth, Personal Resources, The Body as First Possession, Finances: Conservationist
3. Near Environment, Information, Conceptualizing a Self: Siblings
4. Roots, Home Life, Parenting: The Tribe, The Source
5. Romantic Love, Self-Expression, Pleasure: The Lover/Artist
6. Daily Life, Physical Health, Work: The Servant
7. Marriage, Other People, Partnerships, Open Enemies: Marriage
8. Sex, Death, Transformation, Shared Resources: Initiation
9. Larger Horizons, Life Philosophy, Knowledge: The Priest and Priestess
10. Life Task, Profession, Parents: The Culmination
11. Life Wishes, Group Affiliations, Friendships: The Community/Idealist
12. Life Transcendence, Psychological Health, Sense of the Eternal, Self-Undoing: The Monk, Mystic, Prisoner

The planets are then placed in the wheel of the houses, and where they are placed is determined by the sign on the axes, which are called house cusps.

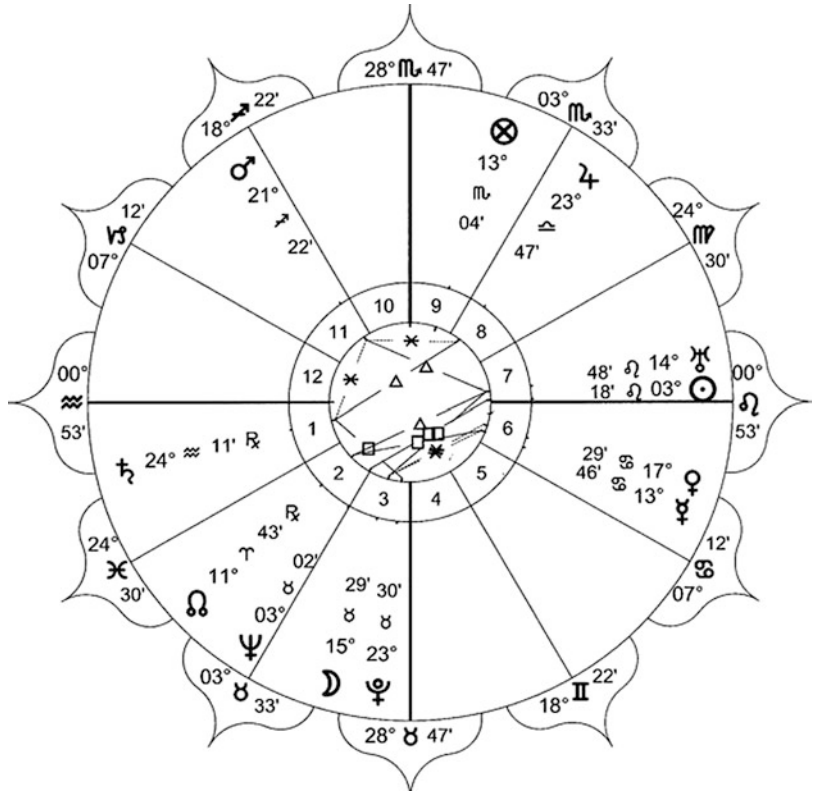
This determines how the sky of the day will affect someone personally.

This is important because the sky is universal, not individual; everyone born on a particular day will have the same placements of the planets in the sky (Sun in the sign of Pisces, Moon in Cancer, Venus in Aries, etc.). This is organized through the circle of the zodiac in the sky that hugs the ecliptic. This is the circle of the astrological mandala. The ascendant fixes the



**Astrology and Mandalas,**

**Fig. 3** Complete astrology chart with the planets placed into the wheel of the 12 houses



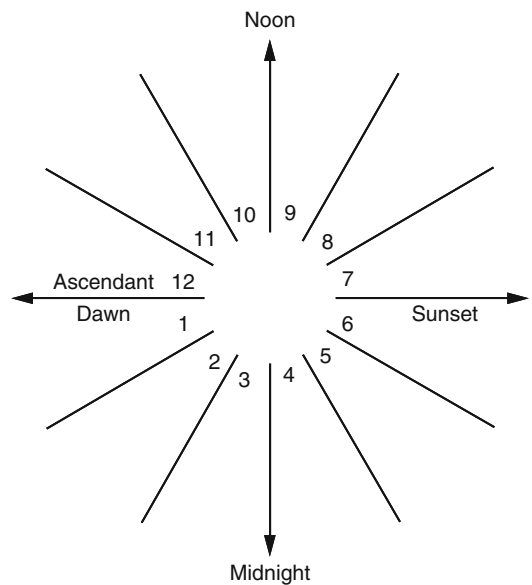
universal energy in time and space, literally bringing it down to earth. This is the cross of the astrological mandala.

This has a counterclockwise order.

In addition, there is a clockwise order as well in the chart, also beginning at the ascendant. Moving in a clockwise direction, it is the beginning of the cycle of a life, dawn. The next turning point represents the noon of life and is at the top of the chart. The third angle, exactly opposite the ascendant, represents sunset. The final angle, at the bottom of the chart, represents the midnight of life, the end of the matter as well as the root issues in life (Fig. 4).

Thus, the astrological chart is a graphic image of how we come from one source, as symbolized by the circle, becoming individualized through time and space.

In this way we inhabit a mandala of existence on earth, and to study an astrology chart is to contemplate a mandala.



**Astrology and Mandalas, Fig. 4** The progression of the angles

## Psychological Aspects

Mandalas and the astrology chart share archetypes of self, center, and reconciliation of the opposites. Jung stated that the mandala is the archetype of wholeness, relating it to the Self. Mandala images arise spontaneously in dreams and art as symbols of the center of the self.

In addition, the wheel of the zodiac and the circle of the mandala create symbolic holding environments, which hearken back to the experience of lying in the circle of one's mother's arms.

Thus, the core architecture of the mandala, and the astrological chart, evokes this early preverbal experience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Astrology and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Astrology and the Transitional Object](#)
- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Mandala and Faces](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Selfobject](#)

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## Astrology and the Transitional Object

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In discussing transitional phenomena, Winnicott states,

this is the place I have set out to examine, the separation that is not a separation. . . but a form of union (1974, pp. 97–98).

An astrological chart is created from the date, minute, and place someone takes their first breath. It creates a map which describes how an individual expresses a piece of the cosmos, similar to the idea of a fractal. Astrology is a symbolic language, and someone's chart is a symbolic bridge. In addition to being a symbolic language about the self that becomes internalized, it is also a concrete image drawn on a piece of paper.

A person's chart shows how he or she is both separate and individual, yet one with the universe. In this way, an astrological chart is literally a transitional space, and the chart itself a transitional object.

To look at these ideas, I'm going to list the qualities of the transitional object and explore how these dynamics are reflected in people who are cathected to astrology. The bolded sentences are direct quotes from Winnicott in his book *Playing and Reality*.

These are the qualities that define the transitional object, as quoted from Winnicott in *Playing and Reality*.

## Qualities of the Transitional Object

1. *The infant assumes rights over the object, and it is agreed upon by all.*

The charts are their charts, real and meaningful. It is an objective fact anyone can agree upon, based on personal birth data.

2. *It stands for the breast, or the object of first relationship.*

The chart works as a surrogate mother in that it holds an image of the person for them; it is drawn in a circle, which is a containing space and conceptually provides a container which facilitates the ability to hold one's self. The astrology chart represents the first relationship, which is to the ultimate container, the cosmos, the ultimate "Great Mother." The round chart itself is a circle with a center, a breast/mandala/eye image.

The eye image adds a layer of symbolism related to lying in mother's arms looking into her eyes. Seeing and being seen, this crucial early experience begins the emotional life. Looking into her eyes, we see ourselves reflected there through her responses to us and her love. We are mirrored by her.

It has a breast energy in that the chart feeds with information and provides mirroring. It is demand feeding, totally under the control of the subject, since it can be pulled out and looked at it whenever it is desired. However, it is not always a "good" breast – sometimes it is positive feeding when it presents "good aspects" and sometimes it is negative feeding or a "bad" breast when seen in terms of "bad aspects."

3. *It antedates established reality testing.*

The chart is set with the first breath, before there is any ability to test reality.

4. *It is a possession.*

The astrology chart is our unique and special object. It is both an internal mental construct and an external object that can be possessed, the chart drawn on a piece of paper.

5. *It is not internal nor external. It comes from without from our point of view, but not so from the baby's point of view. Neither does it come from within; it is not a hallucination.*

The chart is based on something wholly without – the planets at the time and place of birth. It is where a person connects to the objective universe. Yet it is also within us as a completely subjective reality – an expression of someone's life and life's meaning, as well

as a developmental timing device. The predictable cycles of the planets reflect universal life developments as well as reflecting individual differences within the universe. Therefore, a chart is within and without.

It is not a hallucination because it is based on the hard facts of the planets' places and movements.

6. *The object is affectionately cuddled and excitedly loved as well as mutilated. It must never change, unless changed by the infant. It must survive instinctual loving, hating, and pure aggression if need be.*

A person's chart is a drawn image on a piece of paper. This piece of paper is often carried around, looked at, poured over. It is played with in the sense of doing calculations on it. It often falls apart, but can be redrawn. On a more superficial level of astrological information, people read their horoscopes in newspapers; but the columns and their information are excitedly read. Either the actual chart or the newspaper columns can be rejected, hated, and put away if the individual chooses. They never change, in that the natal chart is fixed, and one's sign never changes. They survive.

7. *It must seem to have a warmth, or to move, or to have texture or to do something that seems to show it has a vitality or reality of its own.*

The chart is filled with life. It comes from and represents the living universe. It moves on its own in that it reflects time and changes the timing techniques in astrology, called transits and progressions.

8. *The infant passes from omnipotent control to manipulation. It may develop into a fetish object persist into the adult sexual life. It may stand for feces. It is created by the child.*

A popular astrological theory is that the chart is "chosen" before someone was born or reincarnated. In this sense, they have created it. It is their life path, an indicator of who they are, and what energies we are using. The chart may be seen as having an omnipotent power to help control life by

showing what will happen. This gives the user an illusion of control. Of course, as one continues studying and/or experiencing astrology, it becomes clear that it is not omnipotent that perfect knowledge of the future is not obtainable although one can be forewarned of some aspects of it. By studying one's self through astrology, learning to work with (manipulate) the chart and its symbols, there is a sense of gaining mastery over ourselves and our lives.

9. *Its fate is to be gradually decathected. It is not forgotten, but it loses meaning.*

Chart interpretation is a synthesizing of the meanings of all the symbols in their positive and negative modes. The ability to see good and bad at the same time is a developmental achievement. However, the root of symbolic meaning in astrology is beyond both good and bad. The ultimate object of the study is to know life and reality so well that the chart is not needed to mediate one's life and thus can eventually be discarded. In therapy, I notice that often the chart is initially a very important topic of discussion and interest, but as the therapy progresses it is talked about less and less until eventually it is referred to only during times of stress.

## See Also

- ▶ [Astrology](#)
- ▶ [Astrology and Mandalas](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Atheism

- ▶ [Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Atheism](#)
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## Atman

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In Hindu thought, *Atman* is the true Self of each individual, which is at one with the Divine, Brahman, the Absolute. C. G. Jung acknowledges indebtedness to this concept in *Aion* where he refers to the "Atmic self." The Hindu concept differs from Jung, however, in that the *Atman* is one and the same in every person. *Atman* is *Brahman* since, as it is said in India, "That thou art." Thus, God is the Indweller of every soul. The life task of each person is to discover *Atman* within.

In the *Upanishads*, ancient scriptures of India, *Atman* is described as the innermost nature of every living being, pure and unchanged. Neither birth nor death nor rebirth can alter *Atman*. It is the Real, the unchangeable. In contrast, the body, mind, and personality are changeable and are therefore defined as unreal, or illusory. This usage of the words Real (unchangeable) and unreal (changeable) often creates confusion in the minds of Westerners who use the same words differently. Whether Hindus chant, "Lead me from the unreal to the Real," or talk of *Moksha* (liberation), God-realization or Self-realization, the meaning is the same, i.e., discovery of the eternal *Atman* within. This is the essential spiritual yearning, dating back to ancient Vedic times and continuing today.

The concept of *Atman* or Higher Self is not without controversy, however. In India the topic has long been debated, with Buddhists taking the contrasting view, which they call Emptiness, no-self or *Sunyata*. Some spiritual pundits (e.g., Jungian analyst, Hawyo Kawai) believe that, at

the ultimate experience, both paths end up at the same place, i.e., that paradoxically Emptiness and Fullness of Self are essentially the same experience. What is clear is that both Hindu and Buddhist meditative traditions teach that mind and ego must be transcended in order to achieve the ultimate state of Realization (*Moksha* or *Nirvana*, respectively).

## Wilber's Synthesis

In Western psychology, Ken Wilber conceptualized a spiritual-developmental path that he dubbed, "The Atman Project." In Wilber's perspective, the pathway to realization of *Atman* initially follows an outward arc towards development of ego, followed at midlife and beyond by an inward arc where ego is renounced and desires are transcended in order to approach the ultimate unity, with consciousness resting only in God, i.e., the *Atman*. Wilber synthesizes psychological, Hindu, and Buddhist practice when he states that the ultimate goal, whether called God, *Atman*, Buddha, or Ultimate Reality, is accompanied by recognition that "all things and events in the Universe are aspects of one fundamental Whole, the very source and suchness which is the Real itself" (Wilber 1980, p. 101).

## Traditional Hindu Pathways

In ancient India, Patanjali was the renowned pundit who charted the journey in search of *Atman*. Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* call for devotion to God as the means toward liberation or Self-realization. Spiritual practice and deep psychological purification are needed. The mind must be stilled and freed from all desires. What bubbles up, advanced meditators proclaim, is a state of absorption in *Atman*, nothing else. The experience has been described metaphorically as a light that does not flicker in a windless place. Thus, one-pointed meditation is recommended as an important *sadhana* (spiritual practice). This transcendent state of

liberation is considered to be beyond the Western mapping of psychological states.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the central scripture of Hinduism, the realization of *Atman* is described as union or merging with God, a state that is free from all worldly attachments, free also from ignorance, greed, and pride. To discover the infinite Self, the *Atman*, the Divine within, there is a gradual shift from the small self (or ego) to the higher state of consciousness. This shift is toward ever-more subtle states of awareness. In the process a detached observer arises, sometimes called the Watcher. Some say that this observer is the *Atman*. Others say that eventually even the Watcher disappears.

Hindus believe that the Self underlying the personality is perfect but is covered by layers of illusion. *Atman* lies beyond the senses, beyond the emotions, beyond the intellect. Realization of one's true identity (*Atman*) requires letting go of ego and all that has previously been thought of as "I-me-mine."

## See Also

- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Wilber, Ken](#)

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## Atonement

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The concept of atonement is closely associated with forgiveness, reconciliation, sorrow, remorse, repentance, reparation, and guilt. It is a spiritual concept which has been studied since time immemorial in Biblical and Kabbalistic texts.

It is in a linked pair (or Syzygy) with forgiveness.

It is also associated with the Christian idea of confession and repentance which requires atonement.

Atonement is an archetypal idea and as such originates in an archetype (which Jung describes as “an irrepresentable, unconscious, pre-existent form that seems to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche and can therefore manifest itself spontaneously anywhere, at any time” (Jung 1958–1964, par. 847).

To atone is an act of conscience. True atonement must come from the ego since it must need a conscious humbling rather than moral superego flagellation from “on high” (“Ego” is used here in the Freudian sense, whereas from a Jungian perspective, true atonement would be an expression of Self).

Some regard the process of psychotherapy itself to be a transformative process of repentance in as much as the very act of entering into psychotherapy has a dynamic effect on all those closely connected with the patient himself or herself. There is usually a process of reflection, on past acts, as part of the path of individuation (a Jungian term for the unfolding process of becoming more fully oneself which is broadly the goal of a Jungian analysis). Achieving this requires a person to follow what is known in Kabbalah as the path of the Zaddik (the path of honesty/integrity) which ultimately leads to “at-one-ment” in the sense of a oneness with God which may be seen as the potential inherent in the genuine process of atoning. This accounts for the immanence, the numinous quality

associated with the sense of completion achieved in fully embracing atonement.

The ability to atone is connected to one’s ego strength. If the site of the betrayal or “sin” is one which is suffused with narcissistic wounding, shame or hubris can inhibit the ability to atone. It therefore takes great sensitivity – both in collective and in personal situations – to enter into such a process.

In Judaism the “book of life” is considered to be open until the end of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). The book of life is seen as containing one’s fate (contingent on the process of atonement undergone during this period) for the next year, and the book is sealed at the end of the Yom Kippur festival. In organizations such as Tikkun (a modern/progressive Jewish community whose name means to heal, repair, and transform the world), the imagery of Yom Kippur has been turned into a spiritual path: they take a 10-day period over the festival to examine what changes are needed in life and how seriously one will take the yearlong process of making those changes. By condensing the period of heightened attention to 10 days, they are making sure that there is a time when these matters are brought to the forefront of one’s conscious awareness. If one has not been able to make any progress in self-awareness and steps toward change in those 10 days, then in a certain sense one’s fate is considered to be sealed, the idea being that we will continue to receive the karmic consequences of being the way that we are at the current moment and to the extent that we want that to change, this 10-day period becomes a spiritual retreat and intensive short-term “psychotherapy.”

Yom Kippur is the most sacred day of the year in the Jewish calendar which is marked by fasting, abstaining from work, sex, washing, and wearing of perfume and leather shoes (much like the Christian period of Lent). To truly engage with such a process has a transformative effect, although, as with all religious dogma, it can simply be treated as a ritualistic act.

The idea of the scapegoat originates with the rituals performed during the Yom Kippur festival. In ancient times the high priest of the Temple



in Jerusalem would conduct a sacrificial ceremony on Yom Kippur. He would be clothed in white linen and would confess his own sins and then the sins of the people of Israel before making a blood of sacrifice. The priest then ejected a goat from the temple with a scarlet piece of woolen cloth on its head. It was goaded and driven, either to death or into the wilderness, which was seen metaphorically as carrying away the sins of Israel. It was believed that if these sins were forgiven, the scarlet cloth would turn white.

Some regard the Old Testament scapegoat as being a prefiguration of the New Testament Christ whose suffering and death similarly expunged man's sins. William Holman Hunt inscribed the following two Biblical quotes on the frame of his painting "The Scapegoat": "Surely he hath borne our Grievs, and carried our Sorrows/Yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of GOD, and afflicted" (Isaiah LIII, 4), and "And the Goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a Land not inhabited" (Leviticus XVI, 22).

In the absence of atonement, *someone* becomes scapegoated and left carrying the Shadow.

Sylvia Brinton Perera explores the etymology in *The Scapegoat Complex*: "The Hebrew word for atonement, *kipper*, is related to *kippurim*, eliminatory procedures. . . . A Babylonian rite on the 5th day of the 10 day New Year festival was called *kippuru* and involved purgation, purification, confession of sins and a human sacrifice" (1986, p. 11).

Some of the elements in the complex – e.g., guilt and reparation – have been explored by Melanie Klein (1937) in a model which looks back to infant anxiety and the early development of conscience.

Cook draws our attention to the African philosophy of *ubuntu* which emphasizes the connection between the individual and the collective which perhaps facilitated the balancing of understanding and reparation rather than going down the path of vengeance and retaliation.

Desmond Tutu (1999) (Commission Chair) writes about the principles of restorative justice which underlay the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission, being rooted in the African concept of *ubuntu* which is akin to atonement. *Ubuntu* emphasizes the relatedness between humans whereby everyone is diminished when someone is dehumanized. Criminality is seen as a breach in relationship which is restored by healing the breach as opposed to punishment per se (see Tutu 2004, pp. 4–5; concept also described in detail in Tutu 1999, pp. 34–36).

The acts of atonement and forgiveness are seen as linked, the process involved being partially located in the realm of what Jung described as the psychoid unconscious, so that failure to atone produces a scapegoat. This perspective highlights how energetically we are tied to each other: one person's failure to act can have a significant impact on the ability of the other party in such a dyad to forgive. It is in this impasse that situations can seem quite intransigent and incapable of change. (Might it be in this impasse that blame is more likely to arise?).

This failure to take responsibility by the wounding party thus creating a scapegoat would be seen in terms of the Shadow being projected on to the "other."

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Conscience](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Scapegoat](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)
- ▶ [Transcendent Function](#)

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## Attachment and Loss

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Children's hunger for mother-love and presence is as great as children's hunger for food (Bowlby 1969, p. xiii). This position was maintained by John Bowlby and his colleagues, particularly James Robertson and later Mary Salter Ainsworth. This premise undergirded their compelling work on instinctive behavior and the ontogeny of human attachment.

Bowlby and his associates focused on disturbances and separations in the early relationships between young children and their primary caretakers, most often mothers or mother-surrogates. Whereas psychoanalytic theory at that time connected psychopathology more with child fantasy and the internal events or process of the child, Bowlby and his associates connected psychoneurosis and other forms of emotional disturbance in the child primarily with rather external events. Bowlby undertook training at the British Psychoanalytic Institute and received supervision from Melanie Klein. In her reconstruction of attachment theory, Inge Bretherton relays crucial insight into Bowlby's disagreement with Klein's approach: "Klein held that children's emotional

problems are almost entirely due to fantasies generated from internal conflict between aggressive and libidinal drives, rather than to events in the external world" (Bretherton 1992, p. 761). Klein would not allow Bowlby to speak to the mother of a 3-year-old in treatment. Bowlby's view which had been formed in part through his earlier work at the London Child Guidance Clinic was to look into family process as a cause, if not the cause, of early emotional disturbance (Bretherton 1992, p. 761).

In 1948, James Robertson and Bowlby received a small grant to investigate the effects of mother-separation on the development of small children. Robertson, in particular, worked with 2- and 3-year-old children who were separated from their mothers for weeks or months and placed in hospital or residential nurseries without a stable mother-substitute. Robertson was "deeply impressed by the intensity of the distress and misery he was witness to whilst the children were away from home" and even after they returned (Bowlby 1969, p. xii)! Intense clinging or rejection of and detachment from the mother were observable reactions. According to Bowlby, these reactions will be active in older adults who are still suffering from their early separations, maternal loss, and disturbances. These adults are described as clinging and insatiable in their demands (as in dependent or hysterical personalities) or detached and blocked in forming deep relationships (as in affectionless and psychopathic personalities).

In 1950, the World Health Organization (WHO) under the guidance of Ronald Hargreaves asked Bowlby to research the mental health of homeless children. In the wake of World War II, many children were homeless and/or orphaned. Bowlby then had occasion to interact with leading child psychiatrists, psychologists, and other specialists in the field. In his resulting report of 1951, he formulated the essential principle of mental health: "the infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate, and continuous relationship with [her] mother (or permanent mother-substitute). . ." (Bowlby 1951).

A film produced by the Tavistock Child Development Research Unit in London and

orchestrated by James Robertson with Bowlby's guidance made a visual impact that was not to be forgotten. Titled "A Two-Year-Old Goes to Hospital," the film illustrated the impact of maternal deprivation on an isolated 2-year-old girl (1952).

"Separation anxiety" became the focus of the second volume: *Attachment and Loss*, Vol. II: *Separation* (1973). Various related phenomena such as the distress of separation and the anxiety which follows are discussed at length in this second volume. Behavior with and without mother includes naturalistic observations of humans and nonhuman primates. Bowlby began to utilize ethology for helpful concepts in his exploration of situations that arouse fear. The assessment of danger, susceptibility to fear, and cultural clues learned from others led Bowlby to two breaks in tradition, especially with the psychoanalytic. First, objects that frighten us often bear only an *indirect* relationship to what is in fact dangerous. Secondly, "We are frightened not only by the *presence*, or expected presence, of situations of certain sorts, but by the absence, or expected *absence*, of situations of other sorts" (italics by Bowlby 1973, p. 78). In traditional psychoanalytic and psychiatric circles, the assumption was held that proper fear is always in the presence of something or someone likely to damage us. The second assumption held by traditional psychoanalysts was that a response of fear to something or someone unlikely to hurt us is abnormal. Bowlby took issues with both assumptions. He saw separation anxiety over a beloved object as allied to fear and as a normal response.

The third and final volume of *Attachment and Loss* (Bowlby, The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations 1980) continues to explore "the implications for the psychology and psychopathology of personality in the ways in which young children respond to a temporary or permanent loss of mother-figure" (p. 1). Whereas in the first two volumes, Bowlby drew heavily from ethology and control theory, in Volume III, he utilized cognitive psychology and human information processing. In outlining the trauma of loss, Bowlby clarified the defensive processes. The mourning of children and adults is lodged under the rubric of attachment theory.

Bowlby's contributions were made more applicable and accessible by the related work of Mary Salter Ainsworth. Ainsworth expanded Bowlby's clinical studies through her laboratory procedure titled "The Strange Situation" experiment, through her Baltimore Project involving 26 families, and with her culture-sensitive work in Uganda.

Surely there is more to be done with cultural awareness, economic factors, and gender inclusivity. The latter would benefit from the increasing studies in father absence and father attachment.

Psychology and religion are mutual beneficiaries of John Bowlby's legacy. Religious studies could investigate the relationship between maternal and paternal figures and God images. How does maternal and paternal deprivation create other hunger. Religion promotes a self-in-relation; that significant relation goes by different names including the Divine, the Wholly Other, the Higher Power, and God. Bowlby demonstrated in his trilogy that a child is born as a self-in-relation. Religion and psychology can take this to ever new levels of understanding.

### See Also

- ▶ [Adoption](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Hope](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Personal God](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)
- ▶ [Transitional Object](#)

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## Augustine

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## Life and Legacy

St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) was born to a pagan father and a Christian mother. After a rather wild adolescence, he began to work out his own intellectual and religious beliefs by means of trying on a number of ideas: to name a few, he was highly influenced by various strands of Platonism; he wrestled with Manichaeism and skepticism; and, finally, he embraced Christianity. As Augustine noted in his *Confessions* – the first western religious autobiography – his heart was restless until it found rest in God. St. Ambrose baptized Augustine in the year 387, and Augustine later organized a monastery that eventually became established in Hippo, where he was made bishop in 396.

While he impacted the Western Church much more than the Eastern Church, Augustine, for better or for worse, is undisputedly one of the most influential theologians of all time. With regard to the history of doctrine, he is perhaps most well known for his ideas about original sin and just war theory, as well as for his views on the Donatist and Pelagian controversies. He also greatly influenced John Calvin, perhaps the greatest mind of the Protestant Reformation.

## On Psychology

While Augustine was doing theology, he also addressed psychology. In *On the Trinity*, for example, he made a case for the rationality of the idea of the Trinity – how, in other words, one could rationally conceive of God as “three-in-one” – on the grounds that human personality (one) consists of being, knowing, and willing (three). As Diogenes Allen (1985) points out, “Augustine used the human mind as his analogue because human beings are created in God’s image” (p. 103). In human beings, then, Augustine looked for “trinities” to learn something about the Trinity (1985, p. 103).

## On Sexuality and the Body

Augustine wrote about human sexuality as well (cf. Brown 1988). In *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, Augustine notes that some interpreters of Genesis 3 regarded the first sin to be intercourse. One might say that these interpreters made proto-psychoanalytic interpretations centuries before Freud when they argued that the tree in the garden represented a penis and that the true or deeper meaning of the story concerns premature, premarital, and irrational sex (cf. Wulff 1997, pp. 293–297). Augustine, however, takes the text at face value and sees the sin simply as disobedience to the Lord’s commands (cf. Kvam et al. 1999). In any case, Augustine still does not have a positive view of sexual intercourse – far from it – even if he does not see the first sin to be of a sexual nature. Sexual intercourse as human beings experience it now, Augustine argues, gives evidence for the “fall.” Augustine holds that, before the “fall,” human beings could have procreated without passion and as a deliberate act of the will, but now, Augustine laments, sexual arousal is not governed by the will. So the first sin, if not sexual, nevertheless had serious consequences for human sexuality. Another point to add here is that, for Augustine, the original sin of Adam and Eve is passed down by means of procreation – that is, by means of sexual intercourse. And because all human beings after Adam and

Eve (except the Virgin Mary and Jesus) have come into the world by means of sexual intercourse, all human beings, following Augustine's logic, bear the consequences of the sins of Adam and Eve (cf. Pagels 1988).

Since Augustine was so influential in the history of doctrine, his views on human sexuality have naturally affected many strands of Christianity and western culture in general. In cotemporary scholarship, Daniel Boyarin has written extensively and eloquently on the cultural effects of Augustine's views. In his *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, Boyarin (1993) notes Augustine's infamous charge against "the Jews" – namely, that they are people of the flesh. Ironically, Boyarin, himself a Jew, says that "Augustine knew what he was talking about" (p. 1). But conceding to Augustine this point enables Boyarin to turn what was once a criticism of Jews into a criticism of Christianity and other dualistic metaphysics. How? Boyarin argues that, "for rabbinic Jews, the human being was defined as a body – animated, to be sure, by a soul – while for Hellenistic Jews (such as Philo) and . . . Christians (such as Paul), the essence of a human being is a soul housed in a body" (1993, p. 5). The importance of this perhaps subtle difference in theological anthropology is that

The notion that the physical is just a sign or a shadow of that which is really real allows for a disavowal of sexuality and procreation, of the importance of filiation and genealogy, and of the concrete, historical sense of scripture, of, indeed, historical memory itself. The emphasis, on the other hand, on the body as the very site of human significance allows for no such devaluations (1993, p. 6).

In *The Body and Society*, Peter Brown (1988), generally regarded as the leading scholar on Augustine, has written about such issues as well.

## The Psychological Study of Augustine

In the field of psychology of religion, there has been considerable interest in Augustine. William Parsons (2003) marks the beginning of the modern psychoanalytic study of Augustine with an

article by Charles Kligerman (1957) and a symposium in *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* during the years 1965–1966. Two decades later, Parsons notes, followed another symposium in the journal that led to an edited volume by James Dittes and Donald Capps (1990). Capps and Dittes (1990) mark the beginning of the modern psychological study of Augustine with William James, who characterized Augustine as a "divided self" (p. vii). They note that, while the psychological publications on Augustine "are scattered among journals and books of several academic disciplines and the writers reflect diverse professional and scholarly orientations, the psychological study of Augustine is a matured field" (1990, p. vii). And so the purpose of the Capps and Dittes volume is "to recognize that field of study, to give it a sense of identity and to demonstrate its accumulated wisdom, to introduce fresh interest and to open new vistas" (1990, p. vii). Since then, the most recent full-length psychoanalytic study of Augustine is by Sandra Dixon (1999); James O'Donnell's (2005) work is noteworthy as well. By reviewing the works cited here and the works cited in these bibliographies – especially the publications by Parsons (2003) and Capps and Dittes (1990) – the reader will have a good sense of the psychological studies of Augustine to date.

In "Psychoanalysis and Mysticism: The Case of St. Augustine," Parsons (2003) sketches a portrait of what he thinks a contemporary (and future) adequate psychoanalytic interpretation of Augustine would entail. Parsons notes that, in the psychoanalytic theorizing of Augustine, one can observe three types or schools of interpretation – namely, classic, adaptive, and transformational. Parsons (1999) previously suggested these categories for understanding the psychoanalytic study of mysticism, and in this article, he peruses the psychoanalytic literature around Augustine with his own categories in mind. How does Parsons define the three categories? By "classic" he means traditional or orthodox (and therefore usually oedipal and reductive) psychoanalytic interpretations of mystical experiences. Here, a mystical experience is usually explained in terms of developmental conflicts, and

sometimes such experiences are rendered pathological and, therefore, pejoratively (cf. Kligerman 1957). “Adaptive” interpretations do not interpret mystical experiences to be pathological. Quite the contrary, here mystical experiences are understood often to lead to growth. With regard to Augustine’s mysticism, Parsons notes that Dixon (1999) argues “for a preoedipal basis for Augustine’s mysticism when she states that the ascent with Monica to the ‘region of inexhaustible richness’” which is, for Dixon, “the inexhaustible breast” (Parsons 2003, p. 159). Parsons thinks that this argument is representative of an “adaptive” reading, as is Philip Woollcott’s (1966) argument that “the mystical visions were complicit in enabling Augustine to cure himself” (Parsons 2003, p. 158). “Transformational” interpretations go even further and break with classic and adaptive interpretations in that transformational interpretations give epistemological legitimacy to the mystic, even while acknowledging the validity of classic and adaptive interpretations. As Parsons puts this with regard to the psychoanalytic study of Augustine, “a transformational approach must also create metapsychological space for a mystical desire which ‘ascends’ beyond the purely developmental” (2003, p. 169). The transformational approach, then, seeks a dialogical approach to religion and psychology.

Donald Capps (2007a, b) has continued to write on Augustine, and two of his recent articles have appeared in *Pastoral Psychology*. In “Augustine’s *Confessions*: The Story of a Divided Self and the Process of Its Unification,” Capps (2007a) notes that, when he began his professional career over 30 years ago, he wrote an article “on the psychologies of religion identified with Sigmund Freud and William James” (p. 551). Capps says that he did not realize then that he “would be engaged in a sort of dialectical embrace of these two innovative thinkers throughout [his] career” (2007a, p. 551). So, in the first article, Capps (2007a) uses, as his subtitle intimates, James’s notion of the divided self to interpret Augustine’s *Confessions*, and, in the second article, Capps (2007b)

focuses on Freudian interpretations of the *Confessions*, specifically on the often-noted issue of self-reproach in the *Confessions*. All of this is to point out, in other words, that the psychological study of, and engagement with, Augustine is alive and well (see also Bingaman 2012; Hampson and Hoff 2010; Lamborn 2011).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Mysticism and Psychotherapy

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## Authoritarian Personality

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### Authority and the Father

The “authoritarian personality” is a social psychological construct derived from early psychoanalytic theories of attachment to (and conflict with) the father. To begin with, note that Freud's own attitude toward paternal authority was profoundly ambiguous. In 1910, Freud attributed Leonardo da Vinci's astonishing precocity to the fact that he had “escaped being intimidated by his father in earliest childhood,” implying that the routine exercise of paternal authority leads to the suppression of free and unfettered intellectual development in children and, later on, in adults. Without saying so in so many words, Freud's tribute to Leonardo suggested that childhood and adolescent

rebellion against paternal authority is essentially an *emancipatory* process.

However, 3 years later, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud linked rebellion against paternal authority to an intractable ambivalence rooted in our phylogenetic inheritance, which presumably underlies the “collective obsessional neurosis” that underscores all religious ideation. On this second reading, rebellion against paternal authority is an unconscious reenactment of a collective rebellion against a prehistoric tyrant – in short, a repetition compulsion. Freud never reconciled these contradictory views of rebellion against paternal authority or even acknowledged their existence in his work (Burston 1994, p. 214).

Freud attracted many followers who resonated with the antiauthoritarian elements in his thought. However, all those who were radical or uncompromising in their opposition to patriarchal authority were eventually thrown out of the International Psychoanalytic Association, e.g., Otto Gross (in 1909), Wilhelm Reich (in 1933), and Erich Fromm (in 1954).

Though greeted as a theorist of great promise in 1907, Otto Gross was a “wild analyst” disowned by Freud and Jung by 1909 (Burston). Before his dismissal from “respectable” psychoanalytic circles, Gross was immersed in the matriarchal theory of J. J. Bachofen (Michaels 1983; Green 1999). In 1916, Gross inveighed, both publicly and in print, against “the patriarchal-authoritarian character” – an idea taken up by Wilhelm Reich a decade later (Cathier 1971, Chaps. 9 and 10) in his efforts to explain the growing appeal of Nazism.

Unlike most of his colleagues on the Left, Reich was alert to the quasi-religious character of the Nazi movement and explained the religious and mystical dimensions of Nazi thought and propaganda as sublimated expressions of sado-masochistic tendencies in the collective psyche.

### Fascism and Sado-masochism

When it is used to describe a sexual perversion, the word “sado-masochism” denotes a kind of emotional numbness, or an inability to

experience full sexual arousal and release without inflicting pain on others, or having pain inflicted on oneself. But this narrow definition of sadomasochism was abandoned or, more accurately, expanded by Freud and his followers in the 1920s. Freud noted, for example, that sadism and masochism seldom appear in pure form and that sadistic and masochistic tendencies are always found together in the same person. As a result, a person who prefers the sadistic role harbors masochistic tendencies, because a great deal of the pleasure derived from sadism derives from a process of unconscious identification with their victim. Conversely, the masochist identifies with the sadist and derives pleasure from this in the midst of his pain. (This explains why sadomasochists often exchange roles.)

Taking his cue from Freud, Reich said that our definition of sadomasochism should be expanded beyond overt sexual behavior to include sadistic and masochistic *character traits*, which may or may not take on sexual form. People with a predominantly sadistic character may not gravitate to S & M per se but take great pleasure in dominating, defiling, and humiliating other people, robbing of their dignity and their powers of autonomous decision and action. They love power and control. Hitler was clearly such a person. He was not interested in sex, really, but loved power, control, and killing people, as did most members of his inner circle. Masochistic characters, by contrast, take pleasure in submission. They feel anxious unless they are neurotically attached to a more powerful person who tells them what to do. They love power and control too but typically seek it out in others, rather than trying to seize it for themselves. Many of Hitler's followers fit the masochistic profile. They silenced their consciences and their critical faculties and obeyed their Fuehrer, regardless of how heinous and bizarre his ideas and behavior were.

According to another analyst, Erich Fromm, neither the sadist nor the masochist – in this diffuse, characterological sense – is capable of genuine love or compassion for other human beings. Instead, they cultivate a kind of sordid intimacy with others – what he called “symbiotic

attachment.” According to Fromm, people with a pronounced and open preference for sadomasochistic sex are relatively rare and often conflicted about their inclinations, because they are frowned upon by the general population. But sadistic and masochistic *character traits* are quite prevalent in the general population, and when they proliferate beyond a certain point, authoritarian and antidemocratic regimes tend to flourish. In such circumstances, people who are relatively normal in terms of their sexual behavior and daily habits, but whose conscience has atrophied, support leaders whose sanity is quite precarious. The more grandiose and inflated a sadistic leader's ego becomes, the more his followers revel vicariously in their leader's (real and imagined) power. This attitude toward power legitimates the use of force and deception to solve problems and abets an ideological emphasis on the natural inequality of man, which justifies the oppression of one race (or sex) by another. In Chapter 6 of *Escape from Freedom*, published in 1941, Fromm said:

Usually Hitler tries to rationalize and justify his wish for power. The main justifications are the following: his domination of other peoples is for their own good and for the good of the culture of the world; the wish for power is rooted in the eternal laws of nature and he recognizes and follows only these laws. . . (p. 251).

Moreover, Fromm continued,

The second rationalization, that his wish for power is rooted in the laws of nature is more than a mere rationalization; it also springs from the wish for submission to a power outside of oneself, as expressed particularly in Hitler's crude popularization of Darwinism. In ‘the instinct of preserving the species,’ Hitler sees ‘the first cause of the formation of human communities.’

The instinct of self-preservation leads to the fight of the stronger for the domination of the weaker and economically, eventually, to the survival of the fittest. The identification of the instinct of self-preservation with power over others finds a particularly striking expression in Hitler's assumption that “the first culture of mankind certainly depended less on the tamed animal, but rather on the use of inferior people.” He projects his own sadism upon Nature who is



“the cruel Queen of all Wisdom,” and her law of preservation is bound to the brazen law of necessity and of the right of the victory of best and the strongest in this world.

### Fascism, Conservatism and Anti-Semitism

While *Escape From Freedom* remains Fromm’s best known study of authoritarianism and Nazism, his empirical research on pro-fascist sympathies among blue-collar workers in the Weimar Republic actually in 1929, while he was director for social psychological research at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, under the directorship of Max Horkheimer. Horkheimer was accustomed to thinking of pro-fascist sympathies as an artifact or expression of Right-wing sympathies and was disagreeably surprised by Fromm’s discovery that they are actually quite prevalent among Left wingers as well. For this and other reasons, Horkheimer refused to publish Fromm’s study, which only appeared posthumously (Burston 1991).

Fromm left the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research – which had relocated to Columbia University in 1937 – in 1938 and was replaced by Theodor Adorno, who used Fromm’s unpublished work as a pilot study, which informed his (much larger) study of pro-fascist and anti-Semitic attitudes among Americans, called *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 1950). Significantly, Adorno found no evidence of Left-wing authoritarianism in America, but did find striking correlations between “pseudo-conservative” trends and pro-fascist thinking and between (Right wing) anti-Semitism and intense religiosity, which appear to imply that there is some necessary or inherent linkage between intense religiosity and authoritarian (and/or anti-Semitic) trends. These findings may have been valid in their time and place but must be taken with a grain of salt nowadays. Why? Since the 1950s, Left-wing anti-Semitism has grown apace, while conservatives like William F. Buckley and Barry Goldwater have made anti-Semitism anathema in American conservative

circles. While it certainly has not disappeared from the scene, anti-Semitism is entirely overshadowed by philo-Semitic attitudes (on the Right). Therefore, efforts to replicate Adorno’s study today would yield very different results.

Moreover, and more importantly, Adorno et al. shared Freud and Reich’s assumption that religiosity is the expression of repressed inner conflicts, sublimated sadomasochism, or other “pregenital” libidinal fixations. The idea that religiosity per se is a symptom of immaturity or a derivative expression of psychopathological trends is an example of Enlightenment bias that Fromm, for one, never shared. Fromm had trained for the rabbinate before becoming a psychoanalyst and, though an atheist himself, held the spiritual traditions of the East and the West in high esteem. Indeed, Fromm devoted a chapter of *Sigmund Freud’s Mission* (1959) to demonstrating the presence of authoritarian tendencies in a notoriously *irreligious* thinker, namely, Freud himself. Fromm’s reflections on Freud’s authoritarianism hark back to essays he wrote in the early 1930s on matriarchy and patriarchy and what he called “patricentric” and “matricentric” trends in individual and social psychology (Fromm 1959).

### See Also

- ▶ [Anti-Semitism](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Nazism](#)

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## Avalokiteshvara

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*Avalokiteshvara* is a high-level bodhisattva (“enlightenment being”) in Mahayana Buddhist tradition, expressing the important element of compassion in the Dharma teachings. His name means “Lord who looks down [and hears the cries of the world]”. He was popular in India until the twelfth century, when Muslim invaders expelled Buddhists.

Tibetan *Vajrayana* tradition regards him as a Buddha. They developed many variations on his imagery, some with many faces or many arms. They see the ultimate source of his tradition as the universal manifestation of compassion itself. Some see the *Dalai Lama* as an incarnation of *Avalokiteshvara*, also named *Chenrezig*. His anthropomorphized images are useful ways of conveying his teachings to humans. Some Tibetan traditions tell the story that the goddess *Tara* came from one of *Chenrezig's* tears that fell and turned into a lake, and a lotus grew



**Avalokiteshvara, Fig. 1** Avalokiteshvara as four-armed Chenrezig (This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chenrezigthangka.jpg>)

up and revealed Tara. Another account portrays her emerging from his heart. Chinese Buddhists see him in the goddess *Guanyin*. Carl Jung would call these various images of the archetypal Self (Fig. 1).

## The Lotus Sutra

The earliest text about his teachings is the *Lotus Sutra*, Chap. 25, “The Universal Gateway of *Avilokateshvara Bodhisattva*” (*Lotus*). Here he is the savior of those who suffer dangers such as fire and shipwreck, beating or robbery. Wholeheartedly chanting the name of *Avalokiteshvara* will save those facing danger: “Homage to *Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara*” and respectful meditation on *Avalokiteshvara* will free one from desires, anger, or confusion. A woman wanting to have a baby boy or girl

who reverently pays homage and makes offerings will be blessed. If needed, he can change himself into many forms: Buddha, other deities, spirits, a king, a brahman, a householder, even a child. When needed, he grants fearlessness. “*Avalokiteśvara* displays such qualities, wanders through many lands in various forms, and saves sentient beings” (“The Gateway to Every Direction,” 2007, p. 298).

## The Heart Sutra

The *Heart Sutra* is chanted in many Buddhist monastery ceremonies. It is a highly philosophical, paradoxical, and spiritual text. Its full title is the “Heart of the Great Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom: *Bhagavati Prajna Paramita Hridaya*” (Rinpoche & Donyo 1994). Once when the Buddha himself entered the meditative state of Profound Illumination, the Noble *Avalokiteshvara* answered seekers’ questions about ultimate reality. He taught that ultimately the material world (the five aggregates – earth, water, fire, air, and space) and our human egos are transitory, and so are ultimately unreal, or “empty”, of substantial being. But ego is deluded by becoming attached to its conventional perceptions and feelings. The only true reality is uncovered by awakening to the Great Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom, the undying ultimate reality. Then, the illusions of ego dissipate, consciousness aligns with the transcendent Self, found in meditative illumination, and suffering is overcome. *Avalokiteshvara* says:

The five aggregates themselves are empty by nature.... Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form.... In the same way, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness, are empty.... There is no appearance, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no phenomena. There is no ignorance, no cessation of ignorance ... no old age and death, no cessation of old age and death (p. 10).

If these sayings perplex you, they are meant to confuse the ego. In meditation, slipping deeper than ego’s illusion of logic and control, one awakens to the *Prajna Paramita*, the Great

Perfection of Transcendent Wisdom: “although all phenomena are lacking permanence, our mind remains prisoner of this conception; only Transcendent Wisdom can cut this conception at the root itself” (p. 33). But one need not feel frustrated; that is just ego. Just meditate quietly as long as it takes to awaken to the paradoxes: “Since there is no ignorance, there is no cessation of ignorance, because something that does not exist cannot cease. Likewise, there is no suffering, no origin of suffering, no cessation of suffering, no path” (pp. 38–39). The meaning of the *Prajna Paramita* is contained in:

*Gate* [“got-AY”], *Gate*, *Paragate*: Gone, gone, gone beyond  
*Parasamgate*: Perfectly completely gone beyond  
*Bodi Soha*: To awakening (p. 42).

Applying these abstractions to particulars, we easily come to the passions, such as anger and aggression, which are the major causes of conflicts and wars. But happiness comes from the dissolution of these, not responding to anger with anger, but with compassion, opening our minds to the deeper realities of love and comforting words. Six perfections emerge from *Avalokiteshvara*’s compassion: giving (material possessions, security, and spiritual teachings), ethics (avoiding harm, keeping vows), patience (responding to aggression with love), diligence (maintaining meditative practice to keep compassion present), concentration (calmly focusing on love, not being easily distracted), and perfection of wisdom (knowing that the ego and its desires are earthly conventions, not ultimate reality) (Rinpoche & Donyo 1994, pp. 52–56). Psychologically, this is what Carl Jung means by orienting the ego to serve not the many archetypal desires that clutter the mind, but the Self, the soul’s compassionate spark of ultimate reality. Meditation is Buddhism’s refined practice of orienting the ordinary ego to the highest spiritual reality: compassion.

## Guanyin

When Buddhism was taken to China during the Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), *Avalokiteshvara*

was translated into “*Guanyin*” with the same meaning “Lord who looks down [and hears the cries of the world]” and was at first pictured as a male Chinese monk with a thin mustache. But then *Guanyin* became female. Why would a male bodhisattva turn into a female? Of course, divine powers are beyond gender and can appear as they will. But also in the fifth century, an emperor had a vision of a feminine *Guanyin*, so a transformation from male to female occurred that was not seen before. *Guanyin* became a very popular female Chinese goddess, and still is. She is a major figure in popular religion and became a distinctly different divinity. She retained the very important, refined compassionate Buddhist core of *Avalokiteshvara*, and several Chinese elements were added. She retained *Avalokiteshvara*'s savior archetype; like him, she was portrayed as responding immediately to sincere cries for help from people in desperate situations. But the humanistic Chinese did not care for the many-armed and many-headed images of Hindu deities, so they dropped those symbolic forms and synthesized her with their other deities, as is common in religions. John Blofeld sees in *Guanyin* some of the goddess *Tara* coming from *Tibet* (Blofeld 1977, p. 59). He also says

Kuan Yin sits enthroned as a folk goddess worshiped by millions upon millions. These, ignorant of Buddhist metaphysics, love her in the uncomplicated manner of the fisher-folk, recognizing in her the protective power and rewarding nature of compassion. Images of her in this aspect are ubiquitous in China (Blofeld 1977, p. 64).

One of the most popular myths attached to *Guanyin* was the story of the girl *Miao Shan*. One version of her very symbolic tale is that her father demanded that she marry his choice of men, but she repeatedly refused and begged to go to a convent. Furious with her, he let her go, hoping that his princess would dislike the monastic austerities. But she was very devoted and did not return home, so he had his henchmen drag her into the forest, with orders to decapitate her. But she was rescued by a huge tiger. She was visited by the Chinese Buddha *Amita-fo*, who urged her to seek safety on the island in the bay south of Shanghai, *Pu-tuo*, and gave her a magic peach to

sustain her. She meditated and did compassionate deeds and became a greatly revered *bodhisattva*. Thereafter, this island has become her holy island, with many temples and pilgrims (Blofeld 1977, pp. 69–71). This is a Chinese legend where the daughter, refusing to obey her father, dares to break the Confucian rule of obedience. She prefers to be a Buddhist nun, which he violently disputes and forces her to flee. In other versions, she returns to forgive and save him, since she was *Guanyin* all along.

Now *Guanyin* (also known as *Kannon* and other names across Asia) is a very popular uniquely Chinese goddess who synthesizes Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and indigenous shamanic elements. Many Chinese are not even aware of her Buddhist roots (Yu 2001, p. 223). *Guanyin* traditions are clearly rooted in Buddhist goddesses such as *Tara*, archaic shamanic Chinese goddesses such as The Daoist Queen Mother of the West (Eternal Mother), and Daoist goddesses such as *Ma Tzu*; in these historical roots and current practices are several psychological factors, such as relief from the ancient denigration of women as subservient and polluted. She thus contradicts ancient psychology putting women in shadow and gives women a direct channel to the divine. *Guanyin* is also seen as a goddess of fertility, granting women children; some of her images show her holding a child (Yu 2001, pp. 127–140). *Avalokiteshvara* remains the highest spiritual core of *Guanyin*.

## Mantra

Mahayana Buddhism connects *Avalokiteshvara* with the six-syllable mantra: *Om mani padme hum*. People in Tibet especially recite this mantra frequently with prayer beads (*Avalokiteshvara*).

## See Also

- ▶ [American Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings](#)

- ▶ [Buddhism and Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Dalai Lama](#)
- ▶ [Edinger, Edward](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Care](#)
- ▶ [Tara](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)

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## Avatar

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*Avatar* (or *Avatara*) is an Indian concept meaning the descent to earth of a deity. In particular, Vishnu, the aspect of the Hindu Trinity who is devoted to preservation of the creation, is believed to have incarnated on earth many times. Whenever negative energies are rampant and the world is in great peril, in danger of imminent destruction or chaos, Vishnu is said to return.

He comes to guide humanity back to righteous living (*dharma*) in order to preserve the harmonious order of the universe.

## Interfaith Perspectives

Psychologically, we must compare this idea of Divine Incarnation with other traditions. It is well known that Christian belief in Jesus as Incarnate God impacts the whole belief system and worldview of the individual. In contrast, there is a somewhat more muted impact in Jewish and Moslem reverence for the prophets and in Buddhist reverence for the Buddha. For Hindus, like for Christians, the belief that God has incarnated on earth has profound psychological implications. Prayers to that incarnated Divine One are believed to be efficacious. This belief provides a strong resource for coping with the vicissitudes of life, an inspiration and model of behavior, and a supportive, calming religious-introject in the psyche of the believer. Unlike Christianity, however, the Hindu belief in Divine Incarnation is multiple.

## Incarnation in the Hindu Tradition

Some of the earliest legendary *Avatars* were thought to take animal form (e.g., a fish, a turtle, a boar, and a hybrid man-lion), but for thousands of years, only human incarnations have been reported. These human incarnations have been mostly male, but recently, a few female claimants have been reported (e.g., Mother Mira). The best known and most frequently worshipped *Avatars* are Rama, hero of the *Ramayana* epic, and Krishna, whose legends appear throughout the *Mahabharata* epic, ending with the *Bhagavad Gita* (Song of the Blessed One). In recent times, Sai Baba is also believed to be an *Avatar*, one who first incarnated in Shirdi and secondly reincarnated in Puttaparthi, India.

For the Hindus, as for many Western religions, God is Love. Thus, the *Avatar* is an embodiment of pure Love. Of the four major spiritual paths in Hinduism (*Jnana*, *Bhakti*, *Karma*, and *Raja*), *Bhakti* – the path of devotion – is most readily



practiced in relation to an incarnate person. All humans are socialized to love other humans, so devotion to the *Avatar* is a natural extension beyond devotion to the family, to one's own *Guru* (teacher) and other humans. Like Jesus in Christianity, the *Avatars* are reported to be miracle workers, healers, teachers, and expansive lovers of all creation. They are believed to be fully divine as well as human. Their wisdom is meant for all humanity.

### Purpose of the Avatars

In Indian thought, the Will of God (*sankalpam*) is to protect the structure of the universe, so *Avatars* arrive when evil threatens to vanquish good. These Incarnations are said to occur in response to earnest prayers by devotees, each manifestation suitable to the particular time and circumstance. The *Avatar* provides a role model of righteousness, truth, and compassion.

*Avatars* incarnate to renew the spiritual endeavors of humanity. By example they illustrate the tender, human side of the divine; and by their miracles they demonstrate God's power. They teach how to achieve God-realization. Humans cannot fully understand the nature of God until they merge with the Divine. The *Avatar* teaches essential processes towards that end, including adherence to truth, nonviolence, peaceful equanimity, and loving service of others. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna teaches the way to merge with God: to be a willing instrument of God, acting in accord with Divine Will and leaving the outcome in God's hands. This equanimity is characteristic of *Avatars* and of advanced spiritual followers who merge with God, thus discovering their own true spiritual Self.

### See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Sai Baba](#)

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### Axis Mundi

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The axis mundi or world center is embodied for many cultures in such objects as world trees or centering towers (Ziggurats, temple mounts, etc.) or mandala centers. In Native American pueblo cultures, the axis mundi is the place of the people's emergence into this world, symbolized by the small hole or sipapu in the center of the religious space, usually underground, known as the kiva. For Norse culture, the axis mundi is Yggdrasill, the great tree that in the creation myths links the various segments of creation – the lower world, the middle world, and the upper world. Axle trees such as this exist in many cultures. In Korea, it was believed that a sacred tree connected the three worlds of existence. For ancient Tartars in Central Asia, a giant pine tree grew out of the earth's navel and reached to the home of the supreme god in the heavens. For Christians, the cross is a kind of world tree on the world center hill of Golgotha. A city or town can be the world center, as in the case of the Greek oracular center, Delphi, often called the world navel.

Symbolically speaking, then, the axis mundi is the object that embodies the essential identity of a culture – its center or soul. In terms of individual psychology, the axis mundi is an expression of the interaction between various segments of the psychic world. If we think of the axis mundi as a tree, this understanding becomes clear. The tree's roots are in the mysterious depths; its leaves reach to the sky and its trunk is the vehicle for the energy that derives from the roots and

reaches up to the energizing power that comes from the sun. In terms of the individual's quest for wholeness or individuation, the tree's roots explore and take nourishment from the subconscious – the unconscious world of dreams – where monsters are fought and lost treasures are to be found. The energy from this process makes possible the growth of the trunk – the lived life – and opens the individual to the budding and leaf-making which can be thought of as individual enlightenment or self-knowledge. The total tree is the unified Self.

### See Also

- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Baal Shem Tov

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### General

Israel ben Eliezer (ca. 1700–1760), the founder of the Hasidic movement, was born in Ukraine at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Among devotees, he is most commonly referred to as “the Besht” – an acronym of his Hebrew title, Baal Shem Tov, literally “Master of the Good Name.” His purported ability to perform miracles accounts for the moniker as he was able to harness the power of the “good name” – that is, God’s name – for healing. In his 30s, he emerged as a charismatic leader, storyteller, and traveling healer who quickly amassed a wide following among the impoverished Jews of Galicia. The Baal Shem Tov functioned mostly outside of the established communal structure. The stories told by his followers usually depict him as speaking in small groups or with individuals instead of preaching in the synagogue.

### Core Teachings

The Baal Shem Tov preached an antiestablishment message, downplaying the importance of traditional

text study as an act of piety in favor of narrative, song, and dance. Such spiritual practices are accessible to everyone, not only the educated religious elite. He taught that individuals attain spiritual redemption by striving for a state of constant joy, especially when worshiping. Rather than something to be restricted, physical pleasure is valued because it leads to spiritual pleasure which in turn brings one closer to God. Some of the Baal Shem Tov’s sharpest criticism was reserved for Jewish leaders who encouraged asceticism through fasting or other rigorous practices which limited physical pleasure.

Though there is no evidence that the Baal Shem Tov was a scholar of Talmud or Jewish law, he did study Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism). Until his time, Kabbalistic traditions generally resided in the hands of a small elite and were not taught or practiced widely. Through his travels, the Baal Shem Tov attempted to popularize some Kabbalistic notions, especially those related to the idea that an individual can become one with the divine through spiritual practice and good deeds. However, he also rejected some Kabbalistic principles, especially those that encouraged individual isolation. The Baal Shem Tov and his followers were roundly criticized by many contemporaneous rabbis for oversimplifying complicated mystical teachings and for creating a cult that was preoccupied with miracles, talismans, and the supernatural.

## Influence in Hasidic Movement

The Baal Shem Tov became the first of many Hasidic Tzadikim (“righteous ones”; sing: “Tzadik”). The Tzadik or “Rebbe” was recognized by his followers to have attained a higher spiritual level and was believed to have the power to elevate the souls of those in his community through his righteous acts and ritual practice. Consequently, the Tzadikim of the Hasidic movement garnered loyal and devout ad hominem followings, much more so than that of a standard rabbi in the non-Hasidic world. After his death in 1760, a number of the Baal Shem Tov’s grandchildren and disciples became Tzaddikim with their own followings. Within two generations, the Hasidic movement had spread throughout Eastern European Jewry attracting many adherents and simultaneously eliciting vigorous rabbinic opposition. It remained the primary spiritual orientation for many religious Jews in the region until the destruction of Eastern European Jewry during the Holocaust.

The Baal Shem Tov never wrote any works of his own; the stories he told were passed on orally among his followers. However, after his death, his scribe, Dov Baer of Linitz, compiled a collection of teachings, correspondences, and narratives in a volume entitled *Shivhei Ha-Besht*, translated into English as *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*. Some modern scholars have argued that the Baal Shem Tov’s emphasis on the spiritual value of storytelling, extensive use of symbolic language, fascination with dream material, and veneration of physical pleasure indirectly influenced the thought of Sigmund Freud whose father was raised in the Hasidic tradition.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)

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## Bahá'í Faith

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## Historical Overview

In 1844, a young man named Siyyid ‘Ali Muhammad from Shiraz, Iran, who was a direct descendent of the prophet Muhammad, proclaimed Himself to be the Báb (the “gate” or “door”). In the Shi’ite sect of Islam, it is believed that the Imam Mahdí, or “rightly guided imam,” will come forth and bring in an era of justice and peace. By proclaiming Himself the Báb, Siyyid ‘Ali Muhammad was declaring Himself as the expected imam and forerunner of “He whom God shall make manifest” whom adherents believe was Bahá’u’lláh.

The Báb was rapidly gathering disciples, but this threatened the established clergy in Iran. He was quickly put to death by firing squad in 1850, and many of His followers, or Bábís, were massacred or exiled. In the meanwhile, the “Báb had left as his vicar, before the arrival of ‘He whom God shall make Manifest’ (. . .) Mirzá Yayá Nurí that was known with the name Subh-i Azal (Dawn of the Eternity)” (Bausani 2005, p.196). Thus the group’s leadership was bestowed on Subh-i Azal, until the one foretold by the Báb would come or reveal Himself.

When, in 1863, Azal's half brother Mirzá Husayn Alí Núrí (or Bahá'u'lláh) declared Himself to be the figure promised by the Báb, there were according to the records, at least four sectarian divisions within the Bábí movement, triggered by disillusionment and disorganization. Nonetheless, "from then on the outstanding majority of the bábís pleaded with him and called themselves bahá'í, while the others, that went with their leader Subh-i Azal, exiled to Cyprus, called themselves Azalí" (Bausani 2005, p. 196), or Bayani.

Bahá'u'lláh was born in Tehran, Iran, in 1817, the son of a nobleman and minister. In 1863, after the death of the Báb and His exile, He declared Himself to be "He whom God shall make manifest" to a small group of followers. Shortly thereafter, He was banished to Istanbul and then to Adrianople, in the Ottoman Empire. There, He publicly proclaimed his mission. While in exile, He wrote many letters to world rulers and developed the unifying concepts that characterize the Bahá'í Faith. In 1868, Bahá'u'lláh was exiled yet again to 'Akká, Palestine, where He suffered harsh imprisonment for 2 years. This ordeal was followed by a house arrest that lasted until His death in 1892.

Leadership was passed on by Bahá'u'lláh to one of His sons, known as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or "The Servant of Bahá," written in His will (Kitáb-i-'Ahd, The Book of the Covenant). 'Abdu'l-Bahá was released from prison in 1908 and promptly set out on missionary journeys to Egypt, Europe, and North America. After the death of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921, His grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, was appointed, by the former's Will and Testament, as the Guardian, or next leader of the Bahá'í Faith. After Shoghi Effendi's death in 1957, the administrative duties were vested to the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel.

## World Vision

The Bahá'í Faith is an independent monotheistic world religion, founded in the middle of the nineteenth century, with communities in over

205 countries (Barrett 1988). People in the Bahá'í Faith regard Bahá'u'lláh, the prophet-founder of the faith, as a manifestation of God and consider His writings as divinely revealed.

Bahá'ís view the world as in constant social evolution and progress. At first, humans were united through families, clans, and tribes and in recent centuries through city-states and nations. Thus, different ages have different problems and require different kinds of treatments. Comparing the founders of world religions to physicians, Bahá'u'lláh declares that "Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require" (Bahá'u'lláh 1983, p. 106). If there is only one God, and one progressive mankind, Bahá'ís believe, there is one religion that is also progressive. This idea, called Progressive Revelation, declares that throughout history, God reveals His word through messengers and/or prophets who have come to establish the religions we know now. This process of progressive revelation is never ending, since humanity will never cease to evolve; there is no culmination or finality in religion, as most creeds defend.

Bahá'ís claim that Abrahamic and Dharmic religions are from the same God and that they apply laws that are more coherent with the capacities of the peoples, according to their different stages of progress.

In this way, Bahá'ís are very optimistic. They believe evolution and progress is part of existence. Bahá'u'lláh declares that "This is the Day in which God's most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things" (Bahá'u'lláh 1983, p. 4). Bausani (2005) even comes to explain that this optimism originated at the very outset of the Bábí movement, when the Báb "criticized the materialistic concept of 'end of the world' from those who, precisely, await the mahdí and the hidden imám in the physical end of the world, and strengthens instead the cyclic-progressive doctrine of the manifestation of the divine, characteristic of Islam, declaring that with 'end of the

world' is intended, in reality, the end of an historic-prophetic era" (p. 195). He adds that with the founding of the Bahá'í Faith "each traditional eschatology is abolished" (p. 197).

### The Principles of the Bahá'í Faith

The main tenet of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths, one may say, is the unification of all religions and teachings and the promotion of the unification of humanity. Bahá'ís perceive God as an essence that manifests itself in numerous ways. The theology recognizes the great prophets and saviors of all major religions, but emphasizes the most recent revelations, given by Bahá'u'lláh, as the wisdom is designed for the scientific age. The teachings and laws of the Bahá'í Faith are set forth in such books as the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* ("The Most Holy Book"). Bahá'í teachings have as their goal the improvement of the conditions of human life both spiritually and materially. Within these teachings, one may find individual rules such as one daily obligatory prayer; a 19-day period of improving devotional aspects of life by daily fasting; chastity and monogamous marriage with the consent of both parties' parents and their own, indicating their being content with the will of God; the permissibility of divorce under developed antipathy or resentment, after the lapse of one full year to certify the desire of separation; compulsory education; obedience to government; the writing of a will and testament; as well as prohibitions of imposing one's interpretation of the Holy Writing, slavery, asceticism, monasticism, mendicancy, priesthood, intoxicating drinks and other drugs, gambling, murder, theft, cruelty to animals, backbiting and calumny, and contention and conflict (Bahá'u'lláh 1993, Synopsis and Codifications, sessions IV-A, IV-B, IV-C, IV-D).

On a broader level, the Bahá'í Faith calls all its believers to work on the implementation of those ideas that will elicit a New World Order, sustained by the application of principles such as the equality between men and women, the elimination of all kinds of prejudices, the spiritual

solution to the economic problems, and a universal auxiliary language.

Having no clergy, each individual Bahá'í is encouraged to look into religious teachings with an unbiased mind and be responsible for his or her own individual beliefs and actions, which they also refer to as "independent investigation of truth." The Faith has a system of administration based on a framework expounded by Bahá'u'lláh, which was elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and implemented by Shoghi Effendi. At the local, national, and international levels of the administration, each governing body is comprised of nine members, elected by secret ballot, with no nominations or electioneering. At the local and national levels, these bodies are currently titled "Spiritual Assemblies" and they are elected annually – the Local Spiritual Assemblies by the members of their respective local communities and the National Spiritual Assemblies by delegates who have in turn been elected by Bahá'ís at a local/regional level. The international governing body, called the Universal House of Justice, has been elected once every 5 years since 1963, in Haifa, Israel, at an international convention attended by members of all National Spiritual Assemblies. In administering the affairs of the community, Bahá'í institutions practice a form of consultation that involves full and frank discussion of issues under consideration. Matters are discussed with a desire to ascertain the facts and to come to a decision that is based on spiritual principles and is unencumbered by personal attachments to points of view.

As well as coming together to worship, Bahá'í communities throughout the world are involved in social and economic development activities that serve the needs of local populations. These can range from simply assisting to clean up litter in their local areas to providing schools or running employment training, etc. National Spiritual Assemblies currently manage 1,500 development projects. The majority of the projects are the result of grassroots efforts operating with little or no outside support.

This goes hand in hand with ideas set forth by Jung (1999), who mentions that the main role of religion is to allow the individual the possibility

to judge and make their own decisions (p. 506). If faith and knowledge conflict with each other, Jung declares, both of them may be showing signs of irrationality (Jung 1999, p. 521). In this sense, the Bahá'í Faith declares that religion and science should be balanced by reason: if one is inclined only to religion, he or she it may fall into fanaticism, and inclination towards science leads to materialism. And since “reality is one and cannot admit of multiplicity” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1997, p. 227), this would limit the vision of reality and its phenomena – an idea similar to the concepts of reductionism brought by Frankl’s Logotherapy.

Shoghi Effendi (1982) declares “The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Bahá’u’lláh, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded” (p. 203); a system in which, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions, “free exercise of the individual’s rights, and the security of his person and property, his dignity and good name, [must be] assured” (1990, p. 136). This is why, “Persons who have been attracted to the Bahá’í Faith but who decide, for whatever reason, to leave it are entirely free to do so” (commissioned by the Universal House of Justice 2005), excluding the right from any authority to supervise or even interfere with personal aspects of one’s life.

## A Bahá'í Psychology

This relatively young faith has many mystical, spiritual, or, if you will, psychological aspects to it. It emphasizes on the development of self in terms of morals and ethics and focuses on such virtues such as honesty, kindness, courage, altruism, etc., which defines a well-balanced and functional human being. Although Bahá'ís strive to develop a spiritually and psychologically healthy community, it seems likely, based on the stresses and strains of modern life, that counselors will have opportunities to counsel Bahá'ís.

In particular, guidance in the Bahá'ís writings urges them to use mental health professionals if necessary (Effendi cited in Hornby 1988, pp. 284–285). The teleological emphasis in the Bahá'í Faith is found in several therapies, particularly that advocated by Adler and Dreikurs. “Adlerian psychology regards a human being as a goal-oriented individual and considers everything the person does from the point of view of the goal” (Blumenthal 1988, p. 13). Counselors familiar with this approach could easily engage Bahá'ís in the therapeutic process by indicating this connection. The Bahá'í focus on the value of the rational powers of the human mind is an important factor in counseling. Therapeutic approaches such as cognitive behaviorism (Meichenbaum 1977) and rational-emotive therapy (Ellis 1962), which emphasize the use of reason to overcome emotional difficulties, may be quite amenable to a Bahá'í (Diessner 1990).

There are many prominent and well-known Bahá'í psychologists, psychiatrists, and therapists whose contributions to the world of psychology have been notable. Nossrat Peseschkian (1933–2010) was a specialist in neurology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, and psychosomatic medicine, who founded Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy in 1968, based on a cross-cultural approach, and he was also the founder of the Wiesbaden Academy of Psychotherapy, a German state licensed postgraduate institute of psychotherapy (since 1971). Rhett Diessner, a professor of Developmental and Educational Psychology, and his scholarly research interests includes moral development and moral education, teaching for understanding, and the psychology of love and unity. Khalil Khavari, Emeritus Professor of Psychology, served on the psychology faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee from 1967 to 1995 and has been the research consultant to the US Veterans Administration and the “Psychobiology for the National Science Foundation,” a field reviewer for the United States National Institute of Health, and reviewer and/or an editorial consultant to a number of professional publications such as *Science*, *Journal of Studies on*

*Alcohol, Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Pharmacology, Biochemistry, and Behavior, and Psychopharmacology.* Mary K. Radpour, Suzanne Alexander, Daniel Jordan, etc., are some among the many that can be named in the field of psychology and human development who have made vast and significant contributions to the progress society as members of the Bahá'í Faith.

## See Also

- ▶ [Abraham and Isaac](#)
- ▶ [Adler, Alfred](#)
- ▶ [Bahá'í: A Psychological Perspective](#)
- ▶ [Bahais](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy](#)

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## Bahá'í: A Psychological Perspective

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## Introduction

The Bahá'í Faith offers an interesting and challenging ground for psychologists: as the youngest monotheistic world religion (founded in 1844), it is confronted with the challenge of individualism after millennia of collectivism in religious history; it has one of the most cultural diverse communities in the world (Bahá'ís live in more than 200 countries); its aim is the unity of humankind in diversity; harmony between science and religion is one of its main principles; the existence of thousands of pages of original and authentic scripture and biographical literature offers the unique possibility of independent



investigation – just to name a few aspects which make the encounter between psychologists and this religion interesting. In the words of Bahá'í literature: “In this Revelation the concepts of the past are brought to a new level of understanding, and the social laws, changed to suit the age now dawning, are designed to carry humanity forward into a world civilization the splendors of which can as yet be scarcely imagined” (Universal House of Justice 1993).

Bahá'í laws and principles govern three areas which are also subject to psychological research: “The individual's relationship to God; physical and spiritual matters which benefit the individual directly; and relations among individuals and between the individual and society” (Universal House of Justice 1993). This entry will examine some Bahá'í principles out of each of these areas from a psychological perspective.

## The Human Nature

One of the most important psychological aspects of any religion is its conception of man and human nature. The Bahá'í teachings, in common with all the divinely revealed religions, consider the human race as the highest and noblest form in the world of creation, capable of reflecting divine qualities. “And God said: Let us make mankind in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26) (Taheri 2005). According to Bahá'í belief, “we have three aspects of our humanness, so to speak, a body, a mind and an immortal identity – soul or spirit. We believe the mind forms a link between the soul and the body, and the two interact on each other” (Shoghi Effendi 1997). The individual soul comes into being at the moment of conception and continues to live after physical death in the spiritual worlds of God. Although human beings have been endowed with all the divine capabilities, these are only latent in them at the time of birth. The development of human potential depends on education: physical, human, and spiritual education. The divine messengers are seen as true educators of humankind. Bahá'u'lláh (1994), the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í Faith, explains: “Regard man as a mine

rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures and allow mankind to benefit therefrom.” From a psychological perspective, we could call the Bahá'í conception of man positive, resource oriented, or salutogenetic. This concept that on one hand humans are good by nature and that they have unlimited potential and on the other hand that only through a lifelong educational process these capacities can be developed is a basic Bahá'í concept which helps to understand Bahá'í principles.

## Free Will and Individual Responsibility

One of the key concepts of the Bahá'í conception of man is the existence of a free will. This free will is unlimited – to the extent that human beings can deny the existence of the creator of the free will. Indeed, the very action of choosing to establish a vital relationship to his Creator and to abide by his will constitutes the highest expression of human free will in this earthly life (Taheri 2005). The implications of free will are manifold and they are mainly linked to the importance of individual responsibility: one of the main Bahá'í principles is the “independent investigation for truth,” which implies that Bahá'í children, for example, have to decide from the age of 15 by themselves whether they want to belong to the community or not; there is no clergy in the Bahá'í Faith; therefore, it is governed by democratically elected institutions (“Spiritual Assemblies”), and individual Bahá'í are encouraged to participate actively in these elections; there are no candidates or election propaganda for these elections as this would limit the individual's choice to a few persons; there is no confessing of sins in front of other persons – just to name a few implications. The individual's relation to society is explained as follows: “The Bahá'í conception of social life is essentially based on the principle of the subordination of the individual will to that of society. It neither suppresses the individual nor does it exalt him to the point of making him an anti-social creature, a menace to society. As in everything, it follows the golden mean” (Universal House of Justice 1997).



## Self-Reflection

From a psychological perspective, the call for daily and lifelong self-reflection in the Bahá'í Writings is very interesting. Based on the Bahá'í view of the nature of man that a human being can be considered as *a mine full of gems* and that education is the “polishing process” for these gems, we can say that a process of external and self-education is necessary. The call for self-education required daily reflections which are much emphasized in the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh (1994) says in one of his major works: “O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.” The unique importance of reflection on one's behavior and course of life is reflected in this astonishing statement: “One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship” (Bahá'u'lláh 1994). This statement reflects also the basic principle of moderation – that even a good thing such as prayer should not be one-sided and superficial.

## Purpose of Religion

Bahá'ís believe that there is only one God, the Creator of the universe. Throughout history, God has revealed Himself to humanity through a series of divine Messengers, each of Whom has founded a great religion. The Messengers have included Abraham, Krishna, Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh. This succession of divine Teachers reflects a single historic “plan of God” for educating humanity about the Creator and for cultivating the spiritual, intellectual, and moral capacities of the race. The goal has been to develop the innate noble characteristics of every human being and to prepare the way for an advancing global civilization. Knowledge of God's will for humanity in the modern age, Bahá'ís believe, was revealed just over 100 years ago by Bahá'u'lláh, who is the latest of these divine Messengers (Bahá'í International

Community 2012). Bahá'u'lláh (1994) related God's purpose for humankind to the two aspects of religion, the spiritual and the social: “God's purpose in sending His Prophets unto men is twofold. The first is to liberate the children of men from the darkness of ignorance, and guide them to the light of true understanding. The second is to ensure the peace and tranquility of mankind, and provide all the means by which they can be established.” At the same time, there is a clear warning regarding the misuse of religion for one's own ambitions:

Religion should unite all hearts and cause wars and disputes to vanish from the face of the earth, give birth to spirituality, and bring life and light to each heart. If religion becomes a cause of dislike, hatred and division, it were better to be without it, and to withdraw from such a religion would be a truly religious act. For it is clear that the purpose of a remedy is to cure; but if the remedy should only aggravate the complaint it had better be left alone. Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is no religion. All the holy prophets were as doctors to the soul; they gave prescriptions for the healing of mankind; thus any remedy that causes disease does not come from the great and supreme Physician (Abdu'l-Bahá 2000).

## Consultation and Conflict Resolution

In the Bahá'í Faith, authority has been vested in democratically elected institutions and not in individuals, as had always been the case in religious history. These institutions use a distinctive method of non-adversarial decision-making, known as consultation. The principles of consultation were laid down in Bahá'u'lláh's writings, and as a procedure for building consensus and investigating truth, they have the potential for wide application. Indeed, Bahá'ís have found them to be useful in virtually any arena where group decision-making and cooperation are required. These principles are used not only by the Faith's own institutions but in Bahá'í-owned businesses, in Bahá'í-operated schools, and in day-to-day decision-making of Bahá'í families. In essence, consultation encourages diversity of opinion and acts to control the struggle for power that is otherwise so common in traditional

decision-making systems. Bahá'í consultation is based on the following principles: Information about the underlying facts of the issues and their correlation to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh should be gathered from the widest possible range of sources, seeking a diversity of points of view. During discussion, participants must make every effort to be as frank and candid as possible while maintaining a courteous interest in the views of others. When an idea is put forth, it becomes at once the property of the group. The group strives for unanimity, but a majority vote can be taken to bring about a conclusion and make the decision. An important aspect to this principle is the understanding that once a decision is made, it is incumbent on the entire group to act on it with unity – regardless of how many supported the measure (Bahá'í International Community 2012).

### Purpose of Life and Life After Death

It is only in relation to the Creator, and the purpose which that Creator has fixed for His creatures, that human existence has any meaning. “The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness” (Bahá'u'lláh 1994). Life should be seen as an eternal process of joyous spiritual discovery and growth. Through the daily struggles of material existence, people gradually deepen their understanding of the spiritual principles underlying reality, and this understanding enables them to relate more effectively to themselves, to others, and to God. After physical death, the individual continues to grow and develop in the spiritual world, which is greater than the physical world, just as the physical world is greater than the world we inhabit while in our mother's womb. This last statement is based on the Bahá'í concept of the soul and of life after physical death. According to the Bahá'í teachings, the true nature of human beings is spiritual. The evolution or development

of the soul and its capacities is the basic purpose of human existence (Bahá'í International Community 2012).

### The Unity and Harmony of Religion and Science

For every unbiased person, one of the main principles of the Bahá'í Faith which really stuns is the unity and harmony between the two main forces of human life: religion and science. This principle has many consequences for both – the individual and collective life. It calls for a balanced life which integrates the needs of the body, the mind, and the soul:

We may think of science as one wing and religion as the other; a bird needs two wings for flight, one alone would be useless. Any religion that contradicts science or that is opposed to it, is only ignorance—for ignorance is the opposite of knowledge. . . . Religion which consists only of rites and ceremonies of prejudice is not the truth. Let us earnestly endeavor to be the means of uniting religion and science. . . . Whatever the intelligence of man cannot understand, religion ought not to accept. Religion and science walk hand in hand, and any religion contrary to science is not the truth.”“ . . . weigh carefully in the balance of reason and science everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth! If however, it does not so conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance (Abdu'l-Bahá 2000).

The implications of this fundamental principle show themselves in other laws and principles, such as that marriage is highly recommended, but not obligatory; that divorce is highly discouraged, but possible after a year of separation; that Bahá'ís are called upon to seek medical advice in case of illness; that there are exceptions regarding the application of the fundamental laws of daily prayer and fasting (medical reasons, pregnancy, illness, etc.); the importance of work; the importance of moderation in all things; the equality of women and men in all aspects of life; and the prohibition of asceticism – just to name a few principles. This principle of harmony of science and religion is based upon the premise that there is only one common reality. It is underlying all

processes of community-building through the translation of revelation into social reality in a cycle of consultation, action, and reflection.

### See Also

- ▶ Bahá'í Faith
- ▶ Bahais
- ▶ Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy

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### Bahais

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The history of the Bahais presents us with a fascinating case study in religious, cultural, and psychological transformation. It starts with the appearance of the Babis, a millenarian group of Islamic origins, which developed out of the messianic Shiite tradition, founded by Ali

Muhammad (1819–1850) of Shiraz, Iran, known as the Bab. Ali Muhammad proclaimed himself to be the Bab (gate) in 1844, a 1,000 years after the disappearance of the twelfth imam, according to Islamic Shiite tradition. (In the Shiite Muslim tradition, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiya, who disappeared (or died) in 880 CE, is the Hidden Imam, who is in hiding and would come back one day to restore peace and justice.) The Bab, in Shiite lore, was supposed to announce the coming of one greater than himself, who would open a new era of peace and justice. At first, Mirza's claim was welcomed, but when he started deviating from the Islamic tradition, the reaction was violent. In 1848, the Babis declared publicly their secession from Islam, and 2 years later Muhammad was executed by a firing squad.

The group leadership was then assumed by two half-brothers, Yahya Nuri (1830–1912), later known as Subh-i Azal, and Husayn Ali Nuri (1817–1892), later known as Baha'u'llah. The next stage was a split in the movement which occurred when the former claimed to be the appointed successor, while the latter said that he was the prophet foretold by the Bab. Followers of Baha Allah started a new movement, Bahais.

The followers of Yahya Nuri, known as Azalis, continued the tradition of Babism. Their sacred book is *al-Bayan*, written by Ali Muhammad of Shiraz. According to this book, some elements of traditional Islamic law are abolished, and a promise is made of a prophet to come. The number 19 had central significance, and a calendar of 19 months, having 19 days each, was created. Another splinter group, the Bayanis, rejects Subh-i Azal and claims to follow the Bab alone.

The founder of Bahatism, Husayn Ali Nuri, known as Baha Allah or Baha'u'llah (“glory of God”), was a Babist who, while in exile and in prison, became convinced that he himself was the prophet or the Messenger of God, whose coming was announced by the Bab. He wrote the Bahai scripture *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, detailing the laws of the faith. In 1863, he announced that he was the promised “Manifestation of God.” After his death, his son Abbas Effendi (1844–1921), known as Abdu'l-Baha (“servant of Baha”), was recognized as the leader and, starting in 1908,

when he was released from prison after the “Young Turks” political reforms in the Ottoman Empire, undertook successful missionary work, especially in English-speaking countries. In 1921, the leadership passed to the founder’s great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957). After his death in 1957, the movement was reorganized, and it is now being run by a nine-member body, known as the Universal House of Justice, elected in 1963. The world center of Bahaism and its holy places are located in Israel. Bahaism’s holiest shrines are concentrated in the Haifa area, where the founder worked and died, and the Shrine of the Bab, with its golden dome, is one of Haifa’s best known landmarks. The Bahai organization in the United States, among the largest in the world, is known as the National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) of Bahais in the United States. A National Spiritual Assembly (NSA) exists in more than 100 countries.

Bahaism, having distanced itself from Islam, claims to be a Universalist religion, preaching the religious unity of humankind and human equality. The religious prophecies of all past religions are supposedly being fulfilled now through the movement.

Baha’u’llah is described as the messianic figure expected by Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Earlier prophets are recognized, but with the coming of Baha’u’llah, the “Manifestation of God,” a new era has begun, lasting 5,000 years. It will lead to the Bahai cycle, lasting 500,000 years. This will happen only after a global catastrophe and the disintegration of the present world order.

There are rules covering prayers, fasting, marriage, divorce, and burial and prohibitions against political activities, homosexuality, and the use of drugs. Alcohol and pork are avoided. Prayers are said five times a day, and in addition, there are blessings for many everyday occasions. Bahais of West Asian origin are expected to follow special rules, in keeping with Islamic customs. The numbers 19 and 9 are considered sacred. All Bahais are expected to pay 19 % of their earnings to the group. The Bahai calendar, which started in 1844, has 19 months, each having 19 days, and the year starts on March 21, following the Zoroastrian

calendar. The 19 days preceding it are fast days till sundown. Bahais meet on the first day of the month, and regular meetings are devoted to scripture readings. Local congregations are tightly knit, and the private lives of members are closely supervised by the congregation and its leaders. While there is no involvement in politics, Bahais support the ideal of a world government and the activities of the United Nations. They have suffered prosecution in Islamic countries, especially Iran, where the persecution has become especially severe after the founding of the Islamic republic in 1979. According to Amnesty International, about 200 Bahais were executed between 1979 and 1992 in Iran.

Some descendants of Bahaism’s founder, Baha’u’llah, have refused to accept leadership succession and organizational authority, as they were being marginalized by the leadership. The Bahai World Federation was founded in 1950 in Acre, Israel, by Amin Effendi, the founder’s last surviving grandson, but it has become more marginal after losing all legal struggles against the majority leaders over Bahai real estate holdings and over official recognition by the State of Israel.

Since the 1950s, there have been several Bahai splinter groups in the United States which have predicted catastrophic floods and nuclear wars for 1963, 1980, and 1995. One such group is Bahais Under the Hereditary Guardianship, known also as Orthodox Bahais or Remeyites, founded in 1960 by Charles Mason Remey (1873–1974), who in 1957 became a member of the Bahai collective leadership of 27, known as Hands of the Cause and also of the 9 Chief Stewards following the death of Shoghi Effendi. In 1960, he proclaimed himself to be the Second Guardian of the Faith and was declared a Covenant-breaker by the other members of the leadership, thus being excommunicated.

According to the group’s doctrine of the great global catastrophe, major changes in the Earth’s crust would lead the rise of the seas and the death of two thirds of humanity. Remey predicted in 1960 that a catastrophic flood would inundate most of the United States and urged his followers to move to the Rocky Mountains.

This catastrophe was initially prophesied for 1963 and then postponed to 1995.

Bahais Under the Provisions of the Covenant (BUPC) is a US schismatic Bahai group, founded in 1971 by Leland (“Doc”) Jensen (1914–1996). Jensen left the official United States Bahai organization in 1960 and joined the Bahais Under the Hereditary Guardianship. Noting the predictions of Charles Mason Remey about the impending flood that would cover the low lying areas of the United States in 1963, Jensen moved to Missoula, Montana, where he opened a chiropractic office in 1964. In 1969, he was convicted of sex offenses and sentenced to 20 years in prison. After arriving in prison, Jensen reported having a series of revelations and claimed the identity of several personalities mentioned in the Bible. Jensen combined Bahai teachings, occult ideas, and Christian eschatology to create the BUPC credo. He predicted a nuclear holocaust in 1980, followed by a thousand years of peace for those who would join BUPC and save themselves from destruction. He was paroled in 1973 and started recruiting followers immediately. April 29, 1980, at 5:55 pm. was the time specified by Jensen for a nuclear war to destroy one third of humanity. That would be followed by 20 years of added upheavals, starvation, revolutions, and natural disasters, and in the year 2000, God’s kingdom would be established, followed by 1,000 years of peace. About 150 followers made preparations for the nuclear holocaust. When this did not take place, revised predictions were issued. The group entered a period of crisis and decline but managed to survive.

The Bahai movement, which started as a heterodox Moslem sect growing out of Babism, has proselytized successfully in the West and now has followers on all continents. Its history reflects continuing psychological tensions between visions of apocalyptic destruction and of universal unity and peace. The appearance of dissident groups, competing with the main leadership, reflects these tensions.

We should keep in mind that this is a modern movement, started fairly recently, which has undergone quite a few transformations. At the

leadership level, we can observe the expected conflicts stemming from personal ambitions and opposing visions. The movement has undergone a series of identity upheavals, involving social, psychological, and geographical changes, as its leadership has shown creativity and the ability to adapt and go beyond its historical origins too. What started in Shia millenarianism is today often perceived as a Western belief system, attracting followers all over the world. Its public image is clearly at variance with its complex history and the psychological processes which created it.

### See Also

- ▶ [Bahá’í Faith](#)
- ▶ [Bahá’í: A Psychological Perspective](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy](#)

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### Baptism

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Baptism (Greek: *baptein* = immersion) is a term usually applied to the Christian ritual of initiation by water, and it is the psychology of this ritual that will be addressed here. It must be noted, however, that such acts are by no means peculiar to Christianity. In many other traditions of the ancient and modern world, water is used for ritual cleansing and/or initiation. Ritual washings at death can symbolize a cleansing in preparation for the journey to another world, as in the case of

the ancient Egyptians. The Greeks had many bathing rites, as, for example, in the washing of initiates entering into the Eleusinian mysteries. Jews have ablution ceremonies associated with washing away various forms of uncleanness. Muslims perform ritual ablutions before praying.

Baptism for Christians can be compared to Jewish circumcision in the sense that through baptism, the individual is “marked as Christ’s own forever” as in circumcision the Jew is marked as a part of his “nation” forever.

Christian baptism has immediate antecedents in the Jewish tradition of baptizing converts 7 days after circumcision and in the then radical practice of John the Baptist (the Baptizer) who performed the ritual in the Jordan River. Jesus came to John to be baptized into his life’s mission. It was apostle Paul (formerly Saul), in the early development of the Christian church as it broke away from its Jewish roots, who established the full symbolism of the baptismal ritual, one administered at various stages in Christian history at death, in early adulthood, or in infancy and in various ways according to the sect involved. The descent into or ritual administering of water in the ceremony was, for Paul, a symbolic death based on the death of Jesus. Arising from the water, the initiate follows Christ’s resurrection and is reborn. The initiate dies to the old life and is reborn, this time into life as part of the Church, the “Body of Christ.”

There was always a psychological element to the sacrament of baptism for Christians, a sense of a new knowledge or understanding that comes through the new life. The early church father and theologian, Clement of Alexandria, believed that “baptized, we are enlightened.” In terms of modern psychology, baptism can become a symbol of the birth or recovery of Self. Water has always been the symbol of pre-creation, the symbol of the universal mother, the primal birth waters. In baptism, it can be said that the initiate returns to the creative waters to be reborn as potential self, ready in this new state of being to confront the various traumas and passages of life and ultimately death itself. The descent into the waters can also be seen as a model for the necessary descent into the mysteries and traumas of the unconscious and the

old life in order to be reborn, this time with the understanding making it possible to face the realities and challenges of the life ahead.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Primordial Waters](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Water](#)

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### Bhagavad Gita

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The *Gita*, as it is affectionately called, has been described as the bible of the Hindus. It is a verse Upanishad and has become widely known even in the West because it has been the daily reading of Mahatma Gandhi as well as millions of other Indians. The story of the *Bhagavad Gita* is the tale of the Mahabharata war, the great conflict of good and evil. In this epic tale of war between cousins, the Pandavas won out because they relied entirely on God. Arjuna, the Pandava prince and accomplished archer, turns to Krishna, his friend and charioteer who is God in disguise, for answers to the great questions of life.

Imagine! A man we can all identify with is in dire straits, at a crossroads, brought to his knees by the great pressures and complexities of life, shakily reaching out. And his best friend, an incarnation of God, takes his hand and walks him through the



answer – explaining step-by-step the most profound secrets of all ages (Hawley 2001, p. xxiv).

The *Gita* is thus the story of a psychological war we all wage within, and the answers given teach us how to live so as to win God’s grace. Chapters 2 and 12 are the most significant in their messages to humanity.

## The Gita’s Essential Wisdom

In Chapter 2, Arjuna is bent down with worry and remorse, not wanting to begin the battle that will cause the bloodshed of so many of his family and mentors. In response, Krishna teaches him that (1) we must each do our duty, (2) the death of the body is not the death of the person because the soul (*Atman*) lives on (with a description of the doctrine of reincarnation), and (3) to be an instrument of the Divine is to be in union with God. This third point is the essence of the wisdom of the *Gita*. When we surrender to God and dedicate all our actions to the Divine One, then we can get beyond our own egos and allow God to take over. We must “Let go and let God” (as this same thought is reworded in the 12-step programs for recovery from addictions today).

To accomplish this vital surrender to God, we must let go of our personal desires, and we must leave the outcome in God’s hand. This leads to equanimity, when we neither relish the praise nor cringe under accusations and blame that may accompany the outcome of our actions.

The central points of issue, Arjuna, are desire and lack of inner peace. Desire for the fruits of one’s actions brings worry about possible failure – the quivering mind I mentioned. When you are preoccupied with end results, you pull yourself from the present into an imagined, usually fearful future. Then your anxiety robs your energy and, making matters worse, you lapse into inaction and laziness. . . .

Work performed with anxiety about results is far inferior to work done in a state of calmness. Equanimity – the serene mental state free from likes and dislikes, attractions, and repulsions – is truly *the ideal* attitude in which to live your life (Hawley 2001: 20f).

This spiritual wisdom has profoundly beneficial results in psychotherapy today. It is, of course,

counterculture in the USA to talk of desirelessness and relinquishing the fruits of our labors, but anxiety disorders can be ameliorated by psychoeducation with this “wisdom of the East” in mind.

## God’s Most Beloved Devotees

In Chapter twelve of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna teaches Arjuna that God especially loves those who are genuinely devoted and surrendered to Him, those who love and serve others, and those who are possessed of equanimity. In the expression of particular love, Krishna in the *Gita* teaches humankind how to live in harmony with God’s Will. He states that he loves most:

He who hates no being, who is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from the feeling of ‘I and mine,’ even-minded in pain and pleasure and forbearing.

Ever content, steady in meditation, self-controlled and possessed of firm conviction, with mind and intellect fixed on Me, he My devotee is dear to Me (Chidbhavananda 2000, p. 658).

This is a profound statement of how to live a spiritually oriented, values-based lifestyle, as valid today as it was thousands of years ago when the *Bhagavad Gita* was written. In a recent, more Western translation, Krishna is also saying:

I love those who do their worldly duties unconcerned by life. I love those who expect absolutely nothing. Those who are pure both internally and externally are also very dear to Me. I love devotees who are ready to be My instrument, meet any demands I make on them, and yet ask nothing of Me.

I love those who do not rejoice or feel revulsion, who do not yearn for possessions, are not affected by the bad or good things that happen to and around them and yet are full of devotion to Me (Hawley 2001, p. 112).

Sai Baba (q.v.), a contemporary *Avatar* in India, teaches that the wisdom of the *Gita* provides guidance for all humans who live today. He summarizes:

The great teaching of the *Geetha* is: ‘Put your trust in God, carry on your duties, be helpful to everyone and sanctify your lives.’ Dedicate all actions to God. That is the way to experience oneness with



God. God is in you. You are in God. This oneness is the basic truth. Chant the name of the Lord and render social service in a spirit of selflessness and devotion to God (Sai Baba 1995, p. 235).

Oneness with God has long been the aim of the mystical traditions of all religions. These small clues on how to attain that sense of union are vital for all spiritually oriented clients in psychotherapy or spiritual direction. To dedicate one's daily actions to God is a profound spiritual practice with beneficial results in both the psychological and spiritual dimensions of life.

### See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Avatar](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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### Bible

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The Bible (Greek, “the little books”) constitutes a collection of writings understood to be sacred and essential for the life and worship of Judaism and Christianity. Most of these works are compilations of various oral and literary traditions ranging from the second millennium BCE through the second century CE. They reflect the life and narrative of various groups and sociopolitical contexts of a monotheistic religion taking on distinct

qualities and notions of ritual and worship. The Book of Genesis expresses many of the themes which permeate the Bible as a whole. The account of the creation story (Gen.1-3) sets forth the creative powers of the Divine to bring about life ex nihilo (“out of nothing”). This is YHWH who is mighty and receives sacrifices from patrons to appease his temperament and persuade his actions in the mortal, material world: “And Noah built an altar (Hebrew, *mzbch*) unto the Lord. . . and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground any more for man’s sake” (Gen. 8.20-21). Compare Isaac’s altar at Beersheba (Gen. 26.25), Jacob’s altar at Shechem (Gen. 33.20), Moses’ altar at Rephidim (Ex. 17.15), and Solomon’s altar at Giben (1 K. 6.20; 8.64).

The notion of “revelation” also occurs as a central theme in Genesis and other texts, the purpose and needs of the Divine being made known to the heroes of the Jewish people. Abraham has a revelation that his people will become a great nation (Gen. 12.1-4) and that God is with him as a “shield” (Gen. 15.1). At Bethel, Jacob has a dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder and awakens afraid, knowing that he has been encountered (Gen. 28.10-22). His son Joseph dreams and interprets dreams through which the divine purpose becomes realized (Gen. 37–50; cf. 1 Sam. 3; 1 Sam. 28; 1 Kings 9; Isa. 6.1). Compared to the Canaanite religion of that time, the notion of afterlife in the Jewish scriptures is minimal. Covenantal existence with God in the present world through faithfulness to Torah receives the primary focus. To be in right relation with YHWH is to experience the goodness and blessing of a full life: “Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. . . but delights in the law of the Lord. . . He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bring forth fruit” (Ps. 1.1-3). It is not until the latest writing of the Jewish scriptures, such as the Book of Daniel (168–165 BCE), that any clear notion of resurrection and life after death occurs (Dan. 12; cf. Ezek 37; Isa. 24–27). Embraced by Jewish groups such as the Pharisees and the Essenes, it

is this belief which becomes central for early Christian communities and its writings. Paul writes how Jesus died, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the scriptures. Jesus then “became manifest” (*ōphthē*) to Cephas, then the twelve disciples. “Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time” (1 Cor. 15. 3–6). Paul himself had a theophanous (appearance of the divine) experience while traveling to Damascus. The event leads to his conversion to Christianity as one of its strongest advocates (Acts 9.1-22; 2 Cor. 12.1-5; 1 Cor. 9.1; cf. 1 Cor. 15.5-7). His understanding that a person is justified through faith and not through the works of the Law (Gal. 3.10-14) points to the cultural and political conflict over religious identity and the issue of Gentile (non-Jewish) membership in Jewish Christianity. Jesus as the “Son of Man” (Matt. 16.27-28, 10.23; Mark 10.45; cf. 1 Tim. 2.5-6; Eph. 5.2; Titus 2.13-14) may be understood to continue the Son of Man in Judaism and occurs in the Book of Daniel (Dan. 7.13-14), a writing itself part of apocalyptic tradition especially rooted in the Maccabean wars (168–65 BCE) and the Jewish resistance to the oppression of Antiochus Epiphanes the Seleucid King of Syria (Dan. 7.8; 8.9; cf. 11.31; 12.11). He is the central figure who points to the anticipated “new age” of divine justice and redemption, where those who have suffered and died for the sake of their faith will be restored to new life (cf. 1 En. 46–48; 4 Ezra 13.3, 51 f.; 1 Cor. 15.37-50). According to Jung, in Christian Gnosticism, the Son of Man is the Original Man, a visualization of God as Archanthropos, and the real organizing principle of the unconscious (Jung, 1969, 203). As an apocalyptic and visionary, Jesus as the final sacrifice (John 6.53-54) is presented in the Gospels expecting a dramatic change of world order. In Matt. 1.15, he declares: “The time is fulfilled (*peplērōtai ho kairos*) and the kingdom of God is near” (cf. Matt. 4.17, 16.28; Luke 4.19). Christ is both Messiah and “Lord” – an apocalyptic identification which is unique to early Christianity and its reading of sacred text (see Ps. 110.1; cf. 11QMelech). Paul too anticipates the return of Jesus and new world order: “For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command,

with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God” (1 Thes. 4.16; cf. 1 Cor. 13.12, 15.1-6; 2 Cor. 3.18). For Paul, the new age begins with Christ’s resurrection and will conclude with his return. The Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible and dated around the end of the first century CE, presents this age as the “new heaven and new earth” (Rev. 21.1).

However, by the third generation of Christianity, the immediate return of Christ and notions of millennialism lessen as the church focuses (necessarily) more on the manifest practice of its beliefs in the present world. Implicit within this shift is an interest in evangelism and personal witness that roots Jesus’ life and resurrection in history. Unlike Paul’s inward mysticism and his notion of the “spiritual body,” the Gospels present the fleshly resurrected Jesus (John 21.24-31) who appears for the salvation of the outward world: “Go tell the disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you” (Mark 16.7). The Jesus of the Gospels has a missionary emphasis and a focus upon faith in the apostolic tradition. This more material-world orientation becomes a foundation for the formation of the “church” in concrete terms. The Book of Acts is a good example of the story of the church establishing itself in the Greco-Roman second century world. Other writings such as the Epistle of James, 1 Peter, and 1 Timothy show this religio-social shift from Pauline interiority and the numinous to the outward and literal orientation. In this way, the unconscious processes and content of religious experience in Christian and Jewish scriptures are becoming conscious and formulated. This includes the instituting of rituals such as the Eucharist and baptism and codes of behavior, dress, and diet.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Genesis](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Resurrection](#)

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## Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths

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Fifty years ago, Dr. Eric Wellisch, medical director of Grayford Child Guidance Clinic in England, called for a Biblical psychology, arguing that

The very word “psyche” is Greek. The central psychoanalytic concept of the formation of character and neurosis is shaped after the Greek Oedipus myth . . . . In ancient Greek philosophy, only a heroic fight for the solution but no real solution is possible. Ancient Greek philosophy has not the vision of salvation . . . There is need for a Biblical psychology (Wellisch 1954, p. 115).

Religious leaders in traditional societies often performed the function of applying the psychological wisdom implicit in the Biblical religious traditions to the particular life problems of members of their flock. Rabbis, priests, and pastors used Biblical wisdom to help people with concrete real-life problems. The contemporary situation is very different. The therapist is largely ignorant of if not antagonistic to religion, often in a manner incongruent with the patient’s own orientation.

Several studies, for example, have found that over 90 % of patients believe in a transcendent God, compared to only about 40 % of clinical psychologists. This is a huge disconnect! Most

mental health professionals avoid reference to or recognition of their patients’ religious beliefs and the deep influence of these beliefs on patients’ lives. Few mental health professionals fully incorporate a patient’s religious beliefs into a treatment plan.

There are a number of possible reasons for the resistance toward religion on the part of mental health professionals and for the resistance of religious leaders to the insights and findings of the mental health field. For one, the fields of religion and mental health have historically been in conflict with each other with psychology/psychiatry allying itself to science and medicine. Second, psychology/psychiatry often has approached issues of spirituality in a superficial manner, treating spiritual development as something foreign to the development of the individual personality. Third, issues regarding life meaning are too often relegated to the theological realm alone. Fourth, much of the biological cause of mental illness has been relegated to psychology and psychiatry. Finally, much of traditional psychotherapy has been based on classical Greek rather than Biblical foundation models. For example, traditional psychoanalysis has focused on Greek foundation stories such as Oedipus, Electra, and Narcissus rather than on respective Biblical alternatives such as Isaac, Ruth, and Jonah.

In a series of books on religion and mental health, we (Kaplan and Schwartz 1993, 2006, 2008; Kaplan et al. 1984; Schwartz and Kaplan 2004, 2007) have delineated ten important contrasts with regard to mental health between classical Greek and Biblical thinking: (1) the primacy of God versus nature, (2) the harmonious relationship of body and soul, (3) the cyclical versus linear conceptions of time, (4) the relationship between self and other, (5) the relationship between man and woman, (6) the relationship between parent and child, (7) sibling rivalry and its resolution, (8) the relationship between freedom and suicide, (9) the question of rebelliousness versus obedience, and finally (10) a tragic versus therapeutic outlook on life. Let us briefly describe each of these Hellenistic biases in mental health and suggest a Biblical alternative.

## God and Nature

Hesiod's *Theogony* portrays Earth and Sky mating and giving birth to the titans, in particular Cronus, who later begat the Gods. In other words, nature exists before the gods and creates them. The family pathology commences immediately, as the Sky father shoves the children back into the Earth mother. Such action of course breeds reaction, and Earth repays Sky, by plotting with their son Cronus to castrate his father. The father-son conflict becomes ingrained as a law of nature foretold by Earth and Sky.

The Biblical story of creation sees God as creating heaven and earth. In other words, God exists before nature and creates it (Gen. 1:1). God then proceeds to create order out of chaos. First, light is divided from darkness (Gen. 1:24). God then divides water from the land (Gen. 1:9). Then, God begins to prepare this world for the entrance of man. First, He has the earth bring forth vegetation (Gen. 1:11). He places living creatures in the sea and fowls in the air (Gen. 1:20). Now God places living creatures on the earth – cattle, God creates creeping things, and other beasts (Gen. 1:24). The world is now ready for people, and them, His ultimate handiwork, in His own image and gives them dominion over all that He has created (Gen. 1:27–29). There is no irreconcilable conflict between people and God, between man and woman, or between parent and child.

## Body and Soul

Plato sees the relationship between body (soma) and soul (psyche) as conflictual and unfortunate. The soul is a helpless prisoner in the body, compelled to view reality only indirectly and unclearly (Phaedo, 82d). Plato, perhaps following Orphic teachings, called the body a prison of the soul, and others with comparable ideas called it a tomb (The Oxford Classical Dictionary 1970, p. 895).

In Biblical thought, the human body and soul are both sacred, both created by God. They can and must function in harmony to fulfill God's

purpose in the world. Emotion, intellect, and body are all integral components of a human being, and there is no opposition between body and soul or flesh and spirit (Urbach 1979).

## Conceptions of Time

The pervasive Greek view of time is cyclical, mirroring the seasons of nature. A man rises up only to be overcome by hubris (pride) and cast down into nemesis (retribution), the nadir of the circle.

The Biblical view of time is linear, freeing itself from the cyclical seasons of nature. History begins in God's creation, continues with His ongoing revelation to man, and ends in God's messianic age. The book of Ecclesiastes distinguishes the cyclical view of time regarding natural events: "The sun riseth, and the sun goeth down." (1:3–7) from the developmental view embedded in human events "To everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die" (3:1–8).

## Self and Other

Greek thought sees self and other as fundamentally opposed. One wins at the expense of another losing. The legend of Narcissus is prototypical in this regard. The earliest sources of the myth of Narcissus have long since been lost. Our most complete account from antiquity is from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* (ca. 43–17 CE). Although physically beautiful, Narcissus leads a life full of precarious oscillation between self-absorption and infatuation with another, which turns out to be his own reflection. He ends up in his psychotic attempt to integrate self and other, and he suicides (Conon 1798, p. 24; Ovid 1955, p. 3): "Alas! I am myself the boy I see. . . I am on fire for love of my own self." The Apollonian side of Greek culture relies totally on a walled-off and disengaged intellect. The Dionysiac side of Greek culture portrays an enmeshment which destroys individual boundaries.

Biblical thought sees self and other in harmony. Jonah avoids the polarities of disengagement and enmeshment. When he runs away to Tarshish (Jonah 1:1–3), God acts as a protective therapist, saving Jonah from suicide on several occasions: first, with a fish (2:2–11) and then with a gourd (4:6). Jonah finally learns the message of divine mercy (4:9–11) and that he can reach out to another without losing himself. In the words of the Jewish sage, Hillel, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am for myself only, what am I?”

## Man and Woman

Greek narratives portray men and women in basic conflict. Pandora, the first woman, is sent by Zeus as a punishment to man because Prometheus has attempted to steal fire for man to make him autonomous. Pandora is given many gifts to entice man but, ultimately, is seen as responsible for man’s destruction and as a block to his autonomy. She opens the box she has brought to Epimetheus containing all the evils of the world, leaving only hope left locked inside and unavailable to humanity (Hesiod and Theognis 1973, pp. 60–96).

Biblical narratives portray men and women as different, but in basic harmony.

Eve is sent as a blessing and partner, a “helpmeet opposite,” not as an instrument of punishment. Together she and the man are seduced by the serpent to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and while this leads to their expulsion from Eden, they do not die but build a life together with divine help and hard work (Genesis 2 and 3).

## Parents and Children

*Fathers and sons: Laius/Oedipus versus Abraham/Isaac:* The Greek story of Oedipus portrays the father (Laius) and the son (Oedipus) in basic conflict. The father is told by an oracle that his son will kill him and marry his (the son’s) mother. Such a conflict is originally portrayed in

the Greek theogony discussed above and describes a pattern where the father feels the son is trying to displace him and the son feels the father is trying to block him. The story begins with Laius trying to kill Oedipus and proceeds with Oedipus killing Laius and marrying his mother, Jocasta (Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*). This conflict is resolved in Freudian thinking through a fear of castration. This is the basis of the introjection of the superego for the son, and thus it is fear based (Freud 1923a, b, 1924).

The Biblical story of Isaac portrays the father Abraham receiving the gift of a son, Isaac, late in his and his wife Sarah’s lives. Abraham then receives the command from God to sacrifice this son that he loves to God. However, this is only a test, and Abraham demonstrates his loyalty to God, Who sends an angel to stay Abraham’s hand, preventing child sacrifice which had been so prevalent in surrounding cultures. The blessing of Abraham will continue through Isaac (Genesis, 22). Covenantal circumcision can be seen as a non-injurious alternative to castration, transforming the father into a teacher and the son into a disciple. The father wants the son to both succeed and surpass him. The mother is not a seductress but a harmonizer. The basis of morality is thus not fear but a covenantal relationship between God, father, and son. The son does not need to rebel against the father because he already has his father’s blessing.

*Mothers and daughters: Clytemnestra/Electra versus Naomi/Ruth:* The Greek story of Electra portrays a basic antagonism between mother (Clytemnestra) and daughter (Electra). Clytemnestra accuses Electra of preferring her father, Agamemnon. Electra accuses Clytemnestra of being unfaithful to her father. She and her brother Orestes murder their mother (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, Euripides, *Electra*). This story of Electra has been used by Jung as a term for a “feminine Oedipus complex” (Jung 1961, pp. 347–348).

The Biblical Book of Ruth tells of the relationship between the Moabitess Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi. Even when Ruth’s husband dies, she refuses to abandon Naomi. Naomi does not try to block Ruth and, indeed,

facilitates her marriage to Naomi's kinsman Boaz, who is impressed by Ruth's kindness to Naomi. Naomi is brought into the household as a nurse to their son Obed who is described as the father of Jesse, who is father of David. There is no hint of the antagonism between mother and daughter implicit in the Electra complex.

### Siblings and Family

The Hebrew Scripture contains many stories of sibling rivalry: Cain and Abel (Genesis 4), Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 17–25), Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25–27), and Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37–50). The greater incidence of sibling rivalry in narratives in Genesis than in Greek mythology is misleading. It is a function of the underlying purpose of the Biblical family – the sons compete to inherit the covenant of the father. The father's blessing can help resolve this rivalry, as with Jacob's blessings to his sons, each uniquely given the blessing he needed to suit his own personality and his situation (Genesis 49).

The Greek family is purposeless. The father is not a source of inheritance but an impediment. Sibling rivalry is initially masked by the threat of the father to the sons, who must band together to protect themselves: Uranus versus his sons (Hesiod and Theognis 1973: ll. 155–210), Cronus versus his sons (ll. 453–725), Zeus versus Heracles and Iphicles (Hesiod 1914: ll. 35, 56 and 80), and Oedipus versus Polynices and Eteocles (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*; Aeschylus, *The Seven Against Thebes*). However, this bonding is shallow and will disappear as the paternal threat recedes. This pattern is expressed tragically in the curse of the weakened and blinded Oedipus to his two sons to slay each other at the gate of Thebes (Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*, ll. 1386–1394; Aeschylus, *The Seven Against Thebes*, ll. 879–924).

### Freedom and Suicide

Like and mythological, the Stoics clearly approved of suicide. The Roman Stoic Seneca,

for example, saw suicide as freedom. "You see that yawning precipice? It leads to liberty. You see that flood, that river, that well? Liberty is housed within them. You see that stunted, parched and sorry tree? From each branch, liberty hangs. Your neck, your throat, your heart are so many ways of escape from slavery... Do you inquire the road to freedom? You shall find it in every vein of your body" (Seneca, *De Ira*, 3.15.3-4). Indeed, for Plato, philosophy is "preparation for death."

Biblical thought is clearly opposed to suicide as no better and perhaps worse than homicide. "For your lifeblood too, I will require a reckoning" (Genesis 9. 5). The human being is commanded to choose life: "See, I have put before you today life and death, blessing and curse, and you shall choose life so that you and your seed shall live" (Deuteronomy 30.19). Freedom is seen not in suicide, but in life following God's commandments. "Read not *harut* (carved) but *herut* (freedom). One is not free unless he devotes himself to the study of Torah" (Avot, 6.2). Indeed, Hebrew thought sees the Bible as a "guide for living."

### Rebelliousness Versus Obedience

A great deal has been made of the clash of Islamic and Western (European, American, and Judeo-Christian) civilizations. Yet, there is a more profound line of demarcation between those cultures that view rebellion and rebelliousness as the highest form of development (e.g., Albert Camus) and those that view obedience to the divine will as the highest goal. The underlying message of the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals after the Second World War was to mock the defense "we were just following orders." Thus, the mantra of the West came to be a distrust of *authority* per se (i.e., parents, community and religious leaders, and law and system of morality) rather than of a particular authority. Yet, the Bible criticizes the Israelites, newly freed from Egypt, for building a golden calf (Exodus 32). The question of rebelliousness versus obedience is complicated. In Greek



mythology, Zeus cannot be trusted. Prometheus must rebel against him to help human beings. Prometheus steals fire for men, who are then punished by Zeus by means of the woman Pandora. In Biblical thinking, in contrast, God can be trusted and indeed must be trusted. According to Talmudic interpretation of the Biblical story of creation, God has provided the means for Adam to invent fire (Midrash Genesis Rabbah, 11:2). Thus, the serpent is tempting Eve with the siren call of disobedience, but in Biblical teaching, this act is sinful. In short, one must know who one's god is. If it is Zeus, one should rebel: if it is the Biblical God, one should obey. This does not mean we should not question a particular authority. However, this is different than questioning the very idea of authority.

## Tragedy Versus Therapy

Bruno Snell (1935) has argued that the differences in the respective orderings of God and nature are not just chronological, but logical and psychological as well. The Classical Greek view is deterministic and the essence of the tragic vision of man; the Biblical view is intrinsically open to the possibility of change and transformation and lies beneath the idea of genuine psychotherapy. Before the Biblical God, nothing is impossible: He can cancel the natural order of things, alter it in any number of ways, or, indeed, create something out of nothing, just the way He created nature. A Greek god is confined to acts that may show his power but that cannot truly transcend natural law or defy fate. Lev Shestov (1966) argues very much the same thing, insisting that the Biblical God is not subordinate to necessity. The Greek view of tragedy and the Biblical view of therapy can be contrasted in two main points. First, bad family background is impossible to overcome in the Greek tragic vision: "But now, I am forsaken of the gods, son of a defiled mother, successor to his bed who gave me my own wretched being" (Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, ll. 1359–1361). However, a bad family background can be overcome in the Biblical therapeutic vision: "Cast me not off, neither forsake

me, O God of my salvation. For though my father and mother have forsaken me, the Lord will take me up" (Psalms 27:9–10).

There is a profound difference between the Greek and Biblical vision with regard to the efficacy of prayer and a general sense of hopefulness. For the Greeks, prayer is useless in this determined world: "Pray thou no more; for mortals have no escape from destined woe" (Sophocles, *Antigone*, l. 1336). The Bible believes in the efficacy of prayer, even in the most hopeless of situations.

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## See Also

- Bible
- Biblical Psychology
- Christianity
- God
- Myth

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## Biblical Psychology

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Mindfulness, a Buddhist view of human experience, is widely employed in psychology today. Every major religion offers a view of human experience, i.e., a spiritual psychology. The most popular is the biblical view. There are two billion people in the world who say they are Christian, one billion Muslims, 0.8 billion Hindus, 0.4 billion Buddhists, 0.02 billion Jews, and 1.6 billion people who are none of the above. The biblical view is shared by those who call themselves Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

There is more than one biblical view. For example, in the book of Joshua, there is a ferocious attitude toward people of other religions ("kill the Jebusites"), whereas Jesus taught us to live peaceably in a pluralistic society ("love your neighbors").

### The Bible's God-Centered Approach

The Bible from a Christian perspective offers a God-centered view of people. God is the creator, rescuer, and goal of humans. Comparing today's popular psychology with the biblical approach is like comparing a pre-Copernican to a Copernican model of the solar system. Popular psychology teaches clients to love themselves and trust their own understanding. The Bible teaches that we should "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). Claudius Ptolemy said that the sun and planets revolve around the earth. Nicolaus Copernicus said that the earth and planets revolve around the sun. We are facing a similar debate in psychology today. Popular magazines, TV, and public opinion teach that you are the center of the psychological universe: "believe in yourself." The Bible proposes that you revolve around God, meeting or frustrating God's wishes: "believe in God."

Self-esteem is considered essential in popular psychology today, because you are the center of value in a pre-Copernican solar system. Self-esteem is almost completely absent from the Bible. Often self-esteem is viewed as a problem, as in the quote above from Proverbs 3:5. All value comes from God. Humility is valued: we should worship and obey God, not worship ourselves. When a non-Christian psychotherapist urges a Christian client to acquire self-esteem, the therapist is barking up the wrong tree. She would be more successful speaking to the client about how God values the client.

While popular psychology speaks of self-esteem, Christians speak of Christ crucified. They are parallel statements. Why? Because “Christ crucified” implies he died for me. Therefore, I am valuable. The implication is that if Jesus had not been crucified for my sake, then I would have no value, because I would be a sinner with no foundation for being forgiven by God. But since Christ was crucified in place of me, my worthlessness doesn’t count, and God loves me without reservation, as if I were Jesus Christ himself. Not only is self-esteem otherwise absent from the Bible, the Bible is the most realistic description of humans acting horribly that has ever been written.

Another difference between the Bible and popular psychology is that individualism is almost entirely absent from the Bible. The Bible thinks of people socially, as members of a church, family, or nation. The community is the central focus; individuals are important as they serve the needs of a community.

When we compare an individualistic (i.e., popular psychology today) with a God-and-community (i.e., biblical) view of humans, different things are emphasized. The individualistic approach values breaking rules, refusing to submit to authority, being unique. The God-and-community approach emphasizes obedience to rules, submitting to authority, and loving God and neighbor as much as you love yourself. The individualistic view emphasizes authenticity and honesty, but the Bible encourages you to control your tongue (James 1:26;

3:3–12). The Bible values humility and seeing yourself as small in the larger scheme of things. Popular psychology cannot comprehend that idea. When others are obnoxious, popular psychology tends to hold grudges and resentments. The Bible demands that we forgive our enemies, just as God previously forgave us even though we didn’t deserve it. This implies that when you are married to someone obnoxious, you should forgive and reconcile with your spouse.

### The Bible’s Story

Every day the news media report disasters. What sort of a world do we live in? Is this an evil place? The Bible’s view is that the world is primarily good, for God created it (Genesis 1). But then humans rebelled (Genesis 3). Things have been a mess since people arrived.

The story of the Bible, starting in Genesis 12, is how the hero of the Bible (God) sets about to rescue people, and also the environment, from disaster. People are at war with God. The central problem is how God can love people who are vicious both to God and to God’s representatives (those people who are powerless). God offers a series of peace treaties (called “covenants”), which say, in effect, “If you follow these simple rules, then I will bless you; but if you violate them, I will curse you.” The Ten Commandments are such a covenant (Exodus 20, Deuteronomy 5). People violated the Commandments, so God destroyed the nation Israel in the year 587 BCE.

The last peace treaty in the Christian view is based on Jesus’ blood. God offers to be at peace with people provided they made a decision to believe that Jesus had died for their sake. The Bible promises an experience of “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). The blessings and the curses attached to this treaty are more severe than to the Ten Commandments. The blessing is that if you accept the terms (i.e., belief in Jesus), then you would have eternal life, which is a quality of everyday experience, and also a promise after death. But the curse is that if you reject Jesus,

then you are choosing to remain at war with God, so you will suffer an embattled life now and misery after death.

A person without faith usually lacks motivation or interest in the God of the Bible. Some people, upon hearing about this God, find the biblical story repulsive. Others make a decision to become part of the biblical story. At that moment, God comes into the person's heart and fills it with an awesome experience of new energy. Suddenly there is peace with God; the antagonism of life vanishes. This does not mean that the believer is a perfect person. It means that God treats the person generously and is now responsive and available. From then on the believer has a psychological problem: whether to indulge in the old worldly lifestyle or stick to the new lifestyle described in Matthew 5–7. Experience shows that the new lifestyle is more rewarding. Over decades, there is slow progress of the good gaining more influence. But by the time of death, the believer is still a thousand miles from perfection. The believer approaches death with confident anticipation.

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths

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## Bion, Wilfred Ruprecht, and "O"

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### Speaking of "O"

In seeking to formulate a general theory of the internal object, the British psychoanalyst Wilfred Ruprecht Bion (1897–1979) developed an epistemological understanding of the absolute truth *in* and *of* any object. This absolute truth he called O. While O cannot be known, it can be known about – even its presence can be recognized and felt as, for example, in the Zen or Archimedean experience of eureka. But O itself is unknowable.

Knowledge respectfully leads to the indescribable ultimate reality, godhead, or "O," but the two concepts are not synonymous. Mathematically, Bion might have written this as  $K \rightarrow O$ , not  $K = O$ , for  $K \neq O$ . Transformations occur *in* or *under* "O," the godhead rather than *imago dei* or God, for both *imago dei* and God are imbued with activity, while the godhead is irreducible to operations. K, which stands for knowledge, is usually referred to by Bion as "curiosity." Bion often quoted a statement of French author and critic Maurice Blanchot (given him by André Green) – *La réponse est le malheur de la question* (Blanchot 1969, p. 13) – translating it as "the answer is the dis-ease of curiosity." This is a key feature in understanding that we must allow for possibilities and not close off the realm of the imaginal, especially the Void and formless infinite that is another way of referring to O. To kill curiosity is simplicity itself: just stuff an answer down a person's throat. If curiosity is flattened, then mystery dies with it.

In another paper, Bion (1957/1984) points out the movement that ensues from attempting to extinguish curiosity from life. When this occurs, the death of curiosity leads to arrogance, and arrogance is on the road to stupidity. The bumper stickers that proclaim Jesus as *La réponse* express an attitude of "I know," which indicates the

inhibition and prohibition of the occurrence of possibilities. If such an attitude prevails, curiosity becomes not unlike the image of the crucifixion of Jesus as, for example, Matthias Grünewald imagined and painted him, who stretched out in his agony, which assumes the leprosy of the marginalized. When curiosity begins breeding *scintillae*, or soul sparks, we ought to be fanning them into flame rather than trying to stamp them out because of their seeming irrationality.

Mental pain is thus necessary to sustain the dynamism within the analytic encounter so as to make possible and foster development. By mental pain, which the patient (and analyst!) must come to tolerate, is meant a link to transformation in K – knowledge/curiosity – that leads to transformation in O and the passing through of resistance (psychological turbulence), which can be written TK → TO. Psychological turbulence is resistance to an interpretation that moves one from the comfort zone of “knowledge about” to a less comfortable one of “becoming being” because O is equated with the Void and formless infinite. As with Jung’s notion of individuation, this passage is not a once-for-all event but a process. The mental pain comes about because most people prefer the “knowing about” to “being” or “becoming *being*.” This is comparable to William Sheldon’s understanding that most people are comfortable/content with repression (the “dying back of the brain”) rather than soul making.

Speaking of O is not unlike attempting to define the Tetragrammaton, יהוה (YHWH), in which the vowels are left out of the name of the godhead because it is a way of talking about a force or power that cannot be described in articulate speech appropriate when discussing omnipotence, omniscience, or other formulations of religion.

### Bion’s Lateral Move

Essentially what Bion does is begin with Plato’s theory of Forms to anchor the significance of O. Transformations of phenomena into representations of what once was but is/are no longer known

are representations of a person’s experience of O. This gives the transformations themselves an anamnestic quality, that is, they serve to remind or help us unforget what has been repressed.

The lateral move that Bion makes is from Platonic Forms to the doctrine of Incarnation as expressed by the so-called Rhineland mystics Meister Eckhart and Doctor Admirabilis, John (Jan) van Ruusbroec. O is not 0 (zero). O is unknown ultimate reality. O is whole. The desire to be either completely good (the absence of evil) or completely evil (the absence of good) does a disservice to O, for O is *being*, the thing-in-itself. To be either good or evil is to be forever split, which is not in accord to being O or even attaining at-one-ment with it.

O is analogous to Meister Eckhart’s prayer, “I pray God to rid me of god” (Eckhart 1941, p. 231), an invocation of emptiness that allows one to be filled with the godheadness of the godhead. The capitalization and lower case usage of “God” and “god,” respectively, in this translation is explained by Eckhart’s reading of the *Timaeus* of Plato. Ruusbroec describes a movement from union through an intermediary (God’s grace + one’s holy way of life) through union without intermediary (bare and imageless understanding, i.e., the abyss) to union without difference (the dark stillness which always stands empty out of which all things come [*tohuwabohu*, *abaissement de niveau mental* (!)], superessential to us and essential to God). It is a good demonstration of Bion’s epistemological movement of transformations of curiosity to transformations of unknowable ultimate reality, or TK → TO. Distilled from the thinking of these medieval mystics, O as a function of knowledge that emanates from being without implying action in the world does so without preconceptions, foreknowledge, even identification, for doing so would put distance between O and the person. We can be O but we cannot identify with O. Qualities attributed to O are links to O (such as love, hate, and knowledge [curiosity]), and these qualities or links are but substitutes for and approximations of O. These links are inappropriate to O; however, they are appropriate to transformations in (or under) O, written as TO. After enumerating

several types of transformation, Bion raises the question:

It is possible through phenomena to be reminded of the "form." It is possible through "incarnation" to be united with a part, the incarnate part, of the Godhead. It is possible through hyperbole for the individual to deal with the real individual. Is it possible through psycho-analytic interpretation to effect a transition from knowing the phenomena if the real self to being the real self? (1965, p. 148).

### What Is at Stake?

For Bion, what is at stake is this bit between, the gap betwixt what he terms "knowing about phenomena" and "being reality." For example, one could compare this to knowing about psychology and being psychologized – experiencing the stirring of soul, its provocation, and the waking of the sleeping bear, which despite being quite wrong by standards of common sense is quite right in order to free the *dynamis* of *psyche* by means of provoking or sustaining mental pain. This is what leads to realizing transformations *in* or *under* O.

At-one-ment with O is possible, though it is not attainable through curiosity/knowledge (K). Curiosity depends upon the evolution of O → K, which means ridding curiosity of memory and desire. So it would seem that to become one with O requires a transcendent position, and it is analogous to the Lacanian Real. Grotstein (1996/2000) notes that the letter *aleph* in Borges' story, "The Aleph," captures the essence of O. In the Hebrew alphabet, *aleph* as first letter represents a person reaching simultaneously toward the sky and toward the earth. As such, the *aleph* is the point at which all points converge. Regarding the story of Borges (1949/1998), a view of its shadow and a penumbra of associations is offered by Blanchot (1959/2003). In the Kabbalah, *aleph* is the *Ein Sof* or godhead. According to a story regarding the creation in *Sefer Zohar*, the blessed Holy One explains that despite creating the world through the second letter of the alphabet, a (*aleph*) is to be the first of all the letters, and only through *aleph* does the blessed Holy One become One. "No union," remarks the blessed

Holy One, "is actualized except by a [*aleph*]" (Matt 2004, p. 16).

The change from curiosity to the unknowable ultimate reality (K → O) is for Bion a special case of transformation, and he regards it as of particular concern to the analyst in "[their] function of aiding maturation of the personalities of [their] patients" (Bion 1965, p. 158). In such a transformation from description of action in the world to representation emanating from being, psychological turbulence, or resistance to interpretation, is bound to occur. Bion cites the third dark night of the soul from *The Ascent of Mt. Carmel* of St. John of the Cross. This transformation in O (K → O) that involves becoming is felt as being inseparable from becoming ultimate reality. The dark night pain is, according to Bion, the fear of megalomania, and this fear inhibits acceptance of being responsible and/or mature because it has the appearance of involving *being* God with the pain that can be expressed inadequately as megalomania (Bion 1965, p. 159).

Grotstein notes "The generally feared connotation of 'mysticism' has occurred through the projective identification of 'mystique' onto it by those who, according to Bion, are afraid of truth and so mystify its clarity" (1996/2000, p. 301). What is needed is to learn to see things as they really are, to see through the camouflage and deception of words and symbols.

### See Also

- ▶ [John of the Cross](#)
- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)
- ▶ [Meister Eckhart](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Birgitta of Sweden

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The Catholic Christian Saint Birgitta (*Birgitta Birgersdotter*, Birgitta of Vadstena) is considered by many to be the foremost saint of Sweden. (Although her name is sometimes Anglicized as “Bridget,” she is not identified with either the Celtic goddess or the Irish saint.) She was born in 1303 to the Swedish knight Birger Persson, a wealthy landowner and governor, and his wife Ingeborg, a woman of royal blood. In her early teens, Birgitta was married to a nobleman, Ulf Gudmarsson, and bore eight children, including a daughter who would become St. Catherine of Sweden. Together the couple joined the Third Order of Franciscans. From childhood, Birgitta received mystical visions and felt deeply called to a missionary life of prophecy and piety. In 1341, after fulfilling a dutiful term in the court of her

cousin, King Magnus Eriksson, she and Ulf made the popular pilgrimage to the grave of the Apostle James, *Santiago de Compostela*, in northwest Spain. The journey was arduous and took over 2 years to complete. Ulf became ill and died while being cared for at a Cistercian monastery at Alvastra, Sweden. While grieving Ulf's death, she received a vision in which God called her to be “My Bride and My mouthpiece.” By 1346, she felt called to create an ascetic religious community of her own at Vadstena, the Order of the Most Holy Savior (O.ss.S) or “Brigittines,” following the Rule of Augustine and including both women and men (in spite of significant opposition). Birgitta was not only mystically inclined but practical and effective as a leader. She won financial backing from Magnus Eriksson, and her order drew many adherents, eventually spreading to continental Europe and Britain (Fig. 1).

In the Jubilee Year 1350 Birgitta traveled to Rome to seek papal authorization for her order. The papacy was suffering its famous Schism or “Babylonian Captivity,” so she settled in Rome to wait – and to campaign for the return of the exiled Pope Clement VI from Avignon. Birgitta's order was finally recognized after 20 years by Pope Urban V. Her reputation as a pious and godly woman continued to grow internationally, and she advised several intervening popes on the basis of her visions. After a final pilgrimage to Jerusalem, during which she survived a scandal involving one of her sons and the Queen of Naples, then the death of the same son from fever, plus a shipwreck off the coast of the Holy Land, she returned to Rome and died in 1373 at the age of 71. She was canonized in 1391 by Pope Boniface IX. Her relics are kept at Vadstena.

She is perhaps best known for her visions, recorded and translated into Latin as the *Revelationes Coelestes* (Celestial Revelations) by her confessor at Alvastra and another Canon of the church. These were widely circulated throughout Europe. Her depictions of the virgin kneeling in adoration before a brightly shining infant Jesus had a lasting influence on the iconography of the Nativity in medieval and Renaissance art. In another vision, Birgitta received 15 prayers from Christ to be used to honor his



**Birgitta of Sweden, Fig. 1** Birgitta of Sweden on an altarpiece in Salem church, Södermanland, Sweden. Public Domain ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Heliga\\_Birgitta\\_på\\_ett\\_altarskåp\\_i\\_Salems\\_kyrka\\_retouchéd.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Heliga_Birgitta_på_ett_altarskåp_i_Salems_kyrka_retouchéd.png))

wounds. These became known as the “Fifteen O’s,” as they all began with the words “O Jesu,” “O Rex,” or “O Domine Jesu Christe.” These also were widely disseminated and translated, and eventually set with late medieval rubrics promising indulgences and other benefits to both the living and the dead. For this reason, they fell out of favor during the Reformation, but shorn of their superstitious usage, they remain a testament to Birgitta’s fervent faith and lasting influence. The Brigittine order now spans the globe, with headquarters in both Rome and Vadstena.

## Psychology

Birgitta is a strong figure of female authority, whose ego strength transcended the constraints

of her patriarchal society. In object relations terms, her visions of Christ, Mary, and God provided her with strong internal objects, *imagos*, or mental representations which overrode numerous objections to her mysticism and piety coming from both family and church officials. From the perspective of Jungian depth psychology, such non-pathological visions from childhood may also be seen as archetypal images coming to ego-consciousness with mystical guidance from the divine Self. For example, her images of kneeling before Jesus symbolize her ego’s devotion to serve a transcendent sacred numinosity, which was then transmuted via action into an experience of the sacred for others.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bridget of Ireland](#)
- ▶ [Camino de Santiago](#)
- ▶ [Charismata](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Visions](#)
- ▶ [Women in Christianity](#)

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## Black Elk

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Black Elk, also known as *Hehaka Sapa* (Brown 1953); Nicholas, baptismal name (Steltenkamp 1993); and Choice, Black Elk's boyhood name, *Kahnigapi* (Neihardt 1984), was born in December 1863 in a family of healers; his father and grandfather were prominent Oglala medicine men (DeMallie 1984, p. 3). He, too, was a powerful thunder medicine man, leading in traditional (Yuwipi) ceremonies. As a *Heyoka* he worked with the thunder and dog medicines and, as such, often worked in paradoxical (contrary) ways. The *Heyoka* or thunder dreamers often do or say the opposite of the intended meaning. Black Elk actually practiced traditional healing and medicine throughout his life, converting to Catholicism only in 1929 when he married his first wife, Katie War Bonnet who was a Catholic. Black Elk's family believes that his "conversion" to Catholicism and his work as a catechist were not absolute. Family members recall that he continued to pray with the pipe, especially when the thunder beings came

(during thunder and lightning storms), along with maintaining his Catholic practices (G. A. Looks Twice, 2007, personal communication). However, some family members report that Black Elk did not practice the traditional ceremonies after his conversion to Catholicism.

## Black Elk as a Historical Figure

As a historical figure, he was remarkable in many ways. As a young man, he fought in the Battle of Greasy Grass (Little Bighorn) and traveled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show across the United States, performing at Madison Square Garden, and in Europe, including England, France, and Germany. He was actually left behind when the Wild West Show returned to America, and lived in Europe for a year, traveling across Europe. In a letter written in 1889, Black Elk commented that he wished he could have seen the land "where they killed Jesus..." but noted that it required "four days on the ocean and there was no railroad. [and] If horses go there they die of thirst. ..." nothing that "[It would require] much money ..." (DeMallie 1984, p. 10). He was a survivor of the massacre that occurred at Wounded Knee in 1890. Black Elk survived three wives and fathered numerous progeny. He married Katie War Bonnet in 1892. He had three sons from this union, William (1893), John (1895), and Benjamin (1899), all baptized as Catholics. Katie died in 1903 and Black Elk was baptized as a Catholic in 1904 and named "Nicholas Black Elk." In 1906, he married Anna Brings White, a widow who had two daughters. He fathered three children from this union, Lucy (Looks Twice), Henry, and Nick, Jr. (Goins n.d.). Two of his grandchildren, George A. Looks Twice, 74, coauthor of this article, and Esther Black Elk DeSersa, 80, still live in the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation (Fig. 1).

There are also five other living grandchildren of Nicholas Black Elk Sr., whose father was Nicholas Jr. Nick Jr. was married to a Rosebud (Sicangu) woman by the name of Bertha Brings Three White Horses. Black Elk died in August 1950, at the ripe old age of 87.



**Black Elk, Fig. 1** Photo shows Black Elk and his grandson, George Looks Twice (coauthor) at the summer Indian Pageant held in the Black Hills, Rapid City, South Dakota, during the 1930s (Photo from Vern Ziebart's collection, Rapid City, S.D.)

### Black Elk as an Anthropological Informant

Most of what the non-Indian world has come to know of Black Elk has been through recorded or transcribed interviews about his vision talk and explanation of the rites of the Oglala that he gave to non-Indian partners whom he made his kinship relatives through formal (Hunka) adoption ceremonies. From 1931 to 1947, he shared different things about himself with each partner and relative. These interviews were given to John G. Neihardt (summer of 1931) and later published in *Black Elk Speaks* (1932) and *When the Tree Flowered* (1951). They focus on Black Elk's pre-reservation experiences as a boy and young man and his lifelong struggle with the major vision which he carried with him with much

sadness and regret. Neihardt based these books on material gathered from three visits to Black Elk. Later, Black Elk shared extensive information about the rites of the Oglala with Joseph Epes Brown who published *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (1953). Brown actually lived with Black Elk and his family for almost a year, during which time he became a part of Black Elk's family.

### Black Elk as a Transformational Leader

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the non-Indian unfamiliar with reservation life to comprehend Black Elk. Recall the two extensive works (Brown 1953; Neihardt 1932) written about him, which chronicle about 20 years of his life – mostly his pre-reservation experiences, “the way things used to be for the Lakota. . .” This leaves approximately 67 years unaccounted for, which leads us to consider the third source of information about this important figure in the history of religion and cultural studies. This source is Lucy Looks Twice, Black Elk's daughter, who shared her perspective on her father with Michael F. Steltenkamp, who at the time was a teacher at the Red Cloud Indian High School (1993) on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. This perspective on Black Elk paints a different image of him from the earlier sources (Neihardt 1932, 1951 and Epes Brown, 1953) in that it looks at the previously unrecorded years of Black Elk's life, when he was known for his tireless catechetical work with the Jesuit missionaries. As Steltenkamp talked to people in Black Elk's home community, he realized that while few people even knew about the books written about the man, everyone knew Nick Black Elk for his sense of humor and his dedication and skill in teaching Catholic doctrine to children, as well as his kindness and tireless service to his community (Steltenkamp, 8 February 2007, personal communication; see also Steltenkamp 1993).

Steltenkamp felt that Neihardt had misunderstood Black Elk to some extent and missed some of the humor in Black Elk's interviews. One example was where in *Black Elk Speaks*, where

Nick Black Elk talked about escaping Wounded Knee, commenting that “We were very hungry because we had not eaten anything since early morning, so we peeped into the tepees until we saw where there was a pot with papa (dried meat). . .” While eating the papa, they came under fire by the soldiers; he noted that they “kept right on eating until we had our fill. Then we took the babies and got on our horses and rode away. If that bullet had only killed me, then I could have died with papa in my mouth. . .” (Neihardt 1961, p. 270). While Neihardt viewed this comment with a deep sense of sadness and loss, Steltenkamp noted that this was a good example of Nick Black Elk’s wry humor. . . comparable to the warning many mothers give to their children to always wear clean socks. . . “you never know when you might be in an auto accident [and you don’t want to be found wearing dirty socks when you go to the hospital].” There was also a striking sense of defiance – in that even while under fire, the young Black Elk and his friend eat their fill of the papa. Steltenkamp felt that Neihardt missed the essence of Black Elk’s humorous style.

### Decolonizing Black Elk’s Legacy

Of course, there has been considerable debate as to “Who is the real Black Elk?” We see the traditional Oglala holy man; the brave, self-sacrificing warrior who resisted, fought, and survived the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890; the witness of the traumatic events during the transition of the plains Oglala Lakota to reservation life; a devout Roman Catholic catechist; and the archetypal image of the plains Indian portrayed to tourists visiting the old Indian village during the 1930s (Fig. 2).

Clearly, Black Elk is a complex figure who defies simple categorization. The second author, Georgine Looks Twice, believes that Black Elk’s “conversion” to Catholicism was due in part to his sadness toward his vision but also a way to protect the rituals and traditions that at that time and space were banned by the US Government (Indian Offenses Act, in *Lame Deer* 1992, p. 230).



**Black Elk, Fig. 2** Photo shows Black Elk poring in full regalia at the summer Indian Pageant held in the Black Hills, Rapid City, South Dakota, during the 1930s (Photo from Vern Ziebart’s collection, Rapid City, S.D.)

To Black Elk’s descendents, Black Elk’s conversion to Roman Catholicism was also a survival strategy (Georgine Looks Twice, 17 February 2008, personal communication; see also Lone Hill 2008). Converting to Catholicism during the early reservation era enabled Black Elk to assert leadership in his community during a very tumultuous period of history for the Lakota people. Black Elk’s great granddaughter (and coauthor) believes that Black Elk’s compliance with the Catholic missionaries was his response to the oppression that was part and parcel of reservation life. Black Elk discovered a way to transform the broader and pervasive oppression into personal and spiritual transformation, enabling his people to better understand their new situation while holding on to traditional values.

The process of understanding Black Elk is like setting up a traditional 3-pole Lakota tipi – each

pole a different informant – Neihardt, Brown, and Steltenkamp. While setting up the tipi may seem simple at first glance, it is much more complex and elegant than someone inexperienced with the process might realize. The foundation of the traditional Lakota tipi are three poles laced in such a way that two of the poles can be pulled apart to form the inverted V shape, with the third forward pole serving as the lifting pole, which actually raises the tipi – this can all be done by one person which is quite remarkable considering that each pole is approximately 20–26 ft high and may weigh as much as 50–60 lb each. After the foundation tripod has been set, the remaining poles are lashed under each of the three foundation poles, which, when finished, forms an elegant spiral when looking up at the poles from inside the center of the tipi. Of course, invariably there are inexperienced people trying to set up a tipi. They generally yell instructions to one another, maybe become so frustrated they may even give up. Most of the times, the end result of their effort is usually a disaster – or at least a very wobbly tipi that will blow away in the strong prairie winds. For many non-Lakotas, attempting to understand Black Elk is like this.

**Acknowledgment** Dedicated to the memory of my Hunka relative (adoptive mother, one of the ceremonies which Black Elk discusses), whose name is Margaret Richard Lunderman, a Member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and descendant of Chief Red Cloud. She crossed into the spirit world on 03 March 2008. With esteem, Rick Voss.

## See Also

- ▶ [Native American Messianism](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Vision Quest](#)
- ▶ [Visions](#)

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## Blackfoot Nation

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The Blackfoot Nation is a confederacy of four closely related and allied culture groups, belonging to the Algonquian language family. Historically, the Blackfeet inhabited the northwestern plains of North America. Their territory stretched east from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Sand Hills on the present-day Saskatchewan/Alberta



**Blackfoot Nation,**

**Fig. 1** Blackfoot Teepees, Glacier National Park, USA, 1933 (Photo courtesy of the US National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection. Public Domain. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blackfoot\\_teepees.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Blackfoot_teepees.jpg))



B

border and south from the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to the Yellowstone River in Montana. Today, three groups – the Apatohsiipikanis, the Kainais, and the Siksikas – have individual reserves in Alberta, Canada. The fourth group – the Aamskaapiikannis – are located in the USA, on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana. The reservation and reserves are all located within the much greater, historical Blackfoot territory. While many types of Christianity have been introduced to the Blackfeet, some continue to practice their traditional religion. The Blackfoot religion is centered upon maintaining mutually beneficial relations between the Blackfeet and the other inhabitants of the environment. In recent years, it has been adapted to address contemporary challenges and concerns (Fig. 1).

The Blackfeet refer to themselves as the *Niitsitapiiksi* or “Real Persons.” The notion of personhood is central to their traditional identities and to their understanding of the world. Persons (*matapiiksi*), to them, are beings who are capable of interacting socially and who do so with an understanding that their actions affect others. Thus, the Blackfeet who practice their traditional religion believe that “real” or true persons are those beings who engage consciously in reciprocity.

Importantly, traditional Blackfeet consider many beings besides humans as persons. This

fact is reflected in their language. As psychological anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell (1975) first demonstrated to scholars, it is actually reflected in the languages of all peoples in the Algonquian language family. In the Algonquian languages, there is no gender designation of male, female, or neuter. Rather, there is a designation of animate or inanimate. The former category includes many things that most non-Indians might not even consider alive.

According to the Blackfoot worldview, each animate thing or being belongs to one of three categories: Above Persons (high-flying birds, stars, etc.), Earth Persons (low-flying birds, most four-legged animals), and Underwater Persons (aquatic and riparian animals). Regardless of their categorization, all beings have been animated and given the potential for personhood by *Ihtsipaitapiyo’pa* (“The Source of our Life”). Sun, an Above Person, is the primary manifestation of the Source.

Hence, in the Blackfoot world, social interaction can extend beyond the realm of humanity. Moreover, because their world is inhabited so densely by human and other-than-human persons, practicing reciprocity is imperative. Traditional Blackfeet want their actions to elicit positive reactions from the beings around them rather than negative reactions. Their religion thus highlights generosity, respect, and exchange (Lokensgard 2010).

Psychologist Abraham Maslow spent 6 weeks on the Siksika Reserve. His observation of the *Siksikas* influenced the development of his “hierarchy of needs” theory. These needs are, from basic to most advanced, physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow 1987). Maslow’s idea of the “self-actualized” person – a person who is in “good psychological health,” whose “basics needs are satisfied,” and who devotes herself or himself to pursuits that are “intrinsically worthwhile” – was embodied by the majority of the *Siksikas* he met (Blood and Heavyhead 2007; Maslow 1972, p. 192; Maslow 1987, pp. 15–22). He felt, on the other hand, that self-actualized individuals were rare in mainstream North American society. This is because, he argued, the basic needs in his hierarchy were easily provided for in traditional Blackfoot society, where familial relations are highly esteemed and regarded as the model reciprocal relationships. In other words, he felt that the practices of generosity and respect, which result from the Blackfoot emphases upon reciprocity and caring for others as if they were family, lessened the sort of aggressive competition for status found in other societies (Blood and Heavyhead 2007; Maslow 1972, pp. 201–204, 228).

When Maslow visited the *Siksika*, the Blackfeet, as a whole, were experiencing pressure to give up their traditional religion for Christianity. Also, at the insistence of Canadian and US government agents, they were beginning to turn toward ranching, farming, and commodity foods for sustenance. This means that traditional Blackfoot culture was beginning to weaken (Lokensgard 2010, pp. 115–120). Today, poverty, broken families, alcoholism and drug addiction, and numerous other social problems plague the Montana reservation and Canadian reserves.

Since the late 1970s, however, traditional Blackfoot culture has been going through a period of revitalization. Blackfeet are adapting it to address contemporary social challenges and concerns (Lokensgard 2010, pp. 135–152). Those who are now returning to the traditional religion often come from troubled families or from troubled personal pasts. It is common for individuals

in need of medical help – mental or otherwise – to attend the major ceremonies that are held during each season.

These seasonal ceremonies are the Beaver Bundle ceremony, held each fall and spring; the Thunder Medicine Pipe ceremony, held each spring; the Sun Dance and related ceremonies, held each summer; and the All Smoking ceremony, held in the winter (Lokensgard 2010, pp. 92–103). During the bundle ceremonies, traditionalists renew mutually beneficial relations with certain other-than-human persons who help them lead successful lives. These other-than-human persons, especially animals, are made present at the ceremonies through their physical “bodies” (skins, rocks, etc.). These living bodies are the primary contents of the bundles (Lokensgard 2010; Wissler 1912).

During the Sun Dance, many traditionalists come together to form a strong sense of community with each other and with the other-than-human persons. Some Blackfeet also make physical sacrifices. They do so to express thanks for help received from others, particularly *Ihtsipaitapiyo’pa*, or to elicit help that will be needed in the future. The physical sacrifices can range from merely sacrificing ones’ comfort, through fasting and/or sweating in “sweat lodges,” to the offering of one’s skin. Historically, the Blackfeet would typically offer pieces of flesh from their forearms. Now, some Sun Dance participants pierce their flesh, use these piercings to bind themselves to a post, and dance until the piercings break free from their skin. This practice may have been introduced by the unrelated Lakotas (“Sioux”), but some Blackfeet contend that piercing predates the late 1800s, when the Blackfeet and Lakota began to have friendly interactions (prior to this era, they were often at war). Regardless, both types of physical sacrifice follow the logic that humans benefit from displays of respect and generosity directed toward fellow humans, “other-than-human” persons, and *The Source of our Life* (Lokensgard 2010, pp. 99–101; Wissler 1918).

The fourth seasonal ceremony, the All Smoking ceremony, serves to affirm the credentials of religious leaders. These leaders are people who have achieved and maintained relationships with a large number of other-than-human persons,

through the care of bundles and mastery of other ceremonies. Religious “elders” are, specifically, those who have seen their ceremonial bundles and/or knowledge passed to a second and third person or married couple (many bundles must be cared for by a husband/wife team). They are spiritual “grandparents” or elders to the third generation of ceremonialists caring for the bundles or knowledge that they passed along earlier.

Many people make spiritual vows to participate in bundle ceremonies. Like most participants in the Sun Dance, these people want to request help from the other-than-human beings and the Source or give thanks for help already received. Often, those who make vows are experiencing great medical or other hardships. Usually, they have already seen the non-Indian medical professionals who specialize in addressing their problems. Of course, their participation in seasonal ceremonies requires a display of generosity to the ceremonial leaders and to the other-than-human persons who are being honored; those fulfilling vows must offer food, blankets, and/or tobacco during ceremonies. Ceremonial leaders receive these gifts on behalf of the other-than-human persons and redistribute them to the human attendees. This process demonstrates the commitment to reciprocity that all “Real Persons” should show, if they expect help and kindness from others (Lokensgard 2010).

Narcisse Blood and Ryan Heavyhead of the Kainai Studies Department at Red Crow College (on the Kainai Reserve) are strong advocates of the traditional Blackfoot religion. They have also researched the influence that the Blackfeet had upon Maslow. They argue that he overlooked the importance of “place” to the Siksikas (Blood and Heavyhead 2007). They suggest that he met so many people that seemed self-actualized, not simply because of the pervasive emphasis upon reciprocity in Blackfoot society but also because reciprocal behaviors are extended to include beings beyond the human society. This means that the Blackfeet gain even more allies in their quests for healthy, successful lives, and it also reinforces the spirit of humility that accompanies the emphasis upon reciprocity.

Therefore, Heavyhead and other educators in Blackfoot Country insist that young Blackfeet should set aside their electronic devices and get to know the inhabitants of the wider, spiritual world. Still, even Heavyhead would not deny that living generously and respectfully toward others could benefit *anyone*, whether they live in a highly animate world, like the Blackfoot one, or not.

Kainai scholar Betty Bastien (2004) is also a strong advocate of Blackfoot religion. She suggests that it can help contemporary Blackfeet overcome the colonial mindset that has resulted from the Euro-American style of education that has been imposed upon them since the late 1800s, when the reservation and reserve era occurred. Bastien suggests this mindset is characterized by a “dissociative and objectifying epistemology” (Bastien 2004, p. 99) or, in other words, a highly impersonal and individualistic epistemology. This epistemology reinforces the view that many colonized peoples have of themselves as “victims,” she argues, since a view of the self as highly objectified and removed from interpersonal relations implies passivity. To really deal with the legacy of colonialism, Bastien suggests that Blackfeet need to regain their personhood, their volition, and the strength made available to them through reciprocal relationships. As most indigenous peoples traditionally place some emphasis upon personhood and reciprocity, Bastien’s argument likely applies to other colonized peoples. Those who work with such peoples in the mental health field might benefit from examining her work further.

The Blackfoot religion provides much for the scholar of psychology and religion to consider. While the scholars should not ignore the material aspects of the religion – the physical world and the value of things like medicine bundles are very important – there is a clear psychological component to the religion. Practicing psychologists might view Blackfoot religion as an example of how familial and other interpersonal relationships can improve the quality of individuals’ lives. Moreover, the revitalization of Blackfoot religion indicates that a return to traditional ways might help indigenous peoples overcome some of



the psychological damage caused by colonialism. Finally, a closer look at Blackfoot religion can help both scholars and practicing psychologists understand Maslow's work better. Such a look provides a new perspective upon Maslow's theories, as Blood and Heavyhead demonstrate.

## See Also

- ▶ African Diaspora Religions
- ▶ African Traditional Religion
- ▶ Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings
- ▶ Hero with an African Face
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ María Lionza
- ▶ Native North American Religion
- ▶ Sacred Mountains
- ▶ Soul in the World
- ▶ Spiritism
- ▶ Spiritual Ecology
- ▶ Yoruban Religion in Cuba

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## Bodhi Tree

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The Bodhi Tree is a symbol in Buddhism. It is so called because it was under such a tree that Siddhartha Gautama became the Buddha of this age. By legend it was a fig tree (*ficus religiosa*), known for its heart-shaped leaves. In modern Bodh Gaya, India, a tree at the Mahabodhi Temple is revered as the Bodhi Tree, though the exact spot where a tree stood in Buddha's day is not known with precision. The original tree was destroyed in the seventh century, but the current tree is a scion of a scion of the original tree which was sent by Asoka to Sri Lanka. For the pilgrims, it does not matter, because the act of reverence is sanctifying beyond the literal aspects of history.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism

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## Bodhisattva

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In Buddhism, the “Bodhisattva” (Snsk) is one who has realized enlightenment, or “nirvana,”

but out of compassion for the suffering of sentient beings has deliberately resolved to delay reaching final nirvana, complete release from samsaric rebirth, in order to aid others in achieving enlightenment. This is a principal doctrine of the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism, also known as the northern transmission, since it passed into the rest of Asia from India northwest via the Silk Road. It is the motivation that drives spiritual development in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions in contrast with the model of the arhat, which is the motivating ideal in Theravada Buddhism, the southern transmission, going from Sri Lanka to the rest of Southeast Asia.

The Bodhisattva vow is taken by lay and monastics alike in the Mahayana tradition and involves the commitment to work for the release not only of oneself (the goal of the arhat) but for all sentient beings. The eighth-century Indian Buddhist scholar, Shantideva, authored the *Bodhicaryavatara*, roughly translated as the path of the bodhisattva, which is one of the major statements of Mahayana doctrine, and a source of numerous commentaries. The ethical heart of the image of the Bodhisattva is compassion, and any merit one's actions gain is dedicated, therefore, to the enlightenment of all sentient beings. In Buddhist iconography, images of transcendental Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are numerous. Among the most important of the Bodhisattvas is Avalokiteshvara in the Indian and Tibetan traditions and Kuan Yin in the Chinese, Korean, and Japanese traditions. The former is represented as a male, the latter as a female. These images are used in meditation to generate the underlying attitude of compassion and also serve as foci of devotion, prayers, incense, and other offerings. Other important Bodhisattvas include Manjushri the Bodhisattva of transcendent wisdom and the Bodhisattva who will become the next Buddha, Maitreya.

## See Also

- ▶ [Arhat](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Compassion](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Body and Spirituality

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In secular philosophy, the distinction between body and spirituality is more commonly known as the distinction between body and mind. In either case, it is assumed that humans have at least two dimensions: a material one (body) and a spiritual one (mind). How these two dimensions relate to each other is a contentious matter.

## Body and Mind

For over a century, it has been a common understanding that the part of the body related to mental activity is not the foot, the heart, or the liver, but the brain. Thus, the so-called mind-body problem is actually the mind-brain problem – that is, how psychological phenomena relate to the activity of the nervous system. Many potential types of relationship between mind and brain have been proposed. Classifications of systems of ideas are always arbitrary to a certain extent, but a convenient classification recognizes four major groups: idealism, mentalism, psychophysical parallelism, and materialism (or materialist monism).

Idealism refers to a conception that only the mental realm truly exists and that the brain (and the rest of the material world) is merely an illusion. This position has very few sponsors nowadays. Mentalism refers to the conception

that mental events can be fully explained by psychological concepts without any reference to the nervous system. This is a dualistic viewpoint, as it implies that mind and brain are distinct and largely independent from each other. Psychophysical parallelism refers to the conception that mind and brain are distinct but closely related to each other. This form of dualism may imply that mind and brain are only different sides of the same coin or even that neural activity can affect the operation of the mind without actually creating the mind. Finally, materialist monism refers to the conception that mental events are nothing more than neural events. This is a monist viewpoint because it implies the existence of only one dimension – the neural dimension.

As one reads the scientific literature, one gains the impression that psychophysical parallelism is the dominant conception among behavioral neuroscientists. To start with, the idea that mental events are correlated with neural events has a long tradition in psychology. Four of the major psychologists in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century made explicit statements about the parallelism between mind and brain: the highly influential William James, the father of psychoanalysis (Sigmund Freud), the discoverer of classical conditioning (Ivan Pavlov), and the creator of the intelligence test (Alfred Binet). Particularly after the development of positron-emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), it has become evident that activity in particular circuits of the brain is correlated with particular mental events.

Going beyond mere correlation, however, lesion and stimulation studies in animals and in brain surgery patients have provided evidence that mental events do not have a life of their own – that is, that mental events can be reduced to neural events. As philosopher Mario Bunge put it, behavioral neuroscience performs a limited type of reduction: an ontological reduction without full epistemological reduction, but nonetheless a reduction. Thus, although most neuroscientists are not themselves aware of it, their work actually provides support for materialist monism. The reduction of mind to

matter is also a basic assumption in cybernetics, as Norbert Wiener (the creator of cybernetics) asserted that if we could build a machine whose mechanical structure is entirely consistent with human anatomy and physiology, then we would have a machine whose intellectual capabilities are identical to those of human beings.

It is not difficult to see why behavioral neuroscience needs the reduction of mental events to neural events. After all, if one can see, touch, and disturb nerve cells, one would like to do the same with mental events. Because one cannot do the same with mental events, one assumes that they do not really exist. If mental events are neural events, then there is no immaterial world to be dealt with. Thus, we feel terrified or ecstatic, drowsy, or excited, because of specific electrochemical processes taking place in our brain. Likewise, so-called psychological causes of mental illness are merely those causes whose neural bases are not yet known. In general, to understand behavior is to understand the action of the nervous system. The mind is simply a name associated with brain functioning, just like breathing is a name associated with lung functioning and movement is a name associated with particular forms of muscle functioning. Francis Crick (Nobel laureate for the discovery of DNA) called this The Astonishing Hypothesis because most people who are not neuroscientists (and even many neuroscientists) are astonished to learn that the mind is nothing more than a label attached to the operation of the brain.

## Body and Soul

Although various religions have pronouncements about the relationship of mind and body, the lack of technical detail in these pronouncements prevents close comparisons with the secular perspective. A major roadblock is the nebulous distinction between mind and soul. In Christianity, both Augustine and Aquinas held that the soul lives in the body but is nonmaterial and immortal. Because most psychologists believe that the mind

ceases to exist when the body dies, the soul must be distinct from the mind. Thus, there may be a need to recognize three human dimensions: body, mind, and soul, which are only loosely related to the Ancient Greek concepts of soma, psyche, and pneuma. On the other hand, mind (or spirit) and soul are used interchangeably in many biblical passages, which favors a simple dichotomy of body and soul (the latter somehow incorporating the mind).

The major difficulty in equating mind and soul is that the qualities of the mind cannot be properly characterized without the restrictions of time and space, whereas the soul is eternal and not bound by geography. For instance, in Piaget's model of cognitive development, the mind of a 4-year-old child operates according to a preoperational scheme, whereas that of an adult operates according to a formal operational scheme. Under what principle does the soul operate? Similarly, the mind of an American speaks English, whereas the mind of an Angolan speaks Portuguese. What language do their souls speak? It would seem that the soul must be distinct from the mind. In this case, the concept of spirituality would be related partly to the mind and partly to the soul.

Whether or not the mind is considered to be the same as the soul, the concept of the soul is incompatible with a materialist view that reduces spirituality to the operation of nerve cells. Therefore, the religious perspective (at least in the tradition of Christianity) favors either idealism or mentalism (as defined above) and is, therefore, in disagreement with the secular perspective that favors psychophysical parallelism and materialist monism as explanations for the relationship between body and spirituality. In analytic psychology, Carl Jung was a major proponent of mentalism and had great interest in religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)

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## Boisen, Anton

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## Boisen's Life

Anton T. Boisen was born in Bloomington, Indiana, in 1876. His early life was marked by the death of his father at the age of 7. An able scholar and student, he graduated from the University of Indiana at Bloomington and taught romance languages there for a time before entering the Yale School of Forestry. Later he attended Union Theological Seminary in New York where he studied under George Albert Coe, a professor steeped in the approach of William James to the psychology of religion. After the ordination in the Presbyterian Church and a lackluster career of some 10 years in the parish ministry, he experienced in 1920 the first of three psychiatric hospitalizations where his diagnosis was that of schizophrenia of the catatonic type. The second occurred in 1930 after the death of his mother and the third on the occasion of the death of the love of his life, Alice Batchelder, a woman he courted for years even as she consistently rebuffed his advances and proposals of marriage. He became convinced that his firsthand encounter with mental illness was for him, as he often said, a "problem-solving experience" that permitted him a new lease on life and vocation when he was well into middle age. He set about the task of educating seminarians and clergy about mental illness and ministry in mental health in the hospital setting

and doing research in the sociology of religion and the psychology of religious experience. This investigation into mental illness and religious experience utilized what he had personally gone through and followed William James' descriptive and biographical approach to these phenomena in his magisterial work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). Boisen held two major chaplaincy positions, first at Worcester (Massachusetts) State Hospital and later at Elgin (Illinois) State Hospital where he died in 1965.

### Boisen's Contribution to Psychiatry

Boisen made invaluable contributions to the dialogue between religion and psychiatry. His pioneering work includes, first, his efforts at establishing pastoral care as part of treatment in psychiatric institutions and, second, his passionate interest in the education of seminarians and clergy through encounters with what he called "the living human documents," individuals making their way through psychiatric illness, an experience he poetically describes as "the wilderness of the lost." He inspired individuals to follow him into this field of endeavor that evolved overtime into clinical pastoral education that is regularly offered to or required of those involved in graduate theological education. At the same time, he tirelessly promoted his ideas and articles of an interdisciplinary character that reached a wide professional audience in both the religious and psychiatric communities. Besides his autobiography, *Out of the Depths* (1965), he also wrote *The Exploration of the Inner World: A Study of Mental Illness and Religious Experience* in 1936, a work that is still regarded as a classic in the field. His articles appeared regularly in the journal *Psychiatry*, a publication edited by his friend and colleague, the well-known and highly regarded psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan. Sullivan thought very highly of Boisen whose books he reviewed and ideas and writings he utilized and quoted. He also visited Boisen's pastoral education training programs at Elgin State Hospital where he interviewed patients for student groups and shared in their case reviews.

Boisen's work has been highly regarded enough to have one of his pieces entitled *Personality Changes and Upheavals Arising Out of a Sense of Personal Failure* written in 1926 and published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* included in that August publication's *Sesquicentennial Anniversary Supplement* in 1994. There it appeared alongside seminal pieces by such luminaries as Sullivan, Erich Lindemann, and Leo Kanner. Boisen's article focuses upon the existential dimension of the experience of mental illness as it relates to broader philosophical concerns. The article demonstrates both his analytical gifts and rhetorical powers.

### Boisen's Legacy

The latter half of Boisen's life was filled with professional success along with a great deal of personal loneliness. His efforts in promoting the dialogue between psychiatry and religion were formidable. Among his shortcomings was what critics have identified as his all too clear and certain separation between organic and functional causal factors in psychiatric illness. He also developed as years went on something of a brusque, authoritarian manner in dealing with both colleagues and students. He also lacked the organizational skills to help guide the twentieth century's clinical pastoral movement past its early stages in the 1920s and 1930s. He remains, however, an important figure and formative influence whose person and ideas deserve ongoing attention.

### See Also

- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Sullivan, Harry Stack](#)

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## Bonnell, John Sutherland

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### Introduction

In 1962, John Sutherland Bonnell (January 10, 1893–February 26, 1992), known as “Sid” to his closest friends, retired as Pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City.

### Contribution from the Personality Sciences

Although known best through his radio ministry when he succeeded Harry Emerson Fosdick as the preacher on ABC's National Vespers, his basic contribution lay elsewhere. As a pastor, Dr. Bonnell brought the insights of psychoanalysis into the world of pastoral care in a way that gave those of conservative faith access to that field. In effect, his witness gave the conservative pastor “permission” to see the positive contributions of Freud, Jung, and Adler to the practice of ministry – even though the pastor might not agree with the philosophical or psychological views of any of those three when it came to the Christian faith.

In many ways, through his books *Pastoral Psychiatry* and *Psychology for Pastor and People*, Dr. Bonnell opened doors not only for what clergy might do but what people in the pew might consider both for themselves and for their “lay ministries.”

### Brief Biography

“Sid” Bonnell was born in a barn on a farm of Dover, Prince Edward Island, Canada. He became a truant in the eighth grade and worked in Falconwood Hospital – a hospital for the “insane” – of Charlottetown, PEI, where his father had become superintendent. (His father was not a doctor but a farmer with administrative skills who was brought to the management of the hospital.)

In that hospital a patient by the name of Brown took interest in the tall, lanky young Bonnell and tutored him. Out of that training he passed the examinations for entrance to Prince of Wales College, and he was on his way. The hands-on experience of working in the Falconwood Hospital, however, remained the background and basis for Bonnell's further studies as the works of Sigmund Freud and William James became part of the educational scene in Canada and the United States.

“Sid” Bonnell also enlisted in the Canadian army in World War I, was twice wounded in Europe, and then was sent home after suffering the effects of mustard gas. A shell fragment would have taken his life were it not for a large watch that he carried in his chest pocket. The watch deflected the fragment.

### Princeton Lectures

In 1923 “Sid” married Bessie Louise Caruthers, of Charlottetown, PEI. She was the daughter of a prominent physician on “the Island.” The Bonnells had four children, George, Catherine, Elizabeth, and Margaret.

After a four point pastorate in the area of Cavendish, PEI (a community made famous by the story of *Anne of Green Gables*), the Bonnells moved to the St. Andrews parish in St. John New Brunswick, the Westminster Church of Winnipeg, Canada, and then in 1936, the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. Although the Bonnells became American citizens, they never lost their Canadian roots. Three months of



every summer found them on Prince Edward Island where Dr. Bonnell did most of his writing.

### Basic Viewpoint

After writing the book *Pastoral Psychiatry*, Dr. Bonnell also became a visiting lecturer at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. His course basically dealt with case studies that grew out of his own experience. His early work showed the influence of Sigmund Freud's writings, but Dr. Bonnell never moved the work of pastoral care into a pastoral model of Freudian analysis. Rather, he used the nomenclature of Freud's work, such as "the Oedipus Complex," as a tool for helping a parishioner identify the nature of a problem. He wrote, "...the minister who values his time and desires to conserve his mental and spiritual resources will inform himself of the teaching of these sciences that deal with the human mind" (Bonnell 1938, p. 53).

Dr. Bonnell therefore saw the science of psychotherapy as something that spoke not just to therapy and counseling but to the whole range of one's ministry.

### The Context of Care

Dr. Bonnell took seriously the context in which the "cure of souls" (read, "care of souls") took place. He made use of a small but comfortable room with cathedral style window frames that gave both a church frame of reference and a source of comfortable outside light. On the wall he had a picture of Christ at prayer in Gethsemane. The parishioner sat in an upright but comfortable chair and Dr. Bonnell sat behind a small desk that served simply as a prop for use when necessary but did not give the impression of an imposing study.

The room for this counseling was set across a hall from the entrance to the floor and avoided both the pastoral offices and the secretarial offices. The context for the pastoral counseling was therefore both private and faith centered but not doctrinally overwhelming.

### Evaluation of His Work

Dr. Bonnell never developed a particular system for pastoral care nor did he formulate a theological construct for his work. Basically, Dr. Bonnell was a practitioner and his lectures were more case studies than theoretical discussions. Whereas the work of Norman Vincent Peale, a contemporary and friend in New York, became popular best sellers, much of the two key books in the field by Dr. Bonnell centered on the work of the pastor. His lectures at Princeton were heavily attended.

### The Evaluation by Others

Others in the academic field of that day, such as Seward Hiltner of Chicago and Princeton and Hans Hoffmann of Harvard, saw three strengths in Dr. Bonnell's work: an uncanny ability to sense an individual's "real" problem when that person went to the counseling room; a clear, structured means of communicating an answer to that problem; and a clear context of faith that was not imposed on the one with a problem but created an atmosphere of safety and of concern.

The weaknesses observed by these and others were the following: a person with a weak ego could be overwhelmed and lost in the "larger than life" presence and approach of Dr. Bonnell; for the same reason, pastors often tried to imitate him rather than understand the dynamics behind a counseling session. That failure resulted in a pastor or student failing to develop his or her own approach to a parishioner. The lack of a theoretical framework within which to understand the counseling process left a major need in the area of pastoral care and counseling.

### Books Written

Although Dr. Bonnell wrote some 13 books in his lifetime, the key ones that relate to the field of psychology and religion are listed below.

In the first two of these, Dr. Bonnell spoke of pastoral psychology as the "healing of the soul";

E. B. Holifield sees him as understanding the goal of pastoral psychology as that of “keeping one in touch with God and the spiritual resources that flowed from God” (Hunter 1990, p. 105). His practice also showed three dimensions: a dimension of personal strength and competence that he brought into the counseling room, a dimension of concern for the well-being of the parishioner who came for help, and a dimension of diagnostic accuracy the later professionals such as Seward Hiltner regarded as remarkable (in personal conversation with the writer).

His solutions were practical and immediate. It was not uncommon for a counselee to leave the office with a sense of direction and an immediate task to do. One such counselee needed space and time to work out his concerns and Dr. Bonnell facilitated his having work on a farm for a summer. Another counselee needed a meaningful role that would give a sense of purpose in life and found herself given an opportunity to visit shut-ins. That opportunity had the double value of meeting the need of others and, in so doing, meeting her need for a meaningful role in life.

Some sessions ended with prayer, but that was not the rule. Dr. Bonnell was not “client centered” in the way of Carl Rogers, but he was aware of where the person was, of what the person brought to the counseling moment, and of the fact that the person, not he, set the agenda for the hour in the counseling room.

In the third of these books, Dr. Bonnell sought to reach lay people. In a day called “the age of anxiety,” he focused on anxiety and both inadequate remedies and sound remedies. He had a particular concern for the issue of the ultimate escape – namely, suicide. In the book, he sought to help the reader learn how to confront the problems of the day from a spiritual as well as a psychological frame of reference.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Rogers, Carl](#)

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## Bowlby, John

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Edward John Mostyn Bowlby (1907–1990) was a pioneer in the field of attachment theory. His three-volume exposition of attachment, separation, and loss continues to impact both the fields of psychology and religion. John Bowlby depicted the infant as a “relational self” and elaborated on the significance of the maternal attachment. The term “mother figure” meant “that person to whom a child directs his [her] attachment behavior by preference” (Bowlby 1973, p. 22). By understanding the child as a connected self or a self-in-relation, John Bowlby contributed to the ongoing resistance to a cult of individualism or autonomy. He broke with psychoanalytic theory in his emphasis on the impact of real life events on the internal world of the infant in contrast to the role of fantasy as determinant of the infant’s unconscious realm.

Psychology and Religion: Attachment theory as developed by John Bowlby has offered a major theoretical framework for researchers in the psychology of religion. This theoretical framework has supported ongoing inquiry into the relationship between childhood “parental” attachments and subsequent adult religious beliefs. “Ever since Freud’s well-known proclamation that God represents an ‘exalted father figure,’ psychologists of religion have wondered about the

relationship between early childhood experience and subsequent religiosity” (Kirkpatrick and Shaver 1990, p. 315). Bowlby’s work in attachment theory supports current empirical and clinical investigation into religion’s promotion of and psychology’s study of divine attachment figures.

**Family Background:** John Bowlby was born into an upper-middle-class family in London in 1907. His social location is significant to his research. As typical in that class and time period, a nanny was hired to raise John. John formed a close maternal attachment to his nanny. The time spent with his biological mother was 1 h a day, after tea time. When John was 4 years old, his nanny left the family. This was his critical experience of separation and loss (Bowlby and King 2004, p. 17). At age seven, he was sent to a boarding school which was a difficult familial separation.

**Clinical Background:** John Bowlby studied psychology and preclinical sciences at Trinity College, Cambridge. After Cambridge, his work with delinquent children helped shape the course of his future studies and research. At the University College Hospital in London, he qualified for medicine and simultaneously enrolled himself in the British Psychoanalytic Institute where he was supervised by Melanie Klein and others. After his medical studies, he trained in adult psychiatry at Maudlin Hospital and received certification as a psychoanalyst. During World War II, Bowlby was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Army Medical Corps and was recruited to work with staff from the Tavistock Clinic in London on office selection procedures. After the war, he was asked to become head of the Children’s Department of the Tavistock Clinic. His renaming of the clinic gave evidence to his emphasis on family process, family events, and familial attachments. He renamed the clinic: Department for Children and Parents.

**Contributions:** The World Health Organization (WHO) named Bowlby as Mental Health Consultant in 1950. As such, he was able to observe and research the displacement of children in Europe and the resulting impact of separations. Wartime events created separations: children were

evacuated from London during periods of air raids, Jewish children were imprisoned in camps, and young children were placed in nurseries to allow their mothers to work for the war effort. Bowlby training in medicine, psychiatry, and psychoanalyst positioned him to create observational and theoretical work that was unique in terms of attachment theory. His three volumes (Bowlby 1969, 1973, 1980) on attachment, loss, and separation remain a classic trilogy. In 1940, Bowlby wrote an article for the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* titled “The influence of early environment in the development of neurosis and neurotic character.” In this article he likened psychoanalysts to nurserymen: they should study the nature of the organism, the properties of the soil, and their interaction” (Bowlby 1940, p. 23). Bowlby opened his trilogy by a comparison of his theory to that of Sigmund Freud’s. As journeymen, they were tilling the same field of “instinctive behavior.” However, the furrows of the two men were from diametrically opposite corners. According to Bowlby, the tilling “contained all those same rocky excrescences and thorny entanglements that he [Freud] had encountered and grappled with – love and hate, anxiety and deference, attachment and loss” (Bowlby 1969, p. xi). From his corner of attachment theory, Bowlby has offered cross-fertilization of a field that continues to be enriched by the fertile minds of men like Bowlby and Freud and women like Mary Ainsworth and Melanie Klein.

### See Also

- ▶ [Adoption](#)
- ▶ [Attachment and Loss](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Hope](#)
- ▶ [Personal God](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)
- ▶ [Transitional Object](#)

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## Brahman

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For Hindus, especially those in the Advaita Vedanta tradition, Brahman is the undifferentiated reality underlying all existence. Brahman is the eternal first cause present everywhere and nowhere, beyond time and space, the indefinable Absolute. The gods are incarnations of Brahman. It can be said that everything that is Brahman. And it can be argued that Brahman is a monotheistic concept or at least a monistic one, since all gods – presumably of any tradition – are manifestations of Brahman, real only because Brahman exists. In Hinduism such manifestations would include the great goddess Devi as well as the triad of major deities, Shiva, Brahma, and Vishnu.

As a psychological principle, Brahman shares with the deity concepts of other traditions the task of giving meaning to our inner lives. The existence of the gods we create give significance to our existence as human beings in an otherwise seemingly arbitrary universe.

More specifically, in Hinduism Brahman becomes a psychological concept because Brahman is inseparable from Atman. Atman is the “Lord of the heart,” the Brahman, or ultimate soul, in each human being. Through Atman,

therefore, Brahman is imminent as well as transcendent. Atman is the ultimate Self, the union within ourselves with Brahman. Such union is the goal of life. Readers of Carl Jung will recognize the influence of the Brahman-Atman concept on Jung’s psychological theories. Jung identified Brahman with the psychological principle in which the creative libido is concentrated, leading to individuation, the blissful state in which there is full realization of self, the goal of the psychological life process (Jung 1971, p. 789). Through union with Brahman the opposites of life are reconciled. Jung even referred to self, like Atman, as a “god image” (Jung 1969, p. 334), linking him closely to Vedantic thought about the psyche.

## See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Deity Concept](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Vedanta](#)
- ▶ [Vishnu](#)

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## Breathing

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The use of the breath in spiritual practice has a long history, and the metaphor of the breath as

a symbol for life is equally long standing. First let us note its strong association with life itself. We now know that there are heartbeats and brain function in the womb, but before that knowledge, we knew that taking in a breath was one of the first things we did as we are born. Our airway was cleared, the cord cut, and then we cried out. It is also the last thing we do as we die; we expire, literally. So the Egyptian glyph for life was an airway and the lung, the word in Hebrew for the life spirit is “nefesh,” the ancient Greeks termed the life force, “pneuma,” and in Sanskrit “prana” is also a term linking breath and life.

A basic limb of yoga as laid out by Patanjali was pranayama, the discipline of using the breath as a spiritual practice. Anyone who has practiced hatha yoga knows how intimately the breath is connected with the ability to stretch the body into the postures, or asanas. Different styles of breath are used for different purposes. Alternate nostril breathing has a purifying effect, the breath of fire, short rapid breaths is an energizer, and so on. Likewise most of the Asian forms of martial arts make great use of breath control to enhance the power of blocks, punches, or kicks. A standard technique in Western stress management techniques is diaphragmatic relaxing breath. It is among the most useful techniques since it can be done relatively unobtrusively.

As any singer or orator knows, breath support and breath control is essential in performing long phrases whether chanted, sung, or spoken. So indirectly, breath control is implicitly involved in a wide range of other spiritual practices. In short, the breath is a foundational skill in a wide range of human activities, many of which are directly or indirectly spiritual in nature, and the breath has an obvious association with life itself. In Western psychology, diaphragmatic breathing is taught as a relaxation and stress management technique (Everly and Lating, 2002). Similar approaches are used in a variety of voice training (speaking or singing) and in many of the martial arts. Thus, the ability to effectively use the mechanisms of breath has importance as a clinical tool and for effectiveness in a variety of recreational activities. The breath as both involuntary capacity to sustain life and as a voluntary tool is a vital part of psychology and spirituality.

## See Also

► [Yoga](#)

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## Bridget of Ireland

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Two female figures share the name Brigid, the Christian Saint Brigid of Kildare, Ireland, in the fifth to sixth centuries CE (in Gaelic, *Naomh Brid* or Mary of the Gael) and the ancient Celtic goddess “Brighid.” The name, whose root means “power” or “exalted one,” has many variations throughout northern Europe including Bride, Bridgit, Bríd, and others. Different was St. Birgitta of Sweden, whose name is sometimes anglicized as “Bridget.” Birgitta was a fourteenth century abbess, and is not associated with Brigid of Ireland or the ancient Celtic goddess.

## Celtic Goddess Brighid

Brighid’s lore and ritual practices are said to extend back to Neolithic times. She was associated in Celtic and Irish mythologies with two primal elements necessary for life including fire (*Breo-saighit*, “fiery arrow”) and wells of healing water. As goddess of fire or keeper of the sacred flame, she was associated with both bonfire and hearth, craftsmanship (especially forging and smithy), and therefore also

weapons and warcraft. In one story she forged the whistle (a staple of Celtic music) as a means of communication across great distances, or even night travel. Like the Roman goddess Vesta, she was the keeper of a sacred eternal flame that was tended by her virgin priestesses. In Jungian thought (Jung 1959/1990, para. 288), fire is a symbol of numinous divine power and bright consciousness coming through her, as in the pillar of flame in the Exodus story, the image of Christ as the “Light of the World” in the Gospel of John, and the tongues of flame over the disciples at Pentecost. A full-page painting by Jung (2009) in *The Red Book* (p. 155) similarly shows a shower of flames pouring down on a white-robed figure of the Anima, also named Sophia and *Sapientia* (Wisdom) in the accompanying text.

As goddess of wells, Brighid was further associated with healing, natural springs, magical groves, and highlands (reflecting her exalted nature). Pilgrims to this day dress trees near the sacred wells with strips of decorative cloth (“clooties”) that have first been dipped in the well water and then tied to a branch while praying for healing – both physical and psychological/emotional. As the cloths disintegrate over time, they believe the illness or injury will fade away. Votive offerings of metal – coins, pins, or religious medals – are sometimes also left at holy wells.

Brighid was revered as a goddess of wisdom, intelligence, poetry, and healing. In Cormac’s earliest description, she appears as three sisters with the same name – a triple or triune goddess. A later version of her myth states that she had two sides to her face, one ugly and the other beautiful. These images both hold Brighid in highest esteem in the Celtic pantheon as a goddess of comprehensiveness and transcendence. In Jungian terms, she can be seen as an archetypal figure with multiple functions, and as the Anima (female principle or soul), or even in light of her poetry, the figure *Sapientia* (Wisdom) and a source of healing.

Brighid’s feast was the fertility festival *Imbolc* (Gaelic, referring to the pregnancy of ewes, or sheep’s milk), celebrated at the beginning of

spring. While dates vary in different cultures and hemispheres, in Europe it falls on Feb. 1 or 2 – the halfway point between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox. In analytical and transpersonal psychology, this link to cosmic events is seen as a psychological bond between humans and transcendent powers. As a goddess of fire, her feast was also associated with festivals of light marking the first lengthening of days, such as the folk tradition of Groundhog Day (which also included rites of fertility for the coming season, hearthfires and bonfires, and prognostication of good weather). Her role in nature religion was to draw the numinous sacredness of fertility, warmth, and helpful weather down from the heavens. Similar rituals were incorporated into the feast of Candlemas (recast with scriptural meaning in the Christian liturgical calendar as “The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple,” or “The Purification of the Virgin”). Candlemas represents the culmination of the Christian season of epiphany with a ritual blessing of candles in procession, and imagery of the light of Christ coming as a psychological sign of hope in the midst of darkest winter. Brighid’s feast itself also came to be the Feast of St. Brigid of Kildare (Fig. 1).

### Saint Brigid of Kildare

Here Brigid was one of the earliest saints in Ireland, although her exact dates are uncertain (sometime between 452 or 456 and 524, 526, or 528) and her three early biographies do not agree in a number of details. She was the first Irish saint to be the subject of a *Vita* (biography), written c. 650 by a monk of Kildare who signed his name as “Cogitosus.” Two biographies followed in the seventh and ninth centuries, and the earliest *Vita* of St. Patrick was modeled on Cogitosus’ *Vita Sanctae Brigidae*. While Patrick is better known as the “patron saint of Ireland,” scholar Lisa Bitel (2001) points out that it was Brigid, not Patrick, who was native born, and she accomplished miracles, planted churches, and in earlier times was venerated as Patrick’s equal. Her name, as well, established a link in the imaginations of the Irish





**Bridget of Ireland, Fig. 1** St. Brigid of Kildare, Ireland, holding her cross and fire. Public domain (<http://www.st-brigids-gisborne.org.au/stbrigid.htm>)

people with the goddess Brighid, and her legend and cult often echoed psycho-spiritual themes, symbols, and ritual practices associated with the indigenous cult of the goddess. For example, Brigid's cross, a simple cross of braided rushes which Brigid allegedly made to convert a neighboring Chieftain to Christianity on his deathbed, hearkened back to a talisman from much earlier times. It was hung in kitchens and on front doors on St. Brigid's feast as a protection against fire and evil. Thus the veneration of St. Brigid is in many ways continuous with the worship of the goddess Brighid, and an example of psycho-religious syncretism (Fig. 2).

Extrapolating from multiple early (and at times conflicting) sources, Brigid was born to Broicsech/Brocca, a slave woman, and Broicsech's master Dubthach, a chieftain in the Kingdom of Leinster. She learned cattle and dairy farming from her mother. As a child, Brigid began miraculously multiplying foods to give away such as butter for the poor, and milk for bishops. When she began giving away some of



**Bridget of Ireland, Fig. 2** Bridget of Ireland's braided Cross. Public domain (<http://saintdunstansdenver.blogspot.com/2010/02/feast-february-1-saint-brigid-of.html>)

Dubthach's possessions, he tried to sell her into slavery with the King. While her father was having this discussion with the King, she gave away his sword, causing the King to recognize her holiness and grant her mother's freedom. In another version of the story, the pregnant Broicsech was sold at the insistence of Dubthach's wife to a Druid. The infant Brigid astonished the Druid by sending columns of flame out of her head (again, being depicted like the saint before her as a channel of numinous power). After witnessing more of the girl's miracles – patterned after Jesus' transformation of water into wine (in her case, bathwater into beer) and multiplying the loaves and fishes – the Druid converted to Christianity and freed her mother from slavery.

Like many young women, Brigid chose to join a convent rather than to be handed off in marriage. (In one story, she prayed for an infirmity to make her unmarriageable, and her eye burst open, only to heal again once she took the veil.) She joined seven other young women to form a religious community beneath an oak tree, naming the place "Kildare" (Cill Dara, "the church of the oak"). She won over St. Macaille's support to

request holy orders. In another account, after humbly placing herself last in line to receive the veil, she was called forward by Bishop Mel when he saw a pillar of fire rising from her head. In recognition either of her piety or her authority, and possibly over St. Macaille's objections, Bishop Mel was said to have read the words of consecration for a bishop over her. She became abbess of the first convent in Ireland at Ardagh, a position in many ways equivalent to the Irish bishops of the time, developed a monastic rule of life, and drew numerous followers. Based on one bishop's vision, she was even thought to be an embodiment of Mary ("Mary of the Gael" or Mary of the Celts). In Jungian terms, Brigid's charismatic power and leadership show her ego's being saturated with the sacred power of the divine self. In more Adlerian or existential terms, she may also be seen as an actualization of the will at a high stage of personal development.

As time went on, she began traveling throughout Ireland, visiting churches, and establishing convents. In some accounts, she made three great journeys across the entire isle, and was a close spiritual companion to St. Patrick. She gained a reputation for performing miracles of generosity, healing, and even preventing crimes and mediating peace among enemies. In one story, she rescued a woman falsely accused of theft by producing the allegedly stolen brooch from a fish, saving her from a life of enforced slavery. It was also reported that she miraculously caused a pregnancy in one of her nuns to disappear, thus restoring the woman to the community. She established several communities of religious women, and eventually settled a double abbey for both women and men in Kildare by recruiting the anchorite Conlaed to bring his monks there (thus providing the sacrament for the community). Kildare was already a site sacred to the goddess Brighid, and Gerald of Wales reported in the thirteenth century that a sacred fire – kept apart from men by both hedges and a curse – was still perpetually maintained by the nuns. In one legend, the King of Leinster offered her as much land as her cloak would cover. Miraculously, the cloak stretched out across the

entire grazing plain of Curragh, and there the community established its living. The abbey was a notable center of learning, teaching, medicine, and art. Its illuminated manuscripts were widely admired – including one elaborate "Book of Kildare" cited in early sources but later lost or destroyed. She followed the Celtic practice of having a soul friend (*anam cara*), and this younger nun Darlughdach was both an intimate companion and a public representative. After her death, Kildare grew in popularity as a pilgrimage site, and later abbesses continued to wield influence in matters of government throughout Ireland. Some of her relics were buried with those of St. Patrick and St. Columba at Downpatrick. Together, these three are revered as Ireland's greatest saints. In Jungian terms, they might be viewed as a trinity of masculine and feminine principles, whose combined influence both drew from and contributed to the growth of the sacred in the collective unconscious.

Brigid's reputation grew after her death through stories of posthumous miracles. In one, a boulder on a high mountain could not be moved by human effort, but she caused it to tumble to the exact spot where it was needed as a millstone. Her association with the goddess Brighid also grew. The stories of flames issuing from her head echo the goddess' association with fire, and St. Brigid also came to be venerated at holy wells. She is often depicted with a cow or other animal sacred to the goddess lying at her feet as a symbol of abundance. Moreover, her feast day coincides with *Imbolc* (beginning of spring) – perhaps as an effort on the part of the church to absorb or replace the cult of the goddess, or perhaps in a more syncretist approach (conscious or unconscious), to enhance St. Brigid's holy reputation through a conflation of the two (see syncretism). Whatever the motives of the early church leaders, Brigid is venerated to this day as a holy female figure associated with the fires of home and industry, waters of healing, and the hope for the return of light and abundance with the coming of spring, and may be seen as representing the psychological dimensions of ego strength, growth, hope, and wellness.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Birgitta of Sweden](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Religions](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Charismata](#)
- ▶ [Faith Healing](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Folk Magic](#)
- ▶ [Gardens, Groves, and Hidden Places](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Miracles](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Space](#)
- ▶ [Syncretism](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Buber, Martin

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Martin Buber (1878–1965) had a highly significant impact both on the religious thought of his time and on the theory and practice of psychotherapy.

The foundation for both of these contributions was Buber's early and later lifelong concern with Hasidism – the popular communal mysticism of the Jewry of Eastern Europe that arose with Israel ben Elieazer (the Baal Shem Tov) (1700–1760). In his lifelong work on Hasidism, Buber moved from the fuller stories of his youth, such as *The Legend of the Baal Shem*, to the much shorter tales of the Hasidim – “legendary anecdotes.” When in 1948, the great German-Swiss novelist Hermann Hesse nominated Buber for a Nobel Prize in Literature, he claimed that by his tales of the Hasidim, Buber had enriched world literature as had no other living person. Buber also wrote *For the Sake of Heaven*, his Hasidic chronicle-novel and the little classic *The Way of Man According to the Teachings of the Hasidim* plus essays on Hasidic life and community that were collected and published in English translation in *Hasidism and the Modern Man* and *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*. In Hasidism Buber found a great emphasis upon *kavana* – dedication, devotion, and inner intention. Accompanied by a life of action for man and

God best expressed in the phrase “hallowing the everyday,” Buber was not himself Orthodox and observant. This led many to criticize Buber for his failure to emphasize in the tales *halakhah* – the Jewish law – including his friend Abraham Joshua Heschel, a scion of Hasidism who was directly descended from some of the great Hasidic *zaddikim*. Once, however, when someone suggested to Buber that he free Hasidism from its confessional fetters as part of Judaism, Buber replied, “I do not need to leave my ancestral house to speak a word that can be heard in the street. I brought Hasidism to the Western World against the will of the Hasidim themselves.”

Although there were many things in Judaism that Buber could not accept, he felt that in the Hebrew Bible, more than anywhere else, there appeared the dialogue between God and man; it was to biblical Judaism and not to the rabbinical Judaism that succeeded it that Buber gave his full attention. He translated the Hebrew Bible into German with his friend Franz Rosenzweig, until Rosenzweig’s death in 1929, emphasizing the “cola” or breathing units of the text. “Do we mean a book? We mean a voice,” he said.

God does not ask for “religion” but for community. Buber unfolded his view in a series of important biblical interpretations: *The Kingship of God* (from the beginning of the covenant with Israel, God makes the absolute demand of bringing all of life in relation to him), *Moses* (here Buber replaced source criticism by “traditional criticism”), *The Prophetic Faith*, and *Two Types of Faith*, in which Buber contrasted the *emunah*, or trust in relationship, of the Hebrew bible, Jesus and the Hasidism with the *pistis*, or faith based on a knowledge proposition that characterized Paul and many Christians who followed him.

Buber’s philosophy of dialogue with the eternal Thou that is met in each finite Thou did, however, speak in universal and not just Jewish terms. Buber saw God as the “absolute Person” who is not a person but becomes one to know and be known and to love and be loved by us. We can dedicate to the absolute Person not only our personal lives but also our relationships to others. Buber moved from the actual event – the “lived

concrete” – to symbol and myth. Countless concrete meetings of I and Thou have attained expressions in the relatively abstract form of myth. It is just this that gives these myths their universality and profundity and enables them to tell us something of the structure of human reality that nothing else can tell us. The that can only be met as a Thou. “Love is the responsibility of an I for a Thou.”

Buber was a philosophical anthropologist as well as a religious and community socialist. His teaching of the “life of dialogue” influenced many fields of thought that are not in themselves religious, such as sociology, education, psychology, and psychotherapy. Basic to these fields of thought was the dialogue between person and person and not between God and man. A German book has appeared entitled (in English translation) *Buber for Atheists!*

In psychotherapy, as in teaching and in the relationship of pastor and congregant, Buber spoke of “a normative limitation of mutuality.” This limitation did not mean the I-It relation but a one-sided I-Thou in which the therapist or teacher “imagines the real” makes the other person present in his or her uniqueness. No such seeing the other side of the relationship is possible for the patient or pupil. Yet the patient is not, to Buber, the subject of a psychoanalysis but of a “psychosynthesis,” to use the term that Buber shared with the Italian therapist Roberto Assagioli. Buber’s concern was the whole person who made decisions out of the depths of his or her being rather than with the conscious rational mind alone. “Inclusion,” or imagining the real, is the essential first step to making the other present, and making the other present in his or her uniqueness is the essential step to “confirmation.” Confirmation, to Buber, did not mean merely accepting or affirming the person. It could indeed include confrontation and wrestling with the other. “The inmost growth of a person does not occur, as people like to suppose today, through one’s relation to oneself but through being made present by another and knowing that one is made present.”

Buber’s influence was not confined to individual one-on-one psychotherapy. It also affected group therapy and that “contextual” or

intergenerational family therapy that was founded by Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy, M.D. In such therapy, the adult children come to understand the childhood of their parents while avoiding “parentifying” their own children. So here the central statement of *I and Thou* – “All real living is meeting” – is applied to the relationship between person and person within the family or outside of it without any explicit reference to an I-Thou with the eternal Thou.

In 1957 the Washington (DC) School of Psychiatry brought Buber to America to give the Fourth William Alanson White Memorial Lectures on “What Can Philosophical Anthropology Contribute to Psychiatry.” The lectures that Buber gave then brought together into one whole (now published in Buber’s book *The Knowledge of Man*) the various strands that have before and since served as the groundwork for all dialogical psychotherapy.

The *between* is the ontological dimension in the meeting between persons, or the “interhuman” (not to be confused with the “interpersonal which includes I-It as well as I-Thou!”) that is usually overlooked because of our tendency to divide our existences into inner and outer, subjective and objective *dialogue* is the way through which we relate to others in their uniqueness and otherness and not just as a context of our experience. The intrapsychic is only the accompaniment of the dialogue and not as so many psychologists tend to see it, the touchstone of reality in itself. Underlying the I-Thou as also the I-It is the twofold movement of “setting at a distance” and “entering into relation” (*distance and relation*).

Essential in psychotherapy when it is a question not of some repair work but of restoring the atrophied personal center is “healing through meeting.” Corollary to this is the fact that Buber saw the *unconscious* as the wholeness of the person before the differentiation and elaboration into psychic and physical, inner and outer. Buber felt that Freud and Jung and all other psychologists missed because of the logical error that if the unconscious is not physical, as many claimed, then it must be psychic. The unconscious can only be grasped dynamically

and in process and not as some sort of fixed object. Buber particularly wanted to guard against that “psychologism” that removes reality and the meeting with others into the intrapsychic so that life in the soul replaces life with the world. Jung saw religion as psychic events that take place in relation to the unconscious and God as an autonomous psychic content, a function of the unconscious. “Otherwise,” wrote Jung, “God is not real for he nowhere impinges upon our lives.” Psychology becomes in Jung the only admissible metaphysics. The fiction of the world in the soul conceals the possibility of a life with the world.

*Existential* guilt is an event of the between, something that arises from the sickness between person and persona and that can be healed only through illuminating the guilt, persevering in that illumination, and repairing the injured order of existence through an active devotion to it. Existential guilt is an ontic dimension that cannot be reduced to inner feelings or the introjection of the “superego.” This put Buber at variance with Freud who saw guilt as only neurotic and Jung who saw guilt as one’s failure to achieve individuation. Neither saw guilt as a reality of the human person in relation to the reality entrusted to him or her.

Therapy too rests on the I-Thou relationship of openness, mutuality, presence, and directness. Yet it can never be fully mutual. There is instead what Buber called “a normative limitation of mutuality” that applies to the therapist, the teacher, the pastor, and, of course, the parent. There is mutual contact, mutual trust, and mutual concern with a common problem but not mutual inclusion. The therapist can and must be on the client’s side and, in a bipolar relationship, must imagine quite concretely what the client is thinking, feeling, and willing. The therapist cannot expect or demand that the client practice such inclusion with him or her. Yet there *is* mutuality, including the therapist’s sharing personally with the client when that seems helpful.

*Inclusion* or “imagining the real” must be distinguished from the empathy that goes over to the other side of the relationship and that identification that remains on one’s own side and cannot go over to the other.



*Confirmation* comes through the client being understood from within (by parents, family, friends, and lastly through the therapist) and through the therapist going beyond this to that second stage in which the demand of the community is placed on the client. This demand enables the client to go back into dialogue with those from whom he or she has been cutoff. Buber saw inclusion, or making the other present, as anything but passive or merely receptive. It is rather a “bold swinging” into the life of the other where one brings all one’s resources into play.

### See Also

- ▶ [Baal Shem Tov](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Hasidism](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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### Bucke, Richard

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### Life and Career

Richard Maurice Bucke (1837–1902) was a Canadian psychiatrist who published a detailed investigation of a particular type of

religious experience that he named cosmic consciousness, which he believed to be the next evolutionary step for humanity. Bucke was raised on a farm in Ontario, Canada, and is reported to have had very little formal education as a child (Bucke 1991, p. i). He left Canada to explore the United States at age 17, where he worked odd jobs (including silver mining) until age 21, when he returned to Canada to attend McGill Medical School (Bucke 1991, p. ii). During his professional career, he served as a Professor of Mental and Nervous Diseases at Western University in London, Ontario (Bucke 1991, p. iii). His research into cosmic consciousness was inspired by an experience that he had in 1872 that conforms to several of the criteria outlined in his study (Bucke 1991, p. iii). His book, *Cosmic Consciousness*, was highly regarded by Williams James and P. D. Ouspensky and is considered by many to be a classic in the field of mysticism (Bucke 1991, p. viii).

### Stages of Consciousness

Bucke suggests that there are four distinct stages of consciousness, which grow out of one another as an evolutionary process. The first stage is the perceptual mind, which is characterized by *percepts* or sense impressions (Bucke 1991, p. 12). Any organism that is capable of sense perception has access to this mode of consciousness. Repeated exposure to objects in the environment with similar patterns, such as varieties of trees, eventually causes a neurophysiological advancement that enables the organism to evolve to a state of simple consciousness, which is characterized by *recepts* or composite images of thousands of *percepts* (Bucke 1991, p. 13). It could be understood as a basic form of pattern recognition. Simple consciousness is the mode of consciousness that both humans and nonhuman animals engage in. Bucke suggests that the evolutionary drive eventually necessitates greater efficiency, at which point *recepts* must be named, or “marked with a sign,” which leads to concepts and language (Bucke 1991, p. 14). Self-consciousness, this third stage, is therefore



characterized by conceptual, abstract thinking, and the ability to identify objects, concepts, and mental states – including the concept of self – as objects for one’s consciousness (Bucke 1991, p. 1). The next evolutionary step, or fourth stage, is *intuition*, which is characteristic of cosmic consciousness. Bucke explains, “This is the mind in which sensation, simple consciousness and self consciousness are supplemented and crowned with cosmic consciousness” (Bucke 1991, p. 16). Bucke suggests that one can witness how these stages grow out of one another by observing the development of a human from birth to adulthood. While most adults (he categorizes those who do not) fully participate in self-consciousness, or self-conscious awareness, humans have yet to fully evolve the capacity for cosmic consciousness, which Bucke suggests is the next evolutionary stage.

### Characteristics of Cosmic Consciousness

Bucke sets forth a number of criteria that are characteristics of cosmic consciousness and then reviews a number of case studies that exhibit these criteria. These criteria or “marks” of cosmic consciousness include (a) an intense flash of light, sometimes described as a sense of “being immersed in flame” (Bucke 1991, p. 72); (b) an emotion of “joy, assurance, triumph, ‘salvation’” or the sense that no “salvation” is needed (Bucke 1991 p. 73); (c) an “intellectual illumination” in which an intelligible order to the universe is directly apprehended (Bucke 1991, p. 73); (d) a sense of immortality (Bucke 1991, p. 74); (e) fear of death vanishes (Bucke 1991, p. 74); (f) escape from the concept of sin (Bucke 1991, p. 74); (g) an instantaneousness of illumination (Bucke 1991, p. 75); (h) strong moral character as a prerequisite to the attainment of cosmic consciousness (Bucke 1991, p. 75); (i) age of illumination is generally between 30 and 40 years of age (Bucke 1991, p. 75); (j) an increase in charm, charisma (Bucke 1991, p. 75); and (k) transfiguration or an increase of visible light either within or surrounding the individual who has attained cosmic consciousness (Bucke 1991, p. 75).

### Examples of Cosmic Consciousness

In *Cosmic Consciousness*, Richard Bucke investigates a number of case studies of individuals who have achieved cosmic consciousness by closely examining their writings, teachings, and life stories and assessing to what extent they conform to the above criteria. The individuals considered include the historical Buddha, Jesus, Paul, Plotinus, Mohammed, Dante, St. John of the Cross, and Walt Whitman. The third part of the text examines those who Bucke suggests had an initial experience of illumination, but did not fully integrate and sustain the state of cosmic consciousness. Included in this latter category are Moses, Socrates, Benedict Spinoza, William Wordsworth, and Ramakrishna, among others.

### Possible Criticisms

Although the criteria outlined in *Cosmic Consciousness* form the basis for further investigations into this particular type of religious experience, the study is limited in terms of its appreciation of ethnic diversity. Bucke’s claim that there are more cases of cosmic consciousness among males than females also suggests a possible gender bias that could be further explored (Bucke 1991, p. 65). These biases are most likely related to the era in which Bucke was writing but are here mentioned for the sake of a more complete understanding of both his particular study and for the area of investigation it opens up.

### See Also

- ▶ [Evolution and Religion](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Whitman, Walt](#)

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## Buddha-Nature

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Buddha-nature is a teaching of the Buddha regarding the true nature of self. After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha stated that all beings have Buddha-nature. Propagated in the Mahayana School especially, the teachings espouse that all sentient beings possess a True Self that is unconditioned, undefiled, indivisible, and timeless. This True Self or Buddha-nature is beyond the realm of ordinary consciousness, and practitioners must transcend ordinary conceptual thought (usually through meditation) in order to perceive it. While it is said that Buddha-nature is to be attained through meditation, it is also emphasized that everyone already has it and the process is one of piercing conceptual ignorance and uncovering something that is already there. The experience of attaining Buddha-nature is realization or enlightenment.

The realization of Buddha-nature brings with it a cessation of overidentification with the body, emotions, and mental processes. This results in release from samsara or suffering related to attachment to the idea of a separate self and the related grasping and aversion that results from that idea.

Buddha-nature contrasts with the idea of the self as the essence of individuality in that with the realization of Buddha-nature, all notions of individuality and separateness become less fixed. Psychologically this concept of interconnectivity and nondistinction from all sentient beings, since all beings have the same Buddha-nature, is a perspective that decreases isolation and brings compassion, understanding, and peaceful practices such as ahimsa or nonharming. It can also diminish the fear of death and other forms of insecurity.

From the psychotherapeutic perspective, the experience of being viewed by the Buddhist

therapist as someone who is ultimately undamaged and has the capacity for attaining enlightenment and full Buddhahood is a positive one. Many Buddhist authors and therapists encourage psychotherapy clients to meditate in order to diminish attachment to negative emotions and situations. This can reduce suffering while the client works through their issues and is a valuable skill useful throughout life.

Buddha-nature is not something that can be adequately explained with words but must be experienced for complete comprehension. Within Buddhism there are many teaching tools that point to Buddha-nature rather than attempt to explain what it is. The following is a traditional Chinese Zen poem of unknown authorship pointing to Buddha-nature:

The Human Route  
Coming empty-handed, going empty-handed-  
That is human  
When you are born, where do you come from?  
When you die, where do you go?  
Life is like a floating cloud which appears.  
Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.  
The floating cloud itself does not exist.  
Life and death, coming and going are also like that.  
But there is one thing which always remains clear.  
It is pure and clear, not depending on life or death.  
Then, what is the one pure and clear thing?

## See Also

► [Buddhism](#)

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## Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings

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Throughout time, Buddhist teachings have been mainly sentience concerned or, more specifically, anthropocentric, aiming at an individual human's final liberation. In contrast to Theravadins who aim at arhatship, Mahayanists consider Buddhahood the final goal. As a result, the concept of Buddha-nature has been one of the central themes in Mahayana Buddhism. Over the course of its development on the Indian subcontinent to East Asia, the doctrine of "Buddha-nature" has been interpreted in at least four ways: (1) the inherent Buddha-nature as metaphysical principle is *present but concealed within* each sentient being; (2) intrinsically endowed with the true nature, all sentient beings *have always been* the enlightened ones, even if they might not be aware of this truth; (3) in terms of tathāgatagarbha, everyone has Buddha seeds within and has the potential of *becoming* a Buddha; and (4) every sentient being is *assured of actually becoming* a Buddha at some future time. Apparently, these four definitions only apply to sentient beings. In contrast, the doctrine of insentient beings' Buddha-nature goes against the prevailing Mahayana belief in all sentient beings' inherent Buddha-nature and instead emphasizes that insentient things also possess this nature. The significance of this innovative theory continues to be a challenge to and a reflection on human capacity and self-understanding. Do human beings alone, among all living beings, have the privilege to engage in spiritual practice and achieve enlightenment? Do stones, water, and bricks reputed to be insentient have no feelings, sentiments, or mentality? In other words, is there a clear distinction or delimitation between the "active, subjective" sentient beings and the "passive, objective" insentient world?

The doctrine of insentient beings emerged in early medieval China and aroused Chinese Buddhist thinkers into further meditation on

how to define and interpret Buddha-nature. By making creative use of the neologism "Buddha-nature," Chinese Buddhists extended the universality of Buddha-nature to include insentient beings, which refer to inanimate objects without a nervous system. The idea that Buddha-nature is found in insentient beings assumed its embryonic form in Jingying Huiyuan's (523–592) writing. Though not an advocate of this concept, Huiyuan posits that Buddha-nature, like space, pervades everywhere and all beings, including insentient objects. However, by dividing Buddha-nature into the knowing (the perceiver) and the known (the perceived), he argues that the insentient world shares with sentient beings the Buddha-nature that is known, which is equivalent to inconceivable emptiness, the middle-way, and dharma-nature, yet lacks sentient beings' properties of knowing, i.e., consciousness, true mind, awareness, or wisdom of realization. As such, insentient beings' Buddha-nature, for Huiyuan, is merely static and can be recognized only by sentient beings, whose Buddha-nature, in contrast, can either be concealed – like the full moon covered by clouds – or serve as the basis of practices allowing them to wake up from dreams of ignorance.

In the same spirit, Jiexiang Jizang (549–623), applying the principle of non-dual emptiness between sentience and insentience and between the organism and the environment, acknowledges the Buddha-nature of insentient beings. In addition, he stipulates that in the eyes of the Buddha, all is encompassed in his own perfection; therefore, once any sentient being attains Buddhahood, all sentient beings and plants also achieve the same state. On the other hand, he denies that insentient beings have a mind capable of eliminating delusion or cultivating good in actual experience. Hence, Jizang's views should be considered theoretical and philosophical, but not practical or broadly applicable.

Among the Chinese Buddhist thinkers, Jingxi Zhanran (711–782) in the Tiantai School is the strongest advocate of insentient beings possessing Buddha-nature. He provides his rationale primarily from the perspective of the all-pervasive quality of Buddha-nature, which he

considers synonymous with suchness. This rationale indicates that external tangible objects like water, buildings, and flora, formless sounds and smells, and internal thoughts or ideas all possess Buddha-nature. This is because Shakyamuni Buddha and any other Buddha's meritorious qualities in their practice leading to enlightenment and in the resultant realization do not reject anything, instead embracing all. In the Tiantai terminology, the Buddha and all beings mutually include, inter-pervade, and are identical to each other. Zhanran accordingly presents the reciprocal relationship between insentient beings and Buddha-nature in terms of four distinct claims: (1) insentient things "have" Buddha-nature, (2) insentient things "are" Buddha-nature, (3) insentient things "are replete with" Buddha-nature, and (4) insentient things "are identical to" Buddha-nature (Chen 2011). This mutuality also applies to the inseparable rapport between the sentient and the insentient. To promote his idea, Zhanran dedicates his final work, the *Jin'gangpi* (the *Diamond Scalpel*), to the contention that plants, land, tiles, and even the smallest particle of dust have the threefold Buddha-nature – the cause proper, which is the objective character of the truth to be realized in Buddhahood, and the conditioning and revealing causes, which are the experiential and behavioral concomitants of that realization. Moreover, according to Zhanran, insentient beings can partake in and accomplish the ultimate Way, a step further than Huiyuan's and Jizang's views regarding insentient beings' capability of liberation.

Within the Chan tradition, Nanyang Huizhong (d. 775) and Dongshan Liangjie (807–869) are two examples who advocate the idea that nature is dharma-body and Buddha-mind, per se. It should nonetheless be noted that not all Chan masters hold the same view. Dazhu Huihai (Tang dynasty), Huangbo (d. 850), and Linji (d. 867), for example, restrict Buddha-nature to sentient beings that possess a mind, focusing on a vitalist notion of sentient "function." Even if one concedes the point of Huizhong and Dongshan, one might argue that the concept of insentient beings' Buddha-nature can merely be used as a *koan* (a critical word or phrase to ponder

upon) to assist one on the path of practice. However, these two Chan masters do not just deem the concept as a *koan*. Instead, they assert that each part of the world is constantly preaching the ultimate meaning that might trigger one's enlightenment in an instant moment if one bears in mind a non-discriminative understanding and is attentive to the "voice" of the entire world.

The doctrine of insentient beings possessing Buddha-nature began to circulate in Japan in the early ninth century. The first advocate of plants' Buddhahood was probably Kūkai (774–835), the founder of the esoteric Shingon School, although Saichō (766–822), the founder of the Tendai School, was the first to mention the Buddha-nature of trees and rocks (*mokuseki bussō*) in his writing. According to Kūkai's *Unjigi* (*On the Meaning of the Syllable Hum*), if one argues that plants have no Buddha-nature, it is as if one argues that waves do not have wetness. He contends that the three mundane worlds are the essence/body of the Buddha. The *samaya*, or the original vow of each Buddha, equally pervades all beings, including stones, trees, human beings, and animals. Kūkai further argues that plants also have consciousness – only discernable by opening one's Buddha eye – required for religious aspiration to liberation. According to his idea of "the dharma-body preaching the Dharma," the universe as the cosmic Buddha *Mahāvairocana* speaks to us.

Zen master Dōgen (1200–1253), like Kūkai, also asserts the non-duality between the sentient and the insentient and further refutes any contradictory conflicts between time and space, nature and form, dharma-nature (or even phenomena) and Buddha-nature, permanence and impermanence. Dōgen, therefore, questions the natural world's insentience and is critical of the belief that insentient beings *possess* or *symbolize* Buddha-nature, for this dualistic view would distinguish the samsaric, impermanent world from the Buddha (or Buddha-nature). Rather, he contends that all insentient beings *are* Buddha-nature, an argument reminiscent of Zhanran's views as previously stated. Moreover, in the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen insists that Buddha's body and speech are found in the landscape, yet

ordinary people only perceive the superficial aspects of the universe. Echoing Huizhong, Dōgen maintains that mountains, rivers, plants, and stars as the (Buddha) mind are Buddhist scriptures and constantly illuminate the true Dharma in a nonhuman language, which should not be confused with human actions and needs to be pondered upon as *koans*.

The idea that insentient beings possess Buddha-nature, since its spread to Japan, has become deeply rooted there and was disseminated into medieval poetry and the Noh drama. Yet, it primarily centers on the Buddhahood of grass and trees, in contrast to the Chinese emphasis on the all-pervasiveness and indivisibility of Buddha-nature per se. On the one hand, the focus on plants provides a concrete example of *what* (not just *who*) can reach enlightenment. On the other hand, it risks implying that *only* nature can attain Buddhahood and that artificial objects are excluded. It also leads to a speculation that the theory of plants' Buddhahood is another form of animism. As viewed in the Noh dharma, banana trees, cherries, and moonflowers become Buddhas, and Noh playwrights frequently state, "The grass, trees, and land will all become Buddha" (Shively 1957).

As we have seen, the Chinese and Japanese views on the Buddha-nature of insentient beings are mostly grounded on the principle of non-duality, the (re)interpretation or (re)definition of Buddha-nature, and on the extent of what must be included in Buddha-nature or Buddhahood. Yet, the idea of the Buddha-nature of natural phenomena functions not only as a doctrine but also as a meditation technique whereby phenomena are viewed as direct expressions of ultimate reality, imparting an absolute value to all things. One possible way in which this doctrine can serve as the basis of a meditative practice is that the sentient meditator first has to be mindful of himself *being there* meditating and then let go of the strong sense of being there. In the next step, by welcoming the outside world (e.g., the meditation cushion, the room, the garden, the town, and the sky) to join him, the meditator becomes one with the world. Nonetheless, a two-way fluidity exists in the process of meditation; it is not only that one

is a destination toward which myriad dharmas (i.e., all tangible and conceptual things) flow, but also that one extends outward toward and resonates with each of the dharmas "outside oneself." Following from the achievement of such two-way fluidity, the practitioner would realize that there is no one who invites the world, that there is no movement from without to within or from within to without, and that nothing has been invited or joined. The meditator finally realizes that from beginning to end, he has never been apart from the "outside" world. To sit there is to be present everywhere in the universe, and to penetrate one's self is to clearly see (through) the entire world, in which he is included, and vice versa.

Another perspective from which to assess the theory regarding insentient beings focuses on the definition of the term "sentience." Traced back to Early Buddhism, the Buddhist canons do not offer definitive accounts as to whether plants are sentient or insentient. The *Vāseṭṭha-sutta* and *Suttanipāta* do categorize herbs and trees as belonging to the animate realm (*pāna*), meaning they are not purely passive or static. Nonetheless, this account cannot be used as evidence to justify that plants are sentient, have sentiments, and can think. Plants, in Schmithausen's (2009) words, are "borderline beings" between sentience and insentience in the Early Buddhist canon, and they have a sense of touch according to early Indian thought. Consequently, Ellison B. Findly (2008) goes so far as to propose that in Early Buddhism, the "one-facultied" living beings' possession of one sense faculty implies the possession of the other five senses and that such kind of living beings have developed advanced spirituality like liberated saints. It is interesting to juxtapose such a presumption with the Mahayana *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, which teaches that each of the Buddha's sense faculties functions as all of the six. However, even if we temporarily accept Findly's hypothesis, we cannot extrapolate that non-botanical matter is also sentient.

One might also appreciate the doctrine of insentient beings' Buddha-nature in a contemporary context. In psychological terms, when one is less discriminating, one would be more content with

what one already has. In the face of any situation in daily life, one would construct positive values and respond with tolerance (not acquiescence). Such a perspective on life is made possible through acknowledging the identity between Buddha-nature and all dharmas, which in a broad sense includes mental objects and elements of experience. Some might worry that this belief would undercut efforts for self-improvement or lead to self-abandonment, since even anxiety, depression, and ill-treatment can be considered expressions of Buddha-nature. However, seeing unpleasant things as Buddha-nature would instead encourage one to build a positive, healthy attitude toward life for solutions in difficult times. Knowing that even repulsive or melancholy experiences are perfect Buddha-nature itself, one is challenged to realize the precise way in which this is so in order to think and act in ways that will allow this intrinsic Buddhahood to become manifest.

Under the principle of non-duality, the dichotomy between (sentient) activity and (insentient) passivity, and between the absence and presence of Buddha-nature in both sentient and insentient beings, disappears. This sense of equality would enhance “our” respect for “other” nonhuman beings and may lead to a psychological ideal: a practitioner in his or her encounter with the world is no longer self-centered and does not judge things with one-sided views. The (sentient) mind and (insentient) matter no longer contradict each other. Instead, the mind exists in the realities-as-they-are, and the reality-as-it-is encompasses all minds. Thus, it would be a failure to insist that a subjective consciousness comprehends the objective world. Once the dichotomy between the perceiver and the perceived is eliminated, sentient or insentient beings *outside* of me no longer exist, and there is no self who approaches or chases after the external world. Consequently, there are no more rivals “I” can compete with, there are no beloved ones “I” am passionately attached to, there are no sensuous desires “I” yearn for, there are no stimuli that can tempt or annoy “me,” and nothing is really “mine.” This progress in meditation is a corollary of eradicating the bifurcation between

self and other, or one’s inner consciousness and external objects: each phenomenon, as I perceive it and as it really is, on the one hand, resonates with me and, on the other hand, does not really exist outside me. I have Buddha-nature and so do all beings in the world. All sentient beings, the insentient world, all Buddhas, and I have the same nature.

### See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Archetypal Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism’s Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism’s Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Chan Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Intersubjectivity](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Pantheism](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Participatory Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Space](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Buddhism

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Buddhism is one of the world's major religions. It arose in northern India in the sixth century before the current era from the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama (563–483 BCE.). It grew out of Hindu thought and shares a common worldview based on the concepts of dharma, karma, reincarnation, and the manifest world as illusion or "maya." Dharma, translated often as "law," "way," or "path" refers to the immutable structure of the world and its constituent elements. But it differs from the Western concept of law, as it is not

promulgated by a personal creator god but rather is simply the structure of reality. "Karma" is likewise an impersonal force through which the fruits of one's actions come back to enhance or diminish from one's growth on the spiritual path. This contrasts with the Western view of being subject to judgment by a personal god. Reincarnation refers to the cycle of individual birth, life, death, and rebirth. This is termed the "wheel of life" or "samsara." The goal of spiritual development is to end this cycle.

Siddhartha Gautama was according to legend a son of a king of the Śākya tribe (hence the epithet, "Shakyamuni," or sage of the Śākyas) and was sheltered from viewing human suffering by his father. At age 29, he encountered an old person, a sick person, a corpse, and a mendicant, or wandering holy beggar common in the Hindu tradition. He found this new awareness deeply troubling and decided to leave his wife and child and his palace and life of comfort to pursue the religious life. He wandered with the sadhus and received much training in meditation and the practice of self-denial and discipline. However, he felt he had not received full attainment. After he broke a fast by taking a bowl of milk from a woman cow herder, his followers left him, thinking he had strayed from the path of complete asceticism. Then he sat down in meditation firmly intending to make the final breakthrough. He continued into the night and received many temptations for power, comfort, and so on, but persisted. He did achieve a final enlightened state where the whole of existence was made known to him including knowledge of all his previous lifetimes. As the dawn broke, he realized he had achieved his goal. His title, the Buddha, means "the enlightened one." He claimed to have awakened fully and completely to the ultimate nature of reality with the capacity to retain this awareness while still embodied in the flesh. This day is celebrated in Buddhist tradition as Visaka. It is a combined birthday and day of enlightenment.

He initially doubted humans could either believe him or achieve this same result but became convinced he nonetheless needed to tell humanity about his achievement. So he sought

out his former students who had gone to a deer park in Sarnath near what is now Varanasi (Benares) and preached his first sermon. This is known as the “first turning of the wheel of dharma.” In this sermon, he identified the Four Noble Truths which include the Noble Eightfold Path.

The first of the four noble truths is the reality and pervasiveness of human suffering. The second noble truth is the awareness that suffering comes mostly from our very human attitude of grasping, desiring, and reaching out for something. That can be a feeling, a mental state, a relationship with a person, or an object such as wealth, power, or fame. The third noble truth states that there is a way out of this endless cycle of suffering. The fourth noble truth is that the way out can be summarized in the Noble Eightfold Path, eight specific ways in which one can work toward achieving that same enlightenment that the Buddha experienced.

The Noble Eightfold Path is the most succinct statement of Buddhist spiritual methods and means by which spiritual growth is to be accomplished and how one is to live. It is often broken down in to three groups: two comprised of three truths and a third comprised of two. The first triad, “sila” (Skt. morality), is comprised of right speech, right action, and right livelihood. The second triad, “samadhi” (Skt. meditational absorption), consists of right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. The third, “prajna” (Skt. wisdom), involves right understanding and right thought. The former means seeing the world as it truly is and not as it appears; the second refers to the transformation of our thought processes which comes from the practice of the others, particularly those involved in samadhi.

Of all of the major world religions, Buddhism is often described as the most psychological. The truth in this comes from the fact that doctrines arise from the practice of meditation and are based in that experience. The meditative mind state is cultivated through practice. In a comparative sense, the “gnosis” that leads to salvation (nirvana) is completely experiential and direct. It is not mediated through concepts and

talking or thinking about the divine; it is the experience of the divine. In both Hindu and Buddhist views, that experience is beyond personhood and the boundaries of conceptual logic. The path of spiritual development of all beings is the attainment of that state of non-duality which is known as nirvana. The very etymology of “Buddha” refers to the view that enlightenment is a state of being fully awake and aware in a cosmically uncompassing mind. Despite the ineffable nature of the mystic union which Buddhists call enlightenment, it is the attainment of that state through the discipline of the mind that makes it such a powerful psychological tool. The goal of spiritual development is ultimately the dissolution of the self, which really is a fiction anyway. This contrasts with the Western goal of salvation of the individual soul.

After the death of the Buddha, there were several Buddhist councils which sought to redact his teachings (Skt. sutras) and codify rules for monastic life (Skt. vinaya). Soon explanatory and philosophical discourses (Skt. abhidharma) were added to make the third division of material within the Buddhist scriptural canon. The canon is known as the “Tripitaka,” (Skt) meaning three baskets in reference to these major divisions of the material (Goddard 1938/1966).

The Buddhist sangha, or community, comprised of both monastic and lay followers soon diversified into several schools of thought. The initial distinction occurred geographically: One branch went south, to Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The other branch went first to the northwest, to Pakistan and Afghanistan, then over the high mountains of Central Asia into the Tarim basin of modern China. Here several Buddhist kingdoms flourished before the arrival of Islam. From there it went on to China, Korea, Japan, and meeting the southern transmission in Vietnam. The Sanskrit term “Yana” is generally translated as “vehicle,” and the southern stream called the Hinayana, or lesser vehicle, and the northern transmission called the Mahayana, or greater vehicle. The original Hinayana teachings became transformed into the modern Theravada

school, which is the only remnant of that transmission (Theravada is the preferred name for this score, avoiding any pejorative connotations of Hinayana). Later, in the first millennium, Buddhism was influenced by a pan-Indian movement known as Tantrism. Out of this influence came esoteric Buddhism, or the Vajrayana, or diamond vehicle, as it is now known.

It is not a great surprise that the generation of Western students of Buddhism which began in the 1960s was drawn to the religion through the practice of meditation rather than the cultural aspects of daily religious practice that is at the heart of Buddhism in the ethnic Asian communities where Buddhism was the dominant religion (Fields 1986). Westerners went right for the psychological consciousness-based experiences and only later became aware of and began to find meaning in the cultural cycles of feasts, fasts, and the close interrelationship between a lay and a monastic community. The job of religious education of children and communal bonding was for many Westerners a secondary acquisition. Buddhist meditation practices are quite wide ranging. It shares with Hindu tradition the use of mantra meditation, based on developing the psychological of concentration; it has especially developed an open-focused meditation style now known as “mindfulness” in the psychological literature (Germer et al. 2005). Tibetan meditational practices are the most complex, involving visualizations, chanting, use of gestures (Skt. mudras), and ceremony.

The spectrum of Buddhism offers just as much variety of religious experience as in the Western monotheisms. As with many religions, there are traditions and sects where profound devotion to a particular saint, guru, or person is worked out through more emotional sorts of practices and devotional liturgies and others which are more austere and involve solitude and or denial. The artistic iconography of Buddhism likewise reflects the full range of human experience, from the bare and clean lines of a Japanese rock and sand garden to the ornate and vivid tankas of multiarmed divine beings in coital embrace all portrayed with a busy border of paisley brocade.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Esoteric Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Karma](#)
- ▶ [Samsara and Nirvana](#)
- ▶ [Sangha](#)

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## Buddhism and Ecology

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A statement by Bhikkhu Bodhi (1987, p. vii) reflects several of the core principles, values, and practices that are most relevant to Buddhist environmentalism: “With its philosophical insight into the interconnectedness and thoroughgoing interdependence of all conditioned things, with its thesis that happiness is to be found through the restraint of desire in a life of

contentment rather than through the proliferation of desire, with its goal of enlightenment through renunciation and contemplation and its ethic of non-injury and boundless loving-kindness for all beings, Buddhism provides all the essential elements for a relationship to the natural world characterized by respect, care, and compassion.” Here these attributes will be explained and illustrated with examples, several of them drawn from our field research in Thailand (Sponsel 2012).

### Dependent Origination

The doctrine of dependent origination or codependent arising is called *pratitya-samutpada* or *paticca-samuppada*. It refers to the nexus of mutual causality, that is, the interconnectedness and thoroughgoing interdependence of all conditioned things. In other words, the origin of all phenomena is dependent on causes and conditions. Thus, no phenomenon is totally and absolutely independent. Nothing originates by its own power or exists alone. The principle of interconnectedness and interdependence is also fundamental to both systems and ecological thinking. It is illustrated by an Earth Gatha from the well-known Vietnamese monk Thích Nhất Hạnh (1990, p. 195):

Water flows from the high mountains,  
Water runs deep in the Earth,  
Miraculously water comes to us, and sustains all life.

This ecological relationship is also recognized by many local communities throughout the world where mountains are considered to be the source of water for sustaining human life and livelihoods. Often people consider such mountains to be sacred, such as many wet rice farmers in Thailand.

### Suffering

*Dukkha* refers to suffering and is the central theme in the Four Noble Truths discovered by the Buddha at the time of his enlightenment (see Table 1). *Samudaya*, the second of the Four

### Buddhism and Ecology, Table 1 The Four Noble Truths

- |   |
|---|
| 1. All existence is suffering                           |
| 2. Suffering is caused by ignorance and desire          |
| 3. Suffering can end                                    |
| 4. The way to end suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path |

Noble Truths, recognizes that the ultimate cause of suffering is desire or craving as well as ignorance. A correlate is that genuine happiness is to be found through restraining desire and being content through simple living. Related to this is *anatman* or *anatta*, the doctrine of “not-self.” It is the goal of enlightenment through renunciation or detachment. Monks and nuns are supposed to forego the usual materialism of the daily world and lead a life of voluntary simplicity and poverty satisfying only their essential needs of food, a simple robe, shelter, and medicine. Voluntary simplicity as demonstrated by one of the icons of environmentalism, Henry David Thoreau at Walden, is practiced and advocated today by many environmentalists such as Jim Merkel (2003). It is a fundamental way to substantially reduce one’s ecological footprint or environmental impact. As Buddhist Peter Timmerman (1992, p. 74) asks: “How can we survive on a planet of ten billion points of infinite greed?” Several recent publications have also critiqued the rampant materialism and consumerism of modern Western and other societies from a Buddhist perspective (Badiner 2002; Kaza 2005). The Thai socially engaged Buddhist Sulak Sivaraksa (2009) has developed further E.F. Schumacher’s groundbreaking ideas on Buddhist economics by applying his own Buddhist thinking to promote sustainable economics in the face of globalization.

### Concentration

The Noble Eightfold Path is the set of practical steps that the Buddha taught for his followers to pursue enlightenment (awakening) and ultimately *nirvana*, the release from suffering (*dukkha*) with the endless birth and

**Buddhism and Ecology, Table 2** The Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right understanding
2. Right thought
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right meditation

death cycle (*samsara*) (Table 2). *Samadhi* is concentration, contemplation, or meditation. This is associated with the last three components of the Noble Eightfold Path, namely, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditation.

The Buddha became enlightened through lengthy and intensive meditating under a Bodhi tree (*Ficus religiosa*). Critical junctures in his life from birth to death as well as enlightenment were associated with trees. Throughout his life the Buddha often dwelled, meditated, and taught in natural places such as groves of trees, forests, mountains, and caves. Many of his followers have emulated this habit to this day (Sponsel 2012).

Nature provides an ideal peaceful venue conducive to meditation. Furthermore, nature is *Dharma* or *Dhamma*. The famous Thai monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1998, p. 22) explains:

Everything arising out of Dhamma, everything born from Dhamma, is what we mean by 'nature.' This is what is absolute and has the highest power in itself. Nature has at least four aspects: nature itself; the law of nature; the duty that human beings must carry out toward nature; and the result that comes with performing this duty according to the law of nature.

Alienation from nature is recognized by ecopsychologists as a major source of illness, emotional as well as physical. Nature promotes healing. Human health and the health of nature are interconnected and interdependent. Various programs have been developed by Buddhists among others which include experience and meditation in nature as a source of healing for individuals and families (Coleman 2006).

## Nonviolence

*Ahimsa* is the ethic of non-harming, noninjury, or nonviolence which is the first of the five precepts (*pancasila*). The ideal of avoiding causing harm to any and all beings as much as possible is common to Hinduism and Jainism as well as Buddhism, even if not always commonly and consciously practiced (Chapple 1996). Nonviolence means not only to avoid causing any harm but also to practice compassion and loving-kindness toward all beings.

The Sangha is the Buddhist community of monks and nuns or, more generally, laypersons in addition. Among the more than 200 rules for monks in the monastic code are specific measures to practice non-harm to other beings including not only humans but also animals and even plants. It is a serious offense for a monk to intentionally cut, burn, or kill any living plant. Harming any animal is proscribed too. Monks are supposed to strain or at least check the water that they use for any purposes in order to avoid consciously harming any visible organisms in it. Also monks are prohibited from polluting water in any manner.

Vegetarianism, which is optional for most Buddhists, is a means of reducing the harm that one causes to other beings (Bodhipaksa 2009). It is also the most ecologically sound diet, reducing one's ecological footprint. The lower one eats on the food chain from plants to animals, the less energy is consumed and the less waste is produced in the environment.

## Compassion

*Karuna* literally means compassion while the related term *metta* means loving-kindness. In this case the primary aim of Buddhists is to strive to practice boundless loving-kindness for all beings. This is reflected in the Jatakas, a collection of 547 accounts of the previous incarnations of the Buddha. Most of these parables describe an animal that sacrifices its own life to save others. The Jatakas illustrate the core Buddhist virtues of wisdom, nonviolence, compassion,

loving-kindness, and generosity. They demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependence among beings as well (see Sahni 2008).

The means of reducing suffering and pursuing enlightenment is to follow as much as possible the Noble Eightfold Path (Table 2). Each of its eight principles is relevant to nature to the degree that it is correlated with extending nonviolence, compassion, and loving-kindness to all beings (Koizumi 2010).

In the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism that predominates in East Asia, a person may become a Bodhisattva by suspending their own pursuit of enlightenment with the purpose of helping to relieve the suffering of other beings and to promote the Buddha-nature they possess, that is, their inherent potential to become a Buddha. This is reflected in the famous Metta Sutta:

May all be well and secure,  
 May all beings be happy!  
 Whatever living creatures there be,  
 Without exception, weak or strong,  
 Long, huge or middle-sized,  
 Or short, minute or bulky,  
 Whether visible or invisible,  
 And those living far or near,  
 The born and those seeking birth,  
 May all beings be happy!

In Thailand many temple complexes, but not all, are animal and plant sanctuaries serving in effect as islands of biodiversity. The sacred groves and sacred forests surrounding temples are visible from a mountain side or low-flying airplane. The most famous is the mountain temple called Wat Doi Suthep overlooking the city of Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. In and around a temple, visiting lay Buddhists as well as members of the Sangha are not supposed to disturb plants, animals, and other natural phenomena. For instance, Suan Mokkh, a monastery founded in 1932 by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu near Surat Thani in southern Thailand, embraces over 120 acres of forest. In effect, this forest monastery is an island refuge of biodiversity. Surrounding it is an extensive area deforested for rice paddies and rubber tree plantations. Without the presence of Buddhadasa and other monks, the forest area of Suan Mokkh would long ago have been converted to agroecosystems.

## Skillful Means

At least one other core concept of Buddhism can be identified here. *Upaya* refers to skillful means in teaching and practicing the *Dharma*, the name for the Buddha's teachings. In northern Thailand and elsewhere, some environmental activist monks have symbolically ordained large trees to promote forest conservation. The saffron-colored cloth typically worn by monks is ceremonially wrapped around a tree trunk to signal its sacredness. In effect the tree becomes a surrogate monk and thereby is usually protected (Darlington 2012). To kill a monk is the worst crime in Buddhism. Another initiative is the 99,999 Trees Project encouraging people to plant trees to gain merit. This initiative began at the temple called Wat Nawakaram near Khon Kaen in northeastern Thailand but has spread into many other parts of the country. At the temple of Wat Phai Lom in central Thailand, monks collaborated with government and conservation officials to protect the diminishing population of the Asian open-billed stork (*Anastomus oscitans*), which is now thriving in the area, although endangered in other countries within its range. Near the border with Cambodia at Wat Lan Kuad, also known as Wat Pa Maha Chedi Kaew, the monks even built an amazingly beautiful temple complex with over 1.5 million recycled beer bottles.

Elsewhere in Asia other creative skillful means that are applied in Buddhist environmentalism deserve mention. In 1993 the International Conference on Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue with Buddhism, held in New Delhi India, agreed on the declaration "Towards Ecological Responsibility: An Appeal for Commitment." Recently a countrywide network of Buddhist clergy was established called the Association of Buddhists for the Environment in Cambodia. Some members of the Tibetan diaspora are monitoring and publicizing environmental concerns about Tibet through the organizations called Tesi Environmental Movement and Tibet Environmental News, which have very informative websites.

Beyond Asia, many socially engaged Buddhists are involved in environmental activism.



Often Buddhist centers pursue conserving energy and other resources, recycling, and reducing waste and pollution as well as organic farming, vegetarianism, and voluntary simplicity. Such activities can be observed at Bodhi Tree Forest Monastery, Tullera, Australia; Earth Sangha in Washington, DC; Eco-Dharma Centre, Catalunya, Spain; EcoSangha in Seattle; Green Gulch Farm in Sausalito, California; Zen Mountain Center near Mountain Center, California; and Zen Mountain Monastery at Mt. Tremper, New York.

## Conclusion

The high ideals of Buddhism are not always approximated in practice, a common deficiency of all religious and ethical systems. Also, some Buddhists are far more concerned with meditation in search of their own enlightenment than with the suffering of other beings eschewing the Bodhisattva ideal. Nevertheless, the enormous amount of diverse activity in various manifestations of Buddhist environmentalism worldwide is reflected in a search of Google.com conducted on July 7, 2012. It revealed no less than 260,000 sites for “Buddhism and ecology,” 69,100 for “Buddhist environmentalism,” 958,000 for “Buddhism and nature,” 11,700 for “ecoBuddhism,” 30,900 for “ecological Buddhism,” 24,700 for “Green Buddhism,” and 55,100,000 for “Buddhism.” Many of these reflect Buddhist environmental initiatives on the ground, not just in cyberspace.

The arena of Buddhist environmentalism, or whatever it might be called, is destined to only grow in time. The Buddha repeatedly stated that ultimately he taught only about two matters, the cause and the end of suffering. Inevitably the suffering of humans and other beings will only increase in the future because of the pressures of human population growth, the failure to distinguish between basic needs and desires, and the assumption of industrial and capitalist societies that unlimited material growth and economic development are possible in spite of an inescapably limited

resource base. As a consequence inequality, competition, conflict, violence, and war will only intensify in the near future producing even more suffering. Therefore, Buddhist environmentalism in particular and socially engaged Buddhism in general are most likely becoming even more relevant than ever before given their central focus on suffering. Buddhists, like adherents from other religions, can make a significant contribution to creating more sustainable and green as well as peaceful and just societies in the future.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Islam](#)
- ▶ [Participatory Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Space](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)

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## Buddhism and Psychoanalysis

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David Black (2006) notes psychoanalysis has recently been witnessing a resurgence of interest in religion and spirituality. Numerous interpenetrating factors have facilitated this occurrence (Jones 2007). These include the cultural shift from the modern to the postmodern and its corresponding undermining of science, rationality, and universal objective truth. The postmodern emphasis on the constructed nature of truth has dethroned positivistic science and undone a strict opposition between science and religion. Theoretical developments within psychoanalysis, such as the relational turn and a concern with self-experience, have also rendered it more sympathetic to religion. In addition, many of the analysts pioneering the dialogue between psychoanalysis and religion declare both a theoretical and existential interest in spirituality and/or report having clients with adaptive religious commitments.

Buddhism has featured prominently in the contemporary psychoanalytic rapprochement with religion. Jeremy Safran (2003) explains the appeal of Buddhism among psychoanalysts as being due to the fact that Buddhism offers, at least in certain iterations, a “religion without beliefs,” a system of thought and practices that resonates both with certain modern values and the postmodern turn within analysis. He notes how the Buddha’s agnostic rejection of metaphysical speculation and his pragmatic emphasis on direct experience are attractive to the modern individualistic Protestant sensibilities that have also shaped psychoanalysis. Similarly, he draws attention to how Buddhism’s anti-essentialist worldview and model of subjectivity resonates with the constructivist epistemology and multiple subjectivities advanced by postmodernism. However, at the same time as celebrating its

pragmatic/agnostic elements, Safran also acknowledges the presence of a metaphysical/faith current within Buddhism, and he calls on psychoanalysis to interrogate those aspects that obscure its more emancipatory aspects.

Awareness of the considerable differences within as well as between both Buddhism and psychoanalysis is crucial to understanding the encounter between the two enterprises. Indeed tracking the encounter between Buddhism and psychoanalysis is complicated by the fact that neither conversation partner is monolithic. A wide spectrum of psychoanalytic theory—including classic Freudian drive theory, ego psychology, Neo-Freudians, Self-psychology, object relations, intersubjectivity, and attachment theory—has been put into dialogue with different Buddhist philosophies and practices. In discussing the relationship between the two, therefore, it is imperative to discriminate the specific forms on both sides that are being put into dialogue. Edited collections by Molino (1998) and Safran (2003) display this multiplicity of perspectives with varied contributions ranging from the relationship between Lacan and Zen (Moncayo 2003) to the issue of transference in Buddhist communities (Young-Eisendrath 2003).

William Parsons (2009) offers an invaluable service in dividing the history of the dialogue into three periods: 1880–1944, 1944–1970, and 1970–2007. He analyzes exemplary studies to tease out the main characteristics and developments of each particular historic period. In addition to identifying important differences and shifts in each interval, Parsons forwards three general themes that pervade the literature. First, he claims that all of the studies under analysis view both Buddhism and psychoanalysis as “healing enterprises composed of definitive understandings of personhood, explicit existential aims, and suggested mental techniques for realizing those aims.” Second, he notes that misunderstandings of the cultural differences between the two healing enterprises have shaped representations of both systems to various degrees. Third, he concludes that the dialogue shows clear signs of progress on both sides as advocates become not only theoretically but

also existentially familiar with each other, a development that has resulted in psychoanalysis granting unprecedented legitimacy to Buddhist spiritual aims and experiences.

According to Parsons, the initial psychoanalytic encounter with Buddhism between 1880 and 1944 was severely hindered by a number of factors such as incomplete and poor translations of Buddhist texts, lack of cultural contextualization and differences, ignorance of the rich variety of Buddhist schools and practices, and lack of any first-hand contact with Buddhist teachers. In terms of its interpretative flavor, rooted in classical drive theory, studies from this period were reductive, espoused a psychological universalism, and reflected the prejudices of orientalism and Western ethnocentrism. Franz Alexander’s (1931) interpretation of Buddhist meditative states as essentially inducing catatonia illustrates this classical reductive approach.

Parsons argues that three interrelated factors between 1944 and 1970 served to move the encounter into a more productive engagement. One was the development within psychoanalysis theory of Neo-Freudians, ego psychology, Self-psychology, and object relations perspectives that proved to be much more sympathetic to religion and spiritual than classic drive theory. Another was the dramatic social, cultural, political, and economic shifts that occurred in America during the 1960s, which resulted in a challenge to established norms of Christian religiosity and increased interest occurred in Eastern religions. During this period, Zen Buddhism emerged as a privileged conversation partner with psychoanalysis. A third factor was the gradual psychologization of Asian culture, particularly Japan. Arguably the most influential text from this period was Erich Fromm, D.T. Suzuki, and Richard De Martino’s edited collection *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism* (1960), which presented an already westernized and psychologized Zen to an emerging counterculture hungry for nondual philosophies and spiritual experience.

According to Parsons, the seeds laid down from this period have produced a more sophisticated dialogue between Buddhism and psychoanalysis during 1970–2007. He points to

numerous factors that have facilitated an increased understanding of Asian religions such as Buddhism. These include continuing waves of Asian immigration, unprecedented access to a plurality of Asian religious communities, and an increased awareness of how cultural differences shape healing enterprises. Similarly, there has been the growth of departments of religion and comparative studies, significant improvements in translations, and increased scholarly specialization. Most important, Parsons claims, is the emerging social base, a therapeutically informed population that has considerable theoretical and existential knowledge of Buddhist religious philosophy and practices that is driving the dialogue. Studies from this period draw particularly from object relations (Epstein 1995, 1999) and intersubjectivity (Black 2006) and display sophistication in avoiding both negative/reductive and idealistic/romantic approaches to the Buddhist-psychoanalytic encounter (Aronson 2004; Rubin 1996). Mark Unno's (2006) edited collection also introduces a needed cross-cultural sensitivity and dialogue with contributions cutting across geographical and disciplinary boundaries. As Parsons concludes, the emergence of a genuine dialogical approach during this period gives rise for optimism for future conversations between the two enterprises.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas

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In the early Common Era, a new movement began in the Buddhist world, the *Mahāyāna* (“Great Vehicle”). In contrast to Theravāda, Mahāyāna encompasses greater variety from sect to sect and is more “liberal” when it comes to the laity and their capacity for spiritual development. This is most evident in the Mahāyāna spiritual ideal, the *bodhisattva* (“wisdom being”), a personification of compassion and self-sacrifice.

As an inspirational and aspirational focus for monastics and laity, the *bodhisattva* has been very influential in Buddhist societies. It also has immense psychological power and affords intriguing insights into the positive, spiritual depths of the human psyche.

### Buddhist “Theism” and the *Bodhisattva* Path

The development of a devotional, “theistic” side of Buddhism dates far back in history, certainly to the earliest establishment of Buddhism as a “religion” open to more than renunciates. This process only increased as the faith spread beyond India. As Buddhism came into contact with non-Indian religions, it absorbed some of their views even while remaining uniquely Buddhist. “Buddha” became more of an absolute essence of reality rather than merely a historical person, with the corresponding idea that there are many Buddhas presiding over different worlds than this one. Such teachings were formalized through a doctrine of the “Three Bodies” (*trikāya*) of the Buddha:

1. *The Transformation Body* (*nirmānakāya*): an earthly manifestation, e.g., Siddhārtha Gautama.
2. *The Enjoyment Body* (*sambhogakāya*): a heavenly Buddha presiding over a particular Buddha realm. The Enjoyment Body can communicate with other celestial Buddhas and is “enjoyed” by the faithful in worship and adoration.
3. *The Dharma Body* (*dharmakāya*): the One Absolute, Cosmic Reality.

This doctrine of the Three Bodies explained both the oneness of all Buddhas and the unity of the Buddha nature, the potential for enlightenment that all beings share. According to this teaching, the One True Buddha (Dharma Body) manifests as compassionate heavenly deities (Enjoyment Body) and as human beings who become enlightened on earth (Transformation Body), such as the historical Buddha. This encouraged a growing theistic character.

However, the most distinctive feature of Mahāyāna is the role played by *bodhisattvas*

(“wisdom beings”). A *bodhisattva* is a devout Buddhist who vows to aid others, postponing his/her own awakening until all beings attain enlightenment. The *bodhisattva* ideal is present in early Buddhism (particularly in stories of Siddhārtha’s previous lives) but Mahāyāna greatly expanded upon it. *Bodhisattvas* share their merit with all beings. Those who are highly advanced along the path are reborn in the heavens from whence they can aid of any who call upon them, much like saints in Christianity. Such high-level *bodhisattvas* are almost indistinguishable from Buddhas in that both types of beings stand poised to bestow grace upon those who have faith.

For followers of Mahāyāna, the *bodhisattva* is the spiritual ideal versus the *arhat* (Pali, *arahant*), the ideal in older forms of Buddhism. According to Mahāyānists, *arhats* are selfishly focused on their own liberation rather than relieving the suffering of others. To emphasize this ideal, Mahāyāna encourages all Buddhists, male or female, monastic or lay, to take *bodhisattva* vows, usually in a special ritual in which the aspirant formally vows to become Buddha and to liberate all who suffer. In practice, this amounts to living a devout and holy life in the understanding that one will eventually be reborn in a heavenly realm, from which one can transfer merit to others. There also is a sense that one may be reborn on earth if that would further other beings on their spiritual journey.

The *bodhisattva* path is a great journey involving the developing of six virtues: giving (*dāna*), morality (*śīla*), patience (*ksānti*), vigor (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). According to the earliest Mahāyāna texts, the *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) *Sūtras*, wisdom is the most important – so important that *Prajñāpāramitā* has even been personified as a *bodhisattva* herself and extolled as “The Mother of Buddhas” (Fig. 1).

With perfect wisdom, the *bodhisattva* realizes the truth of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and no longer distinguishes between “self” and “other.” The *bodhisattva* can then perform all other virtues “perfectly” with no selfish motive. Over time, the list of six perfections expanded through the addition of four more virtues: skillful means





**Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas, Fig. 1** Statue of *Prajñāpāramitā* as the *bodhisattva* “Perfect Wisdom” (Public Domain. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prajnaparamita\\_Java.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prajnaparamita_Java.jpg))

(*upāyakauśala*), vows (*pranidhāna*), power (*bala*), and knowledge (*jñāna*). *Bodhisattvas* at the highest level were understood as having mastered each of these perfections. Eventually, Mahāyāna thinkers devised a systematic outline of the *bodhisattva* path, dividing it into ten stages of attainment, with each stage corresponding to one of the perfections (Table 1).

Progressing through all ten stages is a venture worthy of great admiration and traditionally is said to require eons to complete. Generally it is understood that an aspiring *bodhisattva* will need the aid of various heavenly Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* to reach this goal.

Because of the popularity of the *bodhisattva* ideal and the necessity of aid for those following the *bodhisattva* path, Mahāyāna includes innumerable devotional cults dedicated to these heavenly beings, with some standing out as especially important. One of the earliest *bodhisattvas* is Maitreya (the “Friendly One”), the next Buddha of our world. Many Buddhists hold that Maitreya resides in a heavenly realm awaiting the time when he will be reborn here to teach the Dharma

**Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas, Table 1** Systematic outline of the *bodhisattva* path

Ten perfections	Ten stages of attainment
Giving	Joy
Morality	Purity
Patience	Brightness
Vigor	Radiance
Meditation	Difficult to conquer
Wisdom	Facing <i>Nirvāna</i>
Skillful means	Fargoing
Vows	Immovable
Power	Spiritual intelligence
Knowledge	Dharma cloud



**Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas, Fig. 2** Japanese statue of Mañjuśrī, wielding his “sword of perfect wisdom” (Public Domain. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manjushri\\_japan.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manjushri_japan.jpg))

anew. Some Buddhists pray to Maitreya to hasten his arrival or to be reborn when he comes, since it is believed that it is easier to awaken when one has the example of a living Buddha. Another well-known *bodhisattva* is Mañjuśrī, the guardian of perfect wisdom and patron of Buddhist monastics (Fig. 2).



By far the most popular *bodhisattva*, however, is Avalokiteśvara (the “Lord who looks down [from above]”). Avalokiteśvara is the embodiment of great compassion and has a long history of devotion throughout the Buddhist world, and his image is found all over Asia. Avalokiteśvara undergoes an intriguing shift in China, manifesting in female form as Guanyin, the “Goddess of Mercy.” In the form of Guanyin, this *bodhisattva* appears throughout East Asia and is particularly favored by women seeking children. While traditionally Chinese Buddhists since the later middle ages have viewed Guanyin as the feminine form of Avalokiteśvara, some scholars now argue that she also needs to be understood as having “absorbed” various more ancient *Chinese* goddesses – a phenomenon that only makes sense given the East Asian tendency toward syncretic harmonizing and integrating various disparate elements. Again, this integrating dynamic suggests something of the *psychological* function of the various *bodhisattvas* (Guanyin, Yu). Another form of Avalokiteśvara is Tārā, who supposedly was born of his tears and is particularly revered in Tibet.

With the rise of the *bodhisattva* ideal, Mahāyāna spread among ordinary people far more effectively than the more monastically focused Hīnayāna (“Little Vehicle”) sects. *Bodhisattvas* have enormous appeal, becoming “saviors” for millions of people, and are often compared to Christ for their compassion and self-sacrifice. A major difference, though, is that while Christ is held by Christians to have been historically incarnated as Jesus, the historical character of many *bodhisattvas* is doubtful. In this respect, Buddhism remains very *Indian* since Indians have generally not emphasized the historical nature of their important religious figures.

Mahāyāna also ushered in new meditation practices. With the rise of cults to various *bodhisattvas* residing in numerous celestial realms, special visualization techniques became widespread, often drawing on earlier practices of “calling the Buddha to mind” (*buddhānumṛti*). Texts such as the *Pratyupanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (“Sutra on Making the Buddha Appear Before One”) give

instructions whereby, through concentrating on a particular *bodhisattva* or Buddha (often with the aid of paintings or statues depicting them in their wondrous realms), a meditator seeks a vision of that figure. Through intense training and devotion over several days, a practitioner can achieve an altered state of consciousness in which he/she sees the *bodhisattva* or even “join” the figure in his heavenly realm (Harrison 1998). Such visualizations became especially important with the rise of the Vajrayāna (“Thunderbolt Vehicle”).

The *bodhisattva* ideal is quite powerful, encouraging not just devotion but also the aspiration to become like these great figures. Śāntideva (c. 695–743), one of the foremost Buddhist poets and author of the classic *Bodhicaryāvatārā* (“The Way of the Bodhisattva”), concludes his work with these inspirational lines:

By all the virtue I have now amassed  
By composition of this book, which speaks  
Of entry to the bodhisattva way,  
May every being tread the path to buddhahood.

May beings everywhere who suffer  
Torment in their minds and bodies  
Have, by virtue of my merit,  
Joy and happiness in boundless measure.

As long as they linger in samsāra,  
May their present joy know no decline,  
And may they taste of unsurpassed beatitude  
In constant and unbroken continuity (Padmakara  
1997, p. 162).

The Mahāyāna has often been dubbed “the *Bodhisattva* Vehicle” in light of the centrality of these figures, particularly at the popular level. Indeed, in light of this more devotional dimension, we are probably justified to understanding Mahāyāna as a religion of faith and grace, dimensions that often clash with notions of Buddhism held by many contemporary Westerners.

## Bodhisattvas and Psychology

The psychological aspects of the *bodhisattva* path are quite intriguing. We can view *bodhisattvas* as personifying spiritual ideals that we

wish to embody. Thus, for instance, when we act compassionately, we are not merely *like* Guanyin, we *are* Guanyin. Upholding such aspirational ideals helps overcome barriers between “self” and “other” that interfere with true compassion. Bodhisattvas, thus, are powerful catalysts for spiritual and psychological self-transformation. Zen author Taigen Leighton puts it well: “The bodhisattva path is not restrictive or exclusive, but offers a wide array of psychological tools for finding our personal path toward a meaningful, constructive lifestyle” (Leighton 2012, p. 25).

The power of the *bodhisattva* ideal extends beyond individual improvement, as it ultimately aims at the enlightenment of the entire world. The potential for positive social and cultural transformation here is enormous. Alan Senauke, a contemporary Soto Zen priest and social activist, suggests that major figures of social change really *are* bodhisattvas: “They are real people. They walk and talk and practice Dharma with their bodies. Martin Luther King Jr. or Mother Theresa or the Cambodian monk Maha Ghosananda are Bodhisattva models for us because of what they did in the world, because they persevered in the face of violence, discouragement, and countless dark nights of the soul” (Senauke 2010, pp. 1–2).

There are, of course, various potential psychological problems in setting out on the *bodhisattva* path. Many of these stem from “hidden motives” that psychologically fragile people may mask by spiritual pursuits. Among the more common neurotic issues here are the unrelenting quest for “perfection,” withdrawal from painful familial and love relationships, avoidance of negative emotions such as anger or fear, deep-seated guilt that may manifest as in self-punitive actions, etc. (Suler 1993, pp. 139–146). While these can be quite serious, however, they are based on misunderstandings of Dharma and are by no means limited just to Buddhism (or other “Eastern” religions).

Certainly the idea that the *bodhisattva* must always be “nice” is unrealistic and not in keeping with everyday experience or Buddhist tradition. Often, a *bodhisattva* must be tough, even

forceful; compassion may have to be expressed strongly and skillfully. Buddhist author and practitioner Lewis Richmond says that modern *bodhisattvas* should be understood as “compassion warriors,” and he gives several modern versions of *bodhisattva* precepts that might be more compatible with contemporary life: “stand up for what you believe in, do what you say you will, stand by your friends, fix a mistake if you can, don’t blow your own horn, protect the weak and vulnerable” (Richmond 2012). Contemporary Zen teacher Kobutsu Malone takes this even further, arguing that the true *bodhisattva* cannot conform to our preconceptions of somehow transcending the messiness of life but must continually question all aspects of existence including our social, political, and cultural environment: “Ultimately, the path of full awakening – the Bodhisattva ideal – involves revolution” (Malone 2002). While this may not necessarily sound like a “religious” way of life, both Richmond and Malone demonstrate the way the *bodhisattva* ideal continues to be relevant over the centuries in any society.

The spate of neuroscientific studies of Buddhist practice in recent years sheds interesting light on the *bodhisattva* path. Various scientists and analytic philosophers have spent much time critically examining empirical studies of practicing Buddhists and claim that following the disciplined and altruistic path of Dharma really can result in true human happiness. While great claim has often been made here, Owen Flanagan, a participant in the “Mind and Life” series of encounters between the Dalai Lama and a number of prominent scientists over the past 20 years, has rightly pointed out that often such studies are methodologically suspect and make stronger claims than the evidence warrants. Still, Flanagan for one is cautiously optimistic that the Buddhist way of life, exemplified in the *bodhisattva*, offers a unique way to human flourishing, comparable in many ways to the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia*, and that may be compatible with scientific naturalism (Flanagan 2011).

The Mahāyāna notion of the *bodhisattva* marks one of humanity’s most enduring spiritual ideals. Deeply compelling, it has inspired

religious seekers for centuries and continues to do so. In truth, the *bodhisattva* epitomizes the Buddha Dharma: being firmly rooted in the earthiness of the everyday world while seeking to lift all of humanity to a higher state.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation

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As in Theravāda Buddhism, so Mahāyāna includes meditation practices to transform rigid mental and emotional habits and turbulent states of mind – something that, broadly speaking, falls within the parameters of Western psychology, particularly in its more clinical and therapeutic aspects. For the most part, these Mahāyāna practices resemble Theravāda ones, but as Mahāyāna spread to countries such as China and Japan, new forms arose. Of these, the practices found in Pure Land and Chan/Zen schools in particular have had enormous appeal and thus warrant extended attention for their psychological implications.

### Pure Land

Pure Land, a religion where the faithful rely on heavenly figures for salvation, has roots in Mahāyāna teachings. Its central figure is the bodhisattva Dharmākara, a prince who became the Buddha Amitābha (“Infinite Life,” or Amitāyus, “Infinite Light”). According to the *sūtras*, Dharmākara made 48 great vows, one of which established a paradise (located in the “West”) where his followers are reborn.

*Sūtras* describe the Pure Land as a jeweled paradise where one's basic necessities (food,

**Buddhism's Mahāyāna:  
Meditation, Fig. 1**

Altar depicting Amitabha and attendants, Guanyin (*right*) and Mahasthamaprapta (*left*). Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, China, 2011 (Courtesy of Tengu800. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/File:Amitabha\\_Buddha\\_and\\_Bodhisattvas.jpeg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/File:Amitabha_Buddha_and_Bodhisattvas.jpeg))



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drink, etc.) are provided. There, all will dwell in the presence of a true Buddha, learning Dharma firsthand. Pure Land also picks up on notions that the Dharma will eventually decay. Centuries after the historical Buddha, many people were convinced that they lived in this age of decay, when they could no longer practice Buddhism properly. Some forms of Buddhism at that time were beyond the laity and few could master esoteric doctrines or intense rituals and meditations; thus many sought “other” help. Pure Land *sūtras* address such views, explaining how Amitābha helps all who call upon him. The main Pure Land practice is chanting a mantra: “Homage to Amitābha Buddha.” Although chanting is especially important as death approaches, followers often repeat the phrase regularly to focus their minds, and calling on Amitābha remains common throughout Asia.

Pure Land proved popular in China, since faith in a savior deity resembled Chinese folk beliefs, and Pure Land ideas and practices became widespread, along with elaborate paintings and statues of Amitābha and his attendants. Reciting the Pure Land *mantra* – known in Chinese as *nianfo* 念佛 (“remembering the Buddha”: Japanese,

*nembutsu*) – was also common, often in conjunction with the fingering of beads (*malas*). Some Pure Land thinkers stressed concentrating on Amitabha and constantly repenting one’s sins, while others claimed that a single sincere saying of *nianfo* sufficed. Thus, one Pure Land master writes, “If just one instance [of recitation has such power], how much more must it hold true for those who practice constant recollection and recitation (*nian*)! Indeed, this is a person who is constantly repenting” (de Bary and Bloom 1999, pp. 486).

Guanyin, the “Goddess of Mercy” and Amitābha’s main attendant, was particularly prominent in China. While Amitābha helps the faithful reach the Pure Land after death, many Chinese (particularly women) turned to Guanyin for aid in this life. Statues of Guanyin – graceful, whiteclad, and holding a child in her arms – resemble the Madonna with child. Several scholars have noted the seeming coincidence that, like Christianity, Pure Land has a God figure (Amitābha) and a mediator (Guanyin), is based on faith and grace, and includes a devotion resembling the rosary (Ching 1993, p. 142) (Fig. 1).



Pure Land became a major school in Japan and, under the guidance of leaders such as Shinran (1173–1262), grew and split into a number of lineages. To this day most Japanese Buddhists are followers of Pure Land. Its strong resemblance to Christianity has intrigued Westerners for years, and much Buddhist-Christian dialogue has focused on Pure Land ideas and practices.

Pure Land devotion has subtle yet profound psychological effects. Chanting *nembutsu* is a deeply meditative practice, and in monastic settings, Pure Land retreats are as rigorous as those in Chan/Zen. Pure Land uses many artworks (paintings, statues) for visualizations. Faith in Pure Land involves giving up egocentric striving for salvation and is generally quite joyful (cf. Hindu *bhakti*). Followers join together in worship and pilgrimage – practices that help the faithful see themselves as part of something larger than their petty concerns. Rick Fields, a scholar of American Buddhism, realized this after years of intense (and self-conscious) meditation training: “If you really recognize that we are all already ‘saved’ by virtue of Amida’s vow, then you can finally (1) relax and (2) be grateful to everyone around you” (Fields 1998, p. 205). One result is a profound compassion for others, often felt most keenly in times of loss – something that can lead to deep understanding of Dharma. One Pure Land priest observes, “Humanity is one single body, one living Buddha body. . . . My life and yours are completely autonomous. Yet we each exist only in total resonance with all other beings. . . . We rejoice and grieve as one living body” (Nakasone 1990, p. 87).

## Chan/Zen

Chan derives from Indian practices of *dhyāna* (“meditation”). Such techniques came to China with early missionaries and had a ready audience among Daoists. Indian techniques, however, proved difficult, and as Buddhism adapted to Chinese culture, monks devised a simple form of meditation designed to still mind and body in order to attain an intuition of Truth beyond all

thought. The Chinese called such meditation *channa*, the closest they could come to pronouncing the Sanskrit *dhyāna*. At first Chan was practiced in various monasteries and lineages, eventually coming into its own in the Song dynasty (960–1279 CE).

Chan’s motto (attributed to one of its patriarchs) tells us much about how Chan presents itself: “A separate transmission outside the scriptures, not relying on words and phrases, directly transmitted from mind to mind.” Legend says Chan began with the Buddha’s famous “Flower Sermon.” One day the Buddha took his seat before the assembled monks and, instead of speaking, silently held a single flower aloft. Of those present, only his disciple Mahākāśyapa got it, and he, in turn, passed the wordless teaching to his disciples. Eventually the transmission reached Bodhidharma (470–543 CE), who brought the teachings to China. From Bodhidharma, the transmission eventually passed to Huineng (638–713), the legendary Sixth Patriarch and “ancestor” of all later Chan masters.

Most scholars consider this account pious fiction. We know that in the fifth century a figure named Bodhidharma was in China teaching some form of meditation, but did not found a lasting lineage. By the late eighth century, there were two main Chan branches, Northern and Southern, with the latter coming to dominate due to the efforts of Shenhui (684–758), a monk who received transmission from Huineng. Southern Chan eventually split into numerous sub-schools. During the ninth century master Yixuan (d. 867) established the Linji 臨濟 school, and by the eleventh century, another school, Caodong 曹洞, split off over matters of practice and realization.

Chan is based on a central paradox: we are all Buddha but we just don’t know it. It draws on Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, and Tathāgatagarbha teachings but stresses practice over study, pushing practitioners to an immediate intuition of Truth, a glimpse of one’s “true nature” (*kenshō* 見性). Because of its strict discipline, Chan traditionally has required a monastic setting.

Chan’s central practice is seated meditation 坐禪 (*zuochan*: Japanese, *zazen*), where

**Buddhism's Mahāyāna:  
Meditation, Fig. 2**

Soto students practicing zazen at Zengården Zendo in rural Sweden (Courtesy of Spoktu. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Zazen.jpg>)



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practitioners still their minds by hours of sitting cross-legged, following their breath. Ordinarily, our minds are stirred up and muddy, like turbulent water. If we still our minds, we will clear just as water clears when held still. One Chan master writes, “If you do not practice meditation and enter *dhyāna*, then when it comes down to it, you will be completely at a loss. Therefore, to seek the pearl, we should still the waves; if we disturb the water, it will be hard to get. When the water of meditation is clear, the pearl of the mind will appear of itself” (de Bary and Bloom 1999, p. 524) (Fig. 2).

Chan monasteries also stressed labor (cleaning, gardening, cooking) to extend meditation into daily life. Such labor offsets the lethargy from hours of meditation, allows the monastery to be self-supporting, and helps focus the mind. Monastic life is strictly regimented, divided between work, study, ritual, and meditation. A typical day begins at 4:00 am and ends at 9:00 pm, with 2 h of meditation in the morning and 3–5 h in the evening. This schedule is punctuated monthly by intense meditation sessions (*sesshin* 接心) that entail 15 h of daily meditation and may last 7 days.

Since Chan is so demanding, it is common to deny an initial request to enter monastic life.

Usually, an applicant must demonstrate sincerity by waiting outside a monastery for 2 days and then spending several days in a small room, alone. When admitted, the applicant goes to the meditation hall and prostrates three times before the image of the Buddha before being assigned a small mat on which he will live, sleep, and meditate. After a few days he has an interview with the master and officially begins training.

Chan is famous for its *gongan* 公案 (“public cases”: Japanese, *kōan*), paradoxical stories or riddles designed to provoke a realization of Truth. Perhaps the most famous *gongan* is “If clapping two hands produces a sound, what is the sound of one hand clapping?” Such bizarre statements do not have rational answers, which is precisely the point. A master gives a *gongan* to his student and it becomes the focus of intense concentration. The student focuses on the *gongan* day and night in an effort to find a response until he exhausts himself, at which point a “solution” typically emerges. Sometimes *gongan* do not have verbal solutions – the “answer” may be a gesture, shout, or other demonstration of awakening. Accounts say *gongan* study leaves a student’s mind so receptive that a master can awaken him with a blow, phrase, or even a facial expression.



The master is central to Chan, transmitting teachings and verifying students' progress. This direct, face-to-face connection is essential for the lineage to continue. Yet ultimately, awakening – though sudden and miraculous – is nothing special, for one realizes what has always been the case. As Master Linji says, “Followers of the Way, the Law of the Buddha has no room for elaborate activity; it is only everyday life with nothing to do. Evacuate, pass your water, put on your clothes, eat your food; if you are tired, lie down. The fool will laugh, but the wise man will understand” (de Bary and Bloom 1999, p. 504).

Chan had tremendous impact on Chinese culture, inspiring calligraphy, poetry, and painting (all of which demonstrate “spiritual” as well as aesthetic insight). Most Chinese intellectuals are familiar with its teachings and express their admiration for it. Chan spread to Korea (where it is called Son) and Vietnam (where it is called Thien), but had its greatest influence in Japan, where it is called Zen. Linji Chan (Rinzai Zen) was introduced into Japan by Eisei (1141–1215), and Rinzai temples became great cultural and artistic centers. Caodong Chan (Sotō Zen) was introduced into Japan by Dōgen (1200–1253), one of Japan's greatest philosophers. While never as popular as Rinzai, Sotō's focus on *zazen* deeply shaped Japanese art. Later, a third school, Ōbaku 黄檗, arose in 1654. Ōbaku combines Rinzai and Sotō, advocating sudden enlightenment for those few who are ready for rigorous *zazen* and *kōan* practice, while reserving a more gradual path for others involving *zazen* and the chanting of *nembutsu*.

Chan/Zen is very regimented and has been used for military training. It is powerful and can lead to profound transformations, especially in Linji/Rinzai, with its forceful breakthroughs. By contrast, Caodong/Sotō is more quietistic yet perhaps more radical with its focus on “just sitting” and admonition that meditation *just is* enlightenment. All forms of Chan/Zen aim at living life as it is, with no fuss. As one scholar says, “Chan is not a path traveled because of what we will find or be when it is over but because there is simply no better way of traveling” (Hershock 2005, p. 162).

## Therapeutic Dimensions

Over the years, Chan/Zen has attracted interest from many psychologists. Both C. G. Jung and Erich Fromm were fascinated by discussions of Zen in the writings of D. T. Suzuki, the foremost “apostle of Zen” to the West. Jung wrote the foreword to Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, while Fromm and several colleagues collaborated with Suzuki in a series of workshops on Zen and psychoanalysis in the 1950s. More recently psychoanalysts have increasingly become aware of the paradoxical nature of intrapsychic dynamics – a fact that resonates deeply with Zen and Pure Land teachings. It is a mistake, of course, to equate Zen with Western psychotherapy, yet like “mindfulness” meditation, Zen practices have been integrated into clinical treatment. One example is the work of Clive Sherlock, a British psychiatrist trained in Rinzai, who developed “Adaptation Practice” in the 1970s based on Zen monastic routines. Marsha Linehan has drawn on Zen to develop “Dialectical Behavioral Therapy” (DBT), a program involving a continual reconciling of opposites within the psyche that has proven effective in treating borderline personality disorders. Since the 1960s, neuroscientists have studied the physiological effects of meditation, often on Zen practitioners, using various devices (EEG, MRI, etc.) with intriguing results; such studies indicate that meditative states differ markedly from other mental states such as hypnosis, sleep, or catatonia. The “calm awareness” meditators achieve has measurable effects (lowered blood pressure, reduced respiration), and long-time practice “rewires” the brain in beneficial ways.

There are certainly potential problems in both Pure Land and Zen, psychologically speaking. Both can encourage escapism or unhealthy quietism in the face of genuine problems. Zen in particular can foster a spiritual competitiveness or a retreat into elusive, nonrational behavior. Interestingly, Zen masters have long discussed “Zen sickness,” a condition in which students may experience feelings of grandiosity or develop a narcissistic preoccupation

with practice. The “cure”? Careful supervision by an experienced master. Whether a psychotherapist can do the same is an intriguing question.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
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- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy

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Viewing Buddhism through the lens of “psychology” seems natural for many Westerners. While such psychologizing can be misleading, it remains the case that Buddhist thinkers do focus on a transformative liberation (“enlightenment”) through a regimen of study, contemplative exercises, as well as ascetic and moral training. This transformative intention is, broadly speaking, “psychological” in that it entails cognitive and emotional shifts that may radically alter a person's demeanor and understanding of the world. Such an endeavor goes far beyond the parameters of mainstream Western psychology, but the primacy of “mind” in Buddhism invariably lends it a “psychological” flavor. Moreover, Buddhist thinkers have elaborated intriguing doctrines about the nature of the world and humanity that do qualify as “philosophies of mind.” This entry will examine the major philosophical currents in *Mahāyāna* (“Great Vehicle”), the second major branch of Buddhism. Much mystery surrounds *Mahāyāna* origins, but it is clear that its spread into Central and East Asia (~first century CE) does correlate with the development of new scriptures, rituals, and meditation practices. Such changes do not mark a sharp break with older forms of Buddhism (such as Theravāda), but these new interpretations of the Dharma (teachings) did result in new philosophical “schools,” each of which has interesting psychological dimensions. Following scholarly convention, this presentation will use Sanskrit, Chinese, and Japanese terms rather than the Pali terms used in Theravāda.

## Mādhyamika

The first Mahāyāna philosophical school is known as Mādhyamika (“Followers of the

Middle Way”). Based on the teachings found in the *Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā)* texts, this school arose as a critique of earlier *Abhidharma* (“Higher Teachings,” philosophical analyses of the nature of reality) philosophies. From a Mādhyamika perspective, certain *Abhidharma* schools, with their obsessive focus on enumerating and cataloguing the ultimate factors (*dharma*s) that make up reality, had gotten bogged down in intellectual dogmatism thereby losing the Dharma’s liberating spirit.

Mādhyamika thinkers stress that *all* things, including our ideas and opinions, are “empty” (*śūnya*), lacking in any sort of independent, separate being. This means that nothing exists except insofar as it relies on other things. To emphasize the cognitive implications of these teachings, and the way that our rational-linguistic faculties deceive us into *not* perceiving this “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*), Mādhyamikas invoke the notion of two levels of truth: ordinary/conventional and ultimate. In this view, our daily lives involve opinions and assertions concerning the conventional level. Here, they are perfectly valid and useful. However, just as there are no actual “things” (i.e., separately existing entities), the words and concepts we use to label them are, ultimately, false (deceptive). What’s more, our very words and concepts insofar as they are “things” are also “empty.” Thus no verbal formulation of the teachings is true at the ultimate level; it is beyond the reach of thought and language.

Because they maintain that ultimate truth is ineffable, Mādhyamika thinkers rely on a dialectics of *negation* to argue their points. Many proclaim no thesis of their own and instead attack their rivals’ views through *reductio ad absurdum* arguments (arguments that refute an opponent by demonstrating the contradictions of his/her position). This method leads an “opponent” (one who dogmatically clings to a philosophical position) progressively through a series of proposed views, each of which is shown to be inadequate and/or self-contradictory. Eventually, one goes beyond *any* verbal teaching about reality. For Mādhyamikas, any defined philosophical position results in attachment and suffering; thus, we need to break free of all

“views” of reality, even negatively phrased ones. Yet Mādhyamikas are not nihilists and claim to steer a “middle way” between affirmation and negation. The nature of language is such, however, that this “middle way” defies verbalization.

The most famous Mādhyamika is Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250), whose treatise the *Middle Stanzas (Madhyamakakārika)*, a brilliant refutation of “Hīnayāna” views, opens with a famous dedication: I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha, The best of teachers, who taught that Whatever is dependently arisen is Unceasing, unborn, Unannihilated, not permanent, Not coming, not going, Without distinction, without identity, And free from conceptual construction (Garfield 1995, p. 2).

Here Nāgārjuna makes full use of Mādhyamika negation while still demonstrating his abiding faith in the Buddha’s teachings. Later in the same treatise, Nāgārjuna provocatively states that there is no real difference between *samsāra* and *nirvāna*. Nāgārjuna’s disciple, Āryadeva (ca. 170–270), continued his master’s polemical tradition, as did Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650), a major commentator on Nāgārjuna’s works (Fig. 1).

Psychologically speaking, Mādhyamika holds to a philosophy of mind where intellect is central but bound up with emotions and attachments. Mādhyamika rhetoric suggests that *samsāra* (and the “suffering” it entails) is a construction of language (or rather, our rational-linguistic faculties) and that “suffering” will disappear once we see that it hinges on a mistaken notion of reality. There is a complex intention at work here, since Mādhyamika’s negative dialectics make great use of paradoxes that push one beyond rationality. The implication is that the rational aspects of mind are but one layer (albeit the decisive one) and that in some sense they must be “short-circuited” so that other faculties can bring about the transformation to full awakening. Mādhyamika aims only to counter dogmatic attachments. In this sense, Mādhyamika is quite pragmatic, since the dissolving of the “ignorance” created by our incessant rationality actually frees one to practice Dharma and attain enlightenment.



**Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy, Fig. 1** Statue of Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna. Samye Ling Monastery, India (Courtesy of Inmanuel Gibbs. Public Domain. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nagarjuna\\_pond01.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nagarjuna_pond01.jpg))

## Yogācāra

The second major school of Mahāyāna arose in response to the perceived negative focus of Mādhyamika. Some thinkers sought a more positive view of Dharma. Moreover, these thinkers were deeply involved in meditation, hence the name of this school: *yogācāra* (“the practice of yoga”).

While Mādhyamika focuses on Emptiness, Yogācāra concentrates on the nature and functioning of mind; hence it is also known as *Vijñānavāda* (“School of the Mind”) or *Cittamātra* (“Mind Only”). Yogācāra thinkers claim that, whereas *Abhidharma* philosophers maintain that consciousness arises when the senses come into contact with their objects (a “commonsense” view), what actually happens is that a fundamental process of consciousness

produces both sensations and their objects. Many scholars consider Yogācāra to be a form of idealism (a theory that the world is produced by the mind) but Yogācārins may be advancing a more subtle view: that the world *as we experience it* is produced by the mind rather than existing in and of itself. Yogācāra thinkers push us to realize that most of our lives are mental constructions of reality, “mind only.” This interpretation makes sense given the Yogācārins stress on meditation practices that often reveal the subtle workings of our mental processes.

In the Yogācāra philosophy of mind, consciousness manifests through six senses (sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, mental awareness) and their objects. Behind these six sense-consciousnesses is a seventh consciousness that unites the previous six and serves as the basis for reflection and self-awareness. Beneath these seven levels lies an eighth level, the “Storehouse Consciousness” (*ālaya-vijñāna*), and it is this level that generates the subjective and objective aspects of experience, just as ocean’s water takes form as waves. The Storehouse Consciousness explains our apparent continuity in this life through periods of unconsciousness (sleep, fainting) as well as previous and future lifetimes and explains how karma functions. Each action and experience deposits a karmic “seed” which is stored in the Storehouse and influences how it generates later experience. Some time in the future (perhaps the next moment, perhaps years later), the “seed” matures.

## Three Natures

Along with levels of consciousness, Yogācārins distinguish “Three Natures” (*trisvabhāva*) within experience:

1. The “imagined” nature (*parikalpita*): ordinary experience in which self and objects appear to be independent entities. Such independence, however, is only a superimposition of the mind.
2. The “interdependent” nature (*paratantra*): the real nature of experience, i.e., the fact that the “imagined” independent entities arise

interdependently on the basis of the processes of consciousness.

3. The “perfected” nature (*parinispāna*): experience when one has purified oneself from the ignorance that continually superimposes a view of reality in which we imagine ourselves and objects as independent. The “perfected” nature of experience is the realization of *nirvāna*.

These “Three Natures” are really stages of growth along the Buddhist path. We begin in a fantasy world of our own construction, but through diligent effort, we see the difference between our imaginings and how life actually is. Accepting life as it is rather than what we would like it to be enables us to eliminate our insatiable grasping at “things” and live in a more productive and happier way.

Early Yogācāra thinkers include the brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu (ca. 400 CE). Vasubandhu was the more prolific, and his *Thirty Verses (Trimśikā)* provides an overview of Yogācāra teachings, showing how they aim at awakening. He writes:

When consciousness with object is not obtained, then there being no object, one is established in the state of mere concept, for there is no grasping for it. It is without thought and without object. It is also the supra-mundane knowledge. Through the destruction of the twofold depravities, there is reversion of the source [of such depravities]. This, indeed, is the realm free from influxes. It is unthinkable, wholesome and stable. It is the serene body of release. This is called the doctrine of the Great Sage (Kalupahana 1987, pp. 213–214).

Yogācāra teachings spread among Buddhist intellectuals in the years following Asanga and Vasubandhu. Prominent later Yogācāra thinkers included the logician Dignāga (ca. 600) and Dharmapāla (ca. 600), who headed the great university of Nālandā, India. Yogācāra philosophy is probably the most complex Buddhist system and has aroused great interest among Western scholars. Certainly the Yogācāra view of mind as composed of multiple levels and its role in constructing our experience of life uncannily parallel contemporary psychological theories, especially with psychoanalytic schools and their findings on the way the unconscious shapes our conscious experiences.

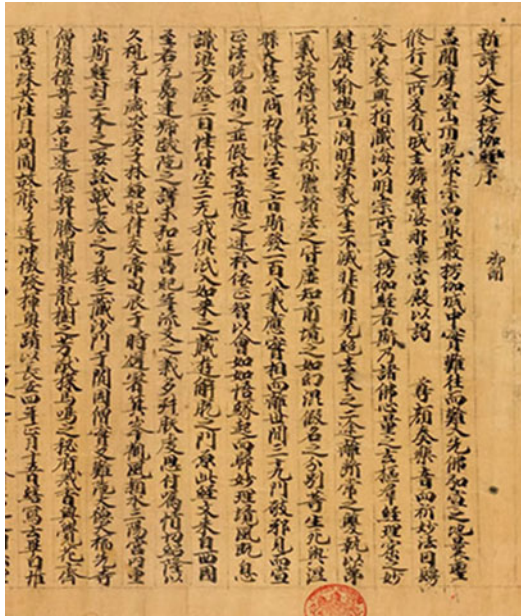
Moreover, Yogācāra's emphasis on the necessity of yogic practice alongside doctrinal study continues to exert tremendous influence on research into meditation and how it affects other aspects of practitioners' lives.

### **Tathāgatagarbha (“Womb/Embryo of Buddha”) Thought**

Another line of Buddhist thinking (although never a formal “school”) speaks of a “Buddha within,” the *Tathāgatagarbha* (“womb” or “embryo” of Buddha). The *Tathāgatagarbha* is like a “womb” in that it contains the potential to become Buddha; it is like an “embryo” in that it can develop into Buddha. Perhaps the best way to describe it is as one's “Buddha nature.”

According to *Tathāgatagarbha* teachings, the “Buddha nature” is inherent in all beings; thus everyone has the capacity to become awakened. Most people are unaware of their inherent “Buddha nature” because it is concealed by defilements (e.g., ignorance, hatred, greed), although generally texts do not clearly explain *how* such obstructions originally began. When these unwholesome thoughts and emotions are removed, the “Buddha nature” shines forth in its original purity, and one has attained *nirvāna*. We must beware of viewing the “Buddha nature” as a substantive “self.” While some texts speak of the “Buddha nature” as eternal and unchanging, it is not a permanent “soul.” A famous *sūtra* states, “Blessed One, the Tathāgatagarbha is Not a Self, nor a living being, nor a soul, nor a person. . . the Tathāgatagarbha is the womb of the Dharma realm, the womb of the Dharma body, the womb of the supramundane, the womb of intrinsic purity” (Strong 2008, p. 170). Thus, the “Buddha nature” is a latent potential for awakening that can be actualized through conscientious Buddhist practice. A number of texts elaborate on “Buddha nature” ideas. One treatise, the *Ratnagotra-vibhāṅga* (“Analysis of the Jewels and Lineages”), states: Like a Buddha in a faded lotus flower, like honey covered by bees, like a fruit in its husk, like gold within its impurities, like a treasure hidden in the dirt. . . like a valuable





**Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy, Fig. 2** Page from the *Lankavatara Sūtra*, a major *Tathāgatagarbha* text (Public Domain. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lankavatara.jpg>)

statue covered with dust, so is this ["Buddha nature"] within all beings (Mitchell 2002, p. 140).

"Buddha nature" literature has deeply influenced the Buddhist world, becoming the basis for the fundamental Chan/Zen paradox "We are always already Buddha." It is the source of bodhicitta, the "thought of enlightenment" that induces one to follow the *bodhisattva* path. The evocative imagery in "Buddha nature" texts resonates with mystical views in other religions that speak of humanity as bearing a "spark of the Divine" (Fig. 2).

**Psychological and Therapeutic Dimensions**

*Mahāyāna* philosophies evoke intriguing psychological insights and thus have strong therapeutic dimensions. *Mādhyamika*'s negative method undermines dogmatism and the subtle pride that often comes with philosophical learning, ideally engendering the humility and skepticism we see in early Buddhist teachings. Much of its rhetoric

functions as a sort of cognitive therapy for a very practical end – to promote *enacting* the Dharma. As one scholar says, The *Mādhyamika* is radically deconstructive, pragmatic philosophy designed to be *used* for exposing, defusing, and dismantling the reifying tendencies inherent in language and conceptual thought...leaving behind nothing other than a dramatic awareness of the living present – an epiphany of one's entire form or life (Huntington 1989, p. 136).

*Yogācāra* presents a full-blown model of "mind" that provides a deeper psychological sense of Buddhist teachings. When coupled with a regimen of meditation, it can help practitioners gain a more "objective" view on how the mind works. Yet unlike models of mind in Western psychology, *Yogācāra* views of mind are aimed to a large extent to explain karma rather than the genesis of specific neuroses.

*Tathāgatagarbha* thought is less systematic but more exhortative, a characteristic that underscores the soteriological aims of the Dharma. It may be that this positing of an inherent "Buddha nature" is really just an ad hoc explanation of experiences of "pure luminosity" in meditation and the like. By analogy, however, we can view this school as asserting an innately healthy core of the human psyche (a position in keeping with basic assumptions about humanity in much of Asia and contrary to more pessimistic "Western" understandings based on views of humankind as sinful). These "philosophies" present intriguing models of the mind and warrant further attention by scholars interested in cross-cultural psychological study.

**See Also**

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)



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## Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation

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In all forms of Buddhism, philosophical study (especially *Abhidhamma*) and monastic discipline are deeply interwoven with the practice of meditation (*bhāvanā*, “cultivation”). The latter, of course, has attracted much attention in the West, with many people virtually equating “meditation” with Buddhism in its entirety. In actuality, the term “meditation” is very vague and can cover

many practices of sustained concentration, but in the Buddhist context, it should not be viewed apart from other aspects of *Dhamma*. Moreover, the temptation for Westerners to view all forms of Buddhism in terms of psychology can be very misleading, as Buddhist teachings and practices generally are based on very different concerns than those shared by most contemporary Westerners, and the ethical and soteriological aspects of the *Dhamma* may not square very well with the secular nature of psychology as a discipline. Yet, it is undeniable that Buddhist teachings and techniques of meditation share a strong therapeutic dimension and so seem destined to attract a lot of interest from a Western psychotherapeutic perspective. The presentation here will provide a basic overview of Buddhist meditative teachings as found especially in Theravāda, using Pali terms (Pali is the sacred language in Theravāda) and stressing their psychological dimensions. It will also look at ways that meditative techniques have influenced and been integrated into certain forms of Western psychotherapy.

## Basic Meditation

Although the Buddha maintained that meditation was essential for his monastic followers, he was clear that such practices were not possible without physical and ethical discipline. Thus from the very beginning, it is clear that Buddhist meditation includes far more than what is normally considered part of Western psychological study or therapy. Physical discipline entails training to achieve and maintain proper posture (e.g., the “lotus position”) and to regulate one's breathing. Ethical discipline is harder, requiring the strict following of ethical precepts and removing impure thoughts. A practitioner should also learn to suppress the Five Mental Hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, lethargy, agitation over lapses in concentration, doubt). Overcoming these forces allows one to focus the mind and enter deep states of concentration.

Most Buddhist meditation aims at instilling “mindfulness,” (*sati*) a general attentiveness to a specific object. Mindfulness meditation is also known as “recollection” (in that one learns to

**Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation, Fig. 1**

Thai monk in meditation in traditional "lotus" posture (Photo courtesy of Tevavrapas Makklay. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phta\\_Ajan\\_Jerapanyo\\_Abbot\\_of\\_Watkungtaphao.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Phta_Ajan_Jerapanyo_Abbot_of_Watkungtaphao.jpg))



B

"recollect" one's normally scattered thoughts). Developing mindfulness requires focus but is useful for cultivating patience and detachment from habitual reactions to the world and is important preparation for entering higher stages of meditation.

The basic style of Theravāda meditation is known as "calming and insight" (*samatha-vipassanā*). It begins by calming the mind's incessant jumping from thought to thought, usually by focusing on a simple bodily movement such as walking or breathing. Theravāda includes 16 different types of breathing practice, involving extending or shortening the breath or focusing on the breath's location in the body. Once a level of "calm" is established, a practitioner turns to developing "insight," by contemplating the breath itself, bodily postures, and sensations, the elements that compose the body and the like. In "insight" meditation, the practitioner maintains simple awareness of an object as it is, gradually developing the ability to sustain simple observation and thus see what reality actually is like. Through much practice of "calm and insight," the practitioner learns to observe the way in which things arise and depart, moving on to perceptions, emotions, and other states of mind. Such practices enable someone to realize Buddhist teachings directly in his/her experience (Fig. 1).

Meditative training also aims at helping practitioners develop positive mental states. The most well known of these wholesome states are the four *Brahmaviharas* ("divine abodes"), virtues that allegedly can lead to rebirth in a heavenly realm (*Brahmaloka*). These are "loving kindness" (*mettā*), "compassion" (*karunā*), "empathetic joy" (*muditā*), and "equanimity" (*upekkha*). Typically, a meditator begins with developing these attitudes towards himself/herself and gradually extends them by stages towards all beings everywhere. Practicing these meditations is an antidote to selfishness and ill will and helps instill a generally cheerful disposition to life. Moreover, on the surface at least, such practices seem to dovetail very well with theories and techniques associated with the field of "Positive Psychology."

The most authoritative Theravādin guide to meditation is the *Visuddhimagga* ("Path of Purification"), a manual compiled by the fifth-century scholar-monk Buddhaghosa. This work, one of the great commentaries on *Abhidhamma*, continues to have enormous influence, even as it may depart from the earliest Buddhist teachings. For example, Buddhaghosa extols the supernatural qualities of the Buddha and speaks of "secret teachings" that elders should reserve for only a select few of their disciples, seemingly in contradiction to the Buddha's claim that he taught

“with an open hand.” Buddhaghosa also stresses techniques of “meditation” (*jhāna*: Sanskrit, *dhyāna*) that receive only peripheral treatment in Buddhist scriptures. Among these is the use of circular devices of various colors (blue, yellow, red, etc.) that the practitioner constructs to serve as focal points for developing concentration. Gradually, a practitioner learns to deepen his concentration by constructing these aids solely with his mind, going on to achieve states of “trance” (*samādhi*) beyond sensory perception. In so doing, Buddhaghosa essentially redefines “meditation” in terms of these states of “trance” rather than other practices such as mindfulness of the breath.

It is probably best to view Theravāda meditative cultivation as one component within a larger project of training the whole person, a lengthy process that begins with the “outer” and proceeds to the “inner.” This regimen begins with careful bodily discipline leading to greater psychological sensitivity and circumspection. During such training, a practitioner learns to detach from his ego and develops a more attentive and compassionate disposition towards others. Accomplished meditators also tend to be more open to and accepting of a variety of experiences (some of which might qualify as paranormal) without discounting them as “unreal.”

## Facing Mortality

No challenge to humanity is as overwhelming as death, and one of the keys to Theravāda's longevity is its effectiveness in helping us come to grips with mortality. Joining the monastic order is a sort of “social death” that harkens back to earliest stage of Buddhism. In ancient India, taking up the life of a wanderer was tantamount to embracing death. The dangers of the world beyond the protection of home and hearth were very real in the form of predators (wild beasts and bandits), starvation, illness, and exposure to the elements. Early Buddhism required monks to clothe themselves in robes stitched together from the shrouds of corpses and even congregate at cremation grounds. To this day in Southeast Asia, forest monasteries are often

located near cemeteries to insure the seclusion necessary for monastic training.

As we have seen, the Buddha deemed meditation as essential for his followers, and he outlined various practices. Among the most potent involved the “cultivation of the foul” (*asubhavanā*), the close contemplation of corpses in varying states of decay. These quickly proved to be very effective at counterbalancing the sensual desires that often plague renunciates. Some texts outline as many as ten categories of corpses, including bodies that are bloated, “gnawed” by scavengers, or smeared with blood. Yet there can be no denying that such practices can have unintended effects. One story relates that after teaching this form of meditation, the Buddha withdrew for a few weeks of solitude. Upon his return, he found that many monks who had mastered the meditation became so disgusted with their *own* bodies that they committed suicide! At once, the Buddha summoned his remaining followers and taught them to meditate on the breath, a less drastic method for realizing the changing nature of existence. From then on, meditating on decaying corpses became optional (Wilson 1996, pp. 41–42).

Theravāda still maintains practices of “corpse meditation,” with the *Visuddhimagga*, the vast encyclopedic commentary on Buddhist teachings by the great scholar-monk Buddhaghosa, describing in lurid detail the various corpses suitable for contemplation: “There is a *worm-infested* corpse when at the end of 2 or 3 days a mass of maggots oozes out from the corpse's nine orifices, and the mass like a heap of paddy or boiled rice as big as the body, whether the body is that of a dog, a jackal, a human being, an ox, a buffalo, an elephant, a horse, a python, or what you will” (Nanamoli 1991, p. 185) (Fig. 2).

There is no denying the strongly negative impressions of such descriptions of “corpse meditations” and potentially problematic results of these practices. Some scholars have remarked on this seemingly unwholesome fascination with the macabre here, yet it would be a mistake to consider such austerities as central to Buddhist training. Rather, they are reserved for the most ascetically inclined members of the sangha. Some monks opt for a more contemporary version of this practice by observing autopsies.

### Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation,

**Fig. 2** Painting of Buddhaghosa, great Theravadin scholar-monk, presenting his commentaries to the sangha (Photo courtesy of Nyanatusita Bhikkhu. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddhaghosa\\_offering\\_his\\_commentaries.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Buddhaghosa_offering_his_commentaries.jpg))



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In addition to instilling aversion to the pleasures of the flesh, the rationale seems to be that such reminders of *dukkha* and the inevitable end of life will spur members of the community to greater attention to their spiritual practice. Jeffrey Schwartz has drawn inspiration from such Buddhist techniques in treating obsessive-compulsive disorder, focusing especially on confrontations with disgust and negative emotions in an overall calm state. It appears, at least in part, that these Buddhist techniques are roughly equivalent to more mainstream Western therapies of systematic desensitization and exposure coupled with habitual response prevention (Schwartz 1996). Perhaps more importantly, while such Buddhist attention to death may seem depressing, when viewed in a larger socio-cultural context, it becomes clear that Theravāda provides a set of powerful psychological tools that encourage us to accept and savor life while not neurotically clinging to it at all costs.

### Theravāda and Psychotherapy

Buddhist analyses of mind and meditation practices have gained a great deal of attention in

the West, and, as we have already indicated, Theravāda has proven especially fertile ground for psychotherapeutic exploration. *Abhidhamma*, for instance, is now often viewed as providing a detailed phenomenological psychology, and meditation has attracted a growing number of mental health professionals as a source of techniques of proven clinical value (such as “mindfulness”) and for its potential for therapeutic transformation and healing.

Among the more established figures drawing on Theravāda ideas in clinical work is Jon Kabat-Zinn, who has created a detailed regimen known as Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR). Kabat-Zinn developed MBSR as a full 8-week program by working with patients at University of Massachusetts Medical Center. A related program is Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), founded by Zindel Segal et al. MBCT draws on Theravāda practices (e.g., *mettā* meditation) for techniques that have been quite successful in alleviating depression and anxiety, anger management, etc. In addition, a number of prominent psychotherapists (Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg) have had Theravāda monastic training and draw upon it in their work at centers such as the Insight



Meditation Society of Barre, MA, and Spirit Rock Center in Woodacre, CA. Theravāda meditation techniques have proven especially helpful for mental health professionals (nurses, doctors, counselors) in handling work-related stress and in developing the detached attentiveness so necessary for them to work effectively.

Care should be taken, though, in applying aspects of Theravāda meditative practices into therapy. Several scholars and therapists have noted that meditation can pose certain threats to psychological health in some patients. Meditation can, for instance, uncover negative psychological content (e.g. suppressed memories of abuse or trauma) that have been relegated to the unconscious. When brought to light, such things may trigger anxiety, depression etc. Sometime taking up meditative practice can also encourage a narcissistic preoccupation with one's 'self' as well. Overall, however, most research indicates that Buddhist meditation can have beneficial psychotherapeutic results that are well worth further exploration (Suler 1993, pp. 123–124).

It would be a mistake to view Theravāda as just a form of psychotherapy, of course. Theravāda is vastly more complicated than any sort of mental health program, and certainly we should avoid viewing *nibbāna* in purely psychological terms. Moreover, developing skill in various meditation techniques does not necessarily mean a person is psychologically mature. Yet the intersection between Theravāda and Western psychology undoubtedly will provide much opportunity for cross-cultural exchange well into the foreseeable future.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Monasticism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Buddhism's Theravāda: Monasticism

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Monasticism, living an ascetic life dedicated to spiritual matters, is central to Buddhism and even

today many people in Southeast Asia (where Theravāda Buddhism dominates) briefly join a monastic order to get an education. Still, the distinction between monastics (*bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*) and laypeople (*upāsakas* and *upāsikas*) is important. While by no means equivalent to education in Western academic psychology or undergoing psychotherapy, entering the monastic path entails engaging in a powerful regimen of psychological training not normally available to laypeople. Following scholarly convention, this discussion of Theravāda will use Pali, an Indic language similar to Sanskrit, for all technical terms.

### Basic Points Regarding Monasticism

There are many misconceptions surrounding Buddhist monasticism that need to be addressed from the beginning. First, Buddhism is not *just* for monastics, and monastics are not technically “higher” than laypeople. Second, Buddhist monastics are not missionaries seeking converts, nor are they “priests” since they do not serve as intermediaries for others. In fact, they really should not be called “monks” or “nuns,” as they are not bound by lifelong vows. Perhaps the best English equivalent would be “mendicant,” since they are supported materially by society at large (Saddhatissa 1987, pp. 69–70). For simplicity’s sake we can refer to them as “monks and nuns,” keeping in mind that this translation is somewhat misleading.

In Buddhism, becoming a monastic is called “leaving home” because aspirants leave their homes and join a community of fellow religious seekers. This does not mean, however, that monastics are cut off from the world. Following the model established by the historical Buddha, Theravāda monastics and laity exist in a symbiotic relationship in which the laity provides material support (food, clothing, property, etc.) while the monks provide spiritual and moral guidance. Monastics serve as a “field of merit” (*puñña*) by which the laity further themselves spiritually. This relationship constitutes a common social order that has held sway in Southeast Asia for centuries (Lester, 1973, p. 130ff).

Joining a monastic order involves a series of steps. Although the Buddha stated that he was establishing a “middle way” between asceticism and indulgence, he stressed that monks and nuns were to live “depending on little.” Traditionally in Theravāda, a candidate had to be old enough to “scare away the crows” (about 7 years of age). At the first level, the candidate’s head is shaved and he is given a monastic name and a set of robes with some other articles. Novitiate ordination only requires that the candidate repeat his vows of “refuge” and accept Ten Precepts (including abstention from wearing perfumes and flowers, singing and dancing, using a large bed, taking regular meals, acquiring personal wealth). Novices may advance to full ordination after intensive training lasting weeks or even months. During this ceremony, novices take their full monastic vows, kneeling for hours as the entire *Vinaya* (“Code of Discipline”), the section of the Buddhist Canon covering monastic life, is read to them. At the conclusion of ordination, new monks are informed of the traditional “four resources” available to them to secure their basic needs: a tree for shelter, robes made of rags for clothing, alms for food, and fermented cow’s urine for “medicine” (Fig. 1).

All monks and nuns must abide by the *Vinaya*, and from the very beginning, the Buddha prohibited criminals, escaped slaves, and debtors from joining the order, specifying that they were also bound by the laws of the state. He also set out rules and principles governing communal life. Theravādin monks are bound by 227 rules, but this number differs in other branches. Penalties for violating monastic rules vary depending upon the nature of the infringement. Serious violations (having sexual intercourse, stealing, killing, and claiming false levels of spiritual attainment) are known as “defeats” and call for expulsion from the community. Less serious violations require public confession and vows of repentance, as well as specific austerities, much the way some Christians take on penances after confessing their sins. Monastic communities have a distinct hierarchy, determined by seniority from the time of ordination. In addition, as per the Buddha’s instructions, every 2 weeks (on the new and full



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**Fig. 1** Nine-year-old Theravāda novice monks in Myanmar/Burma (Photo courtesy of Sputnikkcp. Public Domain. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Novice\\_monks.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Novice_monks.jpg))



moons) the entire community assembles to chant the *Vinaya*, confess any violations, and reconfirm their monastic commitment. Daily monastic life can vary widely across different branches of Buddhism, and even from community to community, but all monasteries are dedicated to living according to and spreading the Dhamma.

Monks also fulfill basic ministerial roles in Theravādin societies, often conducting funerals and festivals connected with the growing cycles of rice and other crops. Monks also conduct protective rituals (*parittas*) to mark special occasions such as the building of a new house, the start of a long journey, or in times of illness, drought, etc. In such ceremonies, the monks draw on their reservoir of spiritual power to ward off evil forces and invite blessings, much like priests or rabbis in Western societies.

Some people might dismiss the performance of such rites as secondary to monastic life, but this is far from the case. As theorists of ritual are finding, the performance of (and participation in) various rites can play a major role in maintaining individual and group well-being on many levels (Bell, 1997, pp. 72–76). These *parittas*, rites of protection against evil spirits, while perhaps easy to dismiss as “superstition,” have for centuries been regarded as manifestations of Buddha’s truth and compassion; for the faithful, they are

the very essence of Dhamma. The presence of the monks chanting Buddha’s words has amazing spiritual, psychological, and even physical power. As one scholar-monk puts it, the power of good thoughts mixed with the vibration of the sound can be transmitted over great distances. It is believed that the sonorous sounds of *paritta* soothe the nervous system, purify the blood, and produce peace and tranquility of mind, thus bringing about harmony of the physical state (Saddhatissa 1987, p. 133).

### “Nuns” in Theravāda

All branches of Buddhism differentiate between the order of monks and the order of nuns (*bhikkhunis*). From an institutional point of view, nuns are inferior to monks (even newly ordained novices) and are bound by many more rules. This comparatively inferior role for nuns reflects misogynistic attitudes prevalent in Asia from ancient times up to the present. Still, the Buddha, although reluctant, *did* admit women into the monastic order – a truly radical policy in his day. Moreover, nuns have long taken active roles in the operation of the *sangha* and ministering to the public. One of the most revered Buddhist texts, the *Therīgatha* (“Songs of Female

Elders”), is a record of verses attributed to some of the earliest Buddhist nuns and evinces great faith and insight into the Dhamma. The *Therīgatha* has been, and remains, a major source of Buddhist wisdom for both men and women. However, due to war and invasions during the twelfth century, the lineage of nuns essentially died out in the Theravāda world. This has led to a peculiar situation: tradition requires both monks and nuns to ordain women but since there is no formally recognized *bhikkhuni* order, there are no nuns to ordain women who have a monastic vocation. There have been attempts to remedy this situation in recent decades. In 1971 Voramai Shatsena (1908–2003) went from Thailand to Taiwan to be ordained as a nun and worked with other women (and men) to reestablish a Thai nun’s lineage, but with limited success.

There are other options for women seeking to live religious lives, such as becoming *phram* (temporary “novices” who wear white but do not shave their heads and do not abide by strict monastic codes), or in some countries such as Thailand, they can become *māeji* (“sisters,” women dedicated to the religious life and who remain celibate). The latter go through ordination but are not bound by as many rules as full monastics. However, they are often ignored or even looked down upon by some more conservative Theravādins (Fig. 2).

The challenges for women leading religious lives in Theravāda society are steep, but those who persevere gain a great deal. This is particularly true for those opting for the unorthodox role of *māeji*, who are slowly gaining influence in Southeast Asia. One scholar who spent over a year living with various *māeji* in Thailand observes that they are establishing an alternative spirituality for women that enables them to develop themselves and work for the betterment of society, particularly in ways that help women and children (Brown, 2001, pp. 141–142). As such, they are compelling figures – dedicated and generous in the truest spirit of the Dhamma. They have much to teach spiritual seekers, especially women who feel oppressed or ignored by male colleagues. In this they recall the verses in the *Therīgatha* attributed to the nun Mutta: “Free,



**Buddhism's Theravāda: Monasticism, Fig. 2** Group of *māeji* at a conference in Bangkok, November 2005 (Photo courtesy of Gakuro. Public Domain. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maeji.jpg>)

I am free/I am free/by means of the three/crooked things: mortar, pestle, and/my crooked husband./I am free/from birth and death/and all that dragged me back” (Murcott 1991, p. 104).

### Stages of Spiritual Progress

While in theory, the monastic path is a gradual progress that eschews hierarchical rankings, Theravāda tradition divides it into four levels ranked according to progress towards *nibbāna*. The first level, the *sotāpatti* (“stream entrant”), is a *bhikkhu* who has overcome the “three fetters” (belief in a permanent “self,” belief that rituals will lead to salvation, doubts regarding the truth of Dhamma) and is assured of eventually attaining full awakening. The second, the *sakadāgāmin* (“once returner”), has further reduced sensual cravings and ill will. The third, the *anāgāmin* (“nonreturner”), has essentially eliminated all ties binding him to the world of desire. In Theravāda the ultimate spiritual goal is the *arhant* (“worthy one”). At its simplest, an *arhant* is a wise monk, perfect in knowledge

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**Fig. 3** Painting in Laos of the Ven. Ananda, one of the most popular early *arahants*, reciting the Buddha's teachings (Photo courtesy of Sacca. Public Domain. [http://em.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ananda\\_at\\_First\\_Council.jpg](http://em.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ananda_at_First_Council.jpg))



and in conduct, who has removed all defilements and thus can recognize things as they truly are. Because of his attainments, an *arhant* may possess great supernormal powers. While traditionally discussions of these levels of attainment are couched in mythic language, we can interpret them psychologically. For instance, following the scheme of Abraham Maslow, we can view the *arhant* as one who is self-actualized: able to judge situations correctly, accepting of others, comfortable with solitude, and deeply identifying with their fellow human beings. Still, if we regard the *arhant* as the model of Buddhist psychological health, it is hard not to be struck by the contrast with contemporary Western views of “mental health” that include autonomy, self-assertion, and the enjoyment of sexual desire, among other things (Fig. 3).

In popular Buddhism, *arhants* may become the focus of their own cults, much like Christian saints, and claims of arhantship are often made on behalf of especially holy monks. Devout laypersons seek them out to ask for favors and may wear amulets bearing their images, and the monasteries of such monks may become sites of holy pilgrimage. Again, these practices may

strike non-Buddhists as ignorant superstition (or even signs of psychological immaturity and dependence), but they make up the heart of much popular religion, and can provide comfort, a sense of community, and strengthen the hope and faith of ordinary Theravādins.

Monastic life is not for everyone, since it requires great devotion and discipline. Monastics are models for all Buddhists. They are held to high ethical standards and are often not afforded the “luxury” of privacy or personal property. While Theravāda monastic life does not entail harsh asceticism, it does amount to a life of “selfless service.” A monk must be celibate, obey a body of ancient body of rules and regulations, serve his superiors as well as laity, and adhere to a set routine. Still, the monastic life is an opportunity for powerful psychological and spiritual transformation, even the attaining of *nibbāna*. In his account of his time living in a Thai monastery, Tim Ward notes the subtle power of monastic routine to shape life and attitudes. As one senior monk tells him: “You must remember, the rules are really just the practice of mindfulness and obedience... That’s what lies behind all our postures and bowing, the gestures of offering

and holding hands together in a simple *wai* when speaking to a senior monk. They build a sense of care and beauty into a day” (Ward 1998, p. 267).

Certainly, Theravāda monasticism differs considerably from modern Western psychological training. For one thing, it does not aim at resolving internal or unconscious psychic conflicts and involves suppressing and transcending of desires. Furthermore, traditional discussions of the *arahant* ideal suggest that it entails *moral* as well as attitudinal and cognitive transformation. Moreover, paranormal and extrasensory powers are readily accepted in Theravāda tradition while most mainstream Western psychologists do *not* consider these phenomena valid or scientifically “real.” And yet, Theravāda monastic life provides an alternative, perhaps broader understanding of “psychology” that warrants serious consideration. Indeed, it is a centuries-old testament to the intertwining of body, spirit, and mind that challenges our understanding of what constitutes human well-being in the contemporary world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)

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## Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy

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It is almost a cliché for contemporary Westerners to approach Buddhism through the lens of psychology. This approach can be distorting, since Buddhism employs different models of the human mind/“self,” does not aim at producing “psychological health,” and is based on far different presuppositions about reality than we find in modern Western psychology. But it can provide a useful way to bridge what can seem like a daunting East/West chasm. Even so, it is helpful from the beginning to understand the immense variety within Buddhism, which, given a history



of over 2,500 years that includes most every major Asian culture, is probably better viewed as a *family* of diverse but interrelated religions.

Theravāda, the “Teaching of the Elders,” dates back to the second great Buddhist council held some 100 years after the Buddha’s passing in 483 BCE. Theravāda spread from India to Sri Lanka in the third century BCE, spreading throughout Southeast Asia, where it still predominates in Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos. As its name suggests, Theravāda is the most conservative of Buddhist sects. Many Theravādins maintain that they are the keepers of the “original” Buddhism; however, scholars have concluded that such claims are unfounded. But because of its conservatism, Theravāda provides a good starting point for understanding Buddhism. This entry is a basic overview of Buddhist teachings as found especially in Theravāda, using Pali terms (Pali is the sacred language in Theravāda), and stresses their psychological dimensions.

## Basic Dhamma

Initially the *Dhamma* (“teachings”; Sanskrit, Dharma) can seem confusing. While the teachings may seem abstract, they are rooted in specific situations and address common issues that plague people the world over. Thus they are not a systematic philosophy, so much as a body of guidelines meant to help us understand our world and live in a more peaceful fashion. One scholar notes, “Buddhist teaching is transformation manifesting as information” (Corless 1989, p. 217).

“Buddha” means “awakened one” – the Buddha “woke up” while the rest of us are basically asleep, ignorant of true reality. A Buddha is one who has attained *nibbāna* (lit. “blown out,” as in the “flame of ego” being extinguished; Sanskrit, *nirvāna*), a state beyond suffering. Although the Buddha declined to describe *nibbāna*, saying that it was incomprehensible for those enmired in delusion, it seems to be a way of living marked by clear understanding and acceptance of the human condition. Buddhists maintain that the

historical Buddha was not the only one to attain such a state – others preceded him and exist in other world systems. Theoretically we *all* can follow his lead and become Buddha (Fig. 1).

Buddhist teachings are rooted in traditional Indian views of existence as a continuous cycle known as *samsāra* (lit. “wandering through”), a beginning-less round of birth-and-death that encompasses all beings. Most beings, ignorant of their true nature, are pushed along blindly by *kamma* (“action”; Sanskrit, *karma*), continually subject to assorted joys and pains, death, and rebirth. However, Indian traditions also teach that one can escape *samsāra* through spiritual training, attaining liberation from suffering (Sanskrit, *moksa*). Within this basic Indian framework, Buddha laid particular stress on the notion of change. When we pay attention to experience, we see that everything is constantly changing from moment to moment. Buddha also stressed the interconnection between all factors within this ever-changing cycle. That is, all phenomena rely on each other for their being; nothing stands apart from the cycle of existence. Such interconnectedness means that all beings are bound together in an intricate web of relationships. Mostly, however, we are ignorant of this fact and instead labor under a sense of ourselves as separate individuals thrown in the midst of innumerable “others.” Invariably, such self-(mis)understanding means that we desire to preserve and protect ourselves. Such fundamental “selfishness” in turn manifests in actions motivated by hatred, delusion, and greed. According to Buddha, if we “wake up” our actions will be “free,” not born of neurotic compulsion. Attaining *nibbāna* comes from a life of good conduct and moral intention (for Buddhists *kamma* has more to do with volition rather than mechanical “doings”), as well as meditative training in which one learns to pay attention and discern what is actually the case.

The decisive feature of the Buddhist cosmos is the pervasive experience of suffering (*dukkha*; Sanskrit, *duhkha*). Life in *samsāra* means that no being is immune to loss, sadness, and death. Note that suffering refers not just to gross matters

### Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy,

**Fig. 1** Painting of the Buddha preaching his First Sermon, setting in motion the “Wheel of Dhamma” (Public Domain. Photo by Kay Ess, at Wat Chedi Liem, Burma. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/File:Sermon\\_in\\_the\\_Deer\\_Park\\_depicted\\_at\\_Wat\\_Chedi\\_Liem-KayEss-1.jpeg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/File:Sermon_in_the_Deer_Park_depicted_at_Wat_Chedi_Liem-KayEss-1.jpeg))



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of pain and sorrow but also to the fact that even joy and happiness may be unsatisfactory because they are temporary and often disappointing. All beings inevitably suffer because nothing lasts and much that occurs is beyond our control. As the Buddha said in his first sermon: Now, monks, what is the Noble Truth of suffering? Just this: Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering. Involvement with what is unpleasant is suffering. Separation from what is pleasant is suffering. Also, not getting what one wants and strives for is suffering (Strong 2002, p. 43). In other words, we could say that *samsāra* just *is* suffering, provided we remember that this suffering is our unenlightened *experience* of existence, not existence *per se*.

Buddhist teachings also detail some six “realms” of rebirth: humans, gods (*devas*), animals, hells, hungry ghosts, and *asuras* (“demonic beings”), often depicted as the *bhavacakka* (Skt. *bhavacakra*, “wheel of becoming”) lodged in the gaping maws of Mara, “Lord of *Samsāra*.” After death one is reborn in

one of these realms, depending upon one’s past *kamma*, yet since all six realms lie within *samsāra*, they are marked by constant change and suffering, to varying degrees. According to tradition, the historical Buddha himself surveyed the universe with his divine vision and perceived all beings everywhere as they were passing in and out of the many realms of rebirth. In addition, Buddhists maintain that in this life, we can experience these realms in visions, dreams, meditative states, or through memories of previous lives. However, many Buddhists understand these realms less as literal places than as psychological states. Thus, “rebirth in a hell realm” can be understood as a state of extreme fury (perhaps when someone cuts you off on the highway), while one can be “reborn in a *deva* realm” when experiencing great joy (say, when enjoying a hot fudge sundae). In fact, viewing *samsāra* as a cycle of consciousness (rather than “existence” in the grossest sense) is fully consistent with canonical texts and is especially common among advanced practitioners of meditation.





**Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy, Fig. 2** Buddha preaching the Abhidhamma to his mother and the devas in Tavatimsa Heaven. (Courtesy of Hintha. Public Domain.)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Buddha\\_preaching\\_Abhidhamma\\_in\\_Tavatimsa.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Buddha_preaching_Abhidhamma_in_Tavatimsa.jpg)

This brief overview of the *Dhamma* should suffice to highlight its psychological focus. A modern teacher sums up the *Dhamma* by quoting the famous *Dhammapada* (“Verses of the Teaching”): “‘Mind precedes all things; all things have mind foremost, are mind-made.’ Here we have the key to Buddhist Ethics, and, in fact, the whole of Buddhist teaching, for Buddhism is essentially a mind-culture” (Saddhatissa 1987, p. 22). Taking Dhamma seriously places one’s perspective in a much larger context, essentially reorienting our self-understanding. Invariably this makes one less selfish and subtly encourages an attentive yet somewhat detached attitude toward everyday experience. This basic Buddhist view has a “cooling” effect among traditional Theravādin Buddhists. Stephen Asma, an American professor who taught in Cambodia, observed this quite often during his travels and writes of what one Thai friend of his told him, “The Thai people seek to have a cool heart at all times. We don’t always achieve this goal. . . . But having a relaxed approach toward the goal is just one more aspect of the Buddha’s lesson of moderation in all things. You Westerners have such hot hearts, it’s not good” (Asma 2005, p. 7).

It is difficult in light of such comments to resist the conclusion that, broadly speaking, Theravāda

instills a more psychologically healthy orientation to ultimate reality among its more traditionalist followers in which people are more at ease than they are in more secular and commercialized societies such as the United States.

## Abhidhamma

Particularly astute monks get extensive training in the subtler levels of Dhamma, an area known as the *Abhidhamma* (“further teachings”). Unlike most of the Buddha’s sermons, the *Abhidhamma* is highly abstruse, essentially being a systematic analysis of consciousness itself. As essentially a detailed catalogue of human psychology, the *Abhidhamma* warrants the attention of anyone interested in Buddhist understandings of mind (Fig. 2).

According to legend, the *Abhidhamma* was first preached by Buddha in the heavenly realms and then passed on to Sariputta, his most intellectually gifted disciple. Eventually compiled into seven volumes, these texts supposedly reveal the natural laws governing awareness and involve sorting out mind (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*), matter (*rūpa*) in the terms of their basic properties, qualities, and the ways they interrelate to produce experience. The key to *Abhidhamma* is

analyzing phenomena down to their ultimate level, the momentary “factors” (*dhammas*), and then classifying these “factors” into seemingly exhaustive lists. *Abhidhamma* texts are impressive in scope and are still studied by scholars. Such painstaking analysis of the diverse factors involved in perception, memory, emotion, etc. helps us realize how blind we often are to various dimensions of our world, but most *Abhidhamma* is beyond those not pursuing *nibbāna* full time.

Theravāda maintains a strong tradition of *Abhidhamma* study in order to train the mind to see through the mental constructions we typically project on to the world “out there.” Skill in *Abhidhamma* study leads to an acute discriminative awareness of reality. Traditionally Theravādin *Abhidhamma* recognizes 89 *dhammas* that comprise the bases of phenomenal experience (although the lists and categories are theoretically open-ended). Unlike other schools, though, Theravādin *Abhidhamma* eschews empty speculation, focusing instead on observing the foundations of human experience. In this it resembles phenomenological studies of Maurice Merleau-Ponty or Edmund Husserl, revealing how cognition and experience are actually the result of complex processes. Theravāda *Abhidhamma* even identifies a subconscious level of mind that is a repository for *kammic* forces and thus may resemble models of the mind in Western psychoanalysis. However, unlike the work of Freud, Jung et al., *Abhidhamma* does *not* focus on curing neurosis by bringing repressed feelings and unresolved emotional conflicts to consciousness.

*Abhidhamma*, although usually reserved for advanced monastics, has important applications to daily life. Familiarity with *Abhidhamma* can help us recognize factors that give rise to some of our thoughts and emotions, especially those that are wholesome versus unwholesome. This in turn can help us decide which states to cultivate and which to avoid. *Abhidhamma* also sheds light on important Buddhist teachings such as *anattā* (“no self”). Thus *Abhidhamma*, while difficult to master, reveals how our minds function, helps us understand conditions conducive to greater

happiness and freedom, and can facilitate meditation practices.

## Abhidhamma and Psychology

Theravādin *Abhidhamma*, while seemingly very esoteric, is an integral part of meditation (*bhāvanā*, “cultivation”), something many people equate with Buddhism. More importantly from a Westerner’s perspective, the analysis of “mind” and its various states that we see in *Abhidhamma* provides an intriguing alternative to Western psychological maps of the human psyche. Ultimately, *Abhidhamma* is one of the most ancient systems of “psychology” in the broadest sense of the term – the systematic and abstract analysis by which humanity seeks to understand itself.

Perhaps it makes most sense to view *Abhidhamma* as a philosophical program of intellectual depersonalization aimed at developing emotional detachment and instilling a habitual orientation to life reinforcing Buddhist views of “no self.” Theravāda *Abhidhamma* breaks conscious experience down into a continual flow of momentary events and thus may be more akin to twentieth century *physics* than theoretical psychology (Anacker 2004, pp. 53–54). The resulting detachment, very much required for attaining *nibbāna*, can be taken to extremes and may be behind past accusations of *Abhidhamma* masters espousing a “monkish” form of Buddhism, not in keeping with the spirit of the historical Buddha. Some Buddhists have dubbed such movements “Hinayāna” (“Little Vehicle”) for their petty concerns in contrast to the theoretically more compassionate Mahāyāna (“Great Vehicle”). In general, such criticisms probably do *not* apply to Theravāda, which specifically includes practices designed to promote positive concern for others (e.g., the *Brahmaviharas*), as well as the ritual life intended to insure regular interaction with laity. Philosophically, Theravāda teachings are intended to be rooted in a direct, pragmatic approach to life.

All told, Theravāda philosophy is quite challenging, particularly with its detailed philosophical psychology. Of course, developing skill in

*Abhidhamma* does not mean a person is necessarily psychologically mature or “spiritually wise,” any more than training in Western academic psychology means that all psychologists and psychiatrists are emotionally stable and well adjusted. Yet such study provides a deep sense of the many levels and dimensions of human mental and emotional life – something that may become increasingly important in a world that so often attempts to reduce people to the level of mere “consumers” or bloodless demographic statistics. At the very least, exploring the intersection between Theravāda and Western psychology should provide much opportunity for philosophical exchange well into the foreseeable future.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Monasticism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)

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## Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation

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The most recent branch of Buddhism is Vajrayāna, sometimes called the “third turning of the Wheel of Dharma,” with Theravāda and Mahāyāna being the first and second turnings, respectively. Sometime around the third century CE, Vajrayāna teachings arose in India and spread, coming to dominate in the Himalayan region (Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, etc.). Because it is mainly confined to the Indo-Tibetan region, this discussion uses Sanskrit and Tibetan terms and emphasizes meditations and symbolism found in the *Tantras*, secret ritual texts, all of which make Vajrayāna an incredibly powerful religion, from a psychological perspective.

### Meditation

Vajrayāna meditation is typically integrated with rites and ceremonies and is based firmly on the Mahāyāna idea of all beings already having “Buddha-nature.” One meditation similar to *zazen* is “Great Perfection” (*Dzogchen*), a practice associated with the ancient Nyingma School, in which the practitioner directly realizes the pure nature of the mind. Guided by a *guru*,

the student's mind gradually calms, and he becomes aware of the "empty" nature of mental and emotional states. From there he moves to a state of pure awareness, the innately luminous mind that is "Buddha-nature." This undistracted awareness is the "essence" of *Dzogchen*, said to be like the roof of one's mind flying off, and as such experiences deepen, Buddhahood will spontaneously manifest.

Meditations involving visualization in Vajrayāna require more extensive training. Typically, a devotee concentrates on a Buddha, bodhisattva, or other deity, for whom he feels an affinity with the aid of a *mandala* ("circle," a symbolic depiction of the cosmos). At the first stage, the devotee may envision rays of light emanating from the deity in its heavenly realm, advancing to a stage of deep identification in which his consciousness is entirely absorbed into the deity's being. Such intense visualizations may lead the devotee to sense the cosmic powers flowing through the *chakras* ("wheels" of energy located at certain points of his body) and perceive himself residing at the center of the realm defined by the *mandala*. The meditation concludes by dissolving the vision into nothingness, graphically encouraging release from ego attachment.

Vajrayāna deities are themselves complex figures, having dual aspects (peaceful or fierce) according to their functions; a deity is invoked in its peaceful form to bestow blessings but in its fierce form to repel evil forces. Practitioners also invoke and unite compassion and wisdom, key virtues to achieve enlightenment, often depicted in the "father-mother" (*yab-yum*) image of deities locked in sexual embrace. The extent to which such unions were ritually enacted, however, remains unclear (Fig. 1).

Regardless Vajrayāna meditations have great potential to benefit practitioners by helping them understand and gain control of their mental and emotional lives. Tarthang Tulku, one of the first Nyingma *lamas* to emigrate to the USA, writes that meditation can lead us to discover previously unrecognized resources within ourselves, helping us to realize "that the mind is our best friend" (Tarthung 1977, p. 128).



**Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation, Fig. 1** Yab-yum image of deities Heruka and Vajravahni (Courtesy of Balaji. [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heruka\\_in\\_yab-yum\\_form.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Heruka_in_yab-yum_form.JPG))

## The Tibetan Book of the Dead

Vajrayāna shares attitudes towards death that we see in other forms of Buddhism. A Tibetan proverb states that one who does not remember the inevitability of death is like a queen – projecting an image of poise and composure while inwardly trembling with innumerable secret desires and fears. Ultimately much of the power of Vajrayāna derives from the way it helps devotees come to terms with the end of earthly existence.

One famous Vajrayāna legend is the saga of Milarepa, a story replete with suffering, magic, and violent death. The most famous scene involves Milarepa returning to his former home to confront death in the form of his mother's corpse. This event becomes the catalyst for Milarepa's spiritual quest, much like the historical Buddha. In his "autobiography" (a fictionalized retelling) Milarepa relates, "The ruins of the hearth mingling with dirt formed a heap where weeds grew and flourished. There were many



bleached and crumbled bones. I realized that these were the bones of my mother. At the memory of her I choked with emotion and, overcome with grief, I nearly fainted. . . I seated myself upon my mother's bones and meditated with a pure awareness without being distracted even for a moment in body, speech, or mind. I saw the possibility of liberating my father and mother from the suffering of the cycle of birth and death" (Lhalungpa 1977, p. 102). This scene underscores for many Buddhists the necessity of facing death and the loss it entails.

Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the foremost Tibetan thinker, saw contemplation of death as central to the *bodhisattva* path and dedicates an entire section of his classic *Great Exposition of the Stages to the Path of Enlightenment* to it. For him, human life is a precious opportunity to understand the nature of *samsāra* and achieve a better future beyond this life. He writes, "Just so, if you create an authentic and full-fledged awareness that is mindful of death, seeing that all toiling for worldly qualities such as possessions, conveniences, and fame is pithless, like winnowing chaff, and is a source of deception, you will turn away from bad activities and, through accumulating good actions, such as going for refuge and [maintaining] ethics with constant and intense effort, you will extract the essence from that which is essenceless, like the body, and will ascend to an excellent state and will lead transmigrators to it as well. What, then, could be more meaningful?" (Lopez 1998, p. 428). Again, seemingly dismal practices actually promote a positive, compassionate orientation to life.

Vajrayāna draws on Bon, the archaic shamanic religion of Tibet, in handling death. Shamans, healers among indigenous peoples in the world over, commonly aid the deceased in passing into the spirit world. The influence of Bon is particularly evident in "The Liberation through Hearing in the *Bardo*" (*Bardo Thol Dro*, commonly translated as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*), a work detailing the various stages of the *bardo*, the 49-day period between lives. Traditionally, clergy and loved ones read the *Bardo Thol Dro* to the dying (or a picture if the person is deceased) and to the deceased to help overcome attachments to his body or family, gain

insight, and understand the visions appearing after death due to the deceased's karma.

According to the *Bardo Thol Dro*, during the *bardo* the deceased faces an array of apparitions (ghosts, demons) but may also glimpse a marvelous light heralding Buddhahood itself. Advanced yogins often awaken during this stage, realizing that their visions are manifestations of their own minds to be accepted rather than rejected. More often, though, the deceased will recoil in fear and be drawn to a new rebirth. It is possible, however, that through insight gained via training or by the aid of others, the deceased can progress towards enlightenment or attain rebirth in a Pure Land. Whether such mythical descriptions are ultimately "true" or not, the *Bardo Thol Dro* is filled with mysterious and powerful imagery surrounding death and the afterlife that also helps the bereaved channel their grief while preparing for their own deaths.

## Therapeutic Dimensions

Since the mid-twentieth century, many Tibetans have fled the Chinese invasion for the West, and Tibet itself has become more accessible. Tibetan texts have been translated, thus allowing Vajrayāna to establish a foothold in the larger world as well. Because of its exotic and colorful nature, as well as the high profiles of some of its spokespeople, Vajrayāna will continue to attract attention with its possible therapeutic applications being particularly enticing.

Vajrayāna has proven quite effective in end-of-life care. A major contributor to this movement is Sogyal Rinpoche, whose book *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* reinterprets teachings and practices associated with the *Bardo Thol Dro* to help terminal patients and their loved ones become more mindful and accepting of their situation. Sogyal Rinpoche sees his work as promoting wise living and guarding humanity's future safely. His intention, he says, is "To inspire a quiet revolution in the whole way we look at death and care for the dying, and so the whole way we look at life and care for the living" (Sogyal Rinpoche 1992, p. 358).

Because women play key roles in *Tantra*, Vajrayāna may be well suited to address aspects of women's psychology. Certainly, the necessity of both male and female deities in Tantric rites suggests a more "woman-friendly" air than in many religions. This is a controversial matter, though, as the actual role of women in such rites is unclear and most Tantras are *male* centered. Yet female imagery in Tantra is undeniably empowering. Miranda Shaw in her study of women in Tantric Buddhism describes visualizations of the *bodhisattva* Tara: "As the Buddha in the center of the *mandala*, her enlightened energy and ecstasy envelope the assembly in a cloud of bliss. Her retinue of twenty-four divine yoginis consists of eight wrathful goddesses in the eight directions, six red and six green goddesses in the next tier, and four door guardianesses (sic) in the directional colors who are ornamented by snakes and trampling the Maras. Like Red Tara, the goddesses of her retinue appear ferocious but are blissful, wise, and tender beneath their ferocity" (Shaw 1994, p. 106). Such imagery can help women become formidable *bodhisattvas*, unafraid to do what is right and to help those who need their aid.

C. G. Jung, one of the founders of psychoanalysis, was famously drawn to Vajrayāna symbolism, especially *mandalas*. For Jung, *mandalas* were potent examples of circle symbolism and a powerful means for accessing the archetypal structure of the Self. Jung said, "I saw that everything, all paths I had been following, all steps I had taken, were leading back to a single point – namely, to the mid-point. It became increasingly plain to me that the mandala is the centre. It is the exponent of all paths. It is the path to the centre, to individuation. . . . I knew that in finding the mandala as an expression of the self I had attained what was for me the ultimate" (Jung 1973, p. v).

Some scholars argue that Jung's interpretation removes the *mandala* from its ritual context and renders it a universal abstraction rather than the intricate palace of a Tantric deity (Lopez 1998, pp. 145–147), but it is difficult to ignore the widespread power of *mandalas* in encouraging subconscious associations and insights (Fig. 2).



**Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation, Fig. 2** Buddhist mandala (Courtesy of [www.buddhismus.at](http://www.buddhismus.at), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandala\\_gross.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mandala_gross.jpg))

Jungian psychologist Rob Reece writes of the power of Vajrayāna to shape our understanding, saying, "When we enter the world of Tantra, we may need to loosen some of our preconceptions about the nature of reality. We begin to inhabit a twilight world where the distinctions between the material and the symbolic are less defined" (Reece 2006, p. 1). There is a decidedly playful aspect here, recalling the work of D.W. Winnicott concerning the vital need for creative "as if" approaches to the world. Taking on such a perspective not only pushes us beyond our dualistic views but also aids work with darker forces within our psyches.

The Dalai Lama often draws on his Vajrayāna background to make connections between religion and science. For example, in September of 1991, he met with physicians, psychologists, and meditation teachers to discuss the body-mind connection and its implications for health and wellness. The published transcripts explore how Buddhist views of the mind may illuminate areas



of experience that baffle Western psychologists. In a discussion on various levels of consciousness attested to in Buddhist texts, the Dalai Lama said, "My perspective on this is that there are many degrees of subtlety of consciousness, and science has looked only at the ordinary levels. So, science has merely not found the more subtle ones, which are crucial to the Buddhist presentations, and merely not finding is not enough to controvert. . . Of course, the Buddhist explanation is also not completely satisfactory – a lot of questions remain" (Goleman 1997, pp. 227–228).

The Dalai Lama's suggestion that Buddhism and psychology may complement each other has increasingly appealed to many people, be they Buddhist or not.

Vajrayāna practices also have application in the field of medicine. Herbert Benson, a pioneer of mind/body medicine, observed Tibetan monks who, in meditation, were able to raise their body temperature by some 17° and slow their metabolism by as much as 64 %. His team videotaped this practice in the winter of 1985, and his work has prompted medical exploration of ways that the "mind" can heal the "body." Ironically, such "new" medical insights have long been central to Vajrayāna tradition.

Certainly Vajrayāna has strongly influenced "New Age" spirituality and self-help movements. Among the more famous (and controversial) figures here is Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987), a lay Tibetan who founded Vajradhatu, a global network of meditation centers headquartered in Boulder, Colorado. Trungpa Rinpoche lectured and wrote many books presenting an alternative to mainstream American life – a life of simplicity and dignity best summed up in his classic *Shambhala: Sacred Path of the Warrior*:

The basic message of Shambhala teachings is that the best of human life can be realized under ordinary circumstances. . . that in this world, as it is, we can find a good and meaningful human life that will also serve others. . . At a time when the world faces the threat of nuclear destruction and the reality of mass starvation and poverty, ruling our lives means committing ourselves to live in this world as ordinary but fully human beings. The image of the warrior in the world is indeed, precisely, this (Trungpa 1984, p. 148).

This image, rooted in Vajrayāna tradition, resonates with principles and goals of humanistic and positive psychology. Trungpa Rinpoche's "spiritual warrior" may seem surprisingly down-to-earth for those convinced that Vajrayāna is all about mystical visions, violence, and sexuality.

Vajrayāna is peopled with a dizzying array of figures personifying all manner of cosmic and psychic forces. They carry us to the outskirts of sanity, revealing both the fragility and preciousness of our personalities and the various conventions governing society. At the very least, Vajrayāna offers a vast reservoir of images, symbols, and practices for transcending our self-imposed limitations that hinder the fullness of human life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals

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Followers of Vajrayāna often call it the “third turning of the Wheel of Dharma,” the idea being that Vajrayāna is the culmination of the previous two “turnings” (Theravāda and Mahāyāna, respectively). Historically, there is some truth to this view, as Vajrayāna emerged much later than those earlier sects. Sometime around the third century CE, Vajrayāna teachings arose in India and spread throughout the Buddhist world, eventually disappearing in Theravāda lands and having only a brief heyday in China. However, Vajrayāna came to dominate the Himalayan region (Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, etc.) and found a ready welcome in Japan, where it is called Shingon (lit. “true word”) and remains a major school of Buddhism.

Vajrayāna evinces no doctrinal break from Mahāyāna (it freely draws upon Mādhyamika, Yogācāra, and *Tathāgatagarbha* teachings) but reflects the infusion of practices from various Indian movements as well as the indigenous Himalayan religion of Bon. Because Vajrayāna flourishes especially in the Indo-Tibetan region,

this discussion will often use Sanskrit and Tibetan terms and emphasize innovations found in *Tantras*, texts describing complex meditations and rituals, as well as the evocative symbolism and transgressive behaviors that make Vajrayāna so distinct.

### Ritual Focus

The term “Vajrayāna” can be translated as “diamond vehicle,” emphasizing the diamond qualities of hardness, clarity, and indestructibility, but is also translated as “thunderbolt vehicle,” in reference to thunderbolt scepter (*vajra*) of the Vedic god Indra. The *vajra* symbolizes cosmic power and is usually rendered as an hourglass-shaped wand which Vajrayāna adepts use in rituals. Its prongs represent different Buddhas and its power is enlightenment itself: unbreakable yet able to shatter all spiritual obstacles (Fig. 1).

Vajrayāna draws on both Hindu and Buddhist elements. With its ritual focus, it makes great use of *mantras*, magical chants and syllables evoking great power when properly uttered. Because of this reliance on *mantras*, Vajrayāna is also known as Mantrayāna (the “*mantra* vehicle”). Particularly powerful *mantras* are closely guarded, passed from master only to qualified pupils. *Mantras* do not necessarily have to be spoken orally to be effective, and they are often written on banners hung from trees and lines or on slips of paper that are rotated in cylindrical containers called “prayer wheels.” The most famous *mantra* is the Sanskrit *Om mani padme hum* (“Hail the Jewel in the Lotus”). Vajrayāna practitioners interpret this *mantra* in diverse ways, most commonly as an invocation of the female form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, “the lady of the jewel lotus.” Like other *mantras*, this one is the aural form of the deity herself but has other layers of symbolism, be it the correspondence of each syllable to one of the Six Realms of Rebirth or the Six Perfections of the *bodhisattva* path.

Vajrayāna is also known as “esoteric” (secret) Buddhism, or “Tantric Buddhism,” due to the centrality of tantric texts and rites. Tantrism is a complex movement having both Hindu and

**Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals, Fig. 1** Vajrayāna ritual objects – *vajra* (Tibetan, *dorje*) and bell (*ghanta*) (Courtesy of the author)



Buddhist forms that developed in India in the early Common Era as a critical response to institutionalized forms of religion. Tantrism uses special rites to tap into mysterious cosmic forces often portrayed in masculine and feminine forms. These techniques (known as *sādhana*) invoke the presence of various deities and aim at uniting a practitioner with such forces for spiritual transformation. These rites tend to be available only by initiation and training at the hands of a master.

Vajrayāna uses other ritual devices such as *mudrās*, symbolic hand and finger gestures associated with particular Buddhas or *bodhisattvas*; performing a *mudrā* allows one to embody symbolically a deity and can evoke certain states of mind. *Mandalas* (lit. “circles,” symbolic diagrams of the cosmos) also help devotees attain mystical union with a chosen *bodhisattva* or Buddha. Some of the most spectacular examples of Tibetan art are the great *thanghas* (wall hangings), portraying one or more Buddhist deities geometrically arranged in chartlike *mandalas*. Such *mandalas* are often the focus of complex visualizations preceding major rituals. The effect of ceremonially garbed adepts chanting *mantras* and performing *mudrās* against the backdrop of colorful *mandalas* gives Vajrayāna rites a truly “magical” air.

Traditionally an aspiring student must undergo an initiation (*abhiṣeka*) in which the

*guru* (in Tibetan, *lama*) passes on details of the practices, transfers blessings of the relevant deities, and bestows protection from the powerful forces to which the disciple will be exposed. Initiation begins with the master undergoing a series of visualizations. In these meditations, he visualizes himself as the focal deity (*yidam*), sees the ritual objects to be used (bells, *vajras*) as instruments of enlightenment, and views an image of the deity as being suffused with the divinity’s presence. The master offers the initiate water for purification and asks him to repeat *bodhisattva* vows for the welfare of all beings – an essential prerequisite to embark on the path. Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887), a *lama* of the Nyingma school, stressed that a student must combine bodhicitta (“the mind of enlightenment”) and “vast skill in means,” writing: Tell yourself: “It is for their well-being that I am going to listen to the Dharma and put it into practice. I will lead all these beings, my parents, tormented by the miseries of the six realms of existence, to the state of omniscient Buddhahood, freeing them from all the karmic phenomena, habitual patterns and sufferings of every one of the six realms” (Patrul Rinpoche 1998, p. 8).

The disciple seals the vow by ringing a bell and displaying the *vajra*. The master then touches an image of the deity to the student’s head, visualizing the deity merging with the student’s body.

**Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals, Fig. 2**

Shingon monk performing a *goma* ceremony (Toji temple in Kyoto, 2008. Courtesy of Shii. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shingon\\_goma\\_ceremony.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shingon_goma_ceremony.jpg))



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Next, various symbols of the deity are touched to the disciple's body at sites where centers of energy (chakras, lit. "wheels") are located. The master and disciple then take hold of a rosary and the master begins chanting the deity's "heart *mantra*" to elicit the deity's compassion, visualizing the *mantra* emanating from his heart into his disciple. Finally, another series of offerings and *mudrā* seal the transmission, binding student, *guru*, and deity together. Sometimes the initiate will vow to practice this rite every day until his death.

Rites involving fire form the centerpiece of most Vajrayāna ceremonies. Known as *homa* in Sanskrit (*goma* in Japanese), these rituals derive from ancient Vedic rites that formed the foundation of early Indian society. A typical fire ceremony requires constructing an altar in the shape of a *mandala* following ancient procedures. During the ceremony, a senior monk invokes certain deities, offering grains, clarified butter, and other foods into the fire while chanting *mantras*. Other monks assist by chanting *sūtras* and beating on drums to accompany him. The various offerings placed in the fire symbolize the individual's mental and spiritual afflictions (attachments, ignorance) that the flame (symbolizing wisdom) consumes. Adepts regularly perform such fire sacrifices for the benefit of all beings (Fig. 2).

Traditional death rites in Vajrayāna also hold great psychological power. Among the most striking is "sky burial," a practice that parallels to practices among followers of Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Persia, and certain Native American peoples. A "sky burial" requires a specially trained yogi (*tomden*) and cannot be performed before outsiders. The *tomden* performs special rituals involving prayers and *mantras* before dismembering the corpse and strewing the pieces on a stone platform encircled by prayer flags. This rite is a type of sacrifice in which the *tomden* offers the flesh of the deceased to benefit other beings, following the Buddha's example in his previous lives. The vultures flocking to the feast are regarded as of *dākinīs*, fierce female "Dharma protectors." "Sky burials" are thus graphic reminders of Buddhist views of impermanence and vivid demonstrations of the essence of the *bodhisattva* path. Sometimes adepts also perform such rites *mentally*, as ritual visualizations in which they offer their bodies for the welfare of all sentient beings as a way to strengthen their altruism.

Vajrayāna tradition is filled with hallucinatory accounts of adepts meeting with various deities, often through dark rituals and being instructed in esoteric rites to bring them closer to Buddhahood.

The eleventh-century yogin Khyungpo Naljor recounts his meeting with the *dākinī* Niguma in the dead of night at a charnel ground and the intricate (and hair-raising) rites to which he is subjected: At that instant, the *dākinī* glanced suddenly about the sky, and her circle of innumerable *dākinīs* appeared from space itself . . . some of them built a *mandala* palace of three stories, some arrayed a *mandala* of colored sand . . . Then, late during the night of the full moon, she conferred on me the empowerment of the Body of Apparition and that of the Dream . . . she said, “Little monk from Tibet, arise!” and in a moment . . . we traveled three yojanas [about 24 miles]. There, in the sky above a mountain of gold, the *dākinīs* had assembled for the feast, dancing (Kapstein 1997, p. 183). The yogin goes on to relate that he journeyed to a “land of gods and demigods” where Niguma once again appeared and taught him mysterious yogic doctrines that are still taught in areas of Western Tibet.

The ultimate ideal in Vajrayāna is the *siddha* (“Accomplished One”), an adept in tantric teachings and practices who, at the popular level, resembles an *arhat* or *bodhisattva*. Between the eighth and twelfth centuries, there were 84 *Mahāsiddhas* (“Great Accomplished Ones”) in greater India who injected a dynamic spirit into the Buddhism of the time, passing these teachings down through the centuries. *Siddhas* take their names from the miraculous powers (*siddhi*) developed through meditation and rituals and typically are portrayed as wild shaman figures. *Siddhas* were crazy “wizard saints” who contact gods, cure illness, promote good harvests, or bewitch enemies and have been the focus of devotional cults. Perhaps the greatest *siddha* was Milarepa (1040–1123), a charismatic Tibetan hermit-poet who could withstand freezing temperatures in his mountain cave with complete equanimity. There were female *siddhas* as well – a feature of Tantrism that may hold clues as to its continuing attraction. Miranda Shaw notes, “The presence of women alongside the men is not an afterthought or an optional feature; it is integral to the Tantric paradigm, prized by the movement as its ideal pattern” (Shaw 1994, p. 195).

## Vajrayāna Ritual and Psychology

Although it may not be apparent, the psychological power inherent in Vajrayāna rites is difficult to overestimate. It is important to understand that Vajrayāna is ultimately a performing art, and traditionally the lives of practitioners (particularly monks) are dedicated primarily to developing performative skill. This would include not just memorizing texts and mastering ritual techniques but fostering the altruistic motivation necessary for these rites to be effective (Robinson et al. 2005, p. 288). Training for and participating in these ceremonies has great potential for shaping practitioners’ psyches since, according to theorists of performance analysis, rituals reside at the intersection of the “mental” and the “physical.” Rituals are inherently bodily and sensual even as they are symbolic and spiritual. Moreover, the artistic aspects of these rites (e.g., painting and contemplation of *mandalas*) have long attracted the interest of psychologists and therapists.

Various important psychological theorists of ritual can help us understand the significance and power of Vajrayāna rites. For example, psychoanalytic thinkers such as Sigmund Freud have focused on ritual as a mechanism dynamic to appease repressed desires and resolve internal psychic conflicts, yet others such as Bruno Bettelheim and Volney Gay argue that ritual is a way of integrating asocial tendencies and adjusting to prescribed social roles. Indeed, Gay suggests that rituals, by aiding the ego to suppress (rather than *repress*) potentially dangerous impulses, may facilitate healthy psychological and social maturation (Gay 1979). Certainly these ideas shed important light on what is really going on in Vajrayāna ceremonies.

The diverse and complex symbolic aspects of these rites continue to puzzle most outsiders but Vajrayāna texts rarely define symbols (deities, *mudras*, *mandalas*) in a final, definitive fashion. What this means is that attempts to find “*the meaning*” may be misplaced. Rather, the focus is on the doing and performance itself. Moreover, rites often have very different goals, ranging from rites of passage (which ease transitions from one



phase of life to another), to rites of intensification (which reinforce group solidarity), to rites of protection (which ward off or control threats). Typically, nearly all Tantric rituals involve these goals to varying degrees. In the end, however, the key to all rituals (certainly those in Vajrayāna) is the active involvement of performer and audience.

Tom Driver, a scholar of ritual, speaks of ritual as “efficacious performance,” by which he means that ritual involves various agencies (gods, demons, nature, the state, the psyche) but invokes them to *do* something and, in doing so, displays incredible powers of creativity: There is a profound sense, and I think not an impious one, in which the unseen powers, including deity, have been brought into being by the rituals that invoke them. Durkheim observed: “. . . if it is true that man [sic] depends upon his gods, this dependence is reciprocal. The gods also have need of man; without offerings and sacrifices, they would die” (Driver 2006, p. 97).

Driver evinces an uncannily “Buddhist” view here (cf. Yogācāra views of mind) that “explains” much of what we see in the visualizations so integral to Vajrayāna rites. Driver also points out that ritual performance is playful – a performer assumes an “as if” attitude, imaginatively constructing the sacred space and time of the ritual in which actions may have multiple personal and religious effects for those who “play along.” We can clearly see Vajrayāna ritual as prime examples of such “playful work,” and they certainly can have profound psychological effects on observers and participants. It may be interesting to consider, as well, developmental psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott’s views of play as *the* key to all creative and cultural activity (including religion), even proper and effective psychotherapy (Winnicott 2005, pp. 51ff).

Vajrayāna with its rich body of rituals explicitly includes intimacy, sexuality, gender, and embodiment – features often ignored or repressed in other religious traditions. Moreover, Vajrayāna embraces the world in its entirety, refusing to accept the distinction between

“sacred” and “profane” as anything other than the product of our own delusional thinking. *This* notion, paradoxical yet undeniably compelling, may be the true “secret” of Vajrayāna.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Monasticism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra

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Vajrayāna, the “thunderbolt vehicle,” is probably the most exotic of the three major branches of Buddhism. Much of the attraction to this style of Buddhism, both to “insiders” and “outsiders,” stems from the role of *Tantras*, texts describing complex meditations and rituals, as well as the evocative symbolism and transgressive behavior associated with them. To a large extent, these aspects reflect the infusion of non-Buddhist practices from various Indian religious movements; doctrinally speaking, Vajrayāna does not differ appreciably from Mahāyāna. Since Vajrayāna remains the dominant religion in the Himalayan region (Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, etc.), this discussion will use Sanskrit and Tibetan technical terms.

### Tantras

Often considered the secret teachings of the Buddha, the *Tantras* were likely composed more than a thousand years after the historical Buddha's passing. The term *tantra* itself is Sanskrit for “fabric/woven” and refers to practices that weave together body, speech, and mind in order to transcend *samsāra*. These practices combine meditations and rituals and aim at enabling the practitioner to attain Buddhahood as quickly as possible. A decidedly esoteric body of knowledge, the *Tantras* are written in an oblique style (“twilight language”) that requires extensive oral explanation by a master. As such, true understanding of the *Tantras* is open only to those who have undergone special initiations.

The *Tantras* themselves outline complex ritual procedures involving lengthy recitations, devotions to and visualizations of particularly deities, and yogic meditation. These practices draw on Indian theories in which a yogi learns to manipulate physical and mental energies in

order to transform the body, climaxing in a blissful state of union with pure mind. The *Tantras*, thus, are spiritual instruction manuals that, because of their power, have been closely guarded. Most scholars believe that the *Tantras* found in the Tibetan Canon also reflect influence from Bon, the indigenous religion of Tibet.

*Tantras* classify the myriads of *bodhisattvas* and Buddhas into family groups that are invoked in Vajrayāna practices. These pantheons can get quite large since each Buddha may include various emanations and will be accompanied by a *bodhisattva* and a female counterpart. In a typical ritual, the focus will be a *mandala* with the head of a particular Buddha family at the center and the other family members surrounding him, each place corresponding to the deities' cosmic connections. The ritual itself is often a group performance, with various adepts taking the roles of the members of the Buddha family arranged following the pattern of the *mandala*. Through meditations on these various deities, practitioners can experience visions that, in turn, help them gain deeper insights and powers on the way to achieving enlightenment (Fig. 1).

### Antinomian Practices

Undoubtedly much of the interest in Tantra is due to its transgressive and antinomian nature. Because of the wondrous tales of *siddhas* (adepts), superficial readings of some texts, and the centrality of sexual symbolism in certain rituals, Vajrayāna has a reputation for encouraging wild behavior. There is some justification for this view. Passages in some *Tantras* speak of practitioners eating meat, drinking liquor, committing murder, having sexual intercourse, and even devouring human flesh – all violations of Buddhist precepts and universal taboos. Certainly rumors of “Left-handed” Tantric communities enacting such things have excited non-initiates. Some Vajrayāna practices are regarded as karmically dangerous, since devotees must engage in passionate acts (albeit in dispassionate states). Finally, traditional Vajrayāna art, with its depictions of wrathful deities (often in the midst



**Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra, Fig. 1** Tibetan *thangka* depicting Vajradhara and his retinue (Public Domain. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hevajra-Tibetan.jpg>)

of sexual intercourse), has aroused the interest of outsiders for years because of their seemingly pornographic nature.

During the ninth and tenth centuries, an antisiddha movement arose in some circles, taking the inversion inherent in Vajrayāna to an extreme. Sometimes called the *Sahajayāna* ("Spontaneous Vehicle"), this movement advocated egotistical pleasure as the path to enlightenment beyond all dualities. One of these legendary adepts, who freely indulged in drunkenness, sexual license, and mixing with low caste peoples, proclaimed, "Here there's no beginning, no middle, no end, no *samsāra*, no *nirvāna*. In this state of supreme bliss, there's no self and no other" (Robinson et al. 2005, p. 135). Ultimately much of this movement was tamed and reabsorbed into Vajrayāna, but its influence, particularly in popular lore, has proven tenacious.

Widely publicized stories of the shocking behavior of several contemporary Tantric *gurus* (e.g., Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and his successor, Ösel Tendzin) have only strengthened this reputation.

Vajrayāna sexual rites are especially provocative. Tantra commonly teaches that sexual passion is a tool that when used properly can propel aspirants to Buddhahood. Some texts proclaim that attaining enlightenment *requires* sexual practice with a consort. One *Tantra* states:

The secret path without a consort  
Will not grant perfection to beings.  
Thus, attain enlightenment  
By applying oneself most diligently  
To the activities of erotic play  
(quoted in Stevens 1990, p. 142).

In the same spirit, some texts even claim that the historical Buddha's awakening was ultimately the result of his sexual experiences with his wife. To what extent such statements have been taken literally has varied tremendously. The so-called "Right-hand" Tantra (the more "mainstream") interpreted discussion of masculine and feminine powers and their accompanying rites symbolically, while "Left-hand" Tantra allegedly acted such things out. Tantric rites included ritual unions where the partner was visualized as a deity; a non-celibate couple would envision themselves as divine being and consort. The goal was to confront lust, master it, and by harnessing its energy, transcend to enlightenment. Needless to say, "Left-hand" Tantric practices earned a bad reputation in various quarters, encouraging Tantric Buddhism to go "underground" and become a secret tradition.

Regardless of the truth behind such stories, the "logic" informing these rites has been well tested over centuries. By drawing on and understanding the passions rather than fighting them, a *tāntrika* (tantric practitioner) can overcome them, rather like fighting fire *with* fire, or, to use a more traditional metaphor, like using a poisonous plant to concoct a powerful medicine. As one *Tantra* states, "Those things that bind people of evil conduct, others use as a skillful means to gain freedom from the bonds of *samsāra*. The world is bound by passion, but by passion too it can be

freed!" (*Hevajra Tantra*, II, 2.50–2.51. Quoted in Mitchell 2007, p. 162.). The key is the careful and patient guidance of a master. Yet there can be no doubting the dangers of evoking and working with such potentially destructive forces. Evidence suggests that actual practices of sexual yoga have been rare (perhaps only among the most advanced yogins), with most Tantric practitioners remaining celibate. Of course this very danger is part of Tantra's attraction – it is invariably exciting to "take a walk on the wild side."

### Psychological and Therapeutic Dimensions

Tantra has long posed problems for Westerners, both scholars and the general public. Certainly much of this is due to its startling imagery and wild reputation, but problems also arise because Tantra is so often presented as an exotic/erotic curiosity divorced from cultural and ritual context. C. G. Jung is a Western scholar who is especially guilty here. Fascinated by the "Mystic East" in true orientalist fashion, Jung was also ambivalent (particularly about how meditation seemed, in his view, to bypass the emotions) about it even while drawing deeply on Vajrayāna in his analysis of "mandala symbolism." Such criticism does not deny important insights from Jung's work, only to point out how it bears traces of a colonialist attitude, treating Tantra as another resource to be exploited for the enrichment of Europeans with little attempt at understanding it on its own terms.

There are even greater dangers with the popular "Tantra" peddled by entrepreneurs such as Osho-Rajneesh, the infamous "Guru of the Rich," and like Margo Anand. According to these modern "masters," Tantra is "spiritual sex" ("nooky *nirvana*") that can be learned through a series of expensive workshops, videos, etc. As scholars have shown, this type of "Tantra" discards the traditional mythic and ritual trappings, focusing on sexual techniques sprinkled with large doses of "self-help," all packaged and marketed to a consumer audience (Urban 2012).

Theorists of feminist psychology are often drawn to Tantra and, although this was not a focus of Tantra in its original context, there is something very intriguing here. Female imagery abounds in Tantric art, and Vajrayāna is more attractive to women than other types of Buddhism. According to Rita Gross, a feminist scholar of Buddhism, views of women in Vajrayāna are "much more favorable than in any earlier form of Buddhism and among the most favorable attitudes found in any major religion in any period of its development" (Gross 1993, p. 1980). Miranda Shaw, a scholar who has extensively investigated the place of women in Buddhist Tantra, goes even further, arguing that Tantric Buddhist theory is based on the affirmation of women as embodiments of Tantric goddesses such as Vajrayoginī. Shaw notes that:

Vajrayoginī repeatedly states that she reveals herself in and through women. She claims that all forms of female embodiment – including supernatural beings, women of all castes and forms of livelihood, female relatives, and female animals – participate in her divinity and announces: *Wherever in the world a female body is seen, That should be recognized as my holy body* (Shaw 1994, pp. 40–41).

Critics, of course, argue that most Tantras are written from a *male* perspective and assume that the ideal practitioner is also male, yet Shaw points out that Tantric movements first began outside of the established male-dominated social institutions and were open to women and members of lower castes. Only later, as Tantra spread into universities and monasteries, was it "co-opted" by patriarchal powers. Moreover, over the years various female adepts (few of whom were the "wild" figures of Western imagination) have been the center of important local cults. A good example is Orgyan Chokyi (1675–1729), a nun from the Nepal/Tibetan area of Dolpo, whose "autobiography" provides a window on the travails of monastic life yet demonstrates deep compassion and insight. After her death, Orgyan Chokyi was designated a *dakini* (female Dharma protector), her remains enshrined in a *stupa*, and her life is commemorated in local festivals, dances, and oral retellings



**Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Tantra, Fig. 2** Image of a Tantric yoginī from a Tibetan *mandala* (Public Domain. <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vajravarahi.JPG>)

well into the late twentieth century (Schaeffer 2004). Her legacy evinces a “grass roots” women-centered focus in Tantra that might surprise many scholars (Fig. 2).

In psychological terms, Tantra seeks to confront the passions rather than deny or repress them. Much as in psychoanalysis, this amounts to coming to terms with the id (the repository of instinctual drives) and/or the shadow (the negative aspects of our unconscious self). And just as in therapy, Tantric training traditionally takes place over an extended time in controlled environments, under careful supervision. Moreover, evidence suggests that overwhelmingly these rites have been conducted *mentally*, through visualizations, and are not about giving free reign to the passions. Rather, the training involves transmuting and sublimating the energy of lust, anger, and/or fear but redirecting it for constructive ends.

Another way to look at Tantra is as a paradoxical inversion of generally accepted social and cultural norms. Its complex techniques are designed to be employed as a way to confront deeply entrenched expectations surrounding “religion,” “asceticism,” and “morality,” as well as the various attachments (emotional, institutional) that often accompany them. Unlike Western psychotherapy, however, Tantra does not focus on accepting desire as “natural” and “healthy” but works through desire towards a “desirelessness” state of awakening. This ultimate intention marks a seemingly unbridgeable divide between the two systems.

Even more interestingly, it may be that Tantra requires intentionally undergoing bouts of insanity. An example is in the practices of the “Great Perfection,” wherein the practitioner gives himself over to all the impulses arising into consciousness (Germano 1997, pp. 317–318). The idea is to transcend ordinary (false) “self” by entering into a frenetic period of intensely “samsaric” states, eventually leading to bodily and mental exhaustion known as “settling into naturalness” (*rnal dbab*). As one scholar describes:

It is essential that one yields to impulses in immediate and abrupt ways, rather than mentally directing and structuring activities. For example, one jumps and prowls like a wolf, howls like a wolf, and imitates its thought patterns . . . or one pretends to be a mass murderer and then suddenly switches to the outlook of a self-sacrificing saint. . . In short, one lets oneself go crazy physically, verbally, and mentally in a flood of diverse activity, so that by this total surrender to the play of images and desire across the mirroring surface of one's being, one gradually comes to understand the very nature of the mirror itself (Germano 1997, p. 318).

The key in such practice is maintaining detached awareness, even as this frenzy goes on. The time for such practice varies, but it typically entails several days of intense manic activity, briefly punctuated by moments of rest from all activity to “gaze directly at the mind.” The goal is ultimately to pacify mental obstructions, purify oneself of negativity, and awaken into the essence of Buddha. In Western psychological terms, this practice seems to



involve intentionally cultivating a dissociative disorder, or even psychotic state. There may be some resemblance to the existentialist psychologist R.D. Laing's experiences and practices regarding schizophrenia (Laing 1967), but these sorts of practices would likely NOT be considered acceptable in Western clinical settings.

The role of the guru (Tibetan, *lama*) in Tantra also presents difficulties to outsiders. Idolization, or taking refuge as living Buddha, would seem to foster an unhealthy dependency to the point of infantilization and certainly is open to abuse (of which there are documented cases). Once more, these issues are particularly problematic when it comes to sexual yoga: how is it possible for a student to tell if his *lama* is truly qualified here? The current Dalai Lama once stated in an interview that only teachers who had no sexual desire whatsoever and whose equanimity was so great that they could drink a glass of urine as willingly as a glass of wine are advanced enough for sexual yoga with a consort. When pressed further, he also admitted he could not name any *lamas* he thought were at this level (Coleman 2001, p. 159).

Clearly the nature of Tantra is such that it poses major problems in a contemporary Western setting. In recent decades Vajrayāna has become increasingly prominent in the West, due to Tibetans fleeing their homeland in the wake of the Chinese invasion, the growing interest in "the East" since the 1960s and 1970s, and the high profile of Buddhist spokespeople such as the Dalai Lama. Many Tibetan texts have been studied and translated as well, and Tibet itself has become more accessible. For all these reasons and more, Vajrayāna promises to continue to attract popular attention. There can be no doubt that part of the attraction is the immense psychological power of Tantra. Vajrayāna is peopled with a dizzying array of figures personifying all manner of cosmic and psychic forces. Immersing ourselves in it carries us to the very outskirts of sanity, revealing both the fragility and preciousness of our personalities and the various conventions governing society.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Bodhisattvas](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Monasticism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

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## Buddhist Death Rituals

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Nothing has more power than the stark fact of death to challenge our sense of embodied selfhood and our deep-seated need to cling onto life at all costs, sometimes even in the midst of much physical and mental pain. And nothing is more important for the Buddhist practitioner who accepts that there is continuity of consciousness after death than to understand and come to terms with that process of dying and its aftermath, gateway to the next life with its ever-fluctuating cycles of pleasure and pain. And for those left behind there is the strong wish not only to come to terms with the loss, but even more to perform actions that aid and guide the consciousness to a happy state of rebirth within the six realms.

Buddhist death rituals are the outcome of a profound understanding of the entire process of dying, death, intermediate state (Tibetan *bardo*), and rebirth and aim to steer the dead person's mind away from confused projections that are regarded as the result of intentional action or karma motivated by ignorance, towards more clear, peaceful, and wholesome mental experience so that the person can achieve a human rebirth or higher in which the spiritual path can again be taken up on the journey towards personal liberation, *nirvana*, or the full enlightenment of a Buddha.

Although the numbers of rituals across the spectrum of the Path of the Elders or *Theravada* and Great Vehicle or *Mahayana* Buddhism may go into hundreds or even thousands, there would no doubt be a consensus that these rituals are, in the case of evolved practitioners, mainly for the

benefit of the living. A realized person does not need a ritual of any kind to help them, for they can effect a happy passage to the next state of embodiment through the power of, for example, their genuine experience of love and compassion, their single-pointed mind of concentration (*samadhi*), deep faith in the Buddha and the teacher or *Guru* (literally “one who is heavy with knowledge”), and in some cases their ability to practice the technique of mind-transference or *phowa* at the time of death, enabling the practitioner to guide their own mental continuum to a pure land of bliss where a kind of effortless spiritual development is assured (Lama Yeshe 2011). In such a case all the rituals mentioned later in this entry are largely for the living to generate positive spiritual energy or merit and for their own peace of mind.

Needless to say, however, for the vast majority of more ordinary beings, certain rituals, prayers, and recitations are said to be crucial in helping the often disoriented consciousness of the dying/dead person to make a smooth transition to the next life.

## The Stages of Death

It is essential to know the death process, (Rinpoche and Hopkins 1985), so the caregiver/ritual performer can gauge the stage the dying person has reached. For example, at the first stage of the so-called dissolution of the earth element, the body becomes thin and weak, the sight unclear, and the person is said to experience an inner appearance like a mirage. In the second stage, the water element dissolves, fluids dry up, mental and physical feelings become very vague, sounds cease, and there is an internal appearance like thin wispy smoke. Then the fire element dissolves, digestion and mental discrimination cease, one can no longer smell, and there is an internal appearance like sparks within smoke. Next the air element dissolves, respiration ceases, physical movement is impossible, and there is an inner appearance like a flickering flame about to go out. At this point one would be pronounced dead by a modern allopathic doctor.



However, from a Buddhist perspective subtle consciousness may reside up to three days in the body, as the consciousness proceeds, or rather one should say, *dissolves*, to more and more subtle levels, experiencing inner visions of white and red light, then an appearance of darkness followed finally by the subtlest level which is like a very clear vacuity likened to an autumn dawn, called *the clear light of death or ground luminosity* (Dalai Lama 2002).

### Rituals and Practices for the Dying and the Dead

The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Coleman and Jinpa 2007; Sogyal Rinpoche 2008) and the teachings in it, which are often recited out loud over the body of the deceased, are a time-honored guide aimed at steering the mind of the deceased through the labyrinth of mental projections and Buddha archetypes that one may face in the state between death and rebirth, a period that may extend, it is said, up to a maximum of 49 days. Every day up to the 49th monastics may be asked to perform prayers and ritual offerings or *pujas*, or at least every seventh day until the 49th. The reciter reminds the person that they are dead, exhorts them to exercise mindfulness and not be afraid, to recognize all that appears as merely a display of the mind. The text also gives advice on what sort of pitfalls may arise, how to tackle them, which visions to follow and which to avoid in order to prevent an inappropriate rebirth. Such recitation of this seminal text, said to originate from the great adept Guru Padmasambhava in the eighth century CE, (Tsogyal 1993), may continue up to the 49th day after death.

Practices for death are most effective in a serene environment and emotional displays of grief are not encouraged. Mental balance and compassion for the departed having been generated, certain prayers and mantras are then chanted or recited out loud or quietly according to the particular practice. Here are some important ones from the Mahayana tradition of Buddhism:

1. The King of Prayers or the Extraordinary Aspiration of the Practice of Samantabhadra, is a very comprehensive prayer outlining the aspirations and practices of the Bodhisattva, a remarkable being who takes responsibility to attain Buddhahood in order to save all suffering beings from the repetitive round of uncontrolled death-rebirth, *samsara*. Reciting this creates much merit which is then dedicated to the welfare and happiness of the deceased.
2. The Dedication chapter of Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, (Padmakara Translation Group 2008), renowned for its vast and compassionate vision, acts in much the same way as the preceding prayer.
3. Prayers to be reborn in pure lands, such as that of Amitabha (Yeshe 2011), or other Buddhas.
4. Prayers to be able to continue one's spiritual practice in future lives, to meet up with qualified wise and compassionate teachers again and again, and to traverse all the stages of the path up to the attainment of Buddhahood itself.
5. Mantras, literally sacred syllables that have the power to protect the mind, are also recited. The practitioner then may blow on water, powder, or sesame seeds which are then sprinkled over the dead body (Lama Zopa Rinpoche 2008).
6. A blessed cord from a realized Lama, a sheet of paper inscribed with mantras and a *stupa* or reliquary filled with blessed substances and mantras are laid near or touching the body.
7. The body is not moved unnecessarily and at the right time any hair at the crown of the head is given a firm tug. This facilitates the ejection of the consciousness from that spot, which is considered auspicious for a fortunate rebirth.
8. The ashes and bones of the deceased can be blessed and consecrated in a practice called *jangwa* and then put into stupas.
9. The relatives of the deceased may sponsor the making of statues or small images of the Buddhas, (*tsa-tsas*), as well as paintings and the printing of texts, prayer flags. Donations to Buddhist temples and monasteries are also popular.

Last but by no means least, it's considered very powerful (and even essential, by some Lamas) to engage as much as possible in practices relating to the Medicine or Healing Buddha (skt. *Bhaisajyaguru*), the manifestation of Buddha energy especially dedicated to be of great benefit at this time when there is said to be a greater profusion of sickness, disease, and conflict rooted in destructive emotional patterns in the minds of living beings. There are short, medium, and long *Sutra* Rituals of the Medicine Buddha, the recitation of which can take from an hour to a whole day or longer depending on the text and the thoroughness of the practitioners. The mantra of the Healing Buddha is also recited extensively for its power to protect beings from unfortunate rebirth and plant the seeds of spiritual practice and the highest attainment of enlightenment (Lama Zopa Rinpoche 2001).

in wholesome, spiritual actions sanctioned by the tradition and that these actions have beneficial effects that can be shared as it were with the consciousness of the departed. In all this we see how the profound and potentially traumatic event/process of dying and death is utilized as catalyst for activity aimed at benefitting the deceased short and long term, in addition to providing scope as therapeutic practice that enhances the spiritual inspiration of the living and engenders a mature acceptance of the inevitable. In some cases it is suggested that practices for the dead can continue years after death has occurred and still bring tremendous benefit. For this of course one needs the right practice, the right practitioner, a sufficient degree of attentional stability and a proper motivation of compassion allied with wisdom understanding the nature of reality (Dalai Lama 2008).

## Rituals from the Theravada Tradition

These rituals are largely aimed at the same outcomes as above and mainly differ in terms of which texts are recited. While reciting, the monks may link a ribbon from the text they are reciting to the dead body, thus effecting a transfer of subtle spiritual vibration to the deceased. For the purpose of generating meritorious potential, it is not uncommon to sponsor the printing, publication, and free distribution of pamphlets and books of the Buddha's teachings. Feeding of the community of monks or sangha (and increasingly nuns also in the Mahayana domains) is also encouraged in order to generate a spirit of generosity and largesse that adds to the positive atmosphere in the days following death when the mind of the deceased can still be influenced in a beneficial manner by a variety of positive actions and protective measures (Langer 2007).

Underlying all these rituals is the firm belief that transfer of merit is possible (Gombrich 1987). This means essentially that people with a close connection to the deceased as well as those with pure ethics and motivation can engage

## See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Karma](#)
- ▶ [Samsara and Nirvana](#)

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# C

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## Cailleach

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### Mythological Background

This mythic old woman appears under various names, most derived from Cailleach (Carlene, Cally, Cally Berry, Gy-Carling), a word generally translated as “hag” but which can also be rendered as the more contemporary “crone.” She is also known by personal names that refer to geographical regions (Garravogue, Echthge, Duineach, Corca Dhuibhne, Bronach, Nicnevin, Boi). Among many Irish geographical sites named for the Cailleach is the Ceann na Cailleach (“Head of the Cailleach”), also known as the Cliffs of Moher. Local legend holds that Cailleach was pursuing a young man with sexual intent, when her speed carried her over the edge of the cliffs and into the sea. Supposedly, her face can be seen on the most southerly of the cliffs. The deadly cliffs suggest something about the psychology of Cailleach’s ancient goddess legends here, paradoxically combining erotic excitement with end-of-life anguish. Many ancient goddesses included life and death in their scope (Fig. 1).

The Cailleach probably descends from a pre-Celtic divinity; she is not found among the

continental Celts, but her lore is widespread in place names and legends in Ireland and Scotland. Her antiquity is suggested by the names born by the largest mountains in those lands (Slieve na Cailleach, Knockycallanan) and by legends that she created the landscape by dropping rocks from her apron or throwing them angrily at an enemy. Creation legends often are attached to the oldest divinities of a land, and settlement in Ireland preceded the Celts by some 4,000 years. The Cailleach was said to have formed the islands off the southwest coast by towing land around with a straw rope; it broke and left the islands of Scariff and Deenish behind. Another tale tells how she struck an escaping bull with a rod as it swam away from her, turning it into an island of rock. The Cailleach was especially associated with high mountains, which often bear her name, most significantly the site of the important megalithic sanctuary, Slieve na Cailleach.

Although descriptions emphasize her age and ugliness (blue face, red teeth, and matted hair), the Cailleach was also renowned for her vigor and sexuality. In Ireland, she owned a farm and hired workers with the stipulation that none would be paid who could not outwork her. Many died of overwork trying to keep the pace she set. She appears in an important Irish myth in which Niall of the Nine Hostages boldly kissed a loathsome hag, at which she transformed herself into a beautiful young woman who controlled the land’s sovereignty – a motif that has been interpreted as a poetic image of the land blossoming under the rule of a just king.

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Patricia Monaghan: deceased.

**Cailleach, Fig. 1** Ceann na Cailleach (“Head of the Cailleach”), also known as the Cliffs of Moher (Public Domain. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lightmatter\\_cliffs\\_of\\_moher\\_in\\_County\\_Clare\\_Ireland.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Lightmatter_cliffs_of_moher_in_County_Clare_Ireland.jpg))



A similar figure, the Loathly Lady, appears in Arthurian legend.

The Cailleach is associated with harvest rituals, her name given to the last sheaf cut, which was dressed in women’s clothing and kept as a charm for prosperity. The hag was also said to appear as a hare or other small creature; a shout went up from the harvesters as they approached the end of a field to “drive the Cailleach” into the next field. Such legends connect the Cailleach with agriculture, but some traditions suggest an earlier origin. In Scotland, a giant Cailleach lived on the milk of a deer. She guarded the wilderness and its animal life, punishing hunters who killed pregnant animals by choking them with their own hair. This figure, who resembles Greek Artemis, may derive from a separate aged goddess conflated to the Cailleach. This figure, called the Hag of the Hair or the Hag of the Long Teeth, was often accompanied by monstrous cats. In a story told in Scotland, the Cailleach befriended a hunter, permitting him to see which deer she struck in her herd, thus marking it as prey.

## Psychology

Jungian theory describes “the feminine” and “the masculine,” arguably essentialist visions of primal forces within both men and women that are

reflected in world mythology and in art. Articulation of “the feminine” relies primarily on the work of Toni Wolff, Jung’s student and lover whose work was unfortunately subsumed under his name after her early death (Wolff 1956). In the United States, Anne Ulanov has been the primary popularizer of Wolff’s theory that there are four aspects to “the feminine,” which she describes as Mother, Amazon, Hetaira (courtesan), and Medial Woman (medium) (Ulanov 1971). In Wolff’s schema, the Mother and Amazon occupy opposite poles, while the Hetaira opposes the Medial Woman. Within this framework, the powerful sensuality of the Cailleach has no place, a lack that tends to be reflected in contemporary Jungian writers like Helen Luke; Jean Shinola Bolen is an exception to this trend (Bolen 2002).

Jung and Wolff based their work on available narratives and images from world mythology, which in fact does not offer many images of vital, creative, and sexual aging. The reason for such lack is unclear, as there is ample sociological and anthropological evidence that such women have existed throughout history and culture. If our gods reflect our lives, there should be many more enticing and creative crone goddesses. Selective recording of myths may have resulted in Cailleach-like divinities being excluded from the record or goddesses being interpreted according to limited or negative stereotypes of women’s aging.

Typically, kindly “crone” goddesses are described as sexless, even beyond gender; thus we find Hestia, ageless Roman goddess of community life, and Hebrew Sophia, similarly beyond age and gender but embodying wisdom. Many other aged goddesses are frightening, such as the Russian cannibal Baba Yaga and the child-stealing Bella Coola (Native Canadian) goddess Snēnē’ik; it is possible that the original figures were more complex and that this limited vision represents later more patriarchal cultural values. A few figures offer more complex iconography or mythology, such as Hindu Kali who, despite wearing a necklace of severed heads, is honored as the consort of the creator god Shiva. The Cailleach offers a similarly multivalent image of the aging woman: undeniably aged, she remains physically strong, with huge appetites for sex and food, and bursting with creative power.

The American women’s spirituality movement has developed a ceremony honoring the postmenopausal period of a woman’s life. Called a “croning,” the event typically celebrates the promise of a woman’s aging years as full of passion and power. Although such ceremonies are frequently tied to the cessation of menses at menopause, many women wait until retirement or completion of family duties to decide that they will accept the term “crone.” The ceremonies are individually created, with no specific template other than the needs of the woman in question. Commonly, an altar is erected, often decorated with photographs of inspiring aged women; the event itself can include meditation, drumming or other music, and a symbolic passing over by the new crone from one state of being to the next. The Cailleach is an increasingly popular image invoked at croning events.

## See Also

- ▶ [Celtic Religions](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Wicca](#)

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## Cain and Abel

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Cain, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, is the first human being born on the earth, the first child of Adam and Eve who were created out of the dust of the earth by God. Qur’an tells a similar, although not identical, story of Cain and Abel. The name Cain in Hebrew means “I have gotten a man from the Lord.” Cain was a tiller of the land as was his father, Adam, following Adam’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden. In the course of time, a younger brother, Abel, was born. The once only child now became an oldest child. Unlike his father and his older brother, Abel became a shepherd of sheep.

The day comes when Cain and Abel each bring offerings to God. God finds Abel’s offering



acceptable, but God finds Cain's gift unacceptable. Many have speculated as to why one offering was acceptable and the other not. Perhaps this reflects a culture that valued pasturing animals over that of land-based farming. Perhaps it is because Abel brings the first of his animals while it is not specified if Cain's offering was the first fruits. Maybe it shows God valuing younger, less powerful people at the expense of the older or more influential. This theme is not uncommon in Hebrew scripture. Jacob is the younger of two sons but becomes the inheritor of their father's estate as well as the father of Israel. Likewise, King David was chosen to be king of Israel over and against his older brothers.

The fact is that we cannot know for certain the reason for the rejection of Cain's offering. But, from my point of view, the more interesting question is how Cain reacted to this rejection.

One can glimpse the family system approach of Bowen in Cain's reaction. Reminiscent of his father, Cain seeks to externalize his difficulties. Adam, when confronted by God for his eating of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, seeks to blame Eve and, by extension, God himself for his failing. Likewise Cain sees the fault in Abel and somehow seems to believe that the death of his brother will make his offering acceptable. Instead, he gains further isolation, and his brother's blood even poisons the earth. True to Bowen, the toxins of a sick family trickle down and contaminate the family in subsequent generations as well as affect the superfamily system.

One may also gain a foreshadowing of Alfred Adler's examination of birth order in this story. In Adlerian thought, the oldest child is an achiever who considers subsequent children as a threat to his place in the world. In this particular account, the older brother is indeed supplanted in worth by the little brother. This ancient story is a tale of sibling rivalry within the context of a fallen family contaminated by parental sins. Cain is ultimately trying unsuccessfully to please a creator father while staving off the rivalry of a brother and suffering from the contamination of his human father.

Cain's reaction to this rejection is murder and the subsequent estrangement from the only community that he loved. Here we see a personality

disorder as described by Rotter. Had Cain developed a mature personality with a strong internal control mechanism, he might have avoided becoming a murderer.

Cain, with a stronger personality, with the strength to reject his family pattern might have received the answer that we find unanswerable, "God what can I do to make my sacrifice acceptable?" He might have altered his history and not become the world's first murderer.

## See Also

- ▶ [Adler, Alfred](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Genesis](#)

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## Call, The

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The call to adventure is the first stage in the monomyth, when the hero is summoned to undertake a quest. The monomyth is a pattern of hero quest narrative developed by Joseph Campbell in

*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* from a host of fairy tales, myths, and other sacred tales that span millennia and cultures. Campbell points out that not all hero quest narratives contain all the features of the monomyth, but the call to adventure is omnipresent in these narratives. Sometimes the hero only recognizes the summons in hindsight, and if the tale has a trickster element, it may be well hidden. A helpful and wise guide sometimes explains the call to the prospective quester, but it may also appear, as in some Biblical examples, to be an incomprehensible demand outraging common sense. The call may summon the hero towards a specific task, such as killing a dragon; it may take the form of an epiphany, profoundly transforming the individual's perceptions and understanding of self and the world; some calls to adventure are aversive, when the hero's dissatisfaction with the status quo propels him or her into a quest for change. The call always announces the prospect of change, whether for a kingdom or an individual soul.

The monomyth hero quest can also be understood as guidelines for the psychological hero quest that, in Jungian thinking, every psyche should undertake. The call for adventure would then be a summons alerting the psyche to unconscious contents that are ready for the work of integration that Jung terms individuation. In this sense, the call to adventure may come in such forms as a generalized dissatisfaction with ordinary everyday life or disturbing dreams, an illness, or retrenchment from a job. Jung's *Red Book* begins with his personal account of one such hero quest, beginning with a call to adventure in the form of a recurrent, disturbing waking dream or vision. While the mythic monomyth very often involves a youthful hero, the Jungian hero quest can be undertaken at any age. The hero in the mythic monomyth is an extraordinary individual, but for Jung, the hero quest is a path available for all human beings, since all have a shadow in need of integration. As Campbell's pattern shows, while individual hero quest stories may deal with only one quest and have a "happy ever after" ending, the hero

quest as a pattern should be regarded as cyclic. When one quest is ended, the next call to adventure may well occur. For the individual psyche, the call to adventure, to recognize and integrate shadow contents, is not a call to achieve complete integration then and there; for Jung, there is always more shadow to emerge and be integrated.

### See Also

- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)

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## Calvinism

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Calvinism refers to a particular understanding of the Christian faith and an approach to the Christian life first articulated by the French Protestant theologian, John Calvin (1509–1564). Subsequently, it has been upheld in Protestant Christianity's reformed tradition by persons such as John Knox (Scotland), John Bunyan (Britain), and Jonathan Edwards (America) (McGrath 2007).

Calvinism has five basic beliefs: (1) Humanity is totally deprived due to original sin, (2) God unconditionally elected those who will be saved to receive eternal life, (3) Jesus Christ has died for

those who were elected by God, (4) the Holy Spirit pours irresistible grace over those saved, and (5) believers will persevere and are eternally saved in Jesus Christ. For Calvinists, the sovereignty of God reigns over all aspects of a person's life: personal, spiritual, intellectual, political, and economical. Education informed by Calvinist dogma is important as is distinguishing the sacred from the secular (Spencer 2002).

Calvin believed that knowledge of self – realizing one's depravity and need for salvation – and knowledge of God lead to wisdom (McMinn and Campbell 2007). Following their founder, Calvinists generally judge psychologies harshly in light of God's sovereignty and humanity's deprivation. They often question the philosophical foundations and models of personhood, health, and abnormality of most psychologies (Browning and Loder 1987).

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Evangelical
- ▶ Fundamentalism
- ▶ God
- ▶ Holy Grail
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Protestantism

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## Camino de Santiago

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The Camino de Santiago (*The Way of Saint James*) is a 1,000 km route used by pilgrims for over 1,100 years to reach the Christian holy site of Santiago de Compostela. One of three major Christian pilgrimage routes popular in medieval times, the Camino leads from the Pyrenees on the border of France and Spain through northern Spain to the legendary site of the remains of Saint James, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, beneath the altar of the Cathedral of Santiago. A 100 km portion of the Camino extends west from Santiago de Compostela to Finisterre on the Galician coast of western Spain. Finisterre was known to the Romans as “Finis Terrae” for it was the end of the known world in their time.

Santiago de Compostela was founded in the ninth century as a sacred site associated with the Apostle James. A shower of falling stars had led a hermit to a buried marble tomb containing bones identified by a local bishop as the remains of St. James, seizing upon the discovery as an opportunity to increase the devotion of local peasants. Alfonso II, king of the region of Asturia, made pilgrimage to the site and in 814 CE built a small wooden chapel as a resting place for the relics.

At first, the chapel at Santiago de Compostela was only a place of local pilgrimage for those within less than a day's travel. Increased attention to Compostela came as a result of a victory over Muslim invaders in 844 CE. Christian troops had called on St. James for aid in battle and subsequently routed the invaders. St. James was given credit for the victory, became known as “The Moorslayer”, and was celebrated as a heroic protector and patron saint of Spain. Loyal Spaniards now had motivation to travel great distances on pilgrimage to honor St. James at Compostela.

Soon, the small wooden chapel was enlarged to become a Basilica and the center of a new Archbishopric.

From its founding in the tenth century through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Camino pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela grew in popularity along with other pilgrimage routes. From the first days after Jesus Christ's death, travel to Jerusalem and to sites connected with his life and death was undertaken as a way of paying homage and seeking spiritual renewal. After Constantine's fourth-century edict making Christianity a state religion, pilgrimages to Rome and other sites were considered equally as efficacious as those to Jerusalem. When travel to Jerusalem became more complicated with the rise of Islam and eventually the Crusades, pilgrimages continued to increase, but the focus shifted to less dangerous sites. By the twelfth century, the number of pilgrims on the Camino rivaled those who traveled to Rome or Jerusalem.

Pilgrimage on the Camino was not an easy journey. Through its early history, the Camino was rural, lacked roads or amenities, and involved a journey of a year or more. In the ninth and tenth centuries, pilgrims risked death at the hands of robber bands, could be attacked by Muslim Moors who had conquered southern and central Spain, often contracted and died from plague and other infectious diseases, and perished from exposure and starvation. Pilgrims set out on such journeys with priestly blessings and tears from their loved ones who were quite convinced that they might never meet again.

So why risk so much to journey to a burial site? Then as now, pilgrimages to sacred sites were a part of the practice of one's spirituality: a means of personal and spiritual transformation, a ritual of penance, a rite of passage, and a way to demonstrate one's religious devotion. The Roman Church encouraged pilgrimage as an obligation of the faithful to journey to a designated sacred site at least once in one's lifetime. Pilgrimage was also a way for the Church to benefit financially through the purchase of pilgrim indulgences that would forgive a specific sin or that

gave lifetime forgiveness for pilgrimages made during Holy Years when a saint's day fell on a Sunday.

Pilgrimages, with all their risks and dangers, could give a sense of the lessening of one's burden of guilt and an opportunity for a new start to pilgrims, especially poor peasants, whose lives offered little hope of redemption and ease. In an era without any idea of the therapeutic value of confession, penance, or making amends, pilgrimage allowed for a lessening of the sense of isolation that a burden of guilt creates. Pilgrimage offered a first taste of freedom for many on the Way. Stepping outside their local environs for the first time, pilgrims walked beside persons from a variety of locales, differing social strata, strange languages, and foreign cultures (Stopford 1994). On the Camino, as on any pilgrimage trek, social hierarchies were sacrificed to the greater need to help and be helped on the path. Because a pilgrimage required months on the road and was accomplished under great hardship and uncertainty, it nurtured an experience of community and equality of station that was a foreign concept to everyday medieval life.

Pilgrimage on the Camino also brought physical and social transformation along the path and when pilgrims returned home. The Camino de Santiago had originally followed ancient Roman roads, but as the tenth century passed into the eleventh century, the old path became crowded with pilgrims making their way to honor St. James. Recognizing that the needs of such large numbers of pilgrims was overwhelming the farmers and villagers who lived along the largely unpopulated rural path, the Church (with the aid of some secular rulers) began to establish religious houses along the way that could house and feed pilgrims. Medieval hospitals (which served a function like today's hostels) likewise offered food and shelter. Monastic orders, secular rulers, and ordinary townspeople collaborated in building bridges and creating passable roads. To provide security from thieves and criminals, medieval orders of knights arose (Stopford 1994).

Numbers of pilgrims on the Camino peaked in the twelfth century, and by the time of the

Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, pilgrimages had fallen out of favor. Serious blows were dealt to the practice of granting indulgences for completed pilgrimages by reformers including Martin Luther. Political instability and an aborted attack in 1589 by Sir Francis Drake on the Galician capital La Coruña, just 40 miles north of Compostela, also caused the numbers of pilgrims to slow to a trickle. News of the attack so panicked the Dean of the Cathedral of Santiago that he hid the relics of St. James so invaders would not find them. Unfortunately, when the danger was over, no one else could find the remains. The reason for making a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela had disappeared, and the Camino itself was soon reclaimed by farm fields and the towns and villages to which it had given birth.

When the bones of St. James were rediscovered 1879 during repairs to the Cathedral, pilgrimage was no longer a spiritual priority. A reawakening of interest in the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage did not come until the mid-twentieth century in part a response to publication of a three-volume history of the Camino (de Parga et al. 1948). Still, only a trickle of pilgrims walked the Camino until the Holy Year 1965. In that year, *Friends of Estella/Amigos de Estella* was formed by scholars interested in historical research and reclaiming the Camino for travel by contemporary pilgrims. The Camino, which had been inhospitable to modern pilgrims, was opened up to pilgrimage again as the Amigos and a Galician priest, D. Elias, published the first contemporary guidebooks and maps, began to mark the Way with yellow arrows, and persuaded towns and monasteries along the way that preserving ancient structures, setting aside the path, and providing hospitality to pilgrims would be to their economic advantage. In 1993, the Camino de Santiago was recognized as a World Heritage Site. By 2010, a Holy Compostelan year when the July 25 Saint's day occurred on Sunday, over 250 million pilgrims walked the Way.

Why is the Camino experiencing such a crush of pilgrims in an era when established religion is decreasing in attendance and practice? The increase may reflect a deep spiritual hunger in

a world where materialistic ambitions no longer satisfy spiritual longings. Pilgrimage offers a spiritual and psychological experience of transformation that is available to any person willing to set out on the journey. As one steps outside of familiar surroundings and the demands of work and relationships, a time of self-reflection and listening for inner truth sets in. The pilgrimage path becomes a form of walking meditation, allowing one to experience the present moment and to be aware of the numinous quality of existence.

Similar to labyrinth, walking the Camino offers metaphorical insights into one's life journey. Whether one sets out to experience the solitude of the trail, seeks healing of soul or body, longs for forgiveness, looks for spiritual or emotional renewal, pursues an experience of the Holy, or hopes to experience a sacred site, the Camino offers life lessons on the pilgrimage.

One learns, first, that the path changes from moment to moment: uphill, downhill, smooth, rocky, uneven, noisy beside trafficked roads and in the middle of town, and still in a green forest. One cannot know what the path will be in an hour, a day, or a week – as in our lives what is present will not last – and sometimes that is a good thing.

On the Camino, as in life, it is good to speak an encouraging word to others – and to hear it in return. *Buen camino* meaning “good pilgrimage” is the common greeting and is understood by all regardless of native language.

One soon learns to carry only necessities – water, a little food, sun protection, and a sweater – and be willing to give up anything if it becomes too heavy in one's backpack. What is truly essential is easier to learn on pilgrimage than in daily life.

Yellow markers or arrows or scallop shells point the Way on the Camino, but as in life one needs to be alert for them so they are not missed. Pilgrims too engaged in internal or external conversation who do not attend to the present moment often end up on the wrong road and spend precious time trying to find the Way.

Other pilgrims are never strangers and are often walking companions. If solitude is needed, walk alone. If companionship is needed, walk with others. As in life, ask for what you need.

Pilgrims do not get to choose daily traveling companions. Whoever is walking the path that day is one's companion for the day. As in life, there is always something to learn from a companion if one has ears to hear.

Whether it is octopus (the local delicacy), Galician goat cheese pizza, or a breakfast of hardboiled egg and hard rolls, food on the Camino is always adequate, sometimes amazing, and often not what one expects. As in life, try it all, or you will miss something delectable.

On the Camino, as in life, what one needs often appears when you think you cannot go any further – like the coffee shop with a bathroom that appears on the path at just the right time.

To walk the Camino, one needs only a sturdy pair of broken-in hiking boots, a walking stick, water, and a pilgrim passport. For Americans, the pilgrim passport (*credential*) can be obtained through American Pilgrims on the Camino [http://www.americanpilgrims.com/camino/credential\\_req.html](http://www.americanpilgrims.com/camino/credential_req.html). Citizens of other countries can obtain the credential through Confraternities of St. James in their own country. Pilgrim passports enable pilgrims to stay at low-cost shelters or *alburgues* (hostels) along the Camino. Each town and *alburgue* along the Camino has a unique stamp to add to the passport. In Santiago de Compostela, the Pilgrims Office issues a *Compostela* to each pilgrim who has walked at least 100 km and has a valid stamped credential. The Compostela attests to completion of the Camino pilgrimage and to this day is an official indulgence for those who have walked the Camino for religious reasons.

## See Also

- ▶ [Communitas](#)
- ▶ [Confession](#)
- ▶ [Labyrinth](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)

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## Campbell, Joseph

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Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) is one of the most widely recognized scholars of mythology. The public television series *The Power of Myth* (1985–1986), consisting of interviews with Bill Moyers, propelled him into the public spotlight. A follow-up book, published posthumously, (Campbell 1988) increased his popularity and catapulted his earlier work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), onto the *New York Times* best-seller list in 1988. George Lucas' public acknowledgment of Campbell's work as inspiration for the *Star Wars Trilogy* cemented Campbell's place in the popular canon. Although many of Campbell's ideas have been embraced by the public at large and his importance has been recognized beyond the walls of academia, Campbell is no less a scholar. That he spent most of his life as a teacher and academic, along with the rigor of his work and its subsequent use among scholars, affirms the pertinence of his ideas to the study of myth within the academy.

## Life and Scholarship

The oldest of three children, Campbell was born in New York City in 1904 to Irish Catholic parents. In 1910 Campbell's father brought him to see Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, igniting a lifelong interest in Native America religions. He quickly exhausted the share of children's books on the subject and by age 11 was already reading Bureau of American Ethnology reports.



Early on, Campbell was an avid reader, excellent student, and gifted athlete. In 1921, he enrolled in Dartmouth College to study biology and mathematics, but, after discovering the humanities, he transferred to Columbia University as an English major in 1922, earning a Bachelor of Arts in 1925. A member of the Columbia track team, he set the school's half-mile record.

In the summer of 1924, while en route to Europe, Campbell met Jiddu Krishnamurti (with whom he sustained a lifelong friendship) who introduced him to Buddhism and Hinduism. This early encounter with Eastern religions had a lasting impact on Campbell's life and scholarship.

In 1926, Campbell returned to Columbia University to pursue a Master of Arts in Medieval Literature. His thesis, "A Study of the Dolorous Stroke," was supervised by the Arthurian scholar Roger Loomis. Hungry to continue his studies but already aware that his interests crossed disciplinary boundaries and were incompatible with the specialization a Ph.D. would require, he traveled on a Proudfit Fellowship to the University of Paris to study Romance philology and later to Munich where he learned Sanskrit. Campbell became enthralled with the European intellectual milieu that led him to the works of James Joyce, Thomas Mann, Leo Frobenius, Sigmund Freud, and C. G. Jung. All of these figures would later come to influence his theory of mythology and his writing and teaching.

Campbell began his teaching career at Sarah Lawrence College in 1934, beginning his career-long acclaim as an exceptionally skilled and popular teacher. His first major publication was *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake* (1944), coauthored with Henry Morton Robinson. Another highly influential figure in Campbell's life was the German Indologist, Heinrich Zimmer, whom Campbell met in 1941. A speaker (along with a plethora of other famous intellectuals from across the globe) at the prestigious Ascona, Switzerland-based Eranos Conferences, Zimmer introduced Campbell to Paul and Mary Mellon, founders of the Bollingen Foundation, which later published many of Campbell's

works. The Mellons solicited Campbell to write the commentary to the first book of the Bollingen series, *Where the Two Came to Their Father: A Navaho War Ceremonial* (1943). After Zimmer's unexpected death in 1943, Campbell was put in charge of editing Zimmer's posthumous writings, a project that took 12 years and yielded four volumes. During this time, Campbell presented two important papers of his own at Eranos: *The Symbol Without Meaning* (1958) and *The Renewal Myths and Rites of the Primitive Hunters and Planters* (1960). He also edited a series of volumes consisting of papers presented at the Eranos conferences. In the summer of 1953, while in Switzerland, he met Jung for the first time.

Campbell retired from Sarah Lawrence in 1972 and moved to Honolulu where he continued his research and writing. A few of his works from this period include *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and as Religion* (1986) and *The Mythic Image* (1974). During this time he also completed *The Power of Myth* interviews. He died of cancer in 1987.

## Notable Works

Campbell's studies in literature, the psychology of Freud and Jung, anthropology and Eastern religion informed his famous study of hero myths, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, which employed Joyce's idea of the monomyth in its examination of hero myths across the globe.

One of Campbell's most significant works of comparative mythology is the four-volume *The Masks of God* (1959–1968), a study of "primitive," "oriental," "occidental," and modern literary, "creative" mythology. On the one hand, the volumes set out to "view the cultural history of mankind [sic] as a unit" and to "compose into a single picture the new perspectives that have been opened in the fields of comparative symbolism, religion, mythology, and philosophy" (1959, p. 3, 4) by tracing worldwide reoccurring mythological themes. On the other hand, the volumes carefully assert that "the myths of differing civilizations have sensibly varied throughout the

centuries” (1959, p. 18) in such a way that the virtue of one culture’s mythology is the vice of another, and one’s heaven, another’s hell. In other words, Campbell warns in his prologue, “mythology is no toy for children. . . . there is a real danger, therefore, in . . . joining the world in a single community, while leaving the anthropological and psychological discoveries from which a commensurable moral system might have been developed in the learned publications where they first appeared” (1959, p. 12), making note of the fact that his comparative study was cognizant of the importance of historical differentiation and the dangers of morphological parallelism and historical diffusion.

At the end of his life, Campbell undertook another comparative study, producing the richly illustrated two-volume *Atlas of World Mythology* (1983, 1989), which further extended his studies of the historical origin and diffusion of myths.

## Theory of Myth

For Campbell, myth functions symbolically, as “energy-releasing, life-motivating and – directing agents” (1959, p. 4; 1969, p. 178). Mythology reveals a psychological truth that shows itself in stories and images. Underlying the historical and cultural particularities of mythology is also the potentiality for shared meaning across time and culture that exists because of the psychological and metaphysical underpinnings at work in the stories and alive in the human spirit. Campbell believed that myths are of nature – that is, they are part of the very structure of human biology and the psyche – and although they manifest within and are influenced by culture, they are not exclusively of culture (as Claude Lévi-Strauss proposed). For Campbell, the gap between nature and culture is bridged by myth. Nature is not only out there in the world beyond the human, but it is also within. Myth unites the inner world with the outer. Toward the end of his life, Campbell summed up myth as the “experience of life” (1988, p. 5). This later statement echoes Campbell’s insistence that the interpretation of mythology is anything but systematic. In fact, in

*Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he uses the shape-shifting god Proteus as a metaphor of mythology in order to suggest that mythology is psychological, historical, anthropological, and metaphysical and cannot be reduced to a single function.

Myths – including mythic discourse and thinking – can function in one of two ways: as a symbol “functioning for engagement” or as a symbol “functioning for disengagement, transport, and metamorphosis” (Campbell 1969, p. 169). Campbell carefully elaborates these two functions in his 1957 Eranos lecture “The Symbol Without Meaning” by drawing on the metaphor of a bow that serves either to engage or disengage meaning. When the symbol is given a meaning, “either corporeal or spiritual, it serves for the engagement of the energy itself” (Campbell 1969, p. 178). As an agent of engagement, myth works to confer meaning. In this way, it can be read as a “literature of the spirit” that provides one with “clues to the spiritual potentialities of the human life” (Campbell 1988, p. 3, 5) that aligns the individual with society (in particular, the collective unit of family, religion, tribe, state, and nation) and the cosmos. Myth unites the inner with the outer and shows how each is mirrored in the other.

However, when the symbol functions to disengage, myth does not provide any assurance of meaning. When “all meaning is withdrawn, the symbol serves for disengagement, and the energy is dismissed – to its own end” (Campbell 1969, p. 178). Rather, myth evokes an experience of existence instead of positing a specific meaning that always runs the risk of being taken dogmatically. In fact, Campbell frequently warns against interpreting the symbolic literally and even argues that such literalizing is absurd (and potentially even dangerous) in a “de-mythologized” world (1969, p. 124–126). Inasmuch as myth can reveal the previously unknown, making it known and bringing it to consciousness, it can also point to the unknown as unknowable.

## Criticism

The bulk of negative criticism of Campbell’s work comes from academics in the fields of

religion and folklore and stems from one basic complaint about his hermeneutic of comparativism. Many detractors have simplistically likened him to Mircea Eliade and Jung on the issue of archetypes and universals, equating the psychological with the universal and ahistorical in order to argue that Campbell's comparativism is unscholarly (dismissed by Wendy Doniger as "Muzak mythology" (Doniger 1992, p. 78)) since it overlooks historical and cultural particulars in favor of generalizations.

In his 2004 Presidential Plenary Address to the American Folklore Society, Alan Dundes takes aim at Campbell's "universalizing," arguing that some mythological motifs do not exist in all cultures. To support his assertion, Dundes cites the lack of a deluge myth in sub-Saharan Africa as one example. Earlier in his speech, however, Dundes does emphasize the point that interpretation "would not have been possible without recourse to grand theory" (2005, p. 4), of which "universalizing" is a key part. In the same speech, Dundes also credits Campbell "for getting people interested in our discipline" (2005, p. 10).

David L. Miller forcefully argues that these claims against Campbell do not bear closer analysis because Campbell was neither a Jungian nor unaware of the importance of historical differentiation. Invoking Plotinus' *Enneads*, Miller avers that Campbell's method is that of comparing the likeness of unlike things (i.e., of finding similarity within inherent difference), as opposed to the likeness of like things (1995, pp. 168–177). Miller points out several pivotal and often neglected parts of Campbell's scholarship that affirm this, adding that Campbell's choice of language in the titles of his books (a 1000 faces as opposed to one face, masks of God) subtly points to the complexity of Campbell's approach.

Robert Segal has also made the case that Campbell is not a Jungian and that, in fact, his theory of myth differs significantly from Jung's (1990, pp. ix–xi; 1987, pp. 244–262; 1999, pp. 463–465). Furthermore, Segal calls into question the flippant dismissal of comparativism, asserting that "any theorist – of myth, religion, or anything else – is a universalist" in some way (1999, p. 463) and lists James Frazer, Northrop

Frye, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Claude Lévi-Strauss as some offenders who are not always subjected to the same scrutiny as Campbell.

## See Also

- ▶ Hero
- ▶ Monomyth
- ▶ Myth

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## Capps, Donald

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### Biographical Information

(1939–) Formerly William Harte Felmeth Professor of Pastoral Psychology at Princeton Theological Seminary, Donald E. Capps is a prolific American (USA) psychologist of religion and pastoral psychologist. Capps, raised largely in Oregon and Nebraska, received his secondary education at Lewis & Clark College (B.A., 1960), Yale Divinity School (B.D., 1963; S.T.M. 1965), and the University of Chicago (Ph.D., 1970). Capps' Ph.D. dissertation was a psychological biography of John Henry Newman, focusing on Newman's adolescence and his vocational struggles that culminated in his conversion to Roman Catholicism. In spite of Capps' prolific writing and publishing tendencies, this dissertation was never published, though Capps has authored numerous articles on Newman, some of which were built off of his dissertation research.

Capps' academic career started as Instructor at the Department of Religious Studies at Oregon State University during the summer of 1969. He then became Instructor and Assistant Professor at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago between 1969 and 1974. Later, he was appointed

Associate Professor at the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, NC, where he lectured between 1974 and 1976. Between 1976 and 1981 he was Associate Professor and then Professor at the Graduate Seminary of Phillips University.

An ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America since 1972, Capps joined the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1981, where he was appointed the William Harte Felmeth Professor of Pastoral Psychology. In May 2009 he retired with the status of Professor Emeritus but remains at Princeton Theological Seminary lecturing as adjunct. Capps has a long list of honors and awards he has accumulated over the course of his career. In 1989 Uppsala University in Sweden awarded him a degree of Doctor honoris causa in Theology for his contributions to the field of Psychology of Religion. Other honors include the William F. Bier Award for contribution to Psychology of Religion, granted in 1995 by the Division 36 of the American Psychological Association; the Helen Flanders Dunbar Centennial Award, granted in 2002 by the Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in New York; and the Joseph A. Sittler Award for Theological Leadership, granted in 2003 by Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

Capps has also done a considerable amount of work for various academic professional associations over the course of his career. Capps was the book review editor for the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* between 1980 and 1983 and editor for the same journal between 1983 and 1988. Additionally, between 1990 and 1992 he was the President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

### Capps' Thought: Four Salient Trends

#### First Trend: Erikson's Influence and Psychohistorical Method

Capps' most clear and obvious theoretical influence in his early years of writing is Erik H. Erikson. Erikson's psychohistorical method provided the methodological basis for Capps' Ph.D. dissertation, and Erikson's life cycle theory was directly relevant to Capps' own intellectual and professional

development, where he vacillated in his graduate study between the professional commitments of becoming a minister or pursuing further study for the teaching profession. While he would later become both an ordained minister and a professor, this questioning of professional fit at that time in his life made Erikson a theorist of great interest to Capps. Prior to returning to Yale for the STM, Capps spent 1 year in Berkeley, CA, at the UC Berkeley Ph.D. program in philosophy before deciding that he wanted to return to Yale for further study with James Dittes. The year with Dittes studying Erikson and developmental psychology proved extremely influential, as Capps then accelerated through the doctoral program at University of Chicago, graduating and defending his dissertation within the psychology and religion concentration in 4 years. In Capps' own experience of vocational confusion, Erikson's writings on vocational and identity confusion came to be of critical importance.

Capps' interests in Erikson's psychohistorical method, life cycle theory, and religious studies, as well as pastoral theology, led to his penning of several foundational texts in the field of pastoral psychology, among them *Pastoral Care: A Thematic Approach* (Capps 1979) and *Life Cycle Theory and Pastoral Care* (Capps 1983). Texts such as these begin to appropriate Erikson's work on religion, history, biography, and the life cycle for the theological community. Capps has never ceased to be influenced by and reflect on Erikson, particularly Erikson's life cycle theory as well as his psychohistorical methodology. This is clear from some of his major later career publications such as *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (Capps 2000) and *The Decades of Life: A Guide to Human Development* (Capps 2008). Both of these texts rely considerably on either Erikson's thought or his methodology.

### **Second Trend: A Desire for Personally Meaningful and Relevant Study**

Close readers of Capps' work develop not only a sense for his scholarly approach but also for how the answers Capps arrives at are forged through a process of critical self-reflection that he openly shares with his readership. This is one of the central, unique ways in which Capps manages to convince readership of his arguments and

their significance. Two examples will suffice. In Capps' (2000) work, he dedicates the book to himself – or, rather, the boy within himself:

My favorite Bible verse in boyhood was John 14:6.... In the course of writing this book, I was mindful of the desire to keep faith with this boy and have done so, I believe, by striving to write a study of Jesus that was not afraid to ask questions in search of a more reliable truth. This book is dedicated to him (Capps 2000, p. xiii).

Throughout the course of this text, we learn of Capps' developing understanding of Jesus from child to adulthood and how this, in conjunction with historical analysis, informs Capps' verbal portrait of Jesus. A second example comes from Capps' (1995) *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children*. In this (1995) passage, Capps writes of his desire to be another man's son and how he realized that this desire was the dawning of his own religious consciousness:

I also found myself reliving the blame I had placed on my mother for her role in activating this desire to be another man's son, as she frequently belittled her husband in the presence of her children.... Yet I believe this desire in me to be another man's son was the beginning of my own religious consciousness (Capps 1995, p. 113).

As with the example from Capps' *Jesus*, readers not only are engaged in critical study of the subjects Capps undertakes but are also accompanying Capps himself in his own process of critical self-reflection on the experiences of his life.

### **Third Trend: Melancholia and Humor**

Capps authored a number of works reflecting and building upon Freud's 1917 essay, *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud 2001). Capps argues that melancholia is primarily a condition experienced by men, as they are forced to separate from their mothers. While he does not discount the experience of melancholia among women, he argues that the etiology of the condition is different and the focus of his studies is on men's experience of melancholia. Capps begins to build upon Freud's 1917 essay by arguing that religion serves as compensation for the emotional loss of mother in early childhood. As the loss of mother is reexperienced over the course of the man's



lifetime in the experiences of trauma such as loss of spouse, loss of occupation, or separation from family of origin at the time of marriage, religion becomes the compensatory mechanism to manage these experiences where melancholic self-revilement becomes most intense. For Capps, all these traumatic experiences mentioned are grounded in the original experience of separation from mother, ensuing melancholia. The critical question for Capps, then, is what form this religion, a compensatory mechanism, takes. He argues that, in general, it will take one of three forms (honor, hope, or humor) though one individual could practice one or more of these forms at different points in their lifetime. For Capps, the religion of humor is ultimately the only religious type able to successfully manage the self-revilement that accompanies melancholia.

With the experience of melancholia comes the threat of self-loss. Capps began to recognize this in the late 1980s when he began to write on the issue of narcissism and Heinz Kohut's self-psychology. Capps' (1992) work, *The Depleted Self: Sin in a Narcissistic Age*, applies Kohut's work on narcissism to the understanding of sin in the Christian churches. This book was given brief screen time in the popular American movie *Seven* (1995) with Morgan Freeman and Brad Pitt as they chase down a serial killer obsessed with the seven deadly sins. This example from popular culture suffices to show the enduring admiration for Capps' work, both inside and outside the academy. Capps' interest in narcissism, religion, and culture would lead to a number of important publications that return to the questions surrounding religious leadership and the method of psychohistory that Capps had begun examining in graduate school. In the last decade, Capps has also continued to build on his writings on religion and humor. Capps' interests in humor have extended beyond its ability to manage the melancholia experience but also to help one reason with greater skill, to relieve somatic pain, and to experience overall well-being.

#### **Fourth Trend: Mental Illness and Creativity**

Capps' interests in religious leadership naturally lends itself to an interest in mental illness because psychohistorical methodology is focused on

examining the psychological struggles of religious and cultural leaders as they fashion new social roles and participate in social reform. Capps (2000) makes this connection between social reform and mental illness explicit in his work, showing how fantasies of power such as symbolic religious constructions can be used to propel social reform movements, as in the days of Jesus. Fantasies of power – which do not reflect accurate assessments of one's self identity or abilities – are also used by mentally ill individuals to separate themselves from painful social situations and the construction of a social identity, examined astutely by Capps (2010) in his *Understanding Psychosis*. Capps' interests in mental illness and religion, thus, reveal the ubiquity of mental illness in culture, if only varying in degree. This point is perhaps most clearly shown in Capps' (2010) work where he compares his own mental processes to that of an individual suffering from a mental illness (Capps 2010, p. 26) in order to show how common and normal the experience of mental illness is. Capps' purpose is not to conflate religious practice with mental illness, so as to disparage religious practitioners, but rather he makes this comparison to show how dignified and normal it is to have a bout with mental illness or delusion.

Capps' collected writings on mental illness and religion provide insights into the mystery of mental illness for individuals, how individuals and social groups can manage mental illness, as well as the psychosocial consequences of mental illness on social and cultural populations. Capps' interests in mental illness lastly can be tied to his interest in poetry and the creative arts, as these are commonly identity-producing activities that engage the individual's religious sensibilities and vulnerably expose the details of their struggle. Capps' work on individuals and their lives rests itself upon a claim that individuals are perhaps better known through their personal writings and works of art, rather than in their lifetimes by their peers. In other words, Capps suggests that because of the unearthing of personal journals, we may come to know the dead better than we ever knew them as living beings. Capps shows that this is because individuals are far more revealing of themselves in their private journals and their



public works than they might ever find comfortable with even the most intimate persons in their lives. As such, Capps' work may be collectively characterized by his interests in the secrets people tell but rarely expect to be heard. Given the merits his work has earned, he could aptly be described as a good listener and an astute observer.

## See Also

- ▶ [Kohut, Heinz](#)
- ▶ [Melancholia](#)

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## Castration

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Castration is defined as any action, surgical, chemical, or otherwise, by which a male loses the functions of the testes or a female loses the

functions of the ovaries. Castration is also referred to as gelding, neutering, orchiectomy, orchidectomy, and oophorectomy. Traditional definitions of castration refer primarily to the physical removal of the testes.

Freudian castration refers to the Oedipal boy's fear that his father will cut off the boy's penis to punish him for incestuous wishes towards his mother. This fear is a central factor in assuring an incest taboo and in the creation of the super-ego, the psychical agent of morality and civilization in Freud's (1924d) structural topology of the psyche. Psychoanalysts in Freud's lifetime, post-Freudians, and psychoanalytic feminists have elaborated, revised, and/or reviled his phallogocentric position. Current views of castration anxiety may include all psychosexual erogenic zones and functions in men and women and to injuries to a person's self-esteem.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share prohibitions about mutilating God's creations. Psychology and religion share thoughts about castration and/or fear of castration serving to free the spirit from the forces of instinctual gratification. The two disciplines also share difficulties with ambiguous interpretations differentiating physical and symbolic castration.

## Religion

### Olympian Creation Myth

At his mother Gaia's urging, the Titan Cronus castrated his father Uranus. Uranus sought sexual gratification every night but hated the children conceived by his lust. The goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, was formed from the foam of the severed testicles in the sea.

### Paganism

The priests of Cybele castrated themselves as early as 415 BCE as a sacrifice to purify the soul and transcend the demands of passion, society, and family in order to reach the divine.

### Judaism

In Deuteronomy 23:1, castrated men are expelled from the assembly of Israel.

### Christianity

The Gospel According to St. Matthew (19:12) includes a quote of Jesus, in which he says that there are men who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. St. Augustine of Hippo argues against a literal reading of Matthew 19:12 indicting physical castration as a return to Cybellene cults, an assault on manhood, and a mutilation of God's creations. Bostock (2003) called Augustine "the anti-Origen," referring to the early Christian scholar who acted on a literal reading of Matthew and castrated himself. In Europe, women were not permitted to sing in church choirs and boys were sometimes castrated to preserve their pure soprano voices. Such boys were called castrati. In the late nineteenth century, the Roman Catholic Church took a formal position that castrating singers is a mutilation of the body and therefore a sin.

### Islam

A hadith, the oral transmission of the words and deeds of Muhammad, orders the physical alteration of the female genitalia in language unclear to both Arabic- and English-speaking people. Two of the ritual procedures rising from that hadith, clitoridectomy and excision, have been termed female castration in modern times (Badawi 1989). The Qur'an forbids alteration of Allah's creations and calls such practice the work of Satan.

### Psychology

#### Psychiatry

Biological castrations have been performed on men and women to control deviant sexual behavior and masturbation primarily in the nineteenth century, although such practice was never widespread. Chemical castration to control deviant sexual behavior is a current treatment. Auto-castration has been observed an onset indicator of schizophrenia, and one such patient incorporated Matthew 19:12 in his delusional system (Meyers and Nguyen 2001; Waugh 1986). The question of madness was raised in the Cult of the Gates of Heaven whose members castrated themselves prior to a mass suicide in preparation to return to God.

### Psychoanalysis

Freud (1911/1955) analyzed the written work of Daniel Paul Schreber (1903/1955), whose delusions included castration so as to become God's wife. Freud viewed this work through the lens of his Oedipus complex. Castration anxiety and symbolic castration are primary forces to repress instinctual and/or id impulses towards forbidden and gratifications, particularly the taboo of incest. A son gives up his sexual desire for his mother for fear of castration by the father. The superego, the internalized father conscience and guardian of civilization, evolves in response to castration anxiety and eliminates the need for the totem father. Freud thought of women as castrated beings, therefore with a weaker superego structure. The threat of castration has no authority to the already castrated. A child experiences shock and horror at seeing the castrated mother and fearing that such castration will happen to him. The Freudian fetish is an object which serves to disavow knowledge of the castrated mother. The mother, who in the infant's fantasy has a penis, is the preoedipal phallic mother. The experience of castration anxiety is necessary to resolve the Oedipal phase. Freud postulated that penis envy is the girl's counterpart of the boy's castration anxiety (1913/1955, 1923b, 1924/1955, 1927/1955).

Eigen (1974) amplified Melanie Klein's (1975) concept of preoedipal castration anxiety and part objects. Klein amplified Freud's (1905/1955) ideas of psychosexual zones and the child's lack of differentiation of penis, feces, and baby (1926d) and the experience of the lost of the breast (1917/1955). Any psychosexually significant body part or function which a child holds dear, which is filled or cathected with libido, is subject to loss by a castrating godlike mother. The breast, experienced by the child as a part of his/her own mouth; the anal sphincter and its feces; the urethral sphincter and its urine; and an imaginary internal penis for boys and girls are Kleinian part objects. Jacques Lacan (1973/1981) added voice and gaze to the Kleinian part object inventory.

Guervich (1999) amplified Lacan's rereading of Freud, which among many things, aimed to correct Freud's blurred inner and outer reality

boundaries and defined castration in purely psychological terms. Lacanian castration is to be cut off from the *jouissance*, defined as both orgasm and excess, of identifying with and having the imaginary phallus of the preoedipal phallic mother and/or the phallus of the father who possesses the mother. Within this model, both boys and girls need to undergo this castration and accept that the mother desires the father's real anatomical penis. This castration is necessary to accept the reality of the external world and to form language. Psychoanalytic feminists have found the revised phallus concept as a gateway to incorporating Freud in postmodern psychoanalysis.

## Commentary

The earliest castration story, the son Cronus, urged by his mother to castrate his lustful, unloving father to create a pure allegorical woman representing truth and beauty, foretells millennia of struggle within psychology and religion to modulate the sometimes mutually exclusive demands of satisfying the flesh and satisfying the soul. Freud sought to solve this problem in his concept of sublimation and the fear of castration contributes to the sublimation process. Biological castration as a religious purification is the extreme enactment of soul-body dualism, devoid of symbolic resolution.

Freud posited circumcision as a symbolic substitute for castration (1909b), and castration anxiety holds a central position in Freud's religious and cultural texts as well as the texts about the unconscious. Jonte-Pace (2001) used Freud's uncanny (1919h), the psychical experience of something missing, to theorize a rival hypothesis to Freud's phallic thinking. In this formulation, the uncanny relates to both the circumcised/castrated Jewish male and the castrated preoedipal phallic mother. These castrated beings induce castration anxiety in Gentile men encountering the castrated Jew and in any man encountering the castrated woman. Castration anxiety is thus a causal factor in both anti-Semitism and misogyny. While Freud himself explored the relationship between castration anxiety and death anxiety,

Freud's father-centered theory may have been an eroticized defense of his fear of death at the hands of the woman as mother, wife, and death figure.

Von Franz (2000) explored the archetypal role of the castrating mother in her explication of Jung's *puer aeternus*. The eternal youth is symbolically castrated by a symbiotic, infantilizing mother and sacrifices his manhood to remain his mother's beloved boy. In both a modernist Freudian as well as Jungian reading, the *puer aeternus*, a castrated boy in fantasy, may be male or female in external reality. While Melanie Klein's work on the castrating mother sought to express the power of a mother god to the infant, the castrating, phallic woman is often a representation of misogyny.

St. Augustine (1467), in his rejection of a literal reading of Mathew 10:19, said "What then doth all that which remained of (Atys) after his gelding signify?" Augustine's use of signification anticipates Lacan, postmodern feminism, and psycholinguistic signification's role in gender identification challenging Freud's omnipresent "anatomy is destiny." Muslim women are regularly gelded and are still signified as women. Men and women are gelded in lifesaving surgeries and still retain their gender identities. Melanie Klein's all-powerful castrating mother god is an iteration of Freud's all-powerful castrating father god, opening gender ambiguity of god figures, a parent god that is both male and female. "And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

Symbolic castration, the freedom of the demands of instinctual passions, opens the gates of heaven, beauty, art, and civilization to men and women.

## See Also

- ▶ [Circumcision](#)
- ▶ [Clitoridectomy](#)
- ▶ [Dualism](#)
- ▶ [Father](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)



- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Id
- ▶ Instinct
- ▶ Lacan, Jacques
- ▶ Mother
- ▶ Oedipus Complex
- ▶ Puer Aeternus
- ▶ Repression
- ▶ Satan
- ▶ Superego
- ▶ Symbol
- ▶ Taboo
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Celtic Religions

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Pre-Christian Celtic religion, mythology, and symbolism have left an incredibly rich and varied legacy in European culture. That being said, it is a field of folkloric mythological studies that is extremely diverse, varied, and, to some extent, historically quite problematic. The extent to which perceptions of Celtic culture and religious practices have been shaped by contemporaneous sociopolitical factors and the ubiquitous problems raised by Christian and Roman transmission has made attempts to develop a holistic understanding of the religious beliefs of the pre-Christian Celts an inordinately difficult and complex affair. However, despite the very murky waters surrounding the historical record of Celtic polytheistic religion, there are very powerful archetypal themes and cultural forms that resonate through to the present.

Unlike the Paleolithic peoples before them, the Iron-Age Celts were semi-historic in that they left traces of their culture in written records and in the enormous wealth of archaeological finds (Hutton 1993). In particular, there are minted coins from Gaul, Raetia, Noricum, and the British Isles; sculptures and other cultural artifacts; Roman eyewitness accounts; and an array of literature and bardic lore transcribed in the Middle Ages. However, these sources leave a great deal to interpretation. The materials left in artwork and archaeological finds suggest a great deal regarding Celtic religious practice and leave many tantalizing themes for speculation on the nature of Celtic culture and religion. However, what remains is also quite fragmentary and open to fanciful fabrications based in more contemporary themes. The classical eyewitness reports, especially that of Caesar and Poseidonius, attempt to directly translate Celtic gods and rituals into Roman equivalents and the medieval

accounts of Celtic folklore, such as that of the *Mabinogion*, strongly reflect medieval Christian and Saxon/Norman preoccupations, power structures, and social mores (Darvill 1987).

## The Roman Conquest and the Celts

When examining the religious practices of Celtic polytheism, there are three distinct phases in the transmission of Celtic religion, folklore, and mythology. Firstly, there are the religious practices, artwork, and festivals of pre-Roman conquest Celtic civilization. Secondly, there is the synthesis and syncreticism of the Roman colonization of Britain and Gaul. Finally, there is the further synthesis and development during the Christian period. In this context, however, and given the diversity and localization of many of the religious practices and rituals recorded, it is a problematic exercise to attempt to find a pure or unadulterated form of Celtic religious belief. Rather, it is a living cultural tradition engaged in constant evolution and development in relation to sociopolitical issues, cultural transmission, and eclectic engagement with other societies and religious beliefs, forming a synthesis of mythological, religious, and cultural forms held together by common archetypal themes and symbols of powerful aesthetic and psychological resonance (Matthews 1991).

## Celtic Culture, Religion, and Folklore in the Roman Era

While there is an enormous amount of diversity between Celtic regional and tribal affiliations, there are several key hierarchical, ritual, and festival themes that remain central to the religious practices of the Celts of antiquity. Caesar and Poseidonius both refer to Celtic religious practices being dominated by a triumvirate of religious castes – the druids who acted as priests and judges, the ovates who acted as seers and prophets, and the bards who specialized in versecraft, lineage, and lore keeping (described as *filid* in Ireland). This pattern of three religious castes was also chronicled by the later Christian scholars of

the Middle Ages. Indeed, the number three seems to have been of enormous significance to the Celts appearing in numerous pieces of artwork, in the triple aspect manifestations of many of the deities, and in much of bardic lore transcribed by medieval Christian scholars (Darvill 1987).

Similarly, while there were immense variations between districts and language groups with regard to seasonal festivals and their ritual/festive activities, it is fairly certain that the four quarterly seasonal festivals associated with the solstice and equinox were practiced through Celtic society. Of these, Samhain, commemorating the end of the year and communing with the spirit world, and Beltane, celebrating the beginning of summer and the harvest, were the most significant. However, recent research by Ronald Hutton suggests that the centrality of Samhain and Beltane to Celtic religious practice may be far less than is generally accepted (Hutton 1993).

Attempting to understand the nature of Celtic deity is similarly difficult in that there was a complicated system of localized tutelary gods and, more commonly, mother goddesses, deities mixed with folkloric hero archetypes such as Lugh, and a collection of zoomorphic deity beings such as Epona the horse goddess and Cernunnos the hunter god which was appropriated as the divine male deity figure by contemporary Wiccans. This network of polytheism varied immensely between districts and language groups and is extremely difficult for the contemporary historian to study in earnest due to the aforementioned problems raised by Roman and Christocentric transmission. The result is that we are left with a bewildering and fragmentary array of evocative and powerful images, rituals, symbols, and archetypes open to much speculation and interpretation (Hutton 1993).

### The Problems of Roman Transmission

During the post-Roman conquest period, this problem was further exacerbated by the well-documented tendency of Caesar, Poseidonius, and other Roman chroniclers to assume that the Celtic deities were direct equivalents of Roman

and Greek deities without attempting to contextualize them within the established Celtic cosmology and social system. Furthermore, during the period of Roman colonization, many of the deities and ritual practices that did merge together with Roman equivalents and cults to Mercury (associated with Lugh in Celtic folklore), Mars (associated with Toutatis), and Jupiter (Taranic), among others, became increasingly common and widespread through Gaul and the British Isles. This merging of Celtic and Roman mythology, religious beliefs, and deities problematizes anthropological and historical interpretation through the loss of the original cultural meanings ascribed to the historical archetypal images of Celtic deity. At the same time, however, this synthesis enriches the analytical psychological perspective through the analysis of what the underlying mythic figures and deities in Celtic religious beliefs archetypically represent in the collective unconscious. A similar pattern occurs when studying the influence of Christian chroniclers who were similarly preoccupied with an alternate cosmology and religious world view. They also found the symbolism, mythology, and archetypal resonance of the Celtic polytheistic mythos deeply inspiring, albeit in a medieval Christian context. Indeed, artwork and mythology inspired by Celtic mythology and deities deeply permeate the nominally Christian artwork and literature of medieval Western Europe. Perhaps the most notable example being the merging of Celtic mythic figures and deities with Catholic saints, in particular St Patrick and St Brigid (Hutton 1993).

### The Celtic Revival

Another important legacy of Celtic religious practices has emerged in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century pagan revival movements. Of particular relevance are the druidical pagan revivals spawned by folklorist and poet Iolo Morgannwg and related organizations such as the “Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids” and the “British Druid Order” (Hutton 1993). Drawing on the Romantic literary tradition’s fixation on nationally oriented cultural authenticity and



sacrality of the landscape, the impact on Welsh and English national identity and culture inspired by these movements is immense and speaks to the archetypal power and psychic resonance of the mythology and religious beliefs of Celtic civilization. Similarly, Celtic-inspired mythology also deeply permeates other pagan revivalist movements, most notably Wicca and Goddess or Dianic Paganism with a strong fixation on the role of feminine-associated Celtic deities such as the Morrigan and Brigid (Bonewits 2006). Thus, while developing an empirical historical understanding of Celtic religious practices can be a fragmentary and problematic exercise, in analytical psychological terms it is a powerful and pervasive model of archetypal symbolism in European culture and a rich source of symbolism in the collective unconscious.

## See Also

- ▶ Celtic Shamanism
- ▶ Celtic Spirituality
- ▶ Christianity

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## Celtic Shamanism

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Though coming into increasing popularity as a contemporary spiritual practice, Celtic shamanism has also generated quite a bit of

controversy over the past two decades. The term “shamanism” is not a religion as much as it seems to be a term that refers to ancient techniques for altering consciousness to accomplish spiritual purposes (Eliade 2004) nor is it in itself Celtic. There is no substantive historical evidence that individuals recognizable as shamans existed among Celtic tribes or Druid groups (Matthews and Matthews 2002). Nevertheless, several folklorists and historians have noted intriguing similarities between elements of Celtic mythology, tradition, fairy tales, and art and practices traditionally identified as shamanic (e.g., Cowan 1993, 2002; Matthews and Matthews 1994; MacEowen 2002). These Celtic elements do, in fact, closely resemble what anthropologist Michael Harner (1990) has identified as common or nearly universal elements of indigenous shamanism. He has labeled these elements core “shamanism,” and they are typically experienced in what he has identified as the “shamanic state of consciousness” or “SSC” (Harner 1990). These similarities have inspired a contemporary system of spiritual practices for healing, alteration of consciousness, and self-development that proponents have termed “Celtic shamanism.” Celtic shamanism has been particularly popular among those of European and Celtic descent who are demonstrably hungry for a sense of spiritual connection with their ancestors.

Harner’s identification of common elements of shamanic experience around the world has led some to identify the shaman as an archetype – one of the universal thematic patterns of experience found in what Jung calls the collective unconscious (e.g., Cowan 1993; Smith 1997). Cowan (1993) identifies several elements as shared by both Celtic mythology and the shamanic archetype. To paraphrase Cowan, they are (1) the ability to sojourn in the “Otherworlds,” (2) the assistance of animal guides or powers in order to acquire or retrieve wisdom or power, (3) an initiatory experience (usually a literal or symbolic death and rebirth) or other experiences of a calling to heal or quest for wisdom or power, (4) a transformational experience of interconnectedness of all things or a state of unity, and

(5) abductions by Otherworldly entities in this case faeries – into the Otherworld proper (pp. 13–14). Matthews and Matthews (1994) additionally point out that contacts and communication with ancestors and otherworldly beings are frequent elements found in Celtic stories, as are omens found in appearances of animals and plants, as well as acts of nature (p. 2). These authors also argue that in these stories, druids, poets, and seers are frequently inspired by divine wisdom and are identifiable as shamans. Finally, themes of heroic retrievals of lost objects of power, such as are found in the Grail quest stories call to mind Ingerman's (2006) work, in which she describes in detail a key task of the shaman – namely, that of soul retrieval. Ingerman shows that throughout history, indigenous shamans have worked to bring back lost parts of a person's spirit or soul that are regarded as having fled in response to trauma or illness. The fact that the Grail is frequently identified with the Sacred King himself (i.e., Arthur) supports a correspondence between Celtic and shamanic concepts.

This link between Celticism and shamanism may have important implications for psychotherapy and counseling – particularly when spiritual issues are a focus of consideration. Moodley and West (2005) point out that many forms of indigenous spirituality and healing practices (which often go back more than a 1,000 years) are resurfacing and are enjoying popular contemporary practice – often in concert with traditional psychotherapy and counseling. Many such individuals find that such practices compensate for what they see as shortcomings of conventional therapeutic approaches due to lack of sensitivity to their particular experience of diversity or even outright contempt for “folk healing.” Celtic shamanism may afford individuals of European ancestry a means of connecting with their own unique cultural heritage. Familiarity with Celtic shamanism in psychotherapeutic contexts may enhance the therapist's competence in the area of spiritual diversity, thereby contributing to an overall understanding of issues and phenomena related to diversity.

## See Also

- ▶ [Altered States of Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Holy Grail](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)

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## Celtic Spirituality

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Celtic spirituality is a contemporary term that encompasses practices, beliefs, attitudes, and values that are loosely based on themes and remnants of Ancient Celtic traditions that survive in fairy tales and Celtic mythology. It is difficult to

ascribe to the Celtic tribes an ancient, coherent, and organized religious structure, though arguably Druidry in various permutations embodied religious elements. For this reason, the term “spirituality” is particularly useful when describing contemporary Celtic spiritual practices, as it is widely regarded as embodying less authoritative, organized, institutional, and dogmatic phenomena than is generally implied by the term “religion.” Many scholarly works, book, and websites are devoted to discussion of the distinction and relationship between religion and spirituality, a full consideration of which is beyond the scope of this article.

Contemporary Celtic spirituality routinely and syncretically blends Christian and Pagan elements of ideology and practice. For excellent examples of such syncretism, the reader is referred to O’Donohue (1998, 2000), Cowan (2003), and MacEowen (2002, 2004). All of these works focus heavily on the idea of “longing” or “yearning” as a significant feature of the Celtic spirit – longing for connection, for deep meaning, for a sense of power and significance, and for a realization of one’s place in the natural world. Drawing on such themes, deeply rooted as they are in mythology and practices that date back to pre-Christian Ireland, Wales, and Scotland primarily, practitioners of Celtic spirituality uniquely find a sense of balance and connection to others, to place, and to natural rhythms of life. Such a sense of connection arguably comes closer to a “universal” definition of spirituality than anything else.

Other Celtic themes utilized by practitioners of Celtic spirituality are shape-shifting (or identifying with animals, plants, stones, or other features of the natural world to experience a multiplicity of perspectives of the natural world); awakening to one’s place and purpose in the world; fostering recognition of the body as sacred and as the gateway to higher spiritual consciousness, initiation through rites of passage (or spiritual death and rebirth experiences); making choices that are in alignment with a higher purpose and accepting responsibility for said choices; living in balance and harmony with the cycles of seasons and of the earth;

communing with ancestors and with the immanent divine spirit in the land; and recognizing the divine spark within oneself.

It is not difficult to discern within these concepts a strong correspondence to humanistic-existential and transpersonal psychology. Humanistic-existential psychologists, such as Abraham Maslow, Rollo May, Victor Frankl, Carl Rogers, Fritz and Laura Perls, James Bugental, and Leslie Greenberg, all speak articulately about the psychological value of an active search for connection, meaning, and purpose in one’s life. They also emphasize that psychological health is rooted in a sense of moving from a state of fragmentation and separation into a state of balance and wholeness and integration. They identify the value of living in congruence between one’s inner perceptions and values and the external reality of one’s life. The existentialists, in particular, stress the necessity of “waking up” and actively resist a somnambulistic tendency to conform and surrender to the “herd mentality” – not to mention actively and responsibly making choices and exercising our inherent power and freedom. Transpersonal psychologists such as Ken Wilber, Stanislav and Christina Grof, Stanley Krippner, and Roger Walsh broaden and expand the definition of “human” to encompass a connection with the “higher” or divine aspects of ourselves and the world.

Celtic spirituality affords its practitioners a unique, culturally congruent means of seeking and finding meaning and purpose in their lives. A culturally competent psychotherapist or counselor would benefit from an understanding of these spiritual practices in order to help clients of Celtic and European background who are experiencing a sense of cultural disconnection that underlies more superficial problems, challenges, and difficulties.

### See Also

- ▶ [Celtic Religions](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)

- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Initiation](#)
- ▶ [Transpersonal Psychology](#)

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## Centering Prayer

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Centering Prayer is a method of Christian contemplative prayer based on the fourteenth century mystical text *The Cloud of Unknowing*. *The Cloud* offers spiritual guidance to one who is ready to progress in the spiritual life to nondiscursive prayer. Because the divine is ultimately beyond human comprehension, *The Cloud* envisions God lying above the one who prays with a cloud of unknowing in between. The goal of prayer is to focus attention on God by directing darts of loving desire into the cloud. Since prayer is understood as attention focused on God, the text envisions a second cloud, a cloud of forgetting, lying between the one who prays and the world. The anonymous author insists that any ideas or thoughts that arise during prayer are distractions that pull attention away from God and must be avoided by showing them under this cloud of forgetting (Johnston 1973; Walsh 1981).

## Methods

Centering Prayer originated in the 1970s at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. Two Trappist monks, M. Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating, have popularized this method of prayer through publications and retreats. The method itself is quite simple. One begins by concentrating attention on God. This is done by choosing a word that focuses one's desire for God. The word is then repeated slowly. Repetition of the word serves as an aid in focusing attention and desire onto God. In the course of prayer, one may find that the word is no longer needed and stop repeating it altogether. Next, during the prayer one will find that distractions inevitably arise. Instead of heeding the thoughts and images that clamor for attention, simply return to the prayer word. This helps return focus to God. Finally, after 20 min, end the prayer by repeating the Our Father (Pennington 1980).

## Distractions

Centering Prayer acknowledges that distractions are unavoidable during contemplative prayer. In *Intimacy with God*, Thomas Keating addresses the mental noise that plagues attempts to pray using this method. Much of this noise is simply distracting material, including items from our to-do list, intellectual insights, and the temptation to reflect on how well the prayer is progressing. Keating asserts that other types of material that pop up such as long forgotten memories, fantasies, or disturbing images are symptomatic of deeper problems. Moreover, he claims that the practice of Centering Prayer can facilitate the healing of these emotional illnesses (Keating 1994).

## Healing

Keating explains how Centering Prayer contributes to healing by interpreting it as a cycle composed of four moments. The first moment of the cycle initiates the sacred word and establishes attentiveness to God. This ushers in the second

moment which brings a deep sense of rest and refreshment. During this moment, Keating envisions that God is present in an analogous way to that of a therapist. Such a supportive relationship creates an atmosphere in which painful memories can be shared. Because such an accepting space has been established, in the third moment, Keating claims the unconscious unloads images that represent emotional wounds into consciousness. During the course of the prayer, these images are registered as distractions. Finally, in the fourth moment which Keating terms “evacuation,” the emotional baggage is released from the psyche. Then, the cycle continues by returning to the sacred word (Keating 1994).

### Distractions and the Unconscious

Ann Ulanov envisions how healing can occur through prayer in a different fashion. Sigmund Freud refers to the psychic life of the unconscious as primary process thinking. This level of the psyche is a raw, rushing flow of being composed of wishes, images, instincts, emotions, urges, and drives. One characteristic of the contents of the unconscious is that they continually attempt to communicate their presence to consciousness. Utilizing these concepts, Ulanov refers to the distractions that plague attempts to pray as “primary speech.” She interprets them as unconscious material trying to get the attention of consciousness. Ulanov does not agree that healing occurs by the simple unloading and evacuation of unconscious emotional baggage. Instead, she recommends deliberately directing attention to distractions as they emerge during prayer. For her, it is by being honest about all the parts inside of us, and using them as conversation starters in a dialogue with God, that psychological healing occurs when one prays (Ulanov and Ulanov 1982).

### See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ God

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### Chakras

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The term chakra (Sanskrit *cakra* but pronounced *chakra* and in general printed usage in the West) comes from the Hindu/Yoga tradition and is a Sanskrit term meaning wheel or mystical circle. The term refers to psychoenergetic centers in the subtle or nonphysical human body (*lingadeha*) discovered in ancient India. The chakras are believed to move in a circular manner and funnel universal energy into the human energy system. References are made in the ancient (ca. seventh century BCE) Upanishads to an esoteric human anatomy composed of subtle life energy or *prana*. This anatomy is comprised of 72,000 *nadis* or channels along which subtle energy travels. Although the chakras or energy centers are not specifically mentioned in the *Upanishads*, the *Maitri Upanishad* (6.21) mentions the *Sushumna* channel which is central to the *Kundalini Yoga* philosophy and practice as are the chakras. The Upanishads also describe five elements – earth, water, fire, air, and ether associated with this subtle body.

Investigation of this subtle body by later Yogic and Tantric practitioners led to a more thorough description including the three vertical

channels – *Sushumna, Ida, and Pingala* – aligned with the spinal axis. It is in the Tantras composed in the medieval period that the term chakra was first applied in written form to these focal points or centers. The *Sat-Cakra-Nirupana* (ca. 1577) describes each of the seven chakras in detail. It was the translation of this text by Sir John Woodroffe (penname Arthur Avalon) entitled *The Serpent Power* published in 1919 that brought specific knowledge of the chakras and Kundalini to the West.

The five elements are associated with the first five chakras. The higher chakras are associated with spiritual knowledge beyond the physical realm. Knowledge of this subtle anatomy and the association with these elements spread from India to Tibet, China, and Japan where distinct practices developed. For example, Chinese acupuncture is based on the flow of subtle energy or chi through the nadis or meridians and the balance of elements in the body.

Tantrism and Yoga typically distinguish seven chakras aligned along the spinal axis. A reserve of spiritual energy or Kundalini is believed to abide in the *Muladhara* chakra located at the base of the spine. Meditation, breathing, and mantra practices arouse this dormant energy and encourage it to rise up the spine through the *Sushumna* channel. During this process the other six chakras are encountered and energized. Depending on their energetic state, they can either block or facilitate this upward flow of spiritual energy. Kundalini Yoga especially focuses on this subtle body and the raising of the Kundalini from the base chakra to the *Sahasrara* chakra at the crown of the head with the intention of attaining spiritual realization. However, all forms of Yoga have the intention of awakening and raising the Kundalini in order to stimulate moral and spiritual growth.

Just as the associated elements progress from gross (earth) to fine (ether), the energies associated with each chakra are believed to be more gross or lower vibration in the lower chakras and finer, or higher, vibration in the higher chakras. The spiritual journey is, thus, a developmental one with sequential steps or levels on the path to transformation of consciousness.

**Chakras, Table 1** Seven major chakras

Chakra	Sanskrit translation	Location	Associated element
Sahasrara	Thousand-petaled	Crown of head	
Ajna	Command	Third eye	
Vishuddha	Pure	Throat	Ether
Anahata	Unstruck	Center of chest	Air
Manipura	Gem site	Solar plexus	Fire
Svadhithana	Own abode	Below navel	Water
Muladhara	Root support	Base of spine	Earth

Each chakra is believed to control specific physical, spiritual, emotional, and psychological functions and elaborate mandalas came to be associated with each. These mandalas include Sanskrit letters, colors, god or goddess with associated symbols, geometric shapes, an element, seed sound or mantra, animal, and specific number of lotus flower petals (the chakras are sometimes referred to as *padmes* or lotuses) indicating the rate of vibration of the energy associated with the particular chakra.

There is variability related to the number and placement of the chakras, e.g., *Sahasrara* is sometimes placed above the crown of the head. In Buddhist Yoga there are five such centers, and in Hindu Yoga six or more chakras. Following is a table of the major chakras depicted in Hindu Yoga and located along the central *Sushumna* channel (Table 1).

Reference is also sometimes made to minor chakras located at various parts of the body.

While knowledge of the chakras has come to the West primarily from the Indian Tantric tradition, other religions such as the Jewish Kabbalists, Sufis, and Taoists also describe energy systems and centers.

## Psychology and the Chakras

Meditations and asanas have been developed by Yoga masters to heal both body and mind, and there are specific practices developed to open the chakras and alleviate anxiety and depression as well as medical illnesses.



The emergence of Western depth psychologies coincided with the translation and dissemination of Yogic texts in the West. However, the Western distinction between philosophy and psychology, its emphasis on empirical methodology and ignorance of subtle energy mechanics, has prevented the acceptance of the chakras as a subject of serious consideration and research in the West.

Jung was very interested in the chakras and viewed them as symbolically depicting inner experience and psychological stages of development. He thought of the Kundalini process as a metaphorical journey such as climbing a sacred mountain. A series of lectures he gave on this topic with J. W. Heur in 1932 reveals his deep interest and intensive study of available material, particularly Sir. John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power*. Jung saw Kundalini Yoga as a process of individuation and translated Kundalini Yoga terms into those of analytical psychology. Jung viewed the system as strictly metaphorical and eastern spiritual realization as a projection of unconscious contents. At the same time, Jung also talked about Kundalini as if it were a real phenomenon and warned that transitions from one chakra to another can lead to psychological crises. He cautioned Westerners away from experimentation with the chakras and Kundalini.

There is a phenomenon known as "meditation sickness" in the East, wherein headaches, chest pain, or stomachaches may occur when the beginner practices excessively. This is believed to result from chi (Kundalini energy) rising too fast. The antidote is to leave off meditation practice until it goes away. This may take weeks or months.

This laddered hierarchical model of the chakras corresponds at places to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with physical safety and security associated with the first chakra (Muladhara) and autonomy with the seventh (Sahasrara).

During the past few decades, many books have been published about the chakras in the West particularly by New Age authors, yet few psychotherapies have developed utilizing this subtle energy system. However, Western clinicians with experience with Eastern spiritual practices are beginning to develop psychotherapies

incorporating this focus. OME (Organic Mind Energy) psychotherapy and Seemorg Matrix Work are two such psychotherapies.

Reichian, Bioenergetics, and Roling are related body therapies that work to release constricted vital energies in the body.

## See Also

- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Tantrism](#)
- ▶ [Yoga](#)

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## Chan Buddhism

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Chan Buddhism is a major Chinese Buddhist sect attributed to Bodhidharma that emphasizes attaining Buddhahood, the supreme Buddhist religious goal, through enlightenment of one's own mind, which subsequently spread to Japan and named as Zen. In Chan Buddhism, the word "Chan" comes from "Dhyana" in Sanskrit (Soothill and Hodous 1937), which refers to meditation, samadhi (one-pointed concentration or perfect absorption), but nevertheless goes beyond the meaning of dhyana to become the manifestation of wisdom with simultaneous perfect composure of the mind (Huineng 1969).

With its focus on personal enlightenment of the mind in the present life, Chan Buddhism is characterized from the other Buddhist sects by its disrespect for religious rituals, sacred texts, godly figures, or intellectual understanding but instead emphasizes on meditation, intuition, master-student relationship, and practicing and realizing within the mundane here-and-now life.

### Development of the Enlightenment Sect

Our Buddha-nature, the mind of enlightenment, is considered to be ever present, just awaiting for discovery through meditation, practice, or direct intuitive insight. Lineage transmission between

enlightened minds is stressed with Bodhidharma, transmitting the right enlightened mind from Buddha to the Chinese patriarch Huike, Sengcan, Daoxin, and Hongren and to the sixth patriarch Huineng, considered the source for the subsequent flourishing of the five Chan sects, including the dominant and still surviving Linji (Jap: Rinzai) and Caodong (Jap: Soto) sects.

The Six Patriarch's Platform Sutra, likely to be written by the disciple Shenhui (Hu 1953), established Huineng (638–713) as beginning a Chan era of sudden enlightenment, for which the Chan sect is externally received and recognized.

Sudden enlightenment refers to the sudden or quick glimpse of self-nature, Buddha-nature, or emptiness, without necessarily going through extended years of meditation or practice. Chan masters were recorded to be able to set off an enlightenment experience in their students through twisting a student's (Baizhang) nose to pain, skillful verbal remarks (Master Mazu) enlightening instantly a novice hunter, or banging a door on the student's (Yunmen) leg. Analytically, there are probably two relevant causes that make these sudden enlightenment experience possible:

1. A significant piece of psychological (or spiritual) attachment is suddenly forced to detach and an enlightening experience is resulted (Chan 2008).
2. The discursive mind is suddenly forced to halt or bypassed whereby the nondiscursive enlightening mind is revealed.

The gradual enlightenment path refers to a more gradual or relatively continual revelation of enlightenment in parts attained normally through extended years of meditation or practice.

Essentially the practice of Chan Buddhism had mainstreamed into two sects, namely, the Linji sect that emphasizes the sudden enlightenment path with instructional methods including shouting and hitting and the Caodong sect, predominantly a gradual enlightenment path that relies heavily on meditation practice.

The sudden enlightenment era of Chan in the Tang Dynasty gradually went to its historical downturn, and by the Song Dynasty, the myriad

masterful ways of initiating sudden enlightenment had gradually receded and the Chan sect began a more safeguard way of practice with more fixed form for enlightenment.

The Linji sect, attributed to Dahui (1089–1163), adopted the “Huatou” or “Gongan” method of practice. By huatou or gongan method, a practitioner is instructed to generate real “doubts” by paying attention to a phrasal excerpt of a gongan, the recorded open case of enlightenment experience, or the whole gongan itself, such as the phrase “What is Wu (nothing or emptiness)?” or the gongan whereby Master Zhaozhou said “Dog has no Buddha nature!” Vigorous immersion into the query might eventually lead to the disbursal of the “doubt mass” with a shattering of the illusive mind so that one can suddenly “see” the Buddha-nature.

The Caodong sect, through Master Hongzhi Zhengjue (1091–1157), had come up with a method of practice called “silent illumination,” by which a practitioner practices a kind of formless (no fixed concentration focus) meditation (Chan 2004) whereby nondiscursive silence is coupled simultaneously with illuminative contemplation so that a nonmoving mind with clarity and wisdom is gradually attained, which is itself enlightenment. This method was subsequently transmitted to Dogen who established the Soto Zen in Japan with a similar practice called Shikantaza (just sitting).

In final analysis, there are no definite advantages of sudden enlightenment over gradual enlightenment, for sudden enlightenment can be quick but not thorough while gradual enlightenment can be slow but firm. Ultimately, it is the degree of vexation dissolution and attachments disintegration (Chan 2006b) that count toward attainment of no-self and genuine complete enlightenment.

Since the Ming Dynasty, Chan sect further declined in China as the Amitabha sect of recitation of Buddha’s name became more popular and prevalent. Many Chinese Buddhists combined the methods of Chan with recitation of Buddhas’ names. A common huatou within the Chan sect had become to investigate “Who recites the Buddha name?” transforming the Buddha name

recitation into a huatou method that can lead to enlightenment.

The Chan sect today has witnessed some revival led by efforts of Master Sheng Yen (1930–2009), who had led numerous international Chan retreats on both huatou and silent illumination methods and espousing a three stage Chan theory (Sheng-Yen 1979) of (1) Small self, the discursive self of the ordinary people and beginning practitioners; (2) Big self, the unified self of the concentrated mind and harmonized body; and (3) No self, the mind who has seen Buddha-nature or attained enlightenment.

### **Distinctive Expressions of Chan Buddhism**

Chan Buddhism is also renowned and distinguished from other Buddhist sect by its disrespect for literal medium and rational thinking, a strange exhibition of uncommon behaviors in the gongans, and sometimes a display of highly abstract symbolism in language and art. The underlying thread linking all the above Chan characteristics is actually a need to bypass the ordinary defiled and discursive cognitive thinking mind such that the pure and nondiscursive mind of enlightenment may have a chance to reveal.

Unlike other Buddhist sect, there is also a de-emphasis on precepts or practice. Absolute freedom and spontaneous rightful action appropriate to the circumstances are believed to be attained through enlightenment such that prima facie adherence to strict moral rules becomes both unnecessary and a hindrance. Famous gongans are Guizong’s ploughing dead a snake in a field work and Nanquan’s chopping a cat among disputes among monks.

The ultimate Chan practice is believed to be both effortless (no concentration effort) and methodless (everyday life as practice) (Chan 2004) and that explains why Chan masters instruct students practice only by eating or excreting, wearing ropes, or daily works with no meditation needed, e.g., Linji sleeping at the Chan meditation hall after enlightenment. The Chan sect is also well known by its disrespect

for religious symbols, such as Buddha, patriarch, or sutras. This is in accordance with the need to attain absolute non-dwelling emptiness (Madhyamika, the middle way) for which any attachment to “sacred” symbols, even Buddha or Buddhism itself, could stand as the last hindrances to complete enlightenment.

Lineage transmission between master and students is considered essential in Chan Buddhism for it is the self-experience of realizing Buddha-nature and liberating enlightenment that is important, not the understanding of religious facts, principles, or the acting out of religious behavioral guidelines. Typical attainment verification guidelines include, e.g., the “*Ten Ox Herding Pictures*” (Sheng-Yen 1988), which depicts the progressive stages a practitioner would go through, by the analogy of taming the mind like taming the ox; and Master Dongshan’s (Five positions of king and minister), a list of five successive Chan attainment stages through the transposition of the manifestation between wisdom and vexations (Chan 2006a).

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment Initiation](#)

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## Chaos

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In archetypal creation myths, the origins of the cosmos are believed to be a state or condition called chaos. Even Western science with its “Big Bang” theory can be construed as being an origin in chaos. In ancient wisdom we find many creation stories that began with chaos. In the Judaic tradition, for example, God’s voice called out over the deep and thus did creation emerge from chaos and darkness. In similar fashion, in the Vedic tradition, when the Absolute spoke the primal word “*Om*,” the wonders of the created universe emerged from chaos, each element pervaded by the Divine. Thus, ancient visionaries seemed to recognize the intimate connection between chaos and creativity, and this is an interrelationship that many scientists have been actively exploring today. As Briggs and Peat state:

Although we humans tend to abhor chaos and avoid it whenever possible, nature uses chaos in remarkable ways to create new entities, shape events, and hold the Universe together. . . . Just what is chaos? The answer has many facets. . . . To begin with, chaos turns out to be far subtler than the common sense idea that it is the messiness of mere chance. . . . The scientific term ‘chaos’ refers to an underlying interconnectedness that exists in apparently random events. Chaos science focuses on hidden patterns, nuance, the ‘sensitivity’ of things, and the ‘rules’ for how the unpredictable leads to the new (1999: 1–2).

Chaos is ubiquitous. From weather patterns to the behavior of homing pigeons, from raging rivers to the nerves and blood vessels in the human body, and from craggy coastlines to the intricacies of fern leaves, nature is filled with complexity, and scientists are discovering common, archetypal patterns that underlie seemingly chaotic systems (Conforti 2003). Moreover, science is discovering that there is an enduring interrelationship between chaos and order. Like waves in the ocean, all the energetic patterns of life arise and fall, wax and wane. Chaos organizes itself into order, and order inevitably dissolves into chaos. The sequence – chaos to order to chaos to order – repeats itself in the ever-changing patterns of life.

### Chaos Theory as a New Paradigm

Today's chaos scientists have rejected the compartmentalization of the sciences, where part systems have long been studied in isolation from the whole – a compartmentalization that often leads to reductionism and oversimplification. Rather, the new inter-scientific paradigm crosses the fields of physics, mathematics, biology, astronomy, meteorology, psychology, physiology, and more. James Gleick was among the first to recognize and articulate the interrelationships of chaos patterns across the varied scientific fields. He wrote "Patterns born amid formlessness: This is biology's basic beauty and its basic mystery. Life sucks order from a sea of disorder" (Gleick 1987: 299).

Among the many component parts of chaos theory, perhaps the most widely known is termed "the butterfly effect," after Edward Lorenz's discovery in 1960 that tiny changes in initial conditions can have major impact on resulting weather patterns far away. This occurrence has been likened to the mathematical properties of feedback loops and iterative processes, both of which are common in many areas of nature. In his 1972 paper, "Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wing in Brazil Set Off a Tornado in Texas?," Lorenz (1993: 181–184) sets about

correcting misconceptions due to his use of the ancient Chinese proverb about the far-reaching effects of small variability such as a butterfly's wings flapping. But the fact remains that feedback loops and nonlinear mathematical systems often appear to create chaos when, in reality, they are behaving precise laws that are often so subtle as to be undetectable. The very unpredictability of weather systems, for example, makes the current debate about global warming most intense. One must remember, however, that feedback loops often reach a point of no return where one pattern is irrevocably shifted into another entirely different pattern. The butterfly effect lies behind many currently unknown subtle effects and unanswered questions. In climatology, for example, how much change in average temperature will cause sufficient ice melting to irrevocably raise sea level so as to wipe away shorelines and inundate coastal cities worldwide? Or the butterfly effect from the perspective of individual clinical health psychology: how much does a tiny taste of sugar affect a dieter's resolve? How much does a whiff of alcohol disturb the precarious balance of an alcoholic's life? Or in the complexity of a family system, how much can a single eyebrow raised in criticism trigger the eruption of chaos that may affect the entire system with repetitive, dysfunctional patterns?

### Repeating Patterns

Another element of chaos theory that is well known is the mathematics of "fractals." First introduced and named by Benoit Mandelbrot at IBM, fractals are complex forms that possess self-similarity at many different levels or scales – whether seen in a microscope or viewed from a great distance. Intricate patterns repeat in the many branches of a fern, for example, or in the folds and crevices of the human brain. In psychotherapy, similar patterns are seen over time when one studies the dynamics of an extended family system. This "multigenerational transmission process" described by Murray Bowen can also be conceptualized as a fractal viewed over time.

Just as chaos and order are interrelated, so too are such apparent opposites as competition and cooperation. They are complexly interwoven.

A complex chaotic system... contains a constantly unfolding dynamic in which what we call competition may suddenly become cooperation and vice versa. In chaotic systems, interconnections flow among individual elements on many different scales (Briggs and Peat 1999: 63).

Furthermore, patterns repeat. Because it is thought that the system is “attracted” to a particular pattern of behavior, that pattern is called a “strange attractor.” Clinically, one needs only to recall Freud’s description of the “repetition compulsion” to know that these strange attractors are found in psychology as well as in the other sciences.

The spiritual dimension of chaos theory is found in the profound glimpses that this theory gives into the basic mechanisms that underlie all of life. In studying the interweaving complexities of chaos theory as it applies to all of the sciences, the sacred dimension of mystery is heightened, and a sense of awe is engendered. We humans, with our own complex patterns of intrapsychic and interpersonal group life, in many ways echo the complex patterns – the archetypes – that are being discovered increasingly in the entire creative/chaotic environment in which we are embedded.

## See Also

- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [God](#)

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## Chaplaincy

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The concept of “chaplain” has a long history, originally associated with the priest who performed religious rites and rituals in the military. The role of chaplain expanded to mean any minister who performed such religious care in public and private institutions, including the military, hospitals, schools, and prisons. The term became more closely associated with Christian faith traditions but in recent years has been embraced by a wide variety of religious traditions.

Chaplaincy is the broad term used to describe the work of and ministry provided by chaplains. In recent years, as the profession has recognized diversity, particularly religious pluralism, terms such as “chaplaincy care” and “spiritual care” have been added to the more traditional concept of “pastoral care” to describe the work of a chaplain.

While original chaplains were ordained priests and ministers, laypersons may also be commissioned by their faith group to function as a chaplain. In addition, the ministry provided by chaplains has expanded beyond religious rites and sacramental rituals to include crisis ministry, counseling, ethical decision-making, education, staff support, worship, and the coordination of community and congregational services and relationships to the institution (Smith 1990, p. 136).

In North America, chaplains have their strongest history in the military and in hospitals. The first military chaplains were priests and ministers who traveled with the military units into battle, praying for victory and administering prayers and Last Rites to the wounded and the dying. In the mid-1920s, the first known formal training for those providing pastoral care in secular institutions occurred through the inspiration of Dr. Dick Cabots in the general hospital setting and then in



the early 1930s under the leadership of Rev. Anton Boisen in the mental hospital setting. This clinical training became known as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) which continues to exist as the primary education and training for those preparing for ministry in specialized settings. In the 1940s, the movement to create standards for the professional certification of chaplains was initiated.

Today, the professionally trained, certified chaplain is the norm for most institutions and agencies that employ or utilize chaplains. Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is offered by a number of organizations, including the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE), the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP), and the Canadian Association for Spiritual Care/Association Canadienne des Soins Spirituels (CASC/ACSS) in North America. CPE is also offered by various organizations and institutions in Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa. Once trained, chaplains are certified by a number of organizations, including the Association for Professional Chaplains (APC), the National Association of Catholic Chaplains (NACC), the National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC), and the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP). A number of other organizations and faith groups also train, certify, and/or commission chaplains. Many of them are members of the COMISS network in North America, a network of institutions, agencies, and faith groups that endorse, employ, support, or train chaplains or accredit chaplaincy training programs. COMISS operates under the umbrella of the concept of ministry in specialized settings.

While the criteria to become a professional, certified chaplain varies from organization to organization, a standard set of basic requirements have emerged, including ecclesiastical endorsement from one's faith group, ordination or commissioning by one's faith group, a predetermined level of theological education of degree, and clinical training and education (usually CPE) (Smith 1990, p. 136). Most certifying organizations also require some time of demonstration of competence through written papers and other documentation, as well as a face-to-face interview with the

Certification Commission or Committee of the certifying body.

The chaplain in the millennium era is confronted with a variety of crises situations for which one must be well trained. While a majority of chaplains spend their workday in the institution or facility providing routine care; listening and counseling the clients, constituents, and staff; organizing and conducting religious worship services; and providing sacramental rituals such as baptism, communion (also known as the Lord's supper or the Eucharist depending on one's faith tradition), and the Sacrament of the Sick (formerly known as "Last Rites"), the role of chaplain has expanded to include a variety of services of functions reflective of a diverse and complex world.

In many institutions, the chaplain works closely with institutional leadership to make sure the religious and general services provided by the institution are culturally sensitive and reflective of the diversity of the community and clients that the institution serves. Chaplains are also included on institutional Ethics Committees, advising on the complex biomedical ethical issues that emerge in today's technology-driven world of care and serving as a direct consultant to patients, families, clients, and staff as ethical decisions are considered and made.

Chaplains are also active participants in the end-of-life care protocols and bereavement programs at many institutions. They assist interdisciplinary care teams, patients, and families in making decisions around care at the end of life and often manage the institution's care to families at the time of death. Chaplains are trained to deal with the intense and often painful realities that accompany tragic and accidental deaths, prenatal and neonatal deaths, suicides, long-term illness and hospice care, war fatalities, and the deaths of prisoners. Chaplains often advise on issues of living wills and durable power of attorney for healthcare, formal processes for individuals to establish the life-saving measures they do or do not desire to have should they become unable to make those decisions or the person(s) who they designate to make such decisions.

Research on the impact of chaplains and pastoral/spiritual care has increased to demonstrate

and determine the ways in which these professionals and ministries affect such things as hospital length of stays, pain management, recovery periods, rehospitalizations, and recidivism. The abstract of an article entitled “Chaplaincy Research: Its Value, Its Quality and Its Future” sets the stage for current research in the field. The article is divided into four major sections, the first of which presents and discusses various reasons given by major researchers in the field why chaplains should do research. The second section summarizes findings on the sophistication of research on religion and health published in (a) medical and other healthcare journals and (b) specialty journals on religion and health, chaplaincy, and pastoral care and counseling. The third section revisits suggestions that have been made by prominent chaplain researchers to increase and improve research by chaplains. The last section offers some suggestions for expanding several lines of current research in the future, including research: (1) to elucidate the nature of spiritual care chaplains provide to different populations, including patients, families, and staff; (2) to assess the prevalence and intensity of patients’ spiritual needs and the degree to which they are being met; (3) to identify that subset of patients who are spiritually at risk in terms of having high needs and slow religious resources; (4) to identify the biological causal mechanisms by which religion influences health; and (5) to measure the effectiveness of chaplain interventions (Weaver et al. 2008).

Specialty professional journals in the field have emerged since the 1940s to chronicle the work of the chaplain, describe the practical skills required for chaplains, and identify the common functions and ministry of chaplains, in addition to the research being done in the field. Some of these journals include the *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* and the *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*. A number of professional medical journals have also published articles related to spirituality and medicine, faith and health, and other connections between the healthcare and religious worlds, with the mainstream recognition and acceptance of holistic care.

The most recent movement in chaplaincy is the creation of “standards of practice” for a variety of subspecialties in chaplaincy. The Association of Professional Chaplains (APC), a multifaith organization that certifies chaplains in North America, has been the leader in defining these standards in the areas of acute care, long-term care, and hospice care. The APC plans to develop standards of practice in other subspecialty areas such as mental health, children’s health, and corrections. Modeled after standards of practice for physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, the “Standards of Practice for Professional Chaplains” are intended to define and describe the minimal standards for chaplaincy care and the consistent, observable skills in which professional chaplains should be competent.

The “Standards of Practice for Professional Chaplains” built on two earlier collaborative works by several of the pastoral care/education/certification organizations to define professional chaplaincy in the healthcare setting (“Professional Chaplaincy: Its Role and Importance in Healthcare,” edited by Larry VandeCreek and Burton 2001) and to create common standards and a common code of ethics in the field (“The Common Standards and The Common Code of Ethics,” created by the Spiritual Care Collaborative 2004).

Chaplaincy has grown into a professional ministry with its own unique identity, as well as a diverse field in and of itself. Today, there are associations of police chaplains, race track chaplains, airport chaplains, correctional chaplains, workplace chaplains, and campus chaplains, in addition to those for the traditional hospital and healthcare chaplains. As the world recognizes the mind, body, and spirit connection as essential to the care of persons and embraces a respect for the diversity of faiths and religious traditions, the role of chaplain will be a critical and more essential one in public and private institutions.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Ethics and Ethical Behavior
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Interfaith Dialog
- ▶ Jewish Mourning Rituals
- ▶ Liminality
- ▶ Orthodoxy
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Sacraments
- ▶ Theodicy
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Violence and Religion
- ▶ Wounded Healer, The

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## Charismata

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“*Charismata*” is the former usage of the new word charisma. Today it means two phenomena:

1. Spiritual gifts which come with charismatic endowments. These endowments include wise words, special knowledge, faith, miracles, prophecy, power to rule, healings, connection with divine grace, discerning of spirits, and diverse kinds of tongues as in religious leaders.

2. Nonreligious, non-supernatural, and secular applications as have been elaborated by Max Weber (1864–1920 CE). In both usages, charisma is the special quality some people possess that tends them “to be attractive to others, to be influential and inspirational, and to be characterized as brilliant and effective communicators.” Despite its wide applications in humanities, it seems to be very difficult to define it. Hence, as Conger has rightly pointed out, “there is no generally agreed-on definition of charisma” (Conger 2004, p. 158).

As an adjective, charismatic characteristics or charismatic authority can be used to mean having a supernatural origin. In the New Testament, Paul writes of spiritual gifts/endowments or charismata, which is the first-known illustration of charismata. In this religious context, the term denotes any good gift that flows from God’s benevolent love (*charis*) unto humans, any divine grace or favor originating in the Holy Spirit to distribute it for the good of others according to his discernment (1 Cor 12–14). In the same context, all such charismata are attributed not only to the chosen ones but to every Christian to be qualified to perform his task in the church (1 Cor 7:7).

This separation between general and special meaning of charismata also occurs in Romans. This word is used in Romans in the singular six times and refers to God’s grace given by faith in Christ (Rom 5:15–16). Although the sinner should be sentenced to death, by faith in Christ, he is bestowed eternal life (Rom 6:23). In Romans (11:26) when talking about Israel, the term in its plural form refers to certain privileges – such as forgiveness and redemption designated by God to Israel. “*Charisma*,” which is the newer form of the term “charismata,” derives from the Greek word *charis* meaning “grace, kindness, and favor.”

The German sociologist and economist Max Weber developed the term “charisma” and it became a central theme in his writings. In his book *Economy and Society*, “charisma” is a certain attractive quality of an individual personality, either with a divine spirit or an extraordinary nonreligious secular quality, by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men (Holton and Turner 1989, pp. 454–455 [1384H, the year following the

Hijrah, when Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina]). Weber's original idea was to apply the term in a nonreligious meaning. In sociological analysis, "charisma" is a power of leadership or a certain type of authority that may have supernatural, superhuman, or any other kind of extraordinary origin. In this usage, "charisma" found its new place in the process of leadership and institution building in modern society. This definition of "charisma" is secular and asserts "denial of the validity of the sacred, and of what is accepted in any given society as sacred" (Eisenstadt 1968, p. xix).

In the Weberian sense of the word, "*charisma*" has also two opposite tendencies: to create and to destroy. This dichotomy between two different situations is the very potential of charismatic activities (Eisenstadt, xx). In Christianity, we perceive many concepts of charisma such as charisma of office (*Amtcharisma*), charisma of kinship (*Geltcharisma*), and hereditary charisma (*Erbcharisma*) or contact charisma. All of these concepts, "especially that of the charisma of office, have been used by Weber to denote the process through which the charismatic characteristics are transferred from unique personality or the unstructured group to orderly institutional reality" (Eisenstadt 1968, p. xxi).

There are two differences between religious, divinely usage of charisma and that of the secular. (1) In the religious context, charisma is mostly an inherited or inborn quality, whereas in the secular context, it is believed to be a constellation of personal characteristics. (2) Charisma in the Weberian usage more likely emerges during times of crisis and social upheaval; so it is situational. But in the former application, it is mostly individual. Contrasted to religious meaning, in the sociological context "charisma" is not regarded as a gift, but an attractive influential force belonging to irrational, exhilarating aspect of life that appears to answer to the question of meaning.

Similar charismatic virtues are honored in other religious traditions. Some observers have perceived a model of leadership and authority in Shiite Islam as a charismatic leadership. In this sense, Shi'ism is regarded as a millenarian movement founded on the basis of the right of prophet Muhammad's male descendants for leadership. Every descendant,

who is called "Imam," inherits leadership from the former one up to the twelfth Imam who entered on occultation at 842H. ("Occultation" in Shiite Islam refers to a belief that the twelfth Imam who is the messianic figure was born but disappeared and will one day return and fill the world with justice.) Imams are recognized as charismatic leaders possessing this quality as inborn and should have it by their office too. Such beliefs have served to unite the faithful community over history. In this sense "charisma is considered the result of contact with a supernatural being from which the individual receives revelation and power enabling him to mediate spiritual grace to other people" (Parrindeh 1987, p. 218).

One can also find this tendency in Judaism. In this cultural context, the notion of *Barakah* among Muslims and of its Jewish counterpart *zechut avot* (ancestral merit) "connote a strong sense of inherited blessedness and ascribes virtue" and regarded as a source of legitimation and charisma-tization (Bilu and Ben-Ari 1995, pp. 226–229).

In Islamic philosophy, the term "*feyz*" literally means "grace" in the same sense as charismata in Christianity. *Feyz* is the first practice of God: everything emanates from Allah, since he is the Prime Agent. Therefore, the Prime Agent or *Fayyaz* – the one who emanates *feyz* or grace – is the very self-existent (Arab 2007, p. 424). In this sense, *feyz* means kindness. Some Islamic philosophers such as those who believe in the School of Illumination also use the term "*light*" (*noor*) instead of *feyz* to refer to the act of emanation. God is called light or "light of lights" (*noor al anvar*). Allah's flow of emanation, or the rise of the sunlight over everything, would not be cut off. His eternity necessitates the everlasting process of emanation flowing from him onto beings (Suhrevardi 1976, p. 186).

"In this sense," as Hossein Nasr says, "the mind of a human being is continuously illuminated by the light of the Divine Intellect and revelation and protected from error by the grace provided by God" (Nasr 2006, p. 32). In fact, this interpretation of *feyz* or grace as light has its origin in Zoroastrianism (Nasr 2006, p. 229). In the religious application of the term, charisma is an extraordinary gift that mostly refers to kings

and prophets. This godly gift is called *xvarnah* or *xvarah*. In the two ancient languages of Pahlavi and Avestai, the term means that the light or shining emanates from God onto Persian emperors in supporting them to govern, defeating their enemies, organizing society, constructing civilizations, discovery and contrivance, prophecy, intuition, and so on. Here again the original source of the term is religious (Nafisi 2002, p. 31). But in some cases, God chooses a certain individual – not necessarily a prophet or a king – who himself owns a personal capability requesting *Farrah* from God and through hard trainings become worthy to receive it (Dehghan 2002, p. 163). So, it seems that in this context, the separation between the secular and the religious, as it is predominant in Christianity, is confusing. The charisma of the kings could not be regarded clearly as religious as opposed to nonreligious and secular charisma. It is both a constellation of personal characteristics and divine gifts and endowments.

“*Farrah*,” the newer form of the old words *xvarnah* or *xvarah*, has different meanings such as glory, greatness, light, force, and special authority of kings and prophets (Tabatabae’i 1996, p. 134). In narrower meanings resembling Christian usages, *Farrah* refers to some qualifications such as to think, to speak, and to act according to the “Just Religion” which is Zoroastrianism (Avesta, *Zamiad yasht*, 1:9). These modes are Zoroastrian styles of thinking, speaking, and acting (Avesta, *Zamiad yasht*, 1:79).

*Farrah* has two aspects: the first aspect enforces its human owner to do his or her social, spiritual, and moral responsibilities; authority; guardianship; and rule. The second aspect refers to the charismatic’s insight into God and relation to Him (Dehghan 2002, pp. 27, 37, 163).

In modern usage, we also find charismatic movements founded by charismatic individuals possessing a human quality, which is mostly a leadership quality, without reference to the supernatural or divine grace. For example, despite the dissimilarity in their political aims, when we speak of Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution he headed, Gandhi’s India, or Adolf

Hitler, we do not intend some charismatic characteristics such as healing and revelation, but rather admiration and respect (Hajarian 2001, p. 170). In this sense, there is usually an elating unity between leader and followers. This relationship is precarious and the state of charismatic authority is transitory and “problems of political continuity necessarily accompany such a phenomenon” (Kruger and Silvert 1995, p. 296).

The concept of charisma has evolved over the years, progressively shifting from its religious usage, in which a certain individual is granted spiritual gifts of divine revelation, prophecy, special knowledge, faith, and leadership. The sociological usage is predominantly leader centered, situational, and secular. This nonreligious use was begun when Max Weber examined varieties of charismatic authority. For Weber, although charismatic individuals possess an extraordinary quality, the relationship between the leader’s qualities as a charismatic individual on one hand and the followers’ devotion to the leader on the other hand is of more importance.

Charisma is also found in other religious traditions such as Islam and Judaism, which is labeled under *Barakah* and *zechut avot*, respectively. Currently, one can observe that “charisma” is used as synonymous with popular appeals in magnetic or alluring movements, religious or not.

## See Also

- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Miraj](#)
- ▶ [Muhammad](#)
- ▶ [Persona](#)
- ▶ [Possession](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Prophets](#)
- ▶ [Sacred King](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Charity

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How has charity been seen in religious tradition? How has it been understood by psychologists? What are the relations between religious affiliation and charitable activity, and how well do we understand the psychological processes involved?

## Religion and Charity

The practice of charity is demanded in all religions (Argyle 2000): all major religions have clear requirements: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and others. Charity is generally seen in two ways in religious tradition. First, donating a fixed proportion of one's income and agricultural produce to appropriate beneficiaries is a religious duty. Religious traditions also endorse providing assistance – financial, food, and whatever else is required – to the needy. These two practices overlap, but there are distinct religious duties: taking and donating a fixed proportion of property, even if there is no desperately needy recipient, and assisting the needy – even if one has already given away ones tithes, one is still obliged to help. Charity is considered as enhancing the spirituality of the donor and is regarded by many commentators as the highest religious virtue (e.g., Porter 1993; Shneur Zalman of Liadi 1796/1973).

## Psychology and Charity

In psychology, the term charity is seldom indexed in social psychology and psychology of religion textbooks. This does not mean that the topic is seldom studied: charity has come under the heading of altruistic behavior in general (Macaulay and Berkowitz 1970). Altruism has been defined as “behavior that aims at a termination or reduction of an emergency, a neediness, or disadvantage of others and that primarily does not aim at the fulfillment of own interests” (Montada and Bierhoff 1991), the behavior being carried out voluntarily.

There was an early debate about whether altruism, helpfulness, and charity can be truly selfless or whether they result from innate own-group and kin helpfulness or other motivations which are not selfless. These include increased status, social desirability or social approval, and the assuaging of guilt (Carlsmith and Gross 1968). More recently, there has been focus on positive psychology and the benefits and importance of practicing psychological strengths. Seligman (2002) has argued that the practice of charity and



kindness results in greater psychological health. For example, Thoits and Hewitt (2001) examined the positive consequences for well-being flowing from volunteer work. Park et al. (2004) showed that love and kindness were among the character strengths consistently and robustly associated with life satisfaction. Loewenthal (2007) cited the case of a depressed Holocaust survivor who reported a steady gain in psychological well-being after being advised by a rabbi to give charity regularly.

reliably with the practice of charity, and some suggest that charitable activity may promote psychological health. There is great scope for more detailed investigation of the cognitive and motivational factors that underlie these effects.

## See Also

► [Religiosity](#)

## How Does Religion Affect Charity?

Does religion promote altruism in general and charitable behavior in particular? Most recent work has supported the view that this is the case. For example, in the UK in 1993, those for whom religion was said to be very important gave about \$50 monthly, compared to \$15 monthly from those who said religion was not important (Argyle 2000). In the USA (Myers 1992), weekly church attenders gave away 3.8 % of their income and non-attenders, 0.8 %. Regnerus et al. (1998) reported that charitable giving was affected mainly by whether a person professed a religion, regardless of what that religion was. The relations between socioeconomic status and charitable giving are slightly complex, but on the whole, the better-off give away more. The straightforward explanation of these findings is that religiously active people are likely to behave according to religious injunctions. The relations between religion and charity apply not only to financial giving but also to voluntary work (Lynn and Smith 1991) and to humanitarian compassion (Perkins 1992). Religiosity is a much better predictor of charitable giving and activity than is economic status, and religion predicts giving to nonreligious causes as well as to religious causes (Brooks 2003).

## Conclusions

We can conclude that there is growing evidence that religious activity and identity correlate very

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## Child, The

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In describing the significance of the child and childhood, a brief historical overview provides a perspective in which to place the developments of psychology and religion in relation to the child. In the classical period, children were not considered individual beings, but were useful to the family and society in the fact that they would eventually become good citizens (Cunningham 2005, p. 23). In antiquity, children were often abandoned when families were not able to take care of them, to the extent that almost every family had abandoned at least one child (Cunningham 2005, p. 19). Christian emperors challenged this practice but seemed to not enforce penalties for it (Cunningham 2005, p. 25). Developments in theology increased the visibility of the experience of the child. With Augustine's *Confessions*, and his development of the idea of original sin, the child began to be seen as being "on par with the adult" in terms of its "moral dilemmas" (Cunningham 2005, p. 26). Caregiving and childrearing began to concern adults in the Middle Ages, as evidenced by the publication of literature relating to the care of children (Cunningham 2005, p. 29). However, it seems that the child of the medieval period was understood as less than fully human, being described as "lacking in adult attributes, marked by his or her deficiencies" (Cunningham 2005, p. 34).

An important transition began to take place from the era of Humanism and the Reformation,

culminating in the nineteenth century. People started to believe that what happened to a child would contribute to what the adult person would become. Children thus became the subject of interest and even idealization. During the height of Romanticism, children were described as "fresh from the hand of God," but at the same time, some Puritan writers called for "rigid disciplines" which would break the will of the child (Cunningham 2005, pp. 29, 69). During the eighteenth century, especially among the middle and upper classes, a "wall of privacy" separated the family from the wider world, and the home came to symbolize the safe haven from the degradation which surrounded it (Cunningham 2005, p. 59). On the other hand, with the advent of industrialization, poor children were separated from their families at the age of ten and forced to work in grueling circumstances under the supervision of strangers (Cunningham 2005, p. 89).

The twentieth century has been called the "century of the child" (Cunningham 2005, p. 170). First, state governments took over from philanthropic organizations to provide compulsory schooling and outlaw child labor. Second, psychology demonstrated the influence of childhood on the adult self and began to see children as sexual persons. Finally, children began to be viewed as agents with rights (Cunningham 2005, pp. 160, 177). In the second half of the twentieth century, children asserted this autonomy as "parental authority declined," "[demanding] and [receiving] entrance into the adult world" in their teenage years (Cunningham 2005, p. 194). As children became members of the consumer culture, they began to exercise authority in ways that would have been unimaginable in previous centuries. In spite of this fact, children continue to be the victims of abuse and neglect and are seldom seen as complete persons, either in religious settings or within the wider culture.

## Commentary

Psychology was born at the beginning of the "century of the child," and it provided its own

view of childhood, suggesting that the riddle of the adult self was rooted in the experience of the child. Freud once claimed that the development of the superego was a direct result of the unusually long period of dependence on her parents which the human being experiences (Freud 1923/1960, p. 31). In his controversial *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud described childhood as a time in which the child experienced sexual satisfaction at the hands of her caregivers and began to entertain fantasies in relationship to them (Freud 1905/1962, pp. 90, 93). Freud concentrated his clinical work on the oedipal period, spanning between the ages of three and five, when the child negotiates these fantasies. If they are unresolved and repressed, they can become the bedrock for future neurosis, but if they are accessed through psychoanalysis, they can serve as a source of creativity. Freud occasionally alluded to anecdotes about children but only seems to have had one child patient, Little Hans (Freud 1920/1961, p. 13). Most of his clinical conclusions about childhood were drawn from his interpretations of the free associations of his patients, attempting to break through the barrier of repression that blocked out all memory of childhood sexuality.

In a quite different approach, Carl Jung explored the prevalence of the Divine Child motif across a wide range of religious and mythological material and suggested the presence of a “child archetype” (Jung and Kerenyi 1949, p. 111). This archetype gave the person who was in the process of individuation a ground in the “still existing state of childhood,” thereby freeing her for future growth in responsibility (Jung and Kerenyi 1949, p. 113).

Anna Freud began direct work with children which shaped the development of ego psychology the theoretical field for which she was largely responsible. Erik H. Erikson began his psychoanalytic career teaching in a Montessori school under his tutelage and continued this interest in the direct experience as a source of psychological insight. In his first book, *Childhood and Society*, Erikson studied children in a variety of societies and cultures, placing the

problems and concerns of children front and center (Erikson 1950/1963). While Freud thought of dreams as the “royal road to the unconscious,” Erikson suggested that it was actually the play of children. Reflecting on the sayings of Jesus late in his life, Erikson marveled that Jesus claimed that the “kingdom” is only available to those who “turn and become like children” (Erikson 1981, p. 348). Erikson considered this exhortation to the “preservation and reenactment of the wonder of childhood,” to be a humbling word to those psychologists who imagined they had “discovered” childhood in the first place (Erikson 1981, p. 349).

The child’s earliest experiences became important in the object relations school of psychoanalytic psychology. Margaret Mahler’s influential theory of infant development traced the adult psyche back to the earliest experience of the child with his mother (Mahler et al. 1975, p. 43). From this perspective, the child’s relationship to his mother in the preoedipal period proved to be important to psychic health in even more fundamental ways than the child’s resolution of the oedipal complex. D. W. Winnicott, a pediatrician who became a psychoanalyst in the object relations school, focused his clinical work on the direct observation of mothers and infants and developed the theory of the transitional object. The transitional object was an object chosen, or “created,” by the child that existed in the space between mother and infant. This object received the child’s affection and rage, yet remained intact, thereby helping to establish the child’s own sense of self.

For Heinz Kohut, being denied the original experiences of childhood narcissism in which one is the object of love and attention can provoke serious and long-lasting damage in the child and subsequent adult. Kohut found himself increasingly working with persons who had an extremely fragile self-structure, including feelings of unreality and a strange sensation of the passage of time. Kohut suggested that while “classical analysis discovered the depression of the child in the adult,” his own version of psychology had “discovered the depression of the adult in the depths of the child,” in the child

who senses that her development will not be fulfilled and thus sabotages her own growth with isolation (Kohut 1985, pp. 215–216).

Religion has attempted to address the needs of children, but it has also perpetuated many myths that have been harmful to children. Judaism was born in a Near Eastern context in which child sacrifice was a current religious practice. In spite of the attempts to distance themselves from this demand, stories such as the binding of Isaac and the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter indicate that such traces had not entirely disappeared (Bergmann 1992, pp. 76, 93). In a psychoanalytic view, such images perform an important function, bearing their roots in the "murderous wishes of children directed at their parents and murderous wishes of parents directed at their children" (Bergmann 1992, p. 314). David Bakan focuses on the latter, suggesting that Job may have not lost his children, but wished they were dead, as a reflection of a father anticipating his own rejection (Bakan 1968, pp. 110, 116). Religion addresses the trauma of a forbidden and buried past, but in its attempts to do, it may sometimes leave traces of the original wish. In the case of Christianity, the trauma of these wishes is reflected again in the sacrifice of the Son to the Father (Bergmann 1992, p. 315).

There are also more redeeming traces of the meaning of children within religion. As mentioned earlier, the statement of Jesus that all must become like children as well as his invitation to children to be close to him provide counterpoints to some of the cruel imagery of the Judeo-Christian tradition, even that which stands behind his own sacrifice. The intimacy with which Jesus addressed God, using the familiar Aramaic form for father, indicates the childlike nature of religious belief. Religious persons have often seen themselves as God's children and thus incorporated into a wider family in which they are cared for by God.

However, within religious circles, children themselves have often been neglected as sources of insight. While the education and moral formation of children has been a traditional religious activity, the experience of children itself

has seldom served as a centerpiece of theological thought (exceptions are Coles 1991; Miller-McLemore 2003; Lester 1985). Frequently, those who educate children in religious faith are not given the same status as ordained leaders in the tradition. In the same way, religion frequently neglects the actual experience of children, focusing instead upon adult emotional and spiritual needs.

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Divine Child
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Klein, Melanie
- ▶ Puer Aeternus
- ▶ Superego

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## Chinese Popular Religions

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Despite restrictions and prohibitions by a modernizing state, first by the Guomintang government of Republican China (191–1949) and then more severely and systematically attacked by the Chinese Communist Party (1949–the present), Chinese popular religion continues to be practiced in China and the off-shore Chinese communities of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and pockets in Southeast Asia. Long condemned by Western missionaries and Chinese intellectuals and officials as “backward,” “superstitious,” and an obstacle to China’s modernization, since the 1980s in Mainland China, popular religion has sprung back to life in many parts of rural and small-town China. The boundaries between popular religion, Daoism, and Buddhism are very porous, and people often feel free to worship in deity temples as well as Daoist and Buddhist ones.

The rational state ideology of national identity, patriotism, and economic development has not been able to satisfy people’s psychological, emotional, and spiritual quests for the meaning of life and death and for a deeper connection with family and local community rather than the nation-state. Through rituals to honor deities and ancestors and to ward off demons, people express their desires for health and longevity in the face of unpredictable natural forces that rule

the earth and the human body. They also exhibit a longing for family prosperity, an ethical society, and social justice in an often corrupted social world where the strong, such as officials, often oppress the weak. The gods, goddesses, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and Daoist immortals are regarded as benevolent forces that are omniscient and legitimate because they help the needy and uphold ultimate justice by punishing evildoers in this world or the afterlife. Thus, when human officials and the law fail to function as they should, there is psychological solace in a notion of ultimate justice that transcends human life spans.

## Shamanism

Shamanism is also called “spirit possession” or “spirit mediumship” and its history extends far back into archaic China. Today, shamans are gifted individuals who have special abilities to see and communicate with ancestors, gods, and demons in other worlds and are also believed to heal illnesses where modern medicine has not succeeded. Male shamans are often called *shenhan* or *shentong*, and female shamans are often called *linggu* or *wupo*, although *wupo* has a slightly pejorative sense. The act of inviting, speaking to, and being possessed by a spirit is called *tiaodashen* (跳大神) or “dancing for the great spirit.” In trying to diagnose a medical or psychological problem of their clients, shamans enter into altered states of consciousness, losing their self when their bodies are overtaken by a deity, ancestor, or demon who speaks through them, often in an unfamiliar voice. When the shaman awakes, he or she may not remember anything from their trance, but they often know what steps their clients can take to appease an angry spirit and improve their situation. In healing illnesses, shamans will prescribe prayers and chants, rituals, food and alcohol offerings to spirits, good deeds, and sometimes the burning and ingesting of magical written talismans. Shamans usually operate out of their own homes, where they receive their clients and

perform rituals, but sometimes a local deity temple allows them to operate there in public. In many areas of China today, female shamans outnumber male ones.

## Feng Shui (風水) or Chinese Geomancy

Chinese civilization invented the magnetic compass or *luopan* several thousand years ago, but it was not used for navigation until much later in its history. Early compasses were used to site graves, tombs, and dwellings in auspicious locations and directions to ensure the well-being and good fortune of their occupants and their families, kinship networks, and descendants. Today, as the Chinese government increasingly bans earth burials, *feng shui* masters now often apply their expertise to siting new homes, factories, and office buildings.

A primary principle of *feng shui* (which means “wind and water”) is that human constructions should be in accordance with the flow of *qi* (pronounced *chee*) in the landscape. *Qi* is the originary “life force” or “vital energy” of the universe that flows through the cosmos, the veins of the earth, and throughout the human body. *Qi* is believed to endow life-giving positive energies. The compass taps into the earth’s electromagnetic field in order to establish the best ways to ensure the smooth flow of the *qi* towards the structure or to block the bad energies or feared unconscious energies. Hills, large rocks, the slant of the land, and bodies of still or running water in the landscape must also be taken into account when siting against the four cardinal directions. The temporal dimension, such as the current season, and alignments with particular stars and constellations in the heavens are also important. The ancient technology of the eight trigrams is another central principal of *feng shui*. Each trigram is composed of three horizontal lines, either broken or unbroken, giving eight variant trigrams. These eight trigrams are based on the waxing and waning of *yin* and *yang* forces in the cosmos at a particular time and the alternating five phases of the “five elements” (metal, earth,

fire, water, and wood) which make up the earth’s matter. Finally, the number of the family members and their sex also play a role in determining how to site the structure. *Feng shui* seeks to locate and align the self and loved ones into the natural terrain in a balanced way, in harmony with the movement of *qi* energies and natural laws, so as to ensure smoothness, stability, and security in their lives. It is believed that radical intervention and violation of natural flows will disturb natural balances and cosmic order, resulting in misfortunes in life. Thus, psychologically, not consulting a *feng shui* master before building will result in anxiety for the future of one’s family and descendants.

## Divination

When a family member dies, many families consult a diviner to calculate the best date and time to hold the funeral, because the right timing will ensure family prosperity. Indeed, any important undertaking, activity, or event calls for consulting a diviner. People want to know whether or not to start a new business and when to start it, whether or not to marry or divorce, whom to marry, whether they will have a son or daughter, when to start a long trip, whether their child will pass an important examination, or whether they will recover from an illness. On the eve of the Chinese New Year, crowds will flock to the most popular local temples to consult with diviners about what the New Year will bring them in good or ill fortunes.

## Ancestor Worship and Appeasement of Ghosts

Ancient ancestor worship is part of Confucian culture which teaches filial piety towards one’s parents and respect for the elderly and regular rituals to honor and remember them after they are deceased. Within the home, photographs of the deceased parents and grandparents are often hung up and receive incense and food offerings on



their birthdays and festivals. The annual Qingming or “Tomb-Sweeping” Festival in Springtime for honoring deceased family members. Families will make a picnic trip to the family tombs with food and grain alcohol offerings and sweep the graves clear of weeds. Psychologically, this reinforces family identity and a sense of continuity through the generations, even though it may require the repression of negative memories of the deceased.

Lineages are large kinship organizations whose families all trace back through the father’s descent line to a common male founding ancestor many generations in the past, often recorded in genealogies. Many lineages have their own ancestor hall where lineage members gather to present food and alcohol offerings in rituals of ancestor sacrifice. Many of these sacrificial ceremonies still follow the basic liturgy set forth by the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi back in the 12th century CE. Psychologically, these rituals reinforce family and kinship solidarity and identity, a sense of life after death for all, and respect for the elderly.

People who die without leaving descendants are often pitied because they will not have anyone to remember them and make offerings. When they die, they are thought to become “hungry ghosts” or “orphan ghosts” (*guhun*) who harbor resentment towards the living and to cause trouble. People who die an unnatural or unjust death, such as a grisly accident or murder, are also thought to become wandering ghosts who can cause harm to the living. Families try to appease these restless spirits with offerings, especially on the Buddhist festival of Universal Salvation (*pudu*). The aim of this festival is to help the souls of the dead who are languishing in purgatory get released. Psychologically, ghosts invoke people’s guilt about abandoning or mistreating strangers in their midst and enjoin people to treat beggars and non-kin with kindness. Ghosts teach people that all human beings deserve to be remembered.

## Deity Worship

Worship of gods or goddesses forms the heart of popular religion. China has always been

a polytheistic culture with innumerable deities (Fig. 1). Nature deities personify natural phenomena such as a constellation, the sun or moon, a river or mountain, or an animal, such as a dragon or tiger. Psychologically, one feels more secure and confident in praying and making offerings to them to gain their aid. Most gods were once a human being who made a great contribution to humankind or who led an exemplary selfless life helping others. Some gods are so ancient that their biographies are more like mythologies: the God of Agriculture (who receives offerings for a good harvest in the face of uncontrollable natural forces), the Western Queen Mother, and the Jade Emperor (the supreme deity). Examples of major gods or goddesses worshipped across China include Guandi, the God of War (once an admired, model righteous general); Mazu, the maritime goddess of the southern seas (who is called on to rescue drowning sailors); Long Wang, the Dragon King who helps bring rain; Wen Chang, the God of Literature who helps students on exams; and Bao Gong, the upright god who defends justice and honesty in officialdom. These are some of the prominent gods worshipped across China and the offshore Chinese communities of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Southeast Asia. Local communities also have their lesser known local deities or tutelary gods. One prays to the gods to request help in life, to swear an oath to do good deeds, or to ask for forgiveness of sins. Worship takes the form of bowing; kowtowing on the floor; offering incense, food, and grain alcohol; and burning imitation money in deity temples.

In temple rituals, the gods are often arranged in a rough hierarchical order of differential ranks. The images of many male gods are dressed up like officials of the old imperial state, and in ritual processions, they are carried out of the temple in a palanquin with a retinue of guards and sometimes shamanistic troops. The ritual procession takes the god to inspect the boundaries of the local community he is responsible for protecting, just like imperial officials in the old days. Anthropologists have called this hierarchical arrangement of gods resembling human officials, the

### Chinese Popular Religions, Fig. 1

Center: Guan Gong, A God of War, with his son Guan Ping to the *right* and Zhou Cang to the *left*. Baosheng Dadi Temple, Xiamen City, China (Photo courtesy of the author)



“celestial bureaucracy,” a unique feature of Chinese popular religion. These images not only express divine sanction for social hierarchies but also project an ideal officialdom of benevolent gods against which human officials are measured and uphold a transcendent justice that is higher than the power of human officials. Thus, corrupt local officials may escape the law with their venality, but psychologically, some may also fear the wrath of the gods.

In ritual processions in Taiwan, the surging and devout crowds, the cacophonous firecrackers, and the shamanistic trances and self-mutilations all contribute to an overpowering psychological and religious experience for believers and a grand spectacle for outside observers. In Mainland China, due to official restrictions, both actual and psychological, religious events are more sober and restrained, in keeping with the emphasis on secularism in the society.

### See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Chan Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)

- ▶ [I Ching](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Shamanic Healing](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Women in Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Wong Tai Sin](#)

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## Chinese Religions

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According to the International Religious Freedom Report (2005), 8 % of the population in Mainland China claimed to be Buddhists, and another 20–28 % of the population practiced traditional folk religions. The latter include worship of local gods, heroes, and ancestors and often present as loose affiliates of Taoism, Buddhism, or cultural practices of ethnic minorities. In Taiwan, 35 % of the population claimed to be Buddhists, 33 % Taoists, and 4 % believers in *Tiende Jiao* and other traditional folk religions. However, the 2006 *World Fact Book* indicated that 93 % of the Taiwan population could be followers of a hybrid of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Distinct religious classification may be difficult.

A substantial portion of Chinese people claim that they do not believe in any religion. Data showed that 59 % of the population in Mainland China are nonreligious (Johnstone 1993). Some 8–14 % called themselves atheists (Barrett et al. 2001; O'Brien and Palmer 1993). The 2001 *World Value Survey* showed that 55 % are nonreligious and 24 % are convinced atheists. More recent investigations show that religions are thriving in the state ruled under atheist communism (Yang 2012). In Taiwan, 12–24 % of the population call themselves atheists (Inglehart et al. 2004). In another study conducted in Taiwan, 43 % of the respondents labeled themselves as not believing in any religion (Chou and Chen 2005). The statistics presented above paint

a confusing yet true picture that it is difficult to arrive at clear distinction among religions in Chinese culture.

## Taoism

Taoism could mean the Taoist school of philosophy as well as the Taoist religion. Tao (or *Dao*) means “way,” everlasting and yet ever changing. Chuang Tzu believed that the world is in peace and harmony in the original state. Disorders arise because of human intending to manipulate and mistakenly dichotomize the world and our understandings of it. The only solution is to acknowledge the limitation and relativity of dichotomized views and to embrace them all. Based on the philosophy of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, Taoism emerged in the second century, being propagated as *Tianshi Dao* or *Wudoumi Dao* (Celestial Masters) and *Tai ping Dao* (Great Peace). Much of its philosophy, values, and religious practices could be traced to its sacred text *Tao Te Ching*. However, as Lai (2003) noted, scholars on Taoism are still debating on what actually constitute the religion.

Certain concepts attributed to Taoism have found favor among some psychologists, especially those with a humanistic persuasion. They include the following:

1. *Qi* or ch'i. According to Taoist belief, *qi* (energy) runs in every individual. Such *qi* is connectable to the energy of the universe. Davis (2004) applied this belief to organizational psychology and posited that leadership energy similarly flows through the social network of an organization. Empirical evidence for *qi* is, however, lacking.
2. Yin and *yang*. The universe, as well as each individual person, is a reflection of the balance of two principles or natures, the *yin* (negative, darkness, weakness) and the *yang* (positive, light, strength). Health is when a person experiences a balance (or homeostasis) of the *yin* and the *yang*. According to Taoism, too much of one thing, however good in its own right, can be dysfunctional. It remains an empirical question how much is too much.

3. Taoism advocates being *wu wei*, which is effortless, spontaneous nonintervention in handling the external world. It entails the return to quiescence and harmony with nature. *Wu wei* is the way to achieve absolute happiness, a high level of mental health (Yip 2004). A leader exercising *wu wei* is, however, like adopting a less effective, laissez-faire style of leadership (Bass 1985).
4. Intuition. In Taoist conceptualization, true understanding (*Dao*) cannot be named but can only be experienced and understood through meditation and intuitive awareness. Intuition is knowing through personal and subjective experience, in contrast with the objective scientific method. Instead of being a cognitive process, intuition is spontaneous. It attends to the presence (Olson 2002). According to Taoism, in spite of its elusive nature, intuition can be nurtured through experiential learning and formal education, like what clinicians have done to develop their clinical intuition.
5. Mindfulness. In Taoism, being mindful is when a person is fully involved in the present moment and focused on what is being done, rather than worrying about the outcome. This process enhances the wisdom of the person, by freeing the person from worries about the past or future, to perceive and understand oneself and others more accurately. This person can then readily attain peace and be able to work interdependently with others. The concept of mindfulness is also found in Buddhism.

In Taoism, a person is an integrated whole, embracing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. Illness and suffering result from the disconnection of the person from himself/herself, others, nature, and the universe. That is why it is important for a Taoist to enhance the harmony between yin and yang and get in touch with the inner self. Through meditation, Taoism develops one's self-awareness and intuition, bringing about "an emotionally and spiritually balanced individual who relates harmoniously with others and with nature" (Olson 2002, p. 161). In other words, this religion contributes to personality development and helps people attain humility,

simplicity, genuineness, flexibility, adaptability, spontaneity, persistence, and acceptance (Olson 2002).

Learning Taoism may have positive impact on subjective well-being among senior citizens in China (Zhou et al. 2002). Taoist philosophy has been incorporated into some cognitive psychotherapy to help college students high on neuroticism and patients with generalized anxiety disorder. The technique may improve coping and reduce neurotic symptoms. However, more empirical evidence on its effectiveness is needed (Huang et al. 2001; Zhang et al. 2002).

## Confucianism

In the midst of civil struggles, Chinese people in the suffering slowly turned away from their gods and spirits to focus on the problems confronting human society and governance. This is the *zeitgeist* in which Confucius (551–479 BCE) lived. Aiming at restoring just rule and legitimate government of the early Zhou dynasty, Confucius advocated a new form of education and expounded ethical principles. He described *ren*, the "way" of the perfect man. Avoiding the subjects of the supernature and afterlife, Confucius would rather "revere deities and ancestral spirits, but keep them at a distance." His concern was on the earthly, human situation in the world. Thus, some people consider Confucianism more a philosophy than a religion.

The influence of Confucianism diminished after the third century and the emergence of Buddhism. It was only until the eleventh century, by the effort of thinkers like Zhu Xi and Wang Yang Ming, influenced by Buddhist theories of mind and enlightenment, that Confucianism revived, consolidated, and reclaimed its status among the Chinese elite. Despite the interest in spiritual elements such as self-awareness and meditation, the original goal towards establishing order within society remained unchanged in neo-Confucianism (Overmyer 2002).

Behavior with other people is regulated in accordance with the "ethical system of benevolence-righteousness-propriety (*ren-yi-li*)"

(Hwang 2001). *Ren* is showing affection to all humankind. *Yi* is respecting others. *Li* is treating others according to their status and roles. Confucianism has a strong faith in people's own ability and power in attaining perfection. According to Ho's analysis (1994), it is the root of parents' authoritarian moralism and cognitive conservatism, as well as children's high rigidity and low cognitive complexity. Nevertheless, it is also the basis of many Chinese people's high achievement motivation.

## Buddhism

Buddhism took root in ancient India in the sixth and fifth century BCE and arrived in China in the second century BCE. Buddhism and traditional Chinese thoughts were at odd with each other in the beginning. However, Buddhism had an appeal to both the ordinary people and the intellectuals, because of its simple religious practice, sophisticated philosophy, promise of life after death, as well as a range of religious and social advantages such as full-time religious vocation in an institution independent of family and state (Overmyer 2002). Buddhism underwent much "sinicization," incorporating some Taoist and Confucian concepts.

Buddhism has much to say about human motivation and emotion. For example, *sukha* is an enduring trait that arises from an equilibrium in mental state and awareness of the true nature of reality. It can be likened to happiness. Achieved through sustained training in attention, emotional balance, and mindfulness, it results in changes in mood and even changes in temperament (Ekman et al. 2005). According to Buddhism, some mental states (such as craving and hatred) are afflictive regardless of their level or context in which they occur (Ekman et al. 2005). This view is different from the prevalent psychological perspective that emotions are adaptive (Cosmides and Tobby 2008; Ekman et al. 2005).

Psychological well-being (e.g., happiness, peacefulness, personal growth, and self-reflective insights) seems to improve among participants in Buddhist retreats (e.g., Page et al. 1997). Tori and

Bilmes (2002) observed a positive correlation of Buddhist beliefs with reaction formation and a negative correlation with regressive emotionality and projection. They found that in Thailand, Buddhist monks' defense mechanism (unconscious coping) was low in regressive emotionality and high in denial, reaction formation, and repression when compared with a local sample.

## Ancestor Worship, Folk Religions, and Animism

Chinese people worship natural objects (e.g., trees, thunder), heroic personalities (e.g., *Guandi*), and even one's own deceased relatives. Many religious activities such as ancestor worship are based on a belief in afterlife (Overmyer 2002). That is why in burial grounds for important people as early as the Shang dynasty, extravagant burial offerings including "decapitated human beings, horses, dogs, large numbers of bronze vessels, and objects of jade, stone, and shell" (Overmyer 2002, p. 258) can be found. To contact the deities, people engaged in sacrificial rituals. Sacrifices were made alongside requests for some benefits in return. According to Overmyer, this principle of reciprocity is the prevalent pattern of human-deity interaction throughout the history of Chinese religions.

A fear of the unknown and an inability to master nature are probably some psychological roots of this line of religious beliefs and practice. Inscriptions on oracle bones and bronze sacrificial vessels show how ancient Chinese asked for help or favor from their ancestors. It was believed that the longer ones had been dead the more powerful were their spirits. The deified ancestors are like the "intermediaries between their living descendants and the more powerful gods of natural force" (Overmyer 2002, p. 258). Since they can bring harm or aids to them, it was "necessary to propitiate the ancestors to ward off their anger as well as to bring their blessing" (Overmyer 2002, p. 258). Besides this desire to gain and to avoid curse, there may also be a Taoist-based desire to become *xian*, namely, deities. In addition, the Confucian doctrine of filial piety



provides the ethical basis of ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is practiced not only to comfort the dead and to make them harmless; it also reflects the “authority on the part of the parents and filial piety on the part of the son” (Hsu 1948, p. 276). The practice extends and strengthens the impact of ancestor in shaping the descendants’ personality as well as their lives.

## Conclusion

The four religious traditions differ in terms of how the “self” is treated. The self is the ultimate goal being served by ancestor worship and animistic practices. In the Confucian tradition, people are viewed as embedded in a social network, with the family as the most important environment for personal development. The self is thus defined in terms of membership in a collective. In the Taoist tradition, the self is “but one of the countless manifestations of the Tao and . . . an extension of the cosmos” (Ho 1995, p. 120). The ideal self is, paradoxically, selflessness. In the Buddhist tradition, construction of self is rejected while “owning” one’s self is an illusion and the source of suffering (Ho 1995, p. 121). To Ho (1995), the commonality among the three religions is about psychological decentering. While the reciprocity principle in Confucianism masks the differentiation between the self and others, the selfless person advocated by Taoism embraces the dichotomy between self and others. The abandonment of selfhood in Buddhist tradition essentially puts the self and craving to death.

Historically and at a doctrinal level, Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and animistic folk religions have distinct worldviews and belief systems. However, as these religions evolved over the years, being formed and modified by the sociohistorical contexts, there were competition as well as amalgamation among them. For example, the cosmology in the classic Confucian text *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (Taiji tushuo)* has incorporated Taoist description of genesis of the cosmos. Likewise, the neo-Confucian’s ideas of self-consciousness, innate knowing, and meditation did not originate from Confucius or Mencius

(another leader of Confucianism) but are rooted in the Buddhist philosophy and Taoist practice. Conversely, Taoism has adopted from Confucianism social ethics (such as loyalty, filial piety, and social responsibility towards the society) into its religious practice and linked them to the Taoist philosophy of immortality. These adoption and fusion have been done by each religion to refine and supplement their own doctrinal systems.

At a practical level, Chinese people do not make clear distinctions among various religions. Chinese people worship deities and honor sages from more than one religion at the same time. It is therefore not surprising to find someone who claims to be a Buddhist to practice Taoist rituals and a Confucian offering incense to a *xian*. Hui et al. (1989) found in a factor analysis of beliefs about death that the Buddhist view and the Taoist view congregate in the same factor. Regardless of the kind of religion one holds, it has impact on the way one interprets the world. Yip (2003) reported that Chinese religious beliefs affect the contents, manifestation, and meaningfulness of delusion and hallucination of Hong Kong schizophrenic patients. Such influence on subjective psychotic experience would in turn affect one’s cognition and behavior (Yip 2003).

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chan Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Confucianism](#)
- ▶ [Taoism](#)
- ▶ [Women in Chinese Religions](#)

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## Christ

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## Christ as the Ideal Individual

Psychologically speaking Christ is not only the ideal individual but he is also the representative individual. The life of the evolving human being is lived in archetypal patterns, consciously or unconsciously. Christ's life is human life, and true wholeness is genuine Selfhood, which involves the recognition that this reality is one's own reality. Thus, by curious paradox, it is precisely in respect of those features that give Christ his uniqueness (his dual nature) that his essential identification with all humanity is all-important.

If Jesus had been seen only as a historical figure and his humanity had been regarded as the whole truth about him, then it is likely that

his present effect would be no greater than Socrates or Plato. It is precisely because he was regarded or recognized and responded to as being God himself, and therefore beyond the reality of the historical, that his life takes on the quality of revelation. This recognition or response was shaped by the “consensus of unconscious expectation” and continues into the present because of the perseverance of this same unconscious in the contemporary Western world.

Therefore, when Carl Jung speaks of the life of Christ, he is concerned primarily with that life as interpreted by some other person or group of persons. Jung ranges widely in his quotations about Christ and is prepared to establish the psychic facts of his life from the New Testament, from the early Church Fathers, from later exponents of orthodoxy, from the mystical traditions, from medieval alchemists, and from dream experiences of contemporary men and women.

There is a miraculous element in Christ's birth, the account of the annunciation, Jesus' conception by the Holy Spirit, and the virginity of Mary. This miraculous element corresponds to the “nonempirical” genesis of the Self. Since the Self is a transcendent reality that encompasses the essentially unknown realm of the unconscious, it cannot by its very nature be known in empirical ways. Both the birth of Christ and the rise of the Self from the collective unconscious come upon one unaware. They are unexpected and surprise happenings, much like Jung's experience of the underground chamber and the vision of God's enormous turd shattering the cathedral.

### **The Bearer of Light**

In spite of the extraordinary elements, the birth of Christ was an obscure and insignificant event by ordinary standards. He was born without the basic comforts and security of a home. He was born to parents who were powerless in the religious and political power structures of their day. His mother was a Galilean peasant woman and his father a carpenter. Shortly after the birth the child was supposedly taken on a trip to Egypt to escape the

rage of the king. Almost nothing more is heard of the child until he is nearly 30 years old. This obscurity combined with the element of danger is symbolic of the extraordinary difficulties an individual must face and overcome in the attaining of psychic wholeness. The very possibility of achieving individuation is precarious. The emerging Self is realized by the conscious but is brought into consciousness by the unknowable and unpredictable forces of the unconscious.

The child Jesus is recognized by Simeon and Anna as the expected Savior of Israel. The Isaiah prophecy is repeated at this time, “Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Luke 2:25–38; Isaiah 9:5).

Jung speaks of the child god, or child hero, as a familiar archetypal figure in myth, religion, folklore, and in spontaneous psychic images in contemporary visions and dreams. The Christ child is only one among many such images, e.g., Apollo, Beldier, and Hercules. Each of these has, in common with Christ, an obscure or miraculous birth, threat from the outset of life, the apparently invincible powers over which he ultimately triumphs, a destiny to bring light into darkness, and a death brought about by something intrinsic to his existence.

Christ's childhood and the appearance of symbols of Christ in the form of the divine child correspond to the necessary link that the Self forms with the primitive origins of humanity in general and with the individual person in particular. However, the significance of the Christ child and other child gods go beyond this. The child is represented as growing to become a future deliverer. The child therefore suggests potential. Individuation is a movement toward a goal. The child figure points to the necessity for the continued development of the emerging Self, but it is a development that does not involve the severance of the necessary roots in the past.

### **Birth of Christ**

The emergence of the child figure in the individuation process is an anticipation of the future

synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality. It is therefore, writes Jung, “a symbol which unites the opposites: a mediator, a bringer of healing, that is, one who makes whole” (Jung 1951/1979, par. 278).

The Christ child is also recognized as the one who brings light into darkness. The theme of light opposed to and threatened by darkness is recognized in connection with Jesus at a number of points in the New Testament and particularly in the writings of the Gospel of John. Light and day are, according to Jung, synonymous with consciousness, and similarly, darkness and night are synonymous with unconsciousness. Thus the advent of the bearer of light reflects the eruption of consciousness into existence and consequently its differentiation from the unconscious, a necessary prerequisite of true Selfhood.

In this context the infant Christ can be understood as the archetypal child-god/child-hero image, who performs the function of healing the individual and group by connecting back to the true origins, who gives a sense of destiny which is necessary to complete psychic wholeness, and who unites the opposites of light and dark, human and divine, conscious and the unconscious, in order to form a transcendent reality, a wholeness which is the Self. The child is the irrational third that consciousness could not conceive of unaided and which provides the necessary union of opposites and psychic attraction by its meaningful, but essentially unknown, content. In the individuation process the Self has to be experienced in terms that take seriously the materiality of the body. The child symbol also fulfills this objective because children provide potentiality, the promise of growth and development, but they also need to be physically cared for and nurtured.

### Jesus of Nazareth

The Gospel records that after he commenced his public ministry, Jesus had nowhere to lay his head: He lived a life of hardship, which culminated in the agony of Gethsemane. Christ’s life parallels the process of individuation. In Jung’s

construction of this, there is much suffering and estrangement in the process of becoming individuated. In the individuation process, in a very real and frightening way, the rational person is threatened by this process, threatened with being swallowed up in a dimension greater than his ego can comprehend. All securities seem to be lost, menace seems everywhere present, and there seems to be no clear resolution to the conflict (Jung 1942/1948, par. 233). The experience of Christ upon the cross signifies the dramatic and extreme nature of the loss of all values that must be endured before the supreme value can be realized (Jung, 1940, par. 149).

Christ was crucified between two thieves: the one destined for paradise and the other for hell. The suffering emphasized here in the crucifixion clearly has a redemptive quality about it. Jung expresses the psychic analogy in terms of the crucifixion of the ego “in its agonising suspension between two irreconcilable opposites.” The confrontation between consciousness and the unconscious presents a tremendous threat to the ego, but one that must be endured if the Self is to emerge. The ego must die, must relinquish its claims to being the center of the whole of psychic reality in order to make individuation possible (Waldron 2003).

After death comes 3 days in hell in which the loss of all value seems to be a permanent state. Then follows the resurrection and the ascension and newness of life. In the genesis, that is, the creative process by which the Self moves from a state of primeval chaos and unconsciousness into consciousness, order, and balance, the apparent chaos and absence of securities and order turn out to be a necessary part of the coming to terms with the depth of unconsciousness, in order to establish a new order of values and hence a supreme clarity of consciousness, by the integration of the contents of the collective unconscious into consciousness. The New Testament records few postresurrection appearances and the nature of these is often veiled. The woman at the tomb does not recognize the risen Christ (John 20:11–15). The disciples on the Emmaus road did not know him until he broke the bread (Luke 24:13–35). The disciple Thomas needed to feel

the wounds of Christ before he would believe the testimony of his compatriots (John 20:24–39). So too, says Jung, “the transferred values are not easy to find or recognise” (Jung 1951/1979, par. 79).

## See Also

- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Christ as Symbol of the Self

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### The Self and the Christ

Jung wrote, “Anything a man postulates as being a greater totality than himself can become a symbol of the Self. . .” (Jung, 1942/1948: par. 232). He also argues that not every image is fully adequate. For him, the figure of Jesus Christ is not a symbol of totality because it lacks evil and sin. Rather, it is Christ’s suffering at the hands of

the collective society that is significant for it is an image of the suffering that the ego must go through at the expense of the unconscious, in the process of individuation (Jung, 1942/1948: par. 233).

Within the process of individuation – the realization of the Self – the image of Christ suspended on the cross between two thieves aptly expresses the tension between good and evil and between consciousness and the unconscious.

It is a paradox, a statement about something indescribable and transcendental. Accordingly, the realization of the Self which would logically follow from recognition of its supremacy leads to a fundamental conflict, to a real suspension between opposites (reminiscent of the crucified Christ hanging between two thieves), and to an approximate state of wholeness that lacks perfection (Jung 1951: par. 123).

Jung argues that the imitation of Christ does not consist of casting one’s burden on Jesus but means undertaking the same experience of life that Jesus had, the way of individuation. That is the great and liberating thing about any genuine personality; he voluntarily sacrifices himself to his vocation and consciously translates into his own individual reality what would lead to ruin if it were lived unconsciously by the group.

There is a parallel between the symbol of Christ and the process of individuation. The incarnation of Christ is God becoming a human, the breaking into the world of consciousness from the unconscious, an integration of one with the other. For Jung, the Christ symbol is a part of the wider symbol of the Trinity. The Trinity symbolizes a process of development and consciousness that has taken place in the individual and the collective community over the centuries. Jung postulates that while the Trinity is symbolic of the process of individuation, it is not a symbol of the goal of that process, the realization of the Self (Jung, 1954: par. 400).

Within this process, God the Father is representative of the unconscious state of childhood. At this stage of development, life for the child is habitual and law regulated. The incarnation begins with the Son taking over the Father’s position. This is not reflective of a development

of consciousness because the old customs are still retained. Differentiation and development of consciousness occurs when the individual begins to reflect, discriminate, and suffer the conflict of the moral opposites resulting from his or her freedom from the law.

The advent of the Holy Ghost represents the recovery of the Father and his reintegration with the Son. Consciousness recognizes the unconscious as a higher authority that stands beyond the power of reason.

However, Carl Jung argues that a symbol of the Self requires a form that embraces good and evil and masculine and feminine. He perceives that evil and the feminine are both missing from the Trinity. Jung postulates the need for a compensatory essence within the god symbol. This is a fascinating development in Jung's thought. He is proposing, out of his conscious, clinical rationale to add to and modify a symbol which he has postulated emanates out of the unconscious and therefore is transcendent and universal. Jung partially addresses the question in *Psychology and Western Religion* when he states:

The God-image is not something invented, it is an experience that comes upon a man spontaneously. . . . The unconscious God-image can therefore alter the state of consciousness, just as the latter can modify the God-image once it has become conscious (Jung, 1942/1948: par. 289).

For Jung, the inclusion of the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary within the god image is psychologically more satisfying. He proposes a quaternity which he states:

Is [a] consistent and logical restoration of the archetypal situation, on which the exalted station of Mary is revealed implicitly and must therefore become a 'conclusio corta' in the course of time (Jung, 1938: par. 122).

Behind this dialectic interaction between the Trinity and quaternity stands Jung's hypothesis of the psyche. In his continuing pursuit of this missing fourth dimension, Jung seeks to explore the relevance of Satan and Christ as the dark and light sons of Father. God the Father is the equivalent to the unconscious. Christ and Satan are

symbolic representations of the tension between good and evil which originate in the development of consciousness. The continued incarnation of God in humankind through the Holy Ghost is representative of the process of individuation. The culmination of this conception of the symbol of quaternity is the birth of the Self.

For Jung, Jesus Christ is and is not a symbol of the Self. Jung argues that in the New Testament figure of Jesus of Nazareth, we see the development of a myth in which the portrait of Christ takes the place of the historical Jesus. It is significant and should be noted that Jung writes out of a time when one of the central issues in theology and biblical scholarship was the question of the differentiation between the historical Jesus and the overlays of reflection evident in the gospel narratives.

In this perspective, Christ became an object of his contemporaries' collective unconscious expectations, resulting in a general projection of divinity onto the figure of Christ.

## The Christ and Jesus of Nazareth

The life of Jesus Christ has all the hallmarks of the hero's life: improbable origins, divine father, hazardous birth, miraculous deeds, symbolic death, and resurrection. These characteristics point to the underlying archetypal idea of the Self that is present in humanity as an unconscious process. In this way Christ realized the idea of the Self. Jung postulates that the Christ figure is "perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the Self, apart from the figure of Buddha." Jung appears to carry his own personal contradictions on this issue. While at one point he argues Christ is the most highly developed symbol of the self, a little later he argues that Christ is not an adequate symbol but is an image of the journey. Christ "becomes" an embodiment of the Self. It is perhaps because Jung is not able to separate himself from a Calvinistic interpretation of Christ which is rather docetic in character. Waldron (2003) sees Christ as removed from the reality of normal human existence, and in this context, he is able

to parallel the Buddha and the Christ, which would seem an unlikely marriage. Buddha eschews the experience of human passion to attain paradise, but Christ embraces the passions, suffering, and evil in order to transform them.

Docetism was a second-century heresy which conceptualized Christ as a phantasm in order to address an inability to conceptualize God existing in a material and finite human form. To the Docetists, their perception of God as utterly holy and good was incompatible with God's existence in the form of a human, for being human meant being subject to the imperfection of the flesh, to dirt, to suffering, and, most significantly, to death.

In saying that Jung's view of the Christ is Calvinistic and as a consequence has a docetic character, I allude to the tendency of Calvinistic theology to have such a high view of the divinity of Christ that even though Calvin would say that Christ is fully human, his work suggests that the divinity of Christ strongly overshadows his humanity. Calvin sees Christ as all good. He may be a human being, but he is not a human being as others are human beings. He knows all. His words and actions are totally good. In his goodness, he redeems us who are of sinful flesh.

Jung always addresses the Christ question from the perspective of Calvinistic Christology. In Jung's framework, the self-revelation of God in Christ illustrates the way in which the problem of opposites arises when God becomes an object of conscious reflection.

In the Christ figure, because evil is absent, there is a void, a construct emanating out of a seemingly conscious reflection on the god-image. Jung sees the opposition between Christ and Satan as a more accurate reflection of the god-image (Jung 1951: par. 351).

When conscious reflection modifies the god-image, our sense of identity becomes based on our ideals of perfection instead of upon the complete psyche and the images emanating out of it. It is from this construct that Jung is able to differentiate between the god-image that is an aberration of one's unconscious and the god-image that is a totality, holding in tension the opposites and so engendering a reconciliation of the psyche.

## Images of God

Jung reflects that while our images of god are a projection of our own unconscious, it is important not to confuse the image of god with that transcendent power which all images point to and hint at. As collectively and individually we move toward individuation, the god-image will, inevitably, correspondingly metamorphose to parallel the psychic reality. The transitions in the god-image are reflective of this journey. And yet, inevitably, the difference between the image of god which is a construction of reason and the image of god which represents the transcendent unconscious and is beyond perception of reason is only conceivable through our conscious perception. This conscious perception of the image of Jesus and the image of god is a reflection of our psychic journey. It is a reflection of our image of the Self.

## See Also

- ▶ [Calvinism](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Christian Mysticism

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### Introduction: Mysticism as a Psychological Phenomenon and in Christian Context

Mysticism is a psychic and spiritual process that exists in relation to the rational, intellectual process and is a psychospiritual phenomenon, a human and divine phenomenon. It is the same process but is experienced differently by each individual person and expressed variously within each religious tradition or outside of all traditions. The intrapsychic mystical process and experience is phenomenologically the same, while psychic contents being processed and religious and social manifestations vary by cultures through time. We as persons experience the mystical process universally, but each of us experiences it in a uniquely individual way spiritually and psychologically, and the mystical right brain interacts with our intellectual left brain in our consciousness.

Carl Gustav Jung's theory of Individuation – of spiritual development across the life cycle from ego emergence to ego transcendence toward the transpersonal and eventual merger with divine consciousness – describes the spiritual developmental process and concomitant transformation of psychological consciousness. This process is also understood in Roberto Assagioli's theory of Psychosynthesis that as the person transforms spiritually, the person must resynthesize the personality at the higher level of consciousness. Both theories describe psychologically the spiritual process of mysticism in human experience, which is understood in various ways within and outside of the practice of religion. Mysticism begins its expression within Christianity with the incarnation of Jesus.

## Mysticism as Religious Experience

Religion can be considered to have three main dimensions: religion itself, religious practice, and religious experience. Mysticism is religious experience, and each religion has a mystical component. Religious experience is personal religion, or spirituality, which has its roots in mystical states of consciousness. William James in his classic *Varieties of Religious Experience* gives this foundational understanding of mysticism psychologically and experientially. "Mystical states . . . add a supersensuous meaning to the ordinary outward data of consciousness. . . facts already before us fall into a new expressiveness and make a new connection with our active life" (James 1902/1958, p. 356). He concludes, "We and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled" (p. 425).

Mysticism brings to our newly expanded consciousness both wisdom and joy. "Expansion of human consciousness into cosmic consciousness by the art of concentration brings to the devotee a joyous wisdom far greater than the satisfaction of theoretical knowledge – however profound – resulting from the study of books" (Yogananda 1994, p. 280). The mystic lives an increasingly spiritual life and discovers experientially the scriptural teachings that God-relationship provides for our spiritual and temporal needs.

Through history and across world religions, mysticism as religious experience has waxed and waned in relation to religious education, doctrine, scripture, practice, and other social institutions and customs. In times when mystical Christianity has been at low ebb in relation to formal doctrine, practice, and theological education, the mystics themselves have kept the mystical tradition alive until it could again outwardly flourish. We see in Christianity today that the focus on doctrine and practice has evolved through literary and historical-critical analysis to be primary, but mystical and religious experience is once again emerging to be essential in desire for personal religious experience for spiritual growth and psychological healing and wholeness.

## Mystical Consciousness in the Christian Tradition

The original mystical state of consciousness in Christianity is that of Jesus. From his birth Jesus was imprinted with Jewish tradition, from which emerged his own mystical consciousness. As he continued through his life and ministry, his teachings were about mystical consciousness in the person, or human consciousness, and the relationship of human mystical consciousness to divine or cosmic consciousness. Christian mysticism consists of Jesus' teachings about the mystical nature of the person, the mystical process within the person, and the relationship of the personal mystical consciousness to the divine consciousness.

### Jesus as Mystical Cosmic Christ

Jesus was identifying with his Cosmic Christ essence, God's essence, when he said, "What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father [God] and I are one" (John 10:29–30). It is this oneness that makes the Father-Son- Holy Spirit Trinity one cosmic essence. He was also demonstrating that his personal mystical consciousness was aware of and in relationship with his universal eternal mystical essence, cosmic consciousness, which in Christian tradition is named God.

In the life of Jesus, Christ consciousness incarnate, we see his essence as omnipresent, from the draw of the Magi to visit him as a child until he ascends into heaven to rejoin God after his resurrection. We see this in the first four books of the Christian, or New Testament, scriptures: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, called the Gospels, or Good News. Jesus showed that this would be good news for people spiritually because of the message it delivered, and he knew the news would be received psychologically as good.

Examples of the Good News Jesus delivered can be seen in two scripture passages. The first is,

"The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among /within [Greek *entos*] you" (Luke 17:20–21). This passage points to the intrapsychic spiritual mystical process and implies inner, personal locus of control. The second is, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near/is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). In this passage Jesus speaks in prophetic voice to instigate change in psychological consciousness of people regarding their own behavior, to encourage spiritual transformation in preparation for union with divine consciousness. His directness indicates urgency and immediacy, and he indicates that human agency, or motivation and choice, accomplishes spiritual transformation into the kingdom of God.

Jesus' ministry, as described in the four Gospel books, taught that the mystical inner relationship of the person to God exists by nature in everyone – as in Jungian individuation – and Jesus set his life, death, and resurrection as evidence of the eternal mystical essence as core to human existence. Subsequently in the Acts of the Apostles, the disciples of the Master Jesus the Christ, led by Peter, began to travel outward after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension to tell the Gospel story and teach the spiritual, mystical principles Jesus had taught to them.

### Paul Emerges as Mystic and Christian Scriptures Are Formed

At this time in the book of Acts, Saul, who was persecuting Jesus' followers, had his mystical conversion experience while going blind and regaining his sight (Acts 26) and became Paul, a disciple. He was transported as a prisoner to other countries, freed, and began to tell the Gospel in foreign lands including Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossus, and Thessalonica. Letters written from Paul to the fledgling churches in these lands form Biblical books that follow Acts. He testified to his own spirit's

mystically and physically transformative experience of the Spirit of God and preached and taught Jesus' mystical teachings, such as the nature of human spirit as part of God's Universal Spirit, particularly in Corinthians.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple (I Corinthians 2:16–17).

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal (II Corinthians 4:16–18).

Throughout the balance of Christian scripture, the locations expand and the mystical teachings culminate in the final and prophetic book of Revelation. John writes, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. . . the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away" (21:1–4).

### Traditions Develop, Mystics Make Their Marks, Psychology Understands

As churches cohere the Christian religion develops into what we now know as the Catholic tradition that remained Latin, the Greek tradition that became Eastern Orthodox Christianity, the Anglican Church that became English tradition, and Protestantism that has continued to develop into distinct denominations, particularly in the West. Christian mysticism has evolved in all four traditions, although uniquely in the Orthodox tradition, "The inward and personal aspect of the mystical experience. . . remains hidden from the eyes of all" (Lossky 1957).

In psychology, the psychologists of religion and spirituality understand the mystical process and spiritual nature of humanity to be integral to the human psyche and at the core of the human

person, existence, and life. Carl Jung's colleague Jolande Jacobi summarizes Jung's theory of individuation of the person, personality, and spirituality across the life cycle.

It is a question of moving from an "ego-centred" attitude to an "ego-transcending" one, in which the guiding principles of life are directed to something objective. . . from one's children, one's house, one's work to the state, humanity, God. . . The possibility of a maturation and rounding out of the psyche is in principle inherent in every individual. . . The important thing is not the widened scope which consciousness attains, but is "roundedness". . . i.e., a state in which the greatest possible number of man's hidden qualities are made conscious, his psychic capacities developed and condensed into a unity. This is a goal which generally can be reached – if at all – only in life's late evening (Jacobi 1973, pp. 24–25).

Some mystics are clergy, some laity, and some saints. All are loved and revered as part of the story of Christianity and exemplars of the mystical body of Christ. All mystics speak of the goal of mysticism as union with God through love.

#### c. 1–34 CE Jesus

Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. . . I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me (John 12:44–50).

#### c. 33–64 Saul/Paul

From one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth. . . so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him. . . For 'in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17: 26–28).

#### 1542–1591 St. John of the Cross

The first passion of the soul and emotion of the will is joy. . . Joy. . . is nothing else than a delight of the will. . . The will should rejoice only in what is for the honor and glory of God (1991, p. 294) (Fig. 1).



**Christian Mysticism, Fig. 1** Saint John of the Cross (Figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license [http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Saint\\_John\\_of\\_the\\_Cross.jpg](http://www.marysrosaries.com/collaboration/index.php?title=File:Saint_John_of_the_Cross.jpg))

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Contemplative Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [John of the Cross](#)
- ▶ [Julian of Norwich](#)
- ▶ [Meister Eckhart](#)
- ▶ [Merton, Thomas](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Nonduality](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalytic Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

### 1898–1963 C. S. Lewis

Out of ourselves, into Christ, we must go. His will is to become ours and we are to think His thoughts, to ‘have the mind of Christ’ as the Bible says (1945/1996, p. 189).

### 1901–1981 Howard Thurman

Mysticism deals with the inner personal response to God. . . It speaks . . . of utter and complete absorption in the experience of union with God. . . [spiritual] exercises are meant to ‘ready’ the spirit for an awareness of the Presence of God dwelling in the core of the individual’s being (2002, p. 189).

### 1929–1968 Martin Luther King, Jr.

I’ve been to the mountaintop. . . [God has] allowed me to look over. And I have seen the promised land. . . we, as a people, will get to the promised land. . . Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord (1968).

### See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)

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## Christianity

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Christianity begins in the first century CE and occurs as an outgrowth of a variety of groups that constitute Judaism during this time. It has as its focus the figure of Jesus of Nazareth who preached, taught, and practiced an interpretation of second-temple Judaism and the Torah which drew both adherents and opposition. He was eventually martyred in Jerusalem ca. 33 CE. Christians claim that he was resurrected by God from the grave and that he yet lives and is present as *ho Christos*, “the Christ” (meaning the “Anointed One”). Early believers gathered in their homes to worship and partake in rituals including the Eucharist and baptism.

A variety of Christian groups emerged, including the Petrine following in Jerusalem, the Johannine community possibly in Palestine, the Montanists in Asia Minor who focus on eschatology, and the Pauline movement with its focus on Gentile membership. It is not until late first century and early second century that the “church” and Christianity as a religion begin to take form as an institution, evidenced, for example, in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch (ca. 100 CE) who gives much attention to ecclesiology and the central role of the bishop as head of the congregation. “We are clearly obliged to look upon the bishop as the Lord (*ton kurion*),” he writes to the church at Ephesus (6.1). To the church in Smyrna, he writes: “All of you should follow the bishop as Jesus Christ follows the Father; and follow the presbytery as you would the apostles. Respect the deacons as the commandment of God. Let no one do anything involving the church without the bishop” (8). For early Christians, the Jewish scriptures represented the authoritative sacred writings. At the same time, a new collection of literature begins to emerge from an oral tradition of the sayings of Jesus. The letters of Paul represent the earliest Christian texts and, along with other writings deemed important by Christian leaders, become part of the New Testament canon. Together, these writings which include stories, teachings, exhortations, parables, sermons, travel accounts, and sayings relate the Jesus of history and even more the Jesus of theology. Paul speaks of encountering the posthumous Jesus in a vision experience and the potency of that experience for Paul leading to his Christian conversion (2 Cor. 12.1-10; 1 Cor. 9.1; 15.1-6). From this event, Paul becomes passionate to include Gentiles into Christian membership, as he establishes church communities in places such as Corinth, Philadelphia, and Galatia. The NT canon consists also of the Gospels. The Gospel of Mark presents Jesus as one who exorcizes demons and moves in mysterious secrecy amid the crowd and his followers. The Gospel of John presents Jesus who is the *logos* made flesh and dwelling in the material world. The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as a social reformer, and the



Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as a great teacher. In this way, the Gospel writers each present Jesus in ways specific to their own socio-political and religio-spiritual concerns. They all however present Jesus as the bringer of a new age. In Mark, Jesus is clear to say: “The time has been fulfilled (*peplērōtai ho kairos*) and the kingdom is near; repent and believe in the good news (*euaggelion*)” (Mark 1.15; cf. Matt. 4.17; Luke 4.15; cf. John 13.31-33). With regard to the era of Christianity, Jung refers to the emerging of the Aion, or *piscus* (Latin, “fish”), the new archetype embraced by the collective (unconscious). The fish is symbolic of Christ coming to the surface and made manifest as the true Light (1 John 2.8-11) in the waking, conscious world. Early Christian catacomb includes the fish as symbol of Christ, the Greek spelling for fish, *ichthus*, taken to mean “Jesus Christ Son of God, Savior.” In the Gospels, there are accounts of Jesus providing fish to feed large groups of people (Mark 6.35-44; Luke 9.10-17; Matt. 14.13-21; cf. John 6.1-13), and in the Gospel of John, Jesus’ final post-resurrection appearance is to the disciples whom he causes to have a great catch of fish, a portion of which they all share as a meal (John 21.1-14). The early church into the Middle Ages struggles to define the relationship between the human and the divine in the figure of Jesus. The Council of Nicea (325 CE), consisting of about 300 bishops called together by the Roman Emperor Constantine, is significant for establishing the notion of *homoousios*, Christ being of the same substance as the Father. Through Constantine’s conversion to the faith, Christianity becomes the official religion of the Roman world, which includes the western Latin church and Rome and the eastern Greek church with its center at Constantinople. Many of the religious beliefs and practices of these two traditions remain into the present time.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

## Christianity and Sexuality

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No topic has been the object of greater controversy in Christian circles in recent decades than sexuality. Families, congregations, and even denominations risk being torn asunder by the question of whether homosexuality, in particular, is compatible with Christianity. Though this controversy hardly exhausts the topic at hand, it provides a useful point of entrée into the topic’s complexities, which are frequently overlooked.

Let’s start with two questions often heard in these debates: (1) Is homosexuality “natural” or is it a “lifestyle choice?” (2) What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Both questions tacitly assume that the forms that sexuality takes in our time and place – and our understanding of “sexuality” itself – are universal and ahistorical. Yet the very terms of the questions belie that assumption as contemporary scholarship has shown. “Homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” are European inventions that date from the late nineteenth century (Foucault 1994; Katz 2007). Let me spell out carefully what I mean – and do not mean – by making this claim. I do not mean that same-sex desire, same-sex acts, or same-sex relationships are modern European inventions. That we think we find answers to our second question in the Bible shows that this is clearly not the case (though whether the Bible actually *answers* our question is highly debatable). But how such aspects of human behavior are named, understood, organized, and lived out in relationship to social norms varies with time and place. My claim here is only in part an etymological one; the words “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality” are of recent European provenance, but so is the fullness of what they reference. The emergent field of psychology, which sought to catalogue and to understand the variety of humanity’s erotic interests and practices, was



formative in their creation. As its work made its way out into the larger world (largely through efforts to manage public, familial, and personal health), those under its sway incorporated them into their sense of identity – their own and others. So much so that we now understand “sexuality” as a singular root of who we are. Sigmund Freud’s work was particularly influential here. He established identity formation as a project that starts at infancy and draws on unformed but powerful energies with which we are born, which are shaped and channeled by our experiences in family and society.

Moreover, it’s not just the *categories* of sexuality that we currently use that are of relatively recent vintage; it’s the larger framework in which they are embedded. That framework links “sexuality” (erotic desire and acts) to (anatomical) “sex” and to “gender” (cultural roles) in a linear fashion. Ours is a binary taxonomy; we expect people to be either homosexual or heterosexual, male or female, and masculine or feminine. Moreover, we expect biological males to act masculine and to desire women. We expect biological females to act feminine and to desire men. Professing or exhibiting same-sex desire calls into question one’s gender (e.g., we associate male homosexuality with effeminacy) and even one’s sex. Contemporary scientific investigations into the biological roots of homosexuality, for example, look for signs of deviation from certain normative features of male or female embodiment – in, for example, the size of one’s hypothalamus, in finger length (Armour 2010; Hamer and Copeland 1994; LeVay 1996).

The Greco-Roman culture in which Christianity came into existence thought about these matters rather differently than we do (Martin 1995). Instead of a binary and linear system that cleanly distinguishes male from female, masculine from feminine, and heterosexual from homosexual, their system was more of a continuum in which manhood was normative and womanhood was derivative. The philosopher Aristotle is infamous for calling women “misbegotten males,” a statement that may sound like an insult but is intended as merely factual. When reproduction went normally, according to his

understanding of biology, it yielded a male body. The birth of a female meant something had gone awry. But simply being born with a male body didn’t guarantee the development of manliness. Bodies – especially infant bodies – were both vulnerable and malleable; caregivers needed to mold and shape those bodies through applying proper amounts of heat or cold and dryness or moisture and through massage to develop their proper shape and character. Though much less malleable, the bodies of elite male youths (and even adult men) also needed careful cultivation to attain and sustain the full degree of manliness of which they were capable. Although diet and exercise were central, so also was erotic practice, that is, who one had sexual relations with and how. For example, whereas our culture associates what I’ll call *homosex* (same-sex sexual acts) among men with effeminacy regardless of who penetrates whom, the ancient Greeks distinguished between the penetrator (a virile position) and the penetrated (an effeminate position). But they also believed that too much sex with *women* made the penetrator vulnerable to effeminacy. In general, though, what mattered in this context was less the gender or sex of one’s partner than his or her social status. Pederasty, a sexual relationship between a young elite man and an older elite man, was a standard practice in ancient Greece. These relationships were essentially apprenticeships in which the older schooled the younger in the *mores* of elite manhood and helped him make important contacts with other elite males.

We may get the *word* “family” from the Latin *familia*, but our families look quite different from those of ancient Rome – and ancient Israel, as well, for that matter. Families in both contexts were organized around married patriarchs, but, as exemplified in the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis, Israelite patriarchs practiced concubinage; Abraham was married to Sarah, who gave him Hagar as a sexual partner (by whom Isaac was conceived) when it became clear she was barren. Jacob, the father of the eponymously named 12 tribes of Israel, was married to two wives who were sisters, Leah and Rachel. Roman patriarchs married only one wife, but

were allowed – even expected – to have sex with other women (as long as they weren't married to other men) and men (as long as they were of lower status). Having sex with one's male slave, for example, compromised neither a patriarch's marriage nor his masculinity (as long as he did the penetrating).

Yet culturally, experientially, and scientifically, we are coming to know that things are more complex than that. Thanks to the second wave of the feminist movement, what counts as appropriate behavior for men and women has broadened considerably in recent decades. Where athleticism used to indicate latent if not active lesbianism (and thus a "masculinity complex" of some sort), we now expect and encourage girls and women to take up sports. There are limits, however, to the compatibility of athletic success and femininity (Levy 2009). Getting a manicure or wearing a scarf (in the winter, at least) and earrings are acceptable masculine behaviors these days, though carrying a "murse" (a man purse) may be pushing it in some contexts. More significantly, consider the now-ubiquitous acronym "LGBTQI." The last four letters, in particular, index forms of gendered, sexed, or sexual identity that we are only recently acknowledging as a society. And each of these forms troubles our neat binary system. The "B" refers to bisexuals; people who are attracted to sexual partners of both the same and opposite sexes. The "T" stands for both *transgendered* and *transsexual*; in the first case, people who do not identify with the *gender* they've been assigned or, in the second case, with their anatomical sex. While some in these categories seek to live as the opposite gender or sex, many more live out their lives somewhere in between – or outside – normative masculinity/femininity or normative manhood/womanhood. These people may identify as "queer," a formerly derogatory term for homosexuality that has been retrieved as a catchall for the nonnormative. A number of people now identify as genderqueer, for example. Finally, the "I" stands for "intersexed," people whose anatomical and/or biological sex is in some way ambiguous or combines features usually seen only in one or the other sex.

By "anatomical sex," I mean what we have come to call primary and secondary sex characteristics: whether one has a penis or vagina and the accompanying internal reproductive organs (primary) to match along with the bodily features (secondary) we expect bearers of each of these organs to have such as breasts, facial hair, and a certain body shape. By "biological sex" I mean all of the internal genetic and chromosomal markers, hormones, and other factors that produce anatomical sex – and other features of human embodiment – in the various forms it takes. Intersexed conditions take a variety of forms at both the anatomical and biological levels. While, most of the time, a person with an XX chromosome, say, will exhibit all the bodily signs we associate with normative femaleness, things can turn out differently at just about any point along the way. To give just a few examples, the result can be an anatomical male, a female with a vagina and breasts but with internal reproductive organs that will not accommodate successful reproduction or whose external sex organ is more penis like. And one cannot necessarily predict, on the basis of these bodily configurations, gender identity *or* sexual orientation. Clearly, our binary system is inadequate to the reality of this complexity (Fausto-Sterling 2012).

So what are the implications of all of this for how we think about sexuality and Christianity? And where can the discipline of psychology be of help to Christianity's ongoing attempts to work out what count as faithful expressions of sexuality? Let me return briefly to the two questions with which I opened this entry. The account I've offered above suggests that both questions are framed far too narrowly – and thus so are the answers they invite. To inquire after the Bible's views on homosexuality is to pose a question it cannot answer, since there was no such thing as *homosexuality as we understand it and live it* in the biblical worlds. Again, that doesn't mean, as we've seen, that ancients didn't experience same-sex desire or engage in same-sex acts. Rather, those desires and acts were *understood and lived* under very different social and familial systems than ours. This, it seems to me, is an important insight for ministers, therapists, and

pastoral counselors to bear in mind when working with parishioners or patients who are struggling to reconcile sexual issues of whatever sort with their Christian faith. Similarly, to claim homosexuality is a “lifestyle choice” simply ignores the role sexuality currently plays in our sense of identity and in our lives – whether we are gay or straight. Yet to claim homosexuals are “born that way” is too simplistic, a claim that scientists researching the biology of homosexual make clear. Whatever our sexual orientation or gender identity might be, it is likely the result of multiple factors: biological factors, no doubt, but also our individual histories and experiences, including choices we make.

Psychology has played a critical role in both the pathologization and the normalization of the various senses of self that LGBTQI attempts to capture. So, for many years, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (popularly known as the *DSM*), authored and published by the American Psychological Association, classified homosexuality as a disorder, but ceased doing so in 1973. In fact, the APA has spoken out strongly against so-called reparative therapy that claims to “cure” homosexuality. As the APA moves toward its 5th major revision of the manual, a similar shift is occurring around trans issues. “Gender dysphoria,” a less pejorative term, will supplant gender identity disorder as a direct attempt to “stop ‘pathologiz[ing] all expressions of gender variance’” (Lowder 2012). What impact this will have on Christianity as it continues to wrestle with issues of sexuality, identity, and faith remains to be seen.

## See Also

- ▶ Abraham and Isaac
- ▶ Anima and Animus
- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Gender Roles
- ▶ Jewish Sexual Mores

- ▶ Postmodernism
- ▶ Psychiatry
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Sacred Prostitution
- ▶ Sex and Religion

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## Chthonic Deities

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Chthonic is from the Greek, χθονιος or *khthonios*, meaning “of the earth” and is used in reference to that which is beneath the surface of the earth or the underworld and its state of darkness. Chthonic also refers to a state of abundance. For the ancient Greeks, chthonic was not to be confused with the visible layer of the soil,

where Demeter reigned as the goddess of the harvest or with Gaia, the earth mother who bore and united with Ouranus and is a primal life force (Farnell 1908/1971). Rather, chthonic implies lower, abundance, darkness, and death.

The chthonic deities and heroes were worshipped in their own cults and sacrificed to in specific ways that differentiated them from Olympian deities. For example, black-skinned animal offerings were preferred for sacrifice to the chthonian gods and light skinned for the Olympians. However, any sort of strict lines of demarcation to categorize the Greek's system of religious affections meet with frustration. The line between the chthonic and the Olympic is immediately blurred as soon as one considers Persephone, Hermes, or, for that matter, Zeus himself, who had cults where he was worshipped with the epithet *Zeus Chthonios* (Burkert 1977/1985).

A chthonic deity, then, is the carrier of the projection of human nature's instinctive drives and dark, rejected propensities and yet is also a fertile and divine source of abundance. Aspects of human nature that were wisely discerned by the ancient Greeks with caution and recognized as potentially dangerous in humans were nonetheless honored in their gods. Through rituals, the Greeks were participating in a relationship with the projected darker parts of their own nature. Devotion to this principle has fallen into disuse.

## Psychological Implications

Today, rather than a reverential attitude toward the awesome power of the chthonic force, even in psychological systems and religions, much of this drive is the target for a lifelong battle to contain, banish, or defeat it in oneself and in society. Unlike the Greek chthonic cults, today, darkness is not worshipped, it is feared. Denial of the dark side of the soul (dark did not mean evil to the chthonic cults, but implied an insufficiency of illumination) inevitably creates projection of one's own unacknowledged urges onto others.

Death was considered transformative for human beings in religion in the ancient Greek

cults and is still thought to be so today. Today, only if the darker aspects of the personality are defeated does the transformation end in a better life. The dead were understood to be of aid to the living by the Greek cults, and all mortals went to the underworld after death. Immortality was not bestowed upon a mortal based on a judgement of the quality of their life. The chthonic cults worshipped their ancestors and heroes at their gravesites, believing that the dead were able to deliver oracular messages that could help them with their daily burdens.

## Dualistic Thinking

Dualistic thinking categorizes the chthonic in a split between good and bad. Chthonic is bad. Olympian is good. But to the ancient polytheistic cult members, this would be a gross oversimplification. They might even view it as the one psychological state they perceived as sinful: hubris. The chthonic gods and goddesses all had healing and destructive tendencies, as did the Olympians.

## The Greek God Pan

One well-known example of the chthonic is personified by the Greek goat-god Pan. Pan's cult began in Arcadia on the Peloponnesian peninsula. He was half divine and half beast, a god of fertility, the hunt, and an aide to men and the divine in battle. He also brought panic and unbridled sexuality. Other Greek chthonic cults worshipped Hermes, Hades, Persephone, Dionysus, Hecate, and Hephaestus, among others. Each carried different shades of the chthonic spirit, which the polytheistic Greeks saw as aspects of the many sided mystery that surrounded and animated all of life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dualism](#)
- ▶ [Pan](#)

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## Circumambulation

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Circumambulation literally means “walking around.” As a religious practice it can take two different outward forms, each with a slightly different but related psychological meaning. The first use of sacred walking comes in the form of a communal act of celebration of a particular deity or saint. At various times in the religious calendar of ancient Egypt, an image of the god was taken out of its shrine and paraded for the people to see. In many Roman Catholic countries, statues of saints are taken around the plaza on the saint’s festal day. These acts of circumambulation are a kin to an animal ranging over the domain of its territory. The parade marks the loyalty of the local populace to the patron deity or saint. Another form is solitary or more solemn pilgrimage. An example of this would be the circumambulation of Mt. Kailash in Tibet. This is a multiday journey and involves not only the physical travail of a difficult and long hike, but becomes a focal period of reflection, meditation, and devotion.

In either form, the act of circumambulation is a human attempt to create or observe what Eliade (1959) termed “sacred space” and “sacred time.” In the act of marking off a space through physically walking its circumference, humans create a boundary between the sacred and the profane or mundane aspects of their world. In the course of the journey of circumscribing a space, the person or group exists in sacred time. Often, the opportunity provided by

a daylong or even multiday event allows individuals who participate to enter into ecstatic trance states or deeply focused meditational states even as they are active in a bodily sense.

## See Also

- ▶ [Mandala](#)

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## Circumcision

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## General

Circumcision refers to the removal of the prepuce (foreskin) covering the glans of the penis. Egyptian mummies from 2,300 BCE were found circumcised, and earlier wall paintings suggest that the practice began long before. Approximately one-sixth of the world’s men today are circumcised; the vast majority are Muslims or Jews. Throughout history, the basis for the procedure has traditionally been religious or cultural; however, in America, Canada, and Australia, many men are circumcised for medical or esthetic reasons.

No consensus exists as to how circumcision originated. Anthropologists have proposed theories including that it began as a mark of defilement for enslaved man, that it served as a sign of cultural identity similar to a tattoo, and that it once was believed to enhance fertility. Today, circumcision is the norm among Muslims, Jews, some African churches, several African tribes, and Australasian Aborigines.

## Judaism

Religious Jews traditionally circumcise male babies on the eighth day unless there is a health-related reason to postpone it. The act is performed by a *mohel* (circumciser) who need not be either a rabbi or a physician. The baby is held firmly by the *sandak* (holder) who is usually an elder male relative. Traditionally, the procedure is done without anesthetic. In premodern times, blood was sucked from the penis following the cut. Among most Jews today, this is done only symbolically using a straw.

Circumcision is understood by Jews to signify acceptance into the covenant between God and the Jewish people whereby Jews agree to follow the laws of the Torah and God and, in turn, agrees to bless the Jewish people. An early iteration of this covenant between God and Abraham is described in Genesis 17; the passage concludes with the command for all of Abraham's descendents to be circumcised. Covenants in biblical times were often sealed by severing an animal, with the implication that the party who breaks the covenant will suffer a similar fate. In Hebrew, the verb meaning to seal a covenant translates literally as "to cut." It is presumed by Jewish scholar that the removal of the foreskin symbolically represents such a sealing of the covenant. A number of sovereigns, beginning with Hadrian and Justinian, attempted to forbid the practice among Jews and anti-Semitic rhetoric throughout Western history has often included a notable anti-circumcision component. Some Reform Jewish theologians of the nineteenth century argued that circumcision should be abandoned as it ran contrary to the Jewish principle of universality. Despite common misconceptions, a child born to a Jewish mother is considered fully Jewish regardless of whether or not he has been circumcised.

## Christianity

With Paul's teaching that faith served as a sufficient prerequisite for conversion to Christianity, circumcision fell away as a religious ritual for early Christians. It is explicitly rejected as

a requirement for conversion in Acts 15:3–11 and Galatians 5:6, but nontherapeutic circumcision was never forbidden by the Roman Catholic Church until the fourteenth century. The practice has been retained in Coptic and Ethiopian Orthodox churches.

## Islam

Though circumcision is not mentioned explicitly in the Koran, it is considered to be a binding "prophetic tradition" among Muslims. There is a great diversity of opinion among Islamic jurists as to the proper time for the ritual to be performed. Often it is during the first 40 days of life, most commonly on the seventh day; however, it can be as late as age seven in some communities. Who performs the circumcision and how vary significantly from community to community in the Muslim world.

## Psychology

Freud understood Christianity as a "religion of the son" which held an Oedipal desire to kill the "religion of the father," Judaism, from which it was born. Freud further viewed circumcision in Judaism as symbolic of man's submissiveness to God. Consequently, by rejecting circumcision and thus removing that symbol of submission, the "son" asserts its authority over the "father." Freud views circumcision as symbolic of castration, and he posits that much anti-Semitism may be rooted in the anti-Semite's fear of castration. Other psychoanalyst theorists have disagreed with Freud, arguing that far from serving as a symbol of castration, circumcision gives the penis the appearance of a permanent erection. The ritual then may seek to ensure fertility and the continued existence of a group which perceives itself as threatened.

## Contemporary Debate

A passionate debate as to the value of circumcision rages across the literature in the fields of medicine,



psychology, and anthropology among others. Proponents often cite medical benefits and the importance of respecting cultural traditions. Opponents generally focus on the pain of the procedure to the infant and rights of the neonate. No solid data exists as to the long-term psychological impact – positive or negative – of circumcision on the individual. The mere intensity of the debate attests to the fact that the practice strikes deep psychological chords for many.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)

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## City

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Cities (and villages) have traditionally represented various concepts associated with the idea of centering. For many cultures, their major city or village is the World Center. In Egypt, creation itself occurred when a primal mound rose from the Nile and became the cult center at Heliopolis. Delphi, home of the Greek oracle, was the navel of the world. Any village into which the people emerged from Mother Earth into this

existence is the World Center, as in the case of many of the pueblo cultures in the American Southwest.

Most ancient and medieval cities were built around a central temple or church, often defined by walls with four gates representing the four directions. In a sense, then, cities were mandalas, representing wholeness and security and a sense that through the structure of the city, the inhabitants participated in that wholeness. In terms of collective psychology, cities have represented not only wholeness but a reasoned barrier against the chaos surrounding their walls. Cities were often referred to by the feminine pronoun, and a constant fear was of the ravishing of the city by invading armies. In mythology, as in history, the fall of a city is a terrible tragedy equated with the psychological and emotional destruction of the culture. The fall of Troy is a prime model for this tragedy, its gates penetrated and its streets filled with the murdering invaders.

Cities, like humans, can be corrupted and can serve as a model for the psychological corruption of a people. A sphinx torments the sinful city of Thebes, and inside at its heart, we find the specific crimes of incest, regicide, and patricide in the person of Oedipus, who lacks the one psychological quality he needs, self-knowledge.

Cities sometimes have mythological, spiritual, and political significance related to particular events. As we know in connection with Jerusalem, a city can be holy to more than one people. Jews, Muslims, and Christians who have fought for the right to occupy that city have, from their points of view, fought for their cultural souls, for their very being. Take away Jerusalem and the people in question no longer are connected to what or whom they believe themselves to be. “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept,” sings the psalmist of the Hebrew exile to Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem. “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning” (wither away) (Psalm 137).

In the *Republic*, Plato discussed the city as an expression of our lack of self-sufficiency and our need to look for help beyond ourselves – i.e., in the collective experience. Ultimately, then, the

city, whether Jerusalem, Troy, Athens, Thebes, or Heliopolis, is a mandalic model for a culture's psychic wholeness, a model, like the heroes who defend it, of the collective self, the perfect union of the society's psyche in both its unconscious and conscious forms.

## See Also

- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)

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## Clinebell, Howard

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Howard John Clinebell, Jr. (1922–2005) served as a pioneer of the modern pastoral counseling movement. Clinebell was born in Springfield, Illinois, to Howard J. and Clem (Whittenberg) Clinebell on June 3, 1922. He received a B.A. from DePauw University in 1944, a B.D. from Garrett Theological Seminary in 1947, and a Ph.D. in Psychology of Religion from Columbia University in 1954. Clinebell completed the Certificate in Applied Psychiatry for Ministry from the William H. White Institute and was highly influenced by the work of Harry Stack Sullivan, Paul Tillich, David Roberts, Horace Freiss, and Carney Landis (Sanborn 1975). A minister in the United Methodist Church, during his studies Clinebell pastored churches in Indiana, Illinois, and New York. Beginning in

1955, he spent 2 years lecturing in religious education at New York University before moving across the country to Southern California. In 1957, Clinebell formed a pastoral counseling center at First United Methodist Church in Pasadena, California, and in 1959 joined the faculty of the School of Theology in nearby Claremont.

Clinebell commenced higher education toward the end of World War II, a time of shifting paradigms in American mental healthcare. The center of psychoanalysis moved to the USA from Europe. Freudian authority waned as neo-Freudian influences began to dominate psychological discourse. And the American public, with knowledge of “shell shock” from World War I, began to understand the insidious impact of mental illness upon aspiring and returning soldiers.

In response to this changing landscape, by the 1950s, over 80 % of theological schools offered courses in psychology. Thus, Clinebell's theological education at Garrett Theological Seminary and his training as a Methodist minister included instruction in both psyche and soul care. Influenced by Sullivan and this mental health milieu, Clinebell viewed “the individual (intrapyschic) and hence mental illness and health” as “abstractions when separated from the social (interpersonal) matrix of the individual's life” (Sanborn 1975, p. 65). Aware of the impact of context upon the individual, Clinebell contended that the growth of one toward his/her “God-given potentialities” (Moss 1984, p. 175) also contributed to the growth of others and the broader society. This precept led toward the construction of what Clinebell termed “growth counseling.” In an interview with Moss (1984), Clinebell defined growth counseling as “a human potential's approach to the helping process that describes the goal as facilitating the maximum development of a person's potentialities, at each life stage ... Growth counseling is both a way of seeing people and a way of helping them” (p. 175). According to Clinebell, “GROWTH = CARING + CONFRONTATION” (Clinebell 1979, p. 55). Therefore, “Confrontation

needs to focus on both negative, growth-limiting attitudes, beliefs, and behavior in persons and on the positive potential for change of which they are unaware” (Clinebell 1979, p. 55). Based on assets—rather than a deficits approach, growth counseling foreshadowed tenets found today within positive psychology, ecological counseling, and motivational interviewing. As noted by Kathleen Greider, Clinebell’s colleague at Claremont School of Theology, “Howard saw the need for counselors to understand how oppression and poverty wound a person” (Rourke 2005, para. 8). Thus, Clinebell was attuned to issues of race, class, gender, and ecology when many others in mental health broadly, and pastoral counseling specifically, remained focused on self-actualization devoid of systemic influences.

In addition to his work in the area of growth and growth counseling, Clinebell also wrote prolifically on the topics of well-being, ecotherapy, marriage, and addiction. Clinebell edited a volume of *The Journal of Pastoral Care* on the “Greening of Pastoral Care” in 1994, a time long before “going green” was so popular (Clinebell 1994). He wrote, contributed to, and edited over 30 books and more than 50 articles. He cowrote a significant number of books and articles with his wife, Charlotte Holt Clinebell. His work was translated into multiple foreign languages, including German, Spanish, Dutch, Finnish, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese, and he offered workshops in more than 60 countries. According to Mendenhall (1990), “His book *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* (1966, revised 1984), perhaps the most widely used seminary textbook for pastoral counseling, helped expand the scope of pastoral approaches from individual/intrapsychic dynamics and nondirective methods to a more inclusive focus on interpersonal dynamics and more directive human potentials approaches” (p. 177).

As previously mentioned, in 1957, Clinebell formed a pastoral counseling center at the First United Methodist Church in Pasadena, California. After joining the faculty of the School of Theology at Claremont as professor of pastoral psychology in 1959, this center became the

training institute for the school’s graduate program in pastoral counseling. Clinebell served as a faculty member at the school and pastoral counselor at the center from 1959 to 1988. During this time he traveled extensively, advancing the pastoral counseling movement across the globe and living out his commitments to justice, peace, and environmental ethics. Though the center underwent numerous name changes, from The Pomona Valley Pastoral Counseling Center to the Pomona Valley Pastoral Counseling & Growth Center, in 1989 the name was officially changed to The Clinebell Institute in recognition of his tremendous influence upon the discipline of pastoral counseling. Clinebell was a founding member and diplomate of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and served as president from 1964 to 1965. He was also the founder of the International Pastoral Care Network for Social Responsibility.

Archives of Clinebell’s papers are housed at the Pitts Theology Library at Emory University as well as the library at Claremont School of Theology. In addition, as many of Clinebell’s books are now out-of-print, a number are available in full text at [www.religion-online.com](http://www.religion-online.com).

Howard J. Clinebell, Jr. and his wife Charlotte Holt Clinebell lived in Santa Barbara, California, until his death in 2005.

## See Also

► [Ecotherapy](#)

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## Clitoridectomy

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### Introduction

Clitoridectomy, or clitorrectomy, the removal of the clitoris, is a term and practice that is not mentioned in formal psychological or psychoanalytic literature. There is incidental mention in Western medical texts of women in Europe, America, and Australia in the nineteenth century subjected to psychosurgical clitoridectomy as treatment for hysteria and masturbation (Duffy 1963). These surgeries never became common practice. The significance of clitoridectomy is within Islamic religious and cultural tradition. The Qur'an does not mention clitoridectomy but there is a hadith, the oral transmission of the words and deeds of Muhammad, discussing the physical alteration of the female genitalia in language unclear to both Arabic and English speaking people.

### Religion

#### African Tribal Religions

Clitoridectomy predates Islam, in ancient African tribal religions. There is much debate as to which force, the old tribal or Islam, is the primary religious force in African female genital cutting (Badawi 1989; Roald 2001).

### Islam

Clitoridectomy is one of several ceremonial procedures often referred to as female circumcision, female genital cutting, or female genital mutilation. This is a Sunni tradition, now debated among Sunnis. Shi'ites have never practiced female genital cutting.

The four procedures are differentiated (Roald 2001) as:

1. Circumcision, the removal of the prepuce or hood of the clitoris.
2. Clitoridectomy, the removal of the clitoris.
3. Excision, the removal of the clitoris and of all or part of the labia minora.
4. Infibulation, the removal of the clitoris, labia minora, and all or parts of the medial part of the labia major. Infibulation is practiced mostly in the Sudan.

In one of the earliest efforts of a scientific, systematic inquiry into practice and psychological impact of female circumcision, the phrase female castration first appeared. In his small sample of female circumcision in Egypt, none of the samples were circumcisions; all were castrations – clitoridectomy and excision (Badawi 1989).

The Arabic word, *bazr*, from the circumcision hadith, is alternatively translated as prepuce of the clitoris or the clitoris itself. The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies clitoridectomy as Type I Female Genital Cutting, including both circumcision and clitoridectomy, reflecting the Arabic dual definition. The WHO Type I clitoridectomy subsumes both. Muslim opponents of all forms of female circumcision quote Holy Qur'an in their argument, saying that clitoridectomy alters Allah's creation and is the work of Satan. The strength and authority of the clitoridectomy hadith is questioned by Islamic clerics and scholars because "in Arabic language, two things or persons may be given one quality or name that belongs only to one of them for an effective cause (al-Awwa)."

### Cultural Psychology

The psychological and psychosexual function of female clitoridectomy is also debated. Scholars,

clerics, and women who have been circumcised and/or castrated speak of controlling sexual desire, enhancing sexual pleasure, limiting sexual pleasure, the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, and even making the female genitalia more beautiful. Information about the psychological impact of clitoridectomy is also split; some are devastated, and some report enhanced self-esteem at being beautiful within a culturally defined beauty. Some women report frigidity, and some report increased sexual pleasure. There are reports of adult women who had sexual experience prior to clitoridectomy reporting no difference in sexual pleasure (Roald 2001). The split in psychological experience is blurred because of reporting circumcision and clitoridectomy as one category (Badawi 1989).

## Commentary

Freud considered clitoral sexuality to be an infantile mimicry of male phallic sexuality, an expression of penis envy in the service of denying a woman's biologically determined identification as a passive, castrated being. To resolve her Oedipus complex, the girl must identify with her mother and reject the subsequent maleness of her clitoris. This is accomplished by the psychical mechanism of decathexis or emptying of the clitoris' libidinal excitement in favor of the passive receptor of the vagina, thus fulfilling the destiny of feminine submissiveness that is determined by a woman's anatomy (Freud 1905/1953, 1924/1961, 1925/1961, 1933/1964). Freud's theory of female sexuality might be considered clitoridectomy by decathexis, or psychical atrophy, but most clearly a function of the unconscious. If Islamic clitoridectomy represents an externalization of unconscious fantasy, this kind of externalization happened within Freud's intimate circle. Princess Marie Bonaparte, a devoted friend and student of Freud's, subjected herself to a clitoral surgery to facilitate psychical decathexis and cure frigidity despite Freud's vehement objections. Bonaparte sought to do psychological research about excised

women when she lived in Cairo during World War II, but was prevented from doing so by the Egyptian government (Walton, 2001).

The concept of female castration anxiety and unconscious fantasy has been a topic of psychoanalytic inquiry which began during Freud's lifetime, challenging Freud's castration complex as being strictly male (Abraham 1920). The difference in unconscious fantasy and psychical structures regarding castration in Islamic women who have grown up with clitoridectomy in their collective cultural consciousness has not yet been explored. To do so at this time, utilizing Freudian-derived work on female castration would be imposing a Western lens on an Islamic unconscious. Clitoridectomy seems unquestionably repellent to the Western soul, and objective observations are easily swept away in passionate moralism and disgust. Vehemently supported and opposed within Muslim communities, the only seeming point of agreement about clitoridectomy is that the dilemma needs to be addressed within its own communities without Western interference or the imposition of Western sensibilities (Roald 2001). Today there are reconstructive surgical procedures available for female genital mutilation (Foldes et al. 2012).

Psychoanalytic theory postulates that male circumcision is experienced as symbolic castration (Freud 1909/1955). This unconscious confusion contributes to the difficulty of defining and signifying clitoridectomy as either circumcision or castration. The Freudian unconscious would not differentiate circumcision from clitoridectomy nor differentiate prepuce from clitoris, in parallel with the confusion of Arabic definition. East and West may need to return to God's covenant with Abraham, the circumcisions of Isaac and Ishmael, and follow the journey of those two circumcised boys to modern times to open a meaningful dialogue between psychology and religion about current-day clitoridectomy.

The word clitoridectomy does not appear in psychoanalytic literature, and the phenomenon is thus far unsignified in a psycholinguistic lexicon. In a Lacanian perspective, real meaning exists in



the space behind the signifier and the absence of key signifier in a chain of signifiers creates a hole in the symbolic order leaving psychotic phenomena. The passionate madness surrounding clitoridectomy limits the dialogue between psychology and religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Castration](#)
- ▶ [Circumcision](#)
- ▶ [Complex](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Cognitive Science of Religion

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The Cognitive Science of Religion (CSR) is an academic discipline which studies the mental capacities and processes that underlie recurrent patterns of religious thought and behavior. The main focus of CSR is on unconscious thought. Unlike the related field of the Psychology of Religion, whose primary level of analysis is the individual, CSR is primarily interested in accounting for cultural forms and why these particular forms are more widespread than others. As all subdisciplines pertaining to the Cognitive Sciences, CSR is interdisciplinary, employing



theoretical perspectives and methodological tools from such fields as religious studies; cultural and cognitive anthropology; cognitive, developmental, and evolutionary psychology; philosophy; neuroscience; biology; behavioral ecology; and others.

## History of CSR

Although the mental underpinnings of religion had often been the focus of earlier research in the psychology, sociology, and anthropology of religion, a more concerted cognitive study of cultural forms was inspired by the cognitive revolution of the 1950s and especially by the work of Noam Chomsky (1957) on language. Chomsky argued for a psychological approach to language, aiming to specify the biologically hardwired principles of the mind that constrain the form of all natural languages. Soon thereafter, growing attention began to be directed to studies that focused on underlying commonalities rather than on surface variability of human traits and searched for a “universal grammar” underlying the particular semantics of cultural phenomena. Cognitive anthropology and sociobiology further contributed to setting the scene for the emergence of CSR. In the 1970s Dan Sperber (1975) argued for a cognitive approach to cultural transmission, calling for attention to the psychological dispositions that underlie the formation and distribution of cultural representations, while Thomas E. Lawson (1976) and Frits Staal (1979) proposed a cognitive approach to ritual forms. However, the first comprehensive cognitive theory of religion was outlined by anthropologist Stewart Guthrie (1980), who argued that the origins of religiosity lie in the evolved human predisposition to attribute agency and intentionality to ambiguous inanimate objects and events in the environment.

Some of the field’s most important theoretical foundations were laid in the 1990s, with the work of Pascal Boyer (1992) on counterintuitive concepts, that of Harvey Whitehouse (1992), Thomas E. Lawson and Robert McCauley (1990) on ritual transmission, and others

(e.g., Deacon 1997; Donald 1991; Mithen 1996). CSR expanded exponentially shortly after the dawn of the new millennium, which brought both theoretical sophistication (Boyer 2002; McCauley and Lawson 2002; Whitehouse 2004) and institutional grounding, mainly in Europe, but also increasingly in North America. Various CSR centers were established: the Institute of Cognition and Culture (ICC) at Queen’s University Belfast; the Religion, Cognition and Culture Research Unit (RCC) at Aarhus University; the Centre for Anthropology and Mind (CAM) at Oxford University; the Centre for Human Evolution, Cognition, and Culture (HECC) at the University of British Columbia; the Institute for the Biocultural Study of Religion in Massachusetts, USA; the International Cognition and Culture Institute, run by the London School of Economics and the Institut Jean Nicod in Paris; and the LEVYNA Laboratory for the Experimental Research of Religion at Masaryk University in Brno. In addition, the International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religion was founded in 2006; the *Religion, Brain & Behavior* journal was launched in 2011, and the *Journal for the Cognitive Science of Religion* in 2012.

## Methods

CSR uses a wide variety of methods, ranging from ethnographic observation (Cohen 2007; Xygalatas 2012) and textual analysis (Slingerland and Chudek 2011) to brain imaging studies (Schjoedt et al. 2011) and computer simulations (Nielbo and Sørensen in press). Following an initial period of purely theoretical approaches to religion, CSR turned towards experimental hypothesis testing. However, many aspects of religion cannot easily be studied in the laboratory. To deal with this problem, some CSR scholars also turned towards naturalistic experiments, in an attempt to provide empirical data while addressing both sides of the cognition and culture continuum.

For example, Richard Sosis and his colleagues (Sosis and Ruffle 2004) conducted a study of

**Cognitive Science of Religion, Fig. 1** A Hindu devotee performing the Kavadi in Mauritius



various Israeli kibbutzim to examine the theorized relationship between ritual involvement and prosociality. They found that members of religious kibbutzim were more cooperative in a common-pool resource game compared to members of secular kibbutzim and that men who engaged more frequently in communal prayer were more cooperative.

Working on related hypothesis, Dimitris Xygalatas and his colleagues (2013) examined the relation between ritual intensity and prosociality. This study was conducted in the context of the Hindu festival of Thaipusam in Mauritius. During this festival, participants perform the Kavadi ritual, piercing their bodies with multiple needles and skewers, carrying heavy structures on their shoulders, and dragging carts attached by hooks to their skin for hours before climbing a mountain to reach the temple of Murugan. The investigators used a donation task to show that participation in this extreme ordeal increased charity and decreased parochial identities both for performers and for observers of the event and that reported pain predicted levels of generosity (see Fig. 1).

Another field experimental study (Konvalinka et al. 2011; Xygalatas et al. 2011) used heart rate monitors to measure physiological arousal at a Spanish fire-walking ritual, where participants crossed a bed of glowing-red coals, each carrying a beloved one on their backs. The results showed

synchronous arousal between performers and observers of the event, despite the fact that the ritual did not involve any motor synchrony. In addition, the degree of synchronicity in heart rate rhythms could be predicted by the level of social proximity. These results suggest that physiological and emotional synchrony is not merely the effect of mirroring but is also mediated by social familiarity (click here to watch a Discovery Channel video about this study).

## Theoretical Perspectives

Given the interdisciplinary and pluralistic character of the field, there are ongoing and constructive tensions and debates over methodological and theoretical priorities. For example, some CSR scholars see religion as a byproduct of human evolution (Boyer and Liénard 2006); others consider that it has evolved to serve specific adaptive functions such as eliciting prosocial behavior (Sosis 2003); and yet others argue that both models can be correct within the framework of Dual Inheritance Theory (Atran and Henrich 2010).

However, CSR scholars by and large agree on a set of basic overarching assumptions. First of all, religion is not a *sui generis* domain of the human existence and therefore can and should be

subject to explanatory scrutiny just like any other cultural expression. Second, a scientific study of religion must necessarily adopt a position of methodological naturalism; religious explanations of religious phenomena cannot be taken to have any explanatory value in themselves. In line with evolutionary psychology, it is accepted that cultural forms are subject to the biological constraints of the human brain and the universal mental capacities of the human species, as they have evolved through natural selection. In line with Cognitive Science, it is also accepted that the mind is not a blank slate nor a general-purpose computational machine but comes pre-equipped with a host of specialized mechanisms, each with a specific function. Based on these premises, cognitive scientists of religion are interested in exploring the causal mechanisms that might account for the recurrent patterns of religious beliefs and practices found around the world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Evolution and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Neurology and Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Reductionism](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Coincidentia Oppositorum

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### God as Unity and Multiplicity

According to fifteenth-century cardinal, mathematician, and mystic Nicholas Cusanus (also referred to as Nicholas of Cusa and Nicholas of Kues), the *coincidentia oppositorum* – or “coincidence of opposites” – constitutes the “least imperfect” name for God and was the means by which humanity could achieve religious toleration and, ultimately, world peace. Cusanus’ concept of the *coincidentia oppositorum* later influenced the work of a number of Western scholars, most notably Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, who considered the psyche of each individual to likewise be a coincidence of opposites – a blend of conscious and unconscious elements which together constitute a harmonious and unified whole called the “self.”

Nicholas Cusanus (1401–1464) has been called “the first modern philosopher” (Bond 1997, p. 17) in part because of the era in which he lived but perhaps more importantly because he is considered responsible for heralding a new stage in the deconstruction of language and epistemology. Unlike most of the Christian theologians of his time who held a monotheistic vision of God as a supernal power that exists independent of the

physical world of existence, Cusanus stood out as a controversial figure because of his belief that God does not exist separately from creation but rather is both transcendent of and immanent within it – a simultaneous *unfolding* of oneness into multiplicity and the *enfolding* of multiplicity within the one.

[W]hen I am at the door of the coincidence of opposites, guarded by the angel stationed at the entrance of paradise, I begin to see you, O Lord. For you are there where speaking, seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, reasoning, knowing, and understanding are the same and where seeing coincides with being seen, hearing with being heard, tasting with being tasted, touching with being touched, speaking with hearing, and creating with speaking (Cusanus 1997a: pp. 252–253).

Because God is infinite and absolute, Cusanus argued all things in existence are aspects of God, without which God would not be adequately represented. For Cusanus, this concept had not just theological significance but social implications as well, for he believed that it was the inability to accept all forms of religious worship as a necessary reflection of God that was the cause of humanity’s most devastating conflicts. He felt certain that if people were educated to the truth of this idea, humanity would recognize its ultimate unity, and there would be perpetual peace.

But, as he bemoans in *De Visione Dei* (“On the Vision of God”), “How can the intellect grasp you, who are infinity? The intellect knows that it is ignorant and that you cannot be grasped because you are infinity. For to understand infinity is to comprehend the incomprehensible” (Cusanus 1997b: p. 258).

### The “Least Imperfect” Name for God

For years, Cusanus struggled to find a way of describing his vision of God as both a unity *and* a plurality and an infinitude *and* a finitude. In what was perhaps his defining work, *De Docta Ignorantia* (“On Learned Ignorance”), Cusanus considers the difficulty of “naming” God, for – due to the limitations of reason-driven language – there is not one name that is not opposed to another. If one describes God as “this,” it implies

that God is not “that.” However, since God is everything, there is nothing that God is not. For example, to call God “absolute” implies that God is not “not absolute.” Therefore, Cusanus argued, any description for God must acknowledge and reveal its own limitations, for since God is everything, there is nothing that God is not. Because of this, many of the names that Cusanus used included linguistic contradictions such as “One-and-All” and “All-in-One.”

In 1453, on his way home from Constantinople where he had gone with the hope of reuniting Eastern and Western Christendom, Cusanus claimed to have had a mystical vision in which he conceived of the “least imperfect” name for God: the *coincidentia oppositorum* or “coincidence of opposites.” The *coincidentia oppositorum* was not a description of God, Cusanus insisted, but an explanation of how God works. That is, God was not *the* coincidence of opposites but rather *a* coincidence of opposites.

Although branded as a heretic by some of his contemporaries, Cusanus and his use of the name *coincidentia oppositorum* as a way of describing the simultaneous plurality and unity of the absolute had, and continues to have, a profound influence on the work of later Western thinkers. Religious historian Mircea Eliade used the term frequently in his work, citing the *coincidentia oppositorum* as being a representation of “man’s deep dissatisfaction with his actual situation, what is called the human condition” (Eliade 1969, p. 122) and of humankind’s “nostalgia for a paradoxical state in which the contraries exist side by side without conflict” (Eliade 1969, p. 122).

## The Psyche as Coincidentia Oppositorum

Within the discipline of psychology, the *coincidentia oppositorum* found its most prominent articulation in the work of Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology. For Jung, the *coincidentia oppositorum* became a kind of meta-archetype to describe the workings of the

human psyche, which he saw as being made up of binary oppositions such as conscious-unconscious, anima-animus, and persona-shadow.

Like Cusanus, Jung devoted himself to tackling the problem of opposites. But while Cusanus focused his attention on the social and religious implications of this idea, Jung emphasized its use as a symbol for the “self” – the core essence and totality of the psyche. The self, Jung wrote, “can only be described in antinomian terms” (Jung 1968a, Vol. 9, Pt. 2, p. 63) for it is the dialectical unity of “both ego and non-ego, subjective and objective, individual and collective. It is the ‘uniting symbol’ which epitomizes the whole union of opposites” (1966 16: 265). Jung believed that all psychological imbalances (such as neurosis, addiction, and various dissociative disorders) represented a “self-division” (Jung 1966b, Vol. 7, p. 20) – a state of disunity with oneself due to this war between various processes within the psyche. “The self is made manifest in the opposites and in the conflict between them; it is a *coincidentia oppositorum*” (Jung 1968b, Vol. 12, p. 186), he wrote. The individual would not be whole until these opposing parts were brought into harmony within the self. Jung believed that psychological healing could be achieved through the ego’s confrontation with and ultimate reconciliation of the “shadow” aspects of the unconscious. Only by doing so could one begin to withdraw projections and integrate the seemingly antithetical aspects of one’s personality into a single, indivisible unity or whole. He called this process “individuation.”

More recently, the *coincidentia oppositorum* as a symbol of both spiritual and psychological transcendence has been highlighted in the work of the contemporary philosopher Ken Wilber (2001), as well as others in the field of transpersonal psychology.

## See Also

- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)



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## Collective Unconscious

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In Jungian psychology, collective unconscious is the totality of inherited potentials, or the full complement of archetypal patterns that are universally human. In addition to ego-consciousness lies all the forgotten material of an individual's lifetime (called personal unconscious) as well as the vast reservoir of latent possibilities that belong to the human species (collective unconscious).

Many popular discussions of the collective unconscious give the mistaken impression that it is a sort of storehouse of images or even a memory bank for everything that has ever happened in the course of the world. Jung insists that it is not images or memories that are inherited but rather the capacity to recognize, imagine, and enact typically human patterns of thought and action. The collective unconscious is best understood as the sum of all the behavior patterns we inherit with our DNA: the capacity to learn and speak a language, for instance; the propensity to fall in love, form lasting bonds, and propagate; the set of aptitudes for nurture and mothering; and so on. Thus, the seemingly effortless facility that very young children show for distinguishing linguistic patterns in the conversations going on about them, as well as for assimilating a huge vocabulary and the grammar to organize it. Such inborn facilities for language illustrate several aspects of the collective unconscious: (1) an inherited capacity to recognize relevant stimuli in the environment; (2) the motor capacity to reproduce sounds and gestures in order to communicate; (3) the possibility of combining those typical acts, ideas, and images in countless ways; and (4) the fact that all typically human patterns take on cultural variations, as the language capacity will become specified as the mother tongue of Japanese, Arabic, or English. On the basis of the collective unconscious, we recognize typical forms of human behavior when we encounter them, intuitively know how to respond, and also know how to enact them ourselves.

We not only enact the archetypal patterns of the collective unconscious; we also use them – or, more accurately, use the capacity to recognize and to imagine such patterns – consciously or unconsciously to reflect upon our lives. The evidence for such acts of imagination and their effects upon us when we encounter them are to be found in, among other things, literature, philosophy, theology, and dreams. Some dreams seem to be nothing more than variant retellings of the events of the previous day and can be understood without reference to the collective unconscious. Others that refer to crises, challenges, and life transitions, however, may



be expressed in imagery that seems archaic, numinous, uncanny, and impersonal. These are images and themes in which the typically human patterns of the collective unconscious (archetypes) emerge relatively free of personal associations and take on mythic significance.

All of evolution is implicitly present in the collective unconscious, for it not only gives human beings a common foundation that accounts for the survival of our species and forms the basis by which we naturally understand and relate to one another; but it also connects us with our primate cousins, who are also highly social beings who groom one another to form friendships and also cultivate “political” alliances for personal and communal advancement. Indeed, since the collective unconscious represents the sum of our inherited capacities, it links us to every DNA-bearing creature on earth. Jung imagined peeling the unconscious like an onion until he arrived at the psyche of an amoeba upon reaching the center.

The narratives of myth and the constructs of theology all express, in one way or another, the fundamental realities of the collective unconscious. Indeed, because they originate in that domain of the psyche which all humans share, such doctrines and stories move us deeply and seem to be eternally true. Religious rites, ceremonies, and rituals are also expressions of the collective unconscious that automatically engage the psyches of all participants, bring them into harmony with one another, and generate altered states of consciousness within which some of the originating ideas and aspirations of the tradition can be reexperienced in the present by each individual.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)

- ▶ [Personal Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Communal and Personal Identity

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Personal identity, one’s own individuality, is a relatively late acquisition – both in life and in human history – and in its best sense not at all to be taken for granted. It is, in fact, an achievement, given the powerful influence of socializing pressures promising acceptance and support at the price of conformity. Personal identity emerges from communal identity only with effort and often longs to return. Sometimes personal identity changes and grows as an individual moves from one communal identity to another.

## Emergence of the Personal

Human life begins within the mother and is so thoroughly dependent upon her bodily processes that a nascent human psyche can hardly be expected to distinguish its own experiences

from those governed by the bloodstream and nervous system of its fleshly environment. Total dependency continues after birth in a different form, where the life, language, and customs of the family environment provide the socially interpreted world within which the infant's consciousness is fostered and shaped. The smiling, babbling, exclaiming protolanguage shared by caregiver and infant is the foundation not only for language learning but also for sociocultural indoctrination. A child begins to discover its individuality somewhat later, as disappointments and conflicts provoke conscious awareness of oneself and the unique otherness of each human mind.

As adults, we live in an environment that is tacitly structured by socially favored ideas, images, and assumptions which go largely unnoticed and uncriticized. They are implicit in the news and entertainment media, in casual conversations, in notions of politeness, etc., forming a collective consciousness that is taken for granted and that shapes even one's private thoughts. At bottom, communal identity is governed by a condition of participation mystique that provides security and belonging. Ritual and myth enact and articulate this largely unconscious foundation of communal identity.

### Rites of Passage

In "traditional societies" – a loose phrase that describes communal life as it has been practiced over the vast course of human history – communal identity is ritually and mythically differentiated into life stages separated by rites of passage related to birth, maturity, reproduction, and death. For example, childhood ends with puberty rites that provide the individual with a new adult identity and role in society. The consequences of such rites shape the daily lives and experiences of every member of a community. While the newly defined adult steps directly and finally into communally established responsibilities and roles that belong to maturity, every other member of the community must relate to the new initiate as to a full-status adult; all interactions and expectations that concern that individual will have changed.

Rites of passage change a person's social identity but always within a larger communal identity. True individuality is perhaps only possible in a more complex social world like that of the modern West, where communal identity in the traditional sense is no longer possible and where individuals are exposed to a variety of social customs, religious traditions, and the like, thereby revealing the less-than-absolute authority of any of them. Much of the meaningfulness of human existence is lost in the disillusionment that comes with modernity, one symptom of which is the longing to return to a simpler time with clearer definitions of what is right and wrong. Hence, the recent rapid growth in fundamentalist religions.

### Cultural Differences

Although modernity is disruptive, it lays down a challenge as well; for in the world as it exists today, religiously defined communal identities are no longer effective for most people. Consequently, each individual must find his or her own mythic foundation in the sense of what Jung has called one's "personal myth" and Kohut has described as "the self's nuclear program." Real personal identity is not a pose like individualism and not to be found in following fads. Rather it is discovered as one's own meaningful relationship to the universally human themes of the collective unconscious.

The tension between communal and personal identity may be quite different in the East, for many studies have shown that the Western model of individuality is not shared by the East. In the West, it is commonly said that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, whereas in the East it is said that the nail that sticks up will be pounded down. Similarly, figure/ground studies of picture interpretation have shown that the central figure in a scene is not perceived in the East as standing out from and opposed to the ground as it is in the West, but rather as standing in dynamic relationship with the ground. Evidently therefore, in the East, communal identity is far more important than personal identity.

## Religions of the Dispossessed

Individuals and minorities within a society that have been labeled as deviant or irrelevant have historically reacted to their exclusion from an honorable membership in their society by reinterpreting the symptoms of their unworthiness as signs of election to subgroups that pursue ecstatic experience – often direct experience of the spirit world through possession trance. Some 90 % of worldwide societies have one or more institutionally recognized form of pursuing altered states of consciousness, while 74 % have possession trance religions that offer an honorable communal identity to individuals whose personal identity is viewed as inadequate by the larger community. As a consequence of such new membership, their personal identity is potentially transformed and made honorable, although it must be pointed out that, again, such an individual's communal identity is stronger than her personal identity. (Women, for reasons of gender discrimination, are more apt to become trance mediums than are men.)

Evidence shows, however, that all societies have used religious rituals to alter the consciousness of their members at least since the Upper Paleolithic and very likely much further back in human history – indeed, ritual behavior has also been documented in primates in the wild. Communal rituals draw individuals together into an emotionally satisfying group identity and are also used to reduce suspicions and hostilities between groups that need to cooperate with one another on behalf of common goals.

### See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)

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## Communitas

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### Introduction

From the Latin, *communis* (community, fellowship, condescension, affability), various meanings of *communitas* (a term taken up under the aegis of the Roman Catholic Church traditions) include joint possession in the hands of a religious community, stockbreeding society, land subject to rights of common, the whole of the clergy and the people, common property tax in mass, sworn association, urban commune, the commonality of the inhabitants of a city having the status of a commune (especially in connection with a military expedition), the Commons (estate of the realm), and the common people. This Latin term was taken and developed by cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1920–1983) to

describe a society during a liminal period that is unstructured or rudimentarily structured with a “relatively undifferentiated comitatus, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders” (Turner 1969a: 96).

### The Moment and Marginality of Communitas

Communitas is a “moment” in or out of secular structure. It seems to be possessive of an effervescence, making this moment one of religious creativity. One is reminded of the troubled waters in the Pool of Bethzatha in John 5: 2–9 (Aland, et al. 1998, p. 259–260). Turner’s work with communitas often goes hand in hand with concepts of pilgrimage, although recent anthropological studies on pilgrimage such as Eade and Sallnow (1991/2000) take issue with this idea with regard to pilgrimages to Lourdes. Nevertheless, it must not be overlooked that Turner’s work has greatly influenced countless anthropologists and the deepening of psychological understanding of human beings. The acquired sacred component in liminal space proffers a suitable container for empathic holding of woundedness and the bringing of notions of the divine into shared consciousness. Even such work with psychoidal realms as that of Raff (2000) indicates the creation of communitas for those undergoing the process of individuation.

Communitas emphasizes the marginal, the alien, the alien foreignness of ourselves (Kristeva 1989/1991). It is the emptiness at the center that can only be identified or apprehended through its hybridization, or in-betweenness, with social structure. Communitas, like liminality and hybridity, is often subjunctive in mood; that is, it thrives in the imaginal world of possibility rather than concretized fact. As a threshold, it possesses an immediacy akin to Bergson’s *élan vital*. One moves from structure into communitas and back to structure with renewed vision. Vision quests, *rites de passage*, contemplative prayer, spiritual retreats, and fasting are all part of the anti-structure of communitas; however, their

purpose is to redirect, reframe, and revision the structures in which we live. Communitas is therefore viewed as cyclic, placed in a dialectic with structure in such a way that the revolutionary quality of communitas is summoned and participated in, structure is reentered, and communitas is summoned again.

### Turner’s Differentiations of Communitas

Turner (1969b) differentiates three types of communitas. The first of these, existential (or spontaneous) communitas, is often approached in the form of a “happening,” or noteworthy event typically involving audience participation.

A second type of communitas Turner designates as normative. This occurs when the spontaneous or existential communitas is organized into a lasting social system. Such a system might include a religious sect, such as the Branch Davidians, Heaven’s Gate, and millenarians. As with any structuring of movements, communitas tends to lose its anti-structural quality as it grows more organized as in, for example, an institution.

The third form of communitas is ideological. This is a utopian model based on existential communitas that can be expressed as an outward form of an inward experience of a happening. This is not unlike the question of the Westminster Larger Catechism (Office of the General Assembly, 2000), “What are the parts of a sacrament?” to which the catechumenate replies, “The parts of a sacrament are two: the one, an outward and sensible sign used according to Christ’s own appointment [the water of baptism and/or the bread and cup of the Lord’s Supper (eucharist)]; the other, an inward and spiritual grace thereby signified” (p. 223). We could then say with Turner that structure is pragmatic and this worldly, whereas communitas is speculative and generates imagery and philosophical ideas. Taken further, if psyche is image, communitas is soul-making.

Turner’s spontaneous/existential communitas is equated with the community of Martin Buber’s

(1947/2002) “essential We” or the I-Thou relationship built up in community. Tribal rites, vision quests, or other forms of invoked *communitas* are not for seeking the pleasurable company of relationship. Rather, in invoking *communitas* one is seeking transformative experience that goes to the root or core of a person’s being in a profound and shared (even sharable) fashion. Psychoanalysis as a sort of *communitas* rationalizes Lacan’s (2005) recognition in 1974 of the triumph of religion as a triumph of structure over movements. It is why he retorts that psychoanalysis will be around for a while longer as there always needs to be a revolutionary component.

Providing optimal occasions for *communitas* are life in the fringes, interstices, and margins of structural forms. *Communitas* can also arise from inferiority, described as coming from beneath structure. The ability to give free rein to imagination, entertain, and hold the doubts, mysteries, and uncertainties of negative capability also provides the circumstances of and for *communitas*. This works well for individuals, but not necessarily for groups that consider themselves in situations of *communitas*.

*Communitas* occasionally is associated with visions or theories of world catastrophe. Examples of such perceived catastrophic consequences of *communitas* include the People’s Temple led by Jim Jones, the frenzy of the Y2k transition, and millennialist religious cults, sects, etc. Despite the infrequency of catastrophic associations with *communitas*, there remains the danger of severe discipline, the circumciser’s knife (as in the establishment of a mark of the divine’s chosen in the story of Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac).

There is the *communitas* of withdrawal, of retreat. This form of *communitas* involves partial or total withdrawal from participation in the social structures of the world. Examples include Jesus the Nazorean, the Buddha, the Prophet Muhammad, Gandhi, Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, and even the Rose-beetle man of Gerald Durrell (1956/1984). Vision quests, hermitage, and retreat are also types of the *communitas* of withdrawal. Curiously, such examples as these

either have a connection with or are possessed by the numinous.

*Communitas* offers a number of benefits. Among these mentioned by Edith Turner (2004) are joy and healing, the gift of “seeing,” mutual help, the experience of religion as religion – not just Jewish, Muslim, or Christian, for instance, but *religion* – and the gift of knowledge (*gnosis* as opposed to gnosticism). Other attributes might include long-term ties with others as others, a humanistic conscience that supports, uplifts, accepts, sustains, and celebrates all of humanity (not just a small portion of it), and the ideals of human rights.

*Communitas* becomes structural when, like grace or the bestowal of favors, it becomes routinized. Turner (1974) notes the similarity between structural *communitas* and Freud’s repetition compulsion. Expressions of routinized *communitas* include monasteries, convents, initiation camps, and communes.

Not unlike the scholastic notion of *haecceity* (Duns Scotus) or the individuation process of Jung, *communitas* preserves individual distinctions. Despite sharing the same cognate with *communio*, *communitas* is not the same as communion because there is no merging. It’s more akin to synchronicity. It is not realizable, for it is a force, a dynamic. Turner (1987) argues that *communitas* is not being realized because “individuals and collectives try to impose their cognitive schema on one another” (p. 84).

*Communitas* is finally analogous, according to Turner (1983/1987), with flow, owing this understanding to the world of positive psychologist M. Csíkszentmihályi. In this understanding, action and awareness are one, and Turner observes that there is no flow when we are aware that we are engaged in the act of flowing. As long as structural rules and framing crystallize out of the flow rather than are imposed upon it from without, *communitas* can be observed as taking place. *Communitas* is then viewed as an imaginal framework, a third space container suitable for an *Einführung* (a feeling into something) of holding, viewing, and bringing of notions of the divine into shared consciousness.

## A Critique of Communitas

The theory of communitas has recently been critiqued (Eade and Sallnow 1991/2000) in its associations with the practice of pilgrimage. The criticism argues that if aligned with pilgrimage, communitas is presented as a model of determinism, and this Eade and Sallnow see as limiting the usefulness of communitas. Sallnow's assessment is that "the most helpful, pre-analytic image to hold in mind is a tangle of contradictions, a cluster of coincident opposites" (p. 52). This assessment would align itself with the idea of the alchemical *massa confusa* (aka *prima materia*) and the concept of synchronicity, components the importance of which Turner acknowledges throughout his work. Another problem they view is that in identifying pilgrimage as communitas, a spurious homogeneity is imposed upon pilgrimage, prejudging its complex character as a phenomenon. While not finding fault with the value of the theory of communitas per se, Eade and Sallnow opt to neglect its capacity for and maintenance of negative capability that itself seems intrinsic to the pilgrimage experience. Instead, they replace negative capability with the power of religious hierarchies to determine the outcomes of pilgrimage. A rebuttal in the form of reminding us that this critique is simply a return to structural communitas is given by Edith Turner (2004).

Despite the recent critique of communitas with regard to pilgrimage, it should be understood that communitas as anti-structure really means it is an inversion of the normal. In this respect, we are open to the play and fascination of mirrors as apophatic third eyes. Communitas thus extends our gaze, including our backward gaze or regard. We are negatively defined – not contradicted – as *neti...neti*: neither this nor that. We are thus opened up to new experience and meaning-making such that we can work and play well with others as we see ourselves as others, too.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Contemplative Prayer](#)

- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)

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## Compassion

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The word compassion comes from Latin *com-* (with, together) plus *pati* (to bear, suffer). Compassion can be defined as “deep feeling for and understanding of misery or suffering and the concomitant desire to promote its alleviation” (Paiano, 1999, pp. 1–291). Another source describes compassion as “the capacity to be attracted and moved by the fragility, weakness, and suffering of another” (Downey, 1993, p. 102).

### Compassion in the Bible

The Hebrew word for compassion, *rahamim*, refers to the womb or uterus. Just as the womb is the source of biological human life, so God’s compassion is the source of life itself. God acts as a womb, and the place of birth is the vehicle of compassion (Trible, 1978, p. 55). Psalm 103 names compassion as a paternal attribute of God: “As a father has compassion for his children, so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.” And Isaiah 46:3–4 portrays God as a mother bearing the house of Israel.

The Christian Gospel refers to the coming of Christ as an act of God’s compassion (“For God so loved the world. . .” – John 3:16). In the story of the feeding of the 4000, Jesus says, “I have compassion on the crowd, because they have

been with me now 3 days, and have nothing to eat; and if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way; and some of them have come a long way” (Mark 8:2–3). Compassion is given a high priority in the parable of the Good Samaritan: “But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (Luke 10:33–34). The parable of the Prodigal Son also highlights compassion: “And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

### Compassion in Psychotherapy

Psychotherapists and psychoanalysts must first look at their own suffering before they can join their patients as fellow sufferers and participants in the individuation process. The psychotherapist has to be compassionate toward self in order to be compassionate toward the patient. One’s own suffering can help one to soothe the suffering of another.

Genuine compassion is clearly differentiated from pathological symptoms that can mimic compassion but are only disguised forms of narcissism, projective identification, inverted envy, or even masochism, sadism, or apathy.

### Freud

Compassion clearly plays a major role in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, but already in 1911 Freud had identified a hazard in the natural tendency of the analyst to frame, define, and resolve the issues emerging in the course of therapy. Instead, the therapist should exercise *evenly suspended attention*, not imposing his own feelings and interpretations on the proceedings. “If he follows his expectations,” Freud wrote, “he is in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows.”

## Jung and Kohut

Jung's *unprejudiced objectivity* and Heinz Kohut's *vicarious* introspection express related concepts. Jung believed that suffering is unavoidable and that what matters is how one responds to suffering. He saw acceptance of suffering as paramount in the developmental process that he called individuation.

## Rogers

Carl Rogers' *unconditional positive regard* addresses more directly the exercise of compassion in the therapeutic context. In Rogers' view, it is not enough for the therapist to be a nonintrusive partner to the therapy. The therapist must *care* for the client with an active, positive concern. Such active concern, Rogers believed, created the most favorable setting for the client to employ their own internal resources for personal growth.

Both in psychological and theological terms, compassion gives suffering meaning and purpose and is a vital connection between personal relationships and the relationship between the individual and God.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Compassion Fatigue

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## General Overview

“Compassion Fatigue” is a term given to the secondary stress suffered by those in the helping professions who are working with those suffering from trauma.

Pioneering theorist Charles Figley notes that “There is a cost to caring” (Figley 1995, p. 1). This cost or risk has been variously called compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress (Stamm 1995/1999), or “vicarious traumatization” (McCann and Pearlman 1990). It has also been associated with therapeutic countertransference (Pearlman and Saakvitne 1995).

Figley, who has been publishing on Traumatic Stress in families and the military since the late 1970s, writes, “Caring people sometimes experience pain as a direct result of their exposure to other’s traumatic material. Unintentionally and inadvertently, this secondary exposure to trauma may cause helpers to inflict additional pain on the originally traumatized. This situation – call it compassion fatigue, compassion stress, or secondary traumatic stress – is the natural, predictable, treatable, and preventable unwanted

consequence of working with suffering people” (Stamm 1995/1999, pp. 3–4).

Figley prefers the use of compassion fatigue or compassion stress as the “most friendly term for this phenomenon” (Stamm 1995/1999, p. 17). It is of note that this term, as compared with secondary traumatic stress or vicarious traumatization, focuses on the impact on the empathy of the caregiver, whereas the other two focus on the origin of the traumatic stress.

One of the earliest uses of this term comes from the nursing profession, where Carla Joinson described “situations where nurses had either turned off their own feelings or experienced helplessness and anger in response to the stress they feel watching patients go through devastating illness or trauma” (Yoder 2010).

One can see in this brief description the two strands of the phenomenon – the empathic relationship and the environment.

The symptoms of compassion fatigue described in the early literature parallel that of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) category of “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD): “A state of tension and preoccupation with the individual or cumulative trauma of clients as manifested in one or more ways: re-experiencing the traumatic event; avoidance/numbing reminders of the traumatic event; persistent arousal; combined with the added effects of cumulative stress (burnout)” (Figley 1995, p. 11).

A later more popular description notes “In simple to understand language, compassion fatigue is the ‘cost of caring’ of working with victims of trauma or catastrophic events that shows itself as spiritual, physical and/or emotional fatigue and exhaustion” (Roberts and Ashley 2008, p. 209).

This reflects both the evolution in the term and the tension of keeping clinical parameters with diagnostic categories not included in the most current DSM. Fleeting lapses in empathy for a parishioner, patient, or client; infrequent flashbacks to a traumatic story triggered by an association; and exhaustion after a particularly stressful day or week may be common for many in the helping professions. However, like PTSD,

compassion fatigue is not simply characterized by the symptoms of re-experiencing *and* avoidance or numbing *and* arousal but by the number of symptoms, intensity, duration, and how they may affect one’s quality of life and ability to work, study, and engage in relationships.

This is further complexified by the relationship between the original trauma of the parishioner, patient, or client and the secondary trauma of the caregiver. PTSD defines two criteria of the traumatizing event that causes the disorder: “the person experienced witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others” *and* “the person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror” (American Psychiatric Association 2000). One would think this would be true also for someone witnessing this secondarily through the narrative of a patient, parishioner, or client. It is of note that the current revisions for the upcoming DSM V are indicating that the latter criteria will be dropped and replaced by significant distress in the re-experiencing category. However, the criteria for the traumatizing event are tightened to the exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violation that is direct or witnessed in person or one learns of the threat to a family member or close friend.

This highlights both the complications in defining what can be seen as an increasingly popular pseudo-diagnostic category and also the confusion and complexity with multiple nomenclature that each reflects a different part of the phenomenon.

Unlike the other descriptions for secondary traumatic stress disorder and vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue appears simply to emphasize the exhausting nature of the disorder, which may draw from the criteria of arousal, avoidance, and negative changes to mood or thoughts, rather than those of intrusive re-experiencing. This tension, however, has been reflected and contained in the tests that have been formulated to indicate the probable presence of compassion fatigue, such as the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) tests.

Brenda Hudnall Stamm who has published, collaborated, and continued the work of Figley in this area since 1995 states explicitly that “Neither Vicarious Traumatization nor Compassion Fatigue are synonyms of PTSD or a mental disorder. (Figley and Roop 2006; Pearlman and Caringi 2009; Stamm 2006; Stamm 2010a). . . Compassion Fatigue is not a diagnosis” (Stamm 2012, p. 1). She states “Compassion Fatigue breaks into two parts. The first part concerns things such as exhaustion, frustration, anger and depression typical of burnout. Burnout may have a gradual onset and reflect a sense of helplessness or assessment of ineffectiveness in your work” (Stamm 2010a, p. 12). Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is “work-related secondary exposure to people who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events. The negative effects of STS may include sleep difficulties, intrusive images, or avoiding reminders of the person’s traumatic experiences” (Stamm 2010a, p. 13). Unlike burnout STS may have a rapid onset. Stamm also notes an additional factor which may mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue, that of compassion satisfaction: the positive feelings associated with being able to help others and the ability to perform effectively, work collegially, and contribute to society.

The ProQOL Test assesses compassion satisfaction and the two components that Stamm cites for compassion fatigue – burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Some theorists in the fields of mental health debate the relationship between burnout and compassion fatigue. Patricia Potter et al. suggest that these sometimes ambiguous terms are closely related but different. “Definitions of burnout more often have environmental stressors, whereas definitions of compassion fatigue address the relational nature of the condition” (Potter et al. 2010, p. E56). Jenkins and Baird (2002) suggest a “useful distinction” between burnout and secondary traumatic stress. Despite these questions the ProQOL or some form of either Figley’s or Stamm’s early compassion fatigue self-administered tests are almost universally used to assess compassion fatigue. The use of such

a test may indicate whether someone may be suffering from burnout alone, secondary traumatic stress alone, or, cumulatively, compassion fatigue.

There is a growing body of research on compassion fatigue in a number of helping professions – nursing, psychiatry, social work, psychotherapy, and disaster response; however, research with religious professionals is still somewhat limited.

Research suggests that 9 % of clergy are at extremely high risk for compassion fatigue through the stresses of their daily ministry (Darling et al. 2004). These stressors may include personal and family criticism, boundary ambiguity, and presumptive and unrealistic expectations of parishioners (Lee and Iverson-Gilbert 2003). Spiritual well-being was seen to “mediate the relationship between stress and compassion fatigue” (Proeschold-Bell et al. 2011). From a United Kingdom context, Hendron et al. simply state “The vocation of clergy life can be a hazardous journey” (Hendron et al. 2012). These stresses are exacerbated by congregational conflict, financial stress, social isolation, and long work hours (Morris and Blanton 1994). Due perhaps to both liturgical and pastoral roles, research in the early 1980s indicated that clergy are often sought out five times more than all other mental health professionals combined in the face of bereavement and grief (Veroff et al. 1981). In discussing Jewish Rabbis, Bonita Taylor notes they “respond to individuals who have been exposed to a wide range of stressors, including criminal assault, rape and robbery, spouse abuse, child abuse, life-threatening illness, severe mental illness, assisted suicide and euthanasia, and human-created disasters, such as Holocaust death-camp survivors” (Taylor et al. 2006). Clergy are often turned to in the face of national disaster or involved in disaster response, such as that of the terrorist attacks at Oklahoma City and of September 11, 2001. *The New England Journal of Medicine* suggests that 90 % of Americans used clergy as a coping resource after the 2001 attacks (Shuster et al. 2001).

A couple of studies on compassion fatigue in clergy who responded to the 9/11 terrorist

attacks focus on the impact of deployment with a single organization, such as the American Red Cross family assistance and respite centers and the mortuaries or voluntary chaplaincy at multiple sites, which may include church respite centers, and denominational disaster response organizations (Flannelly et al. 2005; Roberts 2003). Of note, contrary to what might be expected regarding intense exposure to victims who had suffered the threat of or witnessed sudden death of others, families who feared the potential and probable death of a loved one, and working alongside those recovering human remains that may occasion horror, helplessness, or hopelessness, Roberts found that persons that worked for the American Red Cross alone, with time-limited shifts and structured emotional defusing practices, suffered *lower* levels of compassion fatigue than those who had not been involved in this disaster response. Those that worked with other organizations were assessed as having the highest risk of compassion fatigue (Roberts 2003, p. 758). The research highlights issues of the necessity of not only good individual self-care but structured self-care practices that emphasized good boundaries, limiting work hours and exposure to traumatizing factors rather than overextending them, and the necessity of interventions that connect clergy to others rather than isolate them. Later analysis of the same data led Flannelly, Roberts, and Weaver to discern that chaplains who spent higher than average number of hours working with trauma victims and a greater number of days spent doing so showed increased risk of symptoms of compassion fatigue and burnout. However, these were mitigated in those who worked for the American Red Cross and/or had taken at least one course of Clinical Pastoral Education (Flannelly et al. 2005). Swain's (2011) qualitative research on chaplains who worked at the temporary mortuary at Ground Zero in New York after September 11 also notes the impact of chaplain's self-care and spiritual practices and the transformative aspects of humor, the care of the disaster response community, and the association to what was held to be sacred in the disaster response.

## Treating and Preventing Compassion Fatigue

Charles Figley notes that compassion fatigue is both preventable and treatable. He also emphasizes the necessity of awareness, warning those engaged in empathic work with trauma victims of their vulnerabilities to compassion fatigue and of strategies to mitigate the effect of trauma. Noting that empathy is a major resource in the helping professions, he also notes that unresolved trauma in the caregiver's own life will increase vulnerability, as will working with children and other vulnerable populations (Figley 1995, pp. 15–16).

For religious professionals, and others in the helping professions, the primary way to mitigate the effects of compassion fatigue is to practice self-care that includes (a) supervision or other defusing, debriefing, and problem-solving strategies; (b) maintaining a sense of "connectedness" with peers, with ecclesial or professional bodies, with those outside the sphere of their work: family, friends, and children; and (c) maintaining or developing a "reflective self-focus" (Roberts and Ashley 2008, pp. 212–213). Such a focus may range across the biopsychosociospiritual spectrum from using massage and relaxation techniques to personal counseling or psychotherapy to formal or informal prayer, liturgy, meditation, reading sacred texts, and journaling. The former strategies call attention to the necessity of being in relationships where one is the recipient of care and the empathy of others and not constantly the caregiver and those social relationships where one is not always "on the job." Additionally attention to life-giving transformative experiences, practices, relationships, and to one's relationship to the Divine can increase a sense of compassion satisfaction in such a vocation that can not only offset "the cost of caring" but build resiliency and lead to the possibility of posttraumatic growth. Figley suggests "5:1 ratio rule," which involves 1 h of personal processing for every 5 h of engagement with traumatic cases (Figley 2002, p. 215). Such personal processing can range from informal conversations "over a beer off duty" (without tolerating substance abuse) to post-shift defusing and group

debriefings (p. 215) and for the religious professional or volunteer, the resources of spiritual direction, pastoral psychotherapy, and clinical pastoral supervision.

Charles Figley notes that the first step in treating compassion fatigue is being aware of it, through undertaking self-test that assesses the degree of risk. He commends the comprehensive “Accelerated Recovery Program for Compassion Fatigue” (ARP) of Gentry, Baranowsky, and Dunning (Figley 2002, p. 213). The ARP program facilitates a recovery process which they call “The Road Back Home” (p. 126). Originally designed for five individual sessions, the program has been further developed into a group models of 1-day intensive and 3-day retreats at the request of caregivers involved in the Oklahoma City disaster response. This “powerfully interactive and introspective” program (p. 128) includes components such as building a therapeutic alliance, a variety of assessment tests, anxiety management techniques, the use of narrative, exposure techniques drawn from behavior therapy to resolve secondary traumatic stress, cognitive restructuring, and a “self-directed resiliency and aftercare plan” (pp. 129–130) which builds professional and resilience skills, self-management and care skills, connection with others, and attention to internal and external conflict management (p. 130).

Compassion fatigue in the context of this article is rooted in the empathic relationship with the other for whom we are called to care. Care for the caregiver here is care for the client. Compassion fatigue, rather than simply denoting the empathic “feeling with” the other, etymologically indicates the risks of *com passio*, “suffering with the other.” In professional helping relationships, such a risk includes an ethical demand to care for the self so that the reverse does not become true and that the client, patient, or parishioner begins to either bear or suffer the effects of our suffering.

## See Also

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Compassion

- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Hope
- ▶ Locus of Control
- ▶ Theodicy
- ▶ Transference

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## Complex

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Etymologically, the English word “complex” derives from the Latin *complexus*, “embrace” or “sexual intercourse,” from *complecti*, “to entwine,” made up of the prefix *com* meaning “together” + *piectere*, meaning “to braid.” In the natural and social sciences in general, the word “complex” denotes a system composed of interconnected or related parts that, coming together as a whole, manifest one or more properties not evident from the properties of the individual parts. In mathematics, a complex number consists of a real and an imaginary part, either of which can be zero. In psychology, complexes are organized groups of ideas and memories that are, for the most part, outside awareness but that carry enormous affective power when activated, their presence significantly altering the psychic system as an entwined or braided whole.

Even though Freud and Breuer use the term “complex” in their early studies of hysteria, Laplanche and Pontalis, writers of the seminal *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, attribute its theoretical importance in psychoanalysis to Jung’s studies in word association. Freud regarded Jung’s empirical investigations with complexes (measured as delayed responses to stimulus words as well as by psychogalvanic response) as an important experimental corroboration of his theoretical concept of the unconscious. But Freud increasingly shunned the term “complex” after Jung and Adler placed

complexes at the center of their theories as natural phenomena. That is to say, orthodox Freudian psychoanalysis regards complexes, including Freud's Oedipus complex, as symptoms resulting from failed acts of repression, whereas Adler's individual psychology and Jung's analytical psychology do not theorize complexes as synonymous with neurosis.

Adler employs the concept of a complex to account for psychological strategies such as the "will to power" and self-aggrandizement which individuals adopt often to avoid difficult feelings of inferiority. Jung characterizes conflicts between ego consciousness and other complexes as painful but not necessarily pathological: "A complex becomes pathological only when we think we have not got it" (Jung 1942/1954, para. 179). For Jung, a feeling-toned complex is an image to which a highly charged affect is attached and which is incompatible with the habitual attitude of the ego. Often attributable to a trauma that splits off a bit of the psyche or to a moral conflict in which it appears impossible to affirm the whole of one's being, a complex is a splinter psyche that behaves with a remarkable degree of autonomy and coherence, like an animated foreign property within the sphere of consciousness. It can override will or volition and block memory; that is to say, the individual ego is relatively powerless in a conflict with an unconscious complex. In his essay, *A Review of the Complex Theory*, Jung explicitly describes this as "a momentary and unconscious alteration of personality known as identification with the complex," although the opposing phrase "assimilation of the ego by the complex" could just as appropriately convey the action (Jung 1934/1960, para. 204).

Freud extended the work of Charcot and Janet with regard to hysterical symptoms when he realized that complexes as symptom-producing ideas rooted in unconscious affects needed to be abreacted. But Jung argues that psychoanalytic theory does not adequately convey the power and the positive potential of these symptom-producing ideas. Jung portrays Freud as wanting to unmake as illusion, to reduce to a psychological

formula, what Jung describes in psychological terms as a "complex" but also, at other times, as a "spirit," "god," or "daimon." And Jung argues that his theory contributes to and corrects psychoanalytic theory by emphasizing the inherent ambiguity of complexes which the ego experiences as negative: "Spirits are not under all circumstances dangerous and harmful. They can, when translated into ideas, also have beneficial effects. A well-known example of this transformation of a content of the collective unconscious into communicable language is the miracle of Pentecost" (Jung 1920/1960, para. 596). Jung employs a deliberately equivocal language of psychological "complexes" that are also "spirits," in order to honor their ontological claim as un-lived potentialities of the personality. These forcefully seek to incarnate in time and space and kinetically push the individual psyche towards a more genuinely integral organizing or entwining of its parts, a process which he calls "individuation."

Jung argues that the technique of personification provides a psychotherapeutic means by which the ego can free itself from the affective power of an unconscious complex. In his memoirs, as well as in his theoretical writings, he describes his experiments with the personified image of the complex. Jung observes that if, rather than simply suffering the active complex's often difficult affect, we deliberately enter a state of reverie and permit the complex to manifest spontaneously to conscious awareness as a personified image, then we depotentiate its power over ego consciousness and make interpretation possible:

The essential thing is to differentiate oneself from these unconscious contents by personifying them, and at the same time to bring them into relationship with consciousness. That is the technique for stripping them of their power. It is not too difficult to personify them, as they always possess a certain degree of autonomy, a separate identity of their own. Their autonomy is a most uncomfortable thing to reconcile oneself to, and yet the very fact that the unconscious presents itself in that way gives us the best means of handling it (Jung 1962, p. 187).

Hence, an important component of psychotherapy focuses upon supporting the ego of the

patient within the frame of the transference-countertransference relationship to the point that it can experience the autonomy of the unconscious complex as a splinter psyche and eventually reconcile itself to the contradictions inherent in psychic reality through a personified confrontation and meeting. Jung depicts the images and affects of a complex as clustering around an archetypal core which is both ambiguous and numinous. As a result, an archetypal aspect of the experience of the otherness of the psyche may cause the analytical container to feel tinged with numinosity. As contradictory as this may seem, in order to address contemporary mental disorders cast in the secularized language of “mind” and “complexes,” the practice of psychotherapy needs to take into account a religious function in the experience of healing.

Post-Jungian theorists detach Jung’s definition of the religious function in psychotherapy from connotations of an esoteric system of belief. At the same time, they defend it from classical Freudian interpretation that sees it as a component of transference phenomena which constitutes resistance and an obstacle to the process of healing. Jung’s concept of synchronicity provides an important framework for understanding the numinous aspect of complexes experienced within clinical settings which is otherwise professionally considered taboo and for considering the interaction of religious and scientific imagery. This is important because there are potential risks within the transference – and for the therapy in general – when the religious dimension of psychotherapeutic practice either is not processed consciously but acted out in the transference and countertransference or is only interpreted reductively, that is to say, as infantile and illusory. Jung argues that psychotherapeutic healing depends on the degree to which the therapist carefully considers the implications of this religious function when the otherness of unconscious complexes manifests in the *temenos* of the therapeutic encounter.

Extrapolating from Jung’s theorizing, James Hillman’s archetypal psychology suggests that, by taking into account the inherent multiplicity and pluralism of the psyche, Jung’s theory of

complexes compensates for the dangers inherent in the one-sidedness of modernist Western cultures and the Western practice of an ego-oriented psychology of self-development. The personification of unconscious complexes provides an effective means by which one adopts the paradoxical position of, on the one hand, claiming the personified aspects as one’s own and, on the other hand, experiencing their distinctness from ego consciousness and their autonomy. Furthermore, psychological complexes demand a dramatically engaged and lived response to the unconscious as other, in contrast to intellectualizing and conceptualizing unconscious contents which will not be psychotherapeutically effective.

Whereas psychiatry associates personification with the irrational and pathological hallucinatory phenomena of dissociative identity disorder and psychosis, Jung normalizes it as a natural psychological process through which complexes manifest. This process is comparable to what psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer, in his review of cognitive research on dissociation (1994), designates as a component of “reverie.” Indeed, Kirmayer (1999) describes the recent psychotherapeutic work of Witztum and Goodman precisely in terms of split-off aspects of the self which are experienced as supernatural entities and spirits. Witztum and Goodman report that patients, addressing their suffering through reverie and a manipulation of symbols rather than through abreaction and reductive developmental-based work, effectively reorganize cognitive schemas, unconscious dynamics, and interpersonal interactions.

Jung’s theory of complexes proposes a looser definition of personhood than Western thinking traditionally promulgates. Jung describes this theoretically in terms of “the serious doubt [which the existence of complexes throws] on the naïve assumption of the unity of consciousness” (Jung 1934/1960, p. 96) and also personalistically in the last words of his memoirs wherein he acknowledges “an unexpected unfamiliarity with myself” (Jung 1962, p. 359). When psychoanalysts such as Goldberg (1980, in Samuels et al. 1986, pp. 32–35) write that “a

person is a collective noun,” they affirm Jung’s theory of complexes, of a multiplicity of conscious mental functioning, as well as aligning contemporary psychoanalytical theorizing with current research into the inherent dissociability of normal cognitive functioning.

## See Also

- ▶ Adler, Alfred
- ▶ Ego
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Oedipus Complex
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Compulsion

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## Etymology

The noun, compulsion, generally means the state or experience of being compelled. It is the irresistible urge to act, regardless of the rationality of the motivation. In its verb form, compel expands qualitatively to include meanings such as force, drive, constrain, and sway. It comes from the Latin verb *pellere* (past part. *pulsus*), meaning to push, drive, or strike. The extended form *pelna* comes from the Latin verb *appellare*, to drive to, address, entreat, appeal, or call. Each and all of these contribute to psychological and religious interpretations of compulsion.

## Elaboration

Compulsion, referring to repeated, irrational action (distinguished from obsession involving repetitive thought), is a phenomenon that by its very nature bridges more than one domain. Although this experience is neither exclusively physical, psychological, nor spiritual, it manifests powerfully and problematically as all three. As a physical experience, compulsions fall under the category of addictions of all kinds. Specialists in substance abuse disorders range in focus from alcohol, drugs, food, gambling, shopping, sex, love, and relationship; and this list is not exhaustive. Caught in a compulsive cycle to reexperience the original pleasurable exposure to the substance, people become trapped in a whirlpool of cyclical agonies. In spite of negative consequences, the compulsion to repeat a certain action dominates the will of the individual and a pattern of predictable, yet irresistible actions follow.

In the realm of psychology, Sigmund Freud’s first observations about compulsion include the

curious desire in the psyche to repeat experience even though the return to it could not possibly be pleasurable (Gay 1989, p. 602). Referring to this as the “repetition compulsion,” Freud noted that his earlier thinking surrounding the seeking of pleasure and the avoidance of pain could not explain a need to revisit experiences that cause suffering.

Object relations theorists and analysts focused on the internal objects in the psyche and addressed compulsions as rooted in the inescapable desire to possess, reject, or relate to the object. Michael Balint talks about artists and performers of all kinds as ultimately serving a need to be seen by and thereby possess the object (Balint 1959). This gives new meaning to the saying that “the show must go on.” Perhaps the need of some of the great painters, like Claude Monet, who painted more than 100 paintings of the lilies, answered a similar call.

But it was Carl Jung who first ventured into a spiritual understanding of compulsion’s dynamics, thinking first that certain compulsions bore witness to a lack of moral restraint. While early therapy met with such compulsive behaviors more confrontationally than is acceptable today, Jung touched on the necessity of the analytic relationship to challenge a moral deficit. “Unless the doctor and the patient become a problem to one another, there is no cure” (Jung 1961, p. 142).

Later, and more specifically, Jung addressed the problem of alcoholism in a letter to one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. He had come to see compulsive drinking as a spiritual quest of deep proportions, a destructive cycle without the possibility of cure if there is no spiritual component to the recovery (Adler and Jaffe 1972 pp. 623–625).

Compulsion thus spreads its wings over the physical and the psychological and now reaches into the spiritual experience of the “call.” Religious history the world over describes the individual compelled to move beyond their ordinary circumstances to take up the demands of a larger existence. St. Francis of Assisi quit the trappings of nobility and a career-driven life to minister to

the poor. His devotion to the faith revealed to him in a series of visions moved him to the founding of a new religious order and later canonization. Joan of Arc would have died an obscure French peasant had she not heeded the voices of saints that came to her in a vision, “calling” her to lead her country’s army to victory against the British after the 100 Years’ War. Compelled, surely beyond reason at the time of the Inquisition, Joan held to her beliefs and was burned at the stake for following a compulsive service to a larger authority.

Compulsion presents a dilemma in terms of how to view it. For some, perhaps it is no more, nor less, for that matter, than the physical experience of addiction. Based on a compulsive need to re-experience the initial pleasure, the negative consequences are outweighed by even the hope of finding it. For others, perhaps it is a psychological coping mechanism to manage anxiety over the loss of the original object. Or at depth, compulsions herald movement toward an enlargement of the personality. And finally for others, compulsion could answer a larger call of divine proportions, a response to a certain kind of destiny that effects the larger community and culture (Braden 2008).

## See Also

- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Confession

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The act of confession either begins a process of reparation or affirms the subject's relationship with the transpersonal. That is, one can confess wrongdoing or confess one's faith. In most religious traditions, the former is accomplished through ritualized admission, absolution, and repair, while psychologically it begins the formation of therapeutic trust and unburdens the subject of poisonous secrets. The confession of faith can occur at moments of trial (martyrdom), or of ritual inclusion (initiation), and in the secular world can take the form of moral statements or even scientific stances which are determined by unconscious assumption rather than a rational or integrated practice (see especially Nietzsche 1992).

The word confess is made up of the Latin *com* (together) and *fateri* (to acknowledge), indicating that a process of change begins both *with* another person and by *admitting* that which is in error. A confession of faith can be seen as an acknowledgment of a relationship with the transpersonal. Both modes experientially parallel the psychoanalytic encounter.

In the Catholic tradition, penance is a sacrament of the New Law instituted by Christ in which forgiveness of sins committed after baptism is granted through the priest's absolution to those who with true sorrow confess their sins and promise to rectify them. The whole process of confession is referred to as a "tribunal of penance," because it is seen as a judicial process in which the penitent is at once the accuser, the person accused, and the witness while the priest pronounces judgment and sentence. The church father Origen is explicit: "[A final method of forgiveness], albeit hard and laborious [is] the remission of sins through penance, when the sinner... does not shrink from declaring his sin to a priest of the Lord and from seeking medicine, after the manner

of him who say, 'I said, "To the Lord I will accuse myself of my iniquity" ' " (Origen, Homilies on Leviticus 2:4 [CE 248]). The Council of Trent (*Session Fourteen, Chapter I*) quoted John 20:22–23 as the primary scriptural proof for the doctrine concerning this sacrament, but Catholics also consider Matt. 9:2–8, 1 Cor. 11:27, and Matt. 16:17–20 to be among the Scriptural bases for the sacrament (The Catholic Encyclopedia). This multilevel mediation of sin can be thought of, psychologically, as the careful exploration of the scripture, or transpersonal psychic reality, inscribed in the mind of a patient and read, through translation of the symbolic material, into an analytic session.

Protestant sects in general disavow the necessity of an intermediary between the faithful and God so that confession is a matter of a sincere admission of wrongdoing in prayer and the asking of forgiveness. In practice this also can occur in a communal and ritualized form during service or to another person if he or she has been wronged by the sin committed. Jung interpreted this historical move away from mediation as quite precarious, since most people did not (and do not) have the necessary strength of character and interior conceptual equipment to directly encounter and live with the transpersonal, whether characterized as an archetypal unconscious, an instinctual inclination, or a social movement such as a political ideology or a new age spiritual system. Typically a subject without firm mediation is either overwhelmed by a psychic flood or reverts to some type of collective response but without the benefit of *knowing and choosing* the system.

Various sutras encourage the Buddhist to confess to someone who is able to receive the confession (usually a superior in the temple or a monk). The confessor should at a minimum understand the ethical precepts and ideally should have some experience in following them. The point of confession is to *experience remorse* and to reflect on the consequences of one's actions in order to *exercise* restraint in the future. In practice this results in a sense of relief. Confession does not absolve the Buddhist from responsibility for



the actions committed. The *karmic* consequences of such actions will still manifest.

The following story illustrates the relative nature of confession in Buddhism (Sāmaññaphala Sutta – DN 2, various translations, but see also Macy 1991). The king Ajattasattu had killed his mother and father and has usurped the crown. His conscience bothered him, and so he went to confess to the Buddha. The Buddha said to the king: “Indeed, King, transgression [*accayo*] overcame you when you deprived your father, that good and just king, of his life. But since you have acknowledged the transgression and confessed it as is right, we will accept it. For he who acknowledges his transgression as such and confesses it for betterment in future, will grow in the noble discipline.”

The word *accayo* means “going on, or beyond,” and in the moral sphere means acting outside the established norms – so transgression is quite a good translation. However, once the king departs, the Buddha says to the monks: “The king is done for, his fate is sealed, bhikkhus. If the king had not killed his father. . . then as he sat there the pure and spotless dhamma-eye would have arisen in him” (Walsh 1995, p. 91ff). So it is quite clear that there is no hope for the king regardless of how many cycles of life he uses to work off his karma. Psychologically we can understand this as the harsh but all too common experience that some people are not going to get better (whatever the definition of getting better might be), regardless of treatment or effort. There is also in this story the aspect of appropriate teaching, meaning that for each listener, the king, the monk, and the reader, there is something quite different to integrate.

In Islam, confession in the sense of declaration of faith is very central, being one of the five pillars of Islam. Distinct from this is the act of seeking forgiveness from God, called *istighfar*. Confession of sins is typically made to God and not man (except in asking for forgiveness of the victim of the sin). It is one of the essential parts of worship in Islam. This act is generally done by repeating the Arabic words *astaghfirullah*, meaning “I seek forgiveness from Allah.” Again we

can see that a concept of relationship between the subject and the transpersonal is central and that the locus of authority rests in the latter. This attitude is in stark contrast with the social and economic norms for most populations at this point in history.

In Judaism, like Islam, confession is an important part of attaining forgiveness for both sins against God and another man. In addition, confession in Judaism is done communally in plural. Unlike the Christian “*I have sinned*,” Jews confess that “*We have sinned*.” An early form of this confession is found most directly in Daniel 9:5–19, especially verses 5, 9, and 18–19, where the supplicant acknowledges himself meritless and asks for God’s forgiveness based only on God’s own merit and that God’s name should not be tarnished among the nations.

For Jung, confession was the first of four stages or levels of the analytic process. In some cases, confession is all that is needed for a complete resolution of suffering, and it would be merely a personal agenda for the psychoanalyst to push beyond that. In other words, embedded in the symbolic material is a moral imperative specific to the movement of psyche itself, and it is this that forms the psychological imperative. However, if the analyst detects that further exploration is needed according to the symbolic communication from the psyche of the patient, Jung outlines three more stages of education, elucidation, and finally transformation (Jung 1955).

Confession appears quite universally in religious traditions (this includes tribal cultures not specifically discussed, as presented, e.g., in the journal *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*, May, 2007), so we can safely translate it as the psyche’s need to both orient itself in terms of interpersonal and social norms (because another person is necessary and often the mistreated party must be addressed as well) and relate to those areas of transgression against the transpersonal center of meaning. For the latter, it is seen as critical that this practice of relating happen in a dyadic manner and in a protected environment. In this way the journey of insight and integration begins.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Sin

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## Confidentiality

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Confidentiality refers to the cultural expectation and legally protected right that the privacy of all persons' thoughts, conversations, feelings, writings, correspondence, and personal effects will be honored, guarded, respected, and protected. In Western society and culture, persons have a reasonable expectation and legal right that personal information will be kept private by clergy, pastoral counselors, therapists, chaplains, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other medical and mental health professionals.

Confidentiality assumes that persons have the right to choose when and to whom personal information may be disseminated and that permission

(usually in writing) is expected. Shah (1969, 1970) notes that the purpose of confidentiality is to guard and protect persons from unauthorized disclosure of information without informed consent.

Aside from its ethical, moral, and legal ramifications, confidentiality is also understood as essential to the counseling process of establishing trust; maintaining a professional, ethical relationship; and providing a safe and positive environment that is critical to therapeutic growth and healing. Nearly all established helping professions have clearly articulated requirements of confidentiality in their respective codes of ethics.

Federal and state regulations also have their own legal statutes and exceptions regarding confidentiality. For example, mandatory reporting of child abuse is a well-established exception to confidentiality. Additionally, many jurisdictions require that helping professionals break confidentiality in cases where persons threaten to harm to themselves, others, and sometimes property (i.e., suicidal, homicidal, or terroristic ideation). It is critical, therefore, that all helping professionals familiarize themselves with federal, state, local, and vocational statutes and commit themselves to adhering to these as well as the codes of ethics of their particular profession and/or place of employment regarding confidentiality.

When in supervision, clergy and other helping professionals should familiarize themselves with the legal requirements regarding gaining permission to record (audio or video) counseling sessions and the sharing of confidential information with a supervisor.

A distinction must be made between confidentiality and privileged communication. The *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Hunter 2005) notes: "Simply put, confidentiality refers to privacy while privilege to the legal protection of that privacy" (p. 209). Privilege provides legal protection for persons who wish to block the release of information from a pastoral or professional conversation. Any information shared in confidence with helping professionals belongs to the person who shared it and not to the professional who heard it. Thus, all protection from disclosure belongs to the one who shared the information and not to the professional providing

the care. In other words, privilege is the legal right of one seeking help who alone can waive it, whereas maintaining confidentiality is the moral and ethical obligation of a helping professional.

The complexity of the right of privileged communication should be a sober reminder, especially to religious professionals, that they stand at the juncture of tensions between religious sensibilities about clergy privilege and competing civil statutes. It behooves chaplains, clergy, pastoral counselors, and other helping professionals, therefore, to familiarize themselves thoroughly with all legal statutes and employment protocols and particular professional or vocational ethics regarding confidentiality and privileged communication. Further, they must demonstrate due diligence in being transparent with parishioners and help-seekers regarding their personal practices regarding confidentiality and privileged communication and to seek professional consultation from an appropriate supervisor or other professional when issues or procedures regarding confidentiality or privilege are not clear.

Marriage and family therapists sometimes embrace differing views and practices on confidentiality when offering couples therapy, and one partner discloses a secret about oneself or the other without the other being present. Some therapists refuse to see one partner of a dyad so as not to be put in this awkward therapeutic position. While some therapists vow to keep a secret confidential when the other is not present, other family therapists are reticent to maintain secrets revealed when the other partner is not present so as not to collude in maintaining the secret and the systemic anxiety surrounding it (Bowen 1982; Friedman 1985). It is important for clergy, pastoral counselors, and therapists to be mindful of their profession's guidelines and their own therapeutic and ethical preferences on such matters and to embrace the highest levels of transparency by clearly communicating their particular ethical concerns and practices regarding confidentiality to help-seekers at the very onset of a professional or counseling relationship.

Since hospital chaplains are often seen as a part of a medical team and since military

chaplains often come under different regulations and guidelines, they should both familiarize themselves with how their supervisors understand their role regarding confidentiality and privilege in the larger system in which they work. For example, hospital chaplains should be clear about the hospital's expectation regarding what can and cannot be noted in medical records and charts without a patient's permission. The hospital chaplain should be clear about what a medical team needs to know about a patient who shares personal and medical information or history solely with a chaplain, and military chaplain should acquaint themselves with protocols particular to military codes of conduct.

### See Also

- ▶ [Confession](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Confucianism

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Confucius was born 552 BCE in the district of Tsau, China, during the 20th year of the reign of Emperor Ling. Little is known about his childhood. According to one myth, Confucius' mother Chǎng-tsâi gave birth to him in a cave on a hill as instructed in a revelatory dream experience. The child was born in the night protected by two dragons who kept watch on the left and the right of the hill. At the time of the birth, a spring of warm water from the floor of the cave bubbled up cleansing the child, who was extraordinary in appearance. At age 19, Confucius married a woman of the Chien-kwan family from the state of Sung. They had a son, Lî (*The Carp*) shortly after. According to an inscription, Confucius had at least one other child – a daughter who died at an early age. Confucius first worked as a keeper of public grain stores and public fields. He later served as a public teacher in his early twenties, never refusing a student who desired to learn and eventually becoming teacher to students of the wealthy caste. In 501 BCE he was appointed chief magistrate of the town of Chung-tû, and his authority in the state continued to grow. He died 479 BCE. Some time afterwards public worship of Confucius began, including sacrificial offerings throughout the empire. The primary literary sources for Confucianism include “The Five *Ching*” and “The Four *Shuû*.” The Five *Ching* (“textile” connoting regularity and constancy) are thought to have been used by

Confucius for study. The oldest text, the *Yî*, contains a system of symbols used to determine cosmological and philosophical order in what is perceived to be chance events. The *Shih* (ca. 1000 BCE?) contains 305 poems of folk songs, festive songs, hymns, and eulogies. The *Lî Chî* dates possibly to 300 BCE and contains social forms and rites of the Zhou Dynasty (1122–256 BCE). The *Shû* contains the history of past Chinese heroes and dynasties. Of its 58 chapters 33 are thought to be authentic, dating to the sixth century BCE. Instruction in Confucianism mostly occurred through use of *The Four Books*, which became the core curriculum for the civil service examination in the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644 CE) and Qing Dynasty (1644–1911 CE). *The Four Books* is an abbreviation for *The Books of the Four Philosophers*. The *Tâ Hsio* or *Great Learning* is attributed to Tǎ Shǎn, a disciple of Confucius. Containing reflections on the teachings of Confucius by some of his followers, it represents the first step for learners and aims “to illustrate illustrious virtue, to renovate the people, and rest in the highest excellence.” (1) Knowing this place of rest may enable a “calm unperturbedness” and a tranquil repose. (2) Issuing chapters expand upon the aim for virtue through the comments of Tsǎng. One is to allow no self-deception (VI.1), make thoughts sincere (VI.4), and cultivate the mind, thus not being under the influence of the passions which leads to incorrect conduct (VII.1). In matters of governing, the regulation and well-being of the royal family has central place: “From the loving example of one family a whole State becomes loving” (IX.3). Similarly, when the sovereign shows compassion toward the young and helpless, “the people do the same” (X.1). The *Lun Yü* or “*Digested Conversations (Confucian Analects)*” consists of the sayings of Confucius compiled some time after his death. It gives instruction and guidance on how to be the “superior” person (II.2). One who loves virtue rather than beauty, serves his parents and his prince, and speaks sincerely with his friends is one who shows learning (I.VII). He is one who in wanting to enlarge himself seeks also to enlarge others (VI.XXVIII). He requires much of himself, and

little from others, and so avoids resentment (XV. XIV). As a youth one should be filial in the home and respectful toward elders outside of the home. He should be earnest and truthful, overflowing in love and “cultivating the friendship of the good” (I.VI). Of the manner of governing – a subject often addressed – the “Master” says: “When a country is well-governed, poverty and mean conditions are things to be ashamed of. When a country is ill-governed, riches and honor are things to be ashamed of” (VIII.VIII). The *Chung Lung*, or *Doctrine of the Mean*, is attributed to K’ung Chî, the grandson of Confucius. Not unlike the *Great Learning*, the *Doctrine of the Mean* has a primary focus, which is the “path” called “instruction.” It is never to be left for an instant (I.1–2). Attention to the path yields the states of equilibrium and harmony, and in its furthest reaches, it contains secrets unattainable even by sages (XII.2). It is never far from a person, and the practice of reciprocity – “What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others” – is evidence of being near the path (XIII.3). One who is superior embraces this course; one who is mean lives contrary to it (II.1). One who is superior “stands firm in his energy,” cultivating a friendly harmony without being weak and standing erect in the middle, without inclining to either side (X.5). The fourth writing consists of the writings of Confucius’ successor, Mencius (372–289 BCE). The book contains dialogues between Mencius and various Chinese kings. Distinct from the concise manner of Confucius’ teachings, Mencius’ discussions are more elaborate and extended. The Four *Shuû*, along with The Five *Ching*, relate the cultivation of heightened consciousness through disciplined and considered practice of detailed and focused instruction. This orientation aims toward the experience of a tranquil, orderly state of being, one which is founded upon the implicit relationship between the individual and the collective. Self-control and sociopolitical regulation are essential means toward a desired harmony, and thus there occurs the emphasis upon the praxis of teachings and values. Confucianism in this way, at least in its beginnings, is not so much a religion as it is a teaching about how to live

according to philosophical principles and reflections. As such, it sets forth initially little notion of deity worship. It is based upon life experience and observation of the natural world. In the Four Books the forcefulness of “conscious” existence appears to occur at the expense of the recognition and embrace psyche-soma movements such as *coniunctio*.

## See Also

► [Chinese Religions](#)

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## Conscience

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How has conscience been seen in religious traditions? How has it been understood by psychologists? What do we know about the psychological processes involved in the links between religion and conscience?

## Religious Views of Conscience

The divine “still, small voice” (I Kings 19, 12) has often been used to depict conscience, the spiritual inner voice offering and urging the morally and spiritually correct path for the individual. Conscience in traditional Western religion is a given part of human constitution, but one that may be drowned by bad habits,

temptations, poor upbringing, bad examples, and lack of moral education, and direction. Conscience is sometimes depicted the “good inclination,” arguing with the “evil inclination,” both striving for the attention and obedience of their owner (Shneur Zalman of Liadi 1973/1796). Current writings on religious education are often informed and made complex by current psychological understandings of the nature of conscience, of moral growth, and of philosophical issues (e.g., Astley and Francis 1994).

### Psychological Views of Conscience

There have been important psychological contributions to the understanding of conscience. This selective overview will mention the contributions of Freud, Erikson, Frankl, Kohlberg, Gilligan, and Hare. A more detailed discussion of conscience from the perspective of the psychology of religion may be found in Meadow and Kahoe (1984).

The controversy surrounding Freud’s views has masked the force and accuracy of some of his observations. He was one of few twentieth-century psychological writers to give attention to conscience, an important topic otherwise widely overlooked. Freud (1924, 1940) suggested that young children experience specifically sexual feelings towards their opposite-sex parent. The wish to possess the parent is foiled by the knowledge that the parent is already owned, and by fear that the same-sex parent will seek jealous retribution on the child. This so-called Oedipal situation is resolved by the child’s identification with the same-sex parent. This gains the approval of both parents and enables the child to gain vicarious possession of the opposite-sex parent. Aspects of this theory remain controversial, although few would argue with young children can experience intense need for control, intense attachment to their parents, or that intense positive and negative feelings can be experienced by young children and their parents. Freud’s account of girls’ development is particularly fraught with difficulty. The key point however is that, however identification with the same-sex

parent comes about, there is an internalization of the parent figure which becomes the foundation of the G-d image. Parental attitudes are introjected, forming the basis of the superego, experienced as the conscience. This may have a strongly punitive character, and a distinction is sometimes made between the harsh, introjected superego and the inspiring, internalized ego ideal.

Frankl (1975) trained in Freudian psychoanalysis but developed a very distinctive variety of psychotherapy, sometimes known as existential therapy. In Frankl’s view, the overriding motive is the will to meaning. The guide in the search for meaning and purpose is the conscience, of transcendent origin, and the therapist’s role is to support the client in their search for meaning, a search which is fundamentally spiritual (Wulff 1997).

Like Frankl, Erikson (1950) was a European-trained psychoanalyst, who moved to the USA and developed very distinctive ideas about the nature of psychological health and growth. Erikson was probably the most influential twentieth-century psychologist to give attention to virtue. He put forward an elaborate – and plausible – account of psychosocial development as continuing throughout the life-span, with virtues resulting from the successful negotiation of the challenges at different life stages. Potential psychopathology occurs if emerging capacities are not nurtured and supported. Erikson described eight stages in all, and it is during the third stage – from approximately ages 2–5 – that conscience and guilt make their appearance. As the understanding and use of language develop, along with the capability of independent action, the child may experience guilt as a consequence of adult reactions to aggressive and uncontrolled actions. Guilt may become destructive, resulting in inhibition and self-righteousness, or it may impel the child towards worthy ideals, constructive initiative, and purposeful action.

We have seen that both Erikson and Frankl emphasized sense of purpose and focus on ideals as important functions of the healthy conscience. Both Freud and Erikson indicated the psychopathological functioning of the conscience whose development has been instilled too



coercively or punitively. Finally, we have seen that Freud and Frankel see a close relationship (or identity) between the conscience and G-d.

We turn now to developmental theories of morality, considering Kohlberg (1976) as an exemplar. Kohlberg traced the development of moral thinking from the stage at which morality is bound by utilitarian considerations (what is good for the self), and then by prescribed rules, then through stages in which social welfare and social justice are the highest considerations, to a stage (probably not widely attained) in which an autonomous, individualized morality is concerned with universal ethical principles. In this developmental scheme, an intrinsic conscience is a feature of the stage involving autonomous morality. Kohlberg suggested that women were less likely than men to attain the higher stages of moral development, being more bound by social welfare considerations. This view attracted a strong response from Gilligan (1982), who suggested that while men are concerned with justice, which is inflexible and abstract, women's primary ethical standard is care for others, which is flexible and context sensitive. Belensky et al. (1986) emphasized the importance for women of connected knowing, which is nonevaluative, whose motive is to understand another person in order to live together in harmony in spite of differences. It is worth mentioning the view of Hare (1999) that psychopaths – charming, exploitative, and remorseless – lack conscience. Criminal psychopathy may respond to therapeutic interventions, for example, designed to improve empathy for victims (e.g., Friendship et al. 2003). There are variations in the ways in which conscience and morality are governed, indicating the importance of gender, social factors, and cognitive development.

What, empirically, is known about the relations between conscience, religion, and psychological factors?

It is generally found that religiously identified and religiously affiliated people behave “better” than do others. This is consistent with the possibility that religious identification and affiliation promote knowledge of moral rules and the

self-monitoring of behavior in accordance with these rules. So, for example, religious people are less likely than other to engage in criminal behavior (Baier and Wright 2001) and extramarital sexual behavior and recreational drug use (Mattila et al. 2001; Rostosky et al. 2004). Religious people are more likely than others to engage in charitable activity (Inaba and Loewenthal 2009) and in deliberate moral practice and moral expertise (Rossano 2008). The effects of religion are not always straightforward, for example, the effects of religion may vary with gender (Rostosky et al. 2004) or with style of religiosity (Batson 1976).

The effects of religion on moral behavior are broadly consistent, and we might ask whether this is because religious people have greater knowledge of moral rules, because religious people feel greater shame at the thought of wrongdoing or religious people feel greater guilt.

Shame is normally defined as the result of social anxiety, the experience of others' knowledge that one has done wrong and/or is bad. Guilt is individualized moral anxiety, the experience of one's own knowledge that one has done wrong and/or is bad (Freud 1926; Meadow and Kahoe 1984). Work on religion in relation to guilt and shame suggests that guilt may often be higher among the religiously active (Hood 1992). Shame is not higher among the religiously active compared to others (Luyten et al. 1998). Maltby (2005) has shown a complex pattern of relationships between different styles of religiosity and different types of guilt, for example, intrinsic (“sincere”) religiosity may be linked to healthy guilt. These findings have been produced in Western, generally Christian, cultures, and we know little as yet about guilt, shame, and religion in other cultural and religious contexts.

This overview has suggested three broad conclusions. One is that we may distinguish between two aspects of conscience: a harsh, introjected superego and an internalized, encouraging and inspiring ego ideal. Second, empirical work broadly supports the view that religion is generally associated with “better” and more moral behavior. Third, religion may generally promote guilt but not shame. The psychological processes involved in understanding the relations



between religion and conscience deserve closer study, for example, effects in different genders, cultures, and religious groups; the influence of religious role models; and the development of different styles of religiosity and their relations to conscience.

## See Also

- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Existential Psychotherapy
- ▶ Frankl, Viktor
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund

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## Consciousness

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## Introduction

The term consciousness has acquired several meanings, but it is generally associated with

“the experience of awareness” though there is no consensus as to its cause(s) or extension. In the closing decades of the twentieth century, the phenomenon of consciousness attracted a considerable amount of attention from persons working in a variety of areas but especially in the neurosciences and cognitive sciences. While various theories have since been advanced to account for the phenomenon of consciousness, none have gained sufficient support to amount to more than proposals. The shared and seemingly reasonable assertion of the dependency of consciousness on neurophysiological processes has largely held the day though even here there is a range of opinions and some concerns about the limitations of such an assumption. At the very least, there is general agreement about a correlation between the two. In view of the aforementioned, what the precise relationship is between everyday consciousness and what can broadly be termed religious or transpersonal remains unclear and offers a rich field for future exploration and research.

## Historical Background

There is an earlier, cross-cultural and continuous history of reflecting on consciousness as well as various techniques and practices to bring about its alteration and extension that has been insufficiently explored and evaluated. These are largely to be found in the indigenous, religious, spiritual, and philosophical traditions of the planet.

The earliest indications of such reflections and practices are found in the artifacts of the distant past that are currently being tentatively reconstructed by cognitive archeologists and anthropologist (Lewis-Williams 2004, 2005). The evidence while fragmentary offers a compelling argument for the ubiquitous preoccupation with altered states of consciousness and their function and value in indigenous communities (Hayden 2003). Moreover, overcoming past prejudices and dubious claims of the superiority of one culture over another, there is a growing appreciation that such knowledge may have value beyond the contexts in which it has emerged and have wider applications (Webb 2012).

In larger-scale religious traditions, there are a complex number of developed techniques and spiritual practices that have direct import for the subject of consciousness and its extension. While all of these are rooted in particular cultural contexts, they, too, as in the cases of yoga and various forms of meditation, have attracted wide attention in both theoretical and practical terms (Eliade 1969; Shear 2006; White 2012). Nor are initiatory and spiritual practices of negligible significance in the history of western culture (Sluhovshy 2011; Ustinova 2011). While initially overlooked or deemed of secondary relevance, there is a noticeable change in of attitude on the part of neuroscientists and others in the field of consciousness studies to include the investigation of such reflections and practices in their work.

In the modern west, the first systematic and rational examination of consciousness begins with the distinction, commonly associated with Descartes (1596–1650), between the physical and the mental. Cartesian dualism set the agenda for subsequent discussion and debate as to its legitimacy and this continues until today. Variations of mind/body dualism, psychophysical parallelism, immaterialism, and materialism held sway among philosophers in Europe over the next century. An increasing inclination towards empiricism can be found in thinkers like Locke (1632–1704) who distinguished between outer sense and inner sense, the former having to do with the experience of things and the latter with the experience of the experience of things. Such ideas along with interests in making correlations between, and attempting to localize, mental processes in the brain laid the groundwork for an empirical psychology. Nevertheless, Kant (1724–1804) undercut such optimism by denying the possibility of an empirical psychology on the grounds that while the brain could be systematically studied, mental phenomena were subjective and therefore inaccessible to the scientific method. This distinction between objective and subjective is mirrored in contemporary discussions of the problematic relationship between third-person (scientific) and first-person (subjective) approaches to

consciousness and the so-called explanatory gap that is a consequence (Shear 2000; Velmans and Schneider 2007).

## Psychological Perspectives

Subsequent developments in the study of human physiology and especially the anatomy of the brain and nervous system led to an increasing emphasis on measuring and correlating physiological and mental processes, the latter increasingly perceived as being dependent on the former. The outcome of this was the founding of a laboratory-based, experimental psychology by Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) that William James (1842–1910) well understood but found so abhorrent. James' own contribution was to widen the margins of an increasingly narrow physiologically based psychology to include the possibilities of a multifaceted approach to the study of consciousness, utilizing a number of methods and inclusive of transpersonal experiences as canvassed in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). His ambitious proposal for the exploration of consciousness was not implemented after his death, and with the consolidation of experimental psychology and the emergence of the behavioral school in the following decades, consciousness was effectively removed from being a plausible focus of academic attention and research (Taylor 1996).

Largely outside of academic psychology, a number of different but related developments occurred that would have significant consequences for an understanding of consciousness and especially consciousness beyond the margins of everyday experience. This took two forms: the investigation for purposes of treatment of various mental states that were determined to be mildly to severely pathological and the investigation of exceptional mental states that appeared to be non-pathological and of a parapsychological or transpersonal nature.

The first of these is exemplified by the psychoanalytic school associated with Freud (1856–1939) that led to a psychology that interpreted abnormal mental states as indicative of psychological dysfunction and illness and

extended this to religious and transpersonal experiences. For the most part, Freud understood consciousness as biologically determined and the consequence of sense perception even if it functioned to mediate between the outer and inner world, the latter being largely unconscious and of a psychosexual nature. Any claims that attempted to legitimize religious belief or a more expansive consciousness were deemed evidence of regression to an earlier psychological state and indications of neurosis or a more serious psychotic condition. Psychoanalysis effectively eclipsed most other interpretive models of the psyche and psychodynamic processes and discouraged any views of consciousness as extending beyond the perceptual reality of the ego. Like behaviorism, its own ideological limitations prescribed its views on what constituted consciousness. Remarkably, psychoanalysis, once the dominant and seemingly unassailable technique and reigning theoretical force in psychotherapy, has since suffered what appears to some to be an irreversible decline in the mental health professions (Paris 2005). Its status in the current debates about the cause, nature, and purpose of consciousness appears to be correspondingly peripheral though it remains to be seen whether this will continue to be the case.

The second approach is to be found in the investigation of exceptional mental states that were deemed to be non-pathological and was undertaken by researchers associated with the Society for Psychical Research. F. W. H. Myers (1843–1901) can be taken as the chief representative of this group. His work is rich and suggestive in offering a way to accommodate a broad range of experiences of consciousness and, not least, his notion of “subliminal self,” a larger sphere of consciousness housed in the recesses of the personality that James considered potentially revolutionary for the understanding of consciousness beyond the margins of everyday (Gauld 1968). The investigations and theoretical proposals about the nature of consciousness coming from this group were almost completely overshadowed, if not discredited, by the rise and dominance of psychoanalysis. More recently, with the decline of psychoanalysis and the

emergence of an interest in a broader view of consciousness, Myers' work has come under detailed reexamination, providing a theoretical framework for the possibility that though consciousness is correlated with, it is not necessarily entirely dependent on, neurophysiological processes (Kelley and Kelly 2007).

Another related perspective should also be mentioned at this point and that is the one associated with C. G. Jung (1875–1961). While initially a colleague of Freud's, both Jung's formation and the range of his interests and originality of his ideas place him in an independent light. In many ways, he brings together the psychodynamic approach and a vision of consciousness that extends well beyond the personal and pathological. This is embodied in his conception of the psyche as a self-regulating system consisting of consciousness, the personal and the collective unconscious, and with a drive towards greater consciousness that Jung termed "the process of individuation." The deeper archetypal structures of the unconscious and the relationship between psyche, spirit, and matter that preoccupied Jung's latter work are rich in insights and theoretical possibilities for an understanding of religious and transpersonal experience (Charet 1993; Main 1997). The significance of Jung's psychology for the understanding of consciousness has been largely ignored in academic circles and hence yet to be adequately assessed. Along with James, he is one of formative influences in the emergence of transpersonal psychology (Cortright 1997; Daniels 2005).

Among the pioneers in transpersonal psychology, whose work is clearly focused on the subject of consciousness and its transformation, is a list of researchers and theoreticians. These include the names of Stanislav Grof, Michael Washburn, and a number of others. Grof, in particular, influenced by his experimentation with psychoactives, along with his wife, Christina, has not only developed theoretical additions to transpersonal studies but rooted this in their widely practiced technique of holotropic breathwork to transform consciousness. In addition, the publications and online presence of prolific integral philosopher, Ken Wilber, whose work was

initially rooted in transpersonal psychology, have attracted considerable attention.

## Current Discussions

The so-called cognitive revolution in the neurosciences in the second half of the twentieth century has sparked considerable interest in the relationship between brain function, cognitive processes, and the issue of the origin, nature, and purpose of consciousness. This interest has largely occurred among neuroscientists and persons working in the areas of cognitive science and philosophy of mind. The shared perspective of most working in these areas is rooted in the assumption that a scientific approach to the study of consciousness is the one best suited to attain dependable results. A second shared assumption that is widely acknowledged is that consciousness is dependent on and the outcome of as yet understood neurophysiological processes (Velmans and Schneider 2007).

After decades of research, speculation, and discussion, it appears that the phenomenon of consciousness has not yielded to the various attempts to explain its cause(s) and purpose in scientifically acceptable terms. In fact, the extensive literature on consciousness indicates that for all the effort and theory making, it now appears that an exclusively scientific approach has so far fallen short of coming to terms with the "hard problem" of accounting for phenomenal experience and bridging the now famous "explanatory gap" between first-person and third-person approaches to consciousness. In other words, the determinedly third-person scientific approach in its bid for objectivity has not come up with a satisfactory explanation for what causes the subjective first-person experience of consciousness. This quandary has occupied much recent discussion, but there is still optimism that a detailed correlation of third-person observation and first-person experiences, utilizing the sophisticated technologies of brain imaging and other techniques, will eventually lead to more dependable data upon which a theory could be built. Not all share this view. In fact, serious questions have

been raised about the need to reexamine some of the assumptions that inspire such optimism, such as the exclusive dependency of consciousness on neurophysiological processes, that are implicit in what has passed as the normative scientific approach to the phenomenon of consciousness (Kelley and Kelly 2007). Moreover, it would seem to be reasonable, given that subjective experience is essential to consciousness, to consider exploring the neglected phenomenon of the experience of first-person consciousness, a by no means easy task (Varela and Shear 1999).

To undertake to develop a rigorous methodology of first-person empiricism presents a considerable challenge, and not least because of the claim that objectivity and the conventional scientific method are the only means of attaining any degree of certitude. Yet, arguably, without first-person input, there is the risk of accomplishing little more than measuring ever more precisely the outside of the fishbowl of consciousness. And while arguments have been made about the limitations of introspection for the attainment of insight, it is becoming increasingly clear there are traditions of disciplined introspective analysis, developed in various cultures over the ages that have attained a remarkable degree of understanding about the geography of the inner landscape of consciousness. These mental disciplines and contemplative practices could be of considerable value in exploring and excavating the inner world of consciousness (Shear 2006). And in the contemporary west, techniques and approaches have emerged that have contributed to the mapping of the inner realm, such as Jungian and transpersonal psychology, both of which offer methods of disciplined introspection and analysis, largely ignored or dismissed by current neuroscience and those working in the philosophy of mind (Cortright 1997; Daniels 2005). If research into these techniques is pursued, in the course of time, a sufficient amount of accumulated experience and data could make a significant contribution to understanding the phenomena of consciousness and eventually lead to the bridging of the “explanatory gap” between third- and first-person consciousness (Lancaster 2004).

Yet, admirable as this proposal is, it nevertheless still confers on science a position of authority and even sovereignty over the entire field of consciousness that begs for examination. The qualifications and even reservations that are worthy of consideration have to do with the degree to which the scientific model remains implicit in the proposal of supporting first-person empirical approaches in the study of consciousness. This ignores the fact that there are other, equally valid ways of knowing (Gadamer 1989). Moreover, undue privileging of the first-person perspective and especially assimilating it to a scientific model may, once again, end with limiting knowledge and truth to the control of the scientific method. In the case of religious or transpersonal events, this has the unfortunate consequence of reducing the spiritual and transpersonal to personal experience, uncoupled from the context of the traditions and communities that nurture such experiences. The result is to make such events vulnerable either to turning into extravagant forms of isolated beliefs and practices or being subsumed by an exclusivist scientific understanding, both to the detriment of the wider culture. The upshot of this is to require that religious and transpersonal knowledge claims be deemed valid or falsified only if they can or cannot be evaluated and replicated through various forms of strictly controlled disciplined methods of introspection (Ferrer 2002).

If such an approach claimed the high ground, it would be a further step in the direction of what has been called “the empiricist colonization of spirituality,” something that many transpersonal theorists have been unknowingly working towards in spite of their intent and claim to do otherwise. There are other ways to include the spiritual into a transpersonal model of consciousness, and one is to follow the tracks of the religious traditions and cultures themselves that, after all, provide the sources and context for most of the spiritual experiences people have. Instead of the experiential and empirical approaches and their limitations, perhaps a participatory perspective that is inclusive and pluralistic and is expressed in personal, interrelational, communal, and place-based ways would be more adequate (Ferrer 2002).



To conclude, it would seem that a multifaceted approach to the study of consciousness would have the value of freeing researchers from the hegemony of scientific empiricism, as well as providing a way to steer cautiously through the channel of first-person consciousness and transpersonal experiences. After navigating these areas, a foundation could then be laid for a multidisciplinary and even transdisciplinary perspective where a disciplined pluralism would pervade and all parts of the spectrum of consciousness would be given due consideration, including perspectives from other cultures and times, religions, and spiritualities (Charet and Webb 2007).

## See Also

- ▶ [Altered States of Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Transpersonal Psychology](#)

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## Conservative Judaism

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Under the initiative of the German rabbi Zecharias Frankel, Conservative Judaism (also

known as historical Judaism and Masorti in Israel) emerged in Europe in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Dr. Solomon Schechter, former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, is credited with bringing the movement to the United States, where it is now the second highest represented of Jewish denominations, claiming 40–45 % of Jews who affiliate.

Viewing both the Orthodox and Reform movements to be extreme, Conservative theorists sought to find a middle ground, which maintains or conserves aspects of Traditional Judaism, while allowing for Judaism as it is lived to adapt to the modern world. Jewish doctrine has a stronger emphasis on behaviors and actions than on feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Cohen et al. 2003); this has different psychological implications across the various denominations. For Reform Jews, *halacha* (Jewish law) is not binding; rather, there is an emphasis on the autonomy of the individual to select which aspects of Jewish practice and ritual are personally meaningful.

Like Orthodox Jews, Conservatives believe in the authority of the *halakhah*; however, they interpret sources within their historical context in an attempt to balance traditional principles and rituals with modern life as it continues to evolve. In this spirit, Conservative Jews find it permissible for women to be rabbis and to worship together with men in services. Still, there remains an emphasis on the importance of keeping kosher, performing daily prayers, and observing the Sabbath and other holidays. The use of the Hebrew language is predominant in services so as to conserve original nuances of meaning.

Conservative Jews are more tolerant of other branches of Judaism than the Orthodox tend to be (Mayton 2009), but due to the perceived threat to Jewish cultural and religious identity, intermarriages are forbidden. Intermarriage additionally poses psychological problems, according to Conservative Jewish belief, as it negatively impacts family dynamics. Children of two-religion marriages may feel torn between desired religious practices and parental loyalties on a conscious or subconscious level (Kornbluth 2003).

For Conservative theorists, principles and stories from Jewish sources and texts are continually subject to examination and reevaluation so as to ascertain their applicability to modern circumstances. There is an intrinsic tendency towards retaining traditions and ethical positions; however, Conservatives invite dialogue and exploration within the Jewish community. The cultural valuing of externalizing internal thoughts and questions may make Conservative Jews less vulnerable to physical and mental health difficulties often associated with spiritual struggles and/or questioning religious practice. Further to Orthodox Judaism's emphasis on Torah study as a lifelong endeavor, the Conservative approach advocates also the study of sources outside of the tradition and not to be limited to the questions and answers found internally. Likewise, it calls on its congregants to take their knowledge of Torah into other areas where they are learned: science, literature, philosophy, history, and all other relevant disciplines (Jewish Theological Seminary of America).

Although Jews had a prominent role in the origins of talking therapies, there is little research on which psychotherapeutic approaches are most effective with Jewish clients, belonging to specific denominations, or in general. However, Schlosser (2006) points out that non-Orthodox Jews have a positive association with mental health and psychotherapy in contrast with Orthodox Jews, who have a tendency to ascribe to the stigmatism of psychotherapy.

## See Also

- ▶ [Jewish Reconstructionism](#)
- ▶ [Orthodox Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalytic Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Reform Judaism](#)

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## Contemplative Prayer

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Contemplative prayer, sometimes known as centering prayer, meditation, and mindfulness, has a long history of practice within both Western and Asian religious and metaphysical traditions. Christian, Buddhist, Taoist, Hindu, Greek, Jewish, and Islamic sources all have examples of varying forms and practices of contemplation. Contemplation is the focusing of the mind on a single theme, idea, or spiritual concept. Through contemplation what is focused on gradually reveals its depth and secrets to the mind of the meditator, who gradually becomes aware of the whole of which he or she is a part. Contemplation is about silence and stillness, about receptiveness, listening, and love. “Be still and acknowledge that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). In the Christian tradition, the early Desert Fathers referred to HESYCHIA as stillness, quiet, and tranquility, the purpose being to create a solitary place where one could still the mind and focus in love on God or on God’s Word within. Contemplative prayer is seen as a

relationship with God. It is an opening of one’s mind and heart to the ultimate mystery and goes beyond thoughts and emotions. It is in this receptive silence and listening that one finds contact or relationship with the Indwelling Trinity.

## Mystical Traditions

Many of the mystical traditions use meditation or contemplation to reach transpersonal states of non-duality. Benedict, in the sixth century, developed a particular way of contemplating the scriptures – *lectio divina*. Eastern Orthodox practice used the Jesus Prayer for contemplation and this is well described in *The Way of the Pilgrim*. John of the Cross also wrote extensively about the way of contemplation leading to divine union (see Arraj 1986). From the Christian West many mystical writers emphasize the effect of the contemplative’s encounter with God as one in which the Spirit of God becomes one with the subject. Thomas Merton could be described as perhaps the most prominent Christian contemplative of the twentieth century, and he classified Christian contemplation into three types, first from the teaching of the early Greek Fathers: active contemplation, natural contemplation, and mystical theology or “infused” contemplation (Rothberg 2000). Other authors who brought renewal of contemplative practices to modern times include M. Basil Pennington and Thomas Keating (Scotton et al. 1996). Along with Thomas Merton, these monks aimed to revive the contemplative tradition and bring it to the everyday world outside of the monasteries. There are over 40,000 practitioners in over 39 countries who form an ecumenical community and practice centering prayer (Ferguson et al. 2010, p. 309).

## Mindfulness

Both the Buddhist and Taoist traditions speak of mindfulness – a wakeful awareness or presence to both the internal and external workings of oneself, again for the purpose of opening one to an

inner consciousness. Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist, sees the purpose of mindfulness as the development of what he terms “interbeing” – being in touch with all aspects of one’s relationship to others and to the universe. This includes inner and outer relationships, a connectedness, in the present moment. “Mindful awareness is fundamentally a way of being – a way of inhabiting one’s body, one’s mind, one’s moment-by-moment experience” (Shapiro and Carlson 2009, p. 5). It is both awareness and practice, which is also the same for contemplative prayer.

### Individual and Awareness

Carl Jung’s psychological teaching about the stages of life has a direct relevance to Christian prayer. Jung’s focus on the symbolic life and the need to journey inwards with focus and attention to bring what is in the unconscious into consciousness is similar to the contemplative journey; Jung’s term for the God archetype in a person was the Self and the journey to individuation was a process of integrating all aspects of one’s person and being governed by the Self. For him, it was also a reciprocal relationship. Edinger (1984) comments on Jung’s notion of Christ’s incarnation being a “continuing” incarnation and that “in psychological terms, the incarnation of God means individuation” (p. 84). In other words, the incarnation takes place within each individual. This process requires awareness of the transpersonal self within one’s psyche and then living as one with the self. This transformation can be achieved through contemplative prayer, mindfulness, and meditation. The writings of John of the Cross also created a psychological climate in which people were led to consider if they were called to contemplation and to a life that led to deeper understanding of the divine mysteries and one’s connection to these.

### Psychological Effects

Cortwright (1997) summarizes research that has been done on meditation used in psychotherapy

as having five possible effects: relaxation and self-regulation strategies, uncovering repressed unconscious contents, revealing higher states, reciprocal inhibition, and growth of new consciousness and transformation. While the focus in Christian contemplative prayer was not on these effects but more on a deeper knowledge of God, all contemplatives from the Desert Fathers through to modern day contemplatives experienced varying phases of the above. In striving for stillness and in listening to the Word within, they encountered many aspects of themselves both frightening and repulsive (unconscious contents), both conflict and struggles; they strove for self-emptiness of a nihilation of self (in Buddhist terms), till transformation was achieved. Psychotherapy can enhance spiritual practice, and conversely a spiritual practice such as contemplative prayer and mindfulness can enhance one’s psychological well-being. From a Freudian psychological perspective, contemplation is similar to the technique of free association in that the latter leads a person to a progressively deeper understanding of what is significant and meaningful (Cortwright 1997). It leads, as noted above, to a greater unfolding of the self, an opening of intuition and creativity. More recently, Ferguson et al. (2010) examined the psychological and spiritual process which accompanied centering prayer and the impact of centering prayer on everyday stress with a group of Roman Catholic parishioners in northern California. After 11 weeks, participants experienced “a change in their relationship with the divine, and (2) a healing of stress through the effects of this relationship, substantiated signs of purification of the unconscious and positive coping behavior. Furthermore (3) the study offered an effective program to integrate spirituality and wellness while preserving the integrity of Centering Prayer as a way to deepen one’s relationship with God without reducing it to a relaxation technique” (p. 324).

### See Also

- ▶ [Centering Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)

- ▶ John of the Cross
- ▶ Meditation
- ▶ Merton, Thomas

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## Contemporary Paganisms and the Psychology of Ordeal

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Ordeal work is a fairly modern subculture term that came into use in the early 1990s by people who came out of the BDSM, body modification, and “hook sports” (i.e., recreational flesh suspension) demographics and who wanted a term with an emphasis on the psychological and spiritual rather than on the recreational. Ordeal work refers to a body of practices used to inflict a deep catharsis on an individual for purposes such as self-growth, religious sacrifice and/or offering, or rites of passage. These practices most often involve physical pain, and the rituals themselves are usually done in a spiritual or at least a carefully crafted context. The term “ordeal master” was coined by Belgian ordeal worker Lydia Helasdottir to refer to an ordeal worker who was skilled and trained in facilitating ordeals for others. (It should be noted that many Pagans choose to use pseudonyms or ritual names, either in honor of their Gods or, more practically, to protect their professional identities. These are most often names by which the individuals in question are known within their religious communities. In one case, the individual interviewed for this entry asked to be referenced only by her initials for greater anonymity). The physical techniques involved in ordeal work are varied but often include either singly or in various combinations scalpel cuttings, branding, skin removal (a type of controlled flaying), tattooing, hook suspension, hook pulls, flogging, needle play, sensory deprivation, endurance rituals, and ritual psychodrama. While there are many different Pagan religions, regardless of the religion involved, the lexicon of pain remains the same: according to ordeal workers, the viscera of these practices, when utilized in a controlled manner, have the power to heal, transform, and render the practitioner receptive to their Gods.



The use of pain and body modification as spiritual tools is not new. Examples of scarification, tattooing, body modification, branding, flogging, and the ritual use of pain predate modernity by thousands of years and are found in cultures the world over. Examples run the spectrum of experience from the Catholic devotee who crawls on his or her knees to visit a sacred shrine, to the Hindu who practices kavadi, to the Native American engaged in sun dance, and to contemporary polytheists and Pagans who choose to utilize pain-based rites as part of their own spiritual process. Contemporary Paganisms are the modern reconstructions of pre-Christian polytheisms. While each Pagan religion may have differing pantheons, cosmologies, and cultural origins, in general they share the belief in many Gods and Goddesses, some degree of animism, and an emphasis on ancestor veneration. Heathenry is the commonly accepted name for contemporary Norse polytheism. The difference between Heathenry and Norse Paganism is a denominational one: Heathens tend to give far more theological credence to a body of medieval texts that include the Poetic Edda and Icelandic Sagas, whereas Norse Pagans rely not only on textual evidence for various practices but also on their own personal religious experience, called within these communities UPG or “unverified personal gnosis” (Krasskova 2005).

In his seminal work “Sacred Pain,” Ariel Glucklich (2001) posits that the rise of the medical profession, the easy availability of pain killers, and the introduction of anesthetics into general use led to the development of a psychology of pain that quickly categorized anyone choosing to remain in pain as abnormal. From there, it was but a small leap from abnormal to mentally ill (Glucklich 2001, p. 195). By the middle of the nineteenth century, according to Glucklich, there was a deep divide between illness and religion in which “pain had lost its religious connotations” (Glucklich 2001, p. 196). This coincided with the rise of the medical hysteric and scientific positivism. Essentially as the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment social changes altered the status of religion, it

also altered the status of pain. The result has been that Western society as a whole has lost its “capacity to understand why and how pain would be valuable for mystics, members of religious communities, and perhaps humanity as a whole” (Glucklich 2001, p. 201). This is the controversy surrounding the conscious use and inducement of pain that modern ordeal workers have inherited.

Self-defined Northern tradition shamans, practitioners of Heathenry or Norse Paganism, have largely pioneered the development of the ritual use of ordeal within their communities. The idea of shamanism is itself a very controversial practice within Norse polytheism (commonly called Heathenry by practitioners). While outside the scope of this entry, it is worth noting that despite its marginalized status, the impact on the greater Heathen and Norse Pagan communities has, over the past decade, been tremendous, leading to a possible schism within the religion. Northern tradition shamans refer to ordeal work as one of the many paths to achieving an altered state (Kaldera 2007). Other practices designed to induce trance and create a state of spiritual receptivity include prayer and meditation, ritual work, the use of rhythm and dance, ascetic practices such as fasting, the use of entheogenic plants, sacred sex or sexually based practices, and divine possession. Practitioners acknowledge that it is uncommon to work with all eight techniques but rather point to personal preference, brain chemistry, the influence of one’s primary deity, and personal “wiring” as the determinant for which tools one might utilize (Kaldera 2006).

The use of pain and ritual ordeal raises many questions about the privileging of the body, not the least of which is quite simply: why pain? Ordeal workers consistently emphasize that the point of an ordeal is not in fact the pain experienced. Pain is viewed as little more than a tool to facilitate an internal emotional or psychological process. S. R., an ordeal worker for over a decade, offered the following insight:

You must learn to share space with pain, to embrace it, move toward it, and enter into its dance. It is in no way a process of turning away from pain. Pain becomes one’s partner in the dance



that is the ordeal, the horse by which one travels, and the door through which one walks. In the center of pain, you know what's true (Personal communication with S.R. on August 26, 2008).

Northern tradition shaman Raven Kaldera, who has both practiced, administered, and taught ordeal work for over 20 years, notes:

Pain gets one's attention like nothing else. All the distracting details of one's life fade right away when pain happens, especially if it's intense and ongoing. You are immediately fully present for the situation, assuming that you're not dissociating – and you shouldn't be, dissociation is the last thing you want to be doing. Pain is the focus of last resort, and it is also a wonderful tool to break through your psychological barriers, especially for people who place a high value on control. If it's done properly and mindfully, it strips you down, rips you open, and lets the Spirits in (Personal communication with Raven Kaldera on April 10, 2008).

Not only was pain consistently viewed as a sacred tool by those interviewed, so was the body itself. Many spoke of the body as the primary tool or "interface" between the world of spirit and the human world, the vehicle through which human beings experience everything, including spirituality. The need or desire to honor the body as holy figured strongly in their practices, despite the seemingly contradictory fact that these practices often involved extreme pain. Kenaz Filan, writer and Voudoun priest, commented that "ordeal work privileges the body in that it reminds us that we *have* a body" (personal communication on May 23, 2008).

The actual physiological change that occurs during the course of an ordeal is a complex biochemical process. When a person is being physically hurt in a sustained way, the first thing that happens is raw pain and usually a good deal of it. It takes some time for that to change. Which chemicals eventually engage, and how much of these chemicals the body produces, varies depending on each individual's biochemistry and, surprisingly, the attention they focus on their hurt as well as the purpose they ascribe to it. Ongoing, noticeable pain can affect one's concentration and one's attention to such a degree that it causes the body to release painkillers that

will work to mitigate the pain. The major factor in this physiological process is the release of opiate-like endorphins, but this is by no means the only factor. Lesser chemicals calm, soothe, and create a certain amount of mild euphoria. At this point, the subject might still technically be in pain, but they simply may not care nearly as much (personal communication with Raven Kaldera, May 20, 2008). It is that this point, theoretically, that the transformative process of the ordeal begins, which raises a second question: are ordeal workers sexual and psychological masochists or perhaps addicted to that chemical release?

Surprisingly, the answer appears to be no. Many, in fact, expressed a fear and dislike of pain while at the same time affirming its usefulness as a spiritual tool. S. R. put it bluntly when she said, "every ordeal worker is no more a masochist than everyone who uses fasting as part of their spiritual practice is anorexic. For some of us, though by no means all, pain is an incredibly useful tool. That doesn't mean we like the pain itself" (personal communication with S. R. on May 25, 2008). Ordeal worker and shaman Eric Tashlin elaborated further on this particular dynamic:

Masochism is defined as deriving pleasure, often sexual in nature from pain, humiliation or maltreatment (paraphrased from WebMD's article on masochism <http://dictionary.webmd.com/terms/masochism>). As ordeal workers, devotion or spiritual development rather than worldly pleasure is the objective in our work. I believe that an interest or fetish in masochism can be counterproductive for people looking to the ordeal path for spiritual fulfillment because enjoyment, and especially sexual pleasure, clutters the mind and distorts the spiritual process. In cases where masochists choose the ordeal path, it is important to tailor their ordeal process so as to avoid areas that are fetishized. For instance, while flagellation or flogging can be a valuable ordeal tool, I would not use it with someone I knew to have a sexual fetish for such acts. Instead I would work to find an ordeal tool that was not of "interest" to them sexually or emotionally (Personal correspondence with ordeal master Wintersong Tashlin on September 28, 2008).

As Mr. Tashlin inferred, while many (though by no means all) ordeal workers are also active in the BDSM community, they draw a clear line

between their sexual practices and their spiritual work, and in the extremely open-minded micro-culture that comprises Northern tradition shamanism, in which nearly every (consensual) sexual variation is accepted including masochism, none of them self-identify as masochistic. Rather it appears that pain is conceived of solely as a sacred and very practical tool.

There are four primary ways in which pain-based ordeals are utilized within this community: (1) expiatory, in other words to make reparation to a specific deity for an offense or error committed; (2) as an offering to a specific deity, a devotional act of pain, or in *imitatio* of a God or Goddess' mythic ordeal. For instance a shaman devoted to the God Odin may choose to hang by hooks in a ritual setting in replication of Odin hanging on the world tree for power; (3) as a means of what some ordeal workers call "hunting for power": in other words to overcome a personal weakness, face a fear, or open oneself to an experience that will, in the ordeal worker's mind, lead to greater wisdom; and (4) as an act of magic, i.e., to channel the pain and "energy" raised to achieve a specific goal.

Finally, inevitably the question arises about what the difference might be between an ordeal worker engaging in a cutting, branding, or some other painful practice as part of a ritual ordeal and a person who self-mutilates. According to ordeal workers, the difference between the two lies in personal agency (personal communication with S.R. and R. Fishman, November 1, 2008). The cutter has little control over what they are doing. They have stumbled into a practice that alleviates their pain and are using it because it works. The problem, from an ordeal worker's perspective, is that one who self-mutilates is using these techniques without control or knowledge, very much like an addiction. An ordeal worker, on the other hand, has no particular psychological attachment or *need* to use a particular technique. Their motivation derives from practicality and self-knowledge.

To those who practice it, ordeal work can be a powerfully transformative practice, one that connects ordeal workers more deeply to their spirituality. While this body of practices may seem strange or even repellent to the mainstream

Northern tradition community and to others completely outside of this community, ordeal work is gaining adherents and gaining ground as one of the many practices within the growing body of devotional work coming to define contemporary polytheism in general and Northern tradition shamanism in particular.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Asceticism](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ecstasy](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Masochism](#)
- ▶ [Mystery Religions](#)
- ▶ [New Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [Paganism](#)

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## Conversion

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Conversions are dramatic turning points in life, tied to external or internal events (personality

processes and traumatic events), and leading to the reassessment of one's life, then to identity change, and then a biographical break with the past. It is higher self-esteem, or self-love, which allows us to define the new identity. During times of stress and crisis, as during times of individual distress, there is a regression to "artistic," religious, or magical ways of thinking. When realistic coping fails, magical thinking takes over. When realistic coping seems to be failing or futile, individuals may turn to magical or religious ways of coping. When all hope is lost, these ways of coping do seem worthwhile.

Magical gestures that aim at reaching a conscious break with the past and the shedding off of one's identity include name changes, body changes, and "sex change." These magical or symbolic gestures are not usually sufficient for a real metamorphosis in personality. A name change does not lead to personality change, and a new nose does not do it either. Even a "sex change" often fails to bring about happiness, and these intentional scripts often end in disappointment.

Testimonials of conversion tell us of a miraculous transformation, from darkness to a great light, from being lost to being found. There is a sharp contrast between earlier suffering and current improvements. The conversion narrative always includes a wide gap between the past and the present, between corruption and redemption. The power of transformation through enlightenment is proven through this gap. In many religious traditions, pilgrimage, leading to conversion, is the magical route to achieving private salvation and healing.

Every religion tells us stories of miracles and transformations. For most people, they remain stories about events that happened long ago and far away. For others, they become part of their own personal history, which they are ready to share with us. These cases of rebirth should command our most serious attention, because what they represent are indeed immensely positive transformations, which are impossible under any other conditions. The lame do not start walking, and the blind do not enjoy the sweet light of day; these miracles do not often

happen. But those who find themselves psychologically lame, self-destructive, and desperate, sometimes emerge from darkness and believe everything that happened earlier in their lives.

In all conversion stories, a past of doubt and error is transformed into a present of wholeness in one great moment of insight and certainty. This is a new birth, leading to a new life. And the new birth often follows reaching the lowest depths of despair and consists of (in the words of William James) "... an unexpected life succeeding upon death... the deathlike terminating of certain mental processes... that run to failure, and in some individuals... eventuate in despair." And the new birth creates a wider belief in "... a world in which all is well, in spite of certain forms of death, indeed because of certain forms of death – death of hope, death of strength..." (James 1902/1961).

Since William James, and even before, students of religion have looked closely at the phenomenon of conversion. First, because it is dramatic in the phenomenological sense. We have reports of "mystical states," visions, hallucinations, and voices. These may all be regarded as psychotic symptoms, but they are tied to even more dramatic events. The convert reports a cognitive illumination, a sudden apprehension, and a comprehension, of a divine plan for the cosmos and for individual destiny. The emotional reactions accompanying such a momentous revelation can then be easily justified and accepted. What the individual experiences is a true revolution.

The descriptions offered by James focuses on the subjective report of identity change and conscious mood change, which follows a narrative formula. It can be regarded as a literary or folklore genre, a miracle narrative so easily predictable, and so tend to doubt it. The convert's autobiography is divided into Before and After. Life until the moment of epiphany is described as wasted, a total mistake.

This formula is reminiscent of the death-rebirth idea, basic to initiation rites in tribal societies. Death and resurrection are claimed by the convert as her path to salvation, and her movement closer towards the sacred realm.

There is another level, beyond the dramatic subjective “experience”: objective reports which indicate a change in behavior and functioning, a true miracle cure, putting previously uncontrollable drives under good control.

A small minority within the small minority of converts in this world (99.9 % of believers follow their parents’ teachings) consists of those whose conversion has been followed by dramatic changes for the better in their lives. How do we account for successful, stable, conversions, which we might think of as “overachieving”? There are cases involving a real sea change in actual behavior, as sinners become not always saints, but productive members of society, self-destructive behaviors are dropped, and a lifetime of failure and hate is changed into garden-variety (or better) love and work.

In these cases the self-reported identity change is tied to a role change, a victory, maybe temporary, over pathology, subjectively viewed as a victory over destiny. Because many of the people undergoing transformation are deeply disturbed, even a temporary improvement, as it happens in many cases, is impressive.

The religious career of a seeker, or a convert, is a totally modern idea. In many cultures today, religious identity is still determined by kinship and considered immutable, like “race.” It is a matter of birth within a certain family. The idea of individual choice and voluntary change is in itself a relatively novel idea, tied to secularization and individualism.

Conversion experiences start with conversion dreams. Salvation stories appear in response to dreams of a new self, a new society, and a new world. We have to approach the phenomenon of the religious imagination and the inevitable collisions between religious fantasies and reality. The phenomenon of fantasies about self-transformation and world transformation, which is so common among humans, plays a major role in the history of religious movements. An examination of salvation dreams should start with the individual search for security and wholeness and with the general idea of self-transformation.

Susan Sontag, in an interview on the BBC, on May 22, 2000, said that the American dream is to

reinvent yourself, be born again, but this is not just an American idea: it is a universal modern dream, and possibly a universal human dream. The broadest frame of reference we can use is the common human phenomenon of attempts to escape and transcend destiny and identity. I include here any attempt to redefine biography and identity against “objective” conditions defining that identity. Such attempts at rebirth, at identity change through private salvation, may be quite common in certain historical situations. We may speak about a private utopia, as collective utopias are less and less in vogue. Dreams and actual attempts at escape and rejuvenation should be examined on the basis of context, content, or consequences, and point to a whole range of possibilities. The fantasy of escaping one’s destiny, the dream of identity change, is all too human. So many people see their lives so far as a first draft. We all dream of being of becoming somebody else and something else, breaking with our destiny. This is the dream of private (and collective) salvation. More or less often we feel “I am stuck in this life situation but I should be somewhere else.” Behind the explicit, outspoken fantasy of a new self or a new world lie unspoken processes, which always parallel to those on the surface.

The source of self-reported rebirth is found in internal, conscious and unconscious, conflicts. These conflicts are solved and a balance is reached through an attachment to a set of beliefs, specific ritual acts, changes in everyday behavior and functioning, and support by a group structure. The problem with psychological rebirth is its inherent instability. Real transformation is hard to come by. The illusion of rebirth may lead to good outcomes but is often insufficient to maintain balance inside a personality system long beset by disharmonies and imbalances. This is clear when a variety of purely secular strategies, from psychotherapy to plastic surgery, are followed on the road to self-transformation.

Every successful case of individual rebirth is the result of an internal truce among opposing personality elements. One possible interpretation assumes that in conversion we see what is called a “superego victory.” An internal conflict between the conscious ego ideal and the

unconscious, archaic, parental introject is won by the latter. The child becomes more parental, and this often happens in postadolescence, as the child grows older.

Another interpretation of successful conversion uses Freud's concept of moral masochism. According to classical psychoanalysis, the superego is formed as sadistic impulses directed at the parent are recoiled and internalized. Then the superego, parentally derived, commands self-effacement, if not self-sacrifice, as the punishment for aggressive fantasies. In moral masochism, the superego is satisfied through submission and humiliation. The outer peace and happiness observed in many converts is the result of this final peace between ego and superego, which releases all the energy that was put into the conflict for productive use. This may be the source of many positive, altruistic behaviors. The yearning for peace and wholeness is met by religion through the internal peace between superego and ego. At the conscious level this is experienced as acceptance by God or Jesus, forgiveness, and love, reported by converts ever since St. Augustine of Hippo. Freud suggested that what is achieved through superego victory is a reconciliation with one's father and with all paternal authorities, including father gods. We forgive our parents and are forgiven by them in turn. Of course, this happens in fantasy, and we are not talking of real fathers but imagined ones, consciously and unconsciously.

Another possible explanation is that the convert has gone through the internalizing of a loved and loving imaginary object, which then supports the whole personality system. This internalized object may serve as a new superego, supplying the ego with a control system, which has been missing, and making possible a real control of destructive impulses. A similar process may take place in secular psychotherapy. Early infancy splitting of the mother into good/bad object operates in converts who reach a state of complete euphoria, denying negative impulses and negative realities, which are bound to resurface nevertheless.

But at another level, a psychological analysis may direct us to noting that cases of rebirth

actually represent a way of expressing hostility towards one's parents. In terms of individual and family dynamics, every identity change is a rebellion against one's parents, who usually created the earlier identity, and against one's past. When a young individual, who grew up in the average family, joins a new religion, he is declaring a revolt against his parents. He may rebel also through finding a new, better parent in his secular psychotherapist, and psychotherapists are always better parents. The message of a child's conversion is often one of denouncing parental hypocrisy and shallowness. On a collective, generational level, finding new identities is a total ideological rebellion. The new religious identities constitute in many cases a rejection of the faith of the parents and of the parents' everyday lifestyle. At the same time, the rebellion against the parents may also mean the assumption of the parental role.

What should we make of all these different and sometimes contradictory speculations? Only the realization that in cases of true self-transcendence, something important and far-reaching must be going on beneath the surface. The process is one of accepting authority, loving authority, or internalizing a loving and supportive (but still demanding) authority. What happens in these conversion miracles is an experience of love, both giving and receiving of love. On a conscious level, this is the unconditional (or maybe conditional) love of God, and St. Augustine has already reported on that. On an unconscious level, it is the unconditional love of a father, a mother, or a total parental image.

### See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [New Religions](#)

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## Conversion (Islam)

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Islam makes a distinction between conversion to Islam and conversion from Islam. The former is called *ihtida* or *hidayah* (divine guidance), whereas the latter is *irtidad* (apostasy) (Watt 1980, p. 722). Islam introduced the concept of *din al-fitrah* (innate religion) to express that everyone is endowed at birth with a natural ability to know God. The Qur'an states that every soul before creation was asked the question by God "Am I not your Lord?" and the souls answered "Yes!" to it. Thus, Muslims consider all children as Muslims until they reach puberty. The tradition of the Prophet puts that "children are born possessing the *fitrah*, and it is their parents who turn them into Jews, Christians or Muslims" (Faruqi 1979, p. 92). Therefore, by converting to Islam, one turns to the religion which is already present in him by nature. It is for this reason that some converts to Islam prefer the word revert to convert (Kose 1996, p. 101). In Christianity, one cannot have a conversion experience unless the Will of God is involved (John 6: 44). In Islam, likewise, the act of conversion is attributed to the Will of God (Qur'an 10:100).

### How to Become a Muslim

There is no specific procedure or ritual for joining Islam. The only condition for the person who

converts is to declare, usually in presence of two witnesses, the *shahadah*: "I bear witness that there is no God but God (Allah) Himself, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His messenger." Anyone who says this credo is considered to be a Muslim. However, one is recommended to undergo the greater ablution (*ghusl*) to purify the body symbolically of the earlier ignorance or disbelief. The new Muslim is supposed to believe in such basic creeds of Islam as the accountability in the afterlife and all Prophets (Qur'an 2:136) and also commit himself/herself to keeping the five pillars of Islam (praying, fasting, giving alms, etc.) as well as abstaining from alcohol, pork, and adultery.

It is believed that one's sins, upon embracing Islam, are forgiven by Allah and having the purification of the greater ablution signifies this belief. On embracing Islam, one may or may not select a Muslim name unless his present name has an un-Islamic trait. Circumcision is not obligatory upon adult (male) converts. The act of conversion to Islam should be voluntary, conscious, and out of free choice, relating to what the Prophet said: "declaration by tongue and affirmation by heart." There is nothing to prevent a person from becoming a Muslim; no conditions are imposed; none is debarred for Islam considers itself a universal religion.

A Muslim man has the right to marry a Christian or a Jewish woman (Qur'an 5:5). A Muslim woman cannot marry a Christian or a Jewish man according to Islamic jurisprudence though there is not a Qur'anic prohibition. It is forbidden for a Muslim man or woman to marry someone who does not believe in God or an idolater or polytheist (Qur'an 2:221).

### The Propagation of Islam

Great religions of the world may be divided into missionary and non-missionary based on the definition that in missionary religions the spreading of the truth and the conversion of unbelievers is considered to be a sacred duty by their founders or scriptures. Buddhism, Christianity, and



Islam may be classified as missionary while Judaism, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism fall into the category of non-missionary (Arnold 1913, p. 1).

The propagation of Islam is called *tabligh* or *dawah* (literally means call or invitation). Both words are used in various verses in the Qur'an. *Tabligh* means to make available to non-Muslims the message of Islam. The Qur'an (16:125) commands the Muslim to enable others to share and benefit from the religious truth. The word *dawah* is used in the sense of the religious outreach or mission to exhort people to embrace Islam as the true religion. *Dawah* also covers the mission directed at fellow believers (Denny 1987, p. 244). The primary aim of *dawah*, if directed to the Muslims, is to remind them of the teachings of Islam. In the case of the non-Muslims, the objective is to enlighten them about Islam. However, Islam does not have an institutionalized form of missionary work if missionary means the deliberate activity or to send representatives to win converts. Islamic mission is regarded being a duty of every Muslim rather than being an option. Thus, Muslims are charged with the responsibility of being the model of right conduct for all mankind. The absence of clerical order imposes on every Muslim the obligation to understand the message of his/her religion and to convey by precept and example to non-Muslims who inquire about Islam (Qur'an 16:125). It is the Muslim's responsibility to pave the way to reconcile non-Muslims to Islam. For example, the Qur'an (9:60) demands Muslims to render the legal alms (*zakah*), levied on every Muslim who is wealthy, to the people whose hearts have been recently reconciled, namely, converts or potential converts, among others (Hamidullah 1979, p. 155).

However, Islam has made it explicitly clear that the diversity of ideologies and creeds is natural to mankind. The Qur'an (2:256) states clearly that there is no compulsion in religion. Many Muslims today believe that the age of proselytization is gone, and Islam, being a fairly well-known faith, needs no active mission to attract converts. To them, the stability of

Muslim family life; the absence of drinks, drugs, etc.; and the overall discipline of Muslims, in particular those who live in the West, will itself send powerful signals to non-Muslims. Studies reveal that converts to Islam enter into the fold of Islam by various means and for a variety of reasons. Some accept it after studying it for a long time, and some enter it in order to be able to marry a Muslim or after marrying a Muslim. Many converts recount that their conversion was the result of the positive example of Muslims. Thus, both intellectual and emotional motifs play a great part in conversions to Islam, especially in Western context (Kose 1996; Poston 1992).

## See Also

- ▶ Circumcision
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Qur'an
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Sharia
- ▶ Sin

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## Coping Skills

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“How are you coping?” is a common question from a caregiver, be it a mental health professional or a religious or pastoral caregiver. At first blush it seems a relatively straightforward question, yet at depth the person suffering in a stressful situation is being asked to make a highly complex assessment of the nature of the stressor, their subjective sense of suffering, an appraisal of their ability to function and for how long under these conditions, and what physical, psychological, social, and spiritual resources, behaviors, and practices are enabling them to do so. It is no wonder that people sometimes respond “I don’t know. I just am” or “I’m not.”

The American Psychological Association currently defines coping as “The process of dealing with internal or external demands that are perceived to be threatening or overwhelming” (Gerrig and Zimbardo 2002).

Classical theories of coping used to focus primarily on the nature of the stressor following the logic that the more stressful a situation was, the more difficult it was to cope. In 1967, psychiatrists Thomas H. Holmes and Richard H. Rahe, working backwards from medical records, devised a stress (Social Readjustment Rating) scale that allocated a numeric amount that purported to assist one to calculate the cumulative effect of stress in one’s life over the previous year (Holmes and Rahe 1967, pp. 213–218). Life circumstances such as death of a spouse were assigned the highest value of 100, divorce 73, and right down to events such as Christmas at 12 points. A person who was calculated to have more than 300 points in a year was seen to be in serious risk of developing a physical illness in the coming 2 years, those above 150 having a moderate risk. That is, the more stressful

situations you encounter, the more likely it is that you will not be able to cope. The benefit of such a scale was that it alerted people to the fact that life changes viewed as life enhancing, such as marriage or going on vacation, may also be experienced as stressful.

However, what such a scale failed to indicate is that it is not simply the nature of the stressor that inhibits one’s ability to cope, we need to also assess the person’s subjective sense of suffering and ability to adapt and live into a new reality or at least hold onto the hope that one will be able to do so in the future. For example, divorce may be a great shock and occasion immense grief for one person and may occasion a sense of relief and liberation for another. The death of a loved one from physical deterioration near what would be societally expected as the end of a life cycle may be much easier “to cope with” than the untimely and unexpected death of a child or teenager. There is, therefore, a relationship between the nature of the stressor and the subjective sense of suffering that cannot simply be discounted.

Consequently, it is helpful to be conscious of whether this is what McGoldrick, Carter, and Garcia-Preto define as a horizontal or a vertical stressor (McGoldrick et al. 2011, p. 7). They see a vertical stressors as the “influence of historical issues that flow down the family tree, influencing families as they go through life,” including factors such as poverty, racism, violence, and addictions (McGoldrick et al. 2011, pp. 7–8). Horizontal stressors are “developmental and unpredictable influences that affect families as they go through life,” such as life-cycle transitions and unpredictable untimely personal, historic, economic, and political events (McGoldrick et al. 2011, p. 8). Here we can see that both stress and coping are highly complex, embedded as we are in our social locations, our family, and cultural and historic contexts. However, just as patterns of dysfunctional responses to stress may be generational, so may be patterns of coping and resilience in response to such.

In assessing coping skills, again, one must attend to the individual’s assessment of their suffering and their ability to face it. Persons whose

families have suffered in the past, such as in the Holocaust, or who have suffered violence in another context, such as in a country torn apart by civil war, may find their current situation relativized by suffering of a greater magnitude. However, current suffering may also activate trauma that was unable to be processed in another context or even in another generation. It may be in the context of safety that suffering is able to be borne and worked through in a new way that is more functional. The surest way to assess the subjective sense of another's suffering is by careful, attentive, empathic listening where you hear the other's story in the context of their own world view.

Like the growing recognition that grief is a process, there is also a growing recognition that coping is a process, not simply a static event. This process involves a number of different elements over time. Kenneth Pargament, one of the primary researchers in the field of religious coping, uses a model that draws on the earlier work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) which visually depicts the interdependent relationship between:

- Resources and Constraints
- Situations, Appraisals, Activities, Outcomes
- Coping Functions.

(Pargament et al. 1992, p. 132)

Taking into account the functions over time, it can be seen that coping may have its own life cycle according to the person, situation, and resources. How we cope after the immediate impact of an acute stressor may be different to how we cope in the short term, to coping with long-term suffering. This reality is reflected in the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder that can currently only be diagnosed after 30 days. It may be normative to be acutely stressed after the immediate impact and even in the short term after a potentially traumatizing event; however, if the duration is longer than a month and seriously impacts one's ability to function in usual life circumstances and social relationships, the person is assessed not to be coping but traumatized if they exhibit symptoms of hyperarousal, avoidance, and intrusion of thoughts, memories, and images associated with the event. Therefore in assessing a person's coping, one must take into

account the duration of time since the event and the level of impairment of daily life.

Researchers vary on how they describe the mechanisms people use to cope with stress. They often dichotomize the results into categories such as positive/negative (Abu-Raiya et al. 2011), adaptive/mal- or less adaptive (Pargament et al. 1992; Roesch 2004), reactive/responsive, and helpful/harmful (Doehring 2006). For example, Carrie Doehring notes that "Harmful ways of coping may involve compulsive behaviors such as overworking, overeating, overexercising, anorexia, substance abuse and addiction, excessive shopping, obsessive gambling, cutting oneself, and compulsive sexual behaviors, like excessive masturbation or use of internet pornography" (Doehring 2006, p. 85). For the purpose of this article, the terms functional and dysfunctional are used.

### **Functional and Dysfunctional Methods of Coping**

Persons may use various physical, psychological, social, and spiritual resources to cope in the face of life stresses. These may range from unconscious defense mechanisms such as denial, rationalization, repression (Fenichel), and splitting (Klein), to sophisticated cultural belief systems that help people deal with existential anxieties and life events such as death, disaster, disability, and disease (Freud). Functional coping mechanisms in an acute phase of stress enable a person to soothe themselves and stay connected to reality as a whole, even if they may dissociate from the particular stressor. Examples of such may be someone who on occasion may have an alcoholic drink at the end of a stressful day to someone who denies the reality of the death of their loved one because they "can't believe it." Such an immediate response may be entirely normative. However, if someone cannot get through the evening without having a drink, stressful day or not, or cannot face the reality of the death of their loved one with the immediate evidence of their body after several hours, that may be seen as dysfunctional. This also has to be assessed in light on

what is normative for each person. For some having a drink at the end of a day is normative and for others, depending on their culture or religion having a drink, may not only be rare but may be against their belief systems and contribute to the feeling that they are not coping. Coping needs to be assessed against one's world view, including one's religious and cultural location, and current practices.

Functional forms of coping are those thoughts, behaviors, and resources that enable a person not just to survive in the face of a changed reality but to adapt to that change. Examples of such may be physical anxiety management and emotional coping techniques such as deep breathing, muscle tensing, and relaxation; thoughts such as "this too will pass" and "I'm scared now but I trust I will get through this"; cognitive problem solving; seeking support from others; and religious coping mechanisms such as the use of prayer, meditation and devotional practices, religious ritual and community, reading sacred texts, and seeking guidance from a religious authority such as an imam, pastor, priest, rabbi, Rinpoche, or guru, depending on the person's tradition.

Much has been written on religious coping as a contribution to dealing with stressful events in life. One must be careful however to inquire about coping skills across the spectrum of the person's life, physical, psychological, social, and spiritual, so as not to discount the input of one form of coping that may be particularly functional for a person in the face of stress. An example of this may be the use of massage for recovery workers or the choice of a respite center housed in a church, mosque, or synagogue over other nonreligious respite centers, in a disaster.

## Religious Coping

Harold Koenig states that "Religious coping is the reliance upon religious belief or activity to help manage emotional stress or physical discomfort" (Koenig 1992, p. 107). This focus is two pronged, that which examines religious activity and that which explores religious belief; in some faith

traditions this means the crucial question of "how they relate to God when they experience stress and what kinds of religious activities are used to cope" (Doehring 2006, p. 88).

Despite the caution about making sure one assesses coping across the spectrum of resources, research has shown that religious coping does not simply replicate nonreligious coping but offers an additional element (Pargament and Koenig 1997).

Relation between unconscious defense mechanisms and religious world view is complexified by the question of embedded and deliberative theology. Often we regress to a prior, or more primitive response in the face of threats to our well-being. We may also do this religiously. Hence, persons who may not consciously believe that God directly intervenes in person's physical illness may say "What have I done to deserve this?" or "God must have done this to teach me a lesson." The question may be whether this God is seen as benevolent or punishing or what control God and we may have in regards to the situations we encounter.

The work of Koenig, Pargament, and Neil on a scale to assess the relationship between one's relationship with God and religious resources and how they function has made available the tool RCOPE: "a comprehensive measure of religious/spiritual coping" (Pargament et al. 1999). This measure, based on a theistic world view, draws out whether a responder views God as primarily benevolent or punishing and, drawing on Pargament's 1988 research, sees three different patterns of religious problem solving emerging. These are a:

- Collaborative style
- Deferring style
- Self-directive style

"In the deferring style, control is sought from God; the individual places the responsibility for coping on God. In the collaborative style, control is sought with God; the individual and God share the responsibility for coping. In the self-directing style, control rests within the individual; the individual takes the responsibility for coping him/herself" (Pargament et al. 1999). Pargament and his collaborators consistently found that a collaborative style of coping was associated with

a greater sense of spiritual well-being and decreased depression and anxiety. Results for the other styles were more mixed, depending on whether God was seen as benevolent, punitive, or abandoning (Phillips et al. 2004) or whether the situation was seen as beyond one's own control (Pargament et al. 1990). Later researchers Ana Wong-McDonald and Richard Gorsuch (2000) suggest surrender as an additional coping style. Pargament also adds Pleading to the list of approaches such as in the study on the use of religious coping in the hospital waiting room (Pargament et al. 1999).

There are manifold quantitative articles on religious coping in medical and mental health situations which support the association between the use of religious resources and quality of life and adjustment to serious illness (e.g., Brady et al. 1999; Koenig 1998; Koenig et al. 1988, 1991; Johnson and Spilka 1991; VandeCreek et al. 1997, 1999) and decreased length of hospital stays or readiness to return home (e.g., Iler et al. 2001; VandeCreek et al. 1997). Of note are the studies that explore coping after a disaster, such as that of the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, in the United States. Abu-Raiya et al. examined the "stressful interpersonal events experienced by Muslims living in the United States following the 9/11 attacks" (Abu-Raiya et al. 2011). Swain examined the experience of the chaplains who worked at the Temporary Mortuary at Ground Zero (Swain 2011). Ninety percent of a "nationally representative sample" of the general population reported "turning to religion" to cope after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Schuster et al. 2001). These studies occasion the question of whether persons use current religious practices and resources to hold them up in times of disaster or whether persons take up religious practices in times of acute threat that may then lose meaning or cease to be followed in long-term recovery.

## Current Research

The growing edge in research on coping is that focusing on multicultural and cross-cultural coping in a global context and that explore the

non- or polytheistic religions such as Nalini Tarakeshwar's "Initial Development of a Measure of Religious Coping Among Hindus" (Tarakeshwar et al. 2003) and Yu His Chen's "Coping with Suffering: A Buddhist Perspective" (Wong and Wong 2006).

## See Also

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Delusion
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Compassion
- ▶ Grace
- ▶ Locus of Control
- ▶ Providence
- ▶ Psychospiritual
- ▶ Transitional Object

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## Cosmic Egg

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The cosmic egg motif is a major symbol in creation myths, occurring in all parts of the world.

Ancient Egyptians saw the cosmic egg as the soul of the primeval waters out of which creation arose. In one story the sun god emerged from the primeval mound, itself a version of the cosmic egg resting in the original sea.

One Chinese creation myth describes a huge primordial egg containing the primal being, the giant Pangu. The egg broke and Pangu then separated chaos into the many opposites of the *yin* and the *yang*, that is, into creation itself.

The Satapatha *Brahmana* of India contains the story of the desire of the original maternal waters' desire to reproduce. Through a series of prolonged rituals, the waters became so hot that they gave birth to a golden egg. Eventually, after about the time it takes for a woman or a cow to give birth, the creator, Prajapati, emerged from the egg and creation took place.

The Pelasgians of ancient Greece explained that it was the original being – the goddess Eurynome (a version of the Greek Gaia) – who laid the world egg and ordered the cosmic snake Ophion to encircle it until it hatched the world itself.

The later Orphic cult in Greece preached that in the beginning there was a silver cosmic egg, created by Time that hatched the androgynous being who contained the seeds of creation.

In Africa, a Dogon myth says that in the beginning, a world egg divided into two birth sacs, containing sets of twins fathered by the



creator god, Amma, on the maternal egg. Some say that Amma was the cosmic egg and fertilized himself.

The Polynesian Tahitians have a myth in which the god Taaroa began existence in an egg and eventually broke out to make part of the egg the sky. Taaroa, himself, became the earth.

The practitioners of the Bon religion in Tibet sing of three cosmic eggs, which led to creation.

As an object prone to fertilization, the egg is an appropriate symbol and metaphor for the idea of potentiality. It is pre-creation chaos waiting to become cosmos. In psychological terms, it is the preconsciousness of the given culture – the collective being waiting to be made conscious of itself. To quote psychologist Marie Louise von Franz, “we can easily recognize in it the motif of preconscious totality. It is psychic wholeness conceived as the thing which came before the rise of ego consciousness, or any kind of dividing consciousness” (von Franz 1972, pp. 229). In short, the egg is a symbol of pre-differentiation, differentiation being the essence of the creation of anything. The egg contains within itself male and female, light and dark, all opposites in a state of union. It is perfect entropy and signals the existence of creative power from the very beginning. By extension, the cosmic egg is a symbol of the individual’s preconscious state before the process of individuation allows for the hatching of Self.

### See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Primordial Waters](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Counseling Asians in the West

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Over the past 50 years, the Asian population has been one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the West. Within the Asian population, there is a wide variety of countries of origin, ethnicities, languages, cultural values, religions, socioeconomic status, and acculturation levels. Counseling Asian clients in the West is a multicultural process (Schoen 2005). This entry discusses some of the most important attitudes, skills, and knowledge needed in culturally sensitive and competent counseling services.

### Be Aware of the Basic Traditional Cultural Values

Counselors should treat every Asian student on an individual basis and avoid stereotyping, generalizing, and overemphasizing cultural similarities among Asian clients. On the other hand, an awareness of the Asian traditions helps to lay an essential foundation for the mutual respect, understanding, and appreciation in counseling Asian clients (Kim et al. 2001; Maki and Kitano 2002; Sue and Sue 1999). Basic traditional cultural values can include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) Collectivism: Group welfare is prioritized over individual interests. There is a strong moral obligation to serve others, to reciprocate, and to maintain harmony by reconciling, compromising, and accommodating. (2) Filial

Piety: Children are expected to respect parents, obey the norms established by the family, support and nurse aging parents, and mind the impact of one's own behavior on one's family. (3) Self-Control: Appropriateness, modesty, and self-criticism in social interactions are highly valued, as is the maintenance of dignity, calmness, and rationality in the face of suffering and highly emotional situations. A pursuit of achievement is also paramount to the individual. (4) Shame: "Knowing shame" is regarded as a virtue, which serves as a dynamic to deter inappropriate thoughts and behaviors that might violate collectivist interests, disdain the family's reputation, or weaken the individual's self-discipline.

In addition to the knowledge of these cultural values, counselors also need to be aware of the impact that these values may have on the counseling process. Many Western-born Asian clients and most recent immigrants from Asia attempt to rely on the self, family, and friends in dealing with their psychological problems, rather than seeking professional services. This may be because seeking counseling services not only implies a failure in self-control but may also tarnish the public image of the individual, his/her family, and other larger identity groups, any of which can cause intense shame. As a result, the rate of use of psychological counseling services among Asian clients is disproportionately low to their level of need (Kim and Omizo 2003).

Fortunately, however, the use of other values in the Asian cultures can enhance an Asian client's benefit from counseling services. With the cultural emphasis on achievement, for example, Asian clients are willing to seek help for academic difficulties and challenges. Starting with an academic performance-oriented topic may open the door for the exploration of more psychological- or personal-oriented issues (Kim et al. 2001). Emphasis on education means Asian clients also tend to respond positively to psycho-education, offered to understand and better deal with mental health problems. Usually, psycho-education helps to destigmatize the mental health problems and diminish barriers to treatment. Asian clients also tend to respond better to directive than nondirective approaches compared to their Western

counterparts, due to the cultural value of deference to authority figures (Kim et al. 2001).

There are other impacts of cultural values on counseling Asian clients. Asians have been taught to employ indirect styles of communicating, especially when it comes to disagreement and confrontation. They are also cautious and reserved in public display of emotion, with negative emotions in particular often expressed in an oblique and understated way. Counselors working with Asian clients, especially those who grew up in Asia, may need to read between the lines to grasp the major distress and its degree of severity. As the alliance develops and the client becomes more open and ready, the counselor may work toward more direct expressions.

### **Be Aware of the Common Mental Health Problems Among Asian Clients**

The most common mental health problems among Asian clients are depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, somatization, and adjustment disorder. It is worth noting that the high somatization may be related to internalized stress due to the repression of public display of emotion (Chun et al. 1996). Common somatization includes complaints of sleeplessness, loss of appetite, and stomach pains (Yagi and Oh 1995). International students or recent immigrants may also exhibit culture-bound syndromes such as *amok* (sudden mass assault), which need culturally sensitive interpretation, diagnosis, and treatment.

### **Be Sensitive to the Challenges that Asian Clients Face**

As people of color, Asians historically have been subjected to many forms of racist oppression and discrimination in the West. Despite significant advancement in civil right movements, many Asian clients, including not only international students and recent immigrants but also Western-born Asians, still encounter overt discrimination and/or micro-aggression in schools and communities. A culturally responsive counselor

should be comfortable facing the topic of racism, encouraging the clients to talk about their experiences as people of color in their society, emphasizing with their reported feelings, and understanding the clients' individual distress in the context of the impacts that sociopolitical factors have on the Asian population.

Research shows that the greater the cultural dissimilarity across two cultures, the greater the acculturation stress (Berry 1990). Given the prominent differences between the Asian and Western cultures, Asian clients inevitably face remarkable stress in establishing an individual identity and stance between the two cultures. The extent to which an individual assimilates the Western culture to his or her values, attitudes, and behaviors is *acculturation*. By contrast, the degree she/he retains and identifies with the Asian culture is *enculturation* (Maki and Kitano 2002). Asian clients fall in a wide range of acculturation and enculturation.

Clients who are high in acculturation and low in enculturation identify with the Western culture. To interact effectively with them, counselors need to be highly acculturated. However, counselors should also be attentive to whether or not such clients are at risk of denying their Asian ethnicity, abandoning the culture of origin, losing traditional support, and internalizing racism in the form of self-hatred.

Clients who are high in both acculturation and enculturation are able to integrate both cultures with the best possible compromise. To meet such clients where they are, counselors must demonstrate sensitivity and competence in multicultural practice. In addition, counselors may want to assess whether they have high levels of anxiety while trying to comply with expectations of both cultures.

Clients low in acculturation and high in enculturation identify with their culture of origin. They are likely to be international students and recent immigrants with limited exposure to the mainstream culture and limited language skills. To help such clients, counselors need to be open-minded, empathic, and respectful. It is essential for the clinician to encourage the Asian clients to openly discuss their cultural and religious

viewpoints on the cause of their problems, the cultural conceptualization of their problems, their past coping styles, their health-seeking behaviors, and their treatment expectation (Lee 1997). Interventions should be structured to be compatible with the Asian cultures (e.g., the directive approach) and to match the clients' language skills (e.g., action-oriented activities). In addition, counselors should be aware that their clients may withdraw to the old culture as an escape dynamic.

Lastly, clients low in both acculturation and enculturation reject both cultures. Counselors may need to explore their alienation, frustration, and possible past experiences of failing to satisfy both cultures simultaneously.

When working with second-generation immigrants, counselors should understand and empathize with the cultural conflict between the culture in their family and the culture of their peers. Internalized racism and struggles with identity (e.g., denial, confusion, self-hatred) are typical challenges. If the Asian clients have issues with autonomy and individualization, counselors may want to empower and facilitate their development in a way that is respectful, sensitive, and compatible to their cultural values in order to avoid unnecessary confusion or guilt.

Art therapy and action-oriented activities may be helpful when working with recent immigrants or international students, especially if they have language difficulties. For example, sand play allows for the exploration and expression of intrapsychic world and interpersonal patterns (Enns and Kasai 2003), without a language requirement. Be cautious with the use of a translator, as it can interfere in the establishment of a therapeutic alliance and can cause complications in therapy. If a translator is absolutely needed, be sure to choose a translator who is able to stay unbiased and assure the client of confidentiality.

The myth of the "model minority," which implies that the Asians adapt well to their environment and have few educational or psychological problems, causes additional challenges for Asian clients (Seráfica 1997, 1999). It fuels the unrealistic expectations that Asian clients set for themselves and their reluctance to seek

counseling services. It also influences how the community and other ethnicity groups perceive and react to the Asians, which contributes to the fact that troubled Asian populations often go unnoticed (Yagi and Oh 1995).

### **Be Mindful About Religion**

Religion and spirituality should not be overlooked when establishing counseling relationships. Asians in the West come from a variety of religious and spiritual backgrounds (e.g., Buddhist, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Christianity, ancestor worship). In most Asian cultures, religious beliefs and practices are rooted in tradition and integrated into daily life. When coping with physical illnesses, mental disturbances, or family crises, Asian people traditionally go to religious organizations and consult monks or ministers to obtain comfort, support, and advice.

Acknowledging and respecting the role of religion in their culture and lives help to establish rapport with other Asian clients. The counselor may inquire whether or not the student is devoted to a certain religious tradition and to what degree. If the answer is yes, the counselor may assess the availability of emotional support or counseling from the particular organization of the student's religion. The counselor may also make use of certain beliefs or practices in the student's religion to facilitate the counseling outcome, for example, encouraging practicing the meditation techniques described in the *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* to Hindu clients or discussing the Four Noble Truths to reduce stress and anxiety for Buddhist clients.

Showing knowledge of Asian religion and spirituality can be a powerful invitation to trust the counselor (Hanna and Green 2004). The knowledge is not merely about understanding a religion; more importantly, it is understanding a religion in the cultural context of how it is actually practiced and who is practicing it. One religion varies from culture to culture. Buddhism, for example, is practiced differently in China than in Burma.

Although the knowledge can help, being culturally sensitive and competent involves a genuine respect for other cultures, an eagerness to learn about other cultures, and an appreciation of the particular heritage of the client (O'Sullivan 1994). As a matter of fact, Asian clients tend to show a considerable amount of respect and appreciation for the counselor who has taken the time to learn about their cultures and religions and who demonstrates understanding, interest, and empathy towards their tradition.

### **Be Aware of Countertransference**

The difference between an effective counselor and a mediocre one is the ability to manage countertransference feelings (Van Wagoner et al. 1991). If the counselors are highly religious themselves and/or they find Asian religions strange or misguided, it is important that the counselors restrain from imposing their own religious or spiritual points of view on clients, be empathic, and use the understanding of the clients' religion (together with other information) to better understand both the context and nature of the clients' distress, challenges, and strengths. For Western-born Asian counselors who still have their own identity issues (denial or rejection of one's racial identity), working with Asian clients may evoke unresolved pain and emotions. Counselors should explore their own stereotypes, both positive and negative, about Asian clients. Supervision or consultation on countertransference issues will be needed.

### **Take an Integrative Perspective**

Western psychotherapeutic approaches are traditionally based on the assumptions of individuation, independence, self-disclosure, and verbal expression of feelings. Asian values, on the other hand, focus on collectivism, interdependence, self-control, and repression of feelings. Being culturally responsive, counselors need to be able to recognize the strengths and protective factors inherent in the individual as well as in his/her

cultural heritage. For example, Asian clients may be used to the health traditions of holistic treatment, herbal medicine, and acupuncture. If they find these health practices helpful, they need to explore and recognize the strengths inherent in the individual and his/her cultural heritage, such as the Confucian teaching of the “middle way,” the Buddhist teaching of compassion, the emphasis on family/interpersonal harmony, and the high value of education and achievement. Be open-minded and creative about the potentially therapeutic integration of Western and Eastern healing practices.

### See Also

- ▶ [Asian American Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Popular Religions](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Mindfulness](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Reincarnation](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)
- ▶ [Women in Chinese Religions](#)

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## Counseling Middle Eastern Arab-Americans

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This entry provides an overview of the population known as Arab-Americans and explores their backgrounds, mentalities, cultures, religions, and origins. It emphasizes the rich variety of the Middle East region and the differences among people of Arabic heritage living in the West. The entry also examines the challenges, needs, and struggles of immigrants and refugees as well as the contributions and accomplishments of previous Arab-Americans who were already established for many generations. The place and role of values, faith, culture, and tradition are

especially highlighted. Practical guidelines and suggestions for counseling, therapy, and caregiving are presented at the end along with a list of resources for future reading.

People from Arabic and Middle Eastern background are as diverse as their countries of origin. They have been living and working in North America for many generations. Actually, some of them migrated to both Americas over a century ago. Currently, they represent a mosaic community of various groups, ages, educations, mentalities, customs, affiliations, faiths, values, and social classes.

Basically, the terms *Arab-Americans* and *Middle Eastern-Americans* refer to persons who consider themselves having an Arabic heritage at some level and who trace their roots to one or more regions of the Middle East and North Africa, known as *MENA*. Some consider themselves Americans with a distant Arabic lineage (among other nationalities) due to their mixed family background and cultural ancestry (Arab American Institute 2009–2012).

The term *Arab-Americans* is prevalent in the literature, yet it can be too broad or confusing at times, as there is no single *Arab world* or one unified and homogeneous Arabic people located in a well-confined geographical area. Actually, the Middle East is a vast region and has a rich history, many cultures, and abundant traditions. It contains multiple ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural diversities. It is the birthplace of three major religions – *Judaism*, *Christianity*, and *Islam* – and the crossroad of numerous great civilizations (cf. Barakat 1993). The word *Arab* has *Semitic* roots. *Arabian* refers to the original people who inhabited the Gulf Peninsula, way before Islam came to the scene! Presently, Arabic-speaking countries spread from the East Mediterranean to all North African shore and, at times, reaching deep within the African continent (Sudan, Somalia). Currently, the Middle East and North Africa societies accommodate a wide range of mentalities and social norms – from the highly urban, complex, and progressive lifestyles to the highly rural, tribal, and traditional lifestyles (and everything in between) (cf. Abi-Hashem 2012).

Officially, there are 22 nations that consider Arabic as its main language. They are distributed geographically into distant regions, known as Maghrib, Northeastern Africa, East Mediterranean, Arabian Peninsula, and Arabic-Persian Gulf (Nydell 2006). The nations, listed alphabetically, are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. These nations are part of the *Arab League*, or the *League of Arabic Nations*, which is a loose organization connecting these countries together without any major authority or governing power. Classical Arabic is the formally written language and is spoken and can be understood across the region. French and English are common second languages, but other dialects exist as well. Besides some shared values, cultural norms, and basic religious practices, along with perhaps a collective memory of their place in history and rootedness in the land, there are actually not too many common factors among these countries and communities. Some of them enjoy a beautiful landscape along the seashore of the Mediterranean; others have mountains or flat lands and deserts. However, each community has its own way of life, spoken accent, dress code, mood and temperament, and local habits and customs (Abi-Hashem 2011b).

There were two major waves of immigrations from the East Mediterranean to North America: the first wave was around the last part of the nineteenth century, and the second wave was at the end of World War II. Early immigrants were descendents of the Christian communities mostly from Lebanon and Syria. Presently, about four million Americans trace their origin to one or more Arabic country. However, those from Muslim background are almost double this figure, about eight million, known as *American-Muslims*. It is important to remember that although the majority of the Arabic Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are religiously and culturally Muslims, the largest concentrations of Muslim communities exist outside the MENA, e.g., Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and other Southeast Asian countries.



An American person or a group with an Arabic and Middle Eastern background is someone who is connected to the Arabic language and culture. This connection can be as distant as a 3rd- or 4th-generation, US-born to a multinational and multicultural family or as fresh as in a newly arrived immigrant. Many Americans who have a little trace to the Middle East may not relate well to other Arab-Americans because they do not feel they have many things in common in terms of backgrounds, social experiences, worldviews, and lifestyles, similar to how a 4th- or 5th-generation Italian, German, Irish, or Greek feels or acts toward their countries of origin. Although Middle Eastern Arab-Americans have been living and working in the United States for generations, they are not considered as a separate minority yet, but generically classified among the white (non-Europeans) ethnic groups. The majority of this population is young, thriving, educated, and entrepreneurial in orientation (El-Badry 2010). Some of them are accomplished professionals and academicians in many fields and have made significant contributions toward American society through the years. However, like any other migrant and minority groups, the more recent settlers and refugees, as well as the older generations, face hard times in acculturating and assimilating within the new culture. Expanding identities, balancing nationalities, integrating worldviews, and reconciling differences are not easy tasks, especially when the cultural gap is large and the adapting skills are few. At times, children and teenagers become torn between the home-family subculture and peer-society subculture; therefore, they tend to live a life of mental-emotional splitting (cf. Abi-Hashem 2013b; Abi-Hashem and Brown 2013).

According to the Arab American Institute (2009–2012), the percentage of the religious affiliation of Americans from Arabic and Middle Eastern descent is roughly distributed as follows: 25 % Muslims—Sunnis and Shiites, 35 % Roman and Eastern Catholics, 18 % Eastern Orthodox, 10 % Protestant, and 12 % with other affiliations or no religious faith affiliation at all. Other sources, however, reflect a more equal percentage of population between

Muslims and Christians (50 %) in the greater North American continent. That is more probably the case since more people are migrating recently from Muslim communities around the Middle East and North Africa, for various reasons. They tend to have a higher birth rate and belong to larger nuclear and extended families compared to the average Western families (cf. Dhama and Sheikh 2000).

Although there is some awareness and understanding in the West about the various cultures and religions in the Arabic Near East region, still yet there is a lot of uncertainty and confusion about who are the Arabs, the Muslims, and the Middle Easterners. Therefore, it is important to correct any misconceptions or generalizations and to clarify the similarities and differences among these labels: (a) not all Arabs are Muslims, since there are significant minorities like the Christians, Jews, Druze, and Alawites who are spread out in the region and have been there for many long centuries; (b) not all Middle Easterners are Arabic-speaking people although they deal with Arabic neighbors very closely, e.g., Turkey, Iran, Cyprus, and Israel; (c) not all Arabic people are Middle Easterners, as is the case of the vast North African countries from Egypt to Morocco; and (d) not all Muslims are Arabic or Middle Easterners either since the largest concentration of Muslim population is found in Southeast Asia, like Indonesia, Malaysia, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, and other geographical locations around the world, e.g., former Soviet Union regions in Asia (cf. Abi-Hashem 2008, 2011b; American Psychological Association 2008; Jackson 1997; Zogby 2010).

Similar to other people of faith, Muslims can be practicing, devoted, and faithful or simply nominal, cultural, and even secular. There are also various branches and denominations within Islam, which provides room for diversity as well as for division among its population. Since the start of the War on Terror, many people in the West from an Arabic and Muslim descent became nervous and anxious, so they tried to keep a low profile. Some of them have changed their first or last names to avoid sounding more Arabic or Islamic in nature. However, others never felt

any negative impact from such polarization, and they kept their lives and activities as normal and routine. Virtually, when counselors and caregivers work with people from Arabic Middle Eastern heritage, it is important to find out about their cultural and religious identities, as well as the degree of easiness versus awkwardness they feel while living and functioning in the hosting society.

In the Middle East, the religious identity of people is part of their social identity. Unlike in the majority of the West, the relationship between what is religious-spiritual and what is communal-social is complimentary and intimate. A total division or complete separation between the two spheres is not the norm. However, people in urban settings function professionally and effectively in their field of specialty yet do not lose track of their sociocultural heritages and religious traditions, as they move in and out of them quite easily. They can readily incorporate and celebrate them within short notice. Mentioning God and using religious generic blessings are routine ingredients of any social greetings, common responses, and personal exchanges regardless of the person's religious affiliation or commitment, e.g., *Inshallah* (God willing), *El-Hamdellah* (thanks be to God), and *Allah Maak* (God be with you). For Arabic Middle Eastern people, the term *religion* has many connotations, dimensions, and functions. It could mean or refer to religious *faith* and personal *spirituality*, religious *tradition* and *customs*, religious *affiliation* and *association*, religious *doctrine* and *theology*, religious *values* and *morality*, religious *practices* and *rituals*, religious *culture* and *community*, etc., or combination of some of the above (cf. Abi-Hashem in 2013c).

Americans of Arabic and Middle Eastern descent are quite different from each other. Some are outgoing, competent, and fully integrated, and then less distinguishable from their average American counterparts, while others are reserved, unconfident, very traditional, and reluctant to merge within the hosting culture. Usually immigrants, refugees, and older adults struggle more with emotional regulation and cultural adjustment. The challenges they face are huge—learning a new language,

functioning within a new environment, and maneuvering new sets of freedom and responsibility—all the while keeping their uniqueness and staying loyal to their foundational values, religious faiths, and cultural traditions. Many of them have arrived from regions torn by wars, famine, persecution, sociopolitical conflict, or violence. Their painful memories and emotional scars are still fresh, which make them highly prone to severe anxieties, traumatic reactions, and marked depressions. They certainly need special attention in the forms of cultural coaching, therapeutic presence, and clinical counseling (Abi-Hashem 2011a, b; Amer and Hovey 2005; Hakim-Larson and Nassar-McMillan 2008; Zogby 2010).

There are some great resources available for the helping professionals who are working with individuals and families of various types and ages from Arabic Middle Eastern backgrounds. The following guidelines are samples of the many tips, insights, tools, and approaches that providers, counselors, educators, and caregivers will find in the existing literature to help them gain better understanding, acquire better awareness of themselves and the different others, and achieve better cultural skills so they may increase their cultural competency and counseling effectiveness (cf. Abi-Hashem 2008; 2013a; 2013b; 2011b; American Psychological Association 2008; Dwairy 2006; Erickson and Al-Timimi 2001; Kobeisy 2004; Nassar-McMillan et al. 2010):

- Inquire gently and take time to build trust and warm up the therapeutic visit. Middle Easterners expect friendly encounters and do not respond well to quick diagnoses or interrogative type of evaluations.
- Discover what generation they are (e.g., 2nd or 3rd) and help especially the newcomers to adjust and function well within the hosting society.
- Be faithful to what you learn from them as they expect you to honor that information.
- Do not interpret some of their silence or aloofness as resistance. Many are not familiar or comfortable with the therapeutic professions.

- Find out the nature of their cultural identity and degree of religious affiliation/commitment and how these inform their coping and adaptation.
- Guide immigrants to deal with any emotional residuals or unresolved issues they may carry over with them and acknowledge the acculturating hardship they face.
- Assist them to sort through their beliefs and lifestyles and then integrate some of their values, religious traditions, and heritage with the demands of a new society.
- Most elderly and traditional people look up to the therapist or caregiver as an expert and a person of authority, and they expect structure, guidance, and direct involvement and interaction (assign homework and exercises).
- Facilitate the resolution of any inter- and intra-cultural tensions that they may have intrapsychically, interpersonally, and interculturally.
- Guide them to formulate a sound cultural self, to expand their multilayered identity, and to utilize any religious resources they might have in their personal life and ethnic community.
- Assist them to maintain healthy family connections and intergenerational continuity but not to the extent of isolating themselves from the larger community.
- Help them navigate smoothly through the cultural intricacies and nuances of the American society.

## See Also

- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Grief Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Migration and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)
- ▶ [Religious Identity](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Sharia](#)
- ▶ [Traditionalism](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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## Countertransference

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Countertransference is the response, mostly unconscious, of a therapist, counselor, or other helper toward his or her patient, client, or helpee. In classic psychoanalytic theory, it is understood to manifest as distortions in the helper's perceptions of the helpee and at times irrational responses and behaviors toward him or her. In contemporary psychoanalytic and psychodynamic theory and practice, it encompasses all the thoughts, feelings, fantasies, reactions, dreams, bodily sensations, enactments, and other responses of the helper toward the helpee.

The term originates in relation to the complementary concept of the transference. Transference, first defined by Sigmund Freud (1912/1958a), is the unconscious mental activity in

which the patient unconsciously ascribes – or *transfers* – thoughts, feelings, motives, and behaviors from his or her own inner world, usually based on repressed experiences of one's parents from earliest childhood, onto the therapist or helper. Transference and countertransference form a complex dynamic between helper and helpee, in which interlocking projections, mutual identifications, and counterreactions can increasingly create a multi-textured unconscious relationship that has immediate (but often unrecognized) impact on the conscious relationship.

Traditionally, in Freud's formulation, the *countertransference* was considered to be hindrance to treatment, which depended on rational, clear-eyed, and reality-based diagnosis of the patient's irrational difficulties (1905/1953, 1910/1957, 1915/1958b). A therapist who had undergone his or her own thorough analysis was thought to be able to set aside irrational thoughts, feelings, and impulses and to maintain a calm, ego-controlled view of both him/herself and the patient – even (although Freud honored this mainly in the breach) “the emotional coldness of a surgeon” (Freud 1915/1958b). Countertransference in such a schema was considered to be a contaminant of rational diagnosis and a hazard to treatment. It had its origins in the therapist's own unresolved inner conflicts and repressed wishes, which required further analysis to “manage” the countertransference. Freud was strongly invested in this definition of countertransference, because it came to his awareness primarily through colleagues' giving in to sexual temptations in the face of patients' erotic transferences toward themselves – most notably C. G. Jung's intense relationship with his patient Sabina Spielrein (Carotenuto 1982). Freud's technical papers on transference and countertransference were written in response to the fear that the reputation of psychoanalysis – already under siege – could be permanently damaged if such sexual scandals and exploitation of patients became widespread.

As the concept was developed, it came to be understood as containing the influence of the patient's unconscious. Melanie Klein (1946/1975, 1952/1975), an analyst in Freud's circle

and eventual founder of an offshoot of psychoanalysis called “object relations theory,” noted that the patient could invoke or implant intolerable affects, fantasies, or other unconscious material in the therapist, who then would identify with it – a complex mechanism termed “projective identification.” Another later analyst Heinrich Racker (1968) considered the countertransference to be a kind of mirror reaction to the transference of the patient, which could manifest as either “concordant” (aligned empathically with the patient’s transference) or “complementary” (discordant with the patient’s transference).

In these theories, like Freud’s, the countertransference was still largely viewed as a distorting element that could impede the therapist’s view of the patient and therefore interfere with the treatment. However, more positive or expansive views were also being developed alongside Freud’s orthodoxy. As Jung developed his own mode of “analytical psychology” after the break with Freud, he also examined transference phenomena, viewing the countertransference (a term he seldom used *per se*) not only as the analyst’s internal conflicts and neurotic distortions at the level of the ego but as a well of access, via the transpersonal self, both to the patient’s archetypal material – even with the danger of becoming possessed by it – and the collective unconscious, an archetypal layer of shared human memory that could be tapped by both analyst and patient alike (Kraemer 1989). Jung’s writings on the unconscious and the subjectivity of the analyst (e.g., 1916/1928/1966c, pp. 286–290; 1916/1967, p. 87), on the therapeutic relationship as a dialectical process (1951/1966a, p. 116), and his image of the transference relationship as an alchemical bath in which both therapist and patient were immersed (1946/1966b) anticipated the more expansive contemporary view of countertransference by several decades. Freud also split with his Hungarian follower Sandor Ferenczi primarily over Ferenczi’s (1933/1955) insistence on “active technique,” in which close scrutiny of the analyst’s countertransference could yield

important emotional data about the patient and might also be disclosed to the patient.

In the 1950s, a more positive, or at least useful, understanding of countertransference began to be accepted. Paula Heimann, a patient and student of Klein’s, was the first to fully formulate a definition of countertransference as not only containing neurotic traces of the therapist’s own unresolved internal conflicts but receiving unconscious affective material from the patient via projective identification (Heimann 1950, 1960). This view was echoed in D. W. Winnicott’s (1949/1992) somewhat controversial essay “Hate in the Countertransference.” This view was taken up and became commonplace among British analysts from the mid-twentieth century onward, although it was primarily used as such only among Kleinian and object relations analysts (e.g., Bollas 1989; Casement 1986, 1992; and the American Kleinian Thomas Ogden 1994, 1997).

During mid-twentieth-century debates within classical and object relations schools of psychoanalysis, Otto Kernberg (1965) offered a summary of the two definitions within American psychoanalysis, distinguishing between the classical Freudian definition and his term “totalist countertransference,” i.e., countertransference as the sum total of the therapist’s reactions, conscious and unconscious, to the patient. However, the expanded definition did not come into common usage nor was countertransference a heavily investigated research topic in other branches of psychoanalysis until later in the twentieth century. Meanwhile, interest in the therapist’s subjectivity continued to grow, especially through Heinz Kohut (founder of Self Psychology, a significant offshoot of classical psychoanalysis in the latter half of the twentieth century) and his investigations into empathy as a form of “vicarious introspection” into the patient’s psyche and illuminating the patient’s self structure (e.g., Kohut 1971, 1982).

In contemporary psychoanalysis, countertransference came once again to the forefront of theory and technique through a new interest in intersubjectivity and postmodern paradigms of the permeability of self and other. Recent attention to the treatment of post-traumatic stress also



heightened clinicians' awareness of countertransference as a two-edged sword – both dangerous and also empathically informative – as split-off traumatic material is experienced by the therapist himself or herself, sometimes in the form of “vicarious traumatization” (Dalenberg 2000; Davies and Frawley 1994; Pearlman and Saakvitne 1995). Countertransference is now increasingly understood in its more comprehensive and positive definition. In current usage in most schools of psychoanalytic thought, countertransference and transference are generally understood as a continuum of conscious and mostly unconscious relationship, in which thoughts, feelings, fantasies, and impulses exist in a shared unconscious pool of intersubjective relationship. This view has been examined through extensive theoretical writing and case studies by writers in the relational psychoanalytic school (with its beginnings in New York, e.g., Davies 1994, 1996; Mitchell 2000), the intersubjective theorists emerging from Self Psychology (e.g., Stolorow et al. 1995; Stolorow et al. 2001), other Euro-American theorists (e.g., Loewald 1986), and some modern Jungians (e.g., Samuels 2003; Sedgwick 1994). This usage has spilled over into virtually all psychoanalytic and psychodynamic practice to date (e.g., Gabbard 1995; Gabbard and Wilkinson 2000; McWilliams 2004; Stevens 1986). In consideration of therapeutic ethics, *enactments* are considered inevitable in this understanding, not entirely preventable, but the therapist's maintenance of safe boundaries is still critical – not for the sake of neutrality per se, but because unanalyzed enactments can become collusive, harmful, and out of control. The asymmetry of roles and responsibilities between helper and helpee requires continued introspection and interpretation.

The relevance of countertransference for the psychology of religion is perhaps most closely seen in its fairly recent appropriation into pastoral psychotherapy and pastoral counseling (e.g., Collins 1982; Cooper-White 2004, 2007; Stengl 1996; Wagner 1973). As interest has shifted back toward psychodynamic and psychoanalytic paradigms, especially in their more contemporary

iterations, the concepts of countertransference and intersubjectivity have been reintroduced to the practice of pastoral care, counseling, and psychotherapy (Cooper-White 2004, 2007). Countertransference is also of interest in consideration of treatments in which therapist and patient have differing or even conflicting religions, theologies, and/or God-images (Cataldo 2008). Ana-Maria Rizzuto's (1981) work on the significance of individuals' God-images for understanding their inner object relations is as relevant in the countertransference as in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. The work of Henry Corbin, a French philosopher, theologian, and scholar of Sufism, has been read by Jungian analysts to connect themes of countertransference, the analyst's subjectivity, and Corbin's *mundus imaginalis* that underlies the spiritual imagination across cultures and religious traditions worldwide (Samuels 2003). Investigations into the countertransference as a central dimension of intersubjectivity have perhaps begun to open new avenues for the exploration of psychology and religion in a more phenomenological or Jamesian vein – i.e., the study of the variety of unconscious and intersubjective religious experiences among contested and multiple subjects and their g/Gods.

### See Also

- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Intersubjectivity
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Klein, Melanie
- ▶ Kohut, Heinz
- ▶ Object Relations Theory
- ▶ Post-Jungians
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Relational Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Self Psychology
- ▶ Transference
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Unconscious
- ▶ Winnicott, Donald Woods



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## Couples, Marriage, and Family Counseling

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The typical problems patients bring in for couples, marriage, and family counseling can be broken down into eleven primary categories: (1) sexual problems related to lack of intimacy; lack of desire and attraction; feelings of rejection, hurt, betrayal by a partner; traumatic histories of abuse and trauma causing dysfunction; internet pornography addictions, extra-marital affairs, polyamory; etc.; (2) intimacy and communication issues; partner is not expressive of emotions or feelings; (3) financial problems related to economic stress about the purchase or selling of a home; moving to a different location; travel, school, and career issues; (4) domestic violence, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse; (5) substance abuse; alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs; (6) religious conflicts in multi-cultural marriages; (7) how are the children to be raised, schooled, and disciplined; (8) parent-child relational problems; children's school-related issues; problems with drugs, disrespectful attitude towards adult authority, and peer group problems; (9) lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender counseling (LGBT); (10) premarital counseling; and (11) assessment of emotional disturbances such as anxiety and depression.

All of the above can be addressed through modeling of healthy communication skills, mirroring, and vocational assessment, as problems in relationship are often related to developmental issues, spiritual growth, in preparation for mid-life and old age, search for meaning, and the

final acceptance of the reality of death. Most of the above symptoms or complaints can be fit into criteria of neurotic conflicts; at bottom, they center on questions of purpose in life. The solution of problems for each individual member of a couple, marriage, or family can relieve neurotic suffering and symptomatology in the working relationship if the self-esteem of each person is valued and nourished. Absence of playfulness and lack of affect-attunement and insecure attachments are often at the roots of such problems; their roots go deep into childhood patterns, emotional injuries, isolation, loneliness, or loss of connection to Eros. The yearning for delight, happiness, and expansion, which couples and family members often do not get enough of, is sometimes sought in meaningless diversions, noise, and unsatisfying TV shows, rather than finding ways to enhance pleasure and peace in the partnership, or family connections, via quality time together in sports, camping, hiking, going to the city, or enjoying recreation in Nature.

The aim of the Counselor is to help heal emotional wounds, redirect conversation towards family system cohesion, set limits, and enhance laughter and meaning. Increasing appreciation for the gifts that couples can celebrate and feel gratitude for together is a primary part of the work. Also, chief amongst counseling goals is breaking down defenses that have hardened into anger, resentment, or patterns of withholding, so that the creative freedom to live life more fully can be made readily available. This requires a considerable period of discharge of toxic emotions, expressing and verbalizing negative feelings, and learning how to fight fairly or agreeing to disagree, settling for differences, or, if need be, divorce. This is why premarital counseling is so important, with a divorce rate above 50 %, to avoid the anguish and tragedy of separation and the excruciating pain of divorce. Premarital therapy can help prevent such a possibility by allowing the couple to work out conflicts *before marriage* and carefully assess the relative healthiness or sickness of the partnership.

By letting go of the ego in the larger interests of the Self in the relationship between couple, married partners, or family members, patients

may be reconditioned to come to see Love and connection as the main matter in the quest for spiritual fulfillment.

Amongst the most popular forms of counseling techniques to deal with couples issues today is Imago therapy created by Harville Hendrix (1988). The basic notion of this therapy is that we were all born whole, but became wounded during early development by primary caretakers. More, such injuries created a composite of pain in the personal or family unconscious that forms an Imago. Through the analytic dialogue, the Imago may be examined to help the couple work through unfinished issues from the family of origin that are standing in the way of completeness. This is one way of approaching such issues. But the theoretical foundation, on which the Imago is based, although often left unstated, is *Jungian*.

Jung (1953–1979) began his exploration into the empirical nature of affect-images (complexes) in Switzerland, and his ideas have had a large impact on the shaping of the analytical field. Complexes (affect-images) are formed through developmental trauma that splits off bits of the personality, which then forms an emotional core surrounded by affect that cannot be integrated into consciousness and creates an affect-image that may proliferate into mental disorders, dysfunctional behaviors, or enactments in individuals, families, or groups. This is what Harville Hendrix calls an Imago. To be depleted of their negative emotional charges, complexes (affect-images) need to be transformed through the reductive (regression to early childhood) and constructive (creative and future oriented) methods of analysis, fantasy-thinking, and symbolic language, sometimes employing methods of the expressive arts and sandplay. Typically complexes are experienced in the analytical matrix through projected *relational images*, and the task of the psychotherapist is to take them in and work with them in the analytic dyad, the therapist-patient relationship. Interpretations are based on what is being felt and experienced in the *attunement/misattunement patterns* between dyads or triangular arrangements. Once the complexes are stripped bare to the bone – to their causal origins in each person's adolescence,

childhood, and early infancy – if all goes well, a natural outgrowth of personality for each individual member in the treatment may happen.

The Jungian Marriage and Family Counseling method is a clinical practice that is used by many practitioners worldwide who utilize Jungian/post-Jungian concepts to guide their psychotherapy practices. “Post-Jungian” services are rendered according to clinical education, training, and experience requirements that include various counseling fields of clinical licensure or other educational certification tracks.

What do Marriage and Family Counselors have to offer the field of empirical psychology that other mental health practitioners typically do not provide in their wide range of clinical services? The main difference is the focus placed not on an Imago but on many *imagoes* in the personal, cultural, and transpersonal psyche; on a full assessment and evaluation of the regulative functioning or malfunctioning of myriad affect-complexes (or affect-images) and fantasy systems, coupled with an examination of future oriented dreams, as central channels for the Self’s emergence, in the family/couple/marital matrix. The Self, as the central archetype, or blueprint of wholeness in the human personality is Jung’s master concept for the main image (or Imago) of organization in the personality operating in marriages, partnerships, or families. Self-representations may be recognized and interpreted in the analytical container and allowed to unfold in known and mysterious ways over time. It is also by working with interpretation of psychological types in each individual that post-Jungians tend to excel as clinicians. The main instrument for assessing psychological types is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) (finding your blend of extravert, introvert, sensing, intuitive, thinking, feeling, judging, and perceptive types) and other relevant instruments.

Post-Jungians have an ear for *affect-attunement* and *affect-misattunements* and the aim of the therapist is to listen to and identify emotional tones in the verbal and relational communication patterns between the couple, married pair, or family members and trace the health or illness of these styles of communication back to

their emotional sources in the family of origin, extending back several generations. Once couples, dyads, or triads can see how they are attempting either to master or perpetuate old systemic conflicts arising from the families of origin, sometimes going back beyond the parents to the grandparents and great grandparents, they can begin to let go of dysfunctional styles of interacting and begin to sacrifice their ego-driven ways of relating to one another, in the interests of the larger needs for dyadic or group transformation. Post-Jungian Marriage and Family Counselors *listen* to currents of emotion and image that pass freely back and forth in communication patterns and form the chief sources of information for consciousness-creating narratives, used by the clinician in psychotherapeutic treatment.

The methods of complex analysis, dream interpretation, art, and active visioning techniques, not typically used in mental health institutions, may be utilized. It is also useful to explore creatively the personal and collective myths of the family members or couple. But by far the most commonly used technique in couples work is the teaching of active listening and the therapist’s use of himself or herself as a witness to change cognitive, behavioral, and emotional patterns. Often this requires a painful stripping away of defenses and a painful sacrifice of the ego through the therapist’s confrontation of neurotic styles. By returning patients in treatment to childhood through regressive work, patients may be enabled to allow personal complexes to surface along with creative patterns of destiny, which have been neglected or split off from the Self’s total functioning, and this may happen through the therapist’s directing the patients to keep a careful record of their dreams.

Dreams of a prospective nature may then emerge. Such dreams (or daydreams) tend towards a center, the Self, and their purpose is goal directed. The fundamental basis of such rational work, whether with children, adolescents, adults, couples, or family, is linguistic and poetic at its foundation. Reflecting on the meaning of symbols is one way the emotionally toned complexes may be made self-conscious. (In the language of psychodynamic, or family of

origin systems theory, such complexes are referred to as introjects.) Whatever the language used by the practitioner, image-based therapy is a primary vehicle for understanding a dream's, misunderstandings', or the symptom's meanings.

As the reader can see from the foregoing statements, the importance of the analysis of complexes or affect-images stemming from early childhood is of the utmost importance for the success of a couple, marriage, and stability of a family. The skilled practitioner is equally skilled at working on separation and divorce issues, which includes helping couples deal with grief, loss, anger, or a visitation plan that may involve the following of a court order in conjunction with guidance from a mediator.

Premarital counseling serves to address *potential* problems before they arise in a marriage and is highly recommended today in work with all partnerships, including same-sex arrangements. Agreements need to be made between couples regarding difficult issues, and in order to arrive at agreements, compromises often need to be struck. By shining a light on areas of difference before contractual arrangements become legally binding, couples are in a better position to assess the capacity of the partnership for change.

Finally, I will briefly cover the field of family therapy. Family therapy, as indicated above, involves an analysis of the total relational matrix. This means taking the focus off the identified patient and looking at the entire system, including, if relevant, the sibling dynamics of each individual in treatment and birth order. One of the Family Counselor's chief tasks in this work is to establish an immediate connection to the child or children in treatment so as to build trust and an open line of communication to the unconscious of the child centered on their emotional conflicts. Behavior problems and academic problems in children often have to do with a problem of improper mirroring by the parents and alliances need to be made to form an attitude of equality in the room, while supporting the parent's role as authorities. Teaching parenting skills is a part of this work.

Another task is to assess the stability of the child within the family matrix and to open up lines of communication between the child and the adults involved in the child's treatment. When working with an adolescent, such an assessment sometimes requires working with both parents in a divorced family, where the aim of the clinician is to try and establish as best as possible a collaborative relationship between the couple and to push the parents who sometimes are in disagreement about such concerns as discipline and where the child should live or what kinds of privileges will be assigned to agree on the treatment goals of the family.

The Couples and Marriage Counselor is faced with the unenviable task of having to make the family darkness (evil) conscious, which places not only the child but also the parents on the hot seat. This is a true act of modesty on the therapist's part that requires that she remain open to her wounds. This modality of healing is structured by the wounded-healer archetype. The MFT has chosen her profession from a fateful predisposition that calls her to this work. This lessened hierarchal approach brings a compassionate and respectful attitude to the treatment and a safe container for difficult issues to be confronted and for transformation and change to occur.

## See Also

- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Interfaith Dialog](#)
- ▶ [Psychological Types](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)

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## Creation

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In a religious context, the word “creation” refers to the cosmogonic moment or cosmogonic process or else, as a noun, to the manifest world. In modern terminology, we might speak of the former as the formation of the world or universe (usually in scientific terms from the “Big Bang” or some similar cosmic event) and the latter as the “environment.” In prescientific worldviews, it was usual to hold that life, humankind, the Earth, and the heavens were created in their original form by the action of a deity or deities, and the world at large was referred to as “the Creation,” the product of that Divine act.

The modern scientific worldview, and especially the theory of evolution, has undermined the simplest versions of these traditional beliefs, but religious people still understand the origins of the world and humanity in mythic terms, often along with rather than as antithetical to the scientific worldview. However, among some people these matters are still controversial and they insist upon a literal understanding of religious creation myths along with the outright denial of scientific theories. This view is usually styled “creationism.” Conversely, believers in the scientific accounts of the origins of man and the universe often regard these as a conclusive refutation of traditional religion and the existence of God. This controversy has been especially acute in the United States where proponents of creationism have challenged the teaching of evolution as an unquestioned truth in schools. Such proponents are usually guided by a literal reading of the account of the creation of the world in the Bible’s Book of Genesis.

Leaving aside literalist creationism, traditional religious and spiritual cultures use myths and symbols to explain the great mysteries of life. Mythic and symbolic accounts of creation

abound. The creation may be a deliberate act by the gods or it may be the result of an accident or miscalculation. It may occur in stages, as in the Genesis account of creation over 6 days, or it may take place in a single act, as in the Islamic account where God (Allah) merely makes a decree (kun = the verb “to be”) and it comes to pass. The creation may stem from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) or it may be presented as order being brought to preexisting, chaotic materials. It may be regarded as a gratuitous act by the Divine in which case the creation is said to be utterly other than the deity or it may be regarded as an act of Divine self-disclosure or self-externalization (*emanationism*). Very often in mythological forms found throughout the world, the creation is the result of a sexual, generative act such as the copulation of a sky god with an Earth Mother or sometimes by an autoerotic (*masturbatory*) act by a single deity or else instantaneous *parthenogenesis*. In other cases, analogies are taken from the animal realm, such as the primordial “world egg” of the Orphic cults of ancient Greece. In some traditions, a primordial god vomits up the creation or it results from some other bodily elimination.

In more philosophical cosmogonies, the root of creation might be sound or it might be light, it might be auditory or it might be visual. In the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist religions, the creation extends from the sacred, primordial syllable AUM (Om) which, like a seed, contains all things within it. Similarly, in Christianity, the Gospel of John proposes that “in the beginning was the (Divine) Word.” Alternatively, in many myths, there is first darkness and the creation comes about when a light (or fire) is kindled in the darkness; the darkness is dispelled and the forms of the world appear. The idea that light is the creative stuff of the cosmos is very ancient.

There are, in any case, countless variations and often diverse accounts within the same tradition. In the ancient Egyptian tradition, for instance, there were numerous creation myths existing side by side and it would be wrong to suppose that the Egyptians favored any one more than the others; each reveals different



understandings that are complementary to each other and presents different aspects of a total theology. Even in the Bible's Book of Genesis, textual scholars identify two accounts of creation taken from two earlier sources. In fact, the familiar account of creation over 6 days with which the Book of Genesis begins (called the Priestly account) is the latter of the two. The older account, now embedded in the second chapter of Genesis, is the story of the creation of the garden of Eden and of Adam and Eve. Some reckon the story of the Flood as another type of creation myth taken from Mesopotamian sources now found woven into the Biblical narrative. Many creation myths have water as the creative element; life and the world emerge out of the creative waters. According to some interpretations, such myths are related to human genesis from the waters of the womb. More generally, many creation myths depend upon parallels between human and cosmic birth.

Commonly, in many traditions, the deity who creates the world is presented as a lesser deity or a lesser aspect of the Supreme and transcendent deity, in which case he is usually called the "demiurge," a divine craftsman who crafts the world from raw materials according to a celestial model. In dualistic systems, this demiurge is often portrayed as evil since he brings into being the world of suffering and decay. In more positive accounts, he is said to be perfectly generous and the creation is a result of his overflowing generosity and beautiful handiwork.

In psychological terms, the point of creation represents the moment of ultimate potential and unlimited creativity. There are some modes of therapy – such as Arthur Janov's "primal therapy" – that propose a psychological return to the moment of birth or even conception. In the arts, artists will often seek an experience in which they feel connected to the moment of cosmic creation. A famous instance of this can be found in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's celebrated visionary poem *Kubla Khan* where the poet – under the influence of opium – is transported to a "fountain of creation" that is the source of creativity.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Genesis](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Om](#)

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## Creation Spirituality

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I begin my essay with an overview of Matthew Fox's autobiography *Confessions: The Making of a Post-Denominational Priest* to provide the reader with a sense of where Creation Spirituality had its roots: in Matthew's childhood experiences, experiences in Nature, readings, Dominican studies, relationships with Native Americans, dreams, vision quest, and his encounter with the California poet, William Everson. As the reader will see, *Confessions* is not only a personal memoir but a cultural memoir, a memoir of the world's coming to consciousness in an age of Transformation. First, let us begin with a brief definition. By "Creation Spirituality" Fox means a *fourfold path*:

1. *Via Positiva*, delight, awe, wonder, and revelry
2. *Via Negativa*, darkness, silence, suffering, and letting go

3. *Via Creativa*, birthing and creativity
4. *Via Transformativa*, compassion, justice, healing, and celebration  
(Fox 1996, p. 283).

All four of these paths suggest ways to human wholeness. Fox brings an early awareness into *Confessions* to the body. He links awareness of the body to cosmic history, in the supernova explosion that astrophysicists say occurred billions of years hence: an explosion of a star “that birthed the elements in our and other creatures’ bodies” during the big bang of Creation. This birthing became the starting point for his book *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. Yet, it was in Madison, Wisconsin, that Fox first sensed an “awareness of the Native American presence” and growing up in the Green State, he says he “often felt a spirit presence in the outdoors” (Fox 1996, p. 21).

This is a significant statement, for something of the Native American presence in the land spoke to Fox and continues to do so today, as it does so many Americans. Fox directs us all to look for our spiritual roots in an earth-based wisdom. It is this rootlike aspect of the archetype of Spirit and its ability to *embed* itself in the earth, Nature, and the world that to my mind can help make comprehensible Fox’s discovery of his own personal mythic vocation of cosmic spirituality.

This earth or cosmic Spirit he refers to is, I believe, shamanistic in its Native Ground. If I am right in my hypothesis, Fox’s narration of his subjective myth may be read as a story of our culture’s attempts to recover its religious roots in the indigenous traditions of primal peoples of the earth and in facts of modern science. Indeed, Fox sunk the roots of the creation-centered spirituality tradition (of Europe) into the very depths of the American earth, and it is in this sinking, of an intellectual notion into the earth, into what Meister Eckhart calls the “Godhead” that Fox achieved his vision of Creation Spirituality for the current era.

The roots of his quest may be found in Fox’s coming of age in the Dominican House of Studies in River Forest, Illinois, just outside Chicago (Fox 1996, p. 23). In an ironic twist of fate, Fox tells us he boarded the “Empire Builder” that took

him on a ride to the Far West, to a hermit colony on Vancouver Island (Fox 1996, p. 29), and it was there that Fox’s journey, from outer preoccupations with his Christian base, was traced to the source of all Cosmic Light: what ancient Hindus called the Self.

One cannot read *Confessions* without sensing connections between Fox’s vocation as a Dominican and his call as a post-denominational priest to bring Light to the world out of creation spirituality traditions, in a way that transcends the divide between Eastern and Western spiritualities. The journey to the hermitage and his contemplations of the Nature and Cosmic being are a quest to find his religious vision in Western-Eastern spiritualities. He found a bridge in the writings of the most transcendental Dominican preacher of Europe, Meister Eckhart, who Fox judges as “the West’s greatest mystic” (Fox 1996, p. 39).

It was not in America, however, that Fox came upon Eckhart’s works – but, rather, through his summons in the East and his calling to Paris, France, which came by way of a personal letter from Thomas Merton (Fox 1996, p. 41). It was in Paris, at the age of 26, that Fox met his mentor, Père Chenu, who lit his mind on fire and helped him understand the origins of Creation Spirituality, a term Father Chenu coined. Yet Fox’s tracing of his vocation to the spirits of Nature sound shamanistic to me, and it is clear that William Everson played a pivotal part in his process of self-discovery.

Since the Christ myth is only 2,000 or 3,000 years old, we must look deeper, I believe, to the shamanic traditions of the globe, for the precursors of Christ. Perhaps it was the shamans in whom the first cosmic visions of the Self were first incarnated that carved the deepest channels to the Cosmic Selfhood in the World Soul (Herrmann 2010)? Whatever the indigenous forces are that have shaped creation-centered spirituality in America, Matthew Fox has been aware of them, often to a marked degree.

Yet Fox, a theologian, not a shaman or medicine man, recognizes that healing is a natural part of the *Via Transformativa* and that it is really a priestly function to contribute, through

compassion and social justice, to the healing of the collectivity. And his “dream” of Creation Spirituality and the conscious extension of it offer a *cure* for what is ailing the West. It is my hypothesis that Fox was called by the “shamanic archetype” (Herrmann 2009, 2010) to administer medicine – the *Via Transformativa* – to his Dominican colleagues, an Institution of inspired and uninspired thinkers that had become disturbed in its collective functioning, since it had denounced the teachings of its greatest Christian mystics. Fox’s cultural call, vocation, was to bring the sacred mystical teachings back into the vestibule of the Church and to show, through his rereading of Eckhart, Aquinas, Hildegard, and other Christian mystics, how all religions are essentially related, how they all connect, at their roots, and where the future direction of religion might be tending. Fox has tirelessly demonstrated how all churches must eventually become ecumenical if they are to survive and how creation-centered spirituality is really our myth, a myth in which we, as a species, are currently living out our Fate or Destiny. Its roots, I believe, can be found in shamanism.

Fox’s time spent at the *Institut Catholique de Paris* was a time of cultural turmoil and revolution, and during this occasion of transformation, Fox was to play an instrumental role in attempting to alter the very structures upon which Christianity had been built. But Fox had no doubts that his work was in America. Although he happened upon the term Creation Spirituality in France, under Chenu’s tutelage, his calling was to discover the source of it, and this involved a re-rooting of his mind in the indigenous ground of North America, where his original experience of the numinous was, on our own continent: in lakes, trees, and woods, first awakened during his childhood and adolescent sojourns. Fox tells us he was actually visited by Meister Eckhart himself in a dream. He views this dream as the “most transcendent dream” of his life (Fox 1996, p. 105). What came out of the dream and his shamanic suffering of his Christian heritage is the creative birthing of the Institute for Creation Centered Spirituality (ICCS), in Chicago.

Fox informs us that at Meister Eckhart’s famous trial for heresy, the Rhineland preacher told the people present that we are all meant to “soar like eagles” (Fox 1980, p. 123). In Eckhart’s mystical tradition, Fox found his foothold, his fourfold path, as well as a beginning of his troubles with Rome (Fox 1996, p. 127). The source of this controversy really began to heat up with a talk he gave to “Dignity,” an organization of gay and lesbian lay Catholics in Seattle. This spirited talk planted the seeds for something ominous in the outworking of his career that he could not foresee, and it marks the major moment of inception of a vision that was to become central to the four paths of Creation Spirituality.

Little did Fox know, in giving this talk, what the reverberations would be in Rome and how these rumblings would send shock waves to Chicago, to California, and would eventually be felt in his life and in the lives of his faculty and students at ICCS. Like many of the big decisions that have come to him, the move of ICCS from Chicago to Holy Names College, in Oakland, California, was presaged by a dream that involved his quest for an indigenous “aboriginal mother love” that reveals his unconscious draw towards native regions (Fox 1996, p. 131). His dream depicts a descent to ancient pre-patriarchal religious sites. What Fox was seeking, at this time, is a personal and cultural healing of the lost connection between Western religion and science, a reconnection to the Goddess, and shamanism. During his journey West, he was seeking not only a cure for his personal wounds but also a cultural medicine (the *Via Transformativa*) for Western and Eastern religion as a whole.

During his mentorship under Chenu in Paris, Fox learned that our religions were not only troubled – they are sick; and in California, he found some of the medicine he was seeking to doctor at least some of the ills of Western civilization. Creation-centered spirituality aims to put us in accord with Nature and, as such, with the wisdom of the mother religions, the animals of the soul, and the lifeways of shamanic cultures. Fox tells us that the cure for the ailment of Western religion can be found in a “*spiritual*

encounter,” what William Everson referred to as “the essential genius of American spirituality” (Fox 1996, p. 133) as it was embodied and ennobled in the valiant fights of John Muir over the damming of the Hetch Hetchy. Everson saw Muir’s struggle to defend the American earth, its lakes, trees, and rivers, as “perhaps the chief turning point in the spiritual life of the nation.” Reading Everson’s seminal book, *Archetype West*, helped Fox understand his Christian vocation, as an American, like never before. “Nature is divine, the American soul was saying” (Fox 1996, p. 134), and the shamans of all nations had seen this to be true, thousands of years before Christianity.

Following the tracks of the shamanic archetype, at ICCS, Fox became deeply inspired by the Lakota spiritual teacher, Buck Ghost Horse, who was on the faculty there and bestowed upon him a sacred pipe (Fox 1996, p. 139). Following Cardinal Ratzinger’s letters of complaint to the Magisterium over his book *Original Blessing*, Fox was then forced to take a year of silence, and during this dark time, he let go and followed the natural flow of the path of the *Via Negativa*. This does not mean that he was inactive. For during this year of silence, he published *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*.

It was then that another chance occurrence filled him with an inner light of meaning. Fox was given a “medicine feather” of a vulture from New Mexico from a Lutheran pastor in a midwestern city, whose spiritual directors had been Native American shamans. Fox saw in the synchronicity of this event that his work had been to take what was dead in Christianity and recycle it, like a vulture (Fox 1996, p. 177). What gave Fox the fortitude to endure his trial of strength over his silencing was something inherent in the American earth itself, a fighting spirit ennobled in our American Bill of Rights: the Freedom of Religion.

Fox knew that the basic Christ principle is compassion and holding his Light to be a self-evident truth in the Bible, and with its knowledge, he set forth, courageously, to chart out his own vision, outside the Catholic Church, towards a path to a greater completeness. As a creative

response to the year of silencing, Fox was led by the Native American spiritual elder, Buck Ghost Horse, on a vision quest, where his vocation to combine Native American spirituality with Western mystical traditions reached an apotheosis point in his inner evolution. It was during a visionary experience, atop a lonely mountaintop, during his questing, that the shamanic archetype penetrated his psyche with the brute force of a revelation, and his vision of creation was enlarged by an embrace with the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America, Aztec, and Inca (Fox 1996, p. 189). During his vision quest, Fox was given by Ghost Horse an “eagle-defense prayer stick” to protect him from the negative inquisitional forces of the Vatican (Fox 1996, p. 192).

Following his illuminating and dark ordeal of the vision quest (most of the entire forest was illuminated), Fox was eventually led to Nicaragua, where he visited Ernesto Cardenal, a former student of Thomas Merton and an avid reader of Walt Whitman. Like the Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, and Jorge Borges of Argentina, Cardenal was deeply inspired by Whitman’s long-line technique of free verse in the writing of his 600 page *El Cántico Cósmico*. As he was working on his book *The Reinvention of Work* on March 3, 1993, where the subject of vocation was elevated to a universal principle, across all religious traditions, Fox received the infamous letter of expulsion from the Vatican, which is as much a tragedy for the Catholic Order of Dominicans as for Fox himself: they lost their most ecumenical theologian! Yet, the Dominicans were also amongst his best of friends. In a letter of appreciation for his book on Aquinas, sent from William Everson, Fox was consoled and celebrated for his many achievements, in the following compassionate words: “May God sustain you in this moment of triumph of your vocation” (Fox 1996, p. 216).

Part of Fox’s vocation, following his ordination as an Episcopal priest, has been to restore into Creation Spirituality the erotic mysticism that the Church has been lacking, including a warm embrace of feminism and homosexuality. For surely, a central part of the evolution of Western spirituality, Fox asserts, has been not

only to make it more ecumenical but also to make final “peace” with our sexuality (Fox 1996, p. 237). Fox is far ahead of his times in this regard – for the good news is that the revelations of the Holy Spirit did not end with Scripture or with the Doctrines of the Church; and what better place to extend the myth of Christ, and Christianity, than on the American continent, where the body was not divorced from Divinity (Herrmann 2010)!

What is needed, for our times, Fox feels, is the restoration of Christ’s animal body and his sexuality for the future reinvention of priestly work in America, and Fox has been at the center of a revolution in the West to begin this effort of reinventing the priesthood by flinging the doors of Christianity wide open to all people, believers and nonbelievers alike. As a post-denominational priest, Fox has come to realize that his vocation outside the gilded gates of the Vatican has been to make Creation Spirituality known to the world (Fox 1996, p. 245).

During the writing of his memoirs, at 53, Fox said about Catholicism and Protestantism: “we must both draw from these two traditions *and move beyond them*” (Fox 1996, p. 256). The movement beyond Christian denominations and creeds is a transport of our culture *beyond* traditional images of Christ to a spirituality that is more earth-based and therefore extra *embodied*. Fox’s fight to liberate sexuality, feminism, and deep ecology is what threatens the Church from its overly anthropomorphic views of the Bible (Fox 1996, p. 261).

When I read of the panentheism inherent in Eckhart’s writings in Fox’s book *Breakthrough*, I get a sense of the presence of Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Dickinson, Jeffers, or Muir, in the kind of mysticism Fox helps give birth to. What Fox has been seeking is a new priesthood, which can make room for *panentheism*: “New and ancient ways to midwife transcendence” (Fox 1996, p. 266). Coming full circle, from the cradle in Wisconsin, to France, to his spiritual return to his Native soil as an American, in California, following his encounter with Everson, Fox has come to see his role in society in the sacred lineage of religious teachers: “A time like ours – a transition time – is a time for old

images of God to be buried and new ones to emerge” (Fox 1996, p. 272). The new images of God that will help to shape the future are just beginning to emerge on the horizon, during the world’s crisis in faith in all three of monotheisms: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

From 1996 to the present, Fox has continued to expand his thinking about this. From my personal conversations with the priest, it is apparent that he has been at the forefront of American spiritualists in moving towards a new spiritual paradigm that could help bring further evolution to the God-image to include a wider embrace and to bring forth and reclaim the emergence of the healing powers of shamanism for the global community. He challenges symbolically the patriarchal monotheistic judgments towards the feminine and nature in all three monotheisms, and his aim is to help liberate us from the shackles of patriarchy.

If a new birth of Spirit is to come to age, the world will need to let go of the fundamentalism and literalism of the Hebraic God, Christ, and Allah that are threatening the global village with more un-Holy Wars. New images of God that are emergent from the depths of the earth during this tragic moment of the death of the three patriarchal gods – their institutional track record of absolutism, racism, sexism, homophobia, and inquisitionism – will have to make room for an emergent Spiritual Democracy (Herrmann 2010). This means that we will have to face the facts that there is plenty of sea room in the collective psyche for new images of the Spirit to emerge on a cross-cultural, transnational basis for each to find his or her place on a shimmering globe, spinning in endless Space. Such a vision of the transcendent unity of the human mind with the Ground of all Nature requires a descent into the earth, a movement “down” into the vast rivulets of the river of life.

This is a subject Fox takes up in *One River, Many Wells*, in what he calls “deep ecumenism,” a notion structured by Meister Eckhart’s metaphor of an Underground River, consisting in Fox’s mind, of many wells of the world’s religions all seeking their spiritual nourishment from its One matriarchal Source. Fox does not call the



Underground River the Cosmic Christ. He leaves Eckhart's metaphor intact for what it is: River within the earth. In fact, he often uses terms such as "Buddha Nature" for the "Cosmic Christ," and of course he also talks about "the goddess," the Divine Mother, the Sacred Feminine, the Black Madonna, etc., in his many books and essays, and especially in his newer book *The Hidden Spirituality of Men*. It is true that in the Cosmic Christ book, he uses the name ("Cosmic Christ") a lot, but that book is now 22 years old, and in it he proposes "Cosmic Wisdom" as an alternative title for those who carry too much baggage around the Christ movement. He also cites Thomas Aquinas on many occasions, who says "every creature is a name for God and no creature is a name for God" and Eckhart: "God is superessential darkness who has no name and will never be given a name." In this same tradition of the Apophatic Divinity, he also talks of the "Godhead," which is very different from God (as Being is from Action among other things). In Chapter 8 on the void and nothingness in *One River, Many Wells* and Chapter 5, on the multiple names for God, Aquinas and Eckhart and Fox suggest we simply can't understand the Divine with the mind. So, while some may feel that the Christ-image is not broad enough to include the spiritualities of the earth, Fox feels that the cosmic dimensions of Nature is large enough to contain us all, if we are open to further expansion of the Holy Spirit or the Buddha Mind in our lives.

It is perhaps his message of the cosmic Christ's and the Sacred Feminine coming into one's personal lives that might offer the brightest hope in the future direction of Christian religion, whether inside or outside the Church. For All religions have something important to teach us, Fox argues, and they are all still very *alive* today in the daily spiritual practices of billions of humans.

In Fox's California experience and his fortuitous encounter, through William Everson, with the writings of John Muir, an indelible mark was left on his spiritual inheritance that gave him a deeper appreciation of what the meaning of the Cosmic-Self archetype might be for the

postmodern era. The reuniting of Christianity with Native American shamanism and the science of the Cosmos is at the center of Fox's efforts to instill creation-centered spirituality into the hearts and minds of people who are searching for answers to questions regarding their crises in faith. His basic belief is that there are many wells (religions) to God, but only One River. Whether to call this River the Godhead or the Buddha Mind, or the Black Madonna, or the scientific term Cosmos is the central question I am left with from a post-Jungian angle. The Underground River and Cosmos are, of course, two distinct archetypes of one marvelous unitary phenomenon within the vast diversity of Nature, and what is most remarkable about Mathew's celebration of Creation Spirituality is that he fuses the "upper" Cosmic Consciousness with the "lower" chthonic, instinctual dimensions of psyche, mind, and Earth.

As a follower of Eckhart and his metaphor of the One River, Fox may lift our spirits and deepen us down towards a more feminine earth-based wisdom still: Gaia as our Mother-wisdom. By moving us to listen to the ancient wisdom and voices of the Goddess and Native peoples of the earth (shamans and medicine people), we will hopefully open our ears to God's cosmic music of the spheres and learn how to dance together a human tribe, before it is too late.

Fox's vision of Creation Spirituality instills hope in the future direction of the Christian religion because it is ecumenical at its roots. Only through the transformation of religion, as we have come to know it, will a new birth in spirituality come about. Fox appears to be at the forefront of spiritual change. The changes in our soul concepts have the potential to inaugurate a shift in focus towards deep ecology that may reverse the axis of the world, hopefully turning our overly patriarchal religious institutions upside down. In *The Hidden Spirituality of Men* Fox writes: "Archetypes, like stories, make demands on us" (Fox 2008, pp. xxi, xxiv) and then adds this emphasis: "A rebirth of culture and self comes from one's soul and not from institutions" (Fox 2008, p. xxiv). Fox is getting at the heart of a current debate in our world regarding



religious relativism. For Myths are, indeed, where changes in our soul concepts can be seen in their budding forms; Myths awaken us.

As I have indicated, Fox is at the cutting edge of spiritual transformation in American writing. His work is controversial, very much so. It challenges us! We may not agree with all of his ideas, but his books are essential reading, for anyone who wants to be informed about his myth of Creation Spirituality and what it has to offer to a world on the verge of spiritual Transformation. Towards this effort, Matthew has played an important part in the cosmic drama of evolution.

## See Also

- ▶ [Fox, Matthew](#)
- ▶ [Whitman, Walt](#)

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## Criminality

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Criminality is the state of “being” a criminal, a designation generally accompanied by social

stigma. A criminal is someone who commits a crime or, in other words, breaks or fails to comply with a law or rule. Implicitly then is the presence of a governing authority dictating law and enacting punishment for failure to adhere to it. The word crime originates from the Latin root *cernō* and Greek *κρίνω* = “I judge.”

How social criminality relates to breaches of divine law or covenant – sin in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or *pāpa* in Buddhism and Hinduism – has been complicated and contentious through the centuries. Roman Catholic canon, Puritan moral law, Islamic sharia, and Jewish halakah are examples of religious legal systems which claim absolute and all-encompassing jurisdiction over their adherents and yet must still navigate with political power structures and power-sharing with people from other or no faith. One has only to look as far as contemporary politics in the United States to see the line of demarcation between civil and moral laws, debatably able to be held as an abstraction, grow complicated, and even become erased in practical application as pathology, moral wrongdoing, and criminal activity become blurred: legal prohibitions against alcohol consumption, miscegenation, and homosexuality, being some historical and not-so-historical examples. Depth psychology complicates the matter even further, undermining the simplicity of legal and moral judgments by raising the possibility of motivations and impulses for criminal activity that lie outside the conscious self. What is one's culpability or moral responsibility for actions that result from forces outside one's conscious control, outside one's, in religious terms, free will? Despite his wisdom and incredible intellect, it was not his own decision making but a bigger fate – announced through a prophecy given by the Oracle at Delphi – that eventually dictated Oedipus's path and led to his tragic crimes.

A lot of energy has been put forth in psychological studies towards a new definition of criminality that incorporates the unconscious; the criminal and his/her unconscious has become a fascinating object of study. All of these accounts must take their place within the nexus of biological, psychological, and sociological factors.

Cesare Lombroso, a fin de siècle criminologist, thought criminality could be detected as biological degeneracy, which would appear in particular physiognomic features. Others were more inclined to see criminality as housed within psychic reality. It was this view that made Wilhelm Stekel optimistic that criminality could be cured or even eradicated through psychoanalysis, stating, “Perhaps this change of the social order will go so far that in times to come criminals will be analyzed instead of being punished; thus the ideal of a world without a prison does not appear as impossible to us as it did to a former generation” (1933).

Freud gave the famous and still clinically utilized depiction of the “pale criminal,” who commits crime out of an unconscious sense of guilt that expresses itself as a “need for punishment” (1916, see also Reik (1925) and Fenichel (1928)). Anna Freud discusses criminality that results from defused aggression (1972), while others (Alexander and Staub 1956; Bromberg 1948; Steckel and London 1933) will talk about criminality as the opposite end on the scale as a neurosis - a too-lenient superego that cannot to control criminal tendencies from the id. Melanie Klein will directly contradict this: rather than weak or nonexistent, she says, the criminal’s superego is overly strict, which causes the criminal to feel persecuted and seek to destroy others (1988/1934). Another tendency is to place criminality in an earlier, infantile stage of psychic development, whether in preoedipal rather than oedipal processing of guilt (Klein 1988/1927), a pregenital narcissism that is guided by wants and entitlement (Murray 1967) or a fixation in the anal-sadistic stage (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1978; Simmel 1920). Others, including Simmel, Westwick, and White, add an increased emphasis on the impact of physical and social environments, making room for an understanding of criminality as social protest. D. W. Winnicott links the criminal back to the deprived child, who once had and then lost something good enough from the environment (1984, 1987). Object-relations school will look at criminality in terms of the nexus of family and social relationships (Buckley 1985; L’Abate and

Baggett 1997). Criminal acts have been speculated to both as transitional phenomena that attempt to create communication and dependency (Domash and Balter 1979) and as an impasse-creating defense against emotional contact and relationship (Ferro). According to Lacan (1966), the criminal is one who mistakes the symbolic for the real. Lastly, new understandings of shame (Gilligan 2003) and of trauma have also fed into criminological studies, and a more complex understanding of how victims become victimizers; Sue Grand discusses the “catastrophic loneliness” caused by “malignant trauma” that perpetuates evil (2000). A tangential piece of these studies has been the evolving studies on the criminality of women – back in interest these days in the USA due to rapidly increasing rates of female incarceration.

## Analysis

These studies, while useful towards increasing understanding and implementation of the knowledge of the unconscious, are at their weakest when they profess a definitive characterization of the criminal; taken in their entirety, it seems obvious that the question of what we do with the bad in ourselves and how we contain or act on urges to hurt others are as unique and individual as (and connected to) Freud’s Oedipal gateway or Jung’s process of individuation. What is not unique, depth psychology and religion suggest, is that they are present. The earliest founding story of the Abrahamic traditions, which of the fall from the Garden of Eden, although interpreted differently by different traditions, is based in the concept of a primal crime, inherited by all people. (Freud too, in *Totem and Taboo*, narrates a creation myth in this vein.) According to most interpretations of these stories, who we are as people is born out of a criminal act, and in effect, in religious terms, our “fallenness,” as well as the potential for further criminality, lies in every one of us. In the words of Ferenczi: “I must look for the cause of my own repressed criminality. To some extent I admire the man who dares to do the things

I deny to myself” (qtd. by Costello 2002). Or Dostoevsky: “Nobody in the world can be the judge of the criminal before he has realized that he himself is as much a criminal as the one who confronts him” (1957). Or Jesus: “And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the plank in your own eye?” (Luke 6:41–42, NRSV).

Seeing the criminal as an object of study, then, has the potential to reify him/her as a subjective other, separate and quantitatively different from the investigator. It is important to ask what function morality is serving, who is doing the judging, and when do those human authorities benefit from remaining unquestioned or invisible or equated with the divine. Also, there is further thought to be done on the process of transformation from crime (action) to criminal (person) – when actions designated as “good” or “bad” designate people as inherently “good” or “bad.” DeGrazia writes that society has a stake in maintaining the clear split between “good” and “bad,” arguing that we need the preservation of order and of our ability to make decisions based on knowing who is bad and who is good (1952). Perhaps, yet we cannot pretend that we live in a world without principalities and powers. William A. White writes that “the criminal becomes the scapegoat upon which [man] can transfer his own tendency to sinfulness and thus by punishing the criminal be deludes himself into feeling a religious righteous indignation” (1966, see also Menninger on the desire for vengeance). Neil Altman lists criminality, along with exploitation, greed, unrestrained sexual passion as displaced by white people on to persons of color.

Lastly, studies focusing solely on the individual criminal can have the unhelpful consequence of obscuring the equally if not more relevant criminality of groups, societies, and nations. Jerome Miller criticizes psychologists and other social scientists for their complacency towards an emphasis on individual pathology, being willing to provide “the labels necessary to proceed with the most punitive recommendations available” (2001). Even some laws may in fact be criminal, as advocates against segregation, apartheid,

systems of colonialism would historically attest, and as opponents of, for example, the Rockefeller Drug Laws in New York State would argue today.

Religion must answer to Freud’s criticism of it as an agent of moral repression; it must decide how much of its function is indeed in reinforcing prohibitions or how much it also has a stake in providing a new space with which to evaluate the power structures, a separate authority that may trump improper usage of power and inequitable power structures. Historically, it has been the mechanism by which good and bad are kept far apart, and inequities are maintained, as well as the voice of conscience that, for example, led a few pastors to resist Nazi power, even by becoming criminals. Perhaps there is something to be said for breaking the rules. Jung took issue with religion aligning itself too much with the “good.” Freud (1910) criticizes him for suffering from the “vice of virtue.” He writes, “One must become a bad character, disregard the rules, sacrifice oneself, betray, behave like an artist who buys paints with his wife’s household money or burns the furniture to heat the studio for his model. Without such a bit of criminality there is no real achievement.”

## See Also

- ▶ Evil
- ▶ Original Sin
- ▶ Sin
- ▶ Taboo

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## Crisis Pastoral Counseling

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## Crises

A crisis is an acute emotional and/or spiritual state, which persons perceive as overwhelming despite the use of typical coping methods and resources. Extraordinary or even hazardous events are not crises in themselves; the self-appraisal of being unable to cope is essential. Individuals, families, or groups can experience crises. Due to the frequent spiritual or religious dimension, persons in crisis often approach pastors and pastoral counselors for assistance.

Crises last no more than a few weeks. Since the level of anxiety and pain is not sustainable for

a long duration, individuals and systems will reestablish a homeostasis. The outcome can be adaptive: a return to a similar precrisis functioning. Following significant crises, it is more likely that persons will either grow – as a result of learning new coping skills and/or developing new resources – or persons will function less effectively. Therefore, crises are frequently seen as danger and opportunity. Because persons in crisis are not coping well on their own, prompt, effective intervention is crucial for reducing the negative impact, maximizing the possibility of second-order change, and increasing resilience for future distressing events.

## Assessment

The assessment process of a crisis is intrinsically connected to its resolution. In the initial session or contact, caregivers must evaluate the potential for harm. Direct, clear questions are used to appraise the threat of suicide, ongoing abuse, assault, or other victimizations. If the risk of injury or death is high, the threat needs to be reduced. In hazardous situations, pastors and pastoral counselors may face ethical choices regarding the limits of confidentiality and intervention. Utilizing a hierarchy of needs, other vulnerabilities should be evaluated to help persons in crisis prioritize their response. These assessments and immediate interventions to address risks serve to stabilize the situation.

Helping persons determine whether they are in crisis involves an examination of attempted methods of resolution and resources utilized. This review may produce new options. The counselor should also explore how persons have coped in previous predicaments, using a question like, “When you’ve been overwhelmed before, what has helped you?” Strengths and an understanding of what coping methods haven’t been attempted this time may be identified.

Even if solutions don’t arise, the evaluation process can produce a change in the construal of the situation, reducing or even suspending the crisis. Persons often feel less overwhelmed when they can view their situation from a new

perspective. Research indicates that the most important factors for a positive outcome from a crisis are past resolution of crises or other significant challenges, perceived ability to resolve the current crisis, and strong social support (Hoff 2001). Therefore, reinforcement of self-efficacy and the identification of potential support systems are primary goals of crisis counseling.

There are several “*categories*” of crises, any of which of which can contribute to the perceived inability to cope. Although there is a tendency to label a crisis using a precipitating event – e.g., a midlife crisis – other factors frequently play a critical role, as was seen in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Assessing each of these dimensions produces a holistic understanding of the precipitating origins of the crisis.

*Situational* crises tend to be unanticipated. If choices contributed to the situation, a counselor may need to help the persons explore the resulting guilt and/or shame. Survivor guilt is another common component of situational crises when death occurs. Pastoral counselors are particularly suited for these troubling aspects (potentially present in all kinds of crises) because of the redemptive, hopeful, and forgiving dimensions of religion. Types and examples of situational crises include:

- Disasters and other environmental events, from both natural and human origins
- Personal – illness, injury, unemployment, failure, material loss
- Relational – death, divorce, rape, interpersonal conflict, change in support system

*Developmental*. Although ordinary transitions might be partially anticipated, persons may not have prepared for their impact. Particular characteristics of a developmental event often contribute to the likelihood of a crisis: timing, e.g., atypically early or late parenting; duration, e.g., longer menopause; and the level of expectation that the transition would be challenging. Pastoral counselors may want to utilize religious rituals, which are potent resources for crises that include developmental components. Religious communities are also valuable support systems, serving a preventative and ameliorative function of developmental crises.



Sociocultural factors are often overlooked, particularly when the counselor is from a different social location. Discrimination, oppression, a systemic “Catch-22,” and economic downturns are common examples. A systems analysis is a useful method for evaluating this dimension. Often persons, groups, or institutions who should be supportive are contributing to the crisis, due to the roles of the persons involved. Power dynamics also need to be examined to identify limitations to efficacy. In many cases, persons who have experienced a crisis find solace in addressing the injustice of the sociocultural dimension.

*Religious/Spiritual.* Those who are acutely distressed frequently look toward religious beliefs to make sense of their experience. Confronted with their finitude, they seek meaning and a sense of control over their circumstances. However, as Pargament (2001) has described, some styles of religious coping are more effective than others. For example, belief systems that have little internal locus of control are associated with poorer problem-solving skills. A crisis of faith may ensue in any theology when transcendent assistance or presence is not evident as expected. Questions of theodicy arise and may be the primary source of distress. Even for those who are less formally religious, existential threats to freedom, personal identity, and the meaning of life may be experienced as deeply spiritual conflicts. The pastoral counselor may need to help a person assess the level of congruity among one’s worldview, practices, and embedded beliefs.

These four categories are not completely discrete and can be concurrent. For example, in addition to the apparent sociocultural and religious dimensions, the calamity of September 11, 2001, resulted in intrapsychic/systemic vulnerability that for many people raised profound spiritual questions.

Regardless of the precipitating events, people in crisis typically have experienced a loss, or the threat of loss, of something considered important. The crisis counselor will want to help them understand what has been lost, types of which include material, relational, intrapsychic, functional, role, and systemic (Mitchell and Anderson 1983).

## Intervention

Establishing rapport with those who are overwhelmed requires a safe environment. Physical well-being, initiated via a risk assessment, is connected to the trust necessary for persons to feel emotionally secure enough to reflect up their distress. Reassurance that “everything will be ok” is ineffective and unadvisable. Even those in crisis usually recognize empty guarantees; in some circumstances, such assurances may lead to poorer decisions. Calm, clear communication increases the sense of safety and builds emotional attunement. Spiritual grounding is a particularly valuable resource for helping the crisis responder not overreact to anxiety. Recognizing and accounting for sociological and situational differences, including values and relational patterns, increases the effectiveness of communication.

Crises can be stressful for a caregiver, creating uncertainty as to what to do. However, respect and concern are relatively easily communicated; one need not fear saying the wrong thing even in hazardous situations like a suicide threat. Crisis counseling involves a more direct, interrogative style of engagement, particularly in assessing the nature and scope of the distress. Nevertheless, questions that can be answered with yes or no generally limit rapport. A caregiver also should steer clear of questions beginning with “why,” which may unintentionally assign blame and create unnecessary defensiveness. Although the crisis counselor seeks to make a distressed person feel understood, use of the phrase, “I understand” might be perceived as denying the uniqueness of the person’s situation.

The assessment process generally identifies concrete problems that contributed to the crisis. An intervention plan should be developed collaboratively to maximize the sense of self-efficacy. Doing something for persons that they could do for themselves is not empowering and may decrease the sense of being able to cope effectively.

Reinforcing personal and social strengths increases resilience, thus serving a preventative function. The pastoral counselor may sensitively encourage the use of religious and spiritual



resources, which not only provide comfort and strength but also help persons make sense of what has happened. One must work with the particularity of embedded beliefs, symbol systems, and relationality (Doehring 2006). As a distressed person reflects about the meaning of what has happened, it is important to listen for destructive narratives, which unnecessarily blame oneself (associated with shame) or others (scapegoating). Ameliorative and life-giving practices such as reconnecting with others and with one's core values are a critical goal. Religious communities also can model such a deliberative theology, by engaging difficult issues before crises arise.

A primary goal of the counselor is to limit the extent to which a crisis is experienced as a trauma. Persons react instinctively to traumatic events, which are severe threats to their well-being, identity, or spirit. The stress of the flight, fight, or freeze mechanisms can have long-term physiological, emotional, and spiritual effects (Yoder 2005). These potential consequences include radical suffering in which a person's own sense of humanity is diminished (Farley 1990). The report of unbearable distress for long periods is a sign of traumatization. The mere establishment of new coping mechanisms or resources will not return them to precrisis functioning and may not prevent destructive acting out or acting in. Even empathy, problem-solving, lamentation, and eschatological hope may not be sufficient for healing; justice is often required, especially for traumatized communities. Crisis counselors also must be aware of potential secondary trauma, especially when dealing with victims of violence or events that may resonate with the counselor.

## See Also

- ▶ Dissociation
- ▶ Evil
- ▶ Existential Psychotherapy
- ▶ Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Grief Counseling
- ▶ Hospice
- ▶ Liminality

- ▶ Meaning of Human Existence
- ▶ Religious Coping
- ▶ Rites of Passage
- ▶ Solution-Focused Counseling
- ▶ Spiritual Emergence
- ▶ Theodicy
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Vicarious Traumatization

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## Crucifixion

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Crucifixion (from Latin *crux*, cross) is a method of execution in which the condemned is tied or nailed to a cross, pole, or tree and left to hang until dead. It was employed in ancient Rome until Christianity became the state religion in the fourth century and has been used, less commonly, in various places around the world to the present day.

Christ's crucifixion is described in all four gospels and is pivotal to the Christian understanding of redemption. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). In Christian faith, Christ overcame sin and death on the cross; hence the cross becomes for Christians the symbol of life and hope.

Psychologically understood, crucifixion can be seen as the acceptance of personal suffering and the consequent realization of one's own individuation, when the ego becomes a part of the self. When Jesus on the cross cries out in the words of Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" he portrays, in psychological terms, a crucial phase of individuation. Jung wrote, "Since 'the soul is by nature Christian' this result is bound to come as infallibly as it did in the life of Jesus: we all have to be 'crucified with Christ', i.e., suspended in a moral suffering equivalent to crucifixion" (Jung 1953).

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Cultural Psychology

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Cultural psychology represents a middle stage of psychological reflection between cross-cultural and indigenous psychology. All of them to various degrees take into account the fact that the cultural context in which an individual operates makes a difference for their perception of the surrounding world.

## Migration and Acculturation Strategies

The cultural diversity of the world represents an obvious fact for any observer. This fact becomes even more salient when people of different backgrounds meet through both voluntary and involuntary migrations. Migration implicates acculturation changes that result from the fact that people of different cultural background come into face-to-face contact. These changes pertain to both groups. Different theoretical approaches stress the fact that cultural groups involved in acculturation might display different level of agency, as well as the fact that the acculturation process might be unidirectional or bidirectional (Rudmin 2003; Sam 2006). There are four general strategies of acculturation: *assimilation* when individuals adopt a new culture and simultaneously abandon the original cultural identity, *integration* when individuals opt for maintaining the original culture and also

adopting the new culture at the same time, *separation* when individuals maintain the original culture without seeking contacts with the new culture, and *marginalization* when no contact with the original culture is maintained and when contact with the new culture is possible. No matter what acculturation strategy is selected or possible, individuals involved in the process experience both shared similarities and marked differences between themselves and others.

The newest model of acculturation strategies *Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM)* has been developed by group of Spanish scholars (Navas et al. 2005; Navas et al. 2007) who were researching acculturation of both African immigrants and local population in the south of Spain. Research results permit to specify seven separated domains in which different acculturation strategies might be adopted. They are the following domains: first, *political and government system* which represents social structure and hierarchies in the society; second, *labor and work* which is organization of the professional activities; third, *economic* representing earning and spending activities; fourth, *family* which described both strategies of reproduction but also system of raising children; fifth, *social* which is network of relations outside family bonds; sixth, *ideological* formed from philosophical or religious representation of the surrounding world; and, seventh, *religious* beliefs and values. Major value and novelty of the model stays with the fact that it creates space for analysis of simultaneously existing acculturation strategies (in both hosts and guest population) which are domain specific rather than universal. *RAEM* provides also a tool for better understanding why changes in some domains proceed at different pace, for example, why migrants relatively quickly adapt to political and economic realities of the new country, while family and religious conviction remain pretty untouched by changes in their living environment.

### Reasons of Bias in Academic Psychology

In spite of this reality, psychology as an academic discipline is mostly pursued from one specific

perspective, i.e., that of western scholars. Such a situation leads inevitably to ethnocentric attitude towards encountered diversity. The concept *ethnocentric* has been introduced by William G. Sumner in 1906 (Berry et al. 2002). It describes the tendency for using norms of one's own group as the model for perceiving other groups. The behavior of others gets evaluated and judged via one's own system of standards for what is deemed correct and proper. The assumption is supported by what is sometimes referred to as the principle of "psychic unity" of humankind, i.e., the conviction that there is a central processing mechanism inherent in all human beings and therefore that perceived diversity between people is inconsequential. The central processor remains context and content independent. Such a perception of human nature is supported by the reality of who and where the majority of psychological research takes place.

A recent content analysis study of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* has clearly pointed to the fact that 99 % of the articles were written in the West, with 92 % of the articles coming from the United States and Canada (Quinones-Vidal et al. 2004). Theories, data, and research methods are also rooted in Western tradition. One might say that research is conducted on samples drawn from a population which is nontypical for the majority of the world's population, or even more so it can be considered as anomalous because of the differences related to wealth, individualism, and secularism. Analysis of articles in leading psychological journals in the 1994–2002 period in which culture appears as one of the keywords demonstrates that in journals devoted to experimental and cognitive psychology, this is the case for 1, 2 % of the articles, in journals for clinical psychology 4, 3 %, for developmental psychology 4, 3 %, and in journals for social psychology 4, 8 % (Norenzayan and Heine 2005).

Psychologists became concerned about the underestimated role of culture in their discipline in the 1960s. Concept of culture "usually refers to a particular group of people and includes their values, or guiding principles, and behaviors, or

typical activities. Those values and behaviors are symbolized in the things that the group of people produces, such as art, music, food, and language. All those things are passed down from generation to generation” (Mio et al. 2006, p. 6).

### Approach from the Perspective of Cross-Cultural Psychology

The beginning of a new field of psychology, cross-cultural psychology, which started to take seriously the cultural diversity of humanity, can be linked to the first journals in the field: *The International Journal of Psychology* in 1966 in Paris and *The Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* in 1970 in the United States. The main questions raised by psychologists representing this field pertain to the problem of to what degree western psychological theories describe accurately experiences and behaviors of people who are born and raised in other cultures and whether there are any culture-specific psychological constructs.

Cross-cultural psychology conducts research on the similarities and differences of people coming from different cultural and ethno-cultural groups. It also analyzes relationships between psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors, as well as changes in these factors (Berry et al. 2002). Research conducted from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology is comparative. It is conducted in two or more national, ethnic, or cultural groups. Differences found in these groups are explained by cultural characteristics of the groups. Cross-cultural psychology uses two kinds of concepts: *etic* (universal) and *emic* (local). *Etic* represents concepts which are universal in all cultures (all cultures have some kind of language, art, family structure, mythology, rituals), while *emic* represents elements which are unique to a given culture. For cross-cultural psychologists, culture serves as an explanatory tool for encountered differences. A major concern of cross-cultural psychology is to find research methods that allow for the “psychic unity” of humanity to be revealed in spite of cultural differences between people living in

different contexts. Lots of efforts are placed in finding test materials and research tasks that can be used across cultures.

### Approach from the Perspective of Cultural Psychology

Cultural psychology represents an attempt to take culture more deeply into account. In contrast to cross-cultural psychology, it does not presume the premise of “psychic unity” that to some extent permeates approaches of cross-cultural psychology. According to Richard A. Shweder (1991), “Cultural psychology is the study of the way cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express, transform, and permute the human psyche, resulting less in psychic unity for humankind than in ethnic divergences in mind, self, and emotions” (p. 1). For cultural psychology humans are constructing meanings in a sociocultural environment. This environment becomes an intentional world. Objects existing in the world are receiving meaning through human involvement with them and reactions to them by members of given culture. “Cultural psychology is a study of intentional worlds. It is a study of personal functioning in particular intentional worlds” (Shweder 1991), p. 3) An individual can be understood correctly only in the surrounding of her environments. The role of the psychologist is to discover both the meaning which gets attributed by an individual to her environment and the influence of this environment on the individual. What cultural psychology shares with its predecessor cross-cultural psychology is the fact that the majority of the research has been conducted by western scholars, applying western-based psychological concepts and theories assuming a universal character (Gregg 2005).

### Approach from the Perspective of Indigenous Psychology

Criticism of universality in psychological theories came from psychologists from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, who had

been trained in the West. Upon returning to their countries of origin, they faced problems and numerous difficulties when attempting to apply supposedly universal theories in their home setting. These difficulties have stimulated a desire to create more adequate means and methods based on the understanding “that each culture should be understood from its own frame of reference, including its own ecological, historical, philosophical, and religious context” (Kim et al. 2006, p. 5). A review of various definitions of indigenous psychology points to the fact that “the definitions all express the same basic goal of developing scientific knowledge system that effectively reflects, describes, explains, or understands the psychological and behavioral activities in their native contexts in terms of culturally relevant frame of reference and culturally derived categories and theories” (Yang 2000pp. 245–246). Indigenous psychology advocates a descriptive approach according to which it is necessary to first understand how people function in their natural context. The need for such an approach comes from the fact that some of the cultural facts present in a specific cultural context cannot be understood correctly unless analyzed from the perspective of that cultural context. An example of massive decline of church attendance of Polish immigrants after their arrival to Great Britain (statistics provided by the Polish Catholic Mission in Great Britain claim that only 8 % of Polish immigrants practice their religion while in Britain, with the remaining 92 % loosening their ties with Catholicism) cannot be correctly understood without analyzing the cultural differences in which religious practices are taking place in Poland and in the United Kingdom. The important aspects here of being in a new cultural context are multiculturalism and religious heterogeneity in Britain as contrasted with cultural and religious homogeneity in Poland, flexible and private patterns of religious practice amongst the native British population in contrast to the strong pressure in Poland to attend religious services because of a feeling of national identity based on religious affiliation (Poles-Catholic) and boredom and lack of understanding for Poles when experiencing English-language

church services in Britain, instead of services conducted in the mother tongue in Poland. In conclusion, for both research on and psychological clinical services that address human religiosity taking place in different contexts, both cultural psychology and indigenous psychology seem to offer a much more promising ground than cross-cultural psychology.

## See Also

- ▶ Migration and Religion
- ▶ Religious Coping
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Syncretism

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## Culture Heroes

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Most cultures have culture heroes. Typically, the culture hero assists the creator by living with the newly created humans in the world and teaching them religious rules and ceremonies and ways of survival. In short, the culture hero, unlike the warrior hero or the questing hero, establishes the community's institutions and traditions; he literally establishes "culture." This is not to say that the culture hero cannot also become a warrior or a questor. The culture hero sometimes takes the side of the people against the creator. In the interest of his people and their survival, he can, for instance, steal fire, as Prometheus does from Zeus. Or he can be a trickster who sometimes introduces unpleasant aspects of human life. Coyote, in a Maidu Indian myth, brings death. In matrilineal cultures the culture hero can be female, as in the case of the sisters "Life Bringer" and "Full Basket," who teach the Acoma Indians how to live.

Often the culture hero's powers can be attributed to divine origins. He can be conceived miraculously through divine intervention in the human world. This is the case with Jesus and the Buddha, both in a sense culture heroes, as they teach the people new ways of survival, albeit

spiritual rather than material survival. Culture heroes make their societies safe by struggling against monsters and can even die for their people, sometimes transforming themselves into food that will ensure survival, as in the case of Jesus, who becomes spiritual food, or the many Native American versions of Corn Mother or Father, who become sustenance for the body.

The culture hero, then, nurtures the given culture and, metaphorically, *is* the culture, the ultimate embodiment of what the culture is. It is this fact that leads to the psychological meaning of the culture hero. The culture hero embodies the very soul of a culture. He represents much more than the ego, the central reference point of the collective consciousness of the culture. Rather, he is the embodiment of the culture's Self, i.e., the collective totality of the culture's unconscious and conscious psyches, fighting the monsters that live within us all and establishing the balance and reason we need to survive in the world. To give an example, Carl Jung wrote of the Christ as the symbol of Self, and insofar as Jesus can be seen as a culture hero, he becomes for Christians the Self, the wholeness which individuals and the culture as a whole strive to discover within. The same could be said of Muhammad for Muslims or Manabozho for several Native American groups or the Buddha for Buddhists. Ultimately, the culture hero is who we are or who we could be. The culture hero is Self-knowledge.

### See Also

- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Cupid and Psyche

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### Myth of Cupid and Psyche

The myth of Cupid and Psyche (Cupid is sometimes known by his Greek name, Eros, and is sometimes called Amor, meaning “love”) is a story within the longer story of Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*. This longer story is a witty, obscene, and ultimately religious tale of bodily and spiritual transformation. Within it, the story of Cupid and Psyche ends with the transformation of the human princess Psyche to goddess. Psyche was the youngest daughter of a king and queen who offended Venus, goddess of beauty and sexuality, by claiming that she is no more beautiful than their child. Venus sent her son, Cupid, to make Psyche fall in love with the worst of men, but he fell in love with her instead. Apollo’s oracle prophesied that she would marry a monster and when her parents left her on a mountaintop to meet her fate, Cupid had her brought to his palace where they lived blissfully. Psyche never saw her husband and only met him at night in bed. If she had been able to endure this condition until she gave birth to their daughter, it would have been lifted and she would have become a goddess. Psyche’s two jealous elder sisters visited her and persuaded her that she was married to a monstrous snake, which she must kill. Psyche took a lamp and knife, but when she saw the glorious god asleep in bed, she fell deeply in love with him, wounding herself on his arrow. She burned his shoulder with a drop of oil from the lamp and Cupid left, reproaching her for her disobedience. Psyche sought the aid of the gods to find her beloved Cupid, but in vain, until the angry Venus set her the task of sorting a heap of seeds, an impossible task for a human that was achieved for Psyche by some helpful ants. Then Venus ordered her to fetch some wool from her lethally aggressive golden sheep. A reed of the stream advised

Psyche to wait until evening when the sheep were calm, and then she picked up the wool that the sheep had lost in the field. The next task was to bring water back from the source of the Styx, fatal river of death, and here Psyche was helped by Jupiter’s eagle. Finally Venus sent her to the underworld to bring back a box of beauty from Persephone. This time Psyche was helped by a tower which told her how to enter the underworld and leave it safely, taking coins for the ferryman and bread for the guardian dog, Cerberus, and instructed her not to aid the dead who would plead for her help from the waters of the Styx. Following this advice, Psyche gained the box but opened it along the way and fell unconscious. She was brought back to life by Cupid, and Jupiter raised her to goddess. Their child was Voluptas (“pleasure”).

### Neoplatonic Interpretation

Apuleius, who wrote this story in the second century CE, was educated in Platonic philosophy at Athens and deeply interested in the Egyptian mysteries of Isis and Osiris; the main story ends with initiation into these mysteries. Apuleius’ tale of Cupid and Psyche has long been understood as a Neoplatonic allegory of the ascent of human consciousness from earthly to divine love. In another of his works, the *Apologia*, Apuleius speaks of two Venuses, one the goddess of carnal love and the other of a higher form of love. “Psyche” is a Greek word which had by Apuleius’ time become roughly equivalent to the Christian term, “soul.” Classical representations of Psyche show her with butterfly wings, alluding to her transformation to goddess. To interpret the whole myth of Cupid and Psyche in terms of the Neoplatonist ascent of human consciousness, however, divests it of *The Golden Ass*’s sexual urgency. His Cupid is a splendidly embodied deity who bears the weapons that inflict compelling sexual desire as they wound, and there is little evidence that Psyche gains enlightenment or moves from her earlier state of sexual desire to a spiritual form of love at the end of her story. In fact she commits more than one

act of disobedience to the gods and is ultimately rescued by Cupid rather than gaining him as the ultimate prize in a hero-quest.

### Christian Interpretation

The Neoplatonic interpretation of Apuleius' tale proved easy to adapt into a Christian framework where Psyche was equated with the soul. Again the tale had to be desexualized in order to fit the Neoplatonic preference for the ideal and spiritual over the material and bodily. Psyche's malicious revenge on her sisters (whom she sends to their deaths, telling them that Cupid is in love with them) is censored from this kind of interpretation, as is the birth of Voluptas. Instead, Neoplatonic Christian interpretations focus on the ordeals and Psyche's close encounters with death and identify Cupid with Christ as the God of love. This process of desexualizing the myth is comparable to the allegorizing of the Old Testament's equally sexual Song of Songs as a celebration of Christ's love for the Church.

### Jungian Interpretation

Apuleius' story has drawn the attention of two eminent Jungians, Marie-Louise von Franz and Erich Neumann, both of whom interpret it as depicting the development of consciousness. For Neumann, Venus is the archetypal Great Mother; Psyche must differentiate her consciousness and take responsibility for her own actions. Psyche's true act of heroism is to disobey Cupid and look at him by lamplight. Von Franz speaks of Psyche as an anima figure within a man's unconscious: in this interpretation, it is the man who must differentiate his consciousness. As Betsy Hearne points out, both of these Jungian interpretations run into trouble when Psyche achieves apotheosis, joining what for Jungians would be the collective unconscious of the Olympian pantheon. As with the Neoplatonic interpretation, there is also the issue that Psyche does not display very much wisdom along her path of ordeals. Instead, she despairs and disobeys, ultimately sending herself

into a sleep of death from which the god must awaken her rather than achieving an enlightened state of consciousness.

### Freudian Interpretation

Apuleius' myth is a forerunner to the fairytale, Beauty and the Beast. As a Freudian interpreter of fairytales, Bruno Bettelheim pays close attention to the sexual implications of Beauty and the Beast in his *The Uses of Enchantment*. In his reading, this fairy tale alludes to the pubescent girl's anxious fantasies of sex with a man, which she imagines as bestial. Such a reading of Cupid and Psyche would give full weight to the birth of Voluptas and also to the jealous sisters' fabrication that Psyche has inadvertently married a monstrous (phallic) snake. Bettelheim's discussion of Apuleius' myth, however, accords surprisingly well with those of the Jungians, understanding it as an allegory of the gaining of higher consciousness. Bettelheim sums up the story as dealing with "the difficulties man encounters when the highest psychic qualities (Psyche) are to be wedded to sexuality (Eros)" (Bettelheim 1976, p. 293). This reading runs into exactly the same problems as before, that Apuleius' Psyche exhibits suicidal despair and disobedience but can hardly be seen as a model of the enlightened consciousness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Curanderismo

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## Origins

*Curanderismo* is a healing system that is prevalent throughout Latin America. Although reliance on this system of care by individuals of various Latino heritages in the United States has been documented, the prevalence of its use is unclear. This approach to healing has often been referred to somewhat disparagingly as “folk medicine” or “folk healing.”

Healing activities within the tradition of curanderismo are performed by (male) curanderos and (female) *curanderas*; all three terms derive from the Spanish verb *curar*, meaning to heal. (The remainder of this discussion will utilize the term curandero to refer to both male and female healers in this tradition.) Curanderos are to be distinguished from *parteras*, women who serve as midwives, although they are most frequently not registered as such; *yerberos*, who heal exclusively through the use of herbs; *sobadores*, practitioners who devote their attention to sprains and muscle aches; and *hueseros*, or bone-setters. Individuals who

practice any of these traditions are believed to be endowed with a *don*, or gift, of healing; adherents believe that the don is bestowed on the individual by God, while opponents of the tradition believe it is conferred by Satan.

Scholars have asserted that, as practiced by some believers, curanderismo often reflects six major influences: Judeo-Christian traditions, early Arabic medicine, beliefs associated with European witchcraft, Native American healing practices, current beliefs relating to spiritualism, and modern medicine. Mexican curanderismo is said to derive specifically from the influences of Spanish, indigenous Mexican, and African healing practices. The resulting system of healing is premised on religious beliefs relating to the maintenance of harmony between nature, the self, and spirit. Disease or illness is viewed as the result of a lack of harmony between the individual and his or her environment; the curandero is charged with the task of removing this imbalance and restoring harmony.

## Illness Causation and Healing Practices

The lack of harmony between the individual and his or her environment may result from physical, psychological, social, and/or spiritual causes. Illnesses are recognized as originating through the action of natural agents, as is the case with tuberculosis disease, or through the action of a supernatural agent (e.g., a *bruja*, or witch), as may be the case with unemployment, marital difficulties, and alcohol dependence. Curanderos can address the presenting problems and effectuate healing using any of three levels, or avenues, of treatment: the material, or physical, level; the spiritual level; and the mental level. Frequently, treatment efforts are implemented at all three levels, consistent with the view that health and illness are manifestations of interactive processes at each of these levels.

Healing targeting physical illness at the material level often relies on rituals involving the use of herbs, fruits, eggs, and oils. Treatment may also include massage or prayer; a minority of curanderos will provide vitamin injections.

As one example of available treatments, efforts to detoxify clients who are suffering from alcoholism may include the use of passion flower, linden flower, wormwood, rose petals, evening primrose, and various additional flowers and herbs. In situations in which the illness is believed to have resulted from an imbalance of hot and cold properties, the curandero may attempt to restore balance by prescribing a treatment that will eliminate the excess or augment the deficiency. The “hot” or “cold” nature of a condition or treatment is an inherent property. Family members and individuals within the client’s social network are often enlisted to aid in the healing process.

Healing at the spiritual level requires that the curandero enter into a trance in order to establish a connection between the material and spiritual domains. The curandero essentially functions as a medium through which the spirits can work to effectuate the requested healing. The spiritual forces are able to cause, diagnose, and cure illness on the spiritual level. Clients may participate in cleansing rituals to address the need for healing at a spiritual level.

Less commonly, the curandero may effectuate healing on the mental level. This requires that the curandero channel mental energy from his or her mind directly to that part of the client in need of treatment. It is believed that through this focused mental energy, the curandero is able to halt the growth of the illness-affected cells in the client’s body and promote the healing process.

Common illnesses for which individuals may seek treatment from a curandero include *empacho*, a digestive blockage that is often treated with teas made from specified herbs; *bilis*, an ailment thought to be caused by excessive bile resulting from extreme anger that can be cured through the use of prescribed laxatives; and *mal ojo*, or “evil eye,” for which treatment may be effectuated through a ritual involving a raw egg.

Several illnesses for which curanderos may be consulted are clearly psychological or emotional in origin. These include *susto*, or “fright,” and *nervios*, literally translated as “nerves.” *Susto* is believed to result from a single specific incident,

such as witnessing a death or accident, being involved in an accident, or being suddenly surprised or frightened. Crying, trembling, and insomnia are common symptoms, but *susto* may also present as a lack of appetite or vomiting. Prayer, herbs, and massage are thought to be beneficial.

Depending upon the particular Latino subgroup, *nervios* may refer to the disease *nervios* or to specific symptoms of an illness. Women, sensitive individuals, and older adults are believed to be particularly susceptible to the disorder. *Nervios* can be brought about by family problems, worry, stress, and anger and may be manifested by headache, depression, yelling, worry, pacing, high blood pressure, insomnia, and loss of control. Treatment may consist of counseling, pills, prescribed teas, speaking to another person, and/or calming oneself. Illnesses such as *susto* or *nervios* may or may not be indicative of symptoms that would constitute a mental illness as delineated by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* used by Western-trained mental health care providers for the diagnosis of a mental illness or disorder. Research suggests that some individuals reporting *nervios* or *ataques de nervios*, for example, may be suffering from an anxiety disorder.

## Benefits

Individuals with serious medical problems are often referred by the curandero to Western medical providers. Depending upon the nature of the illness, however, patients may also consult with curanderos as well. Clients may rely on both approaches for various reasons. First, clients may be unable to afford the cost of a medical doctor and will delay or avoid such care unless the illness is perceived to be a serious one necessitating such attention. Second, because curanderismo views the mind and body as inseparable and illness is to be addressed by examining the total context in which it occurs, a curandero may focus on elements of an illness that may not be attended to by medical doctors, such as the underlying stress that is giving rise to

the client's headaches. Third, the curandero's reliance on rituals to address the supernatural origins of a situation may help to restore the client's hope, such as in the case of unemployment or marital disruption.

Consultation with a curandero brings other advantages as well. The attribution of the illness to an external source, whether natural or supernatural, relieves the individual of blame for his or her condition. The curandero's enlistment of the client's family and friends to assist in the implementation of the treatment helps to create a loving and supportive environment through which the client can progress towards healing. In situations in which the illness does result from the client's own actions, the curandero can invoke the aid of spiritual forces, thereby providing the client with an additional source of strength, support, and hope.

Various similarities have been noted between curanderismo and Western psychotherapy. These include the provision to the client of opportunities to identify symbols that have great meaning to him or her and to experience change through the manipulation of those symbols. Each modality also offers the client the opportunity to explore and reevaluate the perceived expectations of his or her support system.

## See Also

- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Shamanic Healing](#)

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## Cybele and Attis

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Cybele was a goddess who originated around 1200 BCE in Pessinus, Phrygia, near Mount Agdistis, in central Asia Minor, now Turkey. This mountain was personified as the Great Mother Goddess Cybele of Asia Minor, Mother Earth. She had dominion over wild beasts – in art her throne was flanked by lions or she drove a chariot pulled by lions. She was a goddess of caves and was worshiped on mountain tops (Vermaseren). Known as “The Mother of All Gods,” her religion spread around the Black Sea, and to Greece by the sixth century BCE, where she was celebrated by a Homeric Hymn to “The Mother of the Gods”:

Sing to me O Muse, clear voiced daughter of great Zeus,  
Of the mother of all gods and of all men.  
In the din of rattles and drums and in the sound of pipes  
she delights. In the howl of wolves and the roar of glaring lions, in resounding mountains and wooded glands she finds her joy (Homeric Hymn 14).

Cybele's religion spread west during the Hellenistic era. Statues of her were found along



**Cybele and Attis,**

**Fig. 1** Cibeles con Palacio de “Cybele in Madrid.” (Photograph owner: Miguel-Ángel Monjas. This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 unported license. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cibeles\\_con\\_Palacio\\_de\\_Linares\\_closeup.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cibeles_con_Palacio_de_Linares_closeup.jpg))



the west coast of Asia Minor, in the ruins of Pergamon, and in Greece. She reached Rome during the early Empire. She was given a temple on the Palatine in 191 BCE, where her ceremonies were held, and where a great number of statuettes of her son Attis were later found (Roller 2005). From Rome the cult spread around the Empire (Fig. 1).

The archaic dimension of Cybele and Attis is the mythic enactment of belief in the death of a fertility god, Attis, symbolizing the onset of winter and the apparent death of plants. Then his resurrection in the spring brings life to plants needed for food and the ongoing reproduction of animals. The goddess Cybele symbolizes the background metaphysical power to keep life going through reproduction. It was told in many religions of the dying and rising gods, such as Ishtar and Tammuz in Babylon.

Later Cybele and Attis were notable among what came to be called the “Mystery Religions” from the East, such as Mithras, Isis, Demeter, Dionysus, and Orpheus (Godwin 1981). Their ceremonies were secret, but apparently offered immoral life to believers, which was a new, appealing element in religion at the time.

During the Hellenistic age, Cybele was increasingly associated with the myth of Attis. Legend says that he was a son of the Cybele’s earthly incarnation Nana, who miraculously conceived him by eating a pomegranate, a fertility image. So he was a child of a virgin, and born on December 25th. When the handsome young Attis was about to be married to the princess of Pessinus, the jealous Agdistis (Cybele) appeared in her power. Attis went mad and castrated himself (Pausanias 1935, Vol. 7, p. 19). Attis became a fertility god, the mythic consort and son of Cybele, a castrated, dying, and rising god of the Great Mother (*Magna Mater*) Goddess. But his castration was unique and controversial. Cybele and Attis remained prominent until the fourth century CE. In Rome, the priests were called *Galli*. In Greece, they were called the *Corybantes*. Today a stone statue of Cybele in Madrid in a chariot pulled by lions is in the *Plaza de Cibeles*. A statue of Attis with bronze light rays on his head is in the Vatican Museum.

Cybele and Attis’ feverish 5-day celebration in the Roman Empire was in March. First was a day of mourning, when a pine or fir tree was cut, following the sacrifice of a ram at its base. It was



carried through the streets by her priests and followers, wrapped with woolen bands, and buried, representing Attis' death. The second day was full of agitated music, dance, and worked up to a passionate intensity with flutes, tambourines, and cymbals. Some flagellated themselves with whips. The third day, the vehement enthusiasm continued until some zealous males committed bloody self-castrations. The severed genitals were thrown on Cybele's statue to offer their blood and reproductive energy to the goddess. Severed genitals of bulls or rams were also cast at her feet, and all were later buried in a cave devoted to her. The fourth day was one of joyful music and dancing ("*Hilaria Matris Deum*") to celebrate Attis' resurrection. People waved reeds, perhaps to symbolize phallic and vegetative fertility, seen as resurrection. Finally came a day of rest (Vermaseren 1977, pp. 113–16).

Another bloody Attis rite, similar to that in Mithraism, was the *taurobolium*, where a pit was dug and covered by a strong grate. A priest stood under the grate and a bull was sacrificed so that the bull's blood ran down on him. He drank the blood and was respectfully saluted from afar, for "A bull's inferior blood has washed him clean" (Vermaseren 1977, pp. 102–103). Poorer people used a ram in a *criobolium*, to be "washed in the blood of the lamb." Some washed in the bull's blood were priestesses of Cybele (Vermaseren 1977, p. 109). They were seen as "born again." This was seen as the sacrificial blood of the god Attis, giving the priest the strong life-power of the bull and conferring on him, and, as in the mystery religions, both a glimpse of the divine and assurance of eternal life (Godwin 1981, pp. 34, 111).

Attis and his priests were notable among cults of the dying and rising gods for being eunuchs. Making men into castrated eunuchs involuntarily was surprisingly common in history worldwide. Most were involuntary, often war prisoners, slaves, or guards for a king's harem. Some were boys castrated to be falsetto singers called "castrati." Often in a king's palace eunuchs were servants who would not have a family that he could gather into a rebellious faction or for whom he might seek positions and wealth. The

last surviving imperial eunuch of China died in 1996 (Eunuch). Castration is tied up with power and pleasure and their denial, perhaps sadism and masochism, but not as clearly as one might think. If a eunuch lost his testicles only, he lost sperm that causes pregnancy, but could still have sex, because prostate gland inside body still produces semen ejaculated through an erect penis, now without sperm. In the ancient world some women preferred to have sex with a eunuch, for it made pregnancy impossible. But some eunuchs lost both testicles and penis. One explicit sculpture of Attis shows the loss of both (Vermaseren 1977, p. 44). Religious castration is intended to take the man away from fleshly desires and toward a more transcendent spiritual divinity. Circumcision has been seen by some as a sublimated castration (Fig. 2).

Psychologically the question arises why the male militarist Romans imported and honored the more feminine Cybele and Attis, and why Emperor Augustus granted her the title of Supreme Mother of Rome, a national goddess. Perhaps Roman imperialist and macho culture was so aggressive and domineering that they needed a feminine balance for the Roman collective unconscious. The powerful empire's masculine tone seems to have needed more feminine *anima*, so perhaps this is why Cybele, along with Isis and other goddesses, were brought to Rome, on the advice of the revered Greek Delphic Oracle. Godwin says that "their act had a psychological rightness, involving an acceptance of irrational and uncontrollable forces" or unconscious needs not met by the strong ego-dominated male warrior Roman society (Godwin 1981, p. 110). To include her self-castrating son implies deep collective feelings, perhaps for a non-macho Roman subpopulation. The priests of Attis were known for their effeminate dress, white face makeup, bleached hair, earrings, and behavior that attracted mockery and scorn in Rome (Vermaseren 1977, p. 97). Although this psychological balance may have been needed unconsciously, many Romans laughed at the effeminate Attis priests. The Roman Senate at one point prohibited the participation of Roman citizens in certain Cybele rituals



**Cybele and Attis, Fig. 2** Statue of a reclining Attis at the Shrine of Attis, “Campus of Magna Mater in Ostia, near Rome”. This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Statue\\_of\\_a\\_reclining\\_Attis\\_at\\_the\\_Shrine\\_of\\_Attis\\_2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Statue_of_a_reclining_Attis_at_the_Shrine_of_Attis_2.jpg))

(Roller 2005, p. 2110). But it seems that the old patriotic religions of the state’s divine Emperor were losing their emotional grasp, and the mystery religions offered more spiritual depth. Attis’ priests taught the spiritual view that they were freed of lust, and thus became Wise Ones’ (*Sophoi*), Pure Ones (*Purissimi*), or Holy Ones (*Agnoi*) (Vermaseren 1977, p. 97). They offered not just political loyalty, but ego orientation to the immortal, mysterious self.

But psychologically, it is apparent that the Attis practice is another version of what became Freud’s Oedipal complex. In these Dying and Rising Gods religions, the goddess was the dominant figure and her beloved was the subordinate victim who died and was resurrected. Attis was born from Cybele with no father involvement.

He is her son, and when he is about to marry another woman, his mother Cybele is furiously jealous and releases all her powers that shock him into castrating himself. The self-castration becomes a sign of his willingness to avoid becoming a man and father, and remain a devotee of his Great Mother – or even become a transvestite, identifying with his mother’s gender. This keeps him passively devoted to her. The ancient ritual was a remarkable acting out of this archetypal pattern of mother and son bonding. Crude and violent as it was, perhaps this was an extreme psychological reaction against the brutal militarism of many Roman men, cheering at the lions ripping up human victims in the Coliseum.

This collective aggressive – passive dynamic may have well triggered a spiritual reaction among Christians who adopted Plato’s Greek metaphysical split between mind, flesh, and spirit. This would have been part of the Christian rejection of the “pagan” belief in fertility gods and goddesses that became so bloody with sacrifices. Though Christians rejected the violence and raised spirituality above bodily desires, they still were so immersed in the old mystery religions that the Gospel authors apparently adopted the ancient archetypal elements of the older traditions of virgin birth, sacrificial death, and resurrection. This theology would fit Jesus into the beliefs about transcendent deities of the time, but also stopped the literal blood sacrifices, turning them into eating the body and drinking the blood of the savior deity symbolically as bread and wine. The question of the extent to which Christianity borrowed images from earlier religions is debated by those who see Christianity as unique. But it is clear, as world religion scholars know that religions commonly borrow archetypal images and synthesize, blending borrowed elements with unique features. Christianity borrowed Jewish themes such as the prophet and messiah, and added the new element of welcoming believers of all ethnic groups and social classes. Surrounded by religions that told of virgin birth and resurrection, such as Cybele and Attis, it is not surprising that they appear in Christianity, though spiritualized and detached from the goddess fertility rites of the past.

But monotheistic religions are intolerant of polytheism, and maintain the patriarchal social pattern based on a Father God, repressing women whom the goddess religions had honored. Roman Catholic priests are required to be male and celibate, which is intended to raise them above the reproductive life and see themselves as more pure. Cybele and Attis suggest themes from mystery religions in the background.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Ashtoreth](#)
- ▶ [Castration](#)
- ▶ [Christianity and Sexuality](#)
- ▶ [Circumcision](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [Inanna/Ishtar](#)
- ▶ [Isis](#)

- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)
- ▶ [Puer Aeternus](#)
- ▶ [Religion, Sexuality, and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Repression](#)
- ▶ [Transgender and Gender Identity](#)

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## Daimonic

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The contemporary term “daimonic” (Latin spelling *daemonic*) is based on the archaic Greek word *daimon* (*di-mone*). The genesis of the daimon idea is decidedly difficult to pin down. Empedocles, the fifth-century BCE pre-Socratic Greek philosopher, employed this term in describing the psyche or soul; to be even more precise, he identified daimon with self. Some classical scholars say *daimon* was used by writers including Homer, Hesiod, and Plato as a synonym for the word *theos* or god. Still others point to a definite distinction between these terms: *daimon* referred to something indeterminate, invisible, incorporeal, amorphous, and unknown, whereas *theos* was the personification of a god, like Zeus or Apollo. The daimon was that divine, mediating spiritual power that impelled one’s actions and determined one’s destiny. It was inborn and immortal, embodying all innate talents, tendencies (both positive and negative), and natural abilities. Indeed, one’s daimon manifested as a sort of fateful “soul” which spurred one on toward good or evil. The earliest pre-Christian conception of daimons or *daimones* considered them ambiguous – rather than exclusively evil – beings and predates even the great philosophers of ancient Greece. Minoan and

Mycenaean daimons were seen as attendants or servants to deities, rather than as deities themselves, and were imagined and represented as half-human/half-animal figures, exemplified by the fearsome Minotaur of Crete.

It was believed during Homer’s day (circa 800 BCE) that all human ailments were brought about by daimons. But daimons could also cure, heal, and bestow the blessings of good health, happiness, and harmony. Plato (428–347 BCE) alluded to the daimonic realm in his writings, deeming the daimon the noblest aspect of the psyche present in everyone and referring to the great god of love, Eros himself, as a powerful daimon: “All that is daemonic lies between the mortal and the immortal. Its functions are to interpret to men communications from the gods – commandments and favours from the gods in return for men’s attentions – and to convey prayers and offerings from men to the gods. Being thus between men and gods the daemon fills up the gap and so acts as a link joining up the whole. Through it as intermediary pass all forms of divination and sorcery” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 69). According to Plato, seeking spiritual wisdom and truth honors one’s daimon, while inordinate preoccupation with worldly matters desecrates it. Perhaps the most famous example of the daimon in action can be found in Plato’s story about the treasured *daimonion* of Socrates: a supposedly supernatural, metaphysical (i.e., spiritual), inner “voice” or intuitive knowing which dissuaded Socrates since childhood from making bad decisions but, ultimately, brought about his

indictment, trial, and demise for teaching his students “false *daimonia*.”

C. G. Jung (1968) points out that “the Greek words *daimon* and *daimonion* express a determining power which comes upon man from outside, like providence, or fate, though the ethical decision is left to man” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 70). The original Greek word *daimon*, notes Jung’s disciple M. L. von Franz (1985), “comes from *daiomai*, which means ‘divide,’ ‘distribute,’ ‘allot,’ ‘assign,’ and originally referred to a momentarily perceptible divine activity, such as a startled horse, a failure in work, illness, madness, terror in certain natural spots” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 70). She points out that “in pre-Hellenic Greece the demons, as in Egypt, were part of a nameless collectivity” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, pp. 66–67). In the words of another insightful scholar, “Plutarch reveals to us the function of these *daimones*. They are the source in us of emotions good and bad” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 69). The implications of this statement for the practice of psychology and psychiatry are profound.

## Daimons, Demons, and Devils

Daimons, at first, were potentially both good and evil, constructive and destructive, depending in part upon how the individual would relate to them. But one of Plato’s pupils, Xenocrates, separated the gods and daimons, shifting the destructive aspects of the gods onto the daimons. Thus began the gradual degradation of the *daimon* into our modern misunderstanding of the *demon* as exclusively evil and the ascendancy of the Judeo-Christian conception of the Devil as evil incarnate. Indeed, our modern English terms “demon” and “demonic” are derived from the Latin spelling of this classical Greek concept popularized during the Middle Ages: *daemon* and *daemonic*. During “the Hellenistic and Christian eras,” writes Rollo May (1969), “the dualistic split between the good and evil side of the daimon became more pronounced. We now have a celestial population separated into two camps – devils and angels, the former on the

side of their leader, Satan, and the latter allied to God. Though such developments are never fully rationalized, there must have existed in those days the expectation that with this split it would be easier for man to face and conquer the devil” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, pp. 70–71). Around the rise of Christianity, the old daimons started to disappear and their ambiguous Janus-like nature torn asunder. “Evil” and “good” were neatly divided, and the daimons, now divorced from their positive pole, eventually took on the one-sided, negative identity of what we today refer to as “demons.”

For millennia, the enigmatic concept of the daimonic lay lost in relative obscurity, recognized and valued by only a few astute artists and philosophers. But the daimonic as a vital existential and psychodynamic model was resurrected in the twentieth century by several prominent theologians and psychologists, notably C. G. Jung, Paul Tillich, and Rollo May. Clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst Rollo May (1969), following the lead of his friend and mentor, existential theologian Paul Tillich, defined the *daimonic* as

*any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person. Sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power are examples. The daimonic can be either creative or destructive and is normally both. When this power goes awry, and one element usurps control over the total personality, we have “daimon possession,” the traditional name through history for psychosis. The daimonic is obviously not an entity but refers to a fundamental, archetypal function of human experience – an existential reality. . . . (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 65).*

For May, much like the earliest Greeks, Egyptians, Hebrews, and Hindus, the daimonic is an essentially undifferentiated, impersonal, primal force of nature incorporating both the *diabolic* and *divine* aspects of being – without deeming them mutually exclusive.

## Evil, Creativity, and Spirituality

This numinous, archetypal, transcendent *coniunctio oppositorum* of the daimonic



resurfaced in contemporary culture in art too, as in the case of Hermann Hesse (1965) describing the paradoxical deity Abraxas in his book *Demian*. And the intensely passionate creative and destructive drives of the daimonic on the individual can be most clearly observed in the lives and works of prodigious artists such as van Gogh, Beethoven, Picasso, Melville, Jackson Pollock, Richard Wright, and Ingmar Bergman, among many others. Indeed, there has always been a close link between creativity and the daimonic, as described by Jungian analyst M. Esther Harding (1973), who writes that

the poets of all times have felt themselves to be filled with a divine influx. . . . For a short space of time such an individual feels himself to be made whole through submitting to possession of his being by a power greater than himself. . . . There is no doubt that life is renewed through contact with these instinctive depths, dangerous though such a contact [can be]. . . . Individuals who have had such experiences assert that they attained a sense of redemption. . . . through such a consummation of union with the daemonic force, which they conceived of as God (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 136).

The archetypal notion of the daimonic, while remaining unknown to most moderns, subtly informs much of what we today refer to as “depth psychology”. For example, psychiatrist C. G. Jung’s Analytical Psychology is founded upon and incorporates the original ambivalent quality and possession-prone nature of the daimonic, as evidenced in his definition (1945) of *demonism*:

Demonism (synonymous with daemonomania = possession) denotes a peculiar state of mind characterized by the fact that certain psychic contents, the so-called complexes, take over the control of the total personality in place of the ego, at least temporarily, to such a degree that the free will of the ego is suspended. . . . Demonism can also be epidemic. . . . The epidemic form includes the induced collective psychoses of a religious or political nature, such as those of the twentieth century (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, pp. 97–98).

Jung’s classic conception of the “shadow” is directly related to that of the daimonic in its bipolar potentiality for destructive possession, creativity, and spirituality. The daimonic model undergirds, transcends, and remains closer to

Jung’s earliest conception of the *shadow*: it is a unified and wholistic paradigm incorporating (but not necessarily differentiating between) the Jungian notion of the *shadow* together with Eros, Thanatos, the id, libido, and the archetypes of anima, *animus*, and the *self* while existentially retaining “the decisive element, that is, the choice the self asserts to work for or against the integration of the self” (May cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 105). Like the shadow, the daimonic only becomes evil (i.e., demonic) when we begin to deem it so and subsequently suppress, deny, drug, or otherwise strive to exclude the daimonic from consciousness. In so doing, we unwittingly participate in the *process of evil*, potentiating the violent eruptions of anger, rage, social destructiveness, and assorted psychopathologies that result from the daimonic reasserting itself, with a vengeance, in its most negative forms.

However, the *daimonic*, unlike the *demonic*, is as deeply involved in the process of creativity as evil. As May (1969) explains, “the daimonic was translated into Latin as *genii* (or *jinni*). This is a concept in Roman religion from which our word ‘genius’ comes and which originally meant a tutelary deity, an incorporeal spirit presiding over the destiny of a person, and later became a particular mental endowment or talent” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, p. 262). When we consciously choose to constructively integrate the daimonic into our conscious personality, we participate in the metamorphic *process of creativity*. This movement toward what Aristotle termed *eudaimonism* – the ability to live happily and harmoniously with the daimonic – is also an essential aspect of any authentic spiritual development. Spirituality, indeed, can be fundamentally defined as *a capacity to love the daimonic*. This *amor fati*, as philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche phrased it, is a spiritual achievement of the highest magnitude. “For God,” Diotima tells Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium*, “mingles not with man; but through a spirit [daimon] all the intercourse and converse of god with man, whether awake or asleep, is carried on. The wisdom which understands this is spiritual” (cited in Diamond 1996/2007, pp. 290–291).



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## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Possession](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Dalai Lama

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The Dalai Lama is the most widely recognized Tibetan religious figure. Most Tibetans view him as the religious leader of Tibet, though his role as

civil head of state has ended. The current one, born in 1935 as Tenzin Gyatso, is the fourteenth in the succession of tulkus, reincarnated lamas, to hold his title. The name “Dalai” (Mongolian for “ocean”) was conferred in 1578 by Altan Khan, a Mongolian ruler who was seeking an alliance with Tibet. There had been two previous incarnations in the lineage, so the one so named (Sonam Gyatso) became known as the third Dalai Lama, and the two previous ones taking this title posthumously.

The young boy Tenzin Gyatso was recognized as the incarnation of this lineage in 1937, but as he was only 2 years old, a regent ruled in his place until 1950. Tibetans have viewed themselves as independent of China but have had a close political relationship with China for a long time as well. In 1950 the Communist government of the People’s Republic of China asserted its claim over Tibet and enforced it with military occupation of the country. The Dalai Lama cooperated with the Chinese at first, visiting Mao Tse Tung in Beijing in 1954, but he fled to India in 1959 in the wake of an unsuccessful revolt and now resides in Dharamsala. He is considered to still be the leader of the Tibetan people in exile.

Spiritually, the Dalai Lama is considered an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara (Tib. Chenrezig), the embodiment of compassion. It is this quality that has marked his diplomatic efforts to both assert Tibet’s claim of autonomy as well as find a realistic accommodation with the Chinese government. His efforts on behalf of his people as well as his leadership efforts toward interfaith communication resulted in his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. The current Dalai Lama has also become involved in dialog with some of the leading neuroscientists through their shared fascination with the nature of human consciousness.

Of all of his predecessors, the other one most widely studied in the West is the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), known as the “Great Fifth.” He was the first to have significant civil authority over Tibet and constructed the Potala Palace in Lhasa, which was the seat of the Dalai Lama until 1959. Under his rule, the Gelug lineage prevailed as the leading one of four major lineages.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Esoteric Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Tulku](#)

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## Dance and Religion

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Dance generally refers to human movement either used as a form of expression or presented in a spiritual, social, or performance setting. Dance is also used to describe methods of non-verbal communication as forms of body language between humans or animals. Animals use dances such as the bee dance or mating dance. Movements convey specific information.

Dancing, combined with musical accompaniment, is one of the oldest rituals in religion, and circle dancing has been one of the most common ritualized dances throughout the history of time.

During the Egyptian Predynastic period (5500–3100 BCE), there were depictions of female figures, probably of Goddesses or Priestesses, dancing with their arms raised above their heads. The act of dancing was an important component of celebration and ritual in Ancient Egypt. Dance was much more than just an enjoyable pastime in Ancient Egypt.

The earliest known form of dancing was done in a line or chain referred to as chain dancing. The ritual of chain dancing is believed to have first appeared over 3,000 years ago, possibly in Ancient Greece. In Greek mythology the God Apollo was called the Dancer, the God of medicine, music, and poetry. In Sparta, a province of ancient Greece, it was the common law that parents were to teach their children to dance beginning at 5 years of age. The types of dance were also used in Israelite society. This included the circular or ring dance as well as the processional dance. These dances were often used to

celebrate specific events, such as David and the people of Israel dancing before the Ark of the Lord, which represented the presence of God.

It is written in Sanskrit that the Hindus believe that the whole Universe was brought into existence as the manifestation of Nataraja – the Supreme Dancer. In Hinduism, there are 23 celestial beings called Apsarases, who dance to please the gods and express the supreme truths in the magic of movement.

In the thirteenth century, Sufism was established by Rumi, the Persian poet. Sufism was a mythological offspring from the Muslim religion. “The Whirling Dervishes” believe in performing their dhikr in the form of a dance and music ceremony. The Mevlevi were a well-established Sufi Order in the Ottoman Empire, known for their dance which was performed as a form of worship. During the Ottoman period, the dance of Mevlevi Sufism spread into the Balkans, Syria, and Egypt. The Sufi dance and tradition is still being practiced in many countries.

Chain dancing was the original form of dance in pre-Christian Europe. During the early middle ages in Western Europe, Christian carols and hymns were sung and danced in “stanza.” The original meaning of “carol” is to dance. Carol is believed mean “dance circle,” and it is accompanied by singers. The definition of stanza is to halt or stop. The worshippers stood still in a circle with their attention to the center of what was being celebrated. From the 1150s to the 1350s, the carol was a popular dance and song performed throughout Europe. Priests danced with the parishioners during the early medieval period. The purpose of the dance was to allow the souls to get lost in the majestic rhythms. However, by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the dance became controversial, and the hierarchy began to ban the dancing for the common people.

Over an 80-year period, from 1774 to the 1850s, the Shakers in America developed a repertoire of dances ranging from spontaneous shouting, falling, skipping, and turning dances. They danced in patterns of squares, lines, and circles, performed with precise and unison hand gestures.

In 1890 the Ghost Dance was a religious movement that was incorporated into numerous Native American belief systems. The traditional ritual in the Ghost Dance was also a circle dance, in which participants gathered without partners in a circle to dance to musical accompaniment.

## Commentary

In 1916 Jung categorized dance/movement as a form of expression from the “active imagination.” Jung emphasized the importance of balance and harmony and attested that modern humans rely too heavily on science and logic. He suggested that it was more beneficial to integrate spirituality and incorporate the unconscious realm into one’s life. Jung incorporated a variety of approaches for the use of active imagination, and this technique has expanded to include nonverbal expressions, such as dance and movement. Jungian movement therapy addresses psychosomatic disorders concerning the body-mind interrelationship and the flow of energy. The use of the Jungian technique of active imagination through authentic in-depth movement is a gateway for the unconscious to communicate the process and direction of one’s therapy. Active imagination is neither dreaming nor guided fantasy; rather, its purpose is to build the bridge between the passive, receptive awareness of the inner unconscious material responding to the conscious in any form. Jung understood that “wholeness” resulted from establishing a working relationship between the conscious and the unconscious levels of the psyche.

The most common type of therapy today incorporating dance is called dance therapy.

In dance therapy the primary belief is that the body and mind are interrelated and the state of the body can affect the mental and emotional well-being both positively and negatively. Dance therapy explores the nature of all movements. Dance therapists have been able to diagnose and help solve various psychological and somatic

problems through observing and altering the kinesthetic movements of a client. Gestures such as standing still, sitting down, or moving one’s hands in protest are considered an expression of movement in dance therapy. There are several different forms used in dance therapy, including encouraging and observing one’s authentic movement in individual or group sessions. There are often various forms or gestures suggested by the therapist.

Marian Chace, who was a modern dancer in the 1930s, officially developed dance therapy. She decided to stop her professional dancing career and teach dance instead. In her classes, she noticed that some of her students were more interested in the emotions they expressed while dancing (fear, loneliness, anger, etc.) than in the mechanics of the moves they made. She began encouraging them to express themselves by emphasizing more freedom of movement rather than technique. By the 1940s, she started the profession of dance therapy.

In the 1960s Mary Whitehouse developed an approach to dance therapy by combining the use of active imagination and analysis. The purpose was to acknowledge all the material that emerged from unconscious levels and to then carefully move the patient towards greater balance, health, and creativity. In ego psychology, the “observing ego” is needed only to maintain a coherent sense of self, so that one is not overcome by overwhelming uncontrollable emotions from the unconscious. It exercises a selective function, choosing what it wants to attend to and deciding when and in what way to act. Thus, the conscious and unconscious levels of the psyche enter an ongoing dynamic relationship with each other, in which both are essential. Gestalt therapy and bioenergetics also incorporate movement and physical expression of the nonverbal content. Lowenian Bioenergetics is a type of therapy that combines working with the body and mind to move beyond emotional blocks and is based on energy flows. In Fritz Perls Gestalt Therapy, one strives to become more whole and creatively alive, to be free from the blocks and unresolved issues that diminish fulfillment and growth.

Both these types of therapy incorporate the body, mind, and energy that one is experiencing in the present moment, just as any form of rigorous dance does.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Rumi, Celaladin](#)
- ▶ [Sufism and Sufism](#)

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## Dark Mother

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The primordial Dark Mother and her values of transformation have existed in the human psyche since ancient times. Her image is specifically apparent in the Black Madonna, Mary Magdalene, Hecate, Demeter, and numerous other female divinities of the earth.

The Dark Mother, as a figure of mythology, is created at the collective archetypal layer of the psyche. Her image appears in all cultures: African, Hindu, Christian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and countless other cultural and religious sources. In 15,000 BCE, Africans sketched fifteen figures of the Dark Mother in red ochre on the walls of the *Grotto dei Genovesi* in the Egadi Islands south of Palermo, Italy. The images existed fifteen millennia before the Common Era (Birnbaum 1993, pp. 26–28).

## Black Mother: Ibla Nera

The characteristics of *Ibla nera* or black Ibla, a contraction of the name of the Anatolian (ultimately African) goddess Cybele brought to Sicily by traders from west Asia, were transferred, in the Christian epoch to the Black Madonna. These images are speculated to have been found in this cave dwelling 100,000 years ago when *Homo sapiens* migrated out of Africa. Archaeologist Marija Gimbutas gathered the evidence of the civilization of the goddess in Old Europe (Gimbutas 1982, 1989, 1991).

Figures of the Dark Mother found in France, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and Eastern Europe, dated 25,000 BCE, were located along paths of Paleolithic migrations out of Africa and are located near post-Christian sanctuaries of Black Madonnas (Cavalli-Sforza 1994, 1995). The origin of her veneration can be traced

to the Sinai where Africans created the oldest religious sanctuary in the world in 40,000 BCE at Har Karkom, later called Mount Sinai (Birnbau 2001). Sanctuaries of *Ibla nera* have been found in Sicily as well as in the later rituals of sibyls and priests of the Dark Mother who reflect the impact of violent Indo-European invasions (Gimbutas 1991, Chap. 10).

Archaeological artifacts and sanctuaries of the Dark Mother found in Italy, Spain, France, Switzerland, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Russia were evidence of cultures of women, peasants, and others who were negated by the dominant patriarchy as “dark.” Historically, these cultural regions retain evidence of religious heresy and were sites of uprisings for justice and equality in which women were persecuted as witches. The cultural folk wisdom about justice found its roots in the collectively inherited ethic of justice in the African culture of Isis who was venerated throughout the known world in the first centuries of the Common Era.

During the time of the Spanish Inquisition and Counter Reformation (fifteenth–eighteenth centuries), power was consolidated by persecuting “dark” others: Jews, Moors, heretics, and women. Catholic and Protestant clergy continued to identify certain women with the devil. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, the handbook of the Inquisition, was used as a reference to put women to the stake who differed from the *status quo* of the church, civil law, and societal custom.

### Compensatory Rituals

In an atmosphere that persecuted and repressed the earthy, fecund, and sexual nature of women, various rituals and festivals arose to compensate for the one-sidedness of the dominant culture. The values of the Dark Mother – justice and equality – were kept alive by godmothers whose rituals resisted patriarchy. Celebratory experiences such as *Carnavale* evoked spontaneous eruptions from the unconscious of the common peoples, enabling European peasants overtly to express feelings of defiance toward the church and state.

During the fifteenth–eighteenth centuries, the church persisted in associating the color white with purity and the color black with evil and the devil. In contrast, the rituals of the common people interpreted the color black as good (Guastella 1887, p. 68ff). In most Old European traditions, black was associated with fertility and the womb of life (Gimbutas 1989, pp. xix-xx, 198). Dreams, the messages of the unconscious, so threatening to the church and doctrinal codification, were believed to reveal divine messages. In dreams that came to the fore during *Carnavale*, a black egg signified fecundity; a dream of a white egg represented loss, sadness, and tears. In general, the color black in dreams was considered a good omen.

Numerous rituals continued throughout the early centuries representing memories, feelings, and images held deep in the unconscious heart of the culture. Regular pilgrimages were made to the Dark Mother, most typically represented by the Black Madonna. During these pilgrimages, the participants wore masks. A group of women covered with black silk capes, their faces hidden except for one eye, would sing and dance while carrying torches, representing the act of Demeter searching for her daughter. As the journey toward the edge of town continued, revelry ensued that lasted throughout the night. The procession of pilgrims would reach the statue of the Dark Madonna at dawn. There, they would behold an image of the Great Mother Cybele which was sculpted into the mountain (Guastella 1887, p. 125).

### Psychological Aspects

The chthonic aspects of the Dark Mother and the other feminine figures can be explored psychologically and symbolically from the perspective of the archetype of the Great Mother as described by twentieth-century Jungian analysts Carl Jung and Erich Neumann. Drawing from primordial and collective origins, the dark and the chthonic – chthonic pertaining to dark, primitive, mysterious, and primal instincts that come to us directly through nature – balance the viewpoint of human

consciousness that respects only the light and spiritual aspects of an archetype.

As an archetype, the Dark Mother represents life, death, earth and sexuality, and deep transformational energy. She has been associated with nurturing, birthing, and caring for children, the sick, the elderly, and the dying. The Dark Mother is often represented in myth as the Queen of the Underworld or one who travels to the Underworld. The Underworld does not necessarily represent hell but more as a place where souls reside between lives, thus, a space or interval of liminality.

One figure who is typically associated only with the light and spiritual aspects of the archetype is Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary, however, is a paradox. If her unconscious values are truly explored, she creates a powerful dynamic by incorporating body as well as spirit, power and vulnerability, the value of death, as well as life and rebirth.

The official presentation of Mary has been as an object of veneration emphasizing qualities of an over-spiritualized, submissive model of a woman ignoring the normal desires and aspirations of flesh-and-blood women. Throughout the centuries, the sketchiness of Mary's scriptural features has been filled in with cultural content that has emphasized such opposite qualities as stature and humility, courtly elegance in contrast to her solidarity with the poor. Yet, as a historical and symbolic figure, her maternity is central.

Jung called Pius XII's proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption on 1 November 1950 "the most important religious development for 400 years" (Jung 1973, p. 567). The importance of the proclamation was that it gave expression to what he called "a spiritual fact which can be formulated as integration of the female principle into the Christian conception of the Godhead" (Jung 1973, p. 8). The proclamation represented official ecclesial sanction for an idea that had been rooted in popular piety, as witnessed in the veneration of the Dark Mother, for many centuries. The Assumption signified the living archetype forcing its way into consciousness. Jung concluded that "the symbol in the Catholic Church is alive and is nourished by the popular

psyche and actually urged on by it. But in Protestantism it is dead" (Jung 1976, p. 8).

Jung earlier had criticized the one-sided masculinity of the Trinity and had suggested that the psychic approach to the Christian godhead might be conceptualized more appropriately by a quaternity, with Mary as the fourth "person." He believed that the two Marian dogmas (the Immaculate Conception, proclaimed by Pius IX in 1854, as well as the Assumption) confirmed Mary's status and function as incorporating a feminine element in the human understanding of the nature of God.

Jung's enthusiasm for the Marian doctrines has been received reluctantly on two principle fronts: church officials, both Protestants – many of whom regard Marian devotion as close to idolatry – and Catholics, who deny the proclamations about Mary's divinity and insist that worship, as opposed to veneration, must be reserved for the triune God alone.

Analytical psychologist Mary Daly maintains that the Mary symbol has been a two-edged sword. The symbol has a power that "the most oppressive of the Christian churches has captured and used. . . tamed and domesticated [through] the plaster statues, the saccharine prayers, sermons, poems and hymns and the sexist theology that has explained it" (Daly 1973, p. 83).

While a study of variations of the Great Mother throughout history reveals that images of Mary are clearly adaptations or reworkings of earlier mythic figures such as Ishtar, Astarte, Isis, Cybele (c.f. Harding 1955, p. 99), Daly argues that Mary is not only connected to the ancient collective past but is also a prophetic figure. Mary conveys female autonomy and also an integrated relatedness. Daly credits Jung with recognizing the corrective of the dogma of the Assumption. Jung succeeded in "raising" matter and unconscious evil – so often attributed throughout history to woman or "dark otherness" as material or earthly – to divine status. Jung thereby contributed toward healing dangerous splitting and projective activity, although we still are witness to such projections in many contemporary cultural arenas.

The figure of Mary, in her symbolic potential to heal the gap between personal and impersonal



in a feminine approach to the divine, “recover[s] to full consciousness...the tangible reality of women’s experiences and the symbolic reality of the feminine” (Harding 1955, p. 124). She does so by making us conscious of the qualities and attributes of the Great Mother as also having also a “Dark” or elemental, earthly nature that has not been acknowledged in official theology and only partly recognized in popular piety.

### **Archetypal Aspects of the Positive and Negative Great Mother**

Jung and his student Erich Neumann expand upon the paradoxical elements embodied by the figure of the Great Mother. Archetypes are aspects of the collective unconscious, a vast transpersonal realm which remains hidden from direct observation but may be inferred or hypothesized through psychic ideas or images as they are expressed in dreams, fantasies, delusions, myths, stories, and symbols. Archetypes have an innate propensity to order experience along certain patterns.

One crucial archetype that can be inferred from behaviors and ideas that emerge and develop from birth onward (or perhaps before) is that of the mother. The mother archetype generates and releases certain patterns and perceptions from the child’s unconscious so that the child develops behaviors, feelings, and activities that form a “mother” pattern within the child’s experience of reality. These images can be positive or negative depending upon how the child is mothered in reality and upon his/her cultural and social context.

Gradually the child’s experience of a personal mother is augmented, refined, and fleshed out by other aspects of mothering by grandmothers, godmothers, nannies, social institutions and ideas such as “mother country,” and cultural constructs such as myths, fairy tales, and religions. Jung calls this intricate interlacing of feelings and experiences the “mother complex” (Jung 1969, para. 156–198). Although the contents of the mother complex are supplied by the child’s experience of self and other, these contents are

activated and shaped by the generative, numinous archetypal core at the unconscious center of the complex.

In *The Great Mother*, Neumann analyzes the “symbolic polyvalence” of the mother archetype. Extracting from the wealth of images, symbols, beliefs, and rituals that cluster around the Great Mother, he is able to formulate the structure of this archetype.

Neumann explains two feminine “characters”: elementary and transformative, each of which has two aspects, positive or negative. He sets up two sets of antinomies: fixed versus fluid and light versus dark, illustrating the various characteristics and activities of the Great Mother as ranging along a series of concentric circles built around these axes (Neumann 1963, p. 82). The elementary character is at the core, and the successive stages of transformation radiate outward from it to the farthest circle from the center, which represents extreme spiritual fluidity. Yet, within each stage or circle, there is a degree of coloration, shading from light to dark that represents the positive/negative range.

By means of his conceptualization, on the “positive” side, the elementary maternal character of fixity can represent nurture, containment, safety, and peace. On the “negative” side, fixity becomes entrapment, devouring, and death. Analogous to developmental maturation and spiritual growth, these opposites can become fluid and transformative. The transformative maternal character can range from the highly evolved spiritual ideals such as wisdom and immortality. An untransformed, undeveloped maternal character results in an experience of entrapment, dissolution, diminution, even madness, and death.

Neumann uses the figure of the Virgin Mary as virgin and mother to depict “high” and “light” in his diagram. Along with such figures as Demeter and Sophia, Mary the God-bearer inhabits the realm of good nurturing and spiritual wisdom. These are the aspects that have been presented by the official church and that have inspired much about her that is virtuous, moral, and noble.

Yet, an excess of only sweetness and goodness can produce a conscious imbalance, an overly idealized image. In a religious symbol, such

one-sidedness can lead to psychological lifelessness. As Jung noted in his introduction to *Women's Mysteries*, an archetype only presents itself in a numinous way if it is clothed in symbolic language, in adequate symbols.

The Great Mother that is transformative – elementary, negative as well as positive – gives us an integrative whole that is timeless and numinous. We need the personal and archetypal elements of the mother archetype, inclusive of the qualities of the Dark Mother, to become conscious in us. Any archetypal symbol of transformative significance incorporates body as well as spirit, power as well as submissiveness, and death as well as life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Mary Magdalene](#)
- ▶ [Sophia](#)

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## Dark Night of the Soul

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John of the Cross was a Spanish poet, Roman Catholic mystic, and a Carmelite priest in the sixteenth century who said “you cannot find the light unless you enter the darkness.” As a founder of the Discalced Carmelites of the Catholic Church and a friend of Saint Teresa of Avila who became his spiritual director, John attempted reforms of the church for which he antagonized the religious and political hierarchy and was imprisoned in 1577. In his prison cell he wrote the *Spiritual Canticle* and began *Songs of the Soul*. After escaping from prison in 1578, he went to Andalusia, where he wrote prose on mystical theology, notably *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night of the Soul*.

## The Contemplative “Dark Night”

John spoke of the *Dark Night of the Soul* as a period of passive purgation that the soul undergoes once having transitioned from active to contemplative spirituality. The dark night is a purging purification before one is brought into the full ecstasy of mystical union with God. John described this purgation as drawing one’s spirit away from its ordinary sense of things so that it can become completely aware of its divine

senses. Although it is difficult conceptually to describe mystical experience with God, the phrase “dark night” can be understood as a metaphor for John’s spiritual journey. His “soul’s flight” entailed an experience of the privation of light as the necessary deprivation of everything that comes between a human being and the perfect love of God.

John defines this experience specifically in *Dark Night of the Soul*:

This dark night is an inflowing of God into the soul, which purges it from its ignorances and imperfections, habitual natural and spiritual, and which is called by contemplatives infused contemplation, or mystical theology. . . . Inasmuch as it the loving wisdom of God, God produces striking effects in the soul for, by purging and illuminating it, God prepares the soul for the union of love with God’s being (St. John of the Cross, 1959, Bk. II, ch. 5).

In the Dark Night of the Soul, the soulful essence of the individual experiences suffering and there is intense longing for God. If an individual has relied upon a prayer life, the reliability and consistency of traditional prayer suddenly becomes labored and unrewarding. The person experiences isolation and abandonment by God. This period of acute desolation, which is a transitory state, feels “dark,” frightening, and even life threatening.

Other descriptions of the dark night refer to at one extreme as holy and at the other extreme as spiritual madness, spiritual emergency, or spiritual crisis. Any of these terms can equally relate to the unique experience in which, from a religious perspective, the soul encounters an ultimate test of faith, endurance, purification, and surrender on the path to finding God. Those who have passed through this “night” express a sense of spiritual emergence and freedom.

In contrast to being a negative event, the dark night of the soul is thought by those whose practice contemplative prayer to be a stage of growth in which an individual achieves a deeper level of contemplation: growth from verbal prayer to mental prayer.

One experiences a closer relationship to the divine. Although the wait makes one feel extremely vulnerable, fearful, and temporarily

out of control, in the end, the former self with its old assumptions dies. For some, the dark night is a long, slow, painful, and repetitive process. For others, the dark night is intense and rapid. The length of time most likely relies upon the individual psyche and what needs to be examined and surrendered to God toward change.

## Psychological Analogues

Psychologically speaking, the dark night is a profound experience that strips away our false self and brings to awareness deeply buried traumas or developmental failures that can be integrated toward individuation: a mature sense of wholeness. Regardless of whether we consider the dark night to be a religious or psychological experience, or both, if the person is able to endure it, his or her life will be extremely changed toward a newly centered consciousness, in psychological terms toward a realignment of the ego with the self, the central archetype of order.

In the development of the ego-self alignment, the ego will no longer be the center of its own universe but will be dedicated toward this new center of being with a confidence that something larger is working within the individual toward accomplishing things for the greater good. As this new center emerges, the temporary state of “spiritual madness” fades. Gratitude and joy abound.

We surpass the “depressive position” of psychoanalytic thought and live from a more truly authentic self. Purged of false projections and unfounded beliefs about ourselves and others, our life path becomes guided by a series of synchronous events: simultaneous occurrences with no discernible casual connection. These synchronous occasions give us a new sense of freedom. The limited view of the ego is no longer the sole guide of our destiny. Our real mission in life begins to unfold. Spiraling ever deeper into a dimensional labyrinth inclusive of psyche, soul, body, and spirit, our consciousness expands to include greater intimacy with that which is transcendent and eternal.

Because of the abyssal emptiness and feelings of desolation of the dark night of the soul, it has

been compared to the psychological manifestation of madness or depression: what Carl Jung called “the night sea journey.” Still others believe that the dark night leads us into the most intimate sanctum of the soul, to that primeval preexistent “gulf” that was the soul before it became incarnate on earth.

Regardless of perspective, what we do know is that the dark night of the soul is a painful and lonely process during which our consciousness is clouded with uncertainty. The entanglements of the ego seem, however, to have some purpose in their unraveling: unveiling a new center. The process in which this disentanglement occurs can appear, psychologically speaking, as a form of depression. Yet, this depression is purposeful in that the psyche is striving toward the goal of soul retrieval. From this perspective, perhaps there are spiritual aspects of depression.

## Soul Retrieval

As a play on the well-known phrase of John of the Cross – *Dark Night of the Soul* – is it possible that occurrences of depression, at least some forms of it, are a necessary first phase in the retrieval of soul? Are there instances in which soul that has become lost, isolated, and devoid of meaning in our modern, stressful world purposefully succumbs to forms of depression that are necessary for greater wholeness?

From an analytical perspective, depression is not always perceived as a disease in need of fixing. Depression is a matter of coming home to the soul. It is not an illness to be cured. It is the cure.

Carl Jung claims that, along with a withdrawal of libido from *consciousness*, what occurs is “an accumulation of value - for example, libido - in the *unconscious*” (Jung, 1966, para. 344). An example of this would be a person whose conscious world “has become cold, empty, and grey; but [whose] unconscious has become activated, powerful, and rich” (Jung, 1966, para. 345).

Analyst Esther Harding (1970) expands upon this, explaining that one hallmark of depression is that “all energy disappears into the unconscious.”

Depression, whatever its degree, “depends on a withdrawal of libido into the unconscious” (p. 1). Harding makes an even more provocative observation by claiming that “the withdrawal of energy or libido from the person’s conscious world comes about because some unconscious content, some unknown element has risen up into consciousness and has exerted an attraction upon it” (Harding 1970, p. 3). In other words, there are certain aspects of depression that are being driven by the force of the central regulating factors of our psyche. Something unconscious is striving to be integrated. Harding calls this purposeful activity on the part of the psyche a “creative depression.”

## Dark Night: Creative Depression

From a Jungian orientation, the notion of creative depression is outlined by John Weir Perry, an analyst known for his work on spiritual emergencies. Perry summarizes the process of working through the dark night of a creative depression. He uses the term “acute episode” to describe the stages of creative depression (Perry, 1999, pp. 63–64):

1. A reordering or reorganization of the ego, in which we mostly deal with the alienated parts of our ego, a crisis in growth and development
2. A charged feeling of death and rebirth

The reference here is to a symbolic death and rebirth not about actual death.

During an acute episode, the feeling is of great ambivalence, doubt, feelings of alienation, depression, and recurring dreams. These symptoms are signs that the unconscious is trying to get our attention.

Jung would say that this activity is being directed by the central core of the psyche, which he calls the self. According to Jung, “The archetype of the Self is the primary ‘ordering force in the unconscious.’” It is the archetype of the center which evokes primordial images similar to the universal motifs of religions and myths. These images are emotionally powerful, and they most often appear in our dreams and fantasies. Like all the archetypes, the self is part of the deepest layer

of our unconscious the layer which Jung calls “collective” or “objective.” Although we experience the self as existing within our subjectivity, it is not our property. The self possesses its own independent life.

1. A third aspect of the acute episode is the feeling of regression. Regression serves to bring something unconscious into our conscious awareness.
2. Forth, the transcendent function is a crucial factor in the acute episode.

We can identify the workings of the transcendent function when we experience intensified conflicting polarities or opposites within ourselves. We find ourselves wrestling with feelings and images that are at great odds. The human psyche works through this function toward a synthesizing resolution in which the two opposites are resolved into a “uniting third.” The uniting third brings new growth to the personality.

1. Fifth, in an acute episode there is an abundance of imagery which is powerful and numinous. Numinous pertains to images that are wholly other. These images tend to break in and shatter our typically one-sided conscious perspective. Numinous imagery often has to do with an aspect of the god-image.

When an acute episode occurs, the first images to emerge are usually persecutory or fearful images such as thieves, devils, inner saboteurs, ferocious animals, or reptilian images. These images feel as if they are trying to destroy anything positive or life giving.

1. Sixth, eventually the person settles down into a state of coherency and clarity with a new vision and identity. The ego’s experience of dying finally gives way to the idea of being born or giving birth. This birth “is the fundamental ground of the whole experience” (Perry and O’ Callaghan, 1992, p. 4).

For instance, a patient in treatment might suddenly become terribly agitated, restless, distraught, confused, and tearful, as if wrestling with his or her fears in an internal dialog that is difficult to externalize. If the person is a religious person, he or she might pray for hours, finally regressing and curling up into a ball, alone, worn down with tears. Guilt, shame, and

depersonalization may come to the fore. The persecutory part of the psyche begins to drown the ego in a spiraling vortex of self-blame.

The person increasingly withdraws inward, feeling traumatized and abandoned by figures whom he or she had trusted. In the middle of these feelings, the person finds herself or himself in the throes of an acute episode. Initially, it may feel like an overt panic attack or a nervous breakdown. The ego, as the central aspect of conscious identity, may be convinced that it is dying.

Some people have described the initial symptoms as if they are crumbling apart, cracking out of their skin, finding it difficult to breathe. The walls of the ego’s defenses are disintegrating. As the contemplatives have demonstrated, prayer, journaling, or any form of writing or expression helps to give an outlet for these strong feelings.

It is strenuous for the ego when the self intentionally draws psychic energy back into the unconscious, but this is necessary so that the otherness of the transcendent function can function. As the transcendent function begins to function, points of view arise in the person’s dreams and waking fantasies that are contrary to whatever position their ego holds. It is as if two voices are in dialog, each with contrasting points of view.

## Conflictual Opposites

Great inner conflicts can arise around moral stance. The opposites within can polarize to an extreme: hedonism versus morals, one political stance over another. Moral confusion, especially in medieval times, was equated with the devil and possession. The internal voices thrash back and forth, each justifying an opposing position. The disparate voices thrash back and forth.

What becomes apparent in an acute episode is that what the values we have been so assured of have been primarily according to the ego’s point of view. Tremendous indecision ensues. The ego flounders. In its confusion can become identified with both sides of the opposites.

On the one hand, we regress back into the world of the biological parents and struggle with

unresolved developmental issues. On the other, we are dealing with the primordial and symbolic parents of the archetypal realm. This clash of forces can feel as if we are in an ideological, spiritual, or cultural battle with the entire collective consciousness, as John of the Cross felt he was in the time of reformation.

Keeping up the dialog – inner or outer – is important because the opposites must be separated first before they can begin to integrate. Both positions of conflict need to become conscious. This tension of opposites makes room for the transcendent function. Each position is given freedom of expression to justify itself without consciously forcing a resolution.

As the preliminary thrashing of opposites subsides, the contrary positions begin to settle. The person may undergo an intense period of melancholy with apparently no relief. Yet eventually spirit breaks through. As one patient described:

a lantern of intense light rose up behind my eyes. It illuminated my thoughts. I suddenly had access to deep insights. This light was so positive and good. Images flashed before me of sexual activity that I had identified with the devil. I fell into sorrow over the object of my lost-love - my once idealized biological father. Then an image of Christ came to me. I was filled with certainty! Christ: a reality! I started reading the Bible even though I had not been to church in seventeen years. Certain words lifted off the page and were three-dimensional. Bliss! I slept easily feeling safe and contained.

In this brief clinical example, we can see how an acute episode of a creative depression can bear the potential of soul retrieval in which the symbolic death that a person undergoes is something like gazing into a dark night. Yet, as Jung discovered among the Latin writings of Desiderius Erasmus: *Vocatus atque non vocatus, Deus aderit*. Bidden or unbidden, God is present.

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Daseinsanalysis

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Daseinsanalysis, the German word for “Existential Analysis,” is based on the phenomenological anthropology of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and the subsequent development of his thought for clinical endeavors in the 1940s by two Swiss psychiatrists, first, Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966) and then Medard Boss (1903–1990). Differentiating from both psychoanalysis and other styles of existential therapy, Daseinsanalysis is distinctive in its analysis of *Dasein*, or quality of “being there” in the world.



Martin Heidegger proposed that human existence has an ontological, or general and foundational, structure that is expressed in “ontic,” or concrete, ways of living out unique comportments in the world (Heidegger 1962). Yet, Heidegger argued that understanding these concrete and specific ways of living in the world requires a prior awareness of how these unique ways of being-in-the-world relate to the broader understanding of human existence as an ontological whole. Heidegger distinguished between an analysis of *Dasein* and Daseinsanalysis as a clinical practice, seeing the former as a philosophical anthropology on which the latter is based. Daseinsanalysis addresses particular ways each human being moves in the world in the light of the larger ontological structure of human existence.

Heidegger wanted to leave the word, “*Dasein*,” untranslated in order to avoid the inaccurate equation of “*Dasein*” with concepts such as “person,” “ego,” or “self.” *Dasein* is not a “thing” or a fixed and encapsulated entity, but a phenomenological *process* in which cleared space and the lightening of existential constriction and burden allow for the possibility of phenomena to “show themselves.” *Dasein*, both concealed and revealed, discloses itself through existential givens, which are inherent conditions all human beings live out in our everyday existence. They are, specifically, temporality, spatiality, coexistence, mood or attunement, historicity, bodyhood, and mortality. Moreover, *Dasein* discloses itself within the equiprimordiality of human existence. By saying that human existence is equiprimordial, we mean that we all simultaneously live our lives within three modes of being: the *Umwelt*, *Mitwelt*, and *Eigenwelt* (Boss 1979; Heidegger 1962; May et al. 1958).

The *Umwelt* is our biological and environmental existence. Our *Mitwelt* is our “with-world,” or relational world, which entails the quality of “being-with” in our relationships (i.e., close, distant, and conflictual). Our *Eigenwelt* is our lived experience, which is the unique ways we experience ourselves living through situations. No one mode of existence dominates and takes

priority over any of the other two. No one mode of existence can be extracted from the other two. Pain, stress, and hypertension are examples of how the three modes of existence mutually shape and are shaped by the other two. Our integrated, equiprimordial comportment through our everydayness always and already finds itself within the integrated existential givens in the world. The world is not a place to locate persons and things, but a web of meaning and backdrop against which aspects of our lives come to make sense to us and come to disclose themselves to us.

Through embracing inherent limitations in each moment, that is, our finitude, facticity, and contingency in existence, which Heidegger called our “thrownness,” we can more authentically live out our “ownmost” possibilities in the world. Relinquishing this call towards our ownmost possibilities, and instead, succumbing to being defined by culture, the status quo, or just allowing life to carry one along and define us without claiming one’s own life as one’s own is a life of inauthenticity. Existence, in its ontic sense, is a perpetual movement between authenticity and inauthenticity, as well as between freedom and finitude. Meaningful experiences in life are those that occur within the embrace of one’s limitations in the search for immanent possibilities.

Binswanger, Boss, and other Daseinsanalysts align with psychoanalysis around the value of a human existence coming to know itself through the movement from concealment to disclosure, but differ significantly from psychoanalysis regarding its more mechanistic understanding of mental processes (Binswanger 1967; Boss 1963, 1977, 1979). As such, key constructs of the psychoanalytic project, such as the psyche, unconscious, transference, and projection, are jettisoned outright, or, at least significantly, altered in their meaning. Furthermore, Boss believed the therapeutic question guiding clinicians should not be the psychoanalytic persistence on a determinative past as expressed in the word, “why?,” but, instead, should be the more hopeful, future oriented, and more inviting question, “why not?” Our future impacts us as much as our past, as Daseinsanalysts see it, and

both our lived future and lived past disclose themselves in the present, or, here and now, comportment in the world. Boss and other commentators of Boss' work have argued, then, that Daseinsanalysis is "purified" psychoanalysis, having rid itself of unnecessary metapsychology and engineering conceptualizations of mind that are not phenomenologically experienced anyway (Stadlen 2005, 2007).

In relation to other existentially oriented therapies, Daseinsanalysis also differentiates itself by insisting on the "thrown" nature of our world situations. We are never *absolutely* free, as some more humanistically bend existentialists may argue, but lean into our possibilities within *situated* freedom. Likewise, Daseinsanalysis does not see the person as an ego, psyche, or any kind of "thing-hood," but sees the person as inextricably interwoven in the world. The person is how one moves in the world. What is seen in the world is not a static "it," but a process of being, a comportment through situations. The relationship of Dasein and the world is co-constructive, as the world is disclosed as it is only in light of the presencing of Dasein being "all there."

## Commentary

Spirituality is an inherent aspect of Daseinsanalysis and is understood as transcendence within and through immanence (Driver 1985). One's experience of transcendence, understood as the experience of unfolding and living through one's ownmost possibilities, is enframed by embracing one's being-unto-death or embracing one's situational and ontological limitations, including, of course, but not exclusively, the end of our biological existence. One's "thrownness," though, is an everyday and every moment phenomenon. Several theorists have tried to compare Heidegger's work to other religious traditions, such as Taoism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism, which is evidence to the universality Heidegger's work could offer to such diverse life worlds, as the impulse to comparisons is predicated on qualities

that may easily be deemed "spiritual," in the existential way, that are embedded within both the ontological and ontic expressions of *Dasein-in-the-world*.

The very ontological structure of *Dasein* is what Heidegger called "solicitude," or care. This is not primarily a feeling of empathy, but an inherent intending and enacting of significance. Each moment of experience intends and responds to his or her world's call to significance. We are always and already attuned, intending, called by, and responding to meaningful encounters in the world. I call this approach "pastoral" in that its focus is on clearing space and lightening burdens such that disclosures of possibility can show themselves. It is "pastoral" in its alignment with one's own most possibilities within the tragic dimension of life's "thrones," or finitude. This approach is very incarnate and finds transcendence by courageously enacting one's own most possibilities while embracing one's death amidst the tragic dimension of life.

Daseinsanalysis values meditative releasement, as Heidegger's calls it, or letting go while exploring phenomena, rather than a habit of calculative manipulation and control of situations and persons. Letting go shows itself in uncovering, clearing, unburdening, disclosing, and releasing phenomena to show themselves as manifestations of *Dasein's* being there, and never being-elsewhere-beyond existence. In other words, transcendence does not occur outside of existence, for the Daseinsanalyst, but within it. Transcendence, however, is the heart of Daseinsanalysis, where the therapeutic questions and goals are on freedom towards how one would like to be in the world and what seems to be constricting their freedom to be so. Hence, rather than fall short of a true integration of psychology and religion through incomplete comparisons and contrasts, or juxtapositioning of one against the other, Daseinsanalysis provides us with the possibility of a discourse and language that could provide a true integration of our present-day separatism, if one agrees that transcendence is found in and through immanence. In the clearing of space and the lightening of burdens, modes of being-in-the-world are uncovered and truths of

existence show themselves in ontic particularities. What is also interesting to consider is how Daseinsanalysis can provide a foundation for multicultural considerations, given that we all live through equiprimordial and existential givens in the world simply by being human beings, but take up those experiences in very unique ways. We then could celebrate a true communion of diversity.

Daseinsanalysis is practiced around the world and is centralized in the International Federation of Daseinsanalysis, including countries such as Brazil, Greece, Belgium, France, Hungary, Austria, Canada, England, the Czech Republic, and, of course, Switzerland. Originally having its training headquarters in Zurich, which was originally limited to medically trained psychiatrists, the apparent exclusivism sparked points of contention among some Daseinsanalysts (Stadlen 2005, 2007). Today, though, Daseinsanalysis is growing in appreciation in the United States and is taught in the human science-oriented doctoral programs in psychology. As it continues to spread in awareness and appreciation, more and more clearings will provide space for freeing us all to live more into our ownmost possibilities.

## See Also

- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)

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## David

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Of all the personalities in the Hebrew Bible, David might be the most human. Very spiritual, musically gifted, and poetic, David is also a man of the flesh. He can be intensely political, coarse at times, and certainly not immune to sexual desires and appetite. David is not one-sided.

He is a “man of the field” as is Esau but also a “quiet man,” as is Jacob (Gen 25:27). It is the blend between David’s spiritual and physical that makes him so endlessly fascinating and so prototypical of the Jewish emphasis on the integration of body and soul, unlike what Robert Alter (1999, pp. 110–111, Footnote 55) suggests is the Greek approach to writing history. Although much has been written about David, both positive and negative (e.g., Sternberg 1985; Halpern 2001), it is the humanness deriving from the blend of spiritual and physical on which we shall focus.

We first encounter David in I Samuel 16:12 after God announces to Samuel that because “he (Saul) has turned back from me. . . I repent that I made Saul king” (I Sam 15:10–11). As Chap. 15 ends, Samuel has told Saul that “The LORD has torn away the kingship of Israel from you this day and given it to your fellow, who is better than you” (I Sam 15:28). The chapter concludes with: “Samuel saw Saul no more till his dying day” (I Sam 15:35).

In Samuel 16, God instructs Samuel to find and anoint a replacement for Saul whom God will indicate (I Sam 16:1–3). Upon arriving in Bethlehem, Samuel asks Jesse to call each of his seven sons to pass in front of him (Samuel). None is suitable. Samuel bids Jesse to call his youngest son, David, who is tending sheep (I Sam 16:9–12).

When David arrives, he is described as “ruddy with fine eyes, and goodly to look on.” Yet God has previously instructed Samuel not to be overly concerned with physical appearance at the expense of underlying spirituality: “Look not to his appearance and to his lofty stature. . . For not as man sees does God see. For man sees with the eyes and the LORD sees with the heart” (I Sam 16: 6–7). David is clearly God’s choice (I Sam 16: 6–7). From this day on, David is described as “gripped with the spirit of the Lord” (I Sam 16:13). From his first appearance, then, the interchange between David’s physical and spiritual nature is emphasized. Saul becomes depressed as a result of God’s abandonment of him and asks his servants bring to him a man skilled in playing the lyre. The musical David is brought to him, and the way he is described

illustrates our theme. “Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, skilled in playing, a valiant fellow, a warrior, prudent in speech, a good-looking man, and the LORD is with him” (I Sam 16: 18–19).

In Chap. 17, the spiritual lyre-playing David volunteers to answer the challenge to battle issued by the giant Philistine warrior Goliath. (I Sam 17: 8–11) Saul at first refuses David’s request, responding that David is just a lad (whom he knows as his lyre player). David persists, describing how he has already slain a lion and a bear who threatened his flock. He says specifically to Saul, “The LORD who has rescued me from the lion and the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine” (I Sam 17: 31–37).

David goes to face Goliath with his sling and a simple shepherd’s pouch. He strikes Goliath in the forehead with a stone from his sling, slaying him. Yet, central to this narrative is that David has not felt that it is his physical agility alone that leads to Goliath’s defeat, but his relationship with the God of Israel. Before he has run at Goliath, David said to him: “And all this assembly shall know that not by sword and by spear does the LORD deliver, for the LORD’s is the battle and he shall give you into our hand” (I Sam 17: 38–54).

David’s behavior is totally unlike that of the more egocentric Greek warrior Ajax, Goliath-like himself, who has angered the goddess Athena by not giving credit to the gods for his military victories: “Father, with heaven’s help a mere man of nought might win victory, but I, albeit without their aid, trust to achieve a victor’s glory” (Sophocles 1938, lines 759–77). She makes him temporarily mad, deflecting his rage against Odysseus and his men to a herd of sheep. When Ajax realizes how madly he has acted, he falls on his sword (Sophocles 1938, lines 815–866).

David gained great favor at Saul’s court and popularity among the people. He became the close friend of Jonathan, the king’s son; marries Saul’s daughter, Michal; and has great success as a battle leader. However, Saul grows jealous of David and seeks to kill him (I Sam 18–26). David flees from the court for his life and runs as

a fugitive with 600 loyal followers to the Philistine King Achish of Gath (I Sam 27). But as events transpire, David is spared from fighting with the Philistines against Israel, in a battle where Saul and Jonathan are killed.

This is not simply political diplomacy on David's part, though it is that. On a deeper psychological level, David's actions speak to his spiritual character. Although he is loyal to King Achish, he continues to love King Saul and Jonathan as well and the God of Israel. When Saul and Jonathan are killed in battle against the Philistines on Mt. Gilboa, David is deeply stricken, composing a beautiful lament for them: "Oh beauty of Israel. On your high places lie the slain. How the mighty have fallen. . . ." (II Sam 1: 17f).

How different David is in this regard than the legendary Roman soldier Coriolanus. As recounted by the historians Plutarch (1978, pp. 15–52), Livy (1960, p. 32f) and Shakespeare (1865), Marcius's military valor at Corioli against the Volsci wins him the honorary name of Coriolanus. He soon becomes embroiled in angry class arguments in Rome. His outspoken insults to the plebeians lead to his banishment. Infuriated and obsessed with wreaking revenge on Rome, he goes to the Volsci and persuades them to attack Rome. Unlike David, Coriolanus seems incapable of any genuine love or loyalty to anyone and is guided only by his rigid inhuman code of how a warrior should act.

I and II Samuel go on to narrate David's many adventures and his human growth through often difficult times. David is elevated to be king over the tribe of Judah, while the other tribes follow Saul's son Ish-Bosheth (II Sam 4:4). David's main center is in Hebron, where he rules for 7½ years until Ish-Bosheth was assassinated by his own retainers, after which David is accepted as king over all Israel, making Jerusalem its capital. David's personal life is often turbulent. He marries 18 women, among them, Michal, Abigail, and, finally, Bathsheba.

David's relationship to Bathsheba begins when he sees her bathing from his roof and is taken with her. He sends for her, even though she is still married to Uriah, one of Joab's officers,

who is off in battle. In such a situation, Israelite soldiers customarily gave their wives a conditional divorce before leaving for battle so that she may not become a "grass widow" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Shabbat 56a). In any case, David lies with her and she becomes pregnant. When she informs David, he summons Uriah, hoping he will lie with Bathsheba and think the child is his. However Uriah refrains, feeling it would be disloyal to his men in the field. This subterfuge failing, David orders Uriah back to the field in a very dangerous spot and has him abandoned. He is killed in battle, and David weds the pregnant Bathsheba. She bears him a son and this is evil in the eyes of God. (II Sam 11). As Bathsheba's spiritual character and wisdom unfolds, however, it becomes apparent that David's desire for her was not simply an example of his physically "following his eyes" that led to the undoing of Samson with Delilah (*Babylonian Talmud*, Sotah 9b).

II Sam 12 begins with God's sending Nathan to confront David with the wrong that he did. Nathan does not do this directly but begins by presenting David with the famous parable of a rich man with much livestock taking the only ewe from a poor man. This represents a very sophisticated psychotherapeutic tool whereby one can instill a truth in a patient by circumventing his defenses. When David expresses his anger against the rich man, Nathan tells him "You are the man." David atones for his act and does not die, but the son borne from this union does die. He is forgiven and Bathsheba bears him another son, Solomon, a brilliant man who will ultimately succeed David on the throne. David wants to build the Temple to God, but God told him that although He loves David very much, the Temple would have to be built by a king (Solomon) who has no blood on his hands.

David had many wives and thus many children who were half brothers and sisters. His many sons could cause problems. Amnon raped his half sister Tamar and was murdered by Tamar's full brother Absalom. Absalom later rebels against David and comes close to dethroning him before he is killed (II Sam 13–18). David never stops loving Absalom his son, grieving mightily for



him when he hears of his death (II Sam 19:1–19:9). Upon hearing of his rebellious son's death, David weeps and laments “My son, Absalom. My son, my son, Absalom! Would that I had died in your stead” (II Sam 19:1). These words become the title of a play *Absalom*, *Absalom* by William Faulkner (Faulkner 1990).

David was a man of many remarkable abilities and of great emotional depth. Warrior, king, poet and saint; no matter what he did, he could not exist without a feeling of closeness to God. David never forgot his origins as a shepherd, and he loved his people with the devotion, love and care he had given to his sheep. His courage in many difficult moments was based on a total loving faith that God created and guided the world and that he had only to follow God's plans, and that whatever God would do would be for the best. It is a faith that shines also from the letters of a great American commander Robert E. Lee almost 3,000 years later (Lee 2007).

David expressed this faith deeply in his poems, some of which are included in the Psalms. One of the most famous is the 23rd Psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . . Your rod and Your staff comfort me.” Other notable chapters in the Psalms are as follows: (3) “A song of David as he fled before Absalom his son.” and (51) “To the choirmaster: A song of David. When Nathan the Prophet came to him when he went to Bathsheba.”

No known contemporary sources mentioned David until the recent finding of one inscription in the biblical archaeological site in Israel at Hazor. Archaeologist Eilat Mazor believes that some large buildings she has unearthed in Jerusalem from about 1000 BCE are David's palace, (Erlanger 2005) though this claim is questioned by others (Finkelstein et al. 2007).

As the founder of the line of Jewish kings and the ancestor of the messiah and an author of Psalms and the subject of many midrashic stories, David remains an important figure. He is psychologically balanced between warrior and musician/poet and is a warrior, lover, and God-fearer. He is introspective, diplomatic, and active and a promising youth and wise King. Body and soul are both important. It is a strength of the

biblical narrative that it does not whitewash his actions toward Uriah. He is not perfect, but whole. When he trespasses with Bathsheba, he repents. Throughout his life, David is “gripped with the spirit of the Lord” (I Sam 16:13).

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Biblical Psychology
- ▶ Body and Spirituality
- ▶ God
- ▶ Hero
- ▶ Jerusalem
- ▶ Jewish Care and Counseling
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Monotheism
- ▶ Prophets
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Talmud
- ▶ Western Wall
- ▶ Yahweh

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## Death Anxiety

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### Definition

Fear of death can be defined as the anxiety experienced in daily life caused by the anticipation of death. It can be the result of facing death through illness and aging or experiencing circumstances that force a confrontation with the idea of death. It can also include many aspects of dying, such as pain and suffering, feelings of abandonment, loss of dignity, and of “nonbeing,” not living up to one’s potential (May 1983; Heidegger 1962).

### Denial

... No one believes in his own death. In the unconscious, everyone is convinced of his own immortality (Freud 1953–1966).

Ernest Becker, the author of Pulitzer Prize winner, *The Denial of Death*, maintains that death denial is a basic human motivation and a universal biological need. The terror of death is so overwhelming, he says, that man conspires to keep it buried in the unconscious network of defense mechanisms where it is repressed.

Irvin Yalom, noted American existential psychiatrist, would agree that death anxiety is a basic tenant of human existence. Rarely though, Yalom maintains, do clients present in therapy settings with the complaint that they fear death. Instead, they appear with a variety of death anxiety-avoiding coping mechanisms and denial-based strategies that are not effective.

### Boundary Experience

Regardless of Yalom and Becker’s contention that fear of death underlies anxiety in general, death anxiety is not always buried. Columbia University’s Dr. David Forrest discusses a “readiness” or Mortality Stage in which a physically healthy, cognitively intact individual reaches the end of the emotional denial of death and becomes acutely aware of his or her own mortality. The Mortality Stage is so distinct that all of life prior to this stage can be subsumed under the rubric the Immortal Stage. Experiences that trigger the Mortality Stage can be any loss or events such as war, terrorism, famine, genocide, pandemics, or even minor accidents. A “boundary” experience is Yalom’s term for this heightened awareness, which he defines as an event or urgent experience that propels one into a confrontation with one’s mortality.

### Death Gives Life Meaning

Because the heart of existentialism and existential therapy is the attempt to resolve the conflict or tension created when an individual confronts one of life’s ultimate concerns such as death, existential therapy, essentially an exploration of one’s life meaning, has been used successfully to integrate spirituality into end-of-life care (Breitbart 2004). Prior to the public awareness and acceptance of the work done by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, end-of-life care was primarily concerned with symptom control and pain management. Following Kübler-Ross’ *Death and Dying*, palliative care literature began to emphasize a need for a greater emphasis on spirituality

and meaning along with interventions to help patients examine these areas of their lives. It is this examination that offers an individual the potential to live purposefully by embracing the inevitability of death.

“Though the physicality of death destroys us, the idea of death may save us” (Yalom 2002, p. 126). English existentialist Emmy van Deurzen agrees “Life and death are two sides of one coin. They cannot be had without each other, they should not be kept apart and in isolation.”

### See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Grace](#)
- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)

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## Death Rituals

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Fear and anxiety are two very basic and all-pervasive human emotions, and nothing seems to constellate them more precisely and powerfully than death, my death, yours, and other peoples’ deaths. Even in times gone by, when human beings were more deeply linked with the natural world and the cycles of living and dying, death was still a strong catalyst for immediate restorative actions aimed at healing the wound to the community caused by an individual demise; the jolt to the continuum of eating, speaking, and acting linked to a personal or even group will. And yet, hope and celebration are also important aspects of our experience, and it appears clear that death also brings these to the fore so that they can nourish the multiplicity of rituals and practices that surround this most challenging of human experiences.

What needs to be taken care of when somebody dies? One must posit three entities in this drama. There is the body, obviously. More of that later. Then comes, for many individuals and cultures at least, some need to provide for that which may continue – variously called spirit, soul, mind, mental continuum – and ensure that this non-bodily essence is given all the help it needs to carry on towards either higher evolution or whatever is deemed appropriate in the culture and also to prevent it from coming back to haunt the living and settle scores on unsuspecting survivors!

The third entity is of course the vast majority, the people left behind, those individuals grieving or rejoicing, even the society as a whole if it’s a well-known personality or figurehead who managed to touch a chord in the zeitgeist or collective consciousness of the time/race/society. For this latter point a thorough exploration of the aftermath of say, Mahatma Gandhi’s or Princess Diana’s deaths, would prove revealing. There, we have a reminder of how powerful a shock to the

national psyche an individual's death can be and how critical to restore some equilibrium through mass rituals involving candles, flowers, praise, and much more. Why? Because what could remind us better of our own mortality than the death of the rich, beloved, and famous, what could arouse our anxiety better, or indeed our love and compassion, our anger, our guilt, our own longing for redemption and forgiveness, not to mention plain and simple happiness and the need to restore a sense of the power of life to outlive death? (Davies 2002). For insight on our need to defeat, transform and confront death see Ferris (1989) on Dylan Thomas, author of the masterful poem, "*And Death shall have no Dominion.*" Since so many emotions can be caused to erupt by this destruction of the bodily element, is it surprising that the rituals surrounding it are so necessary and often complex and of long duration?

### Aspects of Selected Rituals

People influenced by Tibetan Buddhism try not to move the body for a few days so as not to inappropriately hasten the exit of the consciousness or at least try to touch the crown of the head only since the place of exit of the subtle mind is said to determine the realm of rebirth.

Many Hindus quickly cremate and in outdoor traditional cremations, the skull is cracked open by the elder son to allow the soul to depart. If possible Ganges water is forcibly inserted between the lips for purification. Many cultures used to try to give a three-day or so gap after death before the body is disposed to allow time for the consciousness/soul/spirit to exit appropriately, but in modern times, due either to haste, change in beliefs or more mundane factors such as heat and lack of refrigeration facilities, the body is considered merely a totally inanimate object to be quickly removed from the environment of the living. In the past, in Tibet, for example, sky burials were performed, in which the body was chopped up, mixed with barley flour, and fed to the vultures at an elevated spot. Prayers would be performed by monastics

during this process, involving ritual bells, scepters, thighbone horns, and drums. In this way local landlord spirits were placated, and higher beings such as Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Dharma protectors were invoked and requested for help in guiding the mind of the departed to happy rebirths.

See the fascinating discussion of the Wari' of Brazil, (Conklin 2001), as a counterpoise to say, the attitude of the Tibetan Book of the Dead (Sogyal Rinpoche 2008) (or indeed modern western attitudes towards death), to see how we cannot safely presume that all cultures would find an animal rebirth anathema or regard eating one's dear departed as repugnant. For the Wari', it is fit to be reborn as game that in turn feeds the next generation of hunters and eating the dead was considered, at least as late as the 1960s, as compassionate and respectful, acting as a link between living and dead and a focus for channelized grief. Superficial analysis of these unusual rituals may simply galvanize a morbid and twisted understanding of these processes. If we were born into the pre-1960s Wari' society, we'd understand it as part of our seamless world view, undisturbed as yet by mobile phones, established theistic religion, and reality TV. That others may indeed find it barbaric and a sign of ignorance is here quite beside the point.

Let us explore this all a little deeper. It is an inescapable fact that for some relentless work and routine become the means to offset the fear of death, the unknown, and yet even a whole lifetime of work does not guarantee avoiding an abiding leitmotif of unease. So, when death actually occurs to somebody you know, rituals provide an accepted means of satisfactorily and legally putting a seal on a life and releasing the survivors to carry on with their lives. There are so many levels in this. The minimalistic death, deliberately designed to cause least disruption to the community (and practiced by the evolved, the brave, or the rejected even perhaps), is to walk out into the cold and freeze to death unseen and uncharted by others, as practiced formerly by the elderly in some Native American peoples and by a famous British explorer. This, however, is in fact hard on those left behind and most

people have need of a good funeral – “we gave him a good send-off.” And there is such variety in this send-off: prolonged, professionally arranged weeping, chest thumping, feverish massaging of feet, tight bandaging of the body, or quiet meditation, prayers and pujas, and chanting for 40 or 49 days. Nowadays we need to acknowledge that death is good business too and the standardization of the process is marked, despite small exceptions maintained to boost local tourist industries.

### Changes Over Time

What was in a rural community a complex event performed attentively with intimate knowledge of the deceased has all too often become, in the fast-paced anonymity of the urban sprawl, a rapid procedure, a production one might say, in which the religious element is often the shortest and the food and socializing afterwards of more importance (see Davies 2002). After all, the need of the hour is to adjust to a new situation and even more so to carry on with life. To many it’s quickly back to business as normal, especially for those really too busy to see the funeral as anything but a brief interlude in a day full of other work and social engagements.

We see in the contemporary milieu how death can be trivialized in the sense that deeper issues are being deliberately avoided so as not to rock the boat of hard-fought-for but tenuous mental security; however, much self-deception may be involved. The dearly beloved (or most hated), in India, for example, is always made to depart for their “heavenly abode”; their enlarged photos are garlanded as though they were deities and all this in a culture that has long traditions of not only believing in but describing hells and other states of woe in detail that might surpass even Dante. The ritual relieves the anxious itch temporarily but does not often address the deeper need to properly assimilate the sadness, as well as come to terms with one’s own mortality.

But of course for some, the rituals of death are long, profound, even agonizing, and/or liberating. What if you believe, both as a matter of

personal conviction as well as due to faith in a particular religion, that your behavior will definitely influence the welfare of the departed? In other words what if you are profoundly convinced that you can actually contribute to the happy future of a being whose rebirth you or an evolved practitioner could strongly influence through ritual? And what about those for whom a loss seems the end of the world, who seem inconsolable, in despair? It is clear that the short-term rituals of a few days, although perhaps temporarily useful, seem paltry in the face of the larger issue. Which is why in any discussion of this subject it seems that, to be at all meaningful and effective, a great deal of wisdom, love, and patience is needed to inform any of the processes that take place at this time, and that in the end individuals have to come to terms with death in their own hearts and minds as they engage in the process of reflecting, analyzing, accepting, forgiving, and any number of other inner methods to adapt to a world that has changed, an inner and outer landscape without that one significant other. The Tibetan tradition encourages personal retreats aimed at mental and spiritual purification as well as practices to actually benefit the dying and the dead. If one looks at the issue of death as pertaining not just to physical death but to the necessity of constantly letting go of the old or outworn, as in again and again in our daily lives separating from that which is familiar or desired, each night dying to the day in preparation for the rebirth of morning, then we might glimpse another whole set of habits and rituals, both inner and outer, that help us set the compass to changing circumstances. These mental patterns or inner rituals are no less real for not being the subject of as much learned discourse as their outer counterparts and eastern psychology would hold that the inner is key. What we perform externally largely reflects an internal understanding and need.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhist Death Rituals](#)

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## Defenses

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Defenses are ways by which the psyche aims at avoiding threatening affects, above all anxiety. The notion of defense was introduced by Freud with reference to hysteria (Freud 1894, p. 47). The defense mechanism involved in hysteria is repression, which causes the expulsion of a painful affect or idea from the conscious ego. During the following 30 years, Freud would use the term repression with reference to defensive processes in general. This special status of repression was due to its role in the constitution of the unconscious as such. In 1925 however Freud reintroduced the concept of defense as an inclusive category encompassing not only repression but also other mechanisms which he had been identifying in the meanwhile (Freud 1926, p. 163). The analysis of ego defenses was to become subsequently a major theme in psychoanalysis, thanks also to the pivotal study on the topic by Anna Freud.

A subsequent line of development, which paralleled the extension of psychoanalytic theory and practice beyond neurosis and its application to borderline, narcissistic, and schizoid personalities, consists of the analysis of primary defenses (also named primitive, dissociative, archaic, psychotic, and archetypal).

## Ego Defenses

When the ego experiences distressing affects resulting from the perceived incompatibility of an experience, idea, or feeling, it succeeds in defending itself from the related anxiety by “turning this powerful idea into a weak one” and “robbing it of the affect - the sum of excitation - with which it is loaded” (Freud 1894, p. 47). The sources of anxiety are superego demands, external situations, and overpowering or conflicting instincts (Freud 1936, pp. 54–65). Neurosis occurs when a defense mechanism fails to ward off anxiety or when other portions of the id claim a “compensation” – in the form of a symptom – having been damaged by the operation of a mechanism of defense (Freud 1924, p. 183). Exceedingly rigid defenses loosen the relation to reality and hold up the emotional development of the individual (Winnicott 1985a, p. 168).

Freud also regards religion as a form of collective neurosis based on regression to infantile dependence on the father, rooted on childlike feelings of impotence and defending against superego anxiety. Specific defense mechanisms employed are obsessive ceremonials, devaluation of intellect, and altruistic surrender, all in the service of repressing instincts thus avoiding related guilt and anxiety. Freud notes that the impulses that religions strive to suppress are not merely of a sexual nature but concern any instinct that “springs from egoistic sources” (Freud 1907, p. 127). One typical defense against such instincts was identified by A. Freud as “altruistic surrender” of “our own instinctual impulses in favor of other people” (Freud 1936, pp. 11–134).

A. Freud lists nine basic mechanisms of defenses: repression, regression, reaction-formation, isolation, undoing, projection, introjection, turning against the self, and reversal into the opposite, to which she also adds sublimation as a more sophisticated and complex defensive activity of the ego (Freud 1926, p. 44). However, this list is far from exhaustive, as A. Freud herself goes on to describe further mechanisms such as identification with the aggressor and denial. All aspects of mental life can serve a defensive function. For instance,

McWilliams (1994, pp. 117–144) also includes intellectualization, moralization, and sexualization among the defenses of the ego. Jung's notion of regressive restoration of the persona (Jung 1966, pp. 163–168) may also be regarded as a defense mechanism against anxiety.

Defenses may be classified according to the nature of the mechanism which protects from anxiety, which might either affect the instinctual process itself (like displacement, reversal, and turning round upon the self) or merely prevent it from being perceived by the ego (like repression and projection). Bowlby suggests that the operation of defense mechanisms can be spotted when patterns of behavior, thought, or feeling “[are] carried out under pressure, absorb an undue proportion of the person's attention and [are] visibly undertaken at the expense of something else” (Bowlby 1980, p. 66).

Jung often refers to repression of psychic contents as the process constituting the personal shadow. He views confrontation with the shadow as a moral problem and an essential task in the process of individuation – a viewpoint which underpins his aim of “treating” Christianity by showing the importance of integrating the repressed, or “missing fourth,” into its conscious attitude (Stein 1985, p. 171). However, Jung is also of the opinion that as long as a defense works, it should not be broken down as the patient may need it as a protection against overwhelming experience. This is particular so in the case of defenses with a religious content, like the “Catholic defense” (Jung 1958a, p. 45), on which Jung writes: “If the patient is a practising Catholic, I invariably advise him to confess and to receive communion in order to protect himself from immediate experience, which might easily prove too much for him (. . .) I reinforce a means of defense against a grave risk, without asking the academic question whether the defense is an ultimate truth” (Jung 1958a, p. 44). But if the patient's dreams “should begin to destroy the protective theory,” Jung feels that he has “to support the wider personality” of the patient (Jung 1958a, p. 45), in other words work on his/her individuation. This latter aim cannot always be pursued, as the need to maintain the defense

may be paramount: “People may have to go back to the Church when they reach a certain stage of analysis. Individuation is only for the few. . .” (McGuire and Hull 1980, p. 394).

A concept related to (but distinct from) defense is resistance, which is the force that protects the work of defenses and its accessibility to the conscious ego. Overcoming resistances is for Freud one of the cornerstones of the psychoanalytic enterprise. In *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*, he identifies five types of resistances, of which three derive from the ego (repression, transference resistance, and resistances which proceed from secondary gains), one from the id (repetition compulsion), and one from the superego (unconscious guilt and need for punishment) (Freud 1937, p. 238). The latter two account for what Freud came to recognize as sources of an intractable resistance to the analytic cure (negative therapeutic reaction). In particular, the archaic superego in Freud's late view takes on split-off aggressiveness and thwarts recovery by attacking the ego. This new understanding proved pivotal in the development of the study of primary defenses.

## Primary Defenses

According to Melanie Klein, primitive defense mechanisms are aroused by two forms of anxieties that derive from the activity of the death instinct (or fear of annihilation), i.e., depressive and persecutory anxieties. Defenses against the former are manic ones (omnipotence, denial, triumph, and contemptuous control), while the main defenses against persecutory anxieties are splitting and projective identification. All these are called primitive defenses because, as Freud noted (Freud 1926, p. 164), they are employed before the separation of ego and id and the formation of the superego.

Winnicott examined in detail manic defenses, which use external objects “in the attempt to decrease the tension in inner reality” (Winnicott 1975, p. 132), specifically by denying depressive anxiety and guilt. Ultimately, manic defenses use reality as a reassurance against the experience of



death. Any form of psychological organization (including psychosis itself and the experience of oneness with God/universe) which effectively defends against the threat of breakdown and annihilation may work as a primitive defense.

Winnicott also suggested that the ascension of Christ could be seen as an instance of manic defense of an “ascensive” nature, psychologically akin to light-headedness and elation: “Each year the average Christian tastes the depths of sadness, despair, hopelessness, in the Good Friday experiences. The average Christian cannot hold the depression so long, and so he goes over into a manic phase on Easter Sunday” (Winnicott 1975, p. 135). Another example of manic defense in religion is when an aspect of reality is not acknowledged as internal, like “a preacher [who] feels as if God speaks through him,” but denies his own “parenthood of the internalized object” (Winnicott 1975, p. 133). However, in line with Jung’s position of respect for defenses, Winnicott also emphasizes that “in the analysis of the most satisfactory type of religious patient it is helpful to work as if on an agreed basis of recognition of internal reality, and to let the recognition of the personal origin of the patient’s God come automatically as a result of the lessening of anxiety due to the analysis of the depressive position” (Winnicott 1975, p. 133). On the other hand, antireligious attitudes could be seen as manically defensive too: people in analysis “jeering at religion (. . .) are showing a manic defense in so far as they fail to recognize sadness, guilt, and worthlessness and the value of reaching to this which belongs to personal inner or psychic reality” (Winnicott 1975, p. 135).

## Archetypal Defenses

Kalsched offers a post-Jungian formulation of primary defenses in which they are referred to as “archetypal defenses” and “defenses of the self” because they “seem to be coordinated by a deeper center in the personality than the ego” (Kalsched 1996, p. 17). They cause a split in the psyche between a progressed part that protects “whatever is left of true selfhood” (Kalsched 1996, p. 174)

and a regressed part that encapsulates what Kalsched names the “personal spirit” of the individual. Splitting allows disconnecting from unbearable affects and annihilation anxiety, at the cost of blocking individuation, i.e., the incarnation of the self in life. Both parts are experienced by the ego as “daimonic objects” through which “divine activity could be glimpsed - either for good or for evil” (Kalsched 1996, p. 148). Kalsched envisages in the ultimate antilife character of these defenses a “compelling image of what Jung called the dark side of the ambivalent Self. (. . .) The damage to the inner world is done by the psyche’s Yaweh-like rage, directed back upon the self” (Kalsched 1996, p. 17).

Kalsched’s formulation mostly draws upon Winnicott’s false self (Winnicott 1985b), Bion’s attack on linking (Bion 1984), Stein’s archetypal defenses (Stein 1967), and Fordham’s defenses of the self (Fordham 1974), which Kalsched amplifies and develops by delving into the archetypal perspective. Fordham, in particular, observes how defenses of the self oppose and undo any potentially developing link and aim “to keep the way open to regression, or maintain it as it is” (Fordham 1974, p. 193). The direction of this regression is towards “an infantile perverted state of mind” (Fordham 1974, p. 198). As Marcus West argues throughout his recent study of narcissistic disorders (West 2007), this form of regression is particularly enticing for people whose ego functioning is so underdeveloped that they constantly need a vicarious self-regulating other. In this process – in which projective identification is the main defense mechanism involved – they experience very intense affects, of a positive sign if sameness is registered and negative if this expectation is frustrated. In both cases, emotions may have an ecstatic and numinous quality which, however, as West concludes, may militate against the development of the ego, thus further enhancing recourse to primary defenses.

Hillman’s take on defenses brings a different understanding of the psychic processes regulating instincts and affects. He draws upon Jung’s contention that the archetypal image and the instinct belong together in the same archetype, the images

being regarded as self-portraits of the instincts. Jung already recognized the connection between defenses and images: “Instinctive defence mechanisms have been built up which automatically intervene when the danger is greatest, and their coming into action during an emergency is represented in fantasy by helpful images which are ineradicably imprinted on the human psyche” (Jung 1958b, p. 345). Hillman further elaborates this idea by arguing that any archetype has in itself an instinct-inhibiting power, which does not deny or displace or reverse the instinct, but makes full experience of it through its related images and may influence instinctual behavior by reflecting on and transforming the images. This form of defense differs from sublimation because it maintains the connection to the original instinct while allowing alternative outlets other than compulsive action or flight. Hillman exemplifies his argument by showing the self-inhibiting properties of instinctual phenomena linked to Pan, like panic and masturbation (Hillman 2000). Similarly, Murray Stein refers to the self-inhibiting properties of the archetype as “healthy paranoia” (Stein 1983, p. 95) and maintains that both the drive to meet the unconscious and the protection from it stem from the same god, Hermes. In this approach, instinct regulation, -psychological reflection, and pursuit of wholeness – which has a numinous quality, because active and conscious encounter with the unconscious is “an essentially religious struggle” (Stein 1983, p. 105) – are intertwined in a way which is quite far from the Freudian conceptualization of a trade-off between instinct and civilization. The implications of this position on religion are far reaching, particularly on the importance for religious images, symbols, and rituals of remaining in touch with the instincts which they also have the function to inhibit and contain.

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Deity Concept

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Deities are created by humans – usually in their image – to express our sense of where we came from and to express a sense of significance and protection. Deities are believed to be aware of us and our needs. They are ultimate progenitors and ultimate parent. Psychology has taught us how important our mental depictions of and memories of our parents are to any real understanding of our own identities. As far as we can tell, the concept of divinity has almost always been present in human consciousness and human life. We have indications of the concept at least as early as the cave paintings, rock carvings, and other artifacts of the Paleolithic. Deities of many sorts have arisen over time. Sky gods, mother goddesses, fertility deities, tricksters, storm-weather gods, creators, and warrior gods were ubiquitous in the ancient world. Baal and El reigned in Canaan until the Hebrew Yahweh replaced them. Hera and Zeus ruled the heavens in Greece until they were turned into mere statuary and literary characters by the Christian God. Many ancient deities still rule. Devi, Vishnu, and Shiva still dominate the temples and shrines of India. Spider Woman and the Great Spirit still have power in the sweat lodges, dances, *kivas*, and mountains of Native North America. Nigerian Binis have their separated Mother Earth and Father Sky. The Japanese have their sun goddess Amaterasu, the ancestor of their emperors. There are gods who

are said to have become incarnated as humans – Jesus as the Christ or Messiah, Lord Krishna; and the other avatars of the great god Vishnu; and some would say the Buddha.

There are many possible explanations for the concept of deity. A significant proportion of the human race argues that divinity first revealed itself to humanity in the form of personal beings. Others have seen deities as metaphorical expressions, symbols of the mysteries of the universe, reflections of our sense of the numinous, and our sense of a realm of existence that is beyond the physical, beyond our understanding. For some, gods, being immortals, are the embodiment of our instinctive drive to establish a permanent order in the universe, of which we, as the allies or offspring of deities, can be a part. A universal theme reflected in the archetype that becomes our many versions of divinity is our need to feel that we are meaningful inhabitants of a meaningful universe that we are ultimately “parented” as cultures and as a species. In this sense, divinity is a metaphor for the furthest extension of which the human mind is capable at any given time. Not surprisingly, then, deities change with the times, taking ever new forms, even as the essential archetype remains constant, veiled in its eternal mystery.

A generally accepted truth of psychology, itself the source of one of the dominant myth systems of the modern era, is that we are what and who we are not only because of our genes but because of our “background” experience, an important part of which is our parenting. Creation myths are collective stories of parenting by deities. In these myths, our worlds, our cultures, and we ourselves were created by the original deities. When we are asked about these parents, there will inevitably be limitations on our actual knowledge but also, as the myths of psychology teach us, on what we are able to “face.” And, of course, our parents – actual and cosmic – are themselves the products of their own past. The understanding of deities and their role in our lives, like the memory and evaluation of parents, involves a complex process of delving into the past and overcoming strong forces of “denial.” It often means seeing our parents’ limitations and the inadequacies of our visions of them as well as their positive traits.

## See Also

- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)

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## Deluge

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Flood myths are ubiquitous. They are found in Native American and African cultures, in ancient Greece and Egypt, in India, in Oceania, and in South America. More often than not, flood myths are outgrowths of creation myths. Typically, the creator is dissatisfied with creation, usually because of the sinfulness of humanity. In order to make a fresh start, the creator floods the world, destroying everyone and everything in it except, in some cases, for a flood hero, who is sometimes accompanied by his family and representatives of various animal and plant species. These survivors live to populate a new world. The oldest extant version of the flood myth is that of ancient Mesopotamia, contained in the Gilgamesh epic. This is a version remarkably close to the biblical version contained in Genesis.

Perhaps the best way to understand the psychological significance of the flood myth is to suggest an analogy to the rite of baptism, or purification by water, as practiced by many peoples since early times. In baptism the individual is symbolically drowned by submersion in the water only to be “reborn” into a religious community as he or she emerges. The individual dies

to the old life and is reborn into the new. The waters of baptism are analogous to the maternal primal waters of creation. In the flood, humanity is collectively baptized, as it were; we die to the old creation and are reborn, through the flood hero, into the new creation.

In another related sense, then, the flood ritual represents the ever-existing hope for a second chance, for a new beginning. The flood hero, whether the biblical Noah or the Sumerian/Babylonian Ziusudra/Utnapishtim, is the representative of that hope within us. Locked in the ark of survival, Noah is the collective psyche on its Dark Night of the Soul, moving through darkness to the ever hoped for renewal that is wholeness.

## See Also

- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Primordial Waters](#)

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## Delusion

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Delusions can be defined in a general sense as a belief that is false. The more rigorous definition implies that the belief is the result of some sort of

pathology and that it adheres broadly to the conditions laid out by Jaspers: certainty, incorrigibility, and the impossibility or falsity of its content. The belief must be held with absolute certainty; the holder must be unable to be swayed by any counterargument or evidence to the contrary, no matter how compelling the evidence; and the content of the belief must be such that it would be unbelievable under normal, non-pathological circumstances. Delusion is distinct from beliefs arising from disorders or trickery involving perception: delusional beliefs do not arise from incomplete or false perceptual information; rather perceptual information may be manipulated or interpreted to bolster the delusional belief.

## Jaspers

The DSM-IV definition retains a broad similarity with Jaspers' criteria:

A false belief based on incorrect inference about external reality that is firmly sustained despite what almost everybody else believes and despite what constitutes incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary. The belief is not one ordinarily accepted by other members of the person's culture or subculture (e.g., it is not an article of religious faith).

In spite of this general definition's broad acceptance, counterexamples have been produced for all of these criteria, the most notable being labeled the Martha Mitchell effect: a belief may be labeled delusional because of its apparent falsity, although it may in fact be true. Martha Mitchell, wife of the attorney general at the time of Watergate, was labeled delusional when she persisted in asserting that there was illegal activity going on inside the White House. The leaking of information from the White House later proved the truth of her claims.

Further to the Martha Mitchell effect is the impossibility of ascertaining the truth-value of some statements. Religious beliefs fall into the category of beliefs with no determinable truth-value. The distinction between ordinary religious beliefs and delusional beliefs with religious

content is that of sharedness: a religious belief that is shared by many is not classifiable as delusional, whereas a similar belief held by one or a very small number of people may be thus classified.

## Munro

Munro (1999) suggested a more rigorous series of criteria to separate delusions from false beliefs. A delusional belief is expressed and held with unusual conviction, and the holder is particularly unreceptive to contrary evidence. So far Munro is in line with Jaspers; however, the further criteria include a strong emotional investment in the belief, with a concomitant oversensitivity, suspicion, or hostility to questioning of or about the belief. Normal behavior and logic patterns are generally unaffected, except in areas of the believer's life that are affected by the delusion. The internal logic of the belief may be preserved, although the resulting behavior may be out of keeping with the normal social context.

There are some delusional beliefs that allow a person to continue their lives in a reasonably normal fashion. In the main, however, with the lack of universal agreement about what precisely constitutes a delusional belief, the key criteria used for psychiatric diagnosis are practical: a belief should be considered delusional if it is definitively bizarre; if it is held with excessive conviction, especially if the believer is not amenable to counterarguments against it; and if the belief causes distress to the holder. If a belief meets the criteria for a delusional belief and yet causes no distress or even improves the believer's quality of life, then some psychiatrists would prefer to allow the belief to remain unexamined. As with Freud's categorization of religious belief, some untrue or unprovable beliefs are helpful to the believer, and their loss may cause further, unnecessary distress.

## See Also

► [Freud, Sigmund](#)

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## Demeter/Persephone

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The ancient Greek *mythos* of Demeter and Kore-Persephone carries a universal human message, the redemptive power of enduring love, despite violation, suffering, or death. Today, women and men who turn to archetypal psychology or a devotional Goddess-practice for personal and social transformation are often looking for a sense of well-being that is bio-mystical, social, and cosmological in nature. The *mythos* of Demeter and Kore-Persephone depicts reunion with the Mother/mother as a crucial stage on the soul-journey to return to self, others, and a sense of being at home in the world and the cosmos. The fullest telling of their myth is found in the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* from the Archaic Age (ca. 650–550 BCE; author unknown).

### The Sacred Story of Mother and Daughter

The *mythos* of Demeter and Persephone relates how the Daughter is abducted by Ploutos (Hades) against her will to the Underworld, separating Daughter and Mother; the Mother searches with the help of Grandmother Hekate for her lost Daughter; the fasting Daughter longs to return to her Mother, while the fasting Mother grieves for her lost Daughter; the Maiden awakens sexually (pre-patriarchal version) and/or is sexually violated (patriarchal version);

despite anger and overwhelming grief, the Mother never forsakes her desire to see her Daughter again and eventually wins her Daughter's return, because of the famine caused by the withdrawal of her fertile powers and the consequent loss of wealth for Father Zeus, king of the Olympian pantheon; Daughter and Mother are joyfully reunited; Persephone accepts womanhood and claims her own (Underworld) domain, accompanied by new powers in all three realms of Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld; the Mother overcomes her rage against the Gods and regains a gracious heart, along with the return of her powers of fertility, nurture, and regeneration, and the expansion of her honors among humans and the Olympian deities; and the wise grandmother Goddess Hekate becomes Persephone's devoted companion and servant-priestess. Demeter and Persephone restore their gifts of fertility to the Earth and give humans special rites, including the Eleusinian Mysteries, rites of fulfillment, so humans can once again be reconciled with the Two Goddesses, adopted into their divine family, and find joy in this life and hope for life beyond death (Foley 1994, p. 80; Keller 1988).

The merging and diverging lives of mother and daughter, the weaving, unraveling, and reweaving of female ties of love, are part of every woman's daily life. The personal and cultural suffering wrought by the daughter's loss of the mother and the mother's loss of the daughter is a tragedy explored in myth, and the myth and rituals of Demeter and Persephone offer ways for women to heal from the loss of the mother-daughter bond (Rich 1976, p. 273). The *return to the mother* reaches to the deepest level of intra- and inter-human healing, for women and men who have experienced the rupture of this primal bond.

The sacred story of Demeter and Persephone also reflects the experience of a woman who has been violated by a man and by patriarchal collusion. The diminishment of the Goddess under patriarchal societies was reflected in the abduction/rape and suffering of both Mother and Daughter, for both Goddesses were subjected to rape in the patriarchalized variants of their myths



that encoded the changeover from an earlier matrilineal epoch to the patriarchal epoch.

The women's liberation movements of the modern and postmodern eras have encouraged women not to hide their experiences of violation but to tell others the truth, and through this, to address the personal and collective problem of violence against women. This in turn provides common ground for opposing sexual and physical violence against women and children, civilian violence, and wars of aggression. The Demeter-Persephone myth calls for the nurturing and cherishing, not the violation or destruction of human beings. Feminist Jungian psychologist Kathie Carlson explores the deeply relational dynamics of the psychological archetypes of Demeter-Mother, Persephone-Daughter, and Hades-Death in the lives of women and men; and she offers multiple ways to transform psychological wounding (Carlson 1990, 1997).

### Rites of the Thesmophoria, Lesser Mysteries, and Greater Mysteries

Rites honoring the Mother and Daughter Goddesses were celebrated across Greece at crucial points during the agricultural cycle, for invoking fertility of the Earth and seeds, for cultivation of the new green sprouts, and for the harvest. Their earliest known rites, the Thesmophoria, were for women only and called forth the fertile powers of Earth, women, and all nature. These were held in late autumn, just before the men's plowing of the fields and planting of the grain seeds, before the arrival of winter rains.

The Lesser Mysteries were Rites of Spring that celebrated the renewal of the new life-force in all plants, animals, and humans, especially the powers of procreation. They also served as rites of atonement in preparation for the Greater Mysteries in the autumn, also called the Eleusinian Mysteries.

The Eleusinian Mysteries were the most popular of all Greek religious festivals and celebrated the successful harvest each fall, along with the Mysteries of Sacred Marriage, Birth, Death and Rebirth. This panhellenic festival, celebrated

each year at Athens and Eleusis, was open to all, male and female, young and old, slave and free. These rites endured for almost two thousand years, from probably the fifteenth century BCE until 396 CE, when all pagan celebrations were outlawed by the Byzantine emperor Theodosius I. For the best overview and images of the archaeological architecture and art connected with the Eleusinian Mysteries, see the work of Greek archaeologist and chief superintendent of excavations at Eleusis, Kalliope Papangeli (2002). For a detailed discussion of the rituals, see Carl Kerényi (1960), George Mylonas (1961), and Mara Lynn Keller (2009).

The Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone also celebrated Sacred Male Divinities and the Sacred Masculine principle in nature, including human males. Gods and men appear in the mythos of the Mother and Daughter Goddesses as divine consort – Iasion was Demeter's lover in Crete; as husband – Plouton was Persephone's husband in the Underworld; as son – Ploutos, Dionysos, and Iachkos; and as healer – Asklepios.

### The Names of Demeter and Persephone Reflect Their Many Powers

Demeter and Kore-Persephone are the older and younger aspects of the Great Goddess conceived as One, as Two-in-One. This is reflected in their naming as *the Demeters (tas Demetres)* and *the Two Goddesses (to Theoo)*.

Demeter is a multifaceted Great Goddess with cosmological as well as personal and political powers. The etymology of *Demeter* – is contested but probably means both *Mother* and *Earth Mother*. *Demeter-Chthonia* – as Demeter was called in ancient Crete and Greece – was the Earth, above and below ground (*Chthonia* at first meant simply *in and of the Earth*). *Demeter-Oreia/Mountain Mother* connected Demeter of Greece to the Great Goddesses of Crete and Anatolia called *DA-MA-TE* and *Mater*.

As *Thesmophoros/Law-Bearer*, Demeter was the bearer of the laws of nature and the cosmos, good farming, procreation, and community.

She was celebrated as *Bestower of Bright Fruits*, *Bestower of Seasons*, *Anesidora/Sender-up of Gifts*, *Thermasia/Warmth* (the heat of the Earth that brings forth new life), and *Chloe/Green Growth*. As *Demeter-Eileithyia*, she was the birth-giving Goddess; as *Kourotrophos*, she was the *Cherisher of Children*. As *Demeter-Phosphoros/Light-Bearer*, she shared her healing powers. *Demeter-Melania/Black Demeter*, in Phigalia of Arcadia, was blackly cloaked in mourning, while at Eleusis, Demeter was connected to the fertility of the black Earth. As *Demeter-Erinys/Demeter-Fury*, Demeter was enraged at the rape of her Daughter (by Plouton) and of herself (by Poseidon). As *Demeter-Lousia*, she washed away her anger.

Some scholars see Demeter only as the Grain Mother and the grieving Mother of abducted Persephone, however, in addition to her procreative powers, Demeter also embodied political powers. As *Demeter-Amphictyony/Unifier*, she first united the Hellenic tribes into a confederacy in the early Archaic period, to provide mutual protection and assure peace among the Greeks. She was given political titles and invoked for oaths and treaties at many Greek cities. In Athens she was *Demeter-Boulaia/Demeter of the Council*. On the island of Cos, Demeter was believed to have the power to protect children and secure peace, and she was invoked as *Soteira, Savioress*.

*Kore*, the name of Demeter's child, means *Daughter* and *Girl* or *Maiden*. As *Persephone*, the Maiden Goddess represents the sexually awakening daughter who matures from girlhood into womanhood. Following her abduction, Persephone becomes the *Bride of Hades*. She in turn becomes a mother and is the "*producer of beautiful children*" (Euripides *Orestes* 964). Persephone's power as *Midwife* implies that priestesses of Persephone helped women deliver their babies. As the revered *Queen of the Dead*, who could traverse all realms of Earth, Heaven, and the Underworld, Persephone was the shamanic guide who retrieved a lost soul, helped a person transit suffering, or guided the dying to their final place of rest (Sophocles *Antigone* 810–813; *Oedipus at Colonus* 1548). She shared

her mother's powers as *Thesmophoros/Law-Bearer*; and like her mother, she was invoked as *Soteira, Savioress*.

Demeter and Persephone as dual Goddesses expressed the matrilineal bonds of women, sacred marriage, the birthing and nurturing of children, the fertility of Earth and all nature, the basis of a peaceful community in abundant food for all, and the cosmological rounds of the seasons of birth, growth, death, and regeneration.

## See Also

- ▶ [Earth Mother](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)

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## Demons

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The Middle English word “demon” derives from the medieval Latin *demon* and the Latin *daemon*, from the Greek *daimon* meaning “deity,” that is to say, a god or goddess. Inherent etymologically and historically in the English word is an ambiguous mixing of the ancient Greek notion of spiritual beings in addition to the gods and goddesses, not necessarily evil, with the postexilic Hebrew thought of harmful spiritual entities, the Persian notion of conflict between light (Ahura Mazda) and dark (Angra Mainyu) forces, and the Synoptic Gospel accounts of Jesus exorcising evil spirits that had invaded human beings, causing mental and physical illnesses (e.g., Matthew 8:28, 12:22; Mark 5:1, 3:22; Luke 8:26, 11:14). The contemporary use of the English word “demon” is for the most part skewed negatively to suggest one of an army of negative

supernatural entities under the leadership of the devil or Satan, despite attempts to reintroduce the more positive connotations of an attendant daimonic attendant spirit.

The Hebrew word *shedim* meaning “demons” inscribes a hierarchy of evil forces in Jewish religion. In the Talmud, the *mazzikim* or “harmful spirits” are governed by a king named Asmodeus and a queen called Agrat bat Mahalath with 10,000 demonic attendants. Some medieval commentators such as Maimonides and Menahem Meiri either ignore the Talmudic references to demons or read references to evil spirits allegorically as describing, for instance, a bedeviling and persistent melancholy. However, the medieval Kabbalistic movement further develops Jewish demonology, mapping a vast realm of demonic powers which parody the sacred. In Islamic tradition, maleficent entities such as *djinn*s, led by a Satan-like Iblis, test the faith of true believers; those who fall prey to such deceiving demons are treated in the Koran as liars and hypocrites. In similar ways, Buddhism describes demons functionally as forces that obstruct the achievement of nirvana. Hence, the Christian notion of demons as legion (i.e., “or we are many” is the demon’s name in Mark 5:9) but occupying a lesser position within a cosmological hierarchy of beings finds correspondences in other cultural contexts.

The relative subservient position of demons in these hierarchical cosmologies carries important implications for how we deal with the distress they cause. For example, investigating demon possession within the Karava caste community of Galle, Sri Lanka, anthropologist Bruce Kapferer (1983/1991) finds that Sinhalese demons occupy a less powerful place in the vertical hierarchy of being than deities and humans, but demons cause illness by creating the illusion that they can tyrannize and thereby disorder human beings. Kapferer characterizes the demonic as “a false oppressive totalitarian world which refuses possibility” and a possessed Sinhalese person as fragmented, reduced, and alienated (suffering from *thanikama*, meaning “aleness”). Through the ritual process of exorcism, the Sinhalese

differentiate between demons and deities who also have the power of generating illusions, but only for some ultimately edifying purpose. Kapferer argues that Sinhalese exorcism publicly affirms the given cosmological structure and at the same time presents the suffering individual with an opening into the possible. On the one hand, *yaksabhuta cidyava* as “exorcism” literally denotes taking the demon out of the possessed patient and transferring it to the basket, from there to the exorcist, and finally to a cock as sacrificial scapegoat. On the other hand, *yaksabhuta vidyava* as “the science of spirits” enacts the diagnostic problem of differentiating demons from deities and addresses the suffering of the possessed individual by reordering what the demonic has disordered: “In the *vilakku pade* the dancers place torches at the demon palace, lighting it up and opening it to view. The demon palace is revealed in its full completed objective meaning as not just the place of demonic disorder, but also as the place in which the deity resides” (Kapferer 1983/1991, p. 281). Kapferer emphasizes that the Galle Sinhalese differentiate between demons and deities who both create illusion, but for different ends. Demons cannot be transformed or reconstituted at a higher level in the cosmic hierarchy; they can only intensify the chaos of lower-level orders of the cosmic whole. Sinhalese exorcists, as “scientists of spirits,” light up the demon palace and thereby alter the sufferers’ perceptions of their suffering, emphasizing not so much the exorcising of the tyrannical spirit as the placing of the demonic in context with the divine, illness in relationship to health, disorder with order.

Freud wrote a psychoanalytical interpretation of a historical case of demonic possession (1922). A Bavarian painter, Christoph Haitzmann, came to Mariazell near Vienna in 1677 to ask for deliverance from visions and convulsions caused by a pact with a devil which was coming to term after 9 years. This case begins with the death of Haitzmann’s father and with the metamorphosis of his image into the demonic. In a series of paintings, Haitzmann portrayed his dead father that gradually transformed into a demon with breasts and holding an open book in his hand.

Through the rites of exorcism, Haitzmann felt himself released from two pacts he said he had signed with his demon. In the end, however, he chose not to return to his work as a painter but to enter the monastic life. Freud reads the case as a neurotic evasion of the ambivalent image of God-the-Father in which Haitzmann unconsciously defended against feelings of abandonment and deprivation. Freud portrays Haitzmann as having avoided the necessary mourning of the natural father and interprets the selling of his soul as a neurotic attempt to recast himself as son and obedient subject to a nurturing father figure and to remain within the classic Oedipal complex rather than live his adult life bereft. By submitting himself through the pacts to the father-as-demon, Freud argues, Haitzmann employed a “feminine attitude” by which he neurotically preserved his threatened status as “son” for a period of 9 years. For Freud, Haitzmann’s demonological neurosis permitted him to continue to feel contained within the inferior status of vassal-like “subject” and “son,” even though at great psychological cost and with much suffering from convulsions, visions, and creative blocks, culminating after 9 years in a crisis and eventually a shift into another form of containment, the holy orders. Freud knew well medieval textbooks on witchcraft such as *Malleus Maleficarum* and wrote to Fliess about the correspondences he could see between a possessed demoniac and a hysterical patient, between an inquisitor/exorcist and an analyst and between demons and repressed affects. In terms of psychological economies, he theorized that maintaining neurotic solutions such as Haitzmann’s takes a terrible toll, repression stealing libido that would normally be accessible to the ego.

Furthermore, in “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917/1984), Freud describes how a bereaved ego “cannibalizes” and “incorporates” a lost object in order to deny its death. In healthy mourning, he argues, the ego needs to both internalize and eventually expel this incorporated object. In melancholia, the ego finds itself destructively supplanted and ruled by this increasingly obstructing object with no possibility for change. Clearly, for Freud, Haitzmann incorporated and

thereby resurrected the lost father, his ego suffering under a subsequent demonic tyranny for 9 years until he sought deliverance from his symptoms through exorcism. For these reasons, Freud considers Haitzmann's subsequent maneuver out of his subjugation and into the order of the brethren as perhaps progressive but still evasive, neurotic, and, by implication, diabolical, the neurotic splitting perpetuated by the decision to enter a cloistered order rather than to take up again his vocation as painter. Lacan would read this psychoanalytically as a failure to endure a confrontation with the Otherness of the "réel": "that before which the imaginary falters, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant" (Lacan 1966/1989, pp. ix-x).

In a definition of demonism for the *Schweizer Lexikon*, Jung (1945a/1954) accounts for the phenomena of demonic possession by referring to his theory of complexes. At the same time, his definition introduces a collective component. For instance, he describes the demonomania of the Ursuline nuns at Loudun as an epidemic comparable to what he calls the "induced collective psychoses" of the twentieth century; as a result, any interpretation of an individual's suffering such as that of the Mother Superior Jeanne des Anges should take into account not only the possibility of trauma and the activation of repressed contents in the personal unconscious but also the effects of the collective unconscious. In other words, Jung would argue that Jeanne des Anges's demonological neurosis psychically infected the other Ursulines, polarized Loudun, and drew crowds from across Europe because her possession articulated not only a personal repressed conflict but a social dilemma in which the collective unconscious was active. Curiously, in his definition of demonism, Jung doesn't refer to evil or to his theory of the shadow, an inferior part of the individual personality and of the collective which, he would claim, can be integrated only in as much as it can be realized and suffered. Elsewhere, in connection with evil, Jung argues that while conscious constructs tend towards ternary forms, natural totalities form fours, the implication being that any

teleological movement towards wholeness would require the inclusion of a fourth element which consciousness is inclined to abhor or reject; so, he observes, "In the case of the religious triad the Fourth is obviously the devil, a metaphysical figure missing in the Trinity" (Jung 1973, Vol. 1, p. 412). Jung's short definition of demonism also doesn't explicitly mention his notion of a positive "daimon," but this is perhaps implied in his references to trance, shamanism, and spiritualism.

Freud and Jung were addressing not seventeenth-century but twentieth-century Western problems in which psychological disturbances manifested more in terms of organic illnesses than of gods and demons. In an essay written in 1945, Jung makes this comparison explicit:

Psychology has discovered where those demons, which in earlier ages dominated nature and man's destiny, are actually domiciled, and, what is more, that they are none the worse for enlightenment. On the contrary, they are as sprightly as ever, and their activity has even extended its scope so much that they can now get their own back on all the achievements of the human mind. We know today that in the unconscious of every individual there are instinctive propensities or psychic systems charged with considerable tension. When they are helped in one way or another to break through into consciousness, and the latter has no opportunity to intercept them in higher forms, they sweep everything before them like a torrent and turn men into creatures for whom the word 'beast' is still too good a name. They can then only be called 'devils'. To evoke such phenomena in the masses all that is needed is a few possessed persons, or only one. Possession, though old-fashioned, has by no means become obsolete; only the name has changed. Formerly they spoke of 'evil spirits,' now we call them 'neuroses' or 'unconscious complexes'. Here as everywhere the name makes no difference. The fact remains that a small unconscious cause is enough to wreck a man's fate, to shatter a family, and to continue working down the generations like the curse of the Atrides. If this unconscious disposition should happen to be one which is common to the great majority of the nation, then a single one of these complex-ridden individuals, who at the same time sets himself up as a megaphone, is enough to precipitate a catastrophe (Jung 1945b/1954, par. 1374).

Jung's use of the words "primitive" and "primordial" to account for the phenomena of



demons leaves him vulnerable to charges of primitivism when he discusses other cultures, but here he applies the words to twentieth-century Western European culture in order to contradict its rational bias:

I use the term 'primitive' in the sense of 'primordial' and... I do not imply any kind of value judgment. Also when I speak of a 'vestige' of a primitive state, I do not necessarily mean that this state will sooner or later come to an end. On the contrary, I see no reason why it should not endure as long as humanity lasts. So far, at any rate, it has not changed very much, and with the World War and its aftermath there has even been a considerable increase in its strength. I am therefore inclined to think that autonomous complexes are among the normal phenomena of life and that they make up the structure of the unconscious psyche (Jung 1934/1960, para. 218).

Clearly, Jung locates his definition of demonism in the present tense and in parallel with contemporary events.

## See Also

- ▶ [Complex](#)
- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Possession](#)

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## Depression

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What is depression? How is it seen by psychological, psychiatric, and religious authors? How is it related to religion and religious factors?

## What Is Depression?

Depression is a term referring to a disabling and prevalent psychiatric illness, major depressive disorder (unipolar depression). But the term also refers to a number of other related states. Unipolar depression must be distinguished from (1) depressed mood, which is a normal emotional response to adversity, especially involving loss, which if transient is not considered a clinical problem; (2) bipolar disorder, a relatively uncommon psychiatric condition involving uncontrollable swings from elated manic phases to low, depressive phases; and (3) dysthymic disorder, a milder disorder involving the symptoms of clinical depression but as few as two such symptoms (plus depressed mood) qualify the sufferer for the label dysthymic. There are a number of varieties of major depressive disorder and dysthymia, for example, seasonal disorder.



Further, in clinical research, the term depression is sometimes used to refer to a measured dimension, varying in the number and sometimes intensity of the symptoms of depression.

Returning to the commonest meaning of the term depression, major depressive disorder is considered present (American Psychiatric Association 2000) if at least five of the following have persisted for at least 2 weeks, of which at least one is depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure:

1. Depressed mood most of the day, every or nearly every day
2. Diminished interest or pleasure in all or nearly all activities
3. Significant weight loss or gain
4. Insomnia or hypersomnia
5. Psychomotor agitation or retardation
6. Fatigue or loss of energy
7. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt
8. Difficulty in thinking or concentration or indecisiveness
9. Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempt

Although there may be some biological predisposition, the most popular view of the causes of depression involves a diathesis model, in which a causal event or difficulty involving loss precipitates depressed mood, which can become a clinical condition in individuals who are vulnerable. Vulnerability factors may include early experience of loss (such as death of a parent), inadequate social support, low self-esteem, and heavy caring responsibilities, and there is some evidence of cultural variation in the factors that make people vulnerable to or protect them from depression (Brown and Harris 1978; Butcher et al. 2012; Loewenthal 2007). Widely used treatments include medication and psychotherapy, for example, cognitive-behavioral therapy. It is worth noting that of all psychiatric conditions, depression has perhaps excited the most controversy. It has been a prime example for the anti-psychiatry movement, led by Szasz (1974), arguing that it cannot be regarded as an illness, though it involves great suffering. Szasz argues that the illness

model of mental illness leads to medication, custodial care, and other treatments being wrongfully and coercively applied. In spite of Szasz, the view of (clinical) depression as illness remains significant.

This essay will look at views of depression in religious sources and some of the effects of these views. The essay will consider the widely cited claim that religious people are less prone to suffer from depression and will consider the factors which may be involved in this effect. Finally, we will consider recent attempts to deploy religious and spiritual factors in the therapeutic process.

### **How Has Depression Been Viewed in Religious Sources? What Are the Effects of These Views?**

In religious writings, it has been suggested that melancholy may be a spiritually valued, possibly chosen state (see Frost 1992), and even if not chosen, depression and melancholy may be viewed as opportunities for spiritual growth, increasing religious trust (Loewenthal 1992). Much recent work in positive psychology has offered evidence in support of these pious hopes: posttraumatic spiritual growth has now been empirically affirmed as a possibility. Thus, Shaw, Joseph, and Linley (2005) concluded that religion and spirituality are usually, although not always, beneficial to people in dealing with the aftermath of trauma. Traumatic experiences can lead to a deepening of religion or spirituality, and positive religious coping, religious openness, readiness to face existential questions, religious participation, and intrinsic religiousness are typically associated with posttraumatic growth. Positive psychology in general has been advanced as effective in the treatment of depression and as harmonious with a number of core religious teachings and spiritual values, such as the practices of helping, and of forgiveness (Joseph et al. 2006; Seligman 2002). Such religiously encouraged practices are reported to have beneficial mental health effects.

Although in religious writings, melancholy and depression have been generally viewed as normal responses to adversity and loss, and as foundations for a deeper faith, lay religious persons may regard depression as a failure of religious faith (Cinnirella and Loewenthal 1999). For example: *Sometimes we assume that depression can always be overcome through prayer - that good Christians don't suffer from depression* (quoted in Schroedel 2008). Webb, Stetz, and Hedden (2008) report that views of depression as a personal religious failure can be found in some Christian self-help books. Greenberg and Witztum (2001) quote several rabbinic leaders who suggest that prayer, religious song, and other religious coping methods may be sufficient. Indeed they may be in some cases, but where they are not, the cloud of depression thickens. In spite of the frequent helpfulness of religious ideas in coping with the miserable psychological consequences of adversity, religious coping may not always do the trick, and there is an ongoing concern that when religious coping fails, this may be seen as a personal failure, inadequacy of the individual, leading to deeper depression.

It is also important to note that clergy are often trusted as resources for mental health care, generally more so (by their congregations) than the mental health professions. Thus, religious teachings about depression and coping, as delivered by the clergyperson, may be an important resource. A minority of clergy may actively mistrust the mental health professions and warn their congregants against the use of professional help (Leavey et al. 2007). A further barrier to professional help seeking is the stigmatization of depression and other mental illnesses, said to be marked in religious communities (e.g., Crosby and Bossley 2012; Rosen et al. 2008).

Religious teachings on depression have been mixed and have had mixed effects – depression itself may have some spiritual value as a springboard for spiritual growth, religious faith, religious practices, and religious leadership may be helpful in coping with depression. However, the failure of religious coping can have a damaging effect on a person who is already depressed, and the advice of the minority of

religious leaders to avoid professional mental health practitioners may not always be in the best interests of those suffering from depression.

## The Association Between Religiosity and Low Levels of Depression

It has been widely concluded that there is an overall, consistent relationship between indices of religiousness and lower levels of depression (Koenig et al. 2012; Loewenthal 2007; Worthington et al. 1996). In spite of inconsistencies in the assessment of religiosity and of depression, the relationship is fairly reliable, though not strong, and not always consistent. What are the factors involved? Three kinds of effects have been identified:

1. *Social support*: religious groups endorse and encourage helping in times of adversity. This includes in-group as well as out-group helping (Inaba and Loewenthal 2008). Additionally, the existence of a social circle of friends and sympathetic listeners can be an important protective factor. Thus, Shams and Jackson (1993) found that unemployed Muslim men in the North of England were less likely to become depressed if they were religiously active, meeting regularly in the mosque for friendship and support, as well as prayer and religious study. Brown, Brechting, and Carlson (2005) concluded that social support is an important factor enabling the improved adjustment associated with spirituality and religion.
2. *Religious coping*: religiously active people are likely to engage in religious worship, study, and prayer, and this will develop a repertoire of religiously based coping beliefs which are drawn on in adversity, such as “this is all for the best,” “I feel that G-d is supporting me,” and “there must be a reason for this even if I can't see it now” (Loewenthal et al. 2000). The study of religious coping has been effectively established by Pargament (1997), who has reported a number of robust effects. Particularly important is the effect that good psychiatric outcomes (in adversity) are associated with positive religious coping

beliefs, such as those listed above. Poor psychiatric outcomes are associated with negative coping beliefs, such as “G-d is punishing me (because I am bad),” “There is no purpose in this,” and “G-d has abandoned me” (Pargament et al. 2003).

3. *Lifestyle factors*: religions endorse and encourage aspects of lifestyle which can have an important impact on well-being. Thus for instance religious Jews and Christians have been shown to report fewer disruptive life events – particularly, they report fewer family-related disruptions, less arguments, family violence, and divorces. Disruptive life events are strongly associated with the onset of depression, and thus, the lower prevalence of depression in the religious groups studied may be (at least partly) traced back to the religiously supported value placed on harmonious family life and marital stability (Loewenthal et al. 1997; Prudo et al. 1984).

The finding that religious coping can have an impact on clinical outcome – sometimes positive and sometimes negative – has led to the development of exciting attempts to bring spiritual and religious factors into stronger focus in the course of psychotherapy. After many years in which religion and spirituality have been excluded from the psychological therapies, Pargament and his colleagues (among others) have introduced a wide range of suggestions about how religious and spiritual factors may be included (Pargament 2007). Spirituality – defined as “*the search for the sacred*” – is central for many clients in psychotherapy, and therapists need the tools and the sensitivity to address the spiritual dimension in a systematic way. Spiritual coping may be used to conserve, protect, and develop the sacred, it may lead to growth, it may lead to decline, it may be part of the solution, and it may be part of the problem. For example, one woman was in despair because she felt she had committed an unforgivable sin. The therapist was able to liaise with the client’s priest, and the priest, therapist, and client were able to develop a successful reconciliation. A strong merit of the work led by Pargament is the emphasis on an evidence base for findings, which may do much

to enhance the scientific acceptability of clinical work involving spiritual and religious factors.

This essay has defined depression, considered how it has been viewed in religious writings, considered some of the ways in which it may be affected by religious factors, and finally, the ways in which religious and spiritual factors have been brought to bear in therapeutic work.

## See Also

- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)

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## Depth Psychology and Spirituality

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### Introduction: A Spiritual Approach to Depth Psychology

For many depth psychologists with a spiritual orientation, psychology and spirituality are two perspectives on an identical reality, because the divine manifests itself by means of the psyche. Dourley (1981) has pointed out that the psyche is sacramental, since it is a medium of connection to the sacred and it has its own transpersonal dimensions which reveal the sacred or the holy. The depth psychological approach to spirituality appeals to direct, personal experience of this level of reality and eschews reliance on doctrine, dogma, religious tradition, or religious authority.

This approach claims that the personal and transpersonal dimensions of the psyche are inextricably intertwined, so that when we study sacred experience we invariably study the structure and dynamics of the psyche at the same time. Similarly, transpersonal elements are invariably present even in what seems to be purely personal material and even if we are unaware of them. Therefore, to separate spirituality and psychology is largely a convention based on habit, cultural preference, and academic turf. Here I make the usual distinction between religion as an institution with prescribed beliefs and practices and spirituality in the sense of a subjective relationship with the sacred or with the divine in a traditional sense. Or, based on our personal experience of the transpersonal dimension, our spirituality is our acknowledgment of spiritual forces at work beyond human understanding or simply our personal way of dealing with life's ultimate questions.

### Soul in Depth Psychology

From antiquity until the early nineteenth century and the subsequent rise of psychology as an

academic discipline, what we now call psychology was understood to be a science of the soul. This is again the attitude of many contemporary depth psychologists. Although there is no agreement on the meaning of “soul” in their literature, for many depth psychologists, the words “soul” and “psyche” are roughly synonymous terms. Psychotherapy, for instance, is understood in the etymological sense of that word as service to the soul. Most of these psychologists agree that whatever might be the nature of the psyche or the soul, it can be thought of operationally as an ontologically a priori, spiritual essence within the person, not necessarily in the traditional theological sense but as the deepest subjectivity of the individual, that level within us that gives meaning and significance to our lives.

Most depth psychologists would object to attempts to reduce the psyche or soul to an epiphenomenon of the brain, because, as Jung (1964/1970) puts it, we assume that the psyche is a domain of existence in its own right, indeed a cosmic principle coequal with physical being, and that the psyche arises from an unknown spiritual principle (1960/1969). Indeed, many depth psychologists believe that spiritual reality contains and organizes what we refer to as material reality. One has to address in one’s own way the potential problem of dualism that arises here. One can for example simply bracket the traditional soul-body or mind-brain dilemma for practical psychotherapeutic purposes, or one can think of these as two aspects of the same reality, experienced in different modes because of the limitations of the human perceptual apparatus. One can use a personally appealing metaphor to avoid dualism, for example, by thinking of psyche and body as a gradient of different densities of emanation from a unitary source. The physical body is at one end of this spectrum, while consciousness is at a more subtle level of the same energetic process.

### Archetypes as Spiritual Processes

The depth psychological approach to spirituality views the psyche’s intrinsic organizing principles, what Jung called the archetypes, as spiritual

principles within the psyche. This allows depth psychologists to see archetypal processes as spiritual “organs” within the psyche that perform different functions, just as, in antiquity, these forces were personified and thought of as gods, goddesses, or spirits. Archetypal patterns contribute to the structure of the individual psyche because they form the core of intrapsychic structures or complexes, so that there is always a transpersonal aspect to our psychological life, including our psychopathology. That is, spiritual elements are important in forming the structures of the personality, so that to study these structures psychologically is at the same time to study the dynamics of the sacred within the personality. Thus, rather than envision the transpersonal dimension as entirely transcendent, for the depth psychologist, it is located deeply within human subjectivity. Traditional theologians are concerned that this perspective reduces a supra-psychic divinity to a purely psychological phenomenon. However, if the psyche is real and the holy manifests itself thereby, no reduction is implied.

### The Religious Function of the Psyche

Because of the psyche’s intrinsic religious function, which means its ability to either generate or mediate numinous experience, the psyche is a continuous source of personal revelation. Many traditional religionists believe that revelation is restricted to events such as the handing down of the Torah at Mt. Sinai or by means of the life of Jesus. For Christian fundamentalists, revelation ended with the completion of the New Testament. In contrast, the depth psychologist believes that numinous or mystical experiences as described by Rudolph Otto (1958) continue to occur to all of us in dreams, as waking visions, through the body, as synchronistic events, in the natural world, during creative work, during periods of physical illness or psychopathology, induced by entheogens, or spontaneously for no apparent reason (Corbett 1996, 2007). Typically, the eruption of the numinosum into ordinary consciousness is more likely to occur when the hegemony of the ego is relatively weakened by severe stresses.



Experiences of the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* may or may not take a traditional form. Biblical examples are the experience of Moses hearing the voice of God speaking to him from a burning bush (Exodus 3: 2–6) or the experience of Saul on the road to Damascus, blinded by a bright light as the voice of Jesus speaks to him (Acts 9: 1–9). However, numinous experiences may be completely novel and may not be related to the religious tradition of the subject, in which case their content may be difficult to understand, even though their emotional quality is unmistakable. Even when they do not have a traditional content, they are recognized by their emotional quality; they are awesome, dreadful, and uncanny, making one feel that one has been addressed by something not of our ordinary world. Often we feel humbled, captivated, perhaps blessed by them.

Of most importance to the depth psychologist is that numinous experiences are usually intimately related to the psychology of the subject, which is why Jung stressed their healing quality. Sometimes they address the subject's immediate existential problem, while at others they speak to a developmental difficulty, an emotional problem, or they affect the course of the individual's individuation process. They may produce a religious conversion experience or prevent suicide, although it is important to note that in fragile personalities they may trigger a psychosis or a "spiritual emergency."

Because of their emotional intensity, numinous experiences have a self-authenticating quality; they produce a subjective conviction of their ontological reality that is difficult to deny. Nevertheless, for the materialist, whether psychoanalytically or biologically oriented, such experiences are typically reduced to some form of psychopathology by dismissing them as hallucinatory, hysterical, the result of residual primary narcissism, a regressive merger with mother, or due to a pathological brain process. In contrast, for the depth psychologist, as for Rudolph Otto, these experiences are *sui generis*, and not reducible. For the depth psychologist, they can be considered to be the experience of direct contact with the archetypal dimension of the psyche.

Either they originate in what we refer to as the unconscious or the unconscious acts as a medium of transmission of the numinosum which originates "beyond" the psyche. This epistemological problem cannot be definitively solved, but it is not important for practical psychotherapeutic work, which requires that we discern the significance of the experience for the subject's life, relate it to the subject's psychological structures, and assist with its integration if necessary.

### **Spirituality as an Integral Aspect of Human Psychology**

There is evidence (from burial practices, cave paintings, stone monuments, and the shamanic traditions) that our early human ancestors practiced various forms of spirituality for tens of thousands of years prior to the advent of the monotheistic traditions. Obviously there are several ways to interpret this fact. There are "explanations" for the origin of religion from all schools of psychology, while biologists believe that spirituality developed with the evolution of brain structure, although there is disagreement about whether religious belief was directly adaptive or whether religion is just a by-product of our evolution. However, to have a scientific explanation for a phenomenon does not mean it is not real. The psychologist can legitimately argue that human beings have a spiritual sensibility because there really is a spiritual dimension and we are drawn to it because it is an essential level of our being, just as thirst would not have evolved if we did not need water.

If spiritual experience is the experience of something both real and important to us, and our spiritual sense is a source of human motivation, spirituality is properly part of the province of psychology. It may be argued that for the depth psychologist, to study spiritual experience smacks of an encroachment on theology. But this would only be the case if we were to speculate on the origin of this experience or on its absolute nature, whereas we simply accept this genre of experience as an empirical reality. Its source – for example, whether it may



originate in a divinity beyond the psyche – remains a matter of faith.

The depth psychological approach suggests that we have no need to tie our spirituality to any particular religious tradition. The established religious traditions have long insisted that the sacred may only be approached in their terms, using their rituals, sacraments, sacred books, and so on. However, many people experience the sacred in personal ways that may have little to do with the ways in which our religious traditions insist that it manifests itself. Our contemporary consciousness, influenced by advances in quantum physics, cosmology, and depth psychology, requires that we approach the sacred with these developments in mind.

Edinger (1984) has suggested that our culture is beginning to experience a new dispensation, a new means by which divine grace emerges into the world, and a new God image. The ancient Hebrews experienced the divine handing down law cast in stone, followed by the Christian experience of Christ as the incarnation of the God of love. Our felt sense today is that we are in relationship with the transpersonal psyche, which incarnates in everyone and communicates through personal experience of the numinosum rather than by means of a set of laws or a particular savior. It is too early to tell if Edinger is correct, but if he is, the depth psychological approach to spirituality will be one of the pillars of this emerging spiritual form.

## See Also

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)

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## Descent to the Underworld

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In Christian theological doctrine, Christians affirm in the Apostles' Creed their belief that Jesus descended into Hell (Gk. κατελθόντα ες τὰ κατώτατα; L., *descendit ad inferos*, or underworld), on the Saturday between the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. His descent is understood as an act of liberation of the unredeemed souls who had been banished to Hell from the beginning of time. It is believed by most Christians that Christ raised with him those from all previous times who were deemed by God to be worthy to enter the kingdom of eternal life. Although this declaration of faith is made in the Christian Apostles' Creed, there is no specific mention of the event in the gospels other than some inferences in Acts 2:24:

But God raised him up having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

Acts 2:31 further states that:

He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption (The New Oxford Annotated Bible 1991).

John 2:6 describes Jesus' death as three days and three nights in the heart (*en te kardia*) of the earth. The apostle Paul draws in Romans from Deuteronomy 30:12–13 and Psalm 71:20 to describe the death of Jesus as a plummet into the abyss (*tis katabesetai eis abusson*) and the ascent of the Resurrection as a rising from the dead (*ek nekron anagein*). As forecast in the Old Testament, Hebrews (2:14–16), Jesus was to encounter the actuality of death as the only course by which his divine being could conquer evil.

In the Jewish tradition, beginning with the early Hebrew peoples, Hell was referred to Sheol [sh'ôl], the common place of the dead. Sheol was an underground abode comprised of numerous levels. The dead were tortured according to the degree of their earthly sins. There below was also Gehenna, the lake of eternal fire where the fallen were forever tormented by flames.

The theme of human descent to the underworld does not exist in the Old Testament except in how God rescued people from death (Psalm 9:13; 30:3; 86:13; Isa 38:17; Deut 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6; 2 Kings 5:7). For example, when Saul summoned the prophet Samuel through the witch of Endor to consult the dead (1 Sam 28:3–25), there is an indication of bridging the realm of life and death. In general, the notion of human descent was censured by Old Testament Law. In modern Judaism, an increasing distinction arose between the place in which the unrighteous dead dwelled (Hades) and a separate place in which the righteous dead resided (Luke, 16:22–23).

The late Hebrew literature of the apocryphal texts contributed to how the notion of descent was conceptualized in the Apostles' Creed. These included the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* and *the Acts of Pilate* (ca. 3 CE). The *Gospel of Nicodemus* prophesized that Jesus would raise the dead in Hell just as he had raised Lazarus. Apocryphal literature often referred to the *Descensus Christi ad Inferos* which portrayed a conflagration between Christ and Satan, the god Hades.

In the second and third centuries, the early church fathers Tertullian, Clement, and Origen treated Christ's descent as literal. Their

authoritative testimony anchored the event in Christian belief although it was not entered in to the content of the Apostles' Creed until around the seventh century.

The concept of the descent to the underworld derived from numerous oral traditions, legends, and literary forms borrowed from antiquity, which undoubtedly influenced the writers and redactors of scriptural literature. The myths recorded by Homer, Hesiod, Aristophanes, and Virgil featured a protagonist's heroic return from the underworld that involved transforming evil into good, death into life, and torment into faith in relation to a salvific figure. Many of these legends became living religions lasting thousands of years.

In the literature of ancient Egypt, Hades, or Amenti, pertained to the place of the hidden god. The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* attests to specific rites and rituals in which an initiate would venture into the underworld with the goal of transformed consciousness. The Egyptian rituals inspired the Greek Mysteries, Eleusinian Mysteries, and Mithraism, which were liturgies of symbolic death and rebirth that emulated the earlier worship of Osiris. The discourse in Colossians 2:9–15 of the New Testament pertaining to *The Lord's Descent into Hell* may imitate these earlier traditions. The ritual of baptism became representative of symbolic death and rebirth.

In ancient Greece Hades [Gk. unknown, unseen, hidden] became known in various cultures as Gehenna, Tophet, Abaddon, Naraka, Jahannam [Hind.], Aralu [Babylonian], Hel, Nuifhel [Norse], the inferno, the pit, the abyss, the nether world, the region of the dead, the abode of the damned, the place of torment, visitation with the shades (ancestors) below, or limbo, the realm of departed souls. The descent typically involved a confrontation or encounter with the god who ruled the terrain of the underworld.

One of the most celebrated initiates connected to the Greek Eleusinian Mysteries (seventh century BCE) was Persephone, the daughter of Demeter who was seized by the god Hades and taken into the underworld. The myth of Persephone and Demeter remained in the collective culture as a religion for over 2,000 years.

Another descent myth of the Greek Mysteries was the Orphic Mystery. Orpheus had a beautiful wife, Eurydice [Εὐρύδική, Ερδίκη], as well as a talent for playing the lyre. One day while dancing in the fields, Eurydice was bitten by a poisonous snake and died. Orpheus ventured to the underworld in an attempt to bring her back to human life. One version of this legend tells of Orpheus playing his lyre so enchantingly that Cerberus, the sentry of Hades, fell asleep. Orpheus then entreated the god Hades to return the soul of Eurydice to life. His wish was granted with the qualification that Orpheus must walk ahead of his wife and never look back until they had returned to the world of the living. Orpheus failed. He was never to see his beloved wife again (Guthrie 1993, p. 171 ff.).

Christ's descent into Hell and subsequent Resurrection corresponded with the rituals and themes of these ancient civilizations. In early cultures, the triumph over death often coincided with the harvesting seasons of the agricultural year. The Greeks understood Hades as fork in the road where one might enter *Tartaros* (an existence of endless punishments) or, at best, one could be ushered into a paradisaical existence where their loved ones awaited – the Elysian Fields.

Until approximately 500 CE, the descent ritual was an inherent part of a sect of secret teachings known as the Greek Mysteries. The initiate's descent was both symbolic and literal. One was isolated in an underground cave or hollow in order to confront an internal universe. Analogous to modern analytical psychology, the symbolic quest, like C. G. Jung's mid-life challenge, was a *telos* (Gk. *telete*), an end goal and ultimate completion of one's potential for psychological and spiritual development.

In every culture of ancient civilization, the collective psyche gave birth to initiates who made the descent and were magnified into the heroes of myth, for example, Gilgamesh, hero of the Babylonian epic; Ishtar who descended into Aralu; the goddess Astarte of Phoenicia and her consort Adonai who journeyed into the Akkadian Hades; and the Great Mother Cybele of Asia Minor with her consort Attis. Others included Dionysos, Herakles, and Krishna.

A consort, guide, master teacher, high priest, or priestess prepared the initiate for the journey, similar to the modern role of the psychotherapist where one descends into his or her unconscious, internal world and is accompanied by the presence of a therapist. The role of this consort was also to warn an initiate about the possible disintegration of the personality during the process and potential madness upon return.

There was an emphasis upon preparation for “going deeper” and a series of pretrials to pass successfully including fasts and purification rites. One needed a strong constitution, a sturdy ego, and a maturity of character. The initiate was trained to relinquish memory, desire, and will so that the physical self and personal psyche could succumb to a temporary deathlike state (Apuleius 1984, *Metamorphoses*, XI, 21, 23) which was often described as darkness. Plutarch, too, underwent an initiation ritual describing the proximity of *teleutan* and *teleisthai* – *to die* and *to be initiated* – (Plutarch 1987, *Fragments*: 178). In the depth of this slumber, the mysteries of life and death might also be revealed. In the Egyptian Mysteries, Apuleius exclaims this experience of illumination: “at midnight I saw the sun shining with a splendid light” (Plutarch 1987, *Fragments*: 23).

If not sufficiently prepared, the participant could experience a threshold of annihilation. Face to face with the god of the underworld – what in modern psychology C. G. Jung would call an encounter with the archetypal shadow – the individual only could endure only with the qualities of humility and willingness. If the seeker was able to make it beyond the more dangerous stages, the reward was a beyond death experience of immortality.

The Egyptian myths, the Mystery Religions, and the apocryphal texts of Early Christianity were sources for accounts that followed throughout the centuries in various genres, for example, the English Mystery Plays of medieval times, which centered on the theme of the Harrowing of Hell and of Dante's *Inferno* (Canto X. Circle vi).

Inspired by Virgil's *Aeneid*, philosopher Dante Alighieri wrote about the descent into

Hell in “The Inferno” from his *Purgatorio*. In this work he speaks of the lowest Hell replete with “malicious and furious demons” as the City of Dis. Dis is the most abyssal abyss of ultimate despondency. This underworld represents the bowels of the universe and the bleakest recesses from anything alive or life-giving. In Dis, there is no promise of hope or of a caring and sustaining divinity, only evil and despair.

As represented in Dante’s illustration of unconscious life, those who reside in the darkness of Hell are forever alive, yet spiritually dead. What greater cruelty to human consciousness and to the uniqueness of an individual than to be completely unknown, and unconscious. In the abyss of Dis, there is no possibility of the life of the soul without the redemption of another. For Dante, at the end of time, the forgotten non-souls who have not “known” Christ are lost forever to the possibility of being known within the unity of the divinity. These are individuals who have turned their focus toward the sterility of selfish egotism in contrast to offering gratitude for their very being. Control, power, greed, and envy relinquish them to an eternal Hell of nonbeing.

## Psychology

Analogous to the Nekyia, or night sea journey of Carl Jung, the descent into the underworld has powerful and purposeful psychological intent. The ego falls into the unconscious for an extended time to eventually emerge as a person reborn. The transformed individual seeks to “obey a higher will.”

Jungian analyst Edward Edinger concurs that this “fall” or plunge into the psyche represents the ego’s intentional descent into the unconscious because the ego has been “beckoned.” The awareness of the conscious ego is, in the interim, eclipsed and carried into the lower world where it rescues certain contents of the unconscious and even conquers death itself. For Edinger, the death and Resurrection of Christ is an archetype that exists in the collective psyche that is analogous to the process which lives itself out in the individual seeker (initiate). The collective God

image must necessarily undergo death and rebirth throughout certain periods of history; he tells us, thus, the continuing necessity of willing initiates to bring forth “the godhead.”

Jung views this prolonged “disintegrative” encounter as the psychological equivalent of the integration of the collective unconscious, which is “an essential part of the individuation process” (Brome 1981, p. 159). The unconscious underworld needs ego consciousness to raise it (Brome 1981, p. 39). What Dante called Dis represents all that is yet unknown to human consciousness. Dangerous components of the shadow aspects of human consciousness exist externally and dangerously so, as long as the projective nature of the psyche remains shut away within the crypt of the individual and collective psyche.

Drawing from anthropologist and scholar Mircea Eliade, Marie Louise von Franz (1975) likens Jung to the shaman whose “main function is the healing of personal illnesses and disturbances in the life of the collective” (Eliade 1964: 8 passim). Like the shaman or medicine man, certain individuals are forced into a particular inner way as a result of the collective culture around them. As the person feels summoned, “he sets himself apart, turns contemplative; often he receives his call through a dream experience” (Eliade 1964, p. 21). Readiness is crucial to survive the dying of the old self, the former ego, and the emergence of a new self.

The individual is carried off to the underworld where he or she is often dismembered or suffers other tortures. Like the duel possibility of the Greek path of the underworld, one may also be carried off to heaven where instruction is received from a divinity, a female figure, an invisible heavenly spouse, or a magical anima (von Franz 1975, p. 100). The central element is always the same: death and symbolic Resurrection (Eliade 1964, p. 5, 56).

Contemporary Jungian analyst James Hillman agrees with Jung in *The Dream and the Underworld* (Hillman 1979) that it is Psyche who beckons us into the depths. Being polytheistic in contrast to monotheistic, Hillman is more synchronous with the worldview of antiquity: there are many gods and goddesses in the psyche

personified as archetypal manifestations, but there is not necessarily anything divine or transcendent beyond the psyche. Spirit reveals itself in image from the depths of the soul, which Jung, Edinger, Dante, and the masters of the mysteries would agree with. Yet, for Hillman and the Greeks, images *are* the divinity.

In contrast to Jung, Freud's classical perspective views images, dreams, or waking dreams of descent into the underworld, as Oedipal themes related to castration anxiety. Freud emphasizes incestuous content with the repeated theme of the psyche's need to destroy phallic symbols (Boss 1973, p. 273). For instance, a patient might dream of a church tower, an image that dream by dream becomes more differentiated. A Freudian psychoanalyst working with such a dream most likely will interpret reductively the increasing specificity of the church tower as a collection of images that relate back in the patient's developmental life. The image becomes reduced to that of genitalia or "to a preconceived unconscious complex, thus paying a disservice to the spirit" (Robbins 2008).

What is crucial when working with the deeper layers of the psyche (the underworld), the patient, with the analyst's guidance, will begin to amplify dream images in a non-pathological manner, giving the individual the opportunity to dig more archeologically into the collective underpinnings of the psyche at large, which often not only produces religious or spiritual images but a feeling of confidence that one is connected to very deep roots with a suprapersonal divinity. One discovers that religious dreams and symbols have their fundamental origin in archetypal structures that are universal, timeless, and shared in common with all people.

Regardless of the psychological school of thought, the chthonic and instinctual of a psychological complex need to be given as much primacy as the spiritual and transcendent, therefore avoiding abstractions or overintellectualizations. A Jungian perspective can lean too far toward "spirit," with a tendency to universalize a patient's imagery. This inclination can be reductive in if there is an essentialism underlying the image.

A balanced discernment means that one truly descends into the depths of "pathos," or one's pathology, and yet does not remain imprisoned in the darkness, enmeshed with the god of Hades, Hell, or the archetypal shadow – for this would certainly flag a potential psychosis that would need spirit and sustenance to pull one out of this psychotic morass.

The word pathology is comprised of pathos and logos. The logos of pathos exists in an ever-precarious balance. One can succumb to the instinctual nature of soul but miss the logos of spirit. The logos of spirit pulls one back into the world of the living, into the light with a renewed sense of direction and purpose fueled by the experience of spirit *in* the body. This experience is shared by the ancients and the moderns – when it occurs, it will never be forgotten for one will be forever changed. The marriage of pathos and logos gives life to the soul which endures forever.

## See Also

- ▶ [Abyss](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Eleusinian Mysteries](#)
- ▶ [Mystery Religions](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)

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## Deus Absconditus

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### Evolution and Variants of a Theological Concept

Ancient Egyptian and classical Western mystery religions can be said to rest upon the inscrutability of deity, but a concept of god as partially knowable yet ultimately inaccessible by any sort of mediation is the fruit of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Various detailed by different theologians as early as Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215), notions about god as hidden, or Deus Absconditus, generally take their biblical warrant from Isaiah 45:15, “Truly, you are a God who hides himself.” Old Testament injunctions against seeing or looking upon god and New

Testament recapitulations (e.g., “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared Him.” John 1:18) may also have influenced discussions of deity’s purposeful invisibility. But the crafting of theology based on the hiddenness of God would not occur until the Protestant Reformation.

Cited chiefly in context of the indefinability of the one transcendent god in words, concepts, or images, *hiddenness* was significant to early Christian thinkers only as it was implicit to the direct self-revelation of a personal god. In short, while God had revealed something of His personal nature in Jesus Christ, whatever was not known he had chosen to hide.

Clement, a polite opponent of Gnosticism, proposed that through illumination by Christ as the incarnate Logos, humanity, being made in God’s image and likeness, could and was even meant to gradually understand God, the otherwise “Unknown.” For his pupil Origen (ca. 182–254), humanity’s likeness to the divine pointed to a kinship between them. And God’s Logos, revealed in Christ, then hidden again after the resurrection, was “an example,” imitation of which would make the faithful proper “partakers of the divine nature” (Origen 1979, p. 319) at Parousia.

However, John Chrysostom (ca. 347–407), in vehement rejection of the Anomean Arians’ presumption that they understood God’s very essence, proceeded from the conceit that God was in truth wholly other, utterly “unapproachable” as stated in 1 Timothy and “unsearchable in His judgments” as declared in Rom 11:33. In this, Chrysostom apprehended the psychic consequences for the individual in relationship with such divinity, and, according to theologian Rudolf Otto, spoke to the very core of the creature’s experience of the numinous, which is unrational, terrified, and yet drawn to it in fascination.

Augustine (ca. 354–430) engaged the idea of God as hidden and unknowable in His essence, but emphasized the way in which God’s visible miracles draw one toward Him through the love and faith they inspire. Pseudo-Dionysius (ca. fifth century), adumbrating the mature Christian



mysticism of the high Middle Ages, envisioned the possibility of ascending to the very “ray of the divine shadow” (Pseudo-Dionysius 1987, p. 135), however, only by “renouncing all that the mind may conceive [about God]” (Pseudo-Dionysius 1978, p. 137). Nicolas Cusanus (1401–1464) elaborated on the nature of such renunciation in his *Dialogue on the Hidden God*. But it was Martin Luther (1483–1546), driven by recurring bouts of self-doubt, guilt, and despair, who gave the most trenchant and exhaustive attention to the notion of Deus Absconditus.

Luther’s lifelong emotional and psychosomatic sufferings, which he termed *Anfechtungen*, made him question whether they were assaults by the devil or God Himself, who though all-loving had nonetheless subjected His only begotten son to the extremity of suffering. If the latter, Luther concluded, “God hides his eternal goodness and mercy under eternal wrath, righteousness beneath iniquity” (Luther 1972, p. 62). Thus, everyone will know periods of rejection by Him, as had Christ on the cross where God was simultaneously revealing His redemptive love. Indeed, the godhead embraces all contraries, and its justice – in wrath or grace – is hidden from reason. Only through faith in Christ crucified, insisted Luther, can one approach God’s true nature and “believe him merciful when he saves so few and damns so many. . .” (Luther 1972, p. 62).

With the Age of Reason, concern about God’s hiddenness waned. At the dawn of modernity, the last notable reflection on the topic is to be found in the *Pensées* of mathematician and Roman Catholic-convert Blaise Pascal (1623–1662). In these reflections he proposes that God hides Himself so that humanity might come to Him by an act of will; to be fully revealed would make Him a matter of fact, requiring no commitment from the believer.

### God and the Splitting Phenomenon

Among modern thinkers, Martin Luther’s doctrine has occasioned much critique, both

theological and psychological. Erik Erikson, in a definitive biography, sees Luther as achieving in the construct of institutional religion “a living reformulation of faith” that points one back to “basic trust” (Erikson 1962, p. 257), a feature essential to the healthy emergence of ego that is often impaired by the censure of the later developing superego. Luther’s *Anfechtungen* were, psychologically speaking, reactions to a highly charged superego forged in the milieu of a censoring father. According to Erikson, by conceding that behind God’s wrath and prior to it exists compassion, Luther not only approached a resolution to his personal struggles but also rehabilitated religion’s capacity to reaffirm the beleaguered “basic trust” of the faithful.

While theologians debate the nuances of Luther’s exact meaning in his highly varied use of Deus Absconditus, Rudolf Otto credits the reformer with revitalizing rational theology by identifying his personal terror and fascination with experiences of the divine. C. G. Jung, who asserted that the “only statements that have psychological validity concerning the God-image are either paradoxes or antinomies” (Jung 1953, p. 11n), affirms that Luther had grasped a critical nonrational truth when he spoke of God’s dark side: His doctrine can be said to hold up the numinous, disowned shadow material of the collective unconscious, which must always be considered the natural habitat of contraries.

A truth, then, that both Luther’s theology and personal history illuminate from the Object-Relational vantage point is the inherent – to be sure, essential – tendency of the human psyche toward *splitting*. Luther’s God could easily symbolize the psychic field on which an ego that cannot tolerate ambivalence keeps internal objects separated into good and bad, comforting and punishing – God as the compassionate beloved, a representation of the cossetting mother who reflects the infant’s goodness back to it; God as persecutor, hostility split off, and projected. Harry Guntrip, discussing the splitting of ego itself – into *libidinal*, *central*, and *antilibidinal* – notes how an individual will both repudiate (through the antilibidinal ego) and defend

a weak libidinal ego against “outer world pressures and inner world fears” (Guntrip 1992, p. 184) by hiding it behind central ego aggressiveness, obsessive self-mastery, addiction to duty, and physical illness. Despite Erikson’s characterization of his triumph, Luther – renowned for volatility, hyper-scrupulosity, and an assiduous work ethic – never overcame periodic depressions and psychosomatic crises.

It must be acknowledged that the phenomenon of splitting is implicitly central to any conceit of Deus Absconditus, for regardless of the interpreter – and whether or not God is envisaged as the thing of which humanity is Its image and likeness or a screen for human projections – God hidden represents half a perennial debate: the Godhead’s immanence versus Its transcendence. In their delineations of the ways in which the Hidden God might be known, Clement and Origin, Augustine, and the Christian Mystics all point to Christ as signifying a reconciliation of these modes and mooted, if not resolving, the issue of hiddenness. In psychodynamic terms, what they intuited was that Christ represents a well-integrated psyche, the still point at which good and bad objects stand in healthy tension. At the same time, he models the ways in which *introjection* and *projection* facilitate development and relationship: Where Jesus as human was awakened to his divinity, he may be said to have introjected the Father (divine or personal), making Him indeed immanent even immediate and available as a building block of ego and an internal-object world; while Jesus ascended becomes the projected image of an ideal, transcending (or eluding) the domain of the ego yet remaining in relationship with it.

### An Affect Regulation Take

A suggestive point arises at the convergence of Object-Relations and Attachment theories in recent discussions of neurobiology and affect regulation. The elusive-but-desired or (as in the case of Luther) unpredictably present-but-critical “God” might be identified with an unconscious internalized object

that resulted from neurologic imprinting caused by experiences of “self-interacting-with-a-misattuned-dysregulating-other” (Schore 1994, p. 473) – *mother or father*. That is to say, the consequences of a primary caregiver whose affect fails to reflect the infant’s enthusiasms at critical junctures (and/or meets the infant with impatience, disdain, or anger) are not only psychic storage of self- and other-representations corresponding to the misattunement, but also orbitofrontal cortex development primed for future affective replications: A psychobiological expectancy for consequent relations – unto a relationship with a God – to recapitulate the affective experience in the original misattuned dyad. Otherwise put, Deus Absconditus could be hardwired.

### Freudian and Jungian Takes

Perhaps nothing speaks more potently to the concept of the Hidden God than Freud’s theory on the origin of religion as the murder of the primal father by sons who wanted unimpeded access to the primal mother (*Totem and Taboo*, Freud 1957). The father’s elevation to the status of a god is a sublimation aimed at palliating guilt and eradicating the crime from racial memory. In this context, a fantasy of a Hidden God might be considered a redoubling of the sons’ effort to shield themselves from return of the repressed memory. And Isaiah’s assertion that God “hides himself” would be a disingenuous displacement of responsibility – since it is we who have done the hiding. Returning to Luther, his Oedipal conflict with a harsh and disapproving father, which lasted a lifetime, could be said to have made him less able to combat the repeated “return of the repressed,” and more highly identified with Christ as the son who suffered to atone for collective sin (the disguised primal murder). To go this far, however, is to be obliged to suggest Luther’s subjective identification with Christ as exalted in resurrection to equal status with the Father; which Freud could say any Christian does vicariously in the transformed totem meal, the Eucharist, where God is present but hidden.

The Christian, thus, stirs the repressed memory of an archaic crime in regular ritual; and, theoretically, we could say that he or she may never be able to fully outgrow the regressive ambivalence of the Oedipal drama.

In Pascal's contention that God is purposefully hidden, we also find classical psychoanalytic implications. Certainly, the thesis suggests the voice of the superego: God, or something higher in the human makeup, has expectations of the believer; and trust as an accomplishment of good ego consolidation is more valuable (to the internalized father and the ego) than an act of memory which does not engage the individual's value assessing capacity. Placing the thesis, then, in the context of the primal murder, Pascal may be thought to have unconsciously recognized that the internalized father wants the faithful to recognize the primal crime and to atone through an act of character, with consciousness and volition – and he is not going to make it easy. More practically speaking, the superego wants the ego to recognize its obligation to master the impulses of the id.

For C. G. Jung, the realm of the instincts, the unconscious, calls the ego to acceptance and humility. Its task is not so much to subordinate drives as to negotiate with them, and to learn as best as it can their symbolic language. Neither, however, is the ego to be subordinated by the unconscious. It should learn that it is itself archetypal and elemental of the greater psyche represented by the *Self* – the correlate of totality, wholeness, the impersonal God, whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere, as St. Augustine observed. Augustine was also able to approach the idea that we shall not know God in His essence, but rather by as much of the instinctive numinosity as consciousness can metabolize. And such is the wisdom that informed the Pseudo-Dionysius when he saw that one might understand something of divinity only after one renounces what the mind (thinks it) knows. Jung would say, perhaps, that God's very nature is hiddenness and it is only through letting go of qualifying and quantifying intelligence that consciousness experiences the true intimations of wholeness.

## See Also

- ▶ Affect
- ▶ Augustine
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Ego
- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Gnosticism
- ▶ Id
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Logos
- ▶ Luther, Martin
- ▶ Mystery Religions
- ▶ Mysticism and Psychotherapy
- ▶ Numinosum
- ▶ Object Relations Theory
- ▶ Protestantism
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Superego

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## Deus Otiosus

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In many religious traditions, the creator god essentially retires from the world he has created and leaves it to others to run – to humans or lesser gods. In short, he does not interfere with the world once he has created it. His mythological relative is the Deus Absconditus who more actively absents himself from his creation. For the purposes of psychological interpretation, the two types can perhaps be considered to be synonymous. Many African creator gods leave creation to tricksters or to their sons. Sometimes, as in Greek, Anatolian, and Indian mythology, the old high god is forced out and is replaced by young upstart deities. Christian theologians, such as Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther, have used the hidden god concept to emphasize that God is unknowable but that we can know God through the tangible “living” Christ, Jesus. Deists, on the other hand, find in the Deus Otiosus – the

clock-make God who made the world, wound it up, and then left – simply a rational explanation for life as we know it.

The psychological importance of the Otiosus/Absconditus is complex. For some peoples it expresses a “family” that senses desertion by the father and the consequent trials and tribulations of life. For others – Aquinas and Luther, for example – it signifies the gift of the God revealed or embodied in the Christ with whom the worshipper seeks emotional and psychological unity. Mystics of all traditions would find positive psychological energy in the “hidden” god within with whom the individual achieves perfect union or self. For Deists the God who withdraws gives the gift of psychological and moral independence and self-reliance. For the atheist the Deus Otiosus is a myth used to excuse the evils of life. For those who doubt but long for a better life, the hidden god is an inner security longed for but painfully absent.

## See Also

- ▶ [Deus Absconditus](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Devil

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## Origins

The word “Devil” derives from Greek *diabolos*, meaning “adversary.” In Jewish, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Muslim traditions, the term applies to

a single spirit of evil whose function is to oppose the will of the good God. In Zoroastrian tradition, and in the Manicheism that derives from it, the Devil, named Ahriman, is a god of evil and darkness in opposition to the god of goodness and light, Ohrmazd. The two gods struggle against each other until the end of the world, at which Ohrmazd will triumph and annihilate Ahriman. In Jewish tradition the Devil is most often identified as Satan, though he also has many other names. In the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible), Satan's role is usually unclear, and often the term "Satan" is used as a generic term for an opponent. When the Hebrew scriptures were translated into Greek about 200 BCE, the term *diabolos* entered scriptural usage. Though only marginal in earlier Hebrew thought, the Devil, under various names, became of much greater importance in Jewish pseudepigraphical literature (materials falsely claimed to have been written by ancient Biblical figures such as Enoch) from about 100 BCE to about 150 CE. The mutual influence of Hebrew and Zoroastrian thought is still unclear, but in any case, the Devil was a hugely more sinister power in the pseudepigrapha than in the Hebrew Bible.

### Christianity

This is precisely the period in which Christianity arose, and the power attributed to Satan in the New Testament and in other early Christian writings, though less lurid than in the pseudepigrapha, and never as great as that in Zoroastrian texts, is nonetheless a huge threat to Christ, to the Christian community, and to Christian individuals. He is tempter, accuser, tormentor, and jailer of the damned in hell. In addition to the canonical Christian writings, a number of allegedly Christian but actually Gnostic texts, mainly from the second century CE, derived their ideas from the pseudepigrapha and took the power of the Devil to almost Zoroastrian extremes. For most of the Gnostic sects, the cosmos was a battleground between the God of light and spirit on the one hand and the Devil, lord of darkness, and matter on the other. Thus, the Gnostics

created a matter/spirit dichotomy, which they melded with the Zoroastrian good spirit/evil spirit dichotomy. Such a dichotomy was explicitly and firmly denied by orthodox Christianity, in which the Devil's power, though great and fearful, was always weaker than that of Christ. Anyone calling on Christ against the Devil would be saved, and at the end of the world, Christ would cast Satan and his fellow demons forever into hell. Belief in the existence of a Devil as the personification of evil has never been a necessary Christian dogma, but tradition, based on the New Testament, assumed his reality, and in certain periods of history, notably the second to fourth centuries CE and the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries CE, his power was widely believed to loom large. In the latter period, terror of the Devil was the motive force behind the witch craze.

### Islam

Muslims, unlike Jews and Christians, believed that their scripture, the Qur'an, was dictated word for word by God through an angel to the prophet Muhammad. Thus, no word of the Qur'an could be ignored, so the existence of the Devil (called Iblis or Shaytan) could not be denied. However, Islam differed from Judaism and Christianity in another important sense: the will of Allah prevails in every place throughout all time. This means that opposition to Allah either by humans or by spirits was limited entirely to what God wills to allow.

### Polytheism

As opposed to the religions above, most religions recognized no single spirit of evil. The problem of evil was solved in a number of different ways. Some religions posited deities combining good and evil in themselves, such as Quetzalcoatl in ancient Guatemalan religion and Vishnu in Hinduism, where he was both creator and destroyer. Another solution was "doublets," pairs of gods in which the good side has one name and the evil side another, as with Hathor/Sekhmet and

Horus/Seth in Egypt. Yet another solution was to have groups of generally constructive deities at odds with groups of generally destructive ones, as in the asuras and devas in ancient Persia and India. Another was to have gods who are amoral or at least very inconsistent in their morality, as in Greco-Roman religion, where the traits assigned to each deity were wide and varied. Artemis/Diana, for example, was patroness of childbirth and virginity, animals and the hunt, and the moon and the underworld. Still another way, in some Hindu and Buddhist thought, was to deny the existence of any real evil, considering good and evil part of *maya*, the illusion that anything in this world is real, an illusion that must be transcended in order to reach enlightenment.

### Romanticism

In the West since the nineteenth century, alternative approaches to the Devil multiplied. That century was marked by the esthetic movement known as Romanticism, which emphasized feelings over reason and rebellion over tradition. For Romantics such as Victor Hugo, the Devil became a hero symbolizing the revolt of the human spirit against secular and religious authority. The Devil as hero reemerged in the late twentieth century in Satanism, a cult whose followers tended not to take their beliefs seriously; those who did take Satan seriously held the meaningless view that a being whose concept was *invented* to represent evil is actually good.

### Modern Criticism

Much more dominant in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the growth of physicalism, pragmatism, and deconstruction. These brought about a reevaluation of evil and thus of the Devil. Physicalism was the philosophical belief that only material things that can be quantified are real, and so the spiritual exists only as an illusion. In such a view, evil itself is only an outdated metaphor for antisocial behavior. Twenty-first-century psychiatry tended strongly

to the view that most, if not all, psychological problems are the result of genetic, hormonal, and even molecular malfunctions. Freudian psychoanalysis, which dominated from the end of the nineteenth past the middle of the twentieth century, held that evil sprang from the repression of sexual and other strong feelings into the unconscious, which distorted the repressed feelings into ideas and behaviors that the conscious was unable (without analysis) to deal with. Freud of course dismissed the concept of the Devil as unhelpful and even harmful, as people often projected their hateful feelings onto other people. Psychoanalysis was inherently pragmatic in its goal of helping people adjust successfully to their environment. Jungian analytical psychology took the Devil more seriously as one of the archetypes that the universal human mind invented (or perhaps inherited) as a way of understanding evil, which Jung took seriously itself.

Deconstruction, which dominated philosophy the last three decades of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first, maintained that every human concept was an infinitely malleable construct. There being no absolute truth or, indeed, any truth at all beyond what the individual constructs for himself or herself; each concept can be infinitely deconstructed. Thus, the Devil exists or does not exist depending on what you believe, and his characteristics were whatever you think they are. Along with the Devil, evil itself was deconstructed to mean whatever an individual found inappropriate or repulsive. No concepts, even scientific, logical, or mathematical ones, were excluded from deconstruction, so that, a fortiori, fuzzier theological and philosophical views such as the Devil were swept away. Deconstruction mated with pragmatism to produce the dominant view that no concepts were true, so that good and evil were merely constructs that those with power force upon those they dominate and manipulate.

Still, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw a large religious revival in many parts of the world, and Christians and Muslims who remained true to their theological traditions took the Devil seriously, as a supernatural entity or at least as a powerful metaphor of the existence of radical evil.



## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Zoroastrianism](#)

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## Dionysos

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Dionysos (*Bacchos* in Latin) is the son of Zeus and Semele. He was twice born, and the special circumstances of his birth indicate his unusual nature and the special place he occupies in Greek mythology and religion.

His mother Semele (possibly a goddess of Phrygian origin) was tricked by the jealous goddess Hera into requesting Zeus to appear before her in all his radiance. He reluctantly did so, and she was incinerated by the fire of his lightning. The baby, of 6 months gestation, was rescued from his dying mother's womb and sewed into Zeus' thigh to be gestated a further 3 months. When Dionysos was born, he was brought to the mythical Mt. Nysa to be raised by nymphs. This aspect of his history echoes his father Zeus' early origins. His life threatened by his devouring father Chronos, the infant Zeus was spirited away by his mother to be raised by nymphs on Mt. Ida in Crete.

The Orphic version of Dionysos' beginnings also includes a "twice born" element. According to this tradition, Dionysos was the offspring of Zeus and Persephone and became the fourth ruler of the world, after Ouranos, Chronos, and Zeus. The Titans were jealous of the child and plotted to destroy him, perhaps, with the incitement of Hera. They distracted the child with a mirror and other toys, then killed him and tore his body into seven pieces. Apollo, on orders of Zeus, collected his limbs and took them to Delphi. Athena saved the heart and brought it to Zeus, who then enabled Dionysos to be reborn. In a rage, Zeus killed the Titans with his lightning. They were burnt to soot, and from this soot, a substance was made from which humans were fashioned. Since the Titans had ingested some of the god, mankind is seen in the Orphic religion as part divine and part Titan.

His survival of fire and/or dismemberment points to a key psychological aspect of Dionysos. His myth expresses the inevitability, even necessity, of destruction within the psyche, as well as the psyche's ability to be reborn in the face of such destruction. The experience of dismemberment is something that most people who enter psychoanalysis or psychotherapy feel to some degree. In the beginning of analysis, analysands often have dreams with dismemberment motifs. The work of analysis involves the dismantling of personality structures, attitudes, and adaptations that no longer serve the individual or his/her life force.

Dionysos' survival of these experiences is an expression of the indestructible aspect of life

itself, not on the level of the individual but life as a force of nature, that is, larger than our egos alone.

Dionysos is seen as having both masculine and feminine traits. He is associated with various animals, including the bull, the lion, the snake, the leopard, and the dolphin. He is depicted as both young and old and is the most elusive of all the Greek gods. In the plant world, he is associated with the grapevine, ivy, the pine tree, and the wild fig.

His myths and cults are always a challenge to established social order and often have a violent or bizarre element. He effects radical change through his epiphanies. To the rational ego, he represents a magical, enchanted realm. He is depicted as being always on the move, revealing himself in many different epiphanies, more than any other god in Greek mythology.

Dionysos in antiquity was principally the god of wine and intoxication. In addition, he presided over ritual madness or ecstasy (*mania* in Greek). The mask was a significant symbol of his presence, and thus ancient drama was devoted to Dionysos. Dionysos' nature was to transcend boundaries. The normal, conscious identities of his followers are subverted. His presence is fluid, full of illusion, and contains the opposites. He effects transformation, both negative and positive, from the viewpoint of the human ego.

Though scholars for years thought that the cult of Dionysos originated in Thrace and was brought more recently into ancient Greece, the discovery of the name Dionysos on Linear B tablets from Mycenaean Pylos, dated circa 1250 BCE, indicates that he was present in mainland Greece well before. In Homer's *Iliad*, he is referred to as a "joy for mortals" (*Iliad*: 14.325). And in Hesiod's *Theogony*, he is described as "he of many delights" (*Hesiod's Theogony*: 941). Dionysos is seen in Greek religion as having invented or discovered wine, and given this "ambivalent" gift to mankind, much as Demeter gave the gift of the grain to mankind.

In ancient Greece, wine festivals were held in many areas. The oldest of these seems to be the *Anthesteria*, held in Athens each spring, when the new wine was drunk. It also celebrated the

mythic arrival of Dionysos from across the sea. Other festivals included the performance of tragedy and comedy. Festivals that celebrated Dionysos were characterized by revelry, which included licentious and obscene behavior, the reversal of social roles, and cross-dressing by males. Processions of phalluses were paraded through the streets, though there are no extant depictions of Dionysos with an erection, unlike Hermes or Pan.

While alcohol intoxication is one of the darker aspects of Dionysos' gift to mankind, the ritual madness associated with his myth and cult was not associated with drug or alcohol use. The initiates in his cult, the *maenads*, were "seized" or possessed by the god. They behaved ecstatically, dancing wildly on remote mountaintops, and their rites were seen as "mad" only by those uninitiated. Most of the participants were women. In vase paintings, Dionysos and his followers tear apart live animals with the bare hands and eat them raw. We do not know if this actually occurred as part of the cultic practice; however, it reiterates the tearing apart of the young Dionysos by the Titans.

The worship of Dionysos had a very important psychological function. It emphasizes the value and importance of excess. In allowing for the suspension of the structures of everyday life, it enabled individuals to contact the darker, more irrational aspects of their nature in a ritualized way; to let go of ego control and space/time constraints and engage in mystical experience; and thus to have access to the deeper nonego realms of the psyche, what Jung calls the *Self*, for the purpose of inner transformation. His rites promoted the dissolution of differences and the experience of a primordial unity with others, with nature and the mystical realization that life and death are one.

Thus, we see that Dionysos was also associated with death. Heraclitus, the fifth-century philosopher, famously said that Hades and Dionysos are one. His myth includes a story of descent to the underworld to bring his mother *Semele* back from Hades. Tombs were very frequently decorated with Dionysos and his *maenads* in the ancient world.

From a psychological perspective, it makes sense that Dionysos is associated with death, because the ecstatic, transgressive experience he brings happens through the temporary suspension of ego functioning and individual identity. Dionysos brings an otherness of experience. He is considered the most epiphanic of all the Greek gods, bringing metamorphosis and transformation. For those who bring a negative attitude, it is a dark, frightening experience, but for those who bring a positive openness, it is transcendent.

### See Also

- ▶ [Apollo](#)
- ▶ [Dismemberment](#)
- ▶ [Ecstasy](#)
- ▶ [Orpheus and Orphism](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Twice Born](#)

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speaking, discernment, sometimes called discernment of spirits, means skill in discriminating between those influences that enhance or lead to a fuller relationship with God or transcendent reality or, where no belief in transcendent reality is held, to fuller appropriation and implementation of one's value system. Psychologically, discernment is an intentional practice which develops the ability to act in accordance with those agencies that are conducive to integration of the personality and which avoids or resists those influences that would bring about psychic fragmentation or disintegration. For the purposes of discernment, influences within the subject, such as dreams, images, and thought processes, or without, such as relationships with others and political or social context, are understood to have equivalent value and effect. Although meanings vary among traditions, discernment may be characterized as a process that encourages seeing clearly enough to make well-considered decisions which take into account and integrate the multiple dimensions of life, i.e., intellect, affect, body, relationships, principles, values, work, income, expenditures, play, creativity, and religious community, with a particular concern for God, transcendent reality, or a unique system of values. Moreover, discernment's clarity of vision is most often linked with detachment from the promptings of inordinate desire which muddy the waters and make clear discernment unlikely or impossible.

Research into discernment can play an important role in today's debates about the nature of religious experience, especially where a tension is felt between the individual and the collective, the mystical and the prophetic, or the personal and the political. Eschewing an isolating emphasis on personal experience, the process of discernment is understood to unite dimensions of the human witness that are, *at once*, objective and subjective, e.g., historical, textual, moral, theological, aesthetic, political, economic, and communal, *and* personal, psychological, visionary, spiritual, particular, and perspectival. The interpretative strategy called discernment predisposes individuals both to appropriate for themselves and to contribute to the meanings of the historical and communal realities of which they are a part.

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## Discernment

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### Introduction

To discern means to separate or distinguish between or among things. In religion, generally

## Judaism

Discernment is a biblical term with a long and complex history. In the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures), King David was reputed to have a divine gift of discernment: a wise woman of Tekoa exclaimed of him, “The word of my lord the king will set me at rest; for my lord the king is like the angel of God, discerning good and evil” (2 Sam. 14: 17). Job claims discernment for himself: “Is there any wrong on my tongue? Cannot my taste discern calamity?” (Job 6: 30). The Lord, when worship of him has become superficial and empty, threatens to punish the people by taking away a self-professed but false ability to discern: “The wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden” (Isaiah 29: 14). Finally, and of great significance for our discussion, wherever several different Old Testament prophets professed to speak for God and disagreed with each other, the ancient Hebrews recognized that a moral and spiritual awareness which could distinguish between the authentic and the counterfeit was of utmost importance. Among the prophetic books, Jeremiah focuses the most on the problem of discernment because his witness to God was more directly contested than that of the other prophets. Thus the classic discussion of the criteria for critical discernment of prophetic authenticity is in Jer. 23: 9–32, where false prophets are identified by their worship of false gods, including Baal, their promise of good news rather than judgment, false claims to have received a word from God or to have had visions or dreams, immorality, and absence of counsel from the Lord (Moberly 2006).

## Christianity

Although the New Testament gospel narratives depict a process of discernment whenever a decision for or against God or Jesus is made and when demons are cast out by the power of God incarnate in Jesus (cf. *inter alia*, Mat. 8: 31; 12: 28; Mrk 3: 22; 16: 9; Luke 4: 33; 8: 2; 8: 35, etc.), they do not develop the meaning of the

term. However, there are passages, like Matt. 5: 8, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God,” which suggest that the topic was uppermost in these authors’ minds. More to the point, the First Letter of John enjoins, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (4: 1). But it is Paul, more than any other New Testament author, who explicitly engages the concept of discernment, and he does so for the sake of building up the community of the church. For Paul, discernment (he uses several different words to denote the process: *dokimazein* = test oneself out in practice; *diakrinein* = discern; *anakrinein* = discern, examine; *aesthesis* = discernment, perception) is a gift of God’s Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12: 1–11). Paul makes a distinction between the “unspiritual” (*psychikos*) and the “spiritual” (*pneumatikos*), where the “unspiritual” would have natural abilities not specifically related to the agency of the Holy Spirit: “Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned (*anakrino*)” (1 Cor. 2: 14). Moreover, Paul links discernment with love: “And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow with knowledge and all discernment (*aisthesis*) to help you determine what is best” (Phil. 1: 9). (Loving as a prerequisite for accurate knowledge or discernment became a favorite theme among medieval theologians.) Finally, for Paul and the patristic authors who interpreted his letters, Christian discernment hinges on a felt participation in the paschal mystery: it is believed that true discernment only happens when a situation is viewed through the lens of the cross of Jesus. This ability is enhanced through dramatic reading of the gospel narratives and through participation in the Eucharist. Paul speaks of baptism into Christ’s death as the condition for Christian adulthood (Rom. 6: 5f.). Practically speaking, discernment as governed by the cross means that Christians try, by God’s grace, to neutralize the natural effects of envy and strife with a spiritual humility that graciously gives up its own will, desire, or honorific place to

the other. Moreover, there is a spiritual seeing, or discernment, that accompanies such submission (Johnson 1983; McIntosh 2004; Moberly 2006).

The patristic period saw a real flowering of the concept of discernment. *The Life of Antony* by Athanasius (c. 295–373) shows Antony out in the desert, struggling for decades with demons who have tried to compromise his relationship with God. In time, these external entities came to be viewed more and more psychologically as dynamics within the soul. For example, Evagrius Ponticus (346–399) in his *Praktikos* and *Chapters on Prayer* speaks of “eight evil thoughts” that afflict monastics and need to be overcome by prayer and other spiritual practices, such as fasting and vigils. John Cassian (c. 365–435), while believing with his predecessors that both good and evil spirits really exist, is more interested, in his *Conferences*, to teach his monks that the near objects of discernment are not actually external spirits, but movements within the soul, like thoughts, images, feelings, and judgments. For Cassian, discernment is a coming-to-terms with these inner movements that results in a state of equilibrium, as it did for Antony, Origen of Alexandria (c. 185–254), Evagrius Ponticus, Diadochus of Photike (mid-fifth century), and many others (Sweeney 1983). Theologians of the medieval period were also drawn to the discernment tradition. Julian of Norwich, for example, in her *Book of Showings*, correlates discernment with growth in contemplation (Koenig), and Catherine of Siena’s *Dialogue* is replete with teaching on discernment. For Thomas Aquinas, the concept of discernment gives way to an emphasis on prudence which relies more heavily on the rational faculty and is less integrative than discernment.

But it was left to Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) to gather together the patristic teachings on discernment and codify them in usable form. His *Spiritual Exercises*, which are decisional and concern the discernment of religious vocation, are the *locus classicus* for Christian training in discernment. In the form of a 4-week retreat, the training progresses through stages of purgation and sorrow over sin to the “Contemplation to Obtain Love” in the 4th

week where the retreatant sees all of creation as God’s expression of love to his creatures. With a profound sense of giftedness and acceptance of a God-given liberty or free will, that person is encouraged to return the gift to the giver through cultivating an attitude of magnanimity toward God who is dedicated to serving him. Most distinctive of Ignatius’ teaching on discernment are the two sets of the so-called Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, appended to his *Spiritual Exercises*, in particular the suggestions made their concerning the felt alternation between states of “consolation” and “desolation.” These are technical terms in Ignatius’ vocabulary, referring to the raw material that people must judge through if they are to make an appropriate choice. He describes “consolation” as “that which occurs when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord.” It includes “tears of grief for one’s own sins,” and “every increase in hope, faith, and charity, and every interior joy which calls and attracts one toward heavenly things.” “Desolation,” by contrast, Ignatius calls “everything which is contrary [to consolation]; for example, darkness of soul, turmoil within it, an impulsive motion toward low and earthly things. . . . These move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love. . . .” Discernment, then, is a process of keen observation of these affective states that leads to deep familiarity with both their energy for integrative authenticity and their potential for disintegrative deception. Most important, for Ignatius, discernment enables individuals to recognize and avert the beclouding influence of inordinate desires (*afecciones desordenadas*).

## Islam

Discernment is a central concept in Islamic tradition, although the term does not appear in English dictionaries and encyclopedias of Qur’anic terms and concepts. The word *furqan*, usually translated as “criterion” or “distinction,” conveys the notion of one thing as set apart from

another. Both the Hebrew *Torah* and the Qur'an are referred to as *furqan* (the former in *Qur'an* 2: 53 and 21: 48; the latter in 3: 4 and 25: 1) because each book was revealed in order to assist human beings in their judgment of the difference between truth and falsehood. Muslims believe that, at the last time, there will be a decisive victory after which truth will reign in a manifest and uncompromised form. In Islam, the concept of discernment is also conveyed by the notions of "guidance" (*huda*) and "misguidance" (*dalal*). God is the only source of guidance (2: 120; 7: 178) in that God shows the human being both the right and wrong paths, leaving him or her free to choose between them (76: 3). Guidance comes in three forms: *instinctual*, where God has given the human being an instinctual sense of "its evil and its good" (91: 8); *rational*, where God-given reason enables one to consider rationally one's place in the universe; and *revelatory*, an infallible guidance bodied forth in both the *Torah* and the *Qur'an*, although the latter is understood to provide the best guidance (17: 9). "Misguidance" also takes place at God's behest, but God only misguides those individuals who already have chosen evil. In a sense, they have asked for misguidance, and God obliges them by misguiding them in order to punish them for their sins (7: 155) (Mir 1987).

Sufi tradition especially emphasizes a process of discernment. Here human beings are viewed as microcosms of the cosmos so that there is a correspondence between them and all the levels of existence, including the Divine Reality beyond the cosmos. Muhammad said, "There are seventy thousand veils of light and darkness that separate us from God, and they constitute the universe," and "The person who knows himself/herself knows his/her Lord." Thus, the "goal of the spiritual life is to be able to lift up the veil of outwardness so as to behold the inward and subsequently come to know the outward in light of the inward" (Nasr 2007, p. 49). This is a process of ever-deepening interiorization, for the veils only will become transparent to the reality beyond them after a person has penetrated to his or her own center and lifted the veils within. The inner vision, which results from God's guidance

and one's faithfulness to devotional practice, ultimately will be able to distinguish the real from the counterfeit at every level of the cosmos.

Psychological critique. Psychologically, discernment denotes an intentional process that seeks to render unconscious material available to consciousness for the sake of making healthful and appropriate decisions. For example, it is possible to pose a series of questions about an issue to be discerned, or about a dream, to see what "comes up," thus becoming more self-aware and capable of making choices that suit who one really is, rather than what others expect one to be (Wolff 1993; Gendlin 1986). The result can be that energy is released, healing made possible, and integration facilitated. However, such a discernment process is never easy: one's conscious attitude dominates every effort to interpret anything. The unconscious always remains unconscious, and the capacity for self-deception is infinite. Therefore, most people interested in discernment these days speak of the need for well-seasoned spiritual directors, and communal discernment is preferred to a process undertaken in isolation. Moreover, increasingly, there are applications of classical discernment practices and traditions to political and corporate situations (Brackley 2004; Libanio 1982; McClain 1988; Urena 1979; Delbecq et al. 2002).

Various schools of psychology offer ways to evaluate what is going on in discernment. For example, the attempt has been made to correlate the Ignatian *Rules for Discernment* with stages of ego development, with highly suggestive results (Liebert 1992). Jung's notion of the progression and regression of psychic energy assists our understanding of consolation and desolation, the former signaling the uprush of energy and heightened awareness following successful appropriation of a previously unrecognized psychic content and the latter indicating the loss of psychic energy that occurs when there is a retreat into the unconscious in order to discover or retrieve hidden psychic potential. Desolation may be equivalent to psychological deflation when it provides a corrective to inauthentic consolation (i.e., inflation). Thus consolation and desolation operate in contrary or compensatory relationship and



in this way impel forward the process of individuation or spiritual development (Sweeney 1983). Cognitive psychology's labeling of cognitive distortions, such as "all-or-nothing thinking," "overgeneralization," "mental filters," and "disqualifying the positive" Burns (1980) has parallels with ancient and medieval descriptions of the effects of evil spirits, or thoughts, and its method of talking back to these and proposing alternatives has much in common with ancient practices (Ponticus 1981) and Ignatius Loyola's method depicted in his *Autobiography* and *Spiritual Exercises*. Self-psychology can make a very special contribution to understanding what is necessary for authentic discernment, especially in its insistence on full, conscious mourning for what has been lost in life as a prerequisite for "analytic access" to the dynamics of the unconscious and, hence, for a self-knowledge that approaches accuracy (Homans 1989). Finally, systems theory, with its insistence on grasping how the role one has been assigned by one's family of origin, conditions one's perception of all reality, its distinction between the "thinking process" and the "feeling process," and its strategies for encouraging differentiation, all offer clarification for undertaking a psychologically well-informed process of discernment (Kerr 1988).

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Self Psychology
- ▶ Sufis and Sufism

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## Dismemberment

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### Definition

Dismemberment means the taking apart of a body and the removal of one or more body parts. At one end of the scale is the tearing apart of a whole body, resulting in death, as in stories of the early Christians being fed to the lions and Greek myths about the tearing apart of Dionysus by the Titans. The other end of the scale is harder to determine. Forcible removal of eyes, as in St. Lucia's decision to take out her eyes to discourage her pagan suitor, probably counts, but does either castration, as in Origen's self-castration "for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Matthew 19:12), or circumcision, as enjoined on the Jews in the Old Testament? Bodily injuries such as the piercings and flagellation wounds of penitents and the scarification of Australian Aborigines undergoing initiation do not involve the removal of a body

part and hence should not qualify as dismemberment nor should such phenomena as stigmata manifesting on the palms and feet of some saints.

### Bodily Wholeness

With the obvious exception of the loss of body parts that occurs accidentally, or for medical reasons, or in secular hostilities, dismemberment of the living is generally understood in a religious context as indicating the presence of a deity or dedication to the service of a god or a ritual of initiation. Opposing this tendency, however, is the emphasis on whole bodies without blemish where service to a deity is concerned. In the Bible, for instance, the Book of Numbers abounds with instructions that animals chosen for sacrifice must be "without blemish," and in Leviticus the same requirement is made for priests:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever *he be* of thy seed in their generations that hath *any* blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God. For whatsoever man *he be* that hath a blemish, he shall not approach: a blind man, or a lame, or he that hath a flat nose, or any thing superfluous. Or a man that is brokenfooted, or brokenhanded. Or crookedbacked, or a dwarf, or that hath a blemish in his eye, or be scurvy, or scabbed, or hath his stones broken (Leviticus 21:17–20).

### Christianity

For Christians, the wholeness of the body has been important in the case as I had it of priests but also for each human being after death, as the body awaits its resurrection and the Last Judgment, hence the Catholic Church's centuries-long ban on cremation. As Michael Bryson points out, the biblically based Christian understanding of Jesus as head of the Church, which is the body, reiterates the great importance of wholeness. Schism and heresy function as the dismemberment of the body spiritual.

In this context, the fate of Christian saints both before and after death is paradoxical. After death, some saints' bodies have been dismembered to

provide relics for as many altars as possible – sometimes, many more substantial body parts than any human body could possibly provide. Before death, violent acts of dismemberment have become emblematic of sanctity for those saints who were also martyrs, as with St. Oliver Plunkett (whose head can be viewed in Drogheda) or St. Bartholomew, who was flayed. The bodily sufferings of the martyrs are considered an *imitatio Christi*, willingly undergone with Jesus' sufferings and death as their model. These sufferings of Jesus before and during crucifixion, including flagellation and the piercing of his side, do not constitute dismemberment. It is, however, theologically debatable whether, for those branches of Christianity that believe in transubstantiation, the breaking and eating of the host constitutes a form of dismemberment.

### Ancient Egypt

While Jesus' status as a dismembered god is disputable, there are abundant examples in other near eastern and classical religions. The most prominent of these deities is the Egyptian Osiris, whose body was taken apart by his jealous brother Set and pieced together by his devoted wife Isis (his penis was irrecoverably lost). The dismembered and re-membered god of fertility and civilization then became lord of the dead, and the mysteries of Isis promised their initiates a similar resurrection to eternal life. The practice of mummification in ancient Egypt was performed to ensure eternal life by keeping the physical body as intact as possible. While some mummified bodies appear to have been dismembered, interpretation of this procedure is much debated: were the spirits of the dead being urged to depart, was the mummification done poorly, or was this deliberate dismemberment in honor of Osiris' fate?

### Shamanism

The experience of being dismembered, though not its literal enactment, is a well-attested part of the Siberian shaman's initiation into spiritual

power as he gains access to the worlds above and below. To become a shaman is to experience, while still a living human being, the dismemberment and resurrection of a god.

### Punishment

Dismemberment before death, for a human body, is thus in a religious context usually a mark of closeness to the divine. Such closeness is not always a mark of divine favor, however. In Greek myth, offending a god can result in being torn apart by the god's possessed followers, as in *The Bacchae*, or falling and being dragged behind a hurtling chariot to one's death, as in *The Hippolytus*. Dismemberment after death is an indication of the deities' disfavor. For the ancient Egyptians, the sunboat carried the dead to the hall of judgment, but along the way the wicked would be taken, torn apart, and eaten by monsters. The carefully gradated horrors of Dante's Christian hell include the splitting apart of bodies that then grow back together, only to be resplit, and the incessant devouring of the skull's contents. Buddhist hells are similarly stratified with punishments such as having one's eyes gouged out or being disemboweled.

### Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychologically, dismemberment of the body, whether of oneself or another human being, or the urge towards dismemberment, is considered a symptom of serious mental illness. There is no scope for the interpretation of dismemberment as part of a spiritual ascent or as penitential self-sacrifice in current psychological models of the world. Psychoanalytic theory is more hospitable to the concept of dismemberment. For Melanie Klein, the infant splits the mother into "partial objects," representations that must be combined for the child's psyche to become whole. For Lacan, human beings' sense of their own identity is founded on a false equation in the mirror phase which entails that ego consciousness is always unauthentic. Psychic integration is thus

impossible, and early ego development includes fantasies of castration and dismemberment. While Klein and Lacan postulate a sense of the body as split in the young child's psyche, in *Totem and Taboo* Freud postulates the long-ago dismemberment of an actual body as the origin of human civilization. He asserts as literal fact the story of the primal horde in which the sons, eager to gain access to their father's women, slew him and ate the flesh they had torn apart. It is guilt at this primal murder and cannibal feast that still powers human civilization, according to Freud. The dismemberment that for many devout Christians and initiates into the mystery religions has borne a joyful message of resurrection to eternal bliss is for these psychoanalytic theorists in their different ways an uncanny substratum to all human beings' understandings of who we are and can be in this world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)

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## Dissociation

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## Introduction

Dissociation is a normal part of the psyche's defensive process, severing connection between categories of mental events that are normally integrated. Streams of thought or consciousness are kept apart and communication between them is restricted, resulting in a discernable alteration in thoughts, feelings, or actions.

Dissociation is an unforeseen partial or total disruption of the normal integration of conscious functioning, a means by which typically integrated streams of thought or consciousness are segregated and resulting communication restricted. This default defense can take place as a consequence of repeated or overwhelming trauma. The ability to dissociate can begin with self-hypnotic declarations such as "I am not here; nothing is happening to me. I am not in this body." This deceit then becomes a structuring dynamic within the personality (Mollon 2002).

Historically, dissociative states have been associated with psychological and physical trauma, healing practices, and religious experience in nearly every culture. Dissociative states have knowingly been reached by hypnosis, meditation practice, prayer, and shamanic practice. Ritualistic behavior during worship or meditative practice can allow the individual to enter into both overt and implicit dissociative states. Those held hostage or in captivity develop trance capabilities and become adept in the practice of dissociation during isolation and confinement (Herman 1992; Van der Kolk et al. 1996).

For more than a century, the effects of pathological dissociation have intrigued clinicians. The emergence of distinctive dissociative disorder diagnoses is closely intertwined with the development of contemporary psychiatry. More than a century ago, Janet (1889) is credited as the first to identify this essential pathology,

alternation in consciousness, as “dissociation.” Breuer and Freud (1895/1955) followed by defining these same altered states as “double consciousness.” Both Janet and Freud concluded that unbearable emotional reactions to traumatic events produced an altered state of consciousness, which in turn induced hysterical symptoms. Both recognized the essential similarity of altered states of consciousness induced by psychological trauma and those induced by hypnosis (Herman 1992).

Janet asserted that memory is an act of creative integration by which we encoded and characterize experience into preexisting cognitive schemata. When an event in the life of an individual is too overwhelming to fit into these already existing schemata, he believed that it was split off from consciousness into separate systems of subconscious “fixed ideas,” untouched by the rest of individual experience. Individuals with hysteria were those who had lost the ability to integrate the memory of overwhelming experience (Daves and Frawley 1994; Herman 1992; Janet 1889).

From an etymological perspective, the word dissociation is derived from “dis” which means split two ways or “in twain” and is comparable to the Greek “dia” as in “diabolic” – the opposite of “symbolic.” There is moreover an implication of negation or “reverse,” undo a spoil as in discount, disown, or disable, and the notion of “to strip off” or “expel from” as in disbar, disenfranchise, and disempower. In Latin compounds, “dis” was commonly the reverse of “com” or “con” as in concord versus discord. Another meaning is to render a whole into parts, therefore the sense of apart, away, and asunder, as in disperse, dissident, distance, and dispossessed. Association is derived from link, organization, connection, relationship, and bond (Kalsched 1996, 2005, p. 31).

Dissociation is the defensive process that typically results in the loss of interrelationship between various groups of mental processes with an ensuing, nearly independent, functioning of the one group that has been separated from the rest. Dissociative discontinuities can comprise a wide range of phenomena frequently found in both the immediate and long-term response to

trauma. Primary phenomena include depersonalization, derealization, identity confusion, and identity alteration. Individuals may experience bodily detachment, numbing, distorted time perception, fragmentation of the coherence of sensory experience, tonic immobility, forms of extreme passivity, disruption of memory, and amnesic states. Finally, in the case of severe trauma, all connection can be severed between an actual occurrence and permanent symbolic, verbal, and mental representation (Bromberg 1998; Daves and Frawley 1994; Mollon 2002; Van der Kolk et al. 1996).

Dissociation exists on a continuum including normal biological forgetting, daydreaming, and abnormal biological amnesia following a concussion to abnormal psychosocial dissociation that coexists with trauma including multiple personality disorder (Putnam 1989; Ross 1989). While this segregation of mental processes from the rest of the psychic apparatus is most often subtle and transpires unnoticed, other more dramatic manifestations of dissociation can occur among child and adult parts of the personality, between true and false self-structures, sane and psychotic parts of the mind, and different phases of life. Dissociation as a defensive strategy can obstruct emergence of coherent meaning in correspondence to the concept of “attacks on linking” (Bion 1959). Learned dissociation can be considered an internal flight response when external flight is not possible (Mollon 2002; Van der Kolk et al. 1996).

In direct contrast to repression, a horizontal division into conscious and unconscious mental contents, dissociative experience involves a vertical splitting of the ego that can be organized and independently functioning. Under dissimilar internal and external circumstances, two or more ego states alternate in consciousness. These dissociated states remain unavailable to the rest of the personality and, as such, cannot be subject to psychic elaboration (Daves and Frawley 1994, p. 31). However, dissociative states allow external life to go on but at a great internal cost. Psychological sequelae continue to haunt the inner world, making their presence felt in dreams and waking consciousness by way of



recurring intrusive images with violent or symbolic content, enactments, flashbacks, enigmatic somatic sensations, recurrent nightmares, anxiety reactions, mental images split from affect, and somatic conditions. Memory has holes; a full narrative history cannot be told by an individual whose life has been disrupted by trauma (Kalsched 2013).

## See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Complex](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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## Dittes, James

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James Dittes (1926–2009) was the Roger J. Squire Professor Emeritus of Pastoral Theology and Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies at Yale University. He wrote many books and articles. The major topics that he addressed in his work include the vocation of ministry, contemporary western male experience, and theoretical and empirical psychology of religion (Capps and Dysktra 2003). His major books include *The Church in the Way* (Dittes 1967), *Minister on the Spot* (Dittes 1970), *Bias and the Pious* (Dittes 1973), *When the People Say No* (Dittes 1979), *The Male Predicament* (Dittes 1985), *When Work Goes Sour* (Dittes 1987), *The Hunger of the Heart* (Capps and Dittes 1990), *Driven by Hope* (Dittes 1996a), *Men at Work* (Dittes 1996b), *Re-calling Ministry* (Dittes 1999b), and *Pastoral Counseling* (Dittes 1999a). Three of his articles have been particularly influential, two of which have been cited over 150 times: "Effects of Different Conditions of Acceptance upon Conformity to Group Norms" (Kelley and Dittes 1956), "Attractiveness of Group as Function of Self-Esteem and Acceptance by Group" (Dittes 1959), and "Typing the Typologies: Some Parallels in the Career of Church-Sect and Extrinsic-Intrinsic" (Dittes 1971). Perhaps his most interesting essay is a lesser-known book chapter titled "The Investigator as an Instrument of Investigation" (Dittes 1977). For a more complete listing of Dittes's publications and a guide to his



papers housed at Yale University, see “Books and Articles by James E. Dittes” (Capps and Dykstra 2003). Also see Volume 52, Numbers 1–2, of *Pastoral Psychology* for a tribute to his career, as well as Donald Capps’s (2010) “Notice of Death: James E. Dittes.”

Dittes was born on December 26, 1926, and he died on August 24, 2009. In 1994, he was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, which slowly progressed until his death. Dittes married Frances Skinner Dittes in 1948, and they had four children together: Larry (born in 1953); Nancy (born in 1954); Carolyn (born in 1956); and Joanne (born in 1958). Larry was born with Down syndrome and died of heart complications in 1959. Dittes and Frances divorced in 1983. Dittes married Margaret House Rush in 1984, and they divorced in 1986. He then married Anne Herbert Smith in 1987, and they remained married until his death in 2009.

Dittes was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and he was the only child of Mary Freeman Dittes and Mercein Dittes. While his father did not graduate from high school, he worked as a carpenter and later taught industrial arts in a high school. Dittes was baptized as a Presbyterian but grew up in a Baptist church because his mother, Mary, was a soloist in the choir. Regarding these biographical facts, Capps (2003) writes:

[i]t has probably occurred to the reader . . . that a December 26 [birth date], a mother named Mary, and a father whose profession was carpentry would send a powerful message to a young boy that he was predestined to walk in the footsteps of Jesus (Capps 2003, p. 18).

Capps continues:

That the ‘voice’ he heard in church each Sunday was not the authoritative thunderings of a pastor father but the hauntingly beautiful voice of a much-loved mother may also have led some readers to predict, had they known him then, that he would become what he *did* become, one who made a profession (in all senses of the word) of the ministry of care (Capps 2003, p. 18).

Dittes matriculated at Oberlin College in 1944. But he took a leave from college when he joined the Navy in 1945 to work as a radio technician in the Pacific Ocean during World

War II. He returned in 1946 and graduated from Oberlin in 1949 with a major in English and American literature. He matriculated at Yale Divinity School in 1949. After his first year at Yale Divinity School, he took a leave of absence and went to Turkey to teach English. Toward the end of his first year in Turkey, he decided to apply to the doctoral program in the psychology department at Yale University. He was admitted. He received his B.D. in 1955, and he finished his doctoral degree in 1958. Dittes was then appointed to a position at Yale as Assistant Professor of Psychology of Religion. Capps briefly summarizes Dittes teaching career, which spanned 47 years, all of which were at Yale:

From 1955 to 1968 he moved steadily through the ranks of Instructor, Assistant and Associate Professor, and became Professor in 1968 at the age of 42. When he became a full professor with tenure, he was appointed to the Department of Psychology and the Department of Religious Studies. He was Director of Graduate Studies in the latter from 1969 to 1975, and intermittently from 1985–2001, and Chair of the Department from 1975 to 1982. In 1984 his position was renamed Professor of Pastoral Theology and Psychology, and in 2001 was retitled Roger Squires Professor of Pastoral Counseling (Capps 2003, p. 19).

One can observe that Dittes was quite successful in rising through the ranks and handling the various kinds of demands of academic life.

In “Some Accidents, Coincidents, and Intents,” Dittes (2003) offers an autobiographical account of his vocational narrative. He begins by noting that he did not know the word “psychology” when he matriculated at Oberlin as an undergraduate student. When he finally did take a psychology class in college, it was during his last semester, and the course was taught from a behaviorist perspective (it was a little later until Dittes learned of psychoanalysis). Both behaviorism and psychoanalysis, Dittes notes, came to influence him a great deal.

This newfound interest in psychology prompted Dittes to pursue psychology at Yale Divinity School. But his eagerness for psychology – whether behavioral or psychoanalytic – was not shared by students or faculty when he began at Yale Divinity School.

He describes what psychology was like in those days in theological schools:

The psychology in seminaries during the first half of the twentieth century was not, as in the latter half, the psychology of the clinic, i.e., attentive, in the wake of a depression, a world war, and Sigmund Freud, to the deeper, darker parts of personality, past, individual differences, and individual extremes. It was the psychology of the classroom, educational psychology, i.e., optimistic, attentive to the emerging, the newly born, the grand future—what William James might have been heard calling the healthy minded, except that William James was not much heard or heeded either. Even William James was too probing and too dark (Dittes 2003, p. 6).

And so Dittes did not really know what to do with his newfound interest in psychology. His solution was, as he put it, to declare a “moratorium” (cf. Erikson 1962, pp. 99–104) – that is, he moved to central Asia Minor to teach English to Turkish boys and, in so doing, he put his vocational struggles on hold (cf. Dittes 1955).

After his two years in Turkey, he returned to Yale to finish his B.D. and began working on a Ph.D. in psychology. He found, to his surprise, that his psychological interests were now affirmed in the Divinity School upon his return. The psychology department applauded his efforts to “colonize” the Divinity School, and the faculty of the Divinity School, rather than being threatened, now asked him to become a faculty member. They saw him as a “scout” on their behalf.

Dittes began his career in psychology – both in terms of graduate studies and in terms of research – by employing empirical methods. In time, however, he gradually and reluctantly abandoned empirical research, because he became impatient with the amount of energy required to do empirical research, research, he felt, that offered very little insight. He embraced what he felt to be more meaningful psychologies, such as those offered by Sigmund Freud, C. G. Jung, William James, and St. Augustine. As he forged his new identity, he came to name his vocation as psychologist/religionist, a combination, as it were, of his training in theology at Yale Divinity School and his training in the psychology department at Yale University. This title – psychologist/religionist – was, as he puts it, “clumsy, but accurate” (Dittes 2003, p. 9).

He also came to refer to his vocation in various ways, such as “theological anthropology,” “pastoral theology,” and “pastoral psychology.”

In all his years of training, Dittes notes that he did not have a formal course in pastoral counseling, that he did not have any training in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and that he had not even heard of Carl Rogers until he began teaching his own courses in pastoral care. He also recalls that although he gave the keynote address at the founding meeting of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (which took place in Houston, Texas in 1966), he was not, at the time, eligible for membership because he did not have the appropriate credentials. And this seems to connect nicely with some of Dittes’s own convictions about psychology of religion and pastoral theology: Can one ever be “credentialed” to work in this area? Doesn’t the very idea of credentialing seem to assume that there is a standard body of knowledge that one needs to know? Dittes is skeptical of this point of view.

Dittes believes that there is no such thing as progress in psychology of religion, that there is, in other words, no accumulated knowledge. He writes:

There is no knowledge being accumulated. The occasional attempt to manufacture an accumulation or tradition only proves the point. I came to realize that this is not a collective flaw which we all should repent and correct. This is a merit and strength of those of us who work in some version of psychology and religion. This tentativeness, this everyone-needs-to-start-fresh custom, reflects the way things are (Dittes 2003, p. 13).

“It’s not just that there isn’t accumulation and tradition,” Dittes writes. It is that “[t]here can’t be” (Dittes 2003, p. 13). Why? Because in matters of religion and psychology, there cannot be closure and codification, for “[t]here is always more than meets the eye” (Dittes 2003, p. 13). He continues:

It is an important discovery that psychology of religion deals with matters that require—not permit, but require—regular return to the foundations of experience for correction and renewal and perspective. It is in the nature of things that meaningful psychology of religion requires—not permits, but requires—enfolded and unfolding of self throughout as part

of the study, so we can't do it for each other. Maybe in some endeavors such as carpentry or the poring over scriptures and Talmud by young rabbis, it is important to know first what tradition has accumulated, then build from there (Dittes 2003, p. 14).

“But not psychology of religion,” Dittes writes, “which is a personalized process regarding a personalized process” (Dittes 2003, p. 14). From a career spent studying and working in both theological and psychological circles, Dittes came to realize that “[y]ou have to plant and tend new seeds every year” (Dittes 2003, p. 14).

And perhaps this is Dittes's greatest legacy for the fields of psychology of religion and pastoral theology: He has liberated us all to begin our work anew. But, as younger psychologists of religion and pastoral theologians strike out on their own journeys and begin anew, I think (and I think Dittes would also think) that there is still much to gain from listening to the experiences and insights of our mentors, and the mentors of our mentors, not for the sake of progress but for the sake of perspective.

**Acknowledgement** Some of this material for this article is taken, in a condensed form, from my dissertation (Carlin 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ [Capps, Donald](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)

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## Divination

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Divination is the act of using contact between the supernatural world and the mundane world for the purpose of guiding human action. It is commonly

thought of as an act of foretelling the future, or even dismissively termed “fortune-telling,” but this view is simplistic and ignores the social context of divination. In all situations where divination is practiced, there is a person, a “querent,” who has a need for guidance about what course of action to take with regard to a particular situation. The occasion of the divination generally comes at a specific time for a specific reason. When proffered as an amusement, as in a boardwalk fortune-teller, it may be done with little commitment to using the outcome. But the skill of the diviner lies in finding something that the querent can take away from the encounter that makes them feel value was given for the experience, and most importantly some guidance in making a decision about a course of action.

The nature of divination is a spiritual process of obtaining some contact between the two basic orders of reality, the spiritual realm and the mundane one. There is an implicit assumption of some sort of “realm beyond” that speaks in the moment and reveals information not otherwise available to the querent. Usually, the medium is the messenger. That is, the person of the oracle uses a state of trance possession to contact a spiritual power or entity and convey a message to the querent. The classic example of that is the pythia, the oracle of Apollo at Delphi who spoke as the voice of the deity while in a trance. The oracle can also read portents in random events, this is termed sortilege (e.g. clouds) or outcomes of other devices (e.g., tarot cards, and runes). A modern psychological explanation would typically involve some reference to unconscious processes accessing archetypal images relevant to the question posed by the querent.

The Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz (1980) uses the principle of synchronicity to explain why events which seem random and occur in the same time frame have significance at a psychological level. In Jung’s thought synchronicity is distinct from causation, but important nonetheless.

It is simplistic to think that people view the pronouncements of the oracle as predicting the future in a mechanistic way. People vary in the degree to which they view events as beyond their control, but

implicit in the social relationship between the diviner and the querent is the proffering of advice for a course of action in the face of the problem for which the divination is sought. There is nearly always a gap in time between the pronouncement and the ultimate outcome, time enough for the person to act upon the advice. If the feared outcome does not happen, the advice was helpful; if it comes about anyway, the person failed to heed the oracle’s warning. The critical feature is not whether the degree of certainty about the final outcome but to what extent counsel is taken and plans or actions initiated, changed, or aborted. Divination is action-oriented advice giving.

There are a variety of physical media of divination. Among the most popular in the west are the Tarot cards, the reading of lines on the palm, or the pattern of tea leaves in a cup. The Chinese oracle book the I Ching is also widely used. In previous eras animals were sacrificed for the occasion of the oracle, and the patterns in their entrails were interpreted. Among the oldest artifacts from Mesopotamia is a ceramic figure in the shape of a sheep’s liver with different areas marked out for their interpretive significance. There was probably an oral teaching or a cuneiform tablet now lost which catalogued the various meanings.

The interpretation of dreams is also a form of divination. The “incubation” of a dream by the god Asklepios was a major part of the ritual healing process in the ancient Greek world. The deity would come to the sufferer during a special sleep inside the inner sanctum of the temple, or abaton. The priests would interpret the dream the next day and prescribe the mode of healing to be undertaken. Both Artemidorus and the Sophist Antiphon are reputed to have authored a book of dream interpretation, with the title *Oneirocritica*. When Freud wrote about the value of dream interpretation, he was reviving an ancient tradition, albeit with a different theory of hermeneutics or interpretation.

In a more contemporary vein, divination is the old term for the act of diagnosis. In all clinical contexts one of the most important functions of the therapist is to provide an explanation for the troubles the client brings to therapy. We may use modern psychometric instruments, further dialog

or some combination of the above plus outside collateral information, but at some critical point early in the relationship, the professional presents the client with a summary view of the nature of their problems and the implications for course of treatment.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [I Ching](#)
- ▶ [Oracles](#)

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## Divine Child

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The myth of the divine child is ubiquitous in religious traditions. The child is a potential savior for a society in need. He or she represents radical change, the possibility of a new beginning. As such, he is a threat to the status quo, and the representatives of the status quo – wicked kings and demonic monsters – therefore fight the child.

To represent the idea that the child is associated with divine intentions, his father is often divine. To emphasize that he is also of this world, he must be born of a human female. But the conception of the child is often miraculous – out of the ordinary – to signify his divine nature and to suggest that he belongs to the whole society rather than to any one family.

In ancient Egypt, the so-called Delta cycle of the Osiris myth contains the story of Isis

conceiving a son, Horus, by her dead husband, the god-king, Osiris. Isis flees the usurper king, Seth, the brother and killer of Osiris, and gives birth to Horus in the hidden swamps of the Delta. One day, while Isis is away in search of food for her child, Seth comes in the form of a serpent and attacks the child. But the divine child, stomps on the serpent, thus surviving to continue his father’s struggle against the forces of evil.

In a later tradition Gautama, the future Buddha, is conceived by a white elephant in a dream experienced by his mother, Queen Maya. The Buddha’s potential as a savior is challenged in his boyhood by his father, the king, who shelters the child to keep him from the harsh realities of life. And later, the youthful Buddha is unsuccessfully challenged by Mara, the fiend, who tempts him with the vanities of the world.

Moses, the Hebrew divine child and future savior, is threatened at birth with the other Hebrew children by the Egyptian Pharaoh and is hidden in bullrushes. He is saved and lives to lead his people out of Egypt to the Promised Land.

Jesus, the future savior, is miraculously conceived by God through the Holy Spirit which enters the Virgin Mary’s womb. Soon after his birth in a hidden place, the child is threatened with other Jewish children by King Herod and has to be carried off into Egypt.

The Hindu man-god Krishna, the most important avatar of the god Vishnu, who contains the universe and the possibility of salvation within himself, is miraculously conceived through Vishnu, with the help of Maya (“Divine Illusion”) in Devaki. But when the wicked king Kamsa learns that a child of Devaki will 1 day kill him, he orders that any child of Devaki be killed at birth. To prevent this tragedy, Maya removes the embryo of the divine child from Devaki’s womb and places it in the womb of Rohini.

These are only a few of the many stories of the divine child. Other examples can be found in the biographies of such figures as Herakles, Dionysos, Theseus, Zoroaster, Quetzalcoatl, and Cuchulainn.

The theological purpose of the divine child as future savior or embodiment of divinity on earth



is clear enough. But the archetype resonates psychologically as well. For Carl Jung, the divine child – as opposed to the regressive puer aeternus – represents the urge within us all for individuation. This drive can be confronted from birth by what to it can be negative forces – parents, school, religion, the status quo, and its expectations. And the drive for individuation is confronted within the unconscious itself. The divine child in the womb is the preconscious hero – the Self – waiting to be realized. Once born, he is the individual who enters the quest for individual wholeness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Avatar](#)
- ▶ [Gardens, Groves, and Hidden Places](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Puer Aeternus](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Birth](#)

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## Doubt

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The experience of doubt can be understood relative to faith and to belief. Doubt is commonly

perceived to be inimical and opposed to, even erosive of one's faith, as an absence or significant lack of affective confidence and trust in God, in the divine-human relationship and in divine nature and power. The one who doubts is seen to be weak in faith. Relative to beliefs, doubt can be defined as an absence or significant lack of assurance and certitude, even an active dissent and questioning of religious doctrines and practices that traditionally provide structure and meaning to the faith experience. The one who doubts is seen as an unbeliever, unwilling or unable to acknowledge, assent to and embrace the truth of religious tenets and teachings.

Religious beliefs provide a way of articulating, conceptualizing, and providing meaning to the faith experience, that is, to the individual's experience of God and their relationship. Beliefs are about putting the faith experience into words. While beliefs support and facilitate a deepening engagement in the faith experience, they do not constitute it. The faith experience is not primarily about beliefs, but about a vital relationship: trusting and believing *in*, relying *upon*, entrusting *to* an other. Being relational, the faith experience is not static but ever unfolding and developing, in need of an evolving process of understanding, interpreting, and speaking about this experience. Unfortunately, many religious communities and churches resist the maturational development of beliefs. Dissent and doubt of beliefs are often equated to a lack of trust and confidence in God: one who questions beliefs is perceived to be without faith.

The book of Job in the Old Testament or the Hebrew Scriptures is a classic scriptural illustration of how a believer is often perceived to be lacking in faith because of the doubt and questioning of traditional religious beliefs. Conventional Israelite wisdom upheld the doctrine of divine retribution: the one who does right prospers while the one who does evil is punished. A person who is afflicted must have sinned and so, suffers. The character of Job as a man who was upright and blameless, who did not sin yet suffered grievously, called this moral teaching into question. While Job's friends defended religious tradition as sacrosanct in their dialogues



with him, Job vigorously resisted and challenged this inviolability. While the friends chided Job for his lack of trust and confidence in God's power and the divine will, Job confronted the paradoxical nature God. In Job's experience, God was both enemy and friend, oppressor and redeemer, and adversary and judge. Following the God's speech out of the whirlwind that addresses Job, the book ends with Job acknowledging that he has "uttered what (he) did not understand, things too wonderful for (him), which (he) did not know" (Job 42:3) and God upholding Job for he had spoken about God what is right (Job 42:8).

This story provides an apt paradigm for reflecting upon the experience of doubt in relation to faith and belief. Religious beliefs function to provide order and structure, purpose, and meaning to life and relationships. As did Job, individuals often begin to call into question these deeply ingrained and cherished normative beliefs following an experience of trauma, grievous loss, life-threatening illness, unrelenting crisis, or some wanton encounter with violence and evil. In the face of tragedy, the faith questions of believers often revolve around a need to understand and make sense of the event ("What did I do to deserve this?" "Why did this happen?"), the presence, will and agency of God in this event ("Where is God?" "How could God allow this to happen?"), and the consequent dissonance between one's God-image and the occurrence of this seemingly senseless reality ("How can a loving God allow this suffering?" "What kind of God would let this to happen?") Certitude collapses and doubt ensues when beliefs about God's nature and power cannot contain and support, provide order and structure, nor give sense and meaning to the believer in the midst of tragedy's ensuing chaos and disorder, instability, and disorientation. Uncertainty and questioning of long-held beliefs might also occur in the face of less devastating personal experiences, with maturational challenges inherent in life-stage processes such as adolescence and midlife, as well as in times of critical social developments.

The place and function of doubt in one's life, faith maturity and personal development is more

easily appreciated with the understanding of how representations of God are formulated and internalized. Core metaphors and images of God are the foundation upon which religious beliefs are constructed. Religious traditions, creeds, and beliefs are built around God images and representations which originate primarily from parental sources or the impact of experiences with primary caregivers as well as from influences of social groups, peers, formal and informal religious education, and cultural conditions. The pioneering work of psychoanalyst Ana-Maria Rizzuto illustrates how representational traits attributed to God and the divine nature are shaped by childhood engagements, specifically by early parent-child relations and self-experiences. Images and metaphors of God as critical father, punishing judge, and distant deity or of God as loving and merciful, gentle and understanding, and compassionate and protective evolve for the child by way of transference as a function of projective identification, from idealized wishes and fantasies that stem from significant parental interactions as well as from the consequent introjection and self-mirroring images reflected by these experiences. With a growing self-image and individual maturation, increasingly expanding and intricate interpersonal and social engagements, challenges, and demands of life experiences, the deepening of self-awareness, and broadening of relational consciousness can come a corresponding evolution and refashioning of early God representations from childhood.

For many individuals, however, these God images formed from early on remain essentially static, rigid, and unchanged. Much psychic pain and emotional distress ensue when adult religious patients confront the complexities of crisis and tragedy with undeveloped childhood God representations and with religious beliefs and practices that are built upon these unexplored and unrefined divine images and metaphors. Doubt and questioning of religious beliefs founded on archaic God representations that are a result of early unprocessed transferential parent-child experiences can thus be healthy and growth

provoking, purifying, and transformative. Religious patients may be invited to inquire into how a particular belief or early God image had functioned for them and explore how it has promoted wellness or contributed to a lack of well-being. Similarly, the religious patient might look into fantasized consequences of doubting traditional beliefs or questioning deeply ingrained God images while the therapist might explore how inquiry and exploration, doubt, and questioning can also function to enable wellness as well as maturity in the life of faith.

The de-idealization of early God representations and working through of parental transferences onto the divine image in the therapeutic process, while difficult, painful, and grief filled, also enables a reflective challenging of religious conformity and compliance that are part of the false self and facilitates movement into greater spontaneity, freedom of self-expression, and creativity of exploratory play which constitute a release of and reconnection to the true self. As the sense of authentic self grows, expands, and deepens, so can the sense of God. The experience of God is released from restrictive and static constructs, freed from becoming a container of transference and projection material, and idealized wishes and desires. While creeds, traditions, and practices might remain unchanged, new and deeper levels of meanings may evolve. The adult believer becomes more open to the myriad possibilities of divine mystery and of encountering God as God, found in, yet always beyond, all form and image, concept, and representation. The adult believer is more able to hold and contain the awe-full prospect of a God who cannot be held and contained nor grasped with absolute knowledge and understanding.

As with Job, the mature believer is left with the terrifying yet liberating realization that, about God, one can only utter what cannot be understood and speak of things too wonderful that cannot be fully known. Profound confidence and trust in the divine-human connection, life-giving faith, and right speech about God imply the continuing need for doubt of limited, limiting divine representations and questioning of static, archaic

beliefs that cannot acknowledge the limitless breadth of the divine experience, the ensuing recognition of the vulnerability of words and language to articulate the creativity and mystery of divine-human relatedness, and the contemplative entry into reverent silence and reflective exploration of the God engagement which, like the true self, cannot be contained or confined by efforts to capture the radically free, ever-gratuitous process of unfolding and becoming towards a fullness of being.

### See Also

- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Job](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Dragon Slaying

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While dragons are imaginary beasts to be found in the mythology of cultures throughout the world, the concept of *dragon slaying* is unique to the myths of the West. From St. Michael in the book of Revelation in the

Christian New Testament, to Beowulf in the eighth century Anglo-Saxon epic poem of the same name, to Sigurd in Norse mythology (or Siegfried in Richard Wagner's retelling of the story), to Bard the Bowman in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, dragon slayers engage in a heroic fight to the death with a large and powerful beast that threatens a community or the very balance of spiritual forces in the cosmos. These heroes become honored in the myths and legends of their culture and are symbolic of the victory of good over evil.

The word dragon comes from the Greek  $\delta\rho\alpha\kappa\omega\nu$  or *drakon*. Dragons appear throughout mythology as magical creatures with great physical and/or spiritual powers. Depending upon the culture, the dragon may be airborne – a great reptile with wings – or more worm- or serpentlike. In general, dragons of the East are powerful but benign creatures that are wise and revered by the people. In cultures of the West, dragons are often depicted as evil guardians of a treasure or horde which has been stolen from the people. The theft of this treasure has led to their decline, and the return thereof will reestablish their vitality and/or the spiritual balance of the cosmos.

It is perhaps not unsurprising, then, that the concept of dragon slaying is a singularly Western phenomenon and is to be found in that most enduring and powerful sacred scripture of Western culture: the Christian *Bible*. The following excerpt poses the dragon as the embodiment of Satan and St. Michael as the conquering hero in the name of Christ.

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night (KJV, Revelation 12:7–10).

With St. Michael as a prototypical hero, numerous Christian saints from the early church

have been depicted in legend as slayers of dragons (inter alia, St. Mercurialis, St. Margaret of Antioch, St. Clement of Metz, and St. Martha). St. George, probably the most heralded, killed a dragon who was terrorizing a city in ancient Libya. The people had been feeding sheep to the dragon to appease it, but when the sheep no longer satisfied the hunger of the dragon, they began to feed it their children. The victims were chosen by lottery and, one day, the daughter of the King was chosen. St. George happened by the lake where the dragon dwelled just as the daughter was being offered to the dragon and gravely wounded him with his lance. St. George and the princess led the dragon into the city and promised to slay him if the people were baptized into Christianity. Twenty thousand were promptly baptized and the dragon was slain (de Voragine 1993, pp. 238–240).

In the eighth century Anglo-Saxon epic poem of the same name, Beowulf traveled to help an aging king rid his kingdom of a terrorizing troll named Grendel and his avenging mother. Beowulf then returned to his people and reigned as king for 50 years until a dragon threatened to destroy his kingdom. The dragon guarded a rich treasure that was kept in a burial mound, but was angered when a single drinking cup was stolen from the hoard. Beowulf and a young chieftan attacked and killed the dragon as it sought to lay waste to the kingdom. Beowulf was mortally wounded in the fight, but, before dying, he bequeathed the dragon's hoard to his protégé, Wiglaf (Willis 2006, p. 205).

A prime example of the restoration of a treasure that had been stolen and guarded by a dragon can be seen in Richard Wagner's nineteenth century retelling of the ancient Norse legend of the hero Siegfried (Sigurd) and the dragon Fafner (Fafnir). The story is of a magical ring, forged of twice-stolen gold, all of which ends up as a hoard in the lair of the dragon and is eventually returned to its keepers, from whom it was originally stolen, after dragon is slain by Siegfried. This retrieval of the ring and the gold and its return to the rightful owners – the central plotline of Wagner's grand operatic tetralogy, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* – takes the

audience on a journey which restores the disrupted spiritual balance of the cosmos while at the same time destroying those who have stolen these precious and magical items, only to use them in a quest for their own greed and power.

In J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the main antagonist is the dragon Smaug who destroyed the town of Dale and captured the mountain Erebor with all its treasure. Smaug's belly was encrusted with the hoard's "gems and fragments of gold from his long lying on his costly bed" (Tolkien 1984, p. 199), rendering him practically invulnerable to attack. When Bilbo Baggins, the main protagonist of *The Hobbit*, encounters Smaug sleeping in his lair, Tolkien (with a nod to *Beowulf*) causes him to steal a "great two-handed cup" from the hoard. One place on his left breast was left unprotected, allowing Bard the Bowman to slay Smaug with a black arrow when he came to destroy the lake-town of Esgaroth. The hero, Bard, was elevated to the first king of Dale, restored after its destruction by the dragon, Smaug.

In Western mythology dragon slaying represents the act of the questing and conquering hero to destroy an evil creature that guards a hoard or threatens people with its powers. Dragon slaying refers, then, to the act of killing this creature or subduing its power, so that life may go on. In a psychological sense, dragon slaying can be thought of as the subduing or integration of powerful internal forces of opposition which can tend to overwhelm the ego and destroy psychological and spiritual equilibrium; the repair of which is necessary to achieve individuation or wholeness.

In the realm of psychology, the dragon in need of "slaying" may be a constellation of unconscious, shadowy energies that have been rejected by the ego. Even though cast off, these energies may control the conscious life or may be projected outwardly onto others who then hold both our rejected parts and our rejection of them. This inner dragon "guards," or keeps from us, a treasure of wholeness which can only be realized by neutralizing its power. As C. G. Jung writes, "[t]he treasure which the hero fetches from the dark cavern is *life*: it is himself,

new-born from the dark maternal cave of the unconscious. . ." (Jung 1990, p. 374).

Slaying of this dragon constitutes making the unconscious parts of the ego conscious. Jung continues, "[t]he hero who clings to the mother is the dragon, and when he is reborn from the mother he becomes the conqueror of the dragon. . .[he] represents the positive, favorable action of the unconscious, while the dragon is its negative and unfavorable action-not birth, but a devouring; not a beneficial and constructive deed, but greedy retention and destruction" (Jung 1990, pp. 374–375).

The process of individuation, or achieving psychological wholeness, is not unlike the hero's journey. As Joseph Campbell describes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation-initiation-return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. Prometheus ascended to the heavens, stole fire from the gods, and descended. Jason sailed through the Clashing Rocks into a sea of marvels, circumvented the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece, and returned with the fleece and the power to wrest his rightful throne from a usurper (Campbell 2008, p. 23).

This formula is observed in myths and legends of the ancient past. It is seen in more contemporary retellings of hero journeys, such as *The Hobbit*, in which Bilbo Baggins descends into the dragon Smaug's lair and retrieves a treasured drinking cup. J. R. R. Tolkien subtitled his contemporary myth, *There and Back Again* (Tolkien 1984). Dr. Franz Winkler writes, each of us "has a dragon in his subconscious mind, which he must overcome lest he fall victim to the forces of darkness within" (Winkler 1974, p. 44). The inner voyage taken in depth psychology or spiritual direction, a descent away from a "false, exterior self," leading to the discovery of a "true, interior self," can be a treacherous night sea journey or *nekiya* wherein one or more dragons are confronted and conquered before coming "back again." As Jean Shinoda Bolen states:

The dragon fight can be with an addiction, regression, depression, or aggression, or any destructive complex in the psyche that keeps a person from

growing. The dragon fight can also be enacted with real people who are in intimidating, devouring, or abusive...Some inner dragons must be fought because we are already in their grip, some stand in our way and prevent us from growing, and others lash out through us at others. Even when the dragon seems to be a real person or a chemical addiction, it is the susceptibility to be overcome by this kind of person or substance that makes it dangerous (Bolen 1999, p. 115).

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Culture Heroes](#)
- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Dreams

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Up until the time of Aristotle, dreams were divine – messengers from the gods or spirit world with the power of prophecy or healing. Priests or shamans were the intermediaries for these messengers, and in ancient Greece a network of temples, dedicated to the half God Aesculapius were popular sites for dream healing. Aristotle declared that dreams were not from the gods and were not prophetic but leftover sensory impressions from waking life.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, dreams were not only mortal but crazy as well. Freud published his *Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900 not only to distance dreams from the divine but also to rescue them from insanity. Dreams had meaning, and he demonstrated how the meaning was disguised. Freud was a product of classical science with its reductionism and determinism, and his dream work follows that tradition, one that, had no place for the mystical or the divine. His was a one-person model with forces both outside and inside creating dreams. As the twentieth century progressed, classical science was challenged by new physics and its theories of relativity and quantum mechanics, which challenged the old.

Jung analyzed the dreams of the physicist Wolfgang Pauli and found the new physics more compatible with his mystical inclinations. His theory that dreams were a compensation for an unbalanced conscious position coming from the collective unconscious was like the quantum concept of a particle emerging from the sea of infinite potential. The collective made Freud's one-person dream model into a group phenomenon.

The group phenomenon has been utilized by Montague Ullman in dream sharing. In a group

the dream is not interpreted as in Freudian or Jungian therapy, but responded to as if it were the dream of each respondent. Thus the dream is truly no longer a one-person experience but communal.

## See Also

- ▶ [Divination](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Dreams and Religion

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Does divinity appears in dreams? To answer this we must broaden our conceptions of “divinity,” and the scope of the term “dream.”

At the age of 31, I was wrestling with my soul’s desire to fly, to reach for a higher realm and find my authentic self, symbolized by flying. This urge appeared in several dreams, along with images of the opposite: fear of falling/failing. In one dream:

Finally I went to the center of my being, through a pool into two underground levels to a bird, still walking in its placenta, having not left this place. Then I saw the top pool drain, leaving a central hole and the problem of self-discovery. Very rich, warm, friendly dream.

At the center of my being, under the surface, was a bird, still in its placenta, but walking,

ready to be born. I knew that was in the center of my personal being, a piece of what Plato and others call “being” itself or ultimate reality: “*true being dwells, without color or shape . . . the soul’s pilot*” (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247c). This is the mysterious depth of existence itself, the vast power behind the anthropomorphic God the Father, and Son, or Goddess the Mother and daughter. We need these personified images to feel this overwhelming power, but they are just earthly fragments that we make into “religions” while dimly sensing that being is all much more extensive. And Being is the soul’s pilot.

Psychologically, Carl Jung called dream images such as my bird in a placenta the Self, the image of divinity within. This image can take any form; he saw a sphere sparkling with lighting, a peaceful pool glowing with aqua light, and a circle mandala. Such a Self image is mysterious because earthly birds hatch in shells, not placentas. But both are wonders of earthly birth from a greater power. The placenta bird presents my archetypal drive to fly higher, like an eagle, and float amid the presence of Being to access my self-discovery. It needed only to be born, to fly, to take in a dream to my consciousness new guidance and courage for self-discovery – the power of the dream to bring my soul the psycho-spiritual energy it needs. It transformed me, and I am thankful for it.

The appearance of such broadly “religious” images and themes in dreams is ancient and widespread. But alien to ego, they are often surprising, requiring thoughtful interpretation of symbols. Indigenous peoples commonly saw dreams, especially “Big Dreams,” as communications from the Spirit world that surrounds them. A dead relative or ancestor could easily appear in a dream now seen scratched in code on a rock from the Australian Aborigine “Dreamtime” (Mudrooroo 1994). Dreams rarely portray divinity as a traditional image of an old man in the clouds. Rather, images such as animals, light, stars, and feelings such as hope, angels, cosmic



wonder, and spiritual peace are more common, even when conscious events seem hopeless. Dreams, sparkling and flying with surprises, baffle ordinary consciousness, sometimes bizarre or frightening, often psychologically transformative, occasionally magnificent.

## Interpretation

Critics will ask: but are dreams even meaningful? Dreams are studied in many ways, from the highly conscious neurological idea of meaningless “random neuron firings” to emotionally moving and transformative symbolic personal, collective, and religious meanings in depth psychology. Today, the influence of highly rational ego consciousness as the path of verifying “truth” produces meaningless or superficial “subjective” results about dreams. Ironically, Descartes, who firmed up the subject/object dichotomy, rejected the meaningfulness of dreams, even though his inspiration came from a dream. This expresses the rationalist attempt to deny the deep sources of dreamy feelings that lie under their own consciousness, as in the utopian fantasies behind technologies (Bailey 2005).

Sigmund Freud, although rooted in nineteenth-century materialism, opened the way for modern dream interpretation. He showed the meaningfulness of dreams and their healing power. He cracked open the dominant surface rationalism, descended into unconscious psyche, and focused on the Oedipal myth as his central theme – a son/daughter competes with father/mother for their love and feels guilty about incestual fantasies. He saw many dreams as wish fulfillments. Freud rejected religion as an infantile illusion rooted in a father complex. He helped deconstruct the Victorian era’s repression of sexuality, which of course triggered outraged reactions but eventually led to twentieth-century sexual liberation. Psychic transformation with openness to deep, meaningful imagery often accompanies sexual openness.

Carl Jung welcomed Freud’s opening up unconscious dynamics but rejected his narrow

focus on sexuality. He saw sexuality as just one of a vast number of archetypal complexes in dreams – shadows, lovers, prophets, and divinity. His astonishing *Red Book* shows the power of the unconscious psyche behind thinking. It also shows the numerous images that can convey sacredness. This book was the unconscious root of his influential archetypal psychology. Although as a psychologist he said he was not doing theology when discussing God images, in his early private *Red Book* he said: “I daily weigh up my whole life and continue to regard the fiery brilliance of the God as a higher and fuller life than the ashes of rationality” (Jung 2009, p. 339). Later the leading archetypal psychologist James Hillman pressed Jung’s thought further, pointing to the importance of polytheism and the need to expand psychology to include the environment.

## Dream Scope

In the 1860s the German chemist Friedrich Kekulé had a daydream of a snake holding its own tail in a circle (*Ouroboros*) that gave him the insight for his successful model of the important benzene ring (von Stradonitz). This not only shows how dreams can affect the material world but it raises the question of the scope of dreams: must only night dreams be considered? How are dreams related to waking life? The answers are many. The ancient Greeks spoke of “night visions” and “waking visions.” Jung used “active imagination.” Many today reject the idea that the unconscious appears only during sleep, thus theoretically leaving waking consciousness as a purely rational state. Rather, imaginative, dreamy visions occur on a broad spectrum with a fuzzy border, including consciousness, appearing as easily accessible feelings such as enchantment, trance, empathy, and intuition. Near-death experiences are well-researched intermediate states that also disclose religious themes (Bailey and Yates 1996). Dreamy visions can occur in altered states, waking visions, or twilight consciousness, as Kekulé’s daydream shows.

## Dreams and Reality

Mysterious and actually healing light suggests divine influence in dream visions. A woman told me that in her twenties in Central America,

she was dying – hemorrhaging dangerously one night, shivering cold, when a numinous shaft of light from above, which only she could see, thrust down into her body and filled it with light. She immediately recovered.

Dream visions can heal. Such encounters with the soul and being can bring out intuitive perceptions of various degrees of reality – hidden psychological patterns such as self-discovery, widespread archetypal themes such as flying, intuitive glimpses of life patterns, and physical changes, such as healing. These breakthroughs often happen in times of a crisis that overthrows rational self-control.

## Native Americans

The Native American Vision Quest is one of many dreamlike experiences among Indigenous peoples worldwide. Sometimes it is sought ritually, sometimes it comes unasked. Black Elk (1863–1950) was a Lakota Sioux whose people lived around the Black Hills. As a 15-year-old boy he fell sick.

He was carried up to the clouds, where thunder beings flashed. Then the boy saw horses with lightning manes and thunder in their nostrils, dancing all around. He was led to a teepee with a “rainbow entrance,” where he saw six Grandfathers, who looked older than men can be – “old like hills, like stars.” He shook with fear, since he realized that they were not old men, but “The Powers of the World.” These awesome Grandfathers each taught him Powers that he would need as a shaman or holy man (*wichasha wakon*). They gave him the Power of the Thunder Beings, who would take him high to the Center of the World so he could “See.” They gave him the power to make live, to grow, and to understand his relatives in nature and the stars. He saw himself grow into a Grandfather. After he returned to this world, each morning he rose before dawn so he could commune with the Morning Star.

He transformed his vision into a ritual to teach his people the Sacred Way that he had seen and healed many (Neihardt, Ch. 3).

## Judaism

In the Jewish *Torah*, Jacob had a dream important to Hebrew theology. After leaving home he put a stone under his head to sleep:

And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending on it! And behold, the Lord stood above it and said “I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your descendants . . . And [Jacob] was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! . . . this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:11–17).

The Hebrew God (*Yahweh*) often spoke to humans in dreams and visions like this, such as Moses’ vision of the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:2).

## Greece

The ancient Greek word for a revelation received in a dream was *oneiraiteton*. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, grieving Penelope, worried about Odysseus and their son Telemachus, was sent a dream by the goddess Athena:

The dream figure went into the bedchamber. . . and came and stood above her head and spoke a word to her: ‘Penelope, are you sleeping so sorrowful in the inward heart? But the gods who live at their ease do not suffer you to weep and to be troubled, since your son will have his homecoming even yet, since he has done no wrong in the gods’ sight’ (Homer, IV, pp. 801–807).

In her *Dreams in Late Antiquity*, Patricia Cox Miller analyzes several important issues and cases, such as in Plato, who said:

No man achieves true and inspired divination when in his rational mind, but only when the power of his intelligence is fettered in sleep or when it is distraught by disease or by reason of some divine inspiration (Plato, *Timaeus*, 71E).

## Christianity

Among early Christians, Tertullian observed that *most people get their knowledge of God from dreams* (Tertullian 1947, 47.2, p. 65). During Tertullian's life the Roman woman Vibia Perpetua in March 203 CE in Carthage was a 22-year-old Christian martyr, married, nursing an infant, and imprisoned for refusal to renounce her strong faith and burn incense to Roman gods.

In a dream she saw a bronze ladder reaching to heaven. On its sides were fixed weapons of destruction. She stepped on a serpent/dragon/Devil's head. As she climbed she saw a garden below with a white-haired man milking, who said "You are welcome, child." He gave her some delicious cheese (Miller, 152). This seemed to prepare her for her coming suffering, affirm of her courage, and promise that God will feed her soul.

When Perpetua was actually sent into the arena, she sang Psalms ecstatically. Then she was knocked over by an angry cow, then stabbed with a sword (Von Franz 1980, p. 14).

In her *The Passion of Perpetua*, Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz noted the parallel between Perpetua's bronze ladder and Jacob's ladder to heaven and its symbolism of attaining a higher consciousness (Von Franz 1980, p. 16). She saw the old shepherd as the divine Self and milk as spiritual teaching (Von Franz 1980, pp. 30–33). Like Christ, Perpetua had the courage and faith to endure suffering and death with the promise of eternal life.

## Islam

Muhammed was an unlettered man who went to a cave for meditation on Mount Hira, Arabia (610 CE). One night he was aware of the majestic presence of the angel Gabriel, saying "*Iqra!*" ("Recite!"). Muhammed was petrified, but the numinous power before him was compelling. He woke up and remembered the message written in his heart. He saw Gabriel spanning the horizon, saying: "*You are the apostle of God.*" For 22 years Muhammed continued to receive such revelations, as lights, auditory voices, or

a ringing bell. He lifted up Allah, and his revelations became the sacred *Qur'an* (Bulkeley 2008, pp. 193–194).

## India

Kelly Bulkeley, in his *Dreaming in the World's Religions*, concludes that "*Dreaming has always been regarded as a religious phenomenon*" (3) and that it is a primordial source of religious experience (6). In India, although some dreams are seen as demonic or illusory, religious dreams are common.

Once a man went to a Vishnu temple and dreamed that he would have a son who would be the avatar of Vishnu himself. The man's son became Sri Ramakrishna, a highly revered mystic with a large following (Bulkeley 2008, p. 41).

## China

Royal Chinese courts such as the Zhou dynasty (from c. 1100 BCE) relied on dream interpretation for political decisions by experts called *Tai Pu* and (usually women) *wu* (Bulkeley 2008, pp. 54–55). Kings were expected to follow the interpretation of dreams as the will of the Mandate of Heaven and the ancestors (Bulkeley 2008, p. 56). Confucius' dreams emphasized themes such as how the harmony of the state followed from the virtue of the ruler (Bulkeley 2008, pp. 61–62). The more mystical, paradoxical Daoists stressed individual self-awareness and the mysterious interplay of waking and sleeping consciousness:

Long ago, a certain Zhuang Zi dreamed he was a butterfly . . . happy and carefree. . . . Then all of a sudden he woke up to find that he was, beyond all doubt, Zhuang Zi. Who knows if it was Zhuang Zi dreaming a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming Zhuang Zi? (Bulkeley 2008, p. 64).

This text raises the fascinating ontological question of dreaming: what is reality?

The conscious, logical ego deals with the physical world. But ego had no adequate reason to deny that a broader reality is revealed in dreams, symbolic as they may be.

## Buddhism

The Buddha saw dreams as potentially beneficial to Enlightenment, but no more than the highly refined mental state of meditation. One Chinese Buddhist painter, Kwan Hiu, combined meditation, visualization, and dreaming to create his art, saying “*I paint what I see in my dreams*” (Bulkeley 2008, pp. 93–94). Early Buddhist traditions saw dreams as authentic ways of communicating with the divine. A Japanese Buddhist Lady Sarashina had a “Big” dream.

Through the mist in a garden she saw the Amita Buddha. He glowed with golden light and was invisible to all but her. She was impressed but frightened. He said, “I shall leave now, but later I shall return to fetch you.” That dream gave her hope for salvation (Bulkeley 2008, pp. 95–96).

The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a powerful Buddhist text to be read to the dying in their dreamy, visionary in-between state (*Bardo*) of consciousness and to meditatively prepare any reader for death in the colorful Tantric Tibetan tradition. It absorbs the pre-Buddhist Indigenous Bon religion, full of demons and deities, and reframes it into a Buddhist world. Here the first thing a dying person can expect to see in their visionary state is the blazing luminosity or *Dharmakaya*, the essence, the isness of existence, and the body of truth or law. If, thanks to their education and meditative awakening to the Buddha mind, the dying one recognizes this as the Buddhist ultimate reality, he or she is freed from reincarnation to merge with the Light of Nirvana. If one fails to recognize this truth, he/she moves on to a series of dramatic psychic images or projections of colorful demons and deities. Here the opportunity to recognize the *Dharmakaya* and be liberated is repeatedly available. But if there is no recognition, one passes on to the next stage. First one sees the Bardo of the reassuring Peaceful Deities, then the Bardo of the horrifying Wrathful Deities, then the resigned Bardo of Becoming, or reincarnation, from higher to lower earthly beings, depending upon one’s life and awakens (Fremantle and Trungpa 1975).

Dreams and dreamlike states or visions glowing with divine power are common

experiences with powerful images that can heal the body and soul, prepare for death, and provide guidance and meaning. They can be life changing and culture changing. Today interpretive methods are still being explored by scholars such as Wendy O’Flaherty and Morton Kelsey and psychotherapists, notably Jungians. Kelly Bulkeley is engaging in dialogues with contemporary neuroscientists to find common ground for understanding dreams (Bulkeley 2005).

## See Also

- ▶ Altered States of Consciousness
- ▶ Amita Buddha
- ▶ Amplification
- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Black Elk
- ▶ Buddha-Nature
- ▶ Chinese Religions
- ▶ Dreams
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ God Image in Dreams
- ▶ Hermeneutics
- ▶ Hillman, James
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Myths and Dreams
- ▶ Oedipus Complex
- ▶ Symbol
- ▶ Ulanov, Ann Belford
- ▶ Vision Quest
- ▶ Von Franz, Marie-Louise

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## Dreams in the Old Testament

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All in all there are about a dozen dreams in the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament (of the dreams in the New Testament, five, in Matthew, pertain to divine guidance of the Holy Family; in Acts 2:17, Peter quotes Joel 3:1, and in Matt. 27:19, Pilate's wife shares with her husband a frightening dream and tells him to spare Jesus). However, what exactly constitutes a dream may be hard to tell. The distinction between dream and vision is not always apparent.

Besides Jacob's well-known dream of the ladder, we find the main elaboration on dreams

in the book of Daniel, with Nebuchadnezzar's two dreams, and particularly in Genesis, with Joseph's dreams and interpretations.

The attitude towards dreams in the Bible is ambiguous. While Daniel and Joseph are celebrated dream interpreters, in other instances warnings are voiced against the deceit and falsehood of dreams. In Jeremiah, God ridicules and warns, "I have heard what the prophets said, who prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed" (Jeremiah 23: 25), a warning repeated in other instances as well, for example, in Zechariah, "For the family idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and the dreams have told falsehoods; they give empty comfort" (Zechariah 10: 2).

In spite of the relatively few dreams in the Bible, and the warning against dreams as possibly deceitful, their absence may be a bad omen. This is the case with Saul, the first of the Hebrew Kings, who in despair before the battle in which his three sons are killed and he commits suicide, cries out, "God has departed from me, and answers me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams" (1 Sam. 28: 15). Saul had expelled the sorcerers from the country and was now cut off from the mediums, the channels of unconscious and transcendent communication with him.

Two kinds of dreams can be distinguished in the Bible, those which sound a command, message, or guidance of the Divine Voice, as with Abram and Abimelech, and the more symbolic dream, as we find with Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar.

### Abram's Vision

In Genesis 15: 1 Abram, prior to God's changing his name to Abraham, has a nightly vision, which opens in a rather typical way for divine messages to prophets: "the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision." Abram is bewildered, but God tells him, "Fear not, I am your shield, and your reward will be great." God then brings Abram out in the night and tells him to look toward heaven and count the stars, promising a large offspring.

While in the Bible this is called a vision, some authors believe it to be a dream theophany, i.e., the visible, embodied appearance of God in a dream (Bar 2001, p. 148 f.). After the sun has set, Abram makes a sacrifice and falls into a deep sleep. God then makes his first covenant with him. This is the first biblical instance of dream incubation.

### The Dream of Abimelech

The first reference in the Bible of a dream concerns King Abimelech. Abraham and Sarah had journeyed to the Negev, and Abimelech, king of Gerar, had sent for Sarah and “taken her,” believing her to be Abraham’s sister. “But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, you are but a dead man, because of the woman whom you have taken; for she is a man’s wife” (Gen. 20: 3). The king declared his innocence, not having been aware that Sarah was Abraham’s wife and, furthermore, he did not sleep with her. While still in the dream, God answers Abimelech, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart; for I also kept you from sinning against me; therefore I did not let you touch her” (Gen. 20: 6).

Abimelech listened carefully to what he was told in the dream and sent Sarah back to her (half) brother and husband, inviting them to live in the land. He was consequently rewarded with the renewal of life; the wombs of his house that previously had been closed up were now opened, and his wife and maidservants became pregnant.

### Jacob’s Ladder

The Bible’s perhaps most well-known dream is Jacob’s dream of the ladder (Gen. 28: 12). Jacob had set out on a journey to his maternal uncle Laban in Padan Aram. When night arrived he lay down to sleep and dreamed of angels ascending and descending a ladder that reached to heaven. Above the ladder stood God, promising to protect Jacob and to bring him back

safely. When he woke up, he decided to call the place Beth-El, the House of God.

The dream ladder may be a metaphor for the connection between heaven and earth, divine and human, or, within man’s psyche, the connection between the personal ego on firm ground and the sense of divine presence in man’s soul, the god-image, or the Self. The angels, as messengers and intermediaries, wander this vertical axis. In fact, ladder (*sulam*) is a *hapax legomenon*, appearing only once in the Bible, possibly originating in the Accadian word *simmiltu*, stairway, believed to be used by the gods to travel between different realms; at the top of the stairway was the entrance gate to the dwelling of the gods.

Jung referred to the theme of the ladder as pointing to “the process of psychic transformation, with all its ups and downs” (Jung CW 12, 1968, para. 80). Later, Jacob has another dream, in which he is told by an angel to return to his native Canaan.

### Solomon’s Dream of Wisdom

When inheriting the throne, King Solomon sets off to the sanctuary at Gibeon, northwest of Jerusalem. He presented burnt offerings and went to sleep to incubate at the sacred precinct, whereupon he dreamed a dream in which God appeared to him (1 Kings 3: 5 ff.). With Abram’s vision, this is the Bible’s most prominent case of dream incubation. In his dream, Solomon asked God to give him “an understanding heart to judge your people, that I may discern between good and bad.” It is worthwhile to notice that the Hebrew says “a hearing heart;” the root of the word “hearing” [sh-m-a] is also the root of the word “meaning.” That is, he asked for wisdom, and the wisdom of judgment, which he was granted. Immediately upon his return from Gibeon to Jerusalem, Solomon is asked to decide who of the two harlots is the mother of the living child, and whose is the child that has died. He judged wisely that the one willing to forfeit the child rather than have it slain by the king’s sword is the mother.



## Nebuchadnezzar's Troubled Dreams

Four centuries after Solomon built the Temple, the one hand of Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt the city and the civilization of Babylon, while with his other hand he destroyed the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem. He told his magicians, "I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled," and demanded they interpret his dream, without even telling it to them. Unable to do so, Daniel was called upon, and in a vision of the night God revealed the mystery of the dream to him. Daniel explicated the king's dream, in which he saw:

A bright, awesome statue, head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet of iron and of clay. And then, a stone was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue and the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces and became like the worthless straw on a threshing floor in summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the stone that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2: 31 ff.).

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom, his power, his strength, and his glory came from God. "You are the head of gold," he said. Then there will arise a kingdom of silver, inferior to yours, and yet another one of bronze, which will rule over all the earth, Daniel tells the king. A fourth kingdom, as strong as iron – strong, oppressive, crushing, and shattering, however "partly clay and partly iron, it will be divided" – powerful, yet frail, would then arise. At the end, the eternal, indestructible kingdom of heaven will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, Daniel tells the king.

Daniel interpreted the four metals of the statue as four successive kingdoms. Nonpsychological interpreters have seen it as a dream that links the history of worldly empires, and it has thus been perceived as a prediction of the historical succession from the kingdom of Babylon to Medo-Persia and Greece, and on to Rome, from where the Kingdom of God would rise again.

Other scholars have compared the dream to Hesiod's stages in the moral decline of mankind. Psychologically, it may reflect the relentless process of increasing functionality, an increasingly

strong ego, until the ego swells and is overcome by the transcendent, as represented by the stone "cut not by human hands."

However, Nebuchadnezzar remains arrogant; a "classic case of megalomania," writes Jung (CW 8, para. 163). His second dream, in which the tree in the midst of the earth, reaching to heaven, is cut down and the king turned into a mad beast for seven years, may be considered as compensatory to this inflated condition.

## Joseph, the Dream Interpreter

The dreams of Joseph, the butler and the baker, and then Pharaoh, constitute the Bible's most prominent dream series. There are three sets of two dreams each. Joseph's second dream essentially repeats his first, and Pharaoh's dreams are identical to each other.

The doubling of dreams indicates the vital meaning ascribed to them, "that the matter is established by God" (Gen. 41: 32). While the dreams of the butler and the baker are similar and dreamed the same night, they are interpreted by Joseph as predicting their opposing destinies.

Joseph told his brothers that in his dream, their sheaves gathered around his and bowed down to it, and in his second dream, the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. He thus further aggravated his already angry brothers. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, these dreams have been considered as a narcissistic manifestation of Joseph. Standing in the center of the earth's harvest and of heavenly counsel may then be understood as compensatory to his feeling of being rejected by his brothers.

The second set of dreams is those of his fellow prisoners in Egypt, Pharaoh's butler, and baker. The butler dreamed that he gives Pharaoh to drink from the grapes that he pressed from a three-branched vine. Joseph told him this means he will be restored within three days to his former rank. From the position of Pharaoh, which means "the great house" and has been referred to as a metaphor for the ego, whose spirit we are told is troubled (Gen. 41: 8), it may indicate a renewal of the flow of wine, a necessary rejuvenation of

spirit and consciousness. The positive interpretation of the dream makes the baker come forth, as well, to ask Joseph to interpret his dream as well.

In the baker's dream, the food for Pharaoh in the uppermost of the three baskets on his head is eaten by the birds. This time Joseph's interpretation is less agreeable, "The three baskets are three days; And within three days shall Pharaoh lift up your head off you, and shall hang you on a tree; and the birds shall eat your flesh off you" (Gen. 40: 18f). That is, in contrast to the flow of wine and the symbolism thereof, the produce of the earth will not reach the great house of Pharaoh.

Then, the meeting of the two protagonists – the Egyptian King who does not yet realize his kingdom is threatened by famine, and the Canaanite hero whose rise into royalty came to be followed by his people's fall into slavery – becomes the lysis of the dramatic series of dreams.

In his dream, Pharaoh saw seven thin and ugly cows come out of the river and consume the fat ones, without getting fatter, and seven thin and damaged ears spring up and replace the seven good ones. Prosperity is replaced by famine, like autonomous complexes may drain the ego of its resources (cf. Shalit 2002, p. 68 ff.). However, a conscious attitude may enable taking necessary precautions, as suggested by Joseph, who is appointed viceroy to prepare the land for the years of famine. Psychologically, an ego that attends to the manifestations of the soul by listening to dreams can apply conscious means of coping.

The name Joseph means "the added one." Besides interpreting Pharaoh's prospective dream, he added wise counsel. Pharaoh renamed him *Zaphnath-Paaneah*, understood to mean "through him the Living God speaks" or, psychologically, through him the voice of the self speaks. Literally, the name means the one, who "deciphers the encrypted message," thus acknowledging Joseph's gift of dream interpretation.

In summary, dreams are sometimes considered false and misleading (e.g., Jeremiah and Zechariah) in the Hebrew Scriptures; at other times they describe the vertical axis between man

and divinity (or ego and self; Jacob's ladder, or the statue and the tree of Nebuchadnezzar); sometimes Biblical dreams are divine visions, and sometimes they predict a person's fate or serve as spiritual guidance.

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Dreams
- ▶ God Image in Dreams
- ▶ Myths and Dreams
- ▶ Theophany
- ▶ Visions
- ▶ Wisdom

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## Drewermann, Eugen

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The primary function of religion is to be therapeutic. This thesis lies at the heart of the influential work of German psychoanalyst, theologian, and philosopher Eugen Drewermann. Widely read around the globe since the 1980s, he aims to free religion from its anxiety- and violence-producing projections and to interpret the rich symbolism of religions in ways that promote healing and wholeness for individuals and communities. Author of more than 80 volumes

revamping theology in particular and religious studies in general in light of psychological, neurological, ethological, sociocultural, and natural science research, Drewermann radically challenges the implicit and explicit use of traditional conceptions of God by religious, political, and economic authorities to justify psychospiritual suffering and sociocultural forms of violence. He argues that religion needs psychological mediation to free it from literalistic rigidity and objectifying coercion and that psychology, in turn, needs religion in order to safeguard the human person against behavioral, sociocultural, genetic, economic, and other forms of reductionism, dissolution, and exploitation.

Four basic interrelated ideas of Drewermann's work will be highlighted in this entry: first, that the purpose of religion is to calm uniquely human forms of anxiety and that the measure of healthy religion depends on whether it increases or calms human anxiety; second, that a hermeneutics of religious texts and experiences is needed which pays equal attention to the evolutionary roots of religious symbols and to the vicissitudes of the subjective, historical human experience of self-reflection; third, that healthy religion is essential to a resolution of the human propensity to inflict psychological and physical violence; and, fourth, an exploration of the emergence of the notion of God as a person and its relation to the emergence of the human experience of personhood.

Born June 20, 1940, in Bergkamen, then a mining town in the Ruhr area of Germany, to a nominally Lutheran father working as a mining official and a devout Roman Catholic mother working as a homemaker, Drewermann was the youngest of three siblings and exposed to lasting impressions of allied air strikes that destroyed most of his hometown in the final years of World War II. Ordained as a Catholic priest in 1966, he soon found himself confronted as a diocesan priest in a German spa town with congregants suffering from psychosomatic illnesses and ethical dilemmas for which seminary training had ill-prepared him. Thus motivated to enter psychoanalytic training at the Göttingen Psychoanalytic Institute, Drewermann's psychotherapeutic work confirmed the inadequacy of what he called

a superego-oriented form of religion (Drewermann 1989) and argued for a religion oriented around the person-based experience of the I (*Ich*) or self. Simultaneously he began doctoral studies in theology at the University of Paderborn and philosophy at the University of Münster, earning a doctorate in systematic theology in 1976 with a dense three volume interdisciplinary study of Gen. 2–11 (1977–1978). Upon *habilitation*, Drewermann taught as *Privatdozent* for systematic theology at the Catholic Seminary of the University of Paderborn while continuing to work as a priest.

Integrating exegetical, psychoanalytic, cultural-anthropological, ethological, philosophical, and systematic-theological methods, the multivolume works *Strukturen des Bösen* (1977–1978) and *Tiefenpsychologie und Exegese* (1984–1985) provide the methodological foundation for Drewermann's prodigious output of commentaries and interpretations of biblical texts and pieces of world literature are the following: more than two dozen volumes of depth psychological commentaries on biblical texts, including each of the four gospels (1987–1988, 1992–1995, 2003, 2008–2009), the book of Acts (2011), the Luke infancy stories (1986, Engl.: 1994a), texts for Advent and Christmas (1990, Engl.: 1991c) and Lent and Easter (1991a, Engl.: 1994b), and most books of the Hebrew Scriptures (1994c, 1998c, 1999b, 1999c, 2000b); popular depth psychological interpretations of two dozen of Grimm's fairy tales (1981–2007), Anderson's "Little Mermaid" (1997), and the Indian myth Milomaki (1991b); a historical novel on Giordano Bruno (1992), the Renaissance philosopher burned at the stake by the Inquisition; and interpretations of pieces of world literature such as Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1984, Engl.: 1993b), Hermann Hesse's writings (1995), Dostoevsky's writings (1998a), Goethe's *Fairy Tale* (2000a), and Melville's *Moby Dick* (2004). His most recent series of volumes on the question of God in light of neurological (2006a, 2007), anthropological (1998b), biological (1999a), and cosmological (2002) research have made him a public focal point of the science and religion debate in Europe. A prolific author gifted with the memory of

a genius and the oratory skills of a Cicero, Drewermann is frequently featured on German-speaking TV and radio talk shows and presents some hundred lectures annually while continuing his clinical practice.

Turning to the first basic idea, Drewermann's synthesis of psychology and religion centers around the function of religion to calm uniquely human forms of anxiety. He distinguishes broadly three basic dimensions of human anxiety: the biological fear of death, the psychological/social fear of separation and insignificance, and the existential fear of nonbeing. In the face of the inevitability of death, existential anxiety raises biological and psychological/social anxieties through the self-reflective capacity of the mind to uniquely human absolute levels, as described by existential philosophers or psychologists from Kierkegaard and Sartre to Boss, Laing, May, or Becker. The human capacity for self-reflection consciously or unconsciously opens the abyss of nothingness to the personal ego, stirring absolute levels of anxiety the ego forever seeks to calm. Such anxiety often remains unconscious and may then manifest itself in character structures as petrified anxiety which, on the outside, seem socially adaptive to the group, e.g., the routinely obedient fulfillment of the duty of a soldier in World War II moving prisoners to concentration camps or of another soldier to engage in carpet bombing while calmly drinking a cup of coffee in the cockpit of his bomber plane. Since the abyss of nothingness is absolute and, Drewermann maintains in contrast to other existential writers such as Sartre, Camus, or Becker, can never be bridged by anything less than absolute, all attempts to bridge it with anything less than absolute, such as temporal achievement, relative cultural symbols, allegiance to institutions or leaders including religious ones, or clinging to self and others, inevitably fail to calm and, often, inadvertently increase absolute anxiety. Based on this analysis, Drewermann argues that interpretations of religious texts, doctrines, and experiences need to be guided by attention to the basic interpersonal alternative between anxiety and trust. In this context, he has developed diagnostic formulations of key theological dynamics in the experience of

depression, hysteria, obsessive compulsion, and schizophrenia (Drewermann 1982–1984, 1993a) and has provided a far-reaching critique of an alternative to the de facto voluntaristic bias in dominant conceptions of ethics in both Roman Catholic and Protestant notions of moral agency (Drewermann 1982–1984, 2001, 2006b, 2012a, b).

Drewermann's work is best known for his analysis of unhealthy forms of religion which led to his being officially silenced by the Roman Catholic church at the behest of then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, who wrote with alarm in a 1986 letter to the local archbishop that Drewermann's work had caused "grave concern" in the Vatican and instructed the bishop to take all "necessary measures" (Beier 2004, p. 17). Informed psychologically by Freud, Jung, Reik, Fromm, Kohut, Klein, Boss, Laing, Stern, and others, Drewermann expounds through interdisciplinary analysis dynamics that turn religious doctrines, beliefs, and institutions into the opposite of their original function: from calming anxiety and sublimating aggression to being the source of anxiety and violence, thus paradoxically blocking the way to a solution of both (Drewermann 1989, 1993a). "A reactive atheism due to disappointment" (Drewermann 1999a, p. 737, 2007, p. 425) is the inevitable and even necessary response to this poisoning of religion by fear. When Drewermann added to his depth psychological hermeneutic of religious texts an analysis of the Vatican's clergy ideal as practically requiring the sacrifice of the clergy's own personhood through complete identification with the office and called for radical therapeutic reforms of clergy training in his most controversial book, *Kleriker* (1989), he was, despite massive protests throughout Europe reminiscent of the Küng affair, stripped in 1991 of his license to teach Catholic theology and suspended in 1992 from his priestly duties. In the wake of a reunified Germany, Drewermann emerged as a cultural icon for a democratic and nondogmatic form of religion and has since been regarded in the public's eye as a "new Martin Luther" (*Time International*, August 24, 1992). Drewermann left the Roman Catholic Church on the day of his 65 birthday in June 2005.

The second aspect of Drewermann's work addresses the nature of religious symbolism and its relation to historical reality and truth claims. Historical criticism, comparative religious studies, psychoanalytic theory, and recent brain research provide insurmountable evidence that stories collected in sacred texts, for the most part, do not report objective "external" historical facts but rather poetic and narrative retellings of significant "internal" subjective experiences which, Drewermann, attempting to address the imageless Protestant vacuum created by the demythologization of the Bultmann school and dialectical theology, argues, are by no means less historical than physical events but rather more so because they transmit what a powerful experience meant to the people who experienced it or who were touched by it. The story of the virgin birth of Jesus, for instance, aims not to declare Jesus' mother Mary to be biologically a virgin but rather uses a motif resembling Egyptian mythology, where Pharaoh is declared as eternally being born of a virgin and son of God only from the day of his enthronement, to convey that the people who encountered Jesus experienced him as someone whose authority as a person was not born from humans but from God. As such, the symbol of the virgin birth became a democratic symbol expressing the belief that every person receives a place and right to exist in the world directly from God, thus relativizing all oppressive human authority, both internally and socioculturally. In the course of Christian history, however, this mythic symbol turned into the exact opposite when historicized and metaphysicized by Christian institutions as a "belief" to be accepted about the external historical state of Mary's sexuality and thus used to control the private lives of people.

While Drewermann's analysis focuses primarily on Christian symbols and dogmas, it always takes place within the comparative study of religions (Drewermann 2000c). Such study shows that the *content* of key symbols of Christianity, such as virgin birth, cross, resurrection, ascension into heaven, walking on water, or transfiguration is not unique to Christianity but is shared among the world's religions. The uniqueness of Christianity

must be sought not in the content of its symbols but in the *way* those symbols function(ed) to express the process of calming unique human anxiety through an encounter with the person of Jesus who, as evidenced by the signature phrase "Do not be afraid," portrayed God ultimately as the one who can be absolutely trusted and need not be feared. The Christian use of what Freud, Jung, and their varied followers recognized as universal images or archetypes of the psyche and what ethology terms "innate release mechanisms" is decisively therapeutic. The universality of psychic imagery, albeit in sociocultural variations, allows stories from the past to be read as personal stories in the present. Central to Drewermann's thought is that the message of Jesus aimed to heal religion itself from the ambivalent projections into the God image and from the violence so often done in the name of God intrapsychically, interpersonally, and between groups.

This leads to the third key aspect of Drewermann's work: his analysis of the violence of religion and of religious motivations involved in waging war. Following a scathing eco-theological critique of the exploitation of outer and inner nature due to the anthropocentrism of the Judeo-Christian world view (Drewermann 1981) and a radical critique of Christian ideas which inadvertently promote a culture of war (Drewermann 1982; 1991d), Drewermann emerged during the first Gulf War as the most outspoken German antiwar activist. He received the 2007 Erich Fromm Prize for his tireless efforts to fight war and anti-Semitism and to promote peace and social justice. He calls war a disease and sees it as an attempt to solve by material means conflicts that can only be solved by addressing the absolute fears around needs of recognition, existence, and shame that fuel wars and lead to compensatory cultural God-like claims to absolute moral superiority, truth, and power. In war, an abstraction from feelings of empathy takes place, and reason goes mad with fear while creating rationalizations for a supposed necessity to inflict violence in order to fight violence. In addition to the analysis of economic, historical, sociocultural, and political reasons for wars, an analysis of what is spiritually

at stake in violent conflicts is essential. Efforts at peace and social justice so often fail because they are guided by moralistic splitting of the world into absolute good and evil in which the “good” feel justified to use all means possible and thus inevitably come to perpetuate the cycle of violence by trying to solve it through further self-righteous violence. Jesus’ message of peace and Ghandi’s and Martin Luther King’s nonviolent calls for civil disobedience guide Drewermann’s own vision for an active and psychologically convincing form of conflict resolution (Drewermann 1996).

In a postmodern world leaving behind the early Christian councils’ Greco-Roman speculations about the divine cast within a type of thinking in terms of metaphysical being or substance as well as the Thomistic theological pseudo-rationalism, Drewermann argues in light of neurological, biological, and cosmological research that popular conceptions of the soul or spirit as a kind of substance or energy and of Christ as a being or substance ruling from above are no longer tenable (Drewermann 2006a, 2007). Similarly, tempting as it may be, God can no longer be thought of in natural philosophical terms of a principle of explanation for first causes nor for why the world is as it is. Modern sciences, as atheists like Dawkins or Dennett have argued convincingly, do not need the God hypothesis in order to explain anything in the universe. Religion, and specifically belief in God, does not *explain* the world, but rather emerged anthropologically and is needed existential-philosophically to *interpret* the world so that humans do not go mad in the face of the cruelty, indifference, and senseless suffering in nature (Beier 2010). Discussing the alternative approach of Buddhism on how to deal with suffering and nothingness, Drewermann argues based on neurological research on consciousness and self-awareness and on modern infant research conducted by Daniel Stern and others that the conception of the divine as a person is indispensable in a therapeutic form of religion. While Drewermann agrees with the analysis of existential philosophers and psychologists on the radical nature of anxiety, he argues that “ontological insecurity” (Laing) requires a genuinely religious answer in which

religious symbols become catalysts for a calming of existential anxiety in an unconditionally accepting encounter with an absolute person, called God in religions. This experience occurs through the interpersonal human experience of love and then extends to our encounter with the nonhuman world in the form of compassion. It need not necessarily involve God language to occur. Without an absolutely accepting person in the background of the world, all religious symbols remain open to ambivalent uses for purposes of oppression. The idea that God must be imagined as a person is not meant to make an objective statement that can be abstracted from personal, subjective experience. Applying the notion of therapeutic transference developed by Freud and his school (rather than Girard’s notion of mimesis), Drewermann holds that for humans any calming of personal anxiety at the deepest level inevitably occurs by means of the psychic language of the personal dimension. To humans, God becomes most personal in the form of a person. In this sense, the religious is always personal and the personal is always religious. It is religion’s function as a remedy for anxiety that requires humans to conceive of the absolute as an absolutely trustworthy person, God. Only in this context can the Cross, so often interpreted in sado-masochistic ways when conceived projectively as something God did to Jesus or as Jesus sacrificing himself to God for humans, become a symbol for working through human aggression by placing it where the cycle of violence can be broken: onto God who is conceived of as being able to suffer the aggression without feeding the cycle of retaliation and counterviolence. Though God, Drewermann argues with Kant, can never be proven to exist objectively as a person apart from subjective human experience of the divine but is in a way always bound to the projective mechanisms of the human mind and thus remains a postulate, the subjectivity of this experience does not exclude an objective reality corresponding to it, just as all of our experience is by definition subjective in the sense that we are the experiencing subject of it and yet can at the same time correspond to an objective reality beyond our senses. Religion only becomes mere projection in the sense of the



Feuerbachian critique when it is used by external religious or quasi-religious secular institutions to alienate humans from themselves rather than enabling them to truly unfold freely as unique persons in relation to each other. Experience of God, for Drewermann, is by definition poetic, and the attempt to explain the existence of God by objective means would be equal to confusing explanations about hormones with the ecstatic experience of love or explanations about syntax with the rapture experienced at the reading of a poem.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Death Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Fall, The](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Original Sin](#)
- ▶ [Personal God](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)
- ▶ [Vatican](#)
- ▶ [Violence and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Birth](#)

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## Drives

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## Introduction

Freud used the words *instinkt* (instinct) and *treib* (drive) seemingly without organized differentiation. Opposing forces or dualism characterized Freud's thoughts about instinct, in both the nature of the instinct itself and in the source of the force as being of the mind or the body. Freudian instinct differs from strictly biological instinct in the uniquely human consciousness to mentalize the pressure to respond to a sometimes consistent presence of an urge with or without identifiable stimulus. The vast variety of urges to act within the human species, sometimes deemed pathological, might also suggest forces not strictly rooted in the body.

Drive, as used in Freudian psychoanalysis, does not have a distinct role in religious/psychological literature. Religious texts referring to pressure to act generally speak of instinct or inclination, sometimes conceived as divinely implanted.

## Psychoanalysis

Freud conceived the instincts as amoral. The psychological forces taming, transforming, or renouncing the instinctual drives are (1) the death of the totem father, causing the internalization of the taboo against incest (Freud 1913/1962), and, more important, (2) the super ego. These forces of civilization might be viewed as more psychically determined drive within a dualistic framework as they are value-laden. Freud, however, considered the prohibition against incest to be phylogenetically determined, pre-dating the domestication of animals.

## Commentary

Kernberg (1992) summarized the differences of the terms: instinct is a biological force, and drive is a psychically determined force of human nature. The differences only exist in a schema wherein the mind and body are clearly separate. The instincts are proactive and reactive to the demands of the life and death of the body. The drives appear to take on a life of their own, related to the demands of psychical life and death (Kernberg 1992; LaPlanche and Pontalis 1973). The distinction between instinct and drive appears to be of interest to psychoanalytic theorists and, even in those circles, an arcane interest.

The concept of a frontier, an in-between state, is present throughout Freud's lifelong writings. He poetically positioned instinct as residing on the frontier between body and mind (Freud 1905). The great dualist struggled with his dualism, and the forces, on the frontier between mind and body, driving towards unity and destruction.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dualism](#)
- ▶ [Instinct](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)

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## Dualism

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### Dualism Across the Domains

“Dualism” (from the Latin *dualis*, meaning “containing two”) refers to a philosophical system or set of beliefs in which existence is believed to consist of two equally real and essential substances (such as mind and matter) and/or categories (such as being and nonbeing, good and bad, subject and object). Dualism contrasts with *monism*, the theory that existence ultimately consists of only one thing or essence, and also with *pluralism*, the belief that existence is made up of many things or essences (Ajaya 1983; Gordon 2005).

Although the term can be applied to much earlier philosophical and religious traditions, “dualism” as an ontological designation was first used in 1700 by the philosopher Thomas Hyde as a means of describing religious systems that conceive of God and the Devil as coeternal (and therefore equal) principles. The term was later introduced into philosophical discourse by the German Idealist Christian Wolff as a way of categorizing philosophical systems that conceive of mind and matter as distinct and irreducible substances. Rene Descartes further separated mind and body within what came to be known as “Cartesian dualism.” After this, the term “dualism” as a philosophical concept became most frequently applied to issues surrounding the “mind-body problem” – a philosophical conundrum that considers how the seemingly distinct substances of the

immaterial mind and the material body causally interact (Gordon 2005; Stoyanov 2000).

While in Western philosophical dualism the fundamental debate centers on the primacy of mind versus body, when applied to the field of religious studies, “dualism” is most widely used in regard to belief systems that either conceive of two supreme and opposing principles such as “God” and “Devil” or those that create a sharp distinction between the “profane” (the world of day-to-day physical existence) and the “sacred” (an intangible, transcendent, and – in some cases – more “true” or “essential” reality). The Western world’s study of the human psyche has likewise created various splits or dualisms, including (but not limited to) the relationship between society and the individual, nature and nurture, and mind and body. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Wolff divided the study of the soul into “rational psychology,” which examined the human soul and argued for its immortality, and “empirical psychology,” which aimed to identify psychological principles on the basis of the soul’s worldly experiences. Later on came the division of psychological disorders into “organic” (biologically based) and “functional” (mental-emotional) pathologies, with the former orientation emphasizing the explanation, prediction, and control of behavior or cognition and with the latter focusing on the subjective experience of the individual as a means to understand and treat psychological distress (Teo 2007).

### A Preoccupation with Polarity

It has been argued (Levi-Strauss 1963; Maybury-Lewis 1989a; Needham 1973) that all cultures across time and space identify and make meaning of the world through “binary oppositions” – dyads of complementary or opposed elements such as male–female, good–evil, and spirit–flesh. Some (Levi-Strauss 1963; Maybury-Lewis 1979, 1989a, 1989b; Needham 1973) believe binary opposition to be the most fundamental category through which the human mind organizes itself and that the frequency with which this form of classification arises within and across cultures is

evidence that “bipartization,” or the impulse to conceive of the world as split into a duality, is hardwired into the human psyche. Given this “preoccupation with polarity” (Maybury-Lewis 1989a, p. 6), it has been suggested that much of human consciousness is devoted to trying to understand and mediate the relationship of the opposites.

The way in which a culture envisions the relationship between the polarities is one of the most significant and distinctive features in any ontological model. Within religious traditions exhibiting an *antithetical dualism*, one side of the pair is often seen as being responsible for the creation and preservation of the cosmos with its opposite being the “negative” or “evil” aspect that seeks to unmake creation. Stoyanov (2000) split religious systems of this type into several categories based upon the extent to which (and the ways in which) this opposition manifests. For example, he noted that within systems that exemplify an *absolute dualism*, the antithetical relationship of the opposites is, as the term implies, absolute, in that the opposing forces representing good and evil are believed to have originated from two independent, coeternal principles that always have been and always will be separate. Classic examples of *absolute dualism* are the “dualist monotheisms” of Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, two early religious systems that made the antagonistic struggle between good and evil the fundamental principle of their religion. However despite both being forms of absolute dualism, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism show significant differences in how this antithetical struggle is played out. For example, in Zoroastrianism, it is believed that the physical world, including the human body, is an expression of the positive aspects of the “good” principle. This belief is referred to as *cosmic dualism*. Manichaeism, on the other hand, as an example of *anti-cosmic dualism*, equates the profane world and its manifestations with the principle of evil (Stoyanov 2000).

In contrast, other systems exhibiting an *antithetical dualism* subscribe to a kind of *moderate dualism* in which one of the two opposites – typically the “evil” side of the equation – is

considered to be a secondary principle, one that has its origins in the primary and more supreme principle. Some of the classic Gnostic movements are included in the category. Despite these ontological differences, philosophies of *absolute dualism* and *moderate dualism* both share the fundamental belief that the aspect considered to be “negative” or “evil” should be rejected and/or destroyed. It has been noted (Ajaya 1983) that within this context, the human experience is perceived to be an unending struggle to distinguish that which is the “good,” “creative,” or “real” aspect and that which is “evil,” “destructive,” or “illusory.”

While a philosophical model based on an *anti-theoretical dualism* accentuates the struggle and antagonism between the opposites, other systems of thought perceive the polarities as being ultimately *complementary* in nature. Within a dualism of complementary terms, the underlying ontological belief is that everything has a counterpart without which it cannot exist. Philosophical and religious systems based upon forms of complementary dualism (e.g., Taoism and many indigenous, “shamanic” belief systems) maintain that existence is dependent upon the tension and balanced interchange between the polarities. Because they are interdependent and mutually supportive, resolutions or disturbances occurring in one side of the equation evoke a sympathetic response in the other. Therefore, if one side is destroyed or denied, the other will suffer to an equal degree (Hertz 1973; Maybury-Lewis 1979, 1989a; Needham 1973; Tuzin 1989; Watts 1969; Webb 2012).

While certainly acknowledging the tension created by the opposites, philosophical models based on a complementary dualism are marked by their dedication to maintaining an equilibrium and harmony between them. Maybury-Lewis (1989a) stated that, “[Complementary] dualistic theories insist that these antitheses do not tear the world apart, and humankind with it, because they are part of a cosmic scheme in which they are harmonized” (p. 14). Within these cultures, “complementarity” becomes the major organizing principle within all aspects of community life, from the social to the spiritual.

## Dualism in the Psyche

It has been noted (Jung 1953/1956; Myerhoff 1974; Tarnas 1991; Watts 1969; Webb 2012) that Western philosophical and religious systems have historically tended towards a dualism of antithetical terms, with a corresponding belief that the tension created by the polarities can be resolved only through an elimination of the undesirable aspect of the pair. Myerhoff (1974) reflected, “Unfortunately, we westerners have come to feel that enduring this sort of tension is not really necessary, but somehow it is possible to allow one pole to exist and prevail without its opposite. We see good without evil, pleasure without pain, God without the devil, and love without hate” (p. 102). Likewise, Watts (1969) noted that, “By and large Western culture is a celebration of the illusion that good may exist without evil, light without darkness, and pleasure without pain, and this is true of both its Christian and secular, technological phases” (p. 48).

The Western world’s devotion to what Jung (1953/1956) referred to as “neurotic one-sidedness” (p. 42) is evident in a certain intolerance of the complexity of the psyche, one that often results in a compulsion to eliminate all paradoxes and seeming contradictions of the human condition. A 2007 *Time* magazine article, entitled “What Makes Us Moral” gives an example of this. The article begins with the following sentiment:

“If the entire human species were a single individual that person would long ago have been declared mad. The insanity would not lie in the anger and darkness of the human mind – though it can be a black and raging place indeed. And certainly it wouldn’t lie in the transcendent goodness of that mind – one so sublime, we fold it into a larger ‘soul.’ The madness would lie instead in the fact that both of those qualities, the savage and the splendid, can exist in one creature, one person, often in one instant” (Kluger 2007, p. 54).

According to this article, it doesn’t matter which we choose – either the “splendid” or the “savage” – as long as we align ourselves thoroughly and completely with that one side without deviation. Only then can we be considered healthy and sane. While over the years there



have been a number of Western thinkers who have argued for the necessity of balancing the opposing forces within the psyche (Jung and Watts most notable among them), the dominant Western psychological perspective tends to be that the individual must choose between the opposites – either the splendid or the savage – and align oneself thoroughly and completely with it without deviation (See Webb 2012).

## See Also

- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Nonduality](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Taoism](#)
- ▶ [Watts, Alan Wilson](#)
- ▶ [Zoroastrianism](#)

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## Duende and Psychoanalysis

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Duende is a term used to describe artistry empowered by the awareness of death. It has



similarities to the idea of “soul,” in art and life, but although both share the sense of tragedy or pain moving the creative energies, duende is libidinally charged, having more fire and drama in it.

The term duende comes from popular Spanish culture, created from the phrase Duen de Casa – Master of the House. This refers to a poltergeist-like trickster figure that makes a general irritation of its self by hiding things, breaking china, and making noise. However, there was another usage of the term that comes from Andalusia, where great artists are said to have duende, inferring that they are in contact with this force. Great bullfighters, singers, and dancers are graced with this description. Duende becomes a personification of, and resonates to, daimons, muses, and/or demons; it is an energy that moves through the body and soul. It is described as a possession as much as a talent. In this guise, duende takes on a chthonic quality, pulling inspiration from the depths and bursting through the artist to the audience.

Awareness of death is an intrinsic aspect of duende. Destructive and creative energies are very close to each other when the duende is invoked. The whisper of death suffuses their art, and this awareness of it drives life. Thus, Manuel Torre, who was a great flamenco singer, can make the statement that “all that has black sounds has duende” (Torre, quoted by Lorca, p. 49, 1933). The thrill and terror of contact with death, the ultimate mystery and realm of the unknown, is what brings depth of expression and allows the performer and the audience to soar.

The person responsible for bringing the concept of duende out of Spain onto the international stage was the Spanish poet and playwright Federico Garcia Lorca (1898–1936).

A charismatic figure, Lorca was deeply involved in the intellectual and creative life of the time. He had close relationships with Bunuel and Dali and was an influence on Pablo Neruda. Lorca was obsessed with his death and would even stage mock funerals for himself with his friends.

The idea of duende as an artistic force was integral to his thinking from at least 1922 when he

gave a lecture, “Deep Song,” at a music festival for the musical genre called Cante Jondo – deep song.

His ideas about deep song became the foundation for his poetics.

The time in between 1922 and 1933, he was in New York writing “a Poet in New York”; listening to jazz, blues, and African-American spirituals; and studying English at Columbia.

In his contact with professional singers (cantaors) and dancers (bailaors) of Spanish music, Garcia Lorca came to appreciate the difference between a good and bad performer.

The difference was simple. . . he said that good performers have duende, and bad ones never, ever, achieve it. The good singers sing with their whole body, the sound moving from the chest, not the throat. Good dancers pull the energy up from the earth. These performers with duende have “black sounds.”

Black and its various symbolic variants are crucial for duende, and this relationship to the dark and its gifts and trials is crucial for psychoanalysis as well.

The source of the symbolism related to black is rooted in the fact that we are diurnal animals. We humans are most dependent upon our sense of sight. If we go back in time to our experience in nature before artificial light, night is the most dangerous time for us. We are at our most vulnerable in the night, for without light we cannot see. When we sleep, things go dark, and we are helpless at that time. We are unconscious and enter another reality. Additionally, the association of death with black comes naturally since in death we are unconscious permanently. As with all symbols, individual associations to black evolve dependent upon a combination of archetypal factors and a person’s individual psychic structure and experiences.

Duende’s relationship to death resonates with psychoanalytic concepts. Freud coined the term death instinct. He wrote about this in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). The death instinct is more commonly called Thanatos.

Freud was always close to an organic orientation, and when he formulated the idea of the repetition compulsion and its stubborn adherence to early patterns, to NOT changing,

Freud came to the conclusion that the fundamental aim of all instincts is to revert to an earlier state, a regression.

He came to see a battle in the psyche based in biology; life, affiliated with libido, pitted against the drive to death and entropy, the death instinct. When Melanie Klein developed her ideas on the death instinct, these forces took on a different quality.

Melanie Klein was deeply influenced by the idea of the death instinct and saw it as an active, intense force in the psyche in contrast to Freud who saw it working in the background. In Klein's work with children, she observed intense destructive levels of aggression in their play that outbalanced the loving, joyous, positive libidinal aspects of play. She elaborated on the power of the death instinct by describing "envy," an early state in which aggression directed against the life of the subject is directed against anything that supports or is a source of life.

It is difficult to observe Thanatos in its pure form in reality, but art can create images where we might actually get some sense of what the pure form might look like. Mythological monsters and demons and crazed villains in movies and plays open us to the raw expression of the darkness.

A common thread in these villainous characters is their grandiosity and narcissism. They strive to annihilate all difference, because the only thing allowed to exist is themselves. Drenched in Klein's envy, they want to destroy life. This kind of character resonates to the myth of Saturn/Kronos, who, upon hearing a prophecy that one of his children would overthrow him, ate his children.

In a world that does not allow difference, there cannot be an other; without an other, there can be no relatedness and no object relations. When there is no relatedness, death can result. Spitz discussed this in relation to "hospitalism." He reported that infants did not thrive, and some died that were not cuddled, held, and related to, even if they were fed and changed.

The body is important in duende; Lorca quotes an unnamed virtuosic guitarist describing duende as climbing up from the soles of the feet. Resonating in the body, the singing comes from

the chest and belly, not from the throat. Duende's black sounds emerge from deep feelings. Mourning, rage, and love, the forces of destruction and creation, are closely connected. An artist with great duende contains and expresses these.

In psychoanalysis, appropriate mourning and grief are crucial in healing. Psychoanalytic work demands great presence in the face of extreme affect states. The analyst needs to create the container in the rhythm of time and contact in order to help negotiate and midwife real mourning.

Christopher Maurer describes four crucial elements identified as Lorca's vision of duende: irrationality, earthiness, a heightened awareness of death, and a connection to the diabolical.

In these four elements, more aspects of working psychoanalytically come up:

1. *Irrationality*: working with feelings and impulses.
2. *Earthiness*: as a recognition of mortality, that we are in a body that dies; then, the channel of expression through the body. The cantaor (singer) with duende sang from his chest and not his throat.
3. *The awareness of death*: the death instinct and the contrast of the drive for life. The importance of mourning in the process of healing.
4. *Connection to the diabolical*: allows for aggression, sadism, all the Thanatos-driven feeling states.

## Duende and Projective Identification

Another aspect of duende resonates with the psychoanalytic concept of projective identification, the condition where the patient, unable to tolerate their own feelings, cuts them off and projects them into the psychoanalyst. In this case, the psychoanalyst feels the feelings of the patient.

Duende, in its guise as a daimon/muse/demon, is described as seizing both the performer and the audience. It is a right brain experience, beyond intellect. This seizing is an excellent description of what projective identification feels like. However, in this case, the resonant effect is a result of the presence of duende, and the performer is not cut off from feeling.

## Duende and the Alchemical Mercury Archetype

Duende can be understood as an aspect of a larger archetype, mercury. As in all alchemical imagery, the symbols start with the actual chemical substances and processes used in alchemy. Mercury has a special place in these, for mercury is described as both the alchemical process and the goal of the process. Both duende and mercury are paradoxical: a “who” and a “what” destruction and creation.

In descriptions of mercury in alchemical texts, mercury is seen as a combination of substances, having many different qualities which all refer back to the properties of quicksilver. This is called “common mercury.” Chemically speaking, this comes from the fact that quicksilver served as a universal solvent.

However, mercury is often called “Our Mercury.” In this manifestation, mercury gains a capital “M” and takes on a different character. “Our Mercury” is a substance, source, and process all at once. “Our Mercury” is a substance, the source, and a process all at once. It is transformation its self, intrinsic, coming from the matter/substance that is undergoing the change. In the transformation, it devours its self and then recreates its self. The name, “Mercury,” is given to all stages of this death/rebirth cycle.

The juxtaposition of a destructive and creative process fits duende. Duende is referred to as both a presence, the duende, in its guise as daimon/muse/demonic earth spirit, and a process, what is being expressed emotionally and spiritually in performance or in creative process. This slippery quality that encompasses both process and presence is also a way of conceptualizing psychoanalysis. As psychoanalysts hold the space for patients with their therapeutic presence, they also facilitate process occurring. So there is both stillness and movement in the same space. This combination of process and presence resonates with themes from the alchemical mercury archetype as well as duende.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Dunbar, Helen Flanders

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## Dunbar's Life

Helen Flanders Dunbar was a medieval scholar, a seminary graduate, and a practicing psychiatrist

with an abiding interest in psychosomatic medicine. She was born into a well-to-do family in Chicago in May of 1902 and suffered from a variety of illnesses of unclear origin as a child. She was raised primarily by three strong women who invested a great deal in her. They were her mother, her aunt, and her grandmother, all of whom anticipated great accomplishments in her future. She graduated from the Brearley School in New York and went on to attend college at Bryn Mawr where she majored in both mathematics and psychology with an interest in psychology of religion in particular. Dunbar then undertook graduate studies in Comparative Literature at Columbia and attended Union Theological Seminary at the same time. At Union, she met Anton Boisen who engaged her interests in the clinical training program for clergy and seminarians that he was starting at Worcester (Massachusetts) State Hospital. Dunbar went to Worcester in the summer of 1925 where she worked tirelessly in the department of social work studying symbols and symbolization in schizophrenia. Her interest in the clinical training she received with Boisen and others at Worcester combined with her curious and idealistic nature led her to become the first Medical Director of what was then called the Council for Clinical Training for clergy, even as she went on to complete her medical studies at Yale.

A practicing Episcopalian, Dunbar retained a connection to both the church and the medical establishment. As a physician, she showed herself to be an adept institutional politician and an outstanding theorist in the area of psychosomatics. She had a central role in and became the founding editor of the highly esteemed professional medical journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*. She completed a major study *Emotions and Bodily Changes* (1935) that went through several subsequent editions. She held several prestigious positions in the dialogue between religion and medicine and maintained an ongoing interest in furthering the formal, scientific study of the relationship between faith and health. Never one to avoid controversy, Dunbar became involved in confrontations and controversies with male colleagues in both medicine and religion over issues

of gender, power, and authority as much as they had to do with theory and professional practice. Dunbar was not actively involved with the clinical pastoral movement and Anton Boisen in particular much after the late 1930s, but her commitment became rekindled just prior to her untimely death in 1959 from drowning in a swimming pool following a heart attack at her home in South Kent, Connecticut, in 1959.

### Dunbar's Legacy

Dunbar's legacy is complex in both medicine and religion. Her writing displays an erudite and sophisticated appreciation for the interplay of mind and body and psyche and soma. She was greatly interested and expended considerable effort investigating the role of symbols in explaining and understanding illness. Her own study of medieval literature, and Dante in particular, informed her therapeutic approach. The book she wrote arising out of her doctoral thesis at Columbia, *Symbolization in Medieval Thought and Its Consummation in the Divine Comedy*, was first published in 1927 and was republished at the time of her death in 1959 and remains a classic in its field.

It was out of her thinking and writing in theology and medieval studies that she came to understand the depth and power of symbols as they relate to medical and psychiatric symptoms. Symbols potentially provide structures for meaning about the relation of body, mind, and spirit. For Dunbar, symbols call attention to the whole that is always greater than the sum of its parts – a person with a family and a history or life narrative that develops or displays signs of dysfunction at a specific time in life and is under the influence of both inherent predispositions and immediate life stressors. Dunbar's views in these matters reflect a thoroughgoing sense of organic and holistic thinking, where for her the parts or dimensions of a person are not separate or discreet entities but interdependent and dynamically related components affecting one another. Her views on these matters anticipated by a generation in medical

education and practice what is known as the “biopsychosocial model.” Her understanding of healing in medicine and psychiatry was informed by what is often thought of as the property of a medieval world view known as the “organic functional ideal.” Dunbar’s views are at the same time a reflection of the powerful influences upon her of both John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead. Dunbar was a challenge to the medical world as well as to those she encountered in the ministry and the religious establishment both because of her gender and for her highly original perspectives. She could persuade, charm, and confront others. She was known to be a gifted and much sought-after therapist. Her ideas were informed as much by her theological and medieval and literary studies as by her medical and scientific endeavors. Helen Flanders Dunbar thus remains a prophetic and intriguing figure in the dialogue between medicine and religion.

### See Also

► [Boisen, Anton](#)

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## Durga

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Worshiped in both orthodox Hindu and Tantric folds, Goddess Durga is a goddess of strength,

courage, and justice. She is the embodiment of Shakti, the creative dynamic energy or power that animates and pervades existence. While her myth, qualities and iconography do not radically change within the various sects in which we find her in South Asia, her Shakta Tantric expression as a Goddess of Paradox and Invincible Power and as the Remover of Fear and Difficulty can teach us much about navigating the complex terrain of emotions that are triggered through every encounter and experience.

Tantra is a living philosophy that has ancient roots in earth-based, shamanic culture. While there are over 64 schools of Tantra, we can look to tantric tenets; specifically, in the female-centered Shakta tradition (circa 1500 BCE–700 CE) that challenge the status quo, question authority, and teach us to draw from an internal sense of spiritual power in order to face and transform suffering. Ultimately, Shakta Tantrism is a path of empowerment and spiritual liberation. Tantric rituals and practices teach us to consciously engage with the paradoxical nature of life. Tantra invites us to go beyond dualistic black or white thinking and to take a tantric both/and approach to life. The mythology, qualities, and iconography of tantric deities like Durga model a more centered and composed approach to life’s difficulties. Durga’s seemingly contradictory nature is paradoxical: she is compassionate and wrathful, nurturing and fierce, independent and relational, and can serve as a useful spiritual and psychological guide.

### Durga’s Mythology and Qualities

Durga’s fifth century myth from the *Devi Mahatmya* can be read as an allegory for the suffering and afflictions in our minds. This epic narrative describes Durga engaging in a series of battles with *asuras* or demons that are destroying the equilibrium of the earth. From a psychological perspective, these “demons” are actually afflicted ego constructs: ignorance, greed, rage, fear, and doubt. Durga represents the invincible pillar of strength and divine wisdom within. Each battle between Durga and



**Durga, Fig. 1** Indian Goddess Durga, with ten arms riding her lion (Courtesy of the author)



various demons demonstrates how the proliferation of our negative thoughts can take over and govern our behavior in adverse ways. Despite the intensity of the conflict, we witness how Durga's strongest quality is her composure. She does not lose her temper, she does not expend extra energy, nor does she run away in fear. Instead her approach is measured and contained. Durga stays centered amidst the tumultuous battles. She displays the confidence and courage needed when approaching any problem that arises. Working with Durga energies teaches us to practice nonattachment and nonjudgement. Rather than trying to control, resist, or fight difficult or unpleasant situations and people, Durga and her myth remind us to release our expectations about how things should be or look. The annihilation of the demons is actually a metaphor for the slaying of the ego and a return to our divine Durga nature. Even when we are faced with the more difficult

life experiences, for example, loss, death, or illness, there is always an opportunity for spiritual and emotional growth and transformation. Durga's dynamic qualities and victorious defeat of the demons in the myth remind us to remain open to creative solutions (Fig. 1).

### Iconography

Durga rides on a tiger or lion wielding various weapons and tools in her 8–18 arms. She appears calm, yet ready to take on any and every experience. One of the meanings of the name Durga is “fortress.” Durga teaches us about psychological boundaries – who to let in and when; who or what to keep out. Sometimes we need to build a “fortress” around our self for protection, to focus, or to create peace. Other times this fortress can become a prison – especially when we



are withdrawing from life or our relationships out of fear of intimacy, failure, or whatever in our life and psyche is causing us to put up walls. Knowing when our own “fortress” is needed and when we are creating a prison and self-imposed limitations is one of Durga’s deepest teachings. Discernment goes hand in hand with her fiercely compassionate nature. Meditation and visualization practices are integral to Shakta Tantric practices. The iconography of deities serves as a guide for practitioners when working with psychological issues and emotional challenges. Durga’s arms hold different weapons and tools such as the sword, bell, spear, bow and arrow, club, trident, noose, and lotus. These can be understood as liberating symbols that help us transform and release negative emotional and mental afflictions.

Durga carries a sword, symbolic of severing our attachments, especially to unhealthy relationships, behaviors, and life situations. Often described as a symbol of discernment or discriminating wisdom, the sword can help us to be discerning in our relationships, to have better boundaries, to know when to say no and when we are being too rigid and inflexible. Durga’s bell is a tool to dispel negative energies. The resonance of the bell’s tones clear the air of negativity and summons peaceful and clarifying energies. Durga’s spear reminds us to pierce the heart of any matter – especially when it comes to getting clear on what our heart’s true desires are. Her bow and arrow are symbolic of focusing our minds, directing our will, and summoning the confidence to hit the mark of whatever we set our intention on. Her club encourages us to beat a new path, to tread where no one else has. Her trident points to the benefits of sharpening the mind so that we can be clear and direct about our many choices and decisions. The three prongs remind us of the essence of Shakta Tantra to look for opportunities to create synergy and integration rather than opposition and separation. Her noose helps us to reel in that which is needed along our journey. Her lotus is a quintessential tantric symbol along this paradoxical path of life. The roots grow out of the mud and upward through murky water till the lotus blossom pushes

through the water and rests peacefully on the surface. Despite our own and others’ ignorance symbolized by the muddy water, there is a force within us that will always propel us toward growth and liberation of heart and consciousness.

Durga is a Goddess of spiritual authority, deep embodied wisdom, and invincible power. Engaging in meditations, ritual practices, and studying the Shakta Tantra teachings around this Goddess allows us to work with her mythology, iconography, and qualities in order to deepen our relationship with ourselves and to live a more peaceful and balanced life.

### See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Tantrism](#)
- ▶ [Women in Hinduism](#)

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## Dying and Rising Gods

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An ancient text says, as James Frazer worded it, “Heracles on his journey to Libya had been slain by Typhon and brought to life again by Iolaus, who held a quail under his nose: the dead god snuffed at the bird and revived” (Frazer 1922: section 224).

This is a short version of the many accounts of gods and semi-gods who were said to have died and been resurrected, well documented in the eastern Mediterranean region. This one is associated with the migration of quails that descend in hordes on Palestine/Israel in spring to breed.

### James Frazer

The classicist James Frazer (Cambridge University), in his 1890–1915 encyclopedic *The Golden Bough*, collected a mass of reports of ancient authors and nineteenth-century travelers about archaic rituals, myths, and traditions. It is a classic compendium of fascinating material, highlighting the dying and rising god theme, but he organized it according to lax, speculative nineteenth-century standards.

Frazer’s overall thesis was that archaic magic gave way to religion, which has now given way to science. This theme was soon proven wrong when twentieth-century religion continued to flourish alongside science. He also practiced the risky speculation of armchair scholars, by hypothesizing grand organizing themes without adequate study of the details of each culture (he traveled only to Italy and Greece). This conflict between those exploring large universalist themes and those restricting research to culturally unique specifics has continued and is active in the discussion of the “Dying and Rising Gods,” which was the most controversial schema that Frazer proposed.

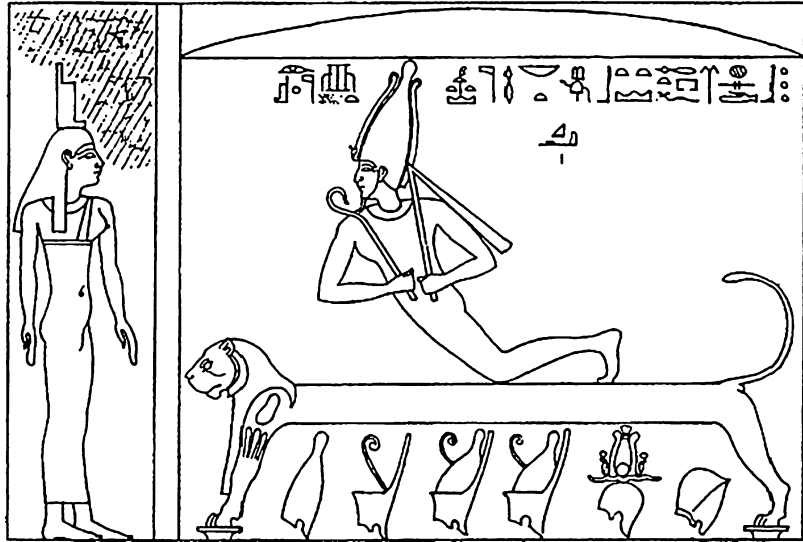
Frazer reviewed the ancient texts and recent studies of eastern Mediterranean gods and

demigods such as Tammuz, Adonis, Dido, Hercules, Melquarth, Attis, Marsyas, Hyacinth, Osiris, Dionysus, Demeter, and Persephone. He interpreted their deaths and resurrections primarily as primitive magic carried over into religions of deities, having the purpose of assuring the fertility of the earth’s reproductive systems. Not understanding the natural processes of growth, he proposed, these ancients believed that they had to magically help fertility happen by imitating the seasonal process, thereby facilitating it. So the death (or descent into the underworld) of a god or goddess was symbolized in part by a ritual of planting seeds, and the resurrection was an image of plants sprouting and animals being born.

Many variations developed, including bloody sacrifices, such as the initiates into the cult of Cybele imitating her beloved Attis by castrating themselves and throwing their blood (life fluid) and testicles onto a statue of the goddess, apparently to assure her impregnation and subsequent fertility in the plant and animal world. Attis was said to be born of the virgin Nana, and initiates were said to be baptized with the blood of a bull (the *taurobolium*) (Frazer 1922, pp. 403–413). Frazer interpreted this all as promoting fertility among hungry people groping with agricultural practices in a world they saw as filled with spirits. The ancient high death rate may have also been in the background. Women were reported to grieve the death of Adonis, plant gardens of Adonis, and celebrate when the seeds sent up shoots (Frazer 1922, pp. 376–403). He notes an Egyptian inscription that shows the dead Osiris lying prostrate, rising up and standing with Isis (Frazer 1922, p. 436; drawings in Mettinger 2001, pp. 171–174). He also argues that in addition to vegetation magic (naturist), some resurrections were intended to be social, assuring the continuation of the life force of the king (euhemerist), and that some myths (e.g., Osiris) were intended to assure eternal life.

Now all this is fascinating, but Frazer has been accused of excessive speculation, especially in the category of the Dying and Rising Gods as symbols of vegetative growth. Several scholars have rejected his broad universalist category and stressed the particular differences among the

**Dying and Rising Gods, Fig. 1** Osiris rising from his bed in a floating position. His wife Isis standing on the left (From the Osiris temple at Dendara; see Mettinger (2001, p. 173) (Published originally in Mariette, A. (1870). *Denderon*. Vol. 4. Paris)



accounts of the gods, semi-gods, or humans and textual difficulties, although some scholars support the Dying and Rising Gods theme (Mettinger 2001, p. 215; Fig. 1).

### Jonathan Z. Smith

The critical particularist reaction by Jonathan Z. Smith (University of Chicago) in 1987 (2005, 2nd ed.), in Eliade's *Encyclopedia of Religion*, swept aside this Dying and Rising Gods typology as "largely a misnomer based on imaginative reconstructions and exceeding late or highly ambiguous texts" (Smith 2005, p. 2535). Smith holds the data to strict standards of empirical historical research and finds it lacking. He argues that some of these gods or semi-gods are said to disappear, not die. His typology is that some deities return but have not died and that other gods died but do not return. His thesis is that "There is no unambiguous instance in the history of religions of a dying and rising deity" (Smith 2005, p. 2535).

In one text about the Syrian/ Babylonian/ Greek god/ hero Adonis, for example, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Adonis is killed by a boar, but does not rise from death [except as the anemone flower – Book 10: line 737]. Apollodorus' *Library* (III. xiv. 4) describes Adonis' alternation

between the upperworld and the underworld, but, Smith interprets, this offers no explicit suggestion of death and rebirth (Smith 2005, pp. 2535–2536). Smith (like some Christians) suggests that late post-Christian myths of Dying and Rising Gods were likely influenced by Jesus' resurrection. Attis, for example, in a late text, is said to be resurrected, but Smith says he is not here a dying and rising deity, nor is he a deity at all, but a human (Smith 2005, p. 2536). Other myths of resurrection, Smith argues, fail to fit his strict category, such as Baal and Marduk. He says that the text so-called *Death and Resurrection of Bel-Marduk* is most likely an Assyrian political parody (Smith 2005, p. 2537). Osiris, he argues, cannot be said to be risen, "in the sense required by the dying and rising pattern," since his resurrection after dismemberment sent him to be the Lord of the underworld land of the dead, imparting a new permanent life to the deceased (Smith 2005, p. 2538). Thus, he defines resurrection as literally returning to mortal earthly life, excluding continuation as plants or in an immortal state, and rejects the motif of going to the underworld and returning as symbolic of death and resurrection.

Smith is right in pointing out many discontinuities among the supposedly dying and rising gods. The vegetation gods, such as Adonis, differ from the royal kingship gods and the gods of

immortality after life, such as Osiris, who combines all three types. Smith's particular readings are rooted in his empirical hermeneutic and logically astute analyses, inspired by empiricism's distaste for speculation. But Smith's readings are selectively speculative and too literalist for such symbolic literature. This contrasts with a symbolic, more phenomenological hermeneutic, which would read important images differently. For example, the underworld is clearly the ancient abode of the dead, and Adonis is relegated by Zeus to spend half his year there with Persephone (goddess of death) and half above ground with Aphrodite (goddess of love) (Apollodorus III, xiv, 4). This seems clearly to symbolize a dying and rising god able to appear on earth, yet partake in immortal forces that overcome ordinary death (*athanatoi*), thus being able to be resurrected, although perhaps not in a literal earthly body.

Smith focuses on the male dying and rising gods and minimizes the importance of the goddesses. For example, an Inanna text that clearly states that *she* is a dying and rising goddess: "My father. . . He gave me descent into the underworld. He gave me ascent from the underworld" (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983, p. 16). Inanna/Ishtar is clearly the dying and rising goddess (c.f. Persephone) in this Sumerian/Akkadian tradition, and seeking evidence primarily among the male figures distracts from the feminine traditions. While she descended into the underworld, life above stopped ("Since Ishtar has gone down to the Land of no Return, The bull springs not upon the cow, the ass impregnates no the jenny. . ." lines 6–7), and when she returned, it began again with resurrection ("May the dead rise and smell the incense" last line, Pritchard 1958, pp. 80–85).

Smith seems loathe to accept the idea that return from the underworld is a meaningful symbol of rising from the dead. But in ancient myth, the underworld is commonly the abode of the dead, and rising from it commonly symbolizes return to life on earth or the place of immortality. "Rising" from death need not mean an empirical return to normal bodily life but could easily mean a more poetic, mystical passage of the spirit of the ancestors into the upperworld, which was a common theme in ancient Egyptian and many

other religions. Smith focuses on Ishtar's lover Tammuz and, with a reading claiming a mistranslation, says that "in the Akkadian version, Tammuz is dead and remains so" (Smith 2005, p. 2539). Yet the complete reference at the end of the Sumerian and Akkadian texts gives a different picture. When Ishtar returns to the upperworld from the land of the dead, she says:

As for Tammuz, the lover of her youth,  
Wash him with pure water, anoint him with sweet oil;  
Clothe him with a red garment, let him *play* on a flute of lapis,  
Let courtesans *turn* [his] mood. . .  
On the day when Tammuz comes up to me,  
When with him the lapis flute (and) the carmelian ring come up to me,  
When with him the wailing men and the wailing women come up to me,  
May the dead rise and smell the incense (Pritchard 1958, p. 85).

On the surface, Ishtar/Inanna's successful battle with Erishkigal, Queen of the Dead, and return to the upperworld with her deceased lover Tammuz/Dumuzi is the symbolic cause of the conquest of death resulting in resurrection. To focus on the death of Tammuz, saying that here he is only being "treated as a corpse," and to highlight the ritual wailing about his loss is to ignore this clear reference to his subsequent return to life, as in the reawakening the erotic instinct of reproduction. ("Let courtesans turn his mood.") Smith simply refuses to read numerous symbols of resurrection as meaningful. To privilege an earlier or later text over another version does not necessarily grant it more authority. Nor does it make sense to claim that Dumuzi/Tammuz cannot return to life, without sending a replacement to the land of the dead, refuting the deity's rising to life for half the year; it simply denies the importance of the "rising" in the life-half of the cycle of the deity's tradition (Smith 2005, p. 3190).

Smith's readings of the Dying and Rising Gods texts is a useful reexamination, but finally a one-sided, narrowly speculative, overly rationalistic hermeneutic, curiously suppressing the symbolic and poetic sensibility basic to religions. "Rising" may be read as a poetic expression of

some form of overcoming death, not just the literal return to a human body. The return of a god from the land of the dead to a spiritual realm associated with the resurrection of the human dead need not be discarded as irrelevant in contrast to a demand that the definition of a rising god includes returning to an empirical human body on earth. Smith does this with Osiris, who returns from death to become not a human, but the Lord of immortal souls, with the repeated ritual formula clearly indicating resurrection: “Rise up, you have not died” (Smith 2005, p. 2538).

### Tryggve Mettinger

A recent study by the Swedish Hebrew Bible scholar Tryggve Mettinger (University of Lund), *The Riddle of Resurrection: Dying and Rising Gods in the Middle East* (2001), does not accept Smith’s conclusions. In a careful textual and linguistic analysis, he accepts more images showing the validity of a variety of dying and rising gods. He does not want to hypostatize a specific type of deity but stresses the different types of gods with similar patterns (Mettinger, p. 218). He concludes, for example, as pictured in the Egyptian Dendara Temple of Osiris inscriptions, that Osiris “both died and rose . . . he rose to continued life in the Netherworld. . .” (Mettinger 2001, p. 175). In response to the idea that some ancient texts may have been read through a Christian lens as implying resurrection, he reminds us that several gods are said to die and return long before the Christian era: Dumuzi, Baal, Melquarth, Adonis, and Osiris.

### Christianity

The major question whether early Christians borrowed the theme of the dying and rising god in interpreting their experiences of Jesus is obviously the critical issue. Frazer puts the question in his boldly speculative way:

When we reflect how often the Church has skillfully contrived to plant the seeds of the new faith on the old stock of paganism, we may

surmise that the Easter celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the dead and risen Adonis. . . (Frazer 1922: section 217).

Now it is true that Christianity, like many other religions, did borrow many themes from other religions, such as baptism and virgin birth. But many religions commonly borrow themes from earlier faiths. The Hebrew term for “my Lord,” *Adonai*, is very similar to the name of the ancient Phoenician/ Syrian/ Greek divinity, Adonis, having the same linguistic root. Mettinger says that dying and rising deities were well known in Israel in New Testament times. Adonis was known in the Hebrew Bible to be “beloved by women” (Bible, Daniel 11:37). The earlier resurrection of Melquarth-Heracles was celebrated in Tyre (where Jesus visited – Bible, Mark 7:24–30).

But looking at particulars, there are some differences with Jesus. The earlier figures were legendary ancient divinities, whereas Jesus was a living human. For the disciples and Paul, Jesus’ resurrection was a one-time historical event, not an annual, mythic ritual tied to fertility or kingship. And Jesus was more an ethical prophet than the ancient vegetation or royalty deities. There is no evidence of the ancient dying and rising gods suffering to forgive sins, as was said of Jesus. There also is no specific evidence that Jesus’ resurrection account drew on ancient traditions (Mettinger, p. 221). Do such particulars negate the overlapping cross-cultural themes?

### Symbolism and Depth Psychology

Psychologically, resurrection is highly symbolic. It incorporates themes needed by many to deal with the terrors of death, as Carl Jung says, describing the [divine] hero who conquers death and brings back the promise of eternal life. Like Osiris, he/she psychologically becomes the “greater personality in every individual (like the Johannine Christ), viz. His *teleios anthropos*, the complete (or perfect) man, the self” (Jung, *CW* 18: para. 1567). In Jesus’ time,

the ancient gods had lost their power to the superficial, concretized state religion of Rome that divinized the Caesar for political reasons. A similar situation exists today, Jung says. The authority of traditional religions has been weakened by empirical science and power politics, and there is a need for a spiritual counterbalance to awaken the divine self in each person, a force that takes the soul beyond the vicissitudes of the life-death struggles of time and space. The Dying and Rising Gods theme must be read with depth psychology's poetic eye.

To deny the significance of this theme is to mistakenly restrict religious interpretation to the secular, rationalistic, calculating, logic-chopping hermeneutic. To affirm its poetic, symbolic, psychological significance is to recall the ancient assumption that dynamic infinity transcends worldly existence and can overcome earthly limits. We could also expand the dying and rising theme to embrace the "one deep river, many new springs" image of old religions as containers of transcendence that contain valuable archetypal themes and successful new "spiritualities" that rise with renewing archetypal themes, now blended globally with new relevance for a new era. We are seeing this with the expanding Western embrace of meditative Buddhism, the feminist and goddess movements, and the newly emerging ecological spirituality.

## See Also

- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)

- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Golden Bough, The](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)

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## Dying God

- ▶ [Hanging and Hanging God](#)



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# E

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## Earth Goddess

- ▶ [Dark Mother](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)

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## Earth Mother

- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)

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## East Asian Pastoral Counseling

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East Asia is one of the most populated regions in the world with 1.5 billion people, approximately 133 people per square kilometer or 22 % of all the people in the world. It has a history that reaches back thousands of years containing narratives of people surviving trauma after trauma drawing on available resources from rich cultural and religious heritages such as Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Ancestor Worship. While there are multiple worldviews that guide social relations, most have their roots in Chinese traditions. East Asia has also witnessed a drastic

economic growth and permeating force of Western culture and ideology that changes family structure, social patterns, and the way of living. It is within this context that pastoral counseling in East Asia has to negotiate and find its place among the complexity of psychosocial, religious, philosophical, economic, and political world of East Asia.

## China

Prior to the People's Revolution in China, Western psychotherapy, particularly psychoanalysis, had already entered the world of the Chinese people through the work of German psychologists. With time, through academic institutions, other therapeutic theories such as cognitive/behavioral, humanistic, and existential psychotherapies became more prominent in China. While these theories were present, the growth of counseling did not start until around 2002–2003. Like many countries in the region, China went through a major transitional period relating to economic growth, stress of unemployment, migration, etc. China realized the enormous negative impact these stressors had on their society, and hence, the government initiated a very basic training program in mental health with different levels of certifications. It was an attempt at mitigating mental health issues. Christians were not immune to this epidemic of social stresses especially in view of the tremendous Christian growth in the country. It was around this period as

well that the church began to recognize the importance of addressing the issue of mental health among its members. Because most Christians sought professional help from Christians with clinical skill, the need for professional training in pastoral counseling became immediate. It was around this period that Professor Xuefu Wang, after graduating from Andover-Newton Theological Seminary in the field of pastoral counseling, returned to China and upon an invitation from Professor K. H. Ting, who at the time served as president of Nanjing Theological Seminary, taught pastoral care and counseling and psychology and religion. In 2002 Professor Wang initiated a psychotherapy institute called Zhi Mian Institute of Psychotherapy. This period could be named the official beginning of the profession of pastoral counseling in China. Around this same period Professor Wang became acquainted with Professor Alvin Dueck of Fuller Theological Seminary. Through numerous trips and support from Professor Dueck, many trainings sessions were conducted for the benefits of pastors and seminary professors including professors in secular universities. These visits of Professor Dueck helped to strengthen the work of Zhi Mian Institute of Psychotherapy.

After years of working with Chinese people dealing with psychological issues, Professor Wang came to the realization that psychotherapy, for it to be effective among Chinese people, needed to be baptized into Chinese culture and as an outcome came the concept of Zhi Mian. The need is to make use of local concepts and resources while maintaining original sources such as existential psychotherapy. Zhi Mian is a dialogue between local resources such as the work of controversial contemporary Chinese philosopher Lu Xun, Chinese medicine, Chinese folk stories, and other philosophers such as Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu and at the same time the work of Frankl, May, Yalom, Tillich, Bugental, Schneider, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Kierkegaard. Zhi Mian aims at helping people find authenticity by raising awareness of the self and learning to confront reality. It helps clients to find courage to face life as it comes and generate a sense of meaning for themselves.

Zhi Mian Institute of Psychotherapy has offered training to thousands of Christians and non-Christians in China through a designed curriculum. The curriculum is called the Extended Counseling Program with curriculum addressing topics such as introduction to counseling, developmental psychology, abnormal psychology, techniques for interviews, hotline counseling, group counseling, parenting, social adaptation, indigenous adaptation to Chinese psychological context, and counseling practicum.

Currently there are many Christian counseling centers in China that offer good psychotherapy and provide some form of clinical training. Many of these counselors are trained overseas such as the USA, Hong Kong, or Singapore. Most seminaries offer a course in pastoral counseling, while some designed a curriculum for pastoral counseling. However, there has not been a formalized way to provide clinical training for students. Some pastors seek training from the government's basic training program. There is no formalized training in pastoral counseling in China at this point although the Chinese Christian Counseling Club is working on forming a network of pastoral counselors. The Zhi Mian Institute of Psychotherapy has also initiated an Association of Chinese Pastoral Counselors as a place of conversation and dissemination of information relating to the field of pastoral counseling.

## Hong Kong

Like many countries in the region, Hong Kong experienced rapid growth economically, and this rapid change has altered traditional practices, culture, lifestyle, and ways of living thus increasing pressure for performance and restructuring relationship impacting mental status of the people of Hong Kong. Unlike the development of the discipline in Mainland China, the training in the field of pastoral counseling started much earlier in Hong Kong. In the early 1970s David McCormick, recognizing the growing prevalence of mental health issue in Hong Kong and the need to educate young pastors to be more informed in

order to provide better care, started teaching pastoral care and counseling. In 1987 after receiving further training, he started supervision for clinical training in the hospital setting offering CPE to chaplains in training. Since then the field of pastoral counseling has expanded with many trained professionals and academia in the field both from oversea and those receiving training in local universities and seminaries. Professor Simon Shui-man Kwan who is also a member of American Association of Pastoral Counselors, has been teaching pastoral counseling and practical theology at Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong from the late 1990s with areas of research on topics dealing with postcolonial theology and hope-based approach to pastoral counseling. There are many seminaries teaching undergraduate and graduate degrees in pastoral counseling such as Bethel seminary, China Graduate School, Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary, and Alliance Seminary. There are seminaries that provide both academic and clinical training, while others offer academic program only. There is no accrediting body in Hong Kong in the field of pastoral counseling that articulates standard of practices and stipulates requirements and hence a variety of requirements in the practice of pastoral counseling with different level of intensity in training both academic and clinical are present. There are many counseling centers with Christian counselors practicing in these centers.

## Taiwan

Although the field of counseling is still in its early stage in Taiwan with not much restriction in terms of the requirements for practicing pastoral counseling, the training itself started in the 1970s with a missionary by the name Dr. Ted Cole who taught a course in pastoral counseling in Tainan while he was working in that region. His objective was to offer pastoral counseling skills to pastors. After his return to the USA, nothing much was happening relating to the field of pastoral counseling until Dr. Tai Chun-nan returned from the USA in the 1990s

after receiving extensive training in the field. Dr. Tai started teaching at Tainan Theological College and Seminary and soon after initiated a master degree in pastoral counseling under the umbrella of Asia Graduate School of Theology. In 1999 he established the Methodist Graduate School of Theology and served as its chancellor. The Methodist Graduate School of Theology offers master degree as well as a Th.D. in pastoral counseling. Core courses consist of courses such as basic counseling skills, basic counseling psychology, family cycle, developmental psychology, family pathology, research method, psychological assessment, counseling ethics, biblical counseling, premarital counseling, New Testament and Old Testament, juvenal counseling, spiritual formation, crisis counseling, integration between theology and psychology, psychopharmacology, grief counseling, or hospice counseling. In order to gain more recognition for the field of pastoral counseling, the Graduate School sought accreditation with Asia Theological Association. In 2004 Dr. Tai formed the Taiwan Association of Pastoral Counselors that was recognized by the Department of Internal Affairs. Hence, an accreditation with a recognized accrediting body was essential in moving the field of pastoral counseling forward.

The objectives of the association are to provide certification for those wishing to practice pastoral counseling and to provide training including clinical supervision. A few years later Dr. Eileen Yulin Lin, a licensed orthodontist who received a doctorate (Th.D.) in pastoral counseling from Methodist Graduate School of Theology, became chairperson of Taiwan Association of Pastoral Counselors.

There are three levels of membership: associate member, member, and pastoral counselor. To be a certified pastoral counselor requires a masters or a doctoral degree in pastoral counseling, passing an examination designed by the association, accumulating 150 client hours and pass and a case presentation. The process of certification was initiated in 2009. Currently there are 200 members with approximately 20–30 pastoral counselors. Although the association is encouraging certification, not all pastoral

counselors in Taiwan are certified. At current, there are approximately 100 pastoral counselors providing care on a part-time basis.

It is not uncommon to find pastoral counselors using theories such as psychoanalysis, cognitive/behavioral, solution-focus brief therapy, gestalt therapy, and existential therapy. There are pastoral counselors who formulate their theories in order to speak more meaningfully to the local context. One such approach is Trinity-Archetypal Counseling (TAC) formulated by Dr. Lin to address the feeling of shame often experience by clients. The theory and practice of this approach is published in the book "Finding True Self in the Bible: Understanding Archetypal Pastoral Guidance: Realizing God's Unique Blueprint." Trinity-Archetypal Counseling affirms clients where they are and helps them see value in themselves even in the midst of mental illness itself. This theory promotes the belief that who they are is a gift from God even if they may be in anxiety or depression. Good and evil are often constructed by the society and it is not how God sees his people. God values them where they are and the way forward is to recognize and learn to regulate issues they are facing instead of pathologizing them. This is a radical approach within the context of Confucian value system.

In Taiwan, due to the small Christian population, pastoral counselors provide treatment for clients from every religious backgrounds. Pastoral counselors also get referrals from other counseling centers and medical professionals. While there are limited personnel resources because it is a new field, there is a great potential for growth for pastoral counseling in Taiwan.

## Korea

According to Y. G. You, the history of pastoral counseling in Korea can be divided into three periods: the Era of Birth: Introduction and Translation Period (1950–1975), Era of Growth: Specialization Period (1980–1999), and the Era of Identity: Competition and Autonomy Period (2000–present).

The Era of Birth. The discipline of pastoral counseling in Korea was initiated during the Korean War. The need for soul care due to deep wounds caused by the war was a fertile soil for the seed of pastoral counseling. It was around this period that Rev. Hwan Shin Lee, who just returned from graduate study in the United States, taught the first pastoral counseling course at Yonsei University. The concept of pastoral counseling was also introduced through translations of some major works in the field into Korean language such as Carroll Wise's *Pastoral Counseling: It's Theory and Practice*, Paul Johnson's *Psychology of Pastoral Care*, Seward Hiltner's *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, and Carl Roger's *Counseling and Psychotherapy*. These books played a formative role in introducing the field of pastoral counseling to the church and the society. In the late 1970s Clinebell's *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* helped to raised interest for the field of pastoral counseling in Korea. Two books on pastoral counseling within Korean context were published: *Principles of Pastoral Counseling* by Euyong Hwang (1970) and *Introduction to Pastoral Counseling* by Peter Van Lierop (1978) who was serving as professor of Yonsei University. Professor Lierop also initiated a counseling center at Yonsei University and offered the first Clinical Pastoral Education program at Severance Hospital of Yonsei University. However, even with translations of major work in pastoral counseling, the field itself did not flourish during this period because the church was more focused on church growth than care of soul, and there was a lack of individuals professionally trained in the field during this period.

The Era of Growth. In 1982, *The Korean Association of Pastoral Counselors* (KAPC) was organized with the primary role of dealing with what it means to be professional pastoral counselors and the development of areas of specialization. To deal with these two issues, the association issues and maintains licenses for practitioners. Obtaining licenses in pastoral/Christian counseling, participants need to pass an exam, a graduate degree in pastoral counseling or related area, and clinical training. The association also hosts monthly clinical seminar and

annual academic conference. In 1997, *The Korean Society for Pastoral Care and Counseling* was formed and along with the formation of the society comes biannual academic journal, *Ministry and Counseling*. There are other organizations as well that seek to promote Christian counseling such as *Korean Association of Christian Counseling and Psychotherapy* (1999), *Korean Evangelical Counseling Society* (2000), and *The Korean Association of Clinical Pastoral Education* (2001).

**The Era of Identity.** This is the era of rapid growth and changes with many Korean scholars returning from the United States with doctorate in the field of pastoral counseling. Many seminaries and religious departments started hiring full-time professors in pastoral counseling and producing many graduates with professional training in the discipline. Many counseling centers were founded and numerous seminaries created their own counseling centers. The rapid growth in the field happened to coincide with changes in Korean society as well. Korean society was experiencing changes as a result of development. Economic changes affect society structure and cultural values where competition has become a new norm and this norm destabilized traditional family. In relation to economic change, the concept of “self” in Korean society has been altered by industrialization as well. Industrialization has replaced the communal self with individual/autonomous self thus creates further alienation within the community. It is within this context that the care for soul took on a significant role within Korean society.

Many Korean scholars recognized the need to rediscover their Korean roots, and certain Korean concepts were explored in relation to the field of pastoral counseling such as the concept of *Han* as a more relevant concept for pastoral counseling instead of sin while others looked at the concept of *Jeong* or shame. During this period pastoral counseling became the most competitive academic major entering graduate schools in Korea.

While the practice of pastoral counseling in Korea started in the 1970s, the proliferation of counseling centers takes place in the late 1990s and onward. The first Christian counseling center

to be established in Korea was Growth Counseling Center established in the 1980s by Dr. Jong Hun Lee. There are approximately 50 counseling centers approved by the Korean Association of Pastoral Counselors. However, there are more counseling centers in operation that have not received approval by the Association. There are three basic types of counseling centers: academic-based centers, independent centers, and church-related centers. Most centers focus their effort on education and training.

## Japan

In 1952 Carl Roger did a lecture tour of Japan and out of this visit came increasing interest in school and guidance counseling. W. P. Browning initiated pastoral counseling in Japan, an American missionary in 1953 with courses being taught at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. The field expanded in the 1950s and the 1960s with Japanese pastors who received training in pastoral counseling returning to Japan. However, the term pastoral counseling only became more widely used after a visit by Paul E. Johnson who gave instruction to 60 pastors at Kyoto Baptist Hospital in 1964. In 1963 the Japan Institute of Pastoral Counseling was organized and began publishing translations of books by Wayne Oates, Seward Halter, and Howard Clinebell. During this period humanistic psychology and client-centered approaches were popularized. This individualistic focus could perhaps be the result of postwar’s struggle to find personal identity. Existentialism and the writings of Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre were a part of the quest for personal meaning in life. The other reason for the popularization of individualistic approach was the teaching of Zen Buddhism whereby the quest is that moment of enlightenment that transcends space-time history.

In the 1980s, Kwansai Pastoral Counseling Center in Kobe, Growth Counseling Center in Tokyo, and Christian Counseling Center were in operation. In 1984 the Second Asian Conference on Pastoral Care and Counseling was held in Tokyo with Clinebell in attendance. Out of this

conference the Pastoral Care and Counseling Association of Japan was organized with the aim of greater inclusiveness. There are seminars offering graduate degrees in pastoral counseling. While the Christian population in Japan remains small (less than 1 %), there are many Japanese Christians who practice counseling and who bring their spiritual knowledge into their interaction with clients without mentioning faith in their conversations.

This expansion of counseling practices is connected to the mental health status of Japanese within this industrialized society. According to a study in 2008 by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labor, 24 % of Japanese people suffer some form of mental health issue. The report further states that one in five adult Japanese contemplates suicide, while the actual suicide rate is 51 per 100,000 which is twice as high as the US rate. While the government recognizes the seriousness of this issue, the accessibility is still limited. Most Japanese still visit hospitals when experiencing emotional distress for diagnosis and medication. This situation in Japanese society reflects the growing need among Christian and pastoral counselors to address this increasing needs in ways that is adaptive to Japanese cultural and religious context.

## See Also

- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Confucianism
- ▶ Guanyin
- ▶ I Ching
- ▶ Migration and Religion
- ▶ Shinto
- ▶ Zen

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## Eclipses

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Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE) in his *Natural History* refers to the eclipse (Greek, *ekleipsis*, “abandonment, failing of power”) of the moon and the sun as “the most marvelous and indeed portentous



occurrence in the whole of our observation of nature” (1944, II.VI.46). He notes how the sun and moon “retaliate on one another” as they cross paths, the rays of the sun being taken away by moon and earth (1944, II.VI.47). Pliny says that for a long time people in the ancient world have dreaded an eclipse as a portent of crime or death and how the dying of the moon meant that “she was poisoned” (1944, II.viii.54). In his *Tetrabiblos*, the Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus (ca. 100–178 CE) refers to the eclipse as the first and most potent cause of the general conditions of countries or cities (Ptolemy 1940, ii, 75). He interprets the meanings of the colors of eclipses or formations such as light rays (*rabdōn*) and halos. Black colors “signify the effects” (*phanenta sēmantika*) of the cooling, drying influences of Saturn. White colors indicate the temperate powers of Jupiter, and red colors have a hot, burning influence. Color and illumination are predictive of events and earth conditions to occur in particular geographical locations (1940, II, 90), and the position of the eclipse on the horizon tells when and with kind of intensity an event will occur (1940, II, 77). In the Hindu myth of the primordial battle between the Titans and the gods, the eclipse represents Rahu’s inability to drink the elixir. Although he is able to steal a sip of the substance, the cup passes easily through his mouth and out again through his throat. The eclipse is also seen to represent apocalyptic events. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus predicts that the sun will be darkened (*skotisthēsetai*) and moon will not give its radiance (*phēggos*) as a sign of the time of world tribulation (Mark 13.24; cf. Matt. 24.29–31; Luke 21.25–28; Isa. 13.10; Joel 2.10; 3.4; 4.15). In the Gospel of Luke, the sun “dies out” (*eklipontos*) at the death of Jesus on the cross (Luke 23.45), in this way marking the death of Jesus as someone who is significant and important. In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter speaks of the sun which will be changed into darkness (*metasraphēsetai eis skotos*) and the moon into blood on the day of the Lord (Acts 2.20). The sixteenth-century alchemical text “*Consilium coniugii*” speaks of the changing and thus corruptive nature of the moon and its pernicious relation

to the sun. The text refers to the poisonous quality of the moisture of the moon in its eclipse of the sun “when she [moon] receives his light and slays the sun” (Jung 1963, p. 28). At death the two parents [sun and moon] “yield their souls to the son, and die and pass away.” Symbolically this means that the moon as the feminine aspect receives the sun-masculine aspect through which dying and rebirth occur. Penetration into the unconscious world is both exhaustive and formative, and there is sacrifice involved to yield the New. The new creation – the birth of the son as hermaphrodite – resolves the conflict of the parents. According to the text, the son eats the parents who “are the food of the son” (c.f. the “god-eating of the Aztecs; the parent-eating soul of the Egyptian Pyramid text of Unas) (Jung 1963, p. 30).

### See Also

- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)

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## Ecology and Christianity

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But ask the animals, and they will teach you;  
the birds of the air, and they will tell you,  
ask the plants of the Earth, and they will teach you;

and the fish of the sea will declare to you.  
Who among these does not know  
That the hand of the Lord has done this?  
In his hand is the life of every living thing  
and the breath of every human being  
(Job 12: 7–10 NRSV).

Recently, Christianity has reflected deeply on its commitment and engagement with the ecological quandaries and crisis of our modern, technological world. Environmentalists have opened up awareness of the negative impact Christianity has had on the environment through the interpretation of passages such as “. . . fill the Earth and subdue it; and have dominion over. . . every living thing. . .” as a license to harm the planet (Gen 1:28 NRSV). Christianity has been charged with contributing, actively or passively, to the ecological crisis including pollution, extinction of many plants and animal life, and climate change (Leiss 1994; White 1967). But other traditions in Christianity, such as those of St. Francis, support ecological responsibility (Sorrell 1988).

Richard Bauckham (2010, Preface) defines “ecology” as “The interconnectedness of all things, living and inanimate, on the planet.” With this definition in mind, three movements towards the current relationship between ecology and Christianity will be discussed as follows: (1) historical Christianity, (2) current debates, and (3) psychological interaction with ecology and Christianity.

## Historical Christianity

Throughout its history, Christianity had a close engagement with its theology and ecology. The premodern interaction of the Bible and Christian commitment to the care of the Earth can be found in God taking the Sabbath as an image of the profound relationship between God, humanity, and creation. How Christians hold in balance the tension between human dominion over creation and human accountability to God has had far-reaching implications on how believers treat the Earth. The need to temper license with accountability is becoming more paramount in light of the current ecological crisis.



**Ecology and Christianity, Fig. 1** St. Francis (Retrieved from <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/stf01026.jpg>)

The Bible, read through the lens of ecological responsibility, is replete with God’s desire for redemption of all of God’s creation: “In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor 5:19 NRSV). Christianity has had a long historical tradition of deep reflection dealing with human interaction and responsibility towards nature. For example, in St. Francis’ “Canticles of Creation,” he strongly emphasized the value of all living and nonliving things that make up the Earth’s environment, including the cyclical nature of seasons as well as all flora and fauna of the Earth. It is no wonder that St. Francis remains the patron saint of Christian environmentalists. St. Francis was not alone in his love for nature. Roger Sorrell writes, “Much of Francis’ outlook in this area [environment and nature] closely reflects earlier ascetic thought and is easily explicable in terms of the common experiences and ideals of the eremitic [hermit’s] life” (Sorrell 1988, p. 138) (Fig. 1).

However, starting in the modern Enlightenment era, Christianity had the unfortunate distinction of being “the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen,” due to the negative impact on ecology with the biblical claim of dominion over creation according to Lynn White, Jr.’s famous article “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (1967). White

critiqued and attributed the environmental problems, in part, to the Christian notion of “instrumentalist” view that permits the [mis]use of nature based on the understanding that humanity possesses dominion over nature.

The dualistic ideology of the Enlightenment era influenced Christianity’s engagement with the environment, which is evidenced in Ludwig Feuerbach’s statement, “Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul” (Feuerbach 1957, p. 287). The Neoorthodoxy of Karl Barth, though claiming a dialectical methodology, also perpetuated the either/or dichotomy between God and the world and humanity and nature. This dichotomy is recognized by evangelical biblical scholar Douglas Moo when he concedes, “The New Testament is heavily anthropocentric; the ‘world’ is often viewed negatively; little is said about the nature world; and what little is said sometimes suggests that it is doomed to an imminent fiery end” (Moo 2006, p. 453).

White’s article evoked anger on one side but also conjured enthusiastic production of articles, books, and conferences from numerous Christian thinkers addressing this very issue of ecological and nuclear crisis during the 1960s. Theologians like Alister McGrath redirected White’s accusation towards the “roots [that] lie in the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and whose foundation belief is that humanity is the arbiter of all ideas and values.” He claimed that Christianity is not by definition antienvironmental; rather, “the critical role of Christianity [is] in emphasizing human accountability for the environment. . .” (McGrath 2002, p. 54). Reflecting through the biblical texts such as Job 12 (above) more carefully has yielded a plethora of correctives to the previous bifurcation that belittled the environment. Numerous groups have emerged with their own debates as a result of recognition of the environmental degradation.

## Current Debates

There are several different foci of effort in saving the environment summarized by John

Cobb (1992). There are those who focus on animal suffering like the Humane Society, while ecologists seek equality for all creation and call human hierarchy a sort of “speciesism,” not unlike racism or sexism. Social ecologists who place capitalistic greed as the source of the current crises encourage concrete human changes to turn the crises around (Bookchin 2005). Another group’s focus is on agriculture, soliciting traditions of wisdom and practices for sustainable farming (Cobb 1992, pp. 42–48, 63–65). Yet another’s focus is on using renewable energy by encouraging customers to use efficient buildings and technology to save both money and the environment (Ecotechnology).

Of these many groups and foci, there are several Christian groups. The most predominant of these groups is The Stewardship Group. This group continues the traditional Christian belief that humanity does indeed have dominion over creation, but the call is to act as good stewards who care for the Earth with understanding and wisdom of the model of God. The focus is on the preservation of the ecosystem for all living things to survive in a healthy planet by realigning the misguided notion of human domination.

## The Stewardship Model

The “the default position within ordinary Christian groups” (Attfield 2006) is the stewardship model. In the Christian sense of the word, a steward reports to God because every living thing ultimately belongs to God. In other words:

Stewardship implies caring management, not selfish exploitation; it involves a concern for both present and future as well as self, and a recognition that the world we manage has an interest in its own survival and wellbeing independent of its value to us. . . Good stewardship requires justice, truthfulness, sensitivity, and compassion (Attfield 2006, pp. 75–76).

According to the Bible, the Earth remains the Lord’s (Psalm 24:1) and belongs to God, while all humanity are foreigners and tenants (Leviticus 25:23). Moo suggests, “The hope for the liberation of creation that Paul expresses in

Romans 8 (For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God,” (vv. 19–21 NRSV) clearly implies that the destiny of the natural world is not destruction but transformation” (Moo 2006, p. 463). Theologian Douglas Hall takes the stewardship model a step further by redefining the words “dominion” and “rule” through the Christological lens of love: sacrificial, self-giving (agape) love (Hall 1986, p. 86).

However, Richard Bauckham points to problems with the stewardship model:

1. Stewardship as hubris – the Earth system itself regulates and automatically controls the global climate and the composition of the atmosphere.
2. Stewardship excludes God’s own activity in the world.
3. Stewardship lacks specific content – the term “stewardship” can denote the need for human intervention to tame the wildness of nature, while some define it more closely to the preservation of creation.
4. Stewardship sets humans over creation, not within it.
5. Stewardship tends to isolate one scriptural text, Genesis 1:26 and 28. Reflecting on the entirety of Scripture allows for a more nuanced look at God’s design of all of the creation (Bauckham 2010, pp. 2–12).

Despite these limitations, this model continues to be the primary view from which other views have risen in response to or reaction against it. Christian environmental ethicist Bill McKibben asserts that the “Bible actually mandated protecting the world around us (Noah: the first Green)” and denotes a significant overlap between Christianity and environmentalism, stating the Book of Job as the “first great piece of nature in the Western Tradition” (McKibben 2005). Nevertheless, the correlation between Christianity and environmentalism has been thin. Due to this lack, many Christian thinkers have contributed much discussion to the correlation between Christianity and the Earth. Of these, two major thinkers will be further discussed as follows: Rosemary Radford Ruether and Joseph Sittler.

## Rosemary Ruether and Ecofeminism

A feminist theologian, Ruether addresses ecological responsibility and gender suppression with one culprit: domination. Ruether sees the correlation between feminist theology and environmentalism in the double domination of male over female and human over nature. Ecofeminism asserts that the patriarchal bias of the Christian history has perpetuated a male dominance over both women and creation that subjugated these into a place of oppression. Hence, salvation will come to the entire creation through significant altering of the patriarchal institutions towards a reciprocal interdependent model (Ruether 2000, pp. 90–104). As such, for Ruether the biblical God and Gaia, Greek goddess of Earth, come together to make Christian ecological theology and ethics possible, calling for a cultural and spiritual revolution towards a post-patriarchal world (Bouma-Prediger 1995, p. 55).

## Joseph Sittler

Dubbed a “Pioneering Christian theologian of nature,” Sittler is one of the first Christian thinkers to address the issue of ecology and theology (Bouma-Prediger 1995, p. 14). Sittler broadens the scope of the theological enterprise of his day by including the ecological crisis and cosmic dimensions in a speech to the World Council of Churches in 1961 titled “Called to Unity.” One of Sittler’s most significant concepts is the Cosmic Christ: “He [Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on Earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him” (Col 1:15–20 NRSV) as the biblical basis. By Cosmic Christ, Sittler means “only a Christ whose work is cosmic in scope is large enough to overcome the meaningless and the demonic” and “cosmic redemption entails a cosmic Christ” (Bouma-Prediger 1995, p. 66). In order for this cosmic redemption to be possible, Sittler also expands the doctrine of

grace of the Triune (Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifying) God that is present in the redemption of all God's creation, rather than just for sin (Sittler 1972).

It is no surprise the historical Christian understanding and the current debates regarding ecology have intersected with the field of pastoral care and counseling. One such example is ecotherapy, the work Howard Clinebell.

## Psychological Implications

Understanding the interconnected nature of all creation, Howard Clinebell, who connected religion to psychotherapy and later ecology, recognized the healing of ourselves and healing of the Earth by interacting with the Earth in a more integrated, healthy manner through "ecotherapy." Under this umbrella term, some therapists use noncoercive "Animal Therapy," "Horticultural Therapy," or "Wilderness Therapy" to help people find their authentic selves in the lap of God's world (Clinebell 1996, pp. 220–230).

Ecotherapy is a result of three realities that constitute the "ecological circle": *Inreach*, *Upreach*, and *Outreach*. *Inreach* involves psychological receiving and being nurtured by the healing presence of nature and Earth such as feeling part of the wondrous mysteries of being nurtured by family and food, while *Upreach* involves phenomenological experience of the creative source by locating the self within the greater life of the natural world such as feeling part of the awesome majesty of the sky's billions of galaxies. Lastly, *Outreach* involves the care for the planet with others such as recycling, conserving resources, and preventing pollution (Clinebell 1996, pp. 8–9).

Within the ecological circle is ecological spirituality, which is a model for both nurturing nature and being nurtured by nature, another subset of ecotherapy. In other words, ecological spirituality is a circle of receiving and experiencing healing from nature, place, and Earth while giving back to the Earth for its healing.

## See Also

- ▶ Clinebell, Howard
- ▶ Creation Spirituality
- ▶ Ecotherapy
- ▶ Spiritual Ecology
- ▶ Teilhard De Chardin: Cosmic Christ

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## Ecology and Islam

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Ecology is a modern field of investigation that came as a result of the industrialization in Europe. The responses to the ecological issues are therefore modern responses; nevertheless, religious texts may provide further incentives to deal with these issues. Islamic texts that may be consulted to tackle ecological matters are divided into two categories: old and contemporary texts. The original texts consist of the Qur'ān and the saying of the Prophet Muhammad, *Hadith*, which forms the basis for legal jurisprudence for the Muslims. In addition, there are several Sufi treatises that approach issues of nature and the relationship between human beings and nature. The second category includes the recent work by Islamic scholars who are addressing the issues of ecology by way of rereading the original texts. The question of ecology in Muslim-majority societies is similar to all nonindustrialized societies; the question has been raised because of its weight in industrialized societies; thus, most of the ecological studies and environmental movements are associated with European and North American understanding to the ecological issues.

In Muslim-majority countries, contemporary dealing with issues of ecology is mostly Western influenced, and organizations are related to UN agencies, green movements, and other international organizations or are inspired by international ecological organizations. Studies about ecology and environment are mostly in English language, and their influence on the practical

understanding of ecological issues is practically absent. Nevertheless, as these studies and primary sources on ecology indicate, there are plenty of concepts and statements in the Islamic sources to lead to tackling ecological matters effectively.

Several of the issues related to the methodology of discussing religion and ecology were set by Tucker and Grim (Tucker and Grim 2001). These include that religion is as new to deal with ecology as science, with an edge for science in this matter. However, religions, including Islam, “have an important role to play in projecting persuasive visions of a more sustainable future” (Tucker and Grim 2001, p. 4).

The teachings of Islam are spread among the populations of Muslim-majority countries that developed with time, and since God is the provider (*Razīq*), there may be some laziness toward the environment. However, a modern reading to the Qur'ān and Tradition of the Prophet may reveal a more sympathetic rendering to the teaching of Islam toward ecology.

Contemporary authors about Islam and ecology concur that “1. Nature is sacred; 2. The central role of humankind is as earth's steward; 3. There is an urgent need for Muslims to modify their behaviors in order to live more harmoniously with the non-human world; 4. The moral and ethical dimensions of the non-human world need to be recognized” (Saniotis 2012, p. 167).

### Qur'ān

The defining characteristics of nature that may be deduced from the Qur'ānic discourse include “that natural phenomena have regularity; internal coherence, and elegance, and that they are self-sustaining” and “that nature is an embodiment of God's mercy or, more fully, that God's mercy is expressed through the creation of nature. These defining characteristics make a conceptual whole” (Haq 2001, p. 134). Nature is beneficial to the human being (Qur'ān 6:4–16; 55:1–12); furthermore, the elements of the natural world are signs for human being to interpret and understand (Qur'ān 13:3–4; EQ, “Nature as



Sign,” EQ). Thus, the relationship between man and nature is both physical and metaphysical. The Qur’ān states as well that nature praises God (Q 24:41), thus equating beings with the rest of creation and suggesting a state of unity, interdependency, and multiplication among the elements of creation.

The world belongs to God, and human beings were assigned several roles within this well-integrated world. On Earth, we were assigned stewardship or agency – the *kahlīfa* of God (Özdemir 2003). “It is He Who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth: He hath raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He hath given you: for thy Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful” (Q 6:165). In spite of this leading role for human beings, God equated all of his creation: “There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you. Nothing have we omitted from the Book, and they (all) shall be gathered to their Lord in the end” (Q 6:38).

God also urged human beings not to be wasteful: “O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for Allah loveth not the wasters” (Q 7:31). The Qur’ān reminds the believers that this earth is not for them forever, other generation will come by his will, and consequently they will be the stewards, in the same way they inherited it from earlier generations (Q 6:133).

## Hadīth

The sayings of the prophet are more straightforward about the action that human being should take toward nature. They include many statements about an ecological relationship between humans and natural resources. His teachings covered issues like water conservation (even during ablution), planting trees, cultivating barren land, admonishing against cutting trees, and kind treatment of animals. In addition, the Prophet established protected areas for natural

life (*hima*), “which may be considered Islamic prototypes for contemporary natural parks and nature conservancies” (Nasr 2003, p. 97).

In one *hadīth*, Muhammad’s guide to saving water was clearly stated: “One day, as [The prophet] was passing by Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas, who was performing ritual ablution, the Prophet scolded him: “What is this waste, o Sa’d?” “Is there waste, even in ablution?” Sa’d asked. And the Prophet answered: “Yes, even when using the running water of a stream” (Ramadan 2010). As for planting trees, the Prophet said in one narration that “there is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift for him” (Bukhārī, n.d., Vol. 3, Book 39, No. 513). He also encouraged cultivating barren land; narrated by Abu Huraira, The Prophet said, “Whoever has land should cultivate it himself or give it to his (Muslim) brother gratis; otherwise he should keep it uncultivated” (Bukhārī, n.d., Vol. 3, Book 39, No. 533).

## Sufism

Sufis took the notion of the unity of the world with God to another level. For them all creatures worship God, including nature, as the Qur’ān states, and creatures should have close and kind relationships, including humans, animals, plants, and earth, in a cohesion of “biodiversity” and interdependence. Jalal al-Din al-Rumi, a thirteenth-century poet who lived in Anatolia and wrote in Persian, elaborated on this unity by citing many parables and stories. Rumi cites a story about King Solomon who asked several flowers and insects what they do: He saw that a new plant had grown there; then he would say: “Tell your name and use – What medicine are you? What are you? What is your name? To whom are you hateful and to whom are you useful?” Then every plant would tell its effect and name, saying, “I am life to that one, and death to this one. I am poison to this one, and sugar to that one: this is my name inscribed on the Tablet by the Pen of the Divine Decree” (*Masnawi*, 4.1287 ff., cited in Clarke 2003, p. 43).

“This led Solomon to teach the physicians, who then compiled their pharmacopoeia. Nature yields wisdom to those who understand and care to enquire. . .” Clarke adds: “We are able to speak of Rumi’s “ecology” because his mystical world view is, above all, holistic” (Clarke 2003, p. 43). Said and Funk stress that because spiritual growth requires a sensitivity to the environment, “Sufis therefore look for signs of God in humans and in nature, and contemplate the divine beauty in creation” (Said and Funk 2003, p. 174). Clarke suggests that in the work of Rumi, “nature should be understood as a system and process, with an overall meaning and end in which all parts have their place. The vision desired is, in a word, *ecological*—an ecology that includes not only biology and physics, but also metaphysics” (Clarke 2003, p. 54).

### Contemporary Situation

Taking into account that the ecological awareness throughout the world was generated in the industrialized world, environmental legislation in Muslim-majority societies is borrowed from the West (Llewellyn 2003). The contemporary ecological challenges led several contemporary thinkers from outside the religious establishment to address the question of ecology. They resorted to two major sources of Islamic ethics to find backing to their environmental concerns. In reading the Qur’ān and the Hadīth, they focused on nature as the creation of God and the idea of unity and the community. Most of these studies, however, are in English. Rarely do we find a text in the indigenous languages from cultures where Islam predominates, such as Persian, Arabic, or Turkish.

Contemporary authors about Islam and ecology concur that “1. Nature is sacred; 2. The central role of humankind is as earth’s steward; 3. There is an urgent need for Muslims to modify their behaviors in order to live more harmoniously with the non-human world; 4. The moral and ethical dimensions of the non-human world need to be recognized” (Saniotis 2012, p. 167). Whereas most environmental writers attempt to

link the teaching of Islam into the contemporary ecological concerns, Tariq Ramadan goes further and calls for considering deep “issues such as reflection over ways of life and modes of behavior and consumption” (Ramadan 2010).

### Psychological Dimension

The modern term for psychology in Arabic is *‘ilm al-nafs*, the science or knowledge of the soul/psyche. The word *nafs* has several uses in the Qur’ān, with several different meanings: one of them is the soul and another is the self. Three characteristics of *Nafs* in the Qur’ān form the basis of much of the later Muslim ethics and psychology; they are:

(a) It is commanding to evil (*ammara bi’l su’*,) (Q 12, 53); it is associated with desire (*al-hawa*,) (Qur’ān 50, 15), it must be restrained (Q 79, 40) and made patient (Qur’ān XVIII, 27) and its greed must be feared (Qur’ān 59, 9).

(b) The *nafs* is *lawwama*, i.e. it upbraids (Q 75, 2); the souls (*anfus*) of deserters are straitened (Q 9, 119).

(c) The soul is addressed as *mutma’inna*, tranquil (Q 89, 27).

Being a good Muslim requires struggling against the first two characteristics of *Nafs* in order to attain the third one. Taking this as a basis for a psychological approach to ecology brings beings to another concept in the Qur’ān. Several modern writers (Chishti 2003; Clarke 2003; Nasr 1996; Yaqoob 2003) relied on the Quranic notion that Islam is the religion of *Fitra*, “which means the religion that is in the very nature of things and engraved in man’s primordial and eternal substance” (Nasr 1996, p. 145). Being aware of the equal status of beings, animals, and nature as they are all the creation of God, and that they all participate in worshiping and praising God, may form a psychological basis for human ecological awareness. In this regard, it is important to cite the context in which the *Nafs* is characterized as tranquil (Q 89, 27):

(27) “(To the righteous [tranquil] soul will be said:) O (thou) soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction”

- (28) “Come back thou to thy Lord – well pleased (thyself), and well-pleasing unto Him”  
 (29) “Enter thou, then, among My devotees”  
 (30) “Yea, enter thou My Heaven.”

It is in the context of God addressing the *Nafs* to return to the realm of God, and it should be tranquil after observing the rule of good religious practice; it is a return to its primordial state. These verses are often inscribed on tombstones as an invocation of the desire to have pleased God and satisfied the requirements of being a good believer.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Ecotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Muhammad](#)
- ▶ [Patience in Sunni Muslim Worldviews](#)
- ▶ [Participatory Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Space](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)
- ▶ [Sufi Psychology](#)

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## Ecotherapy

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As an umbrella term for nature-based methods of physical and psychological healing, ecotherapy represents a new form of psychotherapy that acknowledges the vital role of nature and addresses the human-nature relationship. It takes into account the latest scientific understandings of our universe and the deepest indigenous wisdom. This perspective addresses the critical fact that people are intimately connected with, embedded in, and inseparable from the rest of nature. Grasping this fact shifts our understanding of how to heal the human psyche and the currently dysfunctional, even lethal, human-nature relationship. What happens to nature for good or ill has an impact on people and vice versa, leading to the development of new methods of individual and community psychotherapeutic diagnosis and treatment (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009, p. 18).

Ecotherapy is sometimes described as applied or clinical ecopsychology. If we define ecopsychology as the study of the human-nature relationship (or the study of the relationship between the human psyche and the rest of nature), then a simple definition of ecotherapy is that it is the field that concerns itself with healing the human-nature relationship.

Sometimes this involves conscious nature contact or nature connection for the purposes of healing people. Animal-assisted therapy, horticultural therapies, nature psychotherapies, wilderness work, outdoor activities, and other restorative modalities are common ecotherapies, backed by impressive scientific research attesting to their healing efficacy. In this sense ecotherapy is evidence-based medicine.

Research on the effectiveness of ecotherapy has tended to focus on specific modalities. Gardening therapy, exercise outdoors, and work with animals, to offer three examples, are consistently associated in study after study with lower blood pressure, diminished anxiety, higher self-esteem, more effective communications skills, development of empathy, and lower intensity of trauma

symptoms such as those of post-traumatic stress. Even simple acts like bringing flowers into a hospital room have been shown to speed recovery from surgery. People who have benefitted from these and other ecotherapy modalities include combat veterans, addicts, at-risk juveniles, autistic children, inner city children needing more nature exposure, and institutionalized dementia patients. Also, Richard Louv describes a condition he calls Nature Deficit Disorder that affects both children and adults, prescribing nature contact in various forms as the necessary treatment.

A summary of some of the growing body of evidence for the significant clinical effectiveness of ecotherapy practices is provided in *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind* (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009).

But ecotherapy isn't just about humans healing themselves by reconnecting with the rest of nature. An equally important aspect of ecotherapy is the reciprocal process of humans adopting a more healing stance towards the rest of nature at a time when the rest of nature is in crisis due to human actions. Ecopsychologists like Sarah Conn have pointed out that in the absence of a healthy natural world, human health is impossible (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009, p. 112). So we can't just think of "using" the rest of nature for our own ends without concerning ourselves with the health of the whole of which we are a part. And we also need to take responsibility for our own destructive – even ecocidal – actions. Humans are in the process of destroying not only our own life support systems but also the life support systems of countless other species. In psychotherapy such behavior would be labeled as suicidal, fratricidal, and matricidal – in short, criminally disordered. Ecotherapy seeks ways of treating this collective insanity.

The word "ecotherapy" was coined by pastoral counselor and Civil Rights activist Howard Clinebell (1922–2005), who was born and grew up in Springfield, Illinois. "In the city," as he said, his exposure to the natural world was a constant influence. His parents converted their part of town into a garden (Clinebell's father was an

agriculturalist) in which the future ecotherapist worked throughout his childhood. The garden not only strengthened his emotional bond with nature, it fed his family through the Great Depression. Clinebell often visited his grandparents' farm, riding horses and milking cows and swimming in the creek.

Not all of his nature encounters were pleasant. Nearly drowning in a river when his boat capsized taught him that nature could be dangerous when treated without care; only an oar floating back to him saved him from going under. As an adult, seeing the Amazon River for the first time, and putting his soil-familiar hand into dirt destroyed by erosion and exploitation, convinced him that in his sorrow he could hear Earth crying out in pain. As a result of these events, Clinebell could not consider counseling or therapy complete if it ignored the social and environmental dimensions of life. The social dimension had opened for him while marching in Montgomery, Alabama, with Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement.

After earning his PhD from Columbia University and graduating from seminary, he noticed that images of nature appeared to him spontaneously as he provided counseling. This convinced him to include nature in his work with people. He continued to do this after founding various counseling organizations, writing 20 books, and visiting every state in the Union, often pausing to hike and enjoy the scenery. His travels and career eventually brought him to Santa Barbara; from his home he could see the Channel Islands, places sacred to the indigenous Chumash people.

Although Clinebell's own spirituality was an earthy Methodism, he taught his students to allow the people they counseled their own values and beliefs without judgment. Clinebell looked upon spirituality as a basic human striving ultimately rooted in the natural world created by God. He did not expect others to share his belief, preferring instead to quietly observe how interacting consciously with nature so often developed one's capacity for transcendent experience and healthy joy.

Clinebell published *Ecotherapy: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Earth* in 1996. He described ecotherapy as "healing and growth nurtured by

healthy interaction with the earth" and gave numerous examples of how to use ecotherapy in a wide variety of counseling situations. However, like Sarah Conn, Clinebell also insisted that genuine ecotherapy always involves reciprocal relations with the natural world rather than exploiting the world, as nature cures tend to do. Recipients of nature's healing presences are encouraged to give something back to the world, thereby acknowledging the relational aspect of ecotherapy while evolving that relationship from one of exploitation or mere sightseeing to one of responsibility and care.

Currently, ecotherapists are increasingly addressing this reciprocal aspect of ecotherapy practice. British ecotherapists Mary-Jayne Rust and Nick Totton (2012), in their anthology *Vital Signs: Psychological Responses to Ecological Crisis*, point out that we must be cognizant of the historical moment at which the fields of ecopsychology and applied ecopsychology have arisen. We must be "aware of the extraordinary urgency of the external situation which it is one of the missions of ecopsychologists to address. While there would in theory still be an important role for ecopsychology [and ecotherapy] if we were not facing environmental meltdown – exploring the complex relationships between human and other-than-human, and the therapeutic value of bringing the two together – in practice ecopsychology [and ecotherapy] has been completely shaped by a sense of catastrophic loss, of the irreversible destruction of complexity and the impending threat to the systems that sustain life on this planet" (Rust and Totton 2012, p. xvii).

This understanding has led to the development of ecotherapeutic grief work, eco-anxiety treatments, and "waking up" practices by ecotherapists like Mary Gomes, Buddhist ecophilosopher Joanna Macy, Sarah Anne Edwards, and Linda Buzzell. There is also a developing literature on how to deal psychologically and spiritually with impending environmental collapse by writers like former psychotherapist and historian Carolyn Baker, ecophilosopher/ecotherapist Joanna Macy and UK ecophysician Chris Johnstone, M.D.



## See Also

► [Clinebell, Howard](#)

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## Ecstasy

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## Definition

The word ecstasy is derived from the Greek “ekstasis,” meaning “beyond or outside the self,” and has different meanings depending on whether it is used in a religious or psychological context. One definition that can be used to underscore these different ecstasies might be

“an experience of blissful non-duality.” This involves an experience of dissolution of ontological boundaries between an internal sense of self and external otherness, leading to an intense affective experience of oneness or union of rapturous intensity called *ecstatic*.

## Religious Perspectives

Religious accounts of ecstatic experience are present in the mystical wings of most major world religions, including the Abrahamic, Dharmic, and “indigenous” traditions (also known as shamanic or pagan faiths). Accounts of ecstatic experience are common to charismatic and contemplative Christianity, the Sufis of Islam, the Kabbalists of Judaism, the Vajrayana practitioners of Buddhism, Tantric Hinduism, and the mystics of Sikhism. Ecstatic experience in a religious context derives from the devotional practices and contemplative disciplines used to dissolve the boundaries between one’s sense of an enclosed separate “self” or “I” and the godhead (Yahweh, God, Allah, Brahman, Nam), omnipresent awakened mind (Buddha) or other divine source of being, such as the nature spirits of indigenous and shamanic traditions. Religious ecstasy may be evoked by the affective intensity of the practitioners’ devotional fervor, expressed in chants, dance, song, poetry, and other physical practices, such as fasting and ritual, or the cognitive space and stillness of contemplative discipline, comprised of meditation or prayer. In many cases, a mixture of both active devotion and contemplative stillness is used to achieve the dissolution of dualistic perceptions and evoke the non-dual experience of ecstatic bliss. This experience would be deemed desirable by most religious practitioners and indicative of spiritual progress. However, the understanding of ecstasy from a psychological perspective is somewhat different.

## Depth Psychology Perspectives

From an object relations psychoanalytic perspective, a loss of boundaries of this kind would imply



the dissolution of the ego and a possible regression to a manic defense against separation (Klein 1940), first deployed by the infant in denial of the absent breast, and so a kind of hallucination that defends against unbearable loss of original oneness with the mother's body. Re-experienced in adulthood, an unmediated, boundariless state of bliss could indicate at best a defensive denial of depression and at worst a psychotic mood disorder of the manic or bipolar kind. The one exception to this pathologizing of ecstasy would be the bliss of orgasm experienced during sexual climax with another person and the ensuing sense of intersubjective merging deemed necessary for a healthy intimate relationship.

From an archetypal psychology perspective, the understanding of ecstatic experience is different again. Jungian psychologist Robert A. Johnson's (1987) book *Ecstasy: Understanding the Psychology of Joy* proposes that Western civilization has repressed an innate human ability to experience this "oneness," due to guilt and alienation from our bodies at the heart of modern consumerist society, now harbored by the Western collective unconscious. He calls for us to return to the days of Dionysian celebration of the pleasures of the body and the senses and reclaim our birthright to a regular experience of cosmic bliss and ecstasy. This enables human beings to retain vitality, joy, and a sense of being alive that is absent in the lives of so many Western adults. A loss of ritual celebration has occurred with secularization, causing a kind of exhaustion at the heart of a culture that prohibits this need for periodic Dionysian play and wildness, says Johnson. This exhaustion may be partly responsible for the pandemic of depression and anxiety plaguing secularized Western societies.

### Neuropsychology Perspectives

However, a neuropsychological analysis of ecstasy uses scientific studies of brain activity to explain the phenomenon of blissful, non-dual experience. Neuropsychologists Newberg and D'Aquili (2000) write:

During certain types of meditation... We have proposed that as the hypertrophic state creates a state of oceanic bliss, the ergotropic eruption results in the experience of a sense of a tremendous release of energy... activity is so extreme that 'spillover' occurs... This may be associated with the experience of an orgasmic, rapturous or ecstatic rush, arising from a generalized sense of flow and resulting in a trance-like state (pp. 255–256).

This "spillover" is comprised of the co-activation of both hemispheres of the brain. Meditative techniques that deploy certain kinds of cognitive strategies alongside focused breathwork enable maximal simultaneous stimulation of the causal and holistic operators that then evoke an existential experience of non-duality, selflessness, or "oneness" with all that is conventionally experienced as "other." The result is ecstasy.

### Psycho-Spiritual Explanations

The above accounts have implications for understanding both the psychology and spirituality of ecstasy as an aspect of an experiential ontology of nonself. Far from being a grandiose, elated sensibility associated with the delusory highs and hallucinations of manic psychoses, rather it may indicate that a sense of a bounded self has been lost or relinquished. This may have both positive and negative results psychologically and spiritually. It may well indicate a regression has taken place but it may also indicate that egocentric object relations have been surrendered, as reported by mystics describing the experience of union with the godhead of monotheisms or merging with the deities or spirits of polytheisms. It may also indicate that the conceptual and ontological boundaries associated with doctrines of the self have been ruptured entirely, as occurs with progressively subtle realizations of "emptiness" or "sunyata" experienced by advanced Buddhist practitioners. Outside the context of religious experience, ecstasy may also be evoked by experience of pure immanence, a kind of blissful integration as depicted in nontheistic poststructural thought of Deleuze (1995/2001).

The key to assessing the function of ecstatic experience must be the observation of the effects. Whether it indicates a psychotic regression or a form of spiritual integration, or just a temporary “peak experience” (Maslow 1964), will be revealed by the longer-term effects on thought, affect, and behavior.

### See Also

- ▶ Dionysos
- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Julian of Norwich
- ▶ Kabbalah
- ▶ Mysticism and Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Sufis and Sufism
- ▶ Sunyata
- ▶ Tantrism
- ▶ Teresa of Avila

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### Edinger, Edward

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Edward Edinger (1922–1998) was a preeminent classical Jungian analyst in New York City,

a very articulate author of many books explaining and elaborating on Carl Jung’s analytical psychology. He wrote insightful books on the psychotherapeutic process, such as *Ego and Archetype*, on Jung’s work, *The Mystery of the Coniunctio: Alchemical Image of Individuation*, and on Greek mythology and Gnosticism. He applied Jungian archetypal principles to cultural works, such as *Shakespeare*, Goethe’s *Faust*, Blake’s *Job*, and Melville’s *Moby Dick*. He was very interested in Christianity, and explored the Bible, the Prophets, the Psalms, the biblical Apocalypse, and The Christian Archetype.

### Jungian Psychoanalysis

Edinger’s classic elaboration of the heart of Jungian analytical psychoanalysis is *Ego and Archetype* (Edinger 1972). Here he explores the depths of the relationship between ego and the Self. The Self is the central archetype of wholeness and access to the transcendent that in childhood contains the dormant ego. As the ego develops consciousness, like a child growing up, it moves out of the Self’s embrace. There are positive and negative potentials to this development, but when the ego maintains its connection to the Self, it is most positive, and if it reaches fulfillment in individuation, it serves the Self in a state of wholeness, resolving positives and negatives into the paradoxical and healing conjunction of opposites (Edinger 1972, p. 3ff).

First, the stages of the ego’s development risk inflation, mythically portrayed in Adam and Eve’s bite into the apple that they thought would make them like God. The expulsion from paradise is the primal ego’s birth into the world of conflict, suffering, and uncertainty, forced to deal with instincts such as sexuality. The polarizations of conscious and unconscious, spirit and nature, emerge, challenging the ego to develop awareness and Self-control. From passive obedience, ego grows into greater consciousness, even if it means fighting with parents or God. Myths of encountering or being bitten by a snake express this transition into a new attitude. A snake, symbolizing the instinctive unconscious, stands

opposite the more mature ego. The danger is inflation, symbolized by unrealistic grandiose plans or flying myths like Icarus. It may enlarge into excessive *hybris* or pride, and fall, without proper taboos, restraint, or grounding in reality (Edinger 1972, pp. 27–30).

A healthy connection to Self's path to transcendence is essential to a healthy emergence of the ego, even if the youth becomes alienated. But if cut off from Self, the divine within, the ego will become alienated from Self and will suffer. Since children project Gods onto parents, parental rejection, expulsion, abuse, or abandonment ruptures the Ego-self axis and can deeply wound the child's trust and Self-respect (Edinger 1972, p. 39). The opposite, an excessively permissive parent who never says "no" to a child can breed the spoiled child, whose movement from Self is short-circuited, becoming unwilling to accept restraint of ego's desires (Edinger 1972, p. 42). This disconnect with Self may lead the ego to see life as nothing but random chance, dumb luck, or tragic despair, cold meaninglessness, and at worst, raging violence, psychosis, or suicide (Edinger 1972, pp. 43–46). Alienation is necessary to growth, but also reconnecting to Self in a new way is necessary to mental and spiritual health.

Individuation is begun with a return from ego's alienation to Self in a mature way. A mythic image of this theme is Moses, the fugitive rebel from Egypt, who experienced Self as the mystical burning bush, and thus began a new connection to transcendence. A woman's encounter with Self may be symbolized as impregnation with the divine, as with Mary, or ecstasy as in Bernini's statue *The Ecstasy of St. Theresa*.

The individuated life becomes not an ego's effort to dominate and control, but a quest for meaning in suffering and love, paradox, and mystery, due to ego's openness to transcendence. Thus ego becomes a mature individual oriented toward service to the greater Self. A unified mystical field is seen underneath earth's apparent opposites, such as matter/spirit, inner/outer, and male/female (Edinger 1972, p. 96). This field, Jung showed, is symbolized in the circular

Mandala that points to the transcendent center as a guide for the ego. Individuation is a process that is never complete, but is a constant life challenge.

Symbols of the goal in dreams, myths, philosophy, and religions, are as varied as metaphysics, the Blood of Christ (Edinger 1972, p. 259), and the Alchemical Philosopher's Stone (Edinger 1972, p. 260ff). In Analytic transference, the client typically projects the transcendent, the parent, or the lover onto the analyst, and the work is to help the client withdraw this projection into himself/herself, reintegrating the conscious ego into wholeness, now on an axis serving not Selfish egotism, but transcendent Self. Expanded consciousness sees into the depths, and death may even become a friend (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 59).

## Jungian Theory

Focusing on Jung's achievements, Edinger sees Jung as a major historical turning point, offering a powerful method for increasing cultural consciousness. In *An American Jungian: In Honor of Edward Edinger*, we have an overview of Edinger's contributions. Like Jung, Edinger worked as an M.D. in psychiatry, so he could see that, in psychotic patients, ego is overcome and archetypal images are confused with outer reality. Ego may identify with archetypal themes of the prophet, the savior, cosmic dualism, death, and rebirth (Elder and Cordic 2009, pp. 100–106).

Jung also developed an influential theory of psychological types: introvert/extravert, thinking/feeling, and sensation/intuition, each pair needing balancing (Elder and Cordic 2009, pp. 80–83). Jung's major insight was to articulate the psychology of the archetypes of the collective unconscious, and their expressions in myth and dreams, beliefs, behavior, and cultural products like art, ritual, and music. This opening to the deep meaningfulness of both religion and myth are disclosures of the transpersonal collective depths of soul, thus expanding consciousness. Every athletic contest becomes a

passionate ritual combat, every film a dramatic myth, and every hero or heroine a numinous archetypal image.

Pathologies are complexes clustered around an archetypal image, thrown off balance by affects that disturb the ego, such as the “daddy’s girl” (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 84). Major archetypes typically encountered early in analysis include the shadow, a cluster of unconscious negative psychic energies symbolized by flaws, beasts, enemies, horrors, and Satan, that are commonly blindly projected out into the world. Analysis seeks to withdraw these shadow images and find the hidden nugget of gold that it represents: Edinger said: “You know we get the truest appraisal of ourselves by listening to our enemies. My policy is to listen more to my enemies than my friends” (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 226).

## Culture

Edinger also stresses Jung’s perception that the sixteenth century was the major turning point in Western history, when the Reformation, the Renaissance, printed books, Columbus’ explorations, and the rise of science and expanded commerce, pulled culture away from the faith, toward the modern individual ego, symbolized by the mythic *Faust*, who prefigured the shadow of modernity. He sold his soul to the Devil for unlimited mortal power and pleasure. But modernity’s positive side was to draw away from religion as obedience to authority toward experience of transcendence in one’s psyche, the Self. As the shadow of modernity developed, however, it shifted ego into a hostile, materialistic relationship to nature, and the current ecological and economic crises followed, symbolized in Melville’s *Moby Dick* (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 59).

Jung also revolutionized religion by showing its psychological roots. He transformed the God image, Edinger said. Unlike Freud, whose nineteenth century materialistic atheism scorned religion, Jung opened the way to see that the healthy ego needs a proper relationship to authentic transcendence. This led to seeing that this numinous

power can be symbolized in many ways, so conventional religions came to be seen as full of mythic, not just literal, but poetic symbols of real transcendent powers. Miracles, such as Jesus’ healing the blind, conveyed the mysterious depth of transcendent power, beyond ego’s literal [blind] comprehension. To understand religion, the ego must hear poetically, symbolically the subtle mythic language of powers beyond its literalist ken. This shifted the entire hermeneutic of religious studies to a far more symbolic phenomenology, blended with history. Though Jung was primarily monotheistic in his thinking, he really helped undermine monotheism with his openness to the many images of transcendence. This helped open the door for feminists to reawaken the goddess archetypal images and give them a direct gender-friendly image of transcendence. It also helped open doors to the study of world religions, in search of a common global ground for all religious images of transcendence. This was a strong move. Edinger said:

The great service that Jung has performed by his discovery of the collective unconscious, and the archetypes, and the Self, is that he’s penetrated to the psychological basis that underlies all the world religions.... We’ve got the basis now for a unification of the factual divisions among the world religions (Elder and Cordic 2009, pp. 65–66).

Jung saw that psychology is not a religion, but it deals with the source of religions. Religion is not just translating and elaborating on pure revelations from above, but comes through the Self and blends transcendent power with very human constructs, thus obviating literalist interpretations (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 69). Like the early Modern Paracelsus, Jung saw that the cosmic energy is not simply above, is it below: “the lower heaven,” and the “stars are in us” (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 120).

Jung also struggled with the problem of evil, and concluded in *The Answer to Job* that the archetypal God has a shadow, a dark side, and a backside, like all archetypes. We see this now in other divinities, such as the Hindu goddess Kali, source of both life and death. Existence is not made to please humans or believers, nor is God

simply a pure cosmic spirit, separate from and high above the world. That mythic image simplifies faith in heavenly goodness overcoming evil in monotheism, but leaves victims struggling with problems such as the Holocaust.

The worldwide myths of Apocalypse, are not literal end of the world messages, but symbolic narratives of the end of historical eras, whether eras of imperial national power or eras of religious claims to unique authority (Elder and Cordic 2009, pp. 226–229). But the ends of eras do happen, hopefully without too much damage. But Edinger fears for the power of modern humanity and its technologies to destroy more than before. He liked Matthew Arnold, whose “Dover Beach” envisions the end of modern religious faith:

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar...  
(Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 258).

Yet Edinger believes that, like the Second Coming, this dismal vision of archetypal apocalyptic forces set loose by modernity will be redeemed by Jung’s monumental discovery of the power of the increased consciousness brought by postmodern Jungian psychology. If religions can adapt to this new vision and increase consciousness over literalism and obedience, see through dogmas and mythic religious traditions to the truly powerful numinous transcendence found when the ego aligns with the Self, the spark of God within each soul, there is hope. Enlightened by Jung’s insights, world religions may see the common truth of love for enemies and justice for the poor, at the foundation of all their traditions. Scientific and technological egos may acknowledge their limits, the ecological damage done, and the enchantments in their own technological dreams [such as distant space travel and technological utopia]. Instead each may open their souls to deep transcendence within and without, whispering, with Wordsworth: ... trailing clouds of glory do we come/ From God, who is our home... (Elder and Cordic 2009, p. 257). But after Jung, that word “God”

will have an entirely different meaning – not a socially constructed angry judge or an authoritarian patriarch, but an ineffable experience of powerful and subtle numinous transcendence through the psyche’s Self, that through the Ego-Self axis, guides the ego’s struggles to personal and collective harmony.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dreams and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Feminism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Phenomenology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and the Red Book: Liber Novus](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Post-Jungians](#)
- ▶ [Symbols of Transformation in Dreams](#)
- ▶ [von Franz, Marie-Louise](#)

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## Ego

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In classical psychoanalysis, the human personality contains three parts: the id, ego, and superego. The id is defined in terms of the most primitive

urges for gratification in the infant, urges dominated by the desire for pleasure. Ruled by no laws of logic, and unconstrained by the resistance of external reality, the id uses what Freud called the primary process, directly expressing somatically generated instincts. Through the inevitable experience of frustration, the infant learns to adapt itself to reality. The resulting secondary process leads to the growth of the ego, which follows what Freud called the reality principle, in contradistinction to the pleasure principle dominating the id. Here the need to delay gratification in the service of self-preservation is slowly learned in an effort to thwart the anxiety produced by unfulfilled desires. What Freud termed defense mechanisms are developed by the ego to deal with such conflicts. These mechanisms are a set of unconscious ego activities aimed at maintaining an internal equilibrium inside the personality. Repression is the most fundamental defense mechanism, but Freud also posited an entire repertoire of others, including reaction formation, isolation, undoing, denial, displacement, and rationalization.

The ego is the central and the executive part of the personality. It is the only part which is in contact with reality, and one of its major tasks is reality testing. Moreover, it has to balance internal demands, coming from the id and the superego, with the demands of the outside world. The ego is the locus for our subjective consciousness and its operations. It thinks, speaks, sees, makes decisions, and controls our body. Through the ego, the personality deals with reality. But there is another level of unconscious processing, which really determines observable behavior on the part of the person. At the unconscious level, the ego copes with unconscious anxiety coming from within and caused by the id and the superego.

The imagination is a major area of the ego's activity. It creates the person's dreams, as well as art, science, and culture at every level. Religious beliefs are created by the ego's activity, prodded by internal anxiety and outside reality pressures. In psychoanalytic interpretations of religion, various defense mechanisms in the ego have been suggested as contributing to religion and to

religious experiences, such as splitting, denial, projection, and repetition compulsion. The ego creates religion and then uses it for its own support and adaptation to reality.

### See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)

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## Eleusinian Mysteries

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The mystery cult of Eleusis had roots in ancient initiation rituals of the divine child, in the person of the *pais aph'hestias* ("boy of the hearth"). In the myth of Demeter and Persephone, after Persephone is abducted by Hades, her mother, Demeter, allowed the earth to become infertile and barren as she searched everywhere for her lost daughter. In Eleusis she disguised herself as a nurse maid and cared for the child Demophon, son of the king there. When she attempted to give the child immortality by dipping him into fire, she was discovered and had to reveal herself as Demeter. A temple was built for the goddess at Eleusis and in time the mystery cult evolved there. By sometime in the sixth century BCE, the cult was taken over by the city state of Athens and involved secret initiation rites in an inner sanctum facing which was a magnificent hall. A priestess of Demeter lived in the sanctuary. The rites began with a ritual bath and 3 days of fasting, followed by a procession to



Eleusis led by a statue of the god Iacchos, a form of Dionysos. Rituals still essentially unknown then took place in the inner sanctum, rituals that in some sense signified or were meant to ensure fertility, in keeping with Demeter's role as the goddess of fertility. It seems that the initiate spent a night in total darkness and was finally awakened at daybreak by the light of a great fire.

Psychologically, the initiate is the divine child waiting to be released in each of us. Through the process of the Dark Night of the Soul, the journey into unconscious, we can achieve the illumination represented by the light of the fire that awakens the initiate, itself representing the fire into which Demeter dipped the child in the myth. So immersion in fire becomes a baptismal rite of immortality or rebirth, full initiation into the clan of those who have experienced the mysteries.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Divine Child](#)

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## Eliade, Mircea

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Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) was a Romanian-born historian of religion who did much to shape that discipline and make it an intellectual force in the twentieth century. Eliade graduated

from the University of Bucharest in 1928 and then in 1928–1931 studied Indian philosophy at the University of Calcutta and yoga at an ashram in Rishikesh. Returning to Romania, he earned his Ph.D. in 1933 with a dissertation on yoga which, after later revisions and translations, became his *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (1958). Eliade joined the faculty of the University of Bucharest in 1933, where he taught history of religion and Indian philosophy, as well as becoming a widely-read author of fiction and journalistic commentary in the 1930s, something being spoken of as a major voice of the younger generation of Romanians.

In those troubled times for Romania and Europe, toward the end of the decade, Eliade became involved in the rightist politics of the fascist Iron Guard movement; when the King, Carol II, turned against that body in 1938, the young professor was arrested. After his release, well-placed patrons helped him to escape his increasingly desperate homeland in 1940 by securing his appointment as cultural attaché to the Romanian legation in London and, 1941–1945, in Lisbon, Portugal. After the Axis defeat, Eliade, unable to return home because of the communist take-over of his country, became a professor at the Sorbonne in Paris, and then in 1957 at the University of Chicago, where he remained until his death. His prolific postwar work, containing little overt political content, has been largely devoted to understanding the history and meaning of religion.

## Basic Ideas

Eliade's basic ideas are concisely expressed in *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959) and *Cosmos and History* (1954; also published as *The Myth of the Eternal Return*). In the former, the fundamental assertion is that, for *homo religiosus*, the traditionally religious person, reality is “nonhomogeneous,” split-level, divided into sacred and profane spheres. “Sacred space,” the space of the shrine or temple, the pilgrim's goal or the site of a divine “hierophany” or manifestation such as Moses' burning bush or an apparition

of Our Lady, has a distinct atmosphere or “feel” different from the ordinary, profane world. “Sacred time,” the hours of a festival or religious rite, likewise, is set apart inwardly and outwardly from the profane. Both sacred space and time are likely to be demarcated by symbols. One attuned to it is instinctively aware of the Sacred, likely to speak in a hushed voice and tread with reverent step in its presence.

Sacred space and time, in Eliade’s interpretation, are like recapitulations of *illud tempus*, “that time,” the primal time recited in the culture’s myths of creation and salvation, when divine powers were strong. Temple and rite provide memory of *illud tempus* and a means of access back to it. (For example, the sacred time and space of the Eucharist offers the Christian *homo religiosus* a way once again to be with Jesus and present on the night and day of salvation; cf. also Passover, Chinese and Japanese New Year’s, Wesak, etc.) Symbols of the *axis mundi* (pivot of the world), the sacred tree, pillar, or mountain which connects heaven and earth (the cross, the Christmas tree, Mt. Meru) are especially important.

The Sacred can also be “interiorized,” found within, and so it is in shamanism, yoga, and authentic mystical and religious experience generally. One finds ways to access inner space and time, even an inner *axis mundi* (e.g., the spinal column in some schools of yoga), through appropriate techniques, and often after appropriate initiations. These are discussed in Eliade’s *Yoga* and in *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1964), as well as elsewhere. In the latter work, the author presents a discussion, which has proved influential in psychology and literary criticism as well as history of religion, of the shamanic initiate’s passage through several stages of call, “initiatory psychopathology,” and interiorization of spirit guides before becoming a proficient.

## Cosmos and History

In *Cosmos and History*, Eliade proposes that traditional religious history presents two stages:

cosmic religion and historical religion. The former, essentially that of archaic hunters and farmers (Paleolithic and Neolithic humanity), though with some continuities down to the present, has little sense of linear, historical time but finds and expresses sacred meaning in aspects of nature – the turn of the seasons, sacred rocks, or trees – and in human life in the social order and the life cycle of birth, maturation, and death. Its festivals are those of New Year’s, recapitulating the creation, and annual seedtime and harvest. An “Other World” of gods and spirits stands over against this world here and now; shamans are especially adept at contacting it.

Historical religions, such as Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, differ in that the *illud tempus*, the “strong time” on which the religion is based, was not so much the creation as a moment *within* the stream of linear, historical time: the time of the Buddha’s Enlightenment, of the Exodus, of Jesus (“the hopes and fears of all the years/are met in thee tonight”), and of the revelation of the Holy Qur’an. While these faiths retain considerable admixtures of cosmic religion (Passover and Easter as Spring as well as historical-event festivals), the major focus is on religion and salvation as historically conditioned, and this greatly affects the nature of religion.

Eliade did not conceal his own “nostalgia for the sacred” and for the sacred world of cosmic religion, when the Sacred infused nature and the world could be renewed every year. He spoke of the “terror of history” wrought by the discovery, religious and otherwise, that we humans live in irreversible historical time, not cosmic “eternal return” time. Yet he was well aware that moderns cannot undo modernity; we can at best only complete our own humanity through awareness of that other human possibility which he hoped study of the history of religion could unveil; that was the import of the significant article, “The History of Religions and a New Humanism,” with which he inaugurated the journal he helped found, *History of Religions* (reprinted in *The Quest*, 1969).

Other important works of Eliade’s include *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958), *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* (1960), *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1958), the three-volume

*History of Religious Ideas (1978–1985)*, and his editorship of the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987). There are also several volumes of fiction and of interviews and autobiography.

## Criticism

Eliade has been criticized for the selective use of data to support his models, for being an “essentialist” toward religion and the sacred (i.e., holding it has an objective, unchanging nature) and as an anti-modernist. Some have associated the last with his youthful political views. In response, one could say that he often tried to make clear that his accounts of the sacred are intended to show how the world *appears* to *homo religiosus* as an ideal type, or to put it another way that his model is what is “said” by the phenomena of religion in itself, whether or not most worshippers are an ideal *homo religiosus*; that he believed we need to understand and appreciate the religious past but not to live there; and that the universalism of his history of religions project would appear at odds with the fascist drive to sacralize just one nation and people.

In any case, there is much in Eliade that religious psychology can use: the “nonhomogeneous” character of experience of the religious world; the importance of finding inner and outer ways to get in touch with sacred space and time, whether through places, music, sacraments, or meditation; and the significance of initiatory experience. He has aided many estranged moderns in grasping the inner significance of archaic spirituality.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Astrology and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)
- ▶ [Yoga](#)

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## Elixir

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Elixir (Greek, *xērion*, “healing powder”) is a drug or substance which has life-prolonging properties. Throughout history, the elixir has been sought as an antidote to illness and the human desire for *athasias*, “immortality.” There are a variety of texts and symbols having to do with the elixir. In the ancient alchemical text “Isis to Horus,” the prophetess Isis procures what she calls the *pharmakon tēs chēras* (“drug of the widow”) (16). This is the secret revelation which she gives to her son for immortality.

The secret revelation consists of the regenerative potency of nature, *physis*: “nature enjoys nature and nature conquers nature” (*hē physis tēn physin terpetai, kai hē physis tēn physin nika*) (7). In ancient mythology, Isis herself is the arcane substance and elixir, glistening with the white of the moon, her crown bounded by serpents, and her cloak “deep black and gleaming” (Apuleius 1989, *The Golden Ass*, XI.3). She is the “dew” and “water of life” (*aqua permanens*) which heals and unites the dismembered parts (Jung 1959/1968, pars. 14). In the ancient Mithras Liturgy found in the Greek Magical Papyri, the supplicant speaks of the juices of herbs and spices and of the mysteries handed down to gain immortality for an only child (PGM IV.477). The sixteenth-century physician and alchemist Paracelsus taught that all substances – mineral, vegetable, animal – contain *quinta-essentia* or “virtue.” Even the smallest amount when extracted can be used for its life-giving, healing properties (Paracelsus 1951, p. 164). The alchemical symbol of the “fish” as the arcane substance becomes understood to be the *lapis philosophorum* – the *elixir vitae* – something going back to early Arabic alchemy. Senior (Zadith ben Hamuel), the tenth-century Islamic alchemist, identifies Christ with the *homo philosophicus*, the Microcosm and One who does not die and brings life to anything dead (1566, p. 71; Jung 1953/1993, p. 392). The first-century Christian martyr Ignatius of Antioch refers to the Eucharist as the *pharmakon athanasias*, “the medicine of immortality,” something perhaps reaching back to *kipsu* offerings of bread and water in the Mesopotamian cult of the dead. According to Ignatius, the Eucharist is an antidote (*antidotes*) “that allows us not to die, but to live in Jesus Christ at all times” (Eph. 20). Compare also the life-enhancing forbidden fruit (Hebrew, *pry*) in Gen. 3.2. Mandala centers containing figures such as the Buddha Amitabha or Avalokiteshvara are thought to have elixir properties according to the Taoist text, the *Golden Flower* (Jung 1968, p. 98). A certain life force may also be perceived to have generative potency such as the *Yesod* of the ninth *sefirah* of the Kabbalah tree in Jewish mysticism. It is the flowing together of all cosmic energies.

Compare the Astral Light in transcendental magic (Leví 2001) and also *chee* as the vital spark of life in Taoism. With all of these texts and symbols, the elixir is understood to result from unconscious processes being made conscious and involving the union of opposites which yields the regenerative New. The elixir as the quintessence of that processing is precious, valued, and guarded. It may be both life-giving and life-taking, healing or poisonous depending upon how it is used.

### See Also

- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy
- ▶ Mandala

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### Emergentism

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In contradistinction to psychoanalytic theories and methods that are essentially reductive in

nature, Jung's approach attends to the whole person. The integration of the personality is the central feature of Jung's view of psychological health and maturation. His notion of individuation involves a lifelong dialectic process between conscious and unconscious dimensions of the personality. This goes beyond ego adaptation to reality as the goal of psychological development found in other schools of analysis but requires ongoing examination and even struggle with whatever aspects of one's personality are activated by inner and outer experiences in life. Over the long term, this results in a decentering of the personality with regard to the ego together with the emergence of a new center, the self, which includes transpersonal dimensions. The self is envisioned by Jung to encompass the whole of the personality, conscious and unconscious, personal and collective; it is center and circumference. As such, it does not lead towards perfectionism, but in striving for conscious expression, it necessarily remains unfinished; the approach is towards completeness, with its positive and negative features. It is the achievement of a lifetime. The vision here is radically holistic. What are the roots of this vision?

### Mythic and Historic Background

Prior to the advent of modern science, holistic perspectives were an integral part of cultural life. As a part of the prescientific worldview, the entire world was seen as animated and often so portrayed in mythologies. Within traditional cultures, tales of emergence are commonly featured in creation myths. Original ancestors are typically envisioned as emerging from earth or water, or the world itself emerges from the waters of chaos. Stories of this sort are found throughout history and across cultures. Examples are plentiful, as from ancient Egyptian and Assyrian sources, in tales from Melanesia and the indigenous peoples of the Americas, as well as the better known Norse, Greco-Roman, and Judeo-Christian variants. Mythically emergence displays a transcultural or archetypal pattern, symbolic of birth or rebirth. This mythic stratum

forms a deep background for subsequent elaborations of emergence on a more conceptual level.

During the seventeenth century, with the rise of the scientific paradigm, a new precision was brought to the concept of "emergence." The term began to appear in scientific language as when Newton described experiments in optics, e.g., referring to the refraction of light through a prism he notes "the incident refractions were...equal to the emergent" (Newton 1676, p. 555). Perhaps most interesting of the new conceptual use of terms related to emergence was that by G. W. Leibniz (the co-discoverer of calculus along with Newton). Leibniz was the first person to employ the term "supervenience" consistent with emergentist views in a way similar to its modern use by philosophers of mind (Kim 1993). For Leibniz, this indicated a synchronous, non-Cartesian relationship between bodies and minds, consistent with an emergentist perspective, as has recently been discussed (Cambray 2005). This view of the mind-body relationship, of a preestablished harmony, was the one Jung identified as the primary precursor for his idea of synchronicity.

Leibniz's insights into supervenience were so far ahead of his times that they languished in obscurity for almost 250 years before being revived by the emergentist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Philosophically descriptive emergentism was seeking to reestablish a view of science based on holistic principles. One of the most significant figures in this movement for the development of Jungian thought was Conway Lloyd Morgan. His 1896 book *Habit and Instinct*, with its entomological examples such as the leaf-cutting ant and the yucca moth, was a major source for Jung's formulation of archetypal theory (Hogenson 2001). Morgan's 1922 Gifford lectures on *Emergent Evolution* included recognition of Leibniz's foundational role in this paradigm.

Due to the speculative, philosophical nature of this paradigm at the time (it lacked a more solid experimental base), it could not compete against the empirical data from the growing field of biochemistry and especially the finding arising from

the advent of molecular biology in understanding biological systems. With the triumphant articulation of the structure of the molecular base of genetics, in the form of the biopolymer DNA, revealed by crystallography in 1953, a more reductive, strictly deterministic philosophy came to dominate many of the biological sciences. There was a countermovement in general systems theory and cybernetics also developing during this era, but applications were limited. Jung himself was interested in cybernetic principles and saw the human psyche as a self-regulating system.

### Complex Systems

The study of systems has been greatly aided by the availability of high-speed computers. Remarkable breakthroughs in modeling systems that could not be analyzed by conventional, reductive means due to their complexity began to draw attention starting with the study of “chaos theory.” This was first popularly applied to the investigation of weather patterns. More general exploration of systems made up of numbers of parts capable of interacting with one another showed that certain kinds of interactive systems could produce aggregate properties and behaviors which were not discernable or predictable from the known attributes of the parts. These high-order, non-reducible traits are explored in the new science of “complexity.” Complex systems are nonlinear, small variations, as in initial conditions can generate large changes (the well-known butterfly effect).

A particularly important subset of these systems are those that open to the environment, under selection pressure, capable of dissipating energy and generating increased internal order – they have significant adaptive capacity and are referred to as complex adaptive systems marked by self-organizing properties. The higher-order phenomena associated with the self-organizing features of these systems are termed emergent. There are a number of traits generally associated with emergence: novelty, irreducibility, nonlinearity, unpredictability, and synergy; some researchers also include coherence and historicity.

### Emergence in Analytical Psychology

Emergent phenomena have become a distinct area of study for systems scientists. They have been shown to most likely occur at the edge of order and chaos and are seen as the site for coming into being of life, the psyche and the mind, remarkably consistent with and affirming of the mythopoetic stories referred to earlier. Emergence has been found throughout nature and the human world: from the organization within clusters of subatomic particle all the way to the clustering of galaxies; in biological systems such as the behavior of social insects, the organization of and interactions within the body and brain from which mind emerges; to networks of human interactions producing economic and cultural behaviors. Emergence spans, transgresses, and links the many disciplines studied by humans. In recent years, the study complex systems and emergence have been effectively used to reconsider a variety of Jung’s ideas: archetypes, complexes, the self, synchronicity, as well as his analytic methods (see Cambrey and Carter 2004 together with the references therein). Other schools of psychology have also begun to adopt systemic thinking to their approaches. Within the psychoanalytic community, the intersubjective and relational schools have been most active in developing applying these ideas to their analytic models. Dyads, such as mother-infant pairings as well as analytic couples, have been examined and discussed for their self-organizing and emergent properties.

Although during his lifetime Jung only had studies on self-regulation to draw upon (complexity theory had not yet been developed), he was able to intuit various principles of self-organization and emergence. In applying these ideas to psychological problems and their transcendence, he comments:

I had learned that all the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble. They must be so, for they express the necessary polarity inherent in every *self-regulating system*. They can never be solved, but only outgrown. I therefore asked myself whether this outgrowing, this possibility of further psychic development,



was not the normal thing, and whether getting stuck in a conflict was pathological. Everyone must possess that *higher level*, at least in embryonic form, and must under favorable circumstances be able to develop this potentiality (Jung 1967, para. 18, my ital).

Similarly Jung's theory of compensation with the importance that it stresses on the emergence of a "third" position as a transcendent reality that allows overcoming difficulty without attempting direct solution of problems can be seen as based on an emergentist perspective. This view also allows a reformulation of psychopathology in terms of fears of or resistance to emergence. For Jung then human suffering as well as its transcendence is embedded in a profoundly systemic worldview.

Because Jung's model of the self has an interactive, transpersonal dimension to it, the emergentist aspect of this has been noted. Similarly there is an inherent holism in Jung's self: "As an empirical concept, the self designates the whole range of psychic phenomena in man. It expresses the unity of the personality as a whole" (Jung 1971, para. 789). The spiritual features of Jung's archetypal model of the self have often been discussed; here it serves as part of the linkage between psychology and religion that has entered some of the emergentist literature. Thus, philosopher Philip Clayton's discussion of levels of emergence beyond mental causation associated with mind, derived from biological systems, seeks to make such bridges. In this, collective intelligences of various sorts are drawn upon to point towards phenomena of the spirit (Clayton 2004, Chap. 5: "Emergence and Transcendence"). The growing interest in emergentism in many fields of human endeavor will perhaps allow a deeper appreciation of Jung's psychological genius and a fuller reconsideration of his model of the psyche. In recent years, there have been a growing number of publications reframing Jung's views on archetypes in terms of emergent properties of the psyche providing a bridge to potential engagement with other psychological researchers using an emergentist paradigm.

## See Also

- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jungian Self
- ▶ Synchronicity

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## Emotional Intelligence

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Emotional intelligence is a relatively recent term that has significant implications for understanding religious experience and faith. Before defining emotional intelligence and explaining its relevance to religious faith, it is important to first set the stage by offering a brief definition of the term emotion and an overview of how it has been understood and used in philosophical and theological thought, as well as in the human sciences.

## Defining Emotions

There is considerable debate among researchers, psychologists, and philosophers about what emotions are and how they differ from feelings, sentiments, and moods (see Frijda 2000). “Some researchers,” report Parrot and Spackman, “conceive of emotion in an undifferentiated manner, investigating the effects of overall arousal, excitement, agitation, or drive without any distinguishing among different types of emotional states. Others treat emotional states as varying along two or more continuous dimensions, such as arousal and valence. The third and most common approach to emotional states treats them as discrete categories” (Parrot and Spackman 2000, p. 476). For our purposes, emotion comprises (1) complex mental processes that are innate or pre-organized, which may not be conscious or experienced as distinct feelings, and (2) discrete categories of feeling states such as anger, sadness, fear, and hate. Moods are different from feelings in that they are global and not necessarily directed toward an object or result from a particular object or event (Jacobson 1957, pp. 73–113).

## Overview of Emotions in Philosophy and Science

The notion of emotion vis-à-vis reason, will, and religious faith has varied in meaning and significance in Western philosophy and theology (Solomon 2000, pp. 3–15). Aristotle, in his Rhetoric, recognized that emotions are necessary for rational appraisal and the good life (see Sorabji 2000, pp. 23–26). Rational appraisal for Aristotle includes a person’s ability to assess accurately a social context and to act with the appropriate amount of emotion. After Aristotle, the Stoics offered a slightly different perspective on emotions. Sorabji noted that the Stoics identified four emotions, namely, distress, pleasure, fear, and appetite (Sorabji 2000). They claimed that every “emotion involves two distinct value judgments. One that there is

a good or bad (benefit or harm) at hand, the other that it is appropriate to act” (Sorabji 2000, p. 29). Posidonius, a later Stoic philosopher, criticized the intellectualism of other Stoics, arguing, “that the examination of things good and evil, the examination of goals, and the examination of virtues depend on a correct examination of emotions” (Sorabji 2000, p. 95). Posidonius also said that there are occasions when we experience emotions that are not connected to value judgments (e.g., being moved by music), suggesting that there are irrational or unconscious processes at work; in modern-day parlance, there are emotional experiences that are tenuously connected to the prefrontal cortex. Emotions, for the Stoics, also involve imagination and attention. That is, we can increase the intensity of emotion by way of our imagination.

Solomon argued that, as the Hellenistic philosophers gave way to Christian theologians, several significant changes occurred regarding how theologians conceptualized the relation between reason and emotion. In general, emotion was split between those that led to vices and those that led to virtues. Desire and passion were seen as distorting the will and reason, which gained expression in the seven deadly sins. The good emotions were love, hope, and faith and these were “often equated with reason” (Solomon 2000, p. 6). Emotions linked to the passions and desires were suspect, needing to be eradicated or controlled through spiritual disciplines. The elevation of reason and suspicion of intense emotions were yoked to how theologians conceptualized gender and power. Men were viewed as having greater capacities for reason and women and children with less, making them more susceptible to emotions (passions).

Some modern philosophers have been critical of Cartesian and Christian philosophical traditions that elevate, if not glorify, reason and ignore or minimize emotions in reason and faith (Fiumara 2001; Furtak 2005). John Macmurray, who seemed to take one of his cues from Spinoza’s view that rationality and irrationality are qualities of emotions, was one of the first

modern Western philosophers to argue forcefully that reason plays a role in emotional life and that reason is contingent upon emotion. “Any inquiry,” he wrote, “must have a motive or it could not be carried on at all, and all motives belong to our emotional life” (Macmurray 1992, p. 3). Macmurray believed that we “can only begin to grow up into rationality when we begin to see our emotional life not as the center of things but as part of the development of humanity” (1992, p. 14). For Macmurray, a dynamic interdependence exists between reason and emotion. Thus, we must cultivate both.

While ancient and modern philosophers debated questions about the significance of emotions vis-à-vis knowledge and religious faith, scientists were interested in studying (1) emotions in humans and animals, (2) emotional expressions and meanings across cultures, and (3) emotion vis-à-vis the brain. In the nineteenth century, Charles Darwin studied emotions in human beings and animals (Darwin 1972). In the United States, philosopher-psychologist William James rooted emotions in human physiology, arguing that emotion is caused by physiological sensations (James 1884). He later explored the relation between emotions and religious experience (James 1958). His Viennese counterpart, Sigmund Freud, developed a complex theory of the mind and its relation to anxiety, a central emotion in human life (Roose and Glick 1995). More recently, there has been an explosion of research regarding emotions and intelligence in relation to psychosocial development, psychopathology, and neuroanatomy (Ekman 2003; Shore 2003). This research demonstrates the (1) existence of a feedback loop between physical expressions of emotions and a person’s conscious experience of emotion, (2) centrality of emotions in perceptions and the organization of experience (the interconnection between the limbic system and the prefrontal cortex), and (3) importance of parent’s recognition and appropriate responses vis-à-vis their child’s emotional assertions in his/her developing the capacities for emotional self-regulation, empathy, and social confidence.

## Emotional Intelligence

This research has increased interest in moving away from measuring intelligence solely in terms of cognition. The ideas of interpersonal and emotional intelligence have been proposed, not to replace the intelligence quotient but rather to deepen and expand our understanding of the complexity of intelligence in human life. Gardner argued that intelligence comprises interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence:

Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand other people: what motivates them, how they work, how to work cooperatively with them. Successful salespeople, politicians, teachers, clinicians, and religious leaders are likely to be individuals with high degrees of interpersonal intelligence. Intrapersonal intelligence . . . is a correlative ability, turned inward. It is a capacity to form an accurate, veridical model of oneself and to use that model to operate effectively in life (Goleman 1997, p. 39).

Both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, Gardner claimed, include the abilities to recognize, differentiate between, and appropriately respond to the desires, aims, emotions, and moods of other people. This requires a person’s ability to notice and respond appropriately to social-emotional cues, all of which may take place outside of awareness. Similarly, emotional intelligence, which has various definitions and emphases, refers to an array of cognitive-emotional capacities whereby a person is able to recognize, monitor, and regulate his/her own feelings, as well as the feelings of others. This is accomplished through awareness and appraisal of one’s own and others’ tone of voice, facial expressions, body posture, and gestures, as well as an individual’s and group’s ability to think about or reflect on their emotions (see Taylor et al. 1999, pp. 339–354).

Daniel Goleman has done much to popularize the term emotional intelligence. Citing and summarizing Salovey and Mayer’s, he identified five capabilities related to emotional intelligence, namely, (1) knowing one’s emotions, (2) managing one’s emotions, (3) recognizing emotions in others, (4) motivating oneself, and (5) handling

relationships (Goleman 1997, p. 43). In a later work, Goleman narrates the discussions between scientists and Tibetan religious leaders about destructive and constructive emotions (Goleman 2004). In these conversations, scientists identify research that points to the effectiveness of religious meditation practices in increasing the capacities of emotional intelligence.

### **Emotional Intelligence: Implications for Religion and Faith**

Since Goleman's book, there has been a rise in the literature on emotional intelligence, ranging from scholarly articles to popular self-help books for parents, teachers, leaders, and business people. Some of this has spilled over into the area of religious faith, though the implications of the idea of emotional intelligence for understanding religious faith development are still being realized, in part, because researchers and clinicians continue to rely on cognitive and psychodynamic theories and models of development (see Lyon 2004, pp. 269–284). These psychological perspectives tend to relegate emotions to the background, suggesting that the primary focus of faith development is the regulation of emotions. Instead of relegating emotions to an adjunct position, we might wonder how the notion of emotional intelligence alters views on faith, faith development, and religious experience. How, in other words, does the idea of emotional intelligence inform our understanding of religious faith and experience? Does faith depend on cultivating emotions? If emotional intelligence is necessary for individual and social health, do religious practices and beliefs contribute in any way to the development of emotional intelligence? By contrast, what religious practices and beliefs obstruct emotional intelligence?

While there is growing interest in addressing these questions more directly (Emmons 2000, pp. 3–26; Reich 2003, pp. 1–32), Goleman and others note that religious practices and beliefs can contribute to the development of emotional intelligence. Goleman points to research that shows how Tibetan religious beliefs in loving kindness,

gentleness, and compassion – coupled with the practice of meditation – contribute to emotional intelligence. Similarly, Christian beliefs such as loving one's neighbors, showing compassion for others, as well as religious practices that aim to embody these principles can lead to the development of emotional intelligence and a living faith. One may conclude that (1) the development of emotional intelligence is necessary for the development of a religious faith that embodies compassion, empathy, and loving kindness and (2) particular religious practices and beliefs can lead to the development of emotional intelligence. This said, faith researchers also recognize that human beings can be deliberately cruel and destructive. Traditionally, theological concepts such as idolatry, sin, and evil have been used to account for human destructiveness. The idea of emotional intelligence can be used to reinterpret theological concepts (e.g., sin and idolatry) and expand our understanding of maladies of faith or religious experience.

Research on emotions and the development of emotional intelligence adds to our understanding of human life. This offers theologians, researchers on religious experience and faith development, and ministers of all faiths opportunities to reconceptualize and expand upon their theological anthropologies, their theories on faith development, and their practices of care.

### **See Also**

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ James, William

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## Enlightenment

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Enlightenment generally refers to phenomena involving a significant change of consciousness regarding the self, others, and the universe with accompanying physiological, perceptual, and

conceptual changes that result in significant spiritual or moral changes. It is commonly used in Chan (Zen) Buddhism to refer to the experience resulted from accomplishment in practice, meditation, or insight that is synonymous as seeing the Buddha nature or self-nature or discovering the true or original mind.

That the experience of enlightenment is a critical step of spiritual change toward Buddhahood instead of exercising ritual practice, performing philanthropy, observing ethical disciplines, or merely cultivating calmness meditation had been an emphasis of the Chan school beginning from Bodhidharma. The emphasis on the practice and concept of sudden enlightenment began to gain ground and become the mainstream with the systematic and institutional propagation by the school following the Six Patriarch Huineng.

## Definition and Critical Stages

Enlightenment is an experiential realization of the Buddhist philosophy of no-self and the liberation from inner vexation leakages. The sense of self versus others is broken through with the dissolution of the subject-object duality due to the cessation of the mind's uncontrollable discursive and illusive thoughts. It is sometimes being described as the experience of the “shedding of the body and mind” or “the falling off of the bottom of a paint pail.” Whether there is any experience of light or some specific exalted blissful feeling is not its primary concern.

The development of enlightenment may be most easily understood through the Ten Ox Herding Pictures (Sheng-Yen 1988). They represent the successive stages from beginning practice to helping others after full enlightenment. The story describes the journey of an ox herder, a practitioner, looking for his lost ox, the enlightenment mind. Some milestones are the following:

- (1) the third picture – Seeing the Ox: It refers to the first discovery of the true mind with no illusive thoughts. This can be regarded as the initial enlightenment experience, seeing Buddha nature or kenso

- (2) the seventh picture – Ox vanishes and man exists: Gross practice is no longer necessary to sustain the enlightened mind but mindful awareness as subjective consciousness still exists
- (3) the eighth picture – Both vanishes: An empty circle is left without the ox and the man. Subject-object duality vanishes with the forsake of any minute effort of mindful awareness. This is usually regarded as great enlightenment
- (4) the ninth picture – Return whence they came: Water is boundless; flowers are red. The objective world is perceived same as before, but the mind is unshaken by the world in leaking vexations. This can be regarded as full enlightenment.

### **Cultivation, Gradual Enlightenment, and Sudden Enlightenment**

Meditation can be distinguished as mere cultivation or enlightenment prone by whether it is just an exercise of concentration or whether it is a universal mindful awareness without a fixed concentration focus (Chan 2004). Cultivation through concentration leads to calmness or samadhi. The release of concentrated contemplation as being crucial for attaining enlightenment is emphasized by Chan schools such as sects of Ox Head or Caodong (Soto) that employ mainly the method of meditation for enlightenment.

Enlightenment can be classified as being gradual or sudden. Meditation that works by concentration is not enlightenment prone and should be classified as being cultivation instead of the often misclassified gradual enlightenment. Gradual enlightenment practice should be capable of leading to enlightenment, although taking on a gradual unfolding path. The Ox Head and Caodong sects are examples of the gradual enlightenment schools. Sudden enlightenment schools, derived from the Huineng school, flourished with Master Mazu's masterful enlightenment initiation (see the entry on "[► Enlightenment Initiation](#)" in this encyclopedia) methods like twisting a disciple's nose or kicking down an enquiring disciple by the

chest, emphasized the attainment of sudden enlightenment instead of extended meditation cultivation. Sudden enlightenment can be understood as a sudden glimpse of Buddha nature when the barriers of illusive thoughts are suddenly dispersed. Often it is only available to people who have adequate preparation of practice and more often than not people need to continue practice, such as daily mindful awareness, after sudden enlightenment. There can only be differences in the comprehensiveness and stage of enlightenment experience, but there is not a priori difference between enlightenment reached by gradual or sudden approaches (Chan 2008).

### **Methods of Enlightenment**

Enlightenment may be set off by some environmental stimulus, or purposely being initiated by the act or speech of a Chan master when the person's mind is at a pre-enlightenment stage, often being still with little or no illusive thoughts due to practice or meditation. Systematic methods are employed for attaining enlightenment, like Silent Illumination or Shikantaza meditation and the practice of Huatou or gongan investigation. The meditation methods still the mind by universal mindful awareness without meditating at a fixed focus. The enlightened mind unfolds when the mind is emptied of all tiny dust of disturbance by illusive thoughts through mindful awareness meditation. The investigation methods use a phrase or episode of a former enlightenment case, and the practitioner repeatedly brings up mentally the phrase or episode and attends to the part of the mind before the case is raised. Continued practice of attending to the non-discursive part of the mind will lead to a conglomeration of the discursive thoughts to become what known as the "great doubt." When such great doubt bursts through, the enlightened mind clear of all illusive thoughts unfolds.

Intuitive insight is often enhanced in the enlightened mind that is unobstructed by discursive or illusive thoughts. However, conceptual and logical thinking are not in principle contradictory to the enlightened state. Only when enlightenment



is being examined, as by Chan masters, direct and spontaneous responses become more representative of a disciple's personal experience of enlightenment than prolonged conceptual investigation.

If attachments on the self and the world can be regarded in Buddhist philosophy as the origins of suffering and evil, then enlightenment that involves a dissolution of the self and hence a lessening of attachments will lead to spiritual goodness and salvation of the person and the world.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chan Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment Initiation](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Enlightenment Initiation

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Enlightenment initiation refers to the events, either natural or by human, that directly lead to a person's enlightenment. The Buddha is reported to be greatly enlightened when he

watched the appearance of a brilliant star while meditating. Throughout the history of Chan (or Zen), thousands of people were enlightened while triggered by some natural events such as kicking a tile onto a bamboo strip or seeing one's reflection on water or being initiated by their masters through being hit upon or reprimanded.

The mystery of these enlightenment initiation events can be understood if we understand what enlightenment is involved and the mechanism that may lead to enlightenment. Enlightenment can be analyzed to be the realization of our Buddha mind (nature) when the barrier of illusive and discursive thoughts in the mind is being removed. Enlightenment experience can occur when either the barrier of illusive thoughts in the mind is completely dissolved or when such barrier can be temporarily halted or bypassed. Sudden enlightenment as often represented in Chan consists of a temporary halting or bypassing of the illusive thought barrier of the mind. In some instances, enlightening experience can also occur when a significant part of a person's strong attachment of the self or of the world is being detached due to enlightenment initiation (Chan 2008).

Enlightenment can be broadly classified into two types (Chan 2004): (1) initial enlightenment – initial enlightenment occurs when illusive or discursive thoughts are either stopped, halted, or bypassed resulting in the revelation of the nondiscursive mind. (2) Complete enlightenment – enlightened mind is sustained indefinitely without any application of concentration and illumination effort.

### Common Techniques for Enlightenment Initiation

Common enlightenment initiation techniques are described in the following ways (cf. Suzuki 1949):

1. *A verbal or behavioral shock that bursts open a concentrated mind*

Meditation or practice generally leads to a concentrated mind devoid of discursiveness. Enlightenment takes a step further by dispersing the internal effort of concentration to

become a self-sustained enlightenment mind of no discursiveness. A verbal or behavioral shock or a natural-occurring stimulus applied at the appropriate moment can burst open a concentrated mind and reveal the enlightenment mind. Many gongan (koan) examples include Master Dahui initiated enlightenment in his students through shouting or hitting and Master Mazu enlightening Baizhang through twisting the latter's nose with pain.

2. *Entanglement or short-circuiting of the illusive mind*

Some of the illogical or incomprehensible verbal statements spoken by Chan masters to their students are not to be interpreted by either Buddhist or common knowledge; they are just meant to be a way of entangling or short-circuiting the conceptual or logical habitual thoughts that are often dominated by activities of the illusive thoughts. Enlightened mind can sometimes reveal when the illusive thoughts are being entangled to a halt.

It was asked: "Does a cypress tree have Buddha nature or not?" The master (Zhaozhou) replied: "Yes." "When will it become a Buddha?" The master said: "When emptiness falls onto the ground." "When does emptiness fall onto the ground?" The master replied: "When the cypress tree becomes a Buddha."

3. *Bypassing the illusive thought barrier by forcing the illusive mind with no way to turn*

Chan masters are commonly known to hit their students for 30 sticks for a yes answer and yet gain 30 sticks for a no answer to a question. By creating impossible positions on either side, Chan master forces the student to forsake the conceptual mind already defiled by illusive thoughts and passes into the non-illusive mind, which is the enlightened mind. Master Guishan once was given a test, his master Baizhang pointed to a cleaning vase and asked, "Do not call it a cleaning vase, what would you call it as?" Guishan kicked off the cleaning vase and went out. He received the confirmation.

4. *An apparent irrelevant or illogical answer that helps stop the illusive mind*

Chan gongans (koans) are known to be full of irrelevant or illogical statements. The function of many such absurdity or nonsense is to make the illusive mind impossible to carry out its thought process and being forced to stop, which gives a chance for the nondiscursive enlightenment mind to reveal.

A student asked, "What is Buddha?" Master (Zhaozhou): "That inside the sanctuary." "Isn't that inside the sanctuary a clay statue?" Master said, "Yes." Student: "What is Buddha?" Master said, "That inside the sanctuary."

Eventually, the querying of such puzzle had itself developed into a method of practice known as "cangongan" (querying a public enlightenment case) or "canhautou" (querying a phrase of an enlightenment case). A very popular method of gongan or hautou derives from the following gongan of Zhaozhou. It developed into the popular gongan method of querying "Why does dog have no Buddha nature?"

A student asked, "Does dog has Buddha nature or not?" Master said, "No."

5. *Directing the mind from conceptual reasoning to nonconceptual insight*

Ordinary people's conceptual thinking is defiled by illusive and discursive thoughts. It is not useful as a direct means to approach the non-illusive enlightened mind. Thus, nonconceptual insight is often adopted by Chan masters to help bypass the illusive thoughts into the non-illusive enlightened mind.

Accordingly, masters had adopted methods that are speechless but requires insight such as turning into complete silence, raising or lowering the master's stick, walking from east to west or vice versa, presenting a symbol of a circle, raising the eyebrow or blinking the eyes, and calling the name of the student. When these symbolisms are used in a suitable context, they may elicit insight from the student that resonates with the nature of enlightenment. An example:

Yunyan came to seek advice, Master (Guizhong) showed the gesture of drawing

a bow. Yan was motionless for a while and acted the gesture of drawing a sword. Master said, "It happened all too late."

6. *Pointing out the misapplication of the student's mind while seeking enlightenment*

Chan masters often point out the wrong direction or assumptions of the student's application of their mind in seeking enlightenment. When the student stops looking or going into the wrong direction, they may have a chance to encounter directly enlightenment in the appropriate application of the mind.

For example, a monk asked Master Yuanmen: "Not giving rise to one thought, is there still any fault or not?" The master said: "Mount Xumi!"

Mount Xumi, an extremely enormous legendary mountain in Buddhist literature, here refers to the extremely wrong position of equating enlightenment with complete dispense of thoughts, logic, or conceptual thinking. Enlightenment is the purification of the mind from illusive or discursive thoughts, not to arrive at a mind that cannot think.

A monk asked, "How is the state of quiescence with no reliance?" Master Xuefeng Yicun: "It is sickness still." "What becomes of after turning?" Master: "A ship down Yangzhou."

The state of quiescence with no reliance seems to be the meditative state with no discursiveness or concentration effort. This initial enlightenment experience is still sickness compared to great enlightenment, when enlightenment is completely self-sustained with completely no meditation or contemplation effort and when the mind can be vigorously functioning with no fixation and simultaneously without any discursiveness, likened to the ship that flows freely down toward the city of Yangzhou.

7. *Direct symbolic representation of the enlightenment realm*

Chan gongans are filled with symbolic representations of the enlightenment realm spoken by various Chan Masters. Because enlightenment cognition contains simultaneously unification and differentiation, it is

often not describable clearly in ordinary dualistically opposed logic or conceptualization. Symbolic representations are often used to express (1) the internal state of the enlightenment mind with regard to no illusive thoughts and (2) the enlightenment cognition of simultaneously unification and differentiation, which can be used to stimulate and induce insight from the students.

When the states of mind of the Chan students are close to the said symbolic representations, a resonance can occur that reveals the enlightenment mind and that becomes an enlightenment experience.

Example of representation (1) is "A sunny sky without a cloud in ten thousand miles" and (2) is like "Holding a plough with empty hand, riding an ox while walking; Man walks across the bridge, the bridge flows without water flowing."

8. *Display of speech and action in congruence with Buddhadharma truth, e.g., Middle Way or nonattachment*

Chan masters display Buddhadharma truth, such as Middle Way position or nonattachment, through their speech or actions. Middle Way position refers to the nonattachment of either the form or emptiness of things. Such speech and action coming from an enlightened mind can sometimes resonate and awaken another near-enlightened mind if that is about ripe. Examples of the Middle Way and nonattachment positions are listed as follow:

There is a gongan about an old practitioner believed to be a transformation of a fairy wild fox, came to Master Baizhang to receive instruction about the question of whether a great practitioner would fall into cause and effect or not. Baizhang replied, "Obscure not cause and effect!" By this the wild fox appeared and was transmigrated and liberated.

Patriarch Huineng was asked who could get the rope and bowl from Bodhidharma. Huineng replied, "Who he knows Buddhadharma can get it." And the question followed, "Do you know Buddhadharma or not?" Huineng said, "I don't know Buddhadharma."

### 9. *De-attachment of Buddhism and the Chan Master*

The vital theme declared by Buddha for liberation of suffering is de-attachment. The religion of Buddhism requires not only the de-attachment to the worldly cravings but also to the religion of Buddhism and the religious master in order to gain ultimate liberation. Thus, in Chan there are often themes about renouncing the Buddhist principles and the upsetting of the master by the student. A popular Chan saying says, “With seeing self-nature the Buddha remains not; in great enlightenment the Master exists not.” There are cases about burning a wooden Buddha statue to keep warm and the hitting back to his master by Linji. Chan master can also purposely create a situation for de-attaching the student’s residual attachments to Buddhism and the master so that the student can attain ultimate liberation.

For example, when his student Lingxun was about to graduate, Master Guizhong asked him to come to receive the teaching of the supreme Buddhadharma. Guizhong told Lingxun to come closer and he went closer. Guizhong said, “Season’s cold, take good care of your journey.” When Lingxun heard upon this, he forgot at once his previous (intellectual) understanding.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chan Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Epiphany

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Epiphany is the ecclesiastical feast that falls 12 days after Christmas. It marks the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem to behold the Christ child; it also marks the end of Christmastide. The weeks following it that lead up to Lent are called Epiphany season, which has a variable length in the liturgical calendar. Etymologically, epiphany is derived from the Greek term for “manifestation.” The holiday was originally celebrated by the Eastern Church, to commemorate the angelic announcement of the good news of Christ’s birth, but later focused more on Christ’s baptism. The Nativity came to be understood as one instance of Theophany, a showing forth of God. Accounts vary between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the only two gospels to include Jesus’ birth narrative, but in each, people are immediately led to understand the momentous import of the birth: “Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth and God’s favor to men” (Lk 2.14). Much later, epiphany was used generically to describe instantaneous insight; it was a frequent literary device in modern English literature, where it usually featured as a formative experience in a character’s development. For the purposes of psychology, an epiphany signals a breakthrough that allows a person to apprehend something more fully than before. It has an almost mystical quality to it, an intuitive veracity.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)

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Erik Erikson (1902–1994) was a developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst whose theory presaged Ego Psychology and Interpersonal theories of psychology as well. Erikson emphasized the interaction between the individual and society, placing great importance on the positive influence that religious and cultural values exert on individual development. Religion and its associated rituals provide a pattern, goal, and ideal for the individual life cycle. In his view, a religious life is part of the successful, healthy development of the individual and begins during the stage of basic trust, when faith has its start. Erikson writes, in *Young Man Luther*, “One basic task of all religions is to reaffirm that first relationship” (1958, pp. 118–119).

His early life was difficult. He was born out of wedlock and raised by his mother as a single parent until she married his pediatrician Dr. Theodore Homburger. It is believed that Erikson’s real father was a Gentile, but Dr. Homburger and Erik’s mother, Karla Abrahamsen, were Jewish and led an active religious life together with their family. Although Dr. Homburger eventually adopted Erik, he was not able to convey his total emotional acceptance to Erik as his son.

Identity was an important personal question for Erikson. He never learned who his real father was, but he believed that he looked like him. Erikson was tall and blond. He was criticized for looking like a Gentile when he was in Synagogue and for being a Jew when he was in

school, so he effectively did not fit in anywhere. He solved some of his identity conflict when he became a Christian after his marriage to Joan Serson, whose father was a minister. His confusion about who he was and where he had come from may lie at the bottom of his belief that the “identity crisis” is a normal event.

He is also famous for his Epigenetic Theory, which uses the stages of fetal development as a template for personality development. Successful passage through the early stages of his Epigenetic Theory yields later success, but problems that begin early ineluctably affect later development. The stages and their associated tasks are as follows:

- *Stage one:* Oral-sensory: from birth to one, trust vs. mistrust, feeding
  - *Stage two:* Muscular-anal: 1–3 years, autonomy vs. doubt, toilet training
  - *Stage three:* Locomotor: 3–6 years, initiative vs. inadequacy, independence
  - *Stage four:* Latency: 6–12 years, industry vs. inferiority, school
  - *Stage five:* Adolescence: 12–18 years, identity vs. confusion, peer relationships
  - *Stage six:* Young adulthood: 18–40 years, intimacy vs. isolation, love relationships
  - *Stage seven:* Middle adulthood: 40–65 years, generativity vs. stagnation, parenting
  - *Stage eight:* Maturity: 65 years until death, integrity vs. despair, acceptance of one’s life
- His most important published works are:

- *Childhood and Society*, 1950
- *Young Man Luther*, 1958
- *Insight and Responsibility*, 1964
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## See Also

- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Eros

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*Eros* [Latin *Erōs*; Greek ἔρως *érōs*] refers to passionate love, sensual desire, and longing. In the personified form of Greek mythology ca. 1386, Eros was the god of love, related to desire of an unknown origin. In the early creation myth, the *Theogony* of Hesiod (700 BCE), Eros was a primal god, son of Chaos, the original primeval emptiness of the universe. Eros emerged from the primordial groundlessness of Chaos together with Gaia, the Earth, matter,

and nature and Tartarus the underworld, creating a dichotomy of being. Some legends attribute Eros as the scintilla of desire that united Uranus (Heaven) and Gaia (Earth) from whose union the entire material world came into being. In early legends, he was the firstborn Light that was responsible for the fertile and creative coming into being and ordering of all things in the cosmos.

Later tradition depicted him as the son and attendant of Aphrodite, goddess of sexual love. Together, as gods, they harnessed the primordial force of love and directed it into human beings. In Greek poetry, Eros was often portrayed as a willful, playful, charismatic, and often impish god. In later Greek thought, Eros as a primeval deity transformed into the one who embodied the compelling energies of erotic love as well as the urgent force of ever-flowing nature.

His Roman mythological counterpart was Cupid (Latin *cupido*), or Amor, meaning desire or love. In Roman literature and art, he became increasingly more youthful, eventually represented as the son and companion of Venus. Eros was portrayed as a handsome winged youth prepared to shoot into the heart of an unsuspecting victim with his bow and arrow. He carried two kinds of arrows: one was golden with dove feathers that caused instant love and the other was leaden with owl feathers and was purported to cause indifference in those it pierced.

In the early Greek and Roman civilizations, the phenomenon of love was commonly understood as a kind of madness from the gods that involved the sometimes reckless and careless aim of Eros' love arrows. His arrows were thought to not only pierce and wound the person's heart, overwhelming the individual with love at first sight, but often to promote the antithesis: pleasure accompanied by pain. The notion of passionate love at first sight was commonly believed to lead to unrequited love, impelling the lover into depression, pining, and sorrow.

## Eros in Psychology

Eros was initially defined in Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) as a life



instinct, sexual drive, and unifying force. Eros referred further to the urge for self-preservation and the desire to create life and productive work. Freud conceptualized that all human beings undergo an instinctual dualism with Eros and Thanatos. Thanatos is the destructive force of the death instinct, the psychological polarity that can lead to the disintegration, dissolution, and negation of all that exists. The underlying force beneath both energies is libido.

Analogous to Hesiod's notion of Eros emerging from the nothingness of Chaos, Freud posits that Eros is present in incarnation of matter out of inorganic material (Freud 1920, p. 61). Freud does not reference the work of Hesiod but demonstrates familiarity with the doctrine of the Greek physician and philosopher Empedocles of Agrigento (ca. 490–430 BCE), for whom the production of all things results from the interaction between two primary instincts: attraction and repulsion and love and conflict. Eros represents an increase in tension. With Thanatos, we find an eradication of all tensions. For Freud, the domination of libidinal Thanatos can result in neurosis, the propensity toward masochism, and suicidal tendencies. The domination of Eros fuels our sexuality and promotes creativity. Ideally, we strive toward a psychological balance between the interplay of these two energies.

Freud revised his drive theory over his years of psychoanalytic practice. Eros became a fundamental concept referring to the life instincts of narcissism. The immature ego is relegated to isolated self-love. The libido of the mature ego is directed toward object relations, connection, and relationship. Eros is rooted and has "aim" that takes psychological work to get at. As we become more aware of the aim, we experience something moving toward us and we may feel this something pulling us toward it. At first, the aim may appear as a desire for food, sex, a professional position, a published book, finding a partner, becoming pregnant, and becoming closer to God. Eros leads us beyond ourselves to connect with the aim or goal that is trying to become conscious. At the level of society, Eros leads toward kinship between individuals, groups, and nations.

Freud's theory of mature love implied "the all-inclusive and all-preserving Eros of Plato's *Symposium*" (Freud 1925, p. 218). Plato's concept of Eros included initial desires toward a person but also an aesthetic and reflective appreciation of the beauty within that person.

## Eros and Carl Jung

Analytical psychologist, Carl Jung, understands Eros quite differently than Freud. Jung views libido as vital psychic energy that includes the body, sex, aggression, and also divine pneuma (spirit). More than our bodily desires, Eros has to do with our subjective being in a body and with something we must do before we die. Eros is full of sighs: sighs of relief, sighs of what we long to achieve, whom we wish to unite with or be closer to, as well as sighs of mourning.

Jung used the term *Eros* to represent his primary theory of feminine psychology, specifically the psychology of the anima or feminine soul. The anima (or animus as masculine soul) is the center of the archetype, a dominant image in the unconscious mind that varies for each of us. The anima or animus is a figure opposite to one's ego gender and position. Jung tells us it is an entry point to the deeper unconscious. The anima/animus is the mediator between the ego, the Self, the Self being the central archetype of the objective psyche. The Self is process and content, originator and goal of our psychological life. The experience of the Self for Jung is numinous and feels like a river flowing toward its source.

In contrast to Eros, Jung spoke of logos as the decisive principal ascribed to men. In modern culture, we could think of *Eros* as psychic relatedness and *logos* as objective interest (1959, CW X: 123, 255). In Jung's writings, he specifies gender in relation to these concepts, and yet, the feminine principle is relevant to men as well as women in terms of sexual identity. In fact, the notion of Eros of antiquity was revered by the name *Erotes*, the plural of Eros which pertained to all attractions that induced love and desire, whether heterosexual or homosexual attractions.

More often for the Greeks, Eros was the benefactor of masculine enticements.

Drawing upon the legend of Eros and Psyche, Jung applied these two opposites to his theory of the anima/animus syzygy, or conjunction, of male and female psyches. Jungian theory claims that men possess the anima in their unconscious (images of the feminine soul, breathe, inspiration). These are qualities and representations of the feminine *Eros*. Personal individuation, or the journey of integrative wholeness, requires male consciousness to confront their anima on many levels by accepting *Eros* not only at the projected ego level (i.e., the merely sexual and visceral object) but also by assimilating more mature layers of the feminine principle into conscious being.

Jungian analyst Eric Neumann explains the developmental integration of the anima in the legend of Cupid (Eros) and Psyche. The relationship of desire between Psyche and Eros begins in an uroboric state, as self-containment in which there is not yet individual unconsciousness. Psyche initiates an encounter with Eros and intentionally brings him into the light. Her act represents the undertaking of making the unconscious conscious. In this act, the unconscious bond between them is dissolved, transforming mere objective attraction to genuine love and promoting individuation – the ongoing incorporation of unconscious contents that occurs both in the development of the collective and the individual human being (Neumann 1956, p. 90).

Making the unconscious conscious has risks; yet, we need to bring our desires into consciousness. Eros wants to step over into visible life to be expressed. If Eros is not allowed to become visible and to incarnate, its energies will fasten onto any of a range of addictions or to a social cause that lacks the fullness of enfleshed foundations. Eros needs the body to express itself: through dance, art, music, writing, creative activity, and the love of children. Without such expression, we can fall into illness, somatization, or, on the religious side, fundamentalism or shallow and projective social justice righteousness.

Psychologically, Eros can lead us toward what is hiding in the lost parts of our selves that wants

to be found that wishes to act out to become incarnate. In psychological practice, we track these lost parts of the self, regardless of school of thought, by paying attention to the desire inherent to Eros and not necessarily to its object. We study desire and where desire leads, observing what it ruthlessly seeks, acknowledging what object it is projected upon or images that it is linked with. If we follow the red thread of Eros, we also may discover what object desires us.

At this juncture, we cross into the territory of religion or spirituality. Eros can be defined as desire in relation to spirit. Our personal desires and wishes collect around an obvious theme. If we pay attention to its movement and its images – its feeling tone and its colors – we take on a motif, a gathering together of something principle, a coloring. We begin to question who or what is pulling us toward this need for combining our energies, our self, our bodies, and our ideas, with another person, activity, or relationship.

Unfortunately, in the history of the Judeo-Christian tradition, biblical literature leaves the feminine presence of Sophia behind – a personified presence in the late Hebrew literature – and we find an increasingly exponential split between spirit and Eros. Instead, we find a predominantly male, rationalized emphasis upon the notion that somehow spirit is superior to desire when, in fact, prospective desire leads to spirit and spirit attracts desire. Inherent to an analogical reading of scripture is the lavishing of the “first thing,” about God. Eros, then, is about having a passionate, all-out loving. In the biblical book of Hebrews, such loving is described as “fire.” Eros also flows into the biblical second commandment in that it underlies the efficacy of how social justice works. Otherwise, we just try to fix the world.

In the analytical arena, Eros as passion grows bigger because it comes into a fuller reality as it meets its opposite. What becomes evident and necessary for passionate love to break through is the prerequisite of a weak spot, a vulnerability in us. Something happens that shakes us loose from settled attitudes and creates a response that transforms vague longing into intense passion.

The recognition may be so profound as to be ineffable and experienced as a gap or a void. Passion is the thrust that leaps across this abyss. Passionate love becomes so concentrated at the particular point where it strains against unknowing that it can break the defended barriers, ushering us into a new sphere of experience in which love is given and received. Received, it is returned in response, equaling an exchange. Such passion does not require knowledge and intellect, only willingness. This process is one of self-giving, across a gap of unknowing toward an intensely desired wholeness (Haughton 1981, pp. 18–46, 58–61).

Wholeness links us with spirit and brings the body into the spirit. This fact is what distinguishes C. G. Jung's analytical psychology: we need desire and Eros to find God. God incarnates in the flesh of the psyche. We are innately possessed with the capacity to be conscious of the deity. When Eros aligns with the right object, this connection can link us to a life of relatedness. From Jung's view, depth psychology intends to point us toward religion as a container for the life of the unconscious.

The syzygy of anima and animus is an important factor in an individual's faith tradition because the images and affect that these images carry participate directly in the actual process of the transformation of the God image (Jaffe 1999, p. 25). Out of this inner marriage that Jung speaks of come images of the Self. Self-material is shared; it is not personal. There is a social aspect: if we do not share it, we lose it. Eros can breed a rich sense of interdependence in our work and in our communities, as if we are all connected. Eros as it bridges soul to spirit inevitably includes other people and constellates a "body" evoking us to ask: Is there a God? What is it that we love and that we are living for? What are we really summoned to? Are we living as a carbon copy of someone or something else, or are striving toward being an original? In order to answer these questions, we need to listen in the desert-place, the place of the still, small voice. We have to internally address any conflicting desires we find inside and to really grind down on the marrow to find what is addressing us.

In both psychology and religion, our goal is to pay close attention to this inner movement. How is Eros manifest? In our relationships, our groups, our communities, our creative projects? What does it ask of us? What Eros asks of us in relation to spirit often has to do with what the entirety of our mature lives will be about. First, however, we must find soul in relation to spirit. Jungian psychology offers a map for religion to follow in light of this transformation. We take what images we find under the authority of the psyche seriously, follow the thread of Eros, and eventually find the meaning and intention of our individual lives. Then our desires lead us to the body and to the spirit and through the spirit to the body.

Eros, approached, amplified, and understood from the literal to the symbolic, without the negation of the bodily and the real can lead to the secret of transformation and renewal. From the perspective of religion, Eros has to do with the first commandment, putting the first things first and offering these things up to God. In our faith traditions and rituals, the giving of our desire and Eros is the giving of the most precious thing that identifies us as individuals. Transformation and wholeness requires of us that we sacrifice that which is most dear to us, offer it, give it up, and disidentify from *it*. We are yielding our ego-claims to the "beyond ego." Jung would say this is initiated by the Self. Something comes into our ego-neighborhood. We feel impelled by internal reasons.

As we offer up our desire, all the bits of ourselves begin to be collected and come into a more cohesive image. The Self too is changed, freed from unconscious projection into conscious focus. The Self sacrifices itself in the abstract to the ego. The unconscious Self becomes humanized just as the ego is spiritualized. Hence, the God image is transformed and changed, and we too are transformed by being taken into the center, the Self where we can live from. We can live from this center and the unconscious does not control us. In essence, if we pay attention to Eros, we arrive at where we belong.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Cupid and Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Logos](#)
- ▶ [Love](#)
- ▶ [Sophia](#)

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## Eschatology

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The etymology of “eschatology” is ambiguous; the Greek root may be either *eschaton*, “end time,” or *eschata*, “final things.” Eschatology is more commonly described using the former understanding and thus defined as “the study of

the end time.” In practice, though, eschatology encompasses the latter sense, as well. Particularly in Catholic theology, eschatology has traditionally been defined as being concerned with the so-called four last things: death, judgment, heaven, and hell. (To these four are sometimes added Purgatory and the resurrection of the body.)

Beyond this, though, eschatology also provides the venue for religions to speak of their *hope* both for the afterlife and for the here-and-now. Increasingly, eschatology also has come to imply a theology of history, as well.

As a theological field, eschatology covers a wide array of topics, for it is concerned with the ultimate fate of the cosmos and of humankind. The unfolding of this drama varies widely, however, across and even within faith traditions. In general, though, two basic understandings of the eschaton exist: in one, the world comes to a culmination inherent in nature, and in other, the world ends violently, under assault by seemingly external or supernatural forces. The first is immanent, *within* history; the latter is an *escape* from history. This latter interpretation of eschatology is labeled *apocalyptic*. These distinctions are related, but not identical, to the further distinction between *realized* and *futuristic* eschatology. Futuristic eschatology looks toward fulfillment in some transformation – though not necessarily an apocalyptic one – at the end of time, whereas realized eschatology emphasizes that the present life has already been transformed through the sanctification of history.

A single faith can have both immanent and apocalyptic elements in its eschatology. For example, in Zoroastrianism, creation is oriented toward the *frashokereti*, the refreshment or renewal of the world, in which all is perfected; and devotees of the creator-god Ahura Mazda can precipitate this renewal through their actions. The prophet Zarathustra's emphasis on personal responsibility underscores that, through their own righteous behavior, individuals participate in the vanquishing of evil and restoration of the world to its right state. Ultimately, though, the final restoration must be accomplished by the divine himself; Ahura Mazda must enter into his creation from outside of it and direct the

final battle against evil, a cosmic liturgy in which the evil principle Ahriman is banished to hell.

Indeed, violence, war, and disturbance of the natural world often characterize apocalyptic eschatology, as both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic narratives demonstrate. Yahweh tells the prophet Ezekiel that he will manipulate Gog, king of Magog, and cause him to invade Israel. God, in his anger, will rain down destructive fury: the earth will quake; mountains will crumble; the sky will rain fire and brimstone. The war and tumult will culminate in the destruction of God's enemies and the exaltation of Israel (Ezekiel 38:1–39:29).

In the New Testament, Jesus informs his disciples that, during the end times, there will be wars and natural disasters and the persecution of Jesus' followers; the Temple at Jerusalem will be desecrated. Following these things, the Son of Man – a title found in the prophets, as well – will return, accompanied by cosmic disturbances: the darkening of the sun and moon, falling stars. The angels will gather the peoples, and the Son of Man will sit in judgment (Matthew 24:4–25:46, Mark 13:5–37). John's vision, as recorded in the book of Revelation, also includes wars and heavenly signs, but the battle is much more explicitly one between good and evil, at the end of which Satan is ultimately consigned to a lake of burning fire, while Christ, his martyrs, saints, and church (portrayed as his bride) rejoice in heaven for all eternity.

Apocalyptic accounts also typically feature a heroic figure that marks the penultimate stage of the conflict between good and evil. In Zoroastrianism, it is the final *saoshyant* who restores peace before Ahura Mazda returns. In Islam, Jesus (Isa) returns to vanquish Dajjal, the anti-Christ. In Shi'a Islam, he is accompanied by the Madhi, the twelfth Imam, who went into occultation as a child to return at the end times. In Hinduism, Kalki, the tenth and final avatar of Vishnu, eradicates the impiety that has infected the world in the Kali yuga (the dark age) in order to prepare for a repetition of the first age, the age of righteousness (the Satya yuga).

Eschatology, however, does not concern only narratives of the end times; it also describes the

objects of a religion's hope. Jewish eschatology, thus, relates fundamentally to the restoration of the kingdom of Israel and the Davidic dynasty (Jeremiah 33:14–18). This doctrine develops chiefly in the prophetic books of the Bible, attributed to the period leading up to and during the fall and exile of Israel and Judah. The prophets foretell a time when the Lord will lead the people back from exile; and Yahweh's anointed servant, the Messiah, will reestablish the Davidic line and usher in an era of everlasting peace (Isaiah 11:1–16, Isaiah 2:1–2, Jeremiah 23:1–8). The holy city of Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and true worship at the Temple will be restored (Jeremiah 31:38–40, Ezekiel 40:1–44:31).

Since Christianity assumes that Jesus is the Messiah, it looks, therefore, toward the Messiah's *second* coming and believes that, when he returns, Jesus will bring a spiritual rather than a political restoration. Christians look toward Christ's return – the *parousia* – as the time when the dead will be raised and they, along with the living, will be judged by him. Those deemed righteous will enter into eternal life in heaven, and those found unjust will be relegated to eternal damnation. Likewise, Muslims hold heaven, Jannah, as the object of their hope. Jannah is a place where the righteous both enjoy sensual delights – flowing rivers (Sūra 2:25) and virgins – and participate in glorifying God (Sūra 10:9–10).

Since Buddhism does not conceive of a permanent enduring self, its eschatology takes a different form. The individual concern is not the attainment of heaven, but rather release from suffering. The Buddhist hopes to extinguish desire and the passions and thus end suffering, ultimately breaking free from the cycle of *samsāra* – birth, death, and reincarnation – in the attainment of *nirvana*. Pure Land Buddhism differs, however; here, the person desires to be reborn in the Land of Bliss, a heavenly land created by the Amitābha Buddha.

To be sure, disagreement over eschatological details has resulted in doctrinal division within religious traditions. To take an example from Christianity, Revelation 1:1–10 tells of a 1,000 year period during which Satan will be chained in the abyss and the martyrs will reign. After these

1,000 years, Satan will be released and will once again lead people of all nations astray before his final defeat and his eternal torment in the lake of fire begins. Whereas Catholic and most mainline Protestant churches deny a literal millennium, other Christians affirm it. Within this latter camp, there is a division between those who believe that Christ's second coming will precede the 1,000 years (premillennialists) and those who believe the millennium will occur before his return (postmillennialists). In general, those subscribing to millennialist eschatologies have a strong belief that Christians must, during the reign of Christ, work to establish his kingdom on earth. Nonetheless, Christians are united in their belief in an afterlife, although even in this realm, there are debates. The Catholic Church holds that only saints go immediately to heaven; others must be cleansed in Purgatory before going to heaven. Protestants deny the doctrine of Purgatory, claiming that it is unbiblical and that it mitigates the salvific work of Christ.

## Commentary

Perhaps more than any other doctrinal category, eschatology has reflected the historical and scientific concerns of the time and, likewise, has absorbed its anxieties. Thus, in late antiquity, we see Christian theologians pondering the resurrection of the body, with their primary concern being *how*, precisely, God will reconstruct, at the resurrection, a body that has decomposed or even been eaten by another creature. While this particular question may strike us as naïve, it is certain that religious traditions that espouse belief in a bodily resurrection must wrestle with what the ramifications are for treatment of the human body, living and dead, and for the precise relationship of body and soul; for a religion's eschatology reflects, in many aspects, crucial aspects of its theological anthropology.

Following World War I, philosophers and theologians confronted a loss of optimism about history and its developments; World War II and the Shoah heightened this sense. In the wake of this pessimism, eschatology emphasized new themes as theologians attempted to reinvest history with

meaning. For some, including the Protestant Jürgen Moltmann and the Catholic Johann-Baptist Metz, both German, this meant infusing eschatology with a call for praxis. Both Moltmann and Metz were influenced by the revisionary Marxist Ernst Bloch and demanded concrete engagement with history in its actuality, rather than merely through theory. Moltmann has focused on the necessity of hope in the face of suffering. Metz has presented an extremely intersubjective eschatology; all persons must become subjects, he asserts. Yet one person's achievement of subjectivity does not compete with another's; rather, each person's subjectivity *depends upon* the actualization of every other person's subjectivity. Without explicitly engaging it, Metz theologically parallels social psychology's understanding of the self as at least partially socially constructed.

Rudolf Bultmann, on the other hand, developed his eschatology out of an engagement with existentialism. For Bultmann, humanity's orientation toward the future demands that the person resist the idolatry of security and instead embrace the freedom and risk of the present.

Beginning in the latter twentieth century, eschatology has increasingly entered into dialogue with science. This conversation has led, on the one hand, to a renewed emphasis on the significance of the environment in the eschatological process. Additionally, the introduction of neuroscience into the eschatological discussion has raised the question of what, precisely, *is* the soul that endures beyond death and how much of it is reducible to the brain.

Additionally, in the latter twentieth century, psychologist Robert Jay Lifton has engaged depth psychology to suggest that the human search for immortality need not imply an actual life beyond death. Instead, Lifton suggests, immortality can also be achieved biologically (living through one's descendents) or through the production of enduring creative works.

## See Also

- ▶ [Apocalypse](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)



- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Nirvana](#)
- ▶ [Purgatory](#)
- ▶ [Resurrection](#)
- ▶ [Zoroastrianism](#)

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## Esoteric Buddhism

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Esoteric Buddhism is better known as Vajrayana Buddhism, from the Sanskrit meaning

“Diamond Way.” This is the major form of Buddhism in Tibet, Mongolia, in the Russian states of Buryatia and Kalmykia. It is also a minority group within Buddhists in Japan (Shingon school). This is generally considered a third “yana” or “vehicle” in Buddhism. The other two are the Hinayana (“lesser vehicle”) and the Mahayana (“greater vehicle”). Most of the earlier forms of Hinayana have died out, though the stream that has continued into the present is now termed ‘Theravada’ to avoid the somewhat pejorative implication of a lesser vehicle. All of the varieties of esoteric Buddhism share much doctrine with the other two schools, especially the Mahayana schools, and to that add influences from the Pan-Indian spiritual movement known as Tantrism.

Tantrism was a development in Indian spirituality that came in reaction to the asceticism and restraint of typical Hindu or Buddhist practice. It is sometimes known as the left-hand path for its use of activities or symbolic activities that are normally prohibited, especially sexuality. Snellgrove (1987) discusses how early and literal enactment for forbidden dietary practices, intoxication, and sexual activity was used as a way of breaking out of the dialectic of moral categories and using pure experience as a vehicle for direct gnosis. Over time, the degree of actual enactment diminished and was replaced by symbolic enactment. Westerners have been particularly attracted to the sexual aspects of Tantrism in either actual practice or imagery work. Numerous popular redactions of Tantric practices in the West tend to pitch it as a way of heightening one’s sexual pleasure through withholding orgasm, among other techniques.

It can be said, however, that Tantrism is one of the few places where the sexual act itself is sacralized and used as a vehicle for spiritual development. In most religious contexts, sexuality is seen as a rampant desire that needs to be controlled in order for spiritual development to proceed. This stems from a root philosophy common to both East and West that the body and the material plane of existence are inferior to the mental, psychic, and spiritual planes, which being nonmaterial are therefore higher in the spiritual nature. This idea is not inherently

anti-sexual, though it lends itself to that emphasis. There are examples within both Indian and classical pagan spirituality of positive views of sexuality in moderation and restraint, while still recognizing the superiority of the spiritual realm.

Be that as it may, sexual imagery is a foundational aspect of Tantric practice. The divine is typically portrayed in physical forms of both male and female and often in sexual union. If one chooses not to use a physical partner, Tantric practice involves generating imagery, identifying oneself with one aspect of the deity and visualizing various manipulations of spiritual energy in that form. At the conclusion of the practice, the image is dissolved and one sits in meditation. In Buddhist forms of Tantrism, this is linked to the basic Mahayana doctrine of emptiness (Skt. “*shunyata*”).

At its heart, Tantric practice is the working of high magic. There is a great deal of similarity between techniques used by Tantric adepts and those who are initiates in Western occult or magical traditions. That is, the basic spiritual practice involves generating spiritual energy and in a disciplined manner going through several transformational rituals that manipulate that energy and put it to one or more usage. Thus, meditation practices in esoteric Buddhism make extensive use of multisensory phenomena in trance work. Visual imagery; use of physical gestures (Skt. “*mudras*”); chanting either aloud or silently, mantras, or verbal formulas; repetition of a variety of prayers; and the invocation of divine presence (similar to “drawing down the moon” in Western occultism) are all found in the various “*sadhannas*” or sequence of events that are made part of daily spiritual practice.

The ability to draw down the divine force into direct embodiment goes back to the earliest shamanic practices before the evolution of larger world religions and spiritual movements. In this sense, Tantric practice makes connection to the earliest layer of human spirituality while filtering it through a more evolved theology. Magical practices continued even as civilizations resulted in the bureaucratization of religion and the development of theologies with elaborate logical and explanatory structures.

Because of the intense nature of the imagery and/or actual practices, as well as in keeping with the elaborate formalism of ritual, a direct connection between a student and a practitioner is emphasized. The “guru” and “chela” relationship found in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions is deepened by the requirement of secrecy of teachings and the rite of initiation into a set of mysteries and practices through a gradual and sequential curriculum. The instruction in correct practice of the meditational and ritual practices is a key element. The many texts of Tantric practice were originally kept secret, but now one can find most of them published in both the academic and popular press. Initiates are still generally instructed to keep things like mantras and detailed instructions private, to not disclose to those not initiated in the tradition. To support this privacy, there are often admonitions about the hazards of unauthorized practice.

Shingon Buddhism in Japan began in the 8th century led by Kukai (774–835 CE) and was influenced by Tantrism through Nagarjuna. Many of the beliefs and practices are congruent with the other Tantric forms of Buddhism found in Tibet and Mongolia.

In Tibetan Buddhism, these initiations are termed “empowerments.” Each of the many deities has their own particular “*sadhanna*” or practice. A qualified lama will generally give empowerments as well as less ritualized and more public talks about Buddha Dharma (Buddhist teachings and practice). Disciples accumulate several or even many empowerments over the course of their involvement in the spiritual community. Each empowerment comes with its own commitments to develop the practice and integrate it into one’s daily spiritual work, though the more one takes on, the less it is possible to pursue any one in depth.

Esoteric Buddhism emerged in the first millennium of the Common Era. It was heavily influenced by teaches from Nalanda, the greatest Buddhist monastic and scholarly community. This was the principal school for Buddhist from the seventh through twelfth centuries in India. Its destruction in 1193 presaged the disappearance of Buddhism from its native soil until the late nineteenth century, when a Buddhist revival

began, and the twentieth century, when the Tibetan diaspora fed the growth of Buddhism in India. Among the most influential teachers was Nagarjuna (150–250 CE). He expanded on the doctrine of emptiness as found in the Perfection of Wisdom sutra (Skt. “*prajnaparamita*”), one of the earliest Mahayana sutras. That doctrine is a healthy counterpoint to the heady mixture of imagery and concentration which is part of any ritual-based practice; realizing that, in the end, one has to come back from the “high” of the energy at its peak to the same dispassionate awareness of momentary experience, including suffering which is part of mindfulness practice common to all forms of Buddhist meditation.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Tantrism](#)

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## Esotericism and Psychology

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Similar to the affiliated term “Gnosticism,” Western Esotericism is a scholarly term with taproots

dipping back into Late Antiquity that has only recently been recognized as an independent subject in religious studies. After presenting the classic definition of Esotericism, this entry will trace the etymology of the term and the subject matter typically found under its umbrella. The second half of the entry will broadly outline the historical relationship between esotericism and the psychological sciences beginning with Franz Anton Mesmer and culminating in the contemporary New Age.

## Meanings of Esotericism

Antoine Faivre, the father and leading figure of Western Esotericism as an academic discipline, defined Western Esotericism as a “form of thought” that can be recognized by the presence of four intrinsic characteristics in a thinker, movement, or text:

*Correspondences*: Symbolic and real correspondences are understood to exist between various levels of physical reality, history and the unseen or divine. For example, the cards of the Tarot deck may correspond to the Sephiroth of the Kabbalistic Tree of Life, or various body parts may correspond to the planets and their influences.

*Living Nature*: Nature here is not merely a collection of physical phenomena but is a nature seen, known, and experienced as *essentially* alive in all its parts. Earlier views may see a hidden fire beneath material manifestations, while later esotericists may refer to ether, astral light, or even consciousness.

*Imagination and Mediations*: Largely derived from the work of Henry Corbin, Faivre sharply distinguishes the notion of “imagination” from the realm of “fantasy,” or mere mind play in the form of images. Imagination here is rather an “organ of the soul” which allows humans to enter into a visionary relationship with angels and demons inhabiting the *mundus imaginalis* between the physical and spiritual worlds. Furthermore, this organ of the soul is precisely what allows the esotericist to decode the significations and correspondences

of nature, as well as to simultaneously participate in multiple planes of reference so that myths, magic, and rituals in the physical realm operate on the higher planes.

*Experience of Transmutation:* Faivre uses this characteristic to separate true esotericism from mere speculative philosophy. Transmutation consists of a form of illumination knowledge, or *gnosis*, which leads to the second birth.

These four intrinsic characteristics are often, but not necessarily, found with the following two characteristics:

*The Praxis of Concordance:* Most commonly understood as *philosophia perennis*, esotericists may look to establish common denominators between two or more traditions in the hopes of gaining illumination or gnosis.

*Transmission:* Faivre's sixth characteristic refers to the practice whereby esoteric knowledge should only be transmitted from a master to a disciple within a preestablished channel. This characteristic is most commonly found in initiatory societies (Faivre 1994).

## Etymology and History

The term "esotericism" is derived from the Greek adjective *esoterikos*, "inner." Early in its recorded usage, it was adopted by Patristics such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa to refer to secret teachings reserved for the mystical elite found in a variety of philosophical schools and mystery cults. The substantive "esotericism" is of comparatively recent origin. The German noun *Esoterik* appears to have been coined in a critical commentary to Christoph Meiners' *Revision der Philosophie* by Johann Gottfried Eichorn as a reference to the domain of "inner" philosophy in 1792, therefore carrying much of the connotations of "secret" and "hidden" found in the adjective (Neugebauer-Wölk 2010). It was only through the nineteenth-century French occultist Eliphas Levi that the French cognate *l'esoterisme* expanded in popularity and geography, as occultists on both sides of the Atlantic used the term not merely in the sense of "hidden knowledge" but

also to refer to a Tradition of such knowledge and practices stretching through Western history that they saw themselves belonging to.

While scholars recognize an actual tradition of secret knowledge is historically implausible, the family resemblance of these figures, movements, and texts has helped identify a terrain of scholarly inquiry that reflects the emic religious construction at many points. These figures and currents commonly include Gnosticism, Hermetism, Theurgy, ritual magic, astrology, and alchemical experimentation as sources of and precursors to the birth of Western Esotericism proper in the Renaissance. Due to the translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum* into Latin by the magician and philosopher Marsilio Ficino in 1471, alongside of several other Platonic, Theurgic, and Neoplatonic texts, the European intelligentsia produced a staggering number of magical and philosophical works, the resulting fruits of which are broadly defined as the "occult philosophy." Moving forward from the Renaissance, the category typically includes Christian Kabbalah, Paracelsianism, Jacob Boehme and Christian Theosophy, organized esoteric organizations such as the Freemasons and Rosicrucians, Louis-Claude Saint-Martin and Martinism, French Illuminism, Franz Anton Mesmer and Mesmerism, and Eliphas Levi and the birth of the modern occult.

With the establishment of scientific materialism during the Enlightenment as the dominant cosmological paradigm culminating in what Max Weber referred to as a "disenchantment of the world," each of Faivre's four intrinsic characteristics of Western Esotericism must typically be considered implausible or scientifically untenable. Esotericism beginning with the occult is therefore understood as qualitatively different due to its need to respond in some way to this disenchanted worldview, and adoptions of and participation with psychological discourse have been the primary new mode of legitimization (Hanegraaff 1998). Later manifestations of Esotericism such as the Theosophical Society and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, up to and including the New Age and Neopaganism, exhibit this cross-fertilization of

esotericism and psychoanalysis, while psychologists themselves have interpreted elements of historical esotericism – such as magic and alchemy – psychologically, often having their interpretations reincorporated into the understandings of practical occultists.

## **Eighteenth to Mid-Nineteenth Century**

Although historically earlier esotericists have been read for psychological insight, the inception of psychology into esoteric thinking lies in the experiments of Franz Anton Mesmer. In his 1766 dissertation, the French medical doctor argued for the influence of planets on human maladies. Mesmer hypothesized that an invisible fluid permeates the physical universe and that illness was caused by imbalance of this fluid within the patient. In 1773, Mesmer began his experiments with one Miss Osterlin in order to test this hypothesis, and the resulting trance state of the patient and his practice of healing through magnetic shifting of the fluid became known as animal magnetism.

A cultural fashion in its time, animal magnetism attracted the attention of many intellectuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. One in particular, Marquis de Puységur, began his own experiments in 1784. While magnetizing Victor Race, he discovered astonishing phenomena that Mesmer left unreported: the patient exhibited an entirely new personality, showed a capacity for clairvoyance and mind reading, and was able to diagnose his own malady and prescribe his own cure. De Puységur was able to reproduce this state in his patients with some consistency. Despite early sympathy from the medical establishment in France, by 1842 the Academy of Medicine denied any validity to animal magnetism.

Exiled by medical science, the theorization of this trance state often fell to esotericists. German *Naturphilosophers*, with their theologies of light and electricity behind “living nature,” easily incorporated magnetic phenomena into their systems. In particular, the physiological hypothesis of two distinct nerve systems – the cerebrospinal

system, which was responsible for diurnal, rational thought, and the ganglion system that was responsible for phenomena and perceptions of the “night side of life” – became an early prototype for theories of mind that give independence to the unconscious.

Across the Atlantic, animal magnetism helped to catalyze a variety of religious movements that can be defined as esoteric. In 1837, Charles Poyen went on a lecture tour of the Eastern coast of the USA to demonstrate animal magnetism. Although Poyen departed in 1839, he recruited dozens of “lieutenants” to continue the lecture tour. One of them, J. Stanley Grimes, would introduce and inspire Andrew Jackson Davis to magnetism. Davis proved especially prone, and his visionary experiences and the accounts of conversations with his control spirits provided the most sophisticated and elaborate cosmology of American Spiritualism. Phineas Quimby, another trance subject of Poyen, founded “New Thought” based on his realization that patients could cure themselves by recognizing the superiority of mental operations over material causes.

## **Mid-Nineteenth Century to Present**

James Braid, suspicious of the metaphysical trappings of animal magnetism, invented the technique of hypnosis as an attenuated form of Mesmer’s practice in 1843. In this form hypnosis would reenter the medical establishment proper through the researches at the *Salpêtrière* in France by Pierre Janet and Jean-Martin Charcot. Janet’s major thesis *L’Automatisme Psychologique* detailed his researches with the hypnotized subject Leonie. His work on multiple personality disorder, as well as Charcot’s on hysteria, would help institute a theory of mind where the “night side of life” was associated with physiological disease and mental illness.

Other early professional psychologists offered reductive readings of spiritualist and mesmerist trance as well. The French psychologist Theodore Flournoy’s (1900/1994) *From India to the Planet Mars* interpreted the hypnotic subject Catherine-Elise Muller and her accounts of past

incarnations and the life on Mars as proof of a poetic, creative faculty in the subconscious capable of distinctive cerebration. Carl Jung's (1902/1978) own dissertation, *On So-Called Occult Phenomena*, interpreted the mediumistic trance phenomena of his cousin, Helene Preiswerk, as repressed complexes of the conscious personality activated in trance and acted out through personalities assembled through memories of former relations. While less reductive interpretations of hypnotic phenomena could be found in the work of William James and Frederick Myers, their voices were marginalized in later psychoanalytic discourse.

Practicing occultists at the turn of the twentieth century, many of whom were familiar with the researches of Janet and Freud, utilized techniques similar to animal magnetism for achieving self-trances in order to activate "night-side" powers of the personality and travel astral realms through the imagination. These magical efforts were dedicated towards transcending one's ephemeral ego awareness and communicating with one's "Higher Self" or "Genius," through whom one could come to know the divine. This threefold anthropology corresponded to their three-part cosmology, where the material universe could be transcended to navigate the "Astral Light," the fine-material substance occluded by physical reality which held within it infinite imaginal territories. Unlike their psychological counterparts, these realms and beings were given ontological reality, but like the psychologists they now placed access to them within the mind of the magician and theorized a fragmented and multiple self with conscious and unconscious dimensions (Owen 2007).

Psychoanalytic readings and adoptions of Esoteric thought in the early twentieth century helped facilitate the transition to a more fully developed psychologization of magic and esotericism. Herbert Silberer, the Freudian psychoanalyst, was the first to analyze alchemical and Rosicrucian texts from this angle (Silberer 1914). He concluded that while these texts could be read as Oedipal wish fulfillments, their meaning pointed to the use of introversion to release libidinous energy into mystical states. Jung's own

experiments with active imagination, later captured in *The Red Book*, were one of the sources he used in developing his phenomenology of the self in terms of the anima, shadow, and Self archetypes (Homans 1979). Jung's later writings on alchemy also provided a robust theoretical language that practicing occultists could adopt in order to understand their practice as a form of self-development without necessarily denying ontological dimensions to their experiences. In turn, by the mid-twentieth century, major figures in magic such as Dion Fortune and Israel Regardie had become practicing psychotherapists themselves.

By the late twentieth century, the New Age and affiliated currents had become so thoroughly imbued with psychological discourses that analytically separating "esoteric" from "psychoanalytic" discourses in the occult literature was impossible. Later developments in the psychological sciences such as transpersonal and alchemical psychology were eventually incorporated into the occult bricolage alongside the early adoption of Jungism. Although the contemporary occult literature is too vast to make uniform claims, in general the psychoanalytic discourse provides a framework for conceiving magical practice as a technology for psychological expansion, while the choice of psychological frames adopted allows a pragmatic attitude towards the ultimate ontological source of the experiences themselves (Hanegraaff 2006; Luhrmann 1989).

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Alchemical Mercurius and Carl Gustav Jung](#)
- ▶ [Altered States of Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Angels](#)
- ▶ [Astrology](#)
- ▶ [Astrology and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)



- ▶ Gnosticism and Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Hillman, James
- ▶ Hillman, James, and Alchemy
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Inflation
- ▶ Introversion
- ▶ James, William
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and the Red Book: Liber Novus
- ▶ Jungian Self
- ▶ Magic
- ▶ Mystery Religions
- ▶ New Age Movement
- ▶ New Polytheism
- ▶ Paganism
- ▶ Paracelsus
- ▶ Post-Jungians
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psychology as Religion
- ▶ Psychospiritual
- ▶ Re-Enchantment
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Spiritualism
- ▶ Symbol
- ▶ Symbols of Transformation in Dreams
- ▶ Theosophy
- ▶ Transcendent Function
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Ethics and Ethical Behavior

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## Introduction

Human beings are constantly judging their own actions and those of others. Good and evil, moral

and amoral, and conscienceless are the respective judgments whereby we implicitly assume that “one” knows the basic difference between good and evil. Moral conduct is thus always attributed to an individual, who is regarded as being responsible for his actions and held accountable for these, i.e., he has to answer to himself, his own conscience, or an external authority or institution. Moral behavior therefore presupposes the concept of voluntariness and freedom. Conscience, freedom, and responsibility are central concepts of moral behavior and ethics as the philosophical doctrine of morally relevant behavior (Moral Philosophy).

Ethics as a philosophical discipline dates back to Aristotle, who also pursued earlier approaches, as those of Plato and Socrates. The term ethics is derived from the Ancient Greek “ethikos”: custom, habit, or tradition. Although the adjectival or adverbial forms of moral and ethical are frequently used synonymously, here the following differentiation – outlined by Anzenbacher (1992a) based on Kant’s definition – is made: an action is moral if it is judged in dependence on the individual conscience of the agent, while ethical also means according to convention and is thus placed in a social context. It is therefore open for discussion, on the basis of which norms an action is ethical.

Guided by the idea of a meaningful human life, i.e., a morally good and just life, philosophical ethics attempts to make universally valid statements about good and just behavior in a methodical manner – without reference to political and religious authorities or the well tried. It is primarily concerned with an answer to the questions “What shall I do? Who do I want to be, how do I want to live? What is a successful, succeeding, and happy existence?” complemented by questions like “In what kind of social and political environment do we want to and shall we live?” (Höffe 1999).

## Major Contents and Methodological Positions of Ethics

The Ethics of Morality was first defined by Aristotle. It describes the respective historically

and socially relevant norms and values as the basis for virtuous moral conduct; these shall be realized sagaciously.

The autonomous Ethics of Reason is subject to a rigorous principle of morals and posited primarily by Kant. Norms have to be verifiable with the aid of a procedure which claims universal and categorical validity. The categorical imperative is of the highest order and demands with consideration of our respective subjective maxims (life principles) to “Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a principle of general law.” The decisive factor is alone the individual’s good will guided by reason. This approach has therefore also been discussed as an Ethics of Conviction. Kant asks for the conditions of the possibility for moral action.

Utilitarian Ethics, an approach posited by J. Bentham and J. St. Mill, is concerned with “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” and serves as a guideline for weighing the utility of an action and its consequences. As a result of the utility principle, the well-being of the individual comes after that of society as a whole, and a rational examination of the action is performed against the background of its concrete, foreseeable results (Lang 1992).

In Scherer’s phenomenological approach to Value Ethics, a hierarchy of tangible values which possess an objective quality (pleasure/pain; approve/disapprove; love/hate) is developed, where an action is described as moral when the respective highest-ranked value is realized (Pieper 2007).

In contemporary philosophy the *Discourse Ethics of Habermas and Apel* (developed as Ethics of Reason) plays an important role. They attempt to determine a rational foundation of reason by asking what we need to presuppose to conduct meaningful argumentation. The starting point is the discourse, the argumentation in speech. Everyone who argues has always implicitly committed himself to uphold four validity claims: understandability, truth, rightness, and truthfulness/frankness. These commitments are moral in a twofold sense: In the sense of an ethics of truthful communication, they commit the

subject to reason and represent a criterion for the negotiation and evaluation of moral norms. All norms upon which an agreement is reached by common consent in a discourse without constraints are morally binding (Lang 1992).

Alternative contemporary approaches to Discourse Ethics are anti-universalistic and relativistic as, e.g., the *Usualistic Ethics of Odo Marquard* (1981, 2007). His position is characterized by a skeptical stance and the renunciation of an ultimate moral standard and is oriented toward the concrete moral horizon of the “usual.” He thus arranges himself in a skeptical position between absolute knowledge and absolute ignorance in the sense of the Aristotelian doctrine of mesotes (extremes are to be avoided) (Lang 1992).

In addition to the described differences in terms of content, systematic differentiations also have an important role regarding the question as to the content of ethics. Differentiations are made between Descriptive Ethics, which is concerned primarily with the examination, description, and explanation of the phenomena of morals and conventions; Normative Ethics, whose principal concern is the critical analysis of prevailing morals and the reasons for forms and principles of right and good actions; and Metaethics, which attempts the critical analysis of linguistic elements in moral statements.

Based on the Ethics of Responsibility, the individual considers all possible consequences of a specific action in the evaluation of his decision to perform this action, while Ethics of Conviction is oriented alone toward the good intention, the good will.

The differentiation between Formal and Material Ethics, which is related to the differentiation between Deontological (obligation oriented) Ethics and Teleological (goal oriented) Ethics, is indebted to Kant. Formal Ethics (Ethics of Reason) is based on the universal idea of duty and moral laws. These have the character of unconditional, universally valid claims based on the transcendental view of obligation “from the universal concept of the reasoning being as such.” Exclusively applied are the precepts of rationality and the respective test procedures. It is the self-willing and determining reason which

constitutes morality. Material Ethics bases the concept of morality on the understanding, willing, and pursuit of good purposes or values (e.g., Virtue Ethics, Value Ethics). Material Ethics is frequently viewed as a complement to Formal Ethics in as far as it holds the criteria which serve to examine the moral value of goals and contents (Höffe 2002).

## Central Questions of Ethics

Despite the different approaches and groupings, ethics is essentially concerned with three different topics, which are also significant from a psychological perspective, because they are of basic relevance to all human experience:

1. Happiness
2. Good and evil
3. Freedom (Pieper 2007).

It is in the nature of most humans to strive for happiness. Ethics expounds on this natural striving of man for happiness and asks if and how this can be morally justified. While one school of moral philosophers claims that happiness represents the highest normative principle (Hedonist, Utilitarian, Eudemonistic, Egoistical Ethics), another puts the principle of duty before happiness; the striving for virtue, morality, and reason are given priority (Plato, Spinoza, Kant). It is, however, crucial that happiness cannot be achieved directly, but only through concrete goals, whose attainment holds the promise of satisfaction and thus of happiness. Furthermore, happiness does not simply occur but needs to be actively pursued in a practice, which contributes to a meaningful life when successfully accomplished.

The Good in itself is one of the central principles of ethics. In Greek philosophy and metaphysics, the Good is the essence of all being, the goal toward which all striving is directed, and through which man becomes wholly himself (Plato, Aristotle). Something is morally good, which is good in itself and not with regard to something else or for something else. Kant states, “Nothing can be thought anywhere in this world, or even outside the same, which can unreservedly

be regarded as good, except the good will alone . . . The good will is not good through that which it effects or accomplishes, nor through its usefulness in achieving a certain purpose, but it is good through the willing only, good in itself” (Kant 1995b – *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*: 180f).

Joined in the concept of the highest Good, in which consummate personhood is reflected, are the three topics of ethics: happiness, freedom, and the Good (Pieper 2007). “It is a priori (morally) required to achieve the highest Good through the freedom of will, . . . In the highest for us practicable – i.e., realizable through our will – Good, virtue and happiness have to be thought as necessary and connected” (Kant 1995b, p. 173).

The term freedom has repeatedly occurred above and is, in fact, of even greater importance to ethics, because it implies both precondition and goal. Today the question arises based on recent findings from neurobiology, attachment research, and psychoanalysis of how free the human being is in his actions. Were behavior – as it is understood by some behaviorists and neurobiologists – completely predetermined, there would no longer be a need for a science of morals.

While freedom was seen as self-evident in antiquity, it has assumed great importance in the reflections of modern ethics since Kant. As a “natural being” man is other-directed as a result of his sensuality, i.e., his drives, instincts, feelings, passions, needs, and interests (heteronomy). Even if he cannot invalidate the laws of nature, he can decide what he can want, shall want, or not want, i.e., he can act self-determinedly (autonomy). Because he can free himself from the constraints of nature and determine autonomously what he can want, he uses his moral freedom. In contrast to unconstrained freedom, arbitrariness, moral freedom refers to the freedom of others and acknowledges this as a principle. The contradiction between unconstrained, absolute freedom and freedom which delimits itself with consideration of the freedom of others characterizes moral freedom. Moral freedom is the basis for freedom of action. Freedom of action, which means not merely to

want the Good but to do it, is always limited by the prevailing circumstances.

Inherent in the concept of freedom is also one of the limits of ethics. As a theory it cannot be its own practice, because the realization of freedom lies outside itself. The individual is moral through will; it is not ethics that renders him moral. In addition, because freedom is one of its presuppositions, ethics cannot develop a material catalog of norms. It can, however, substantiate formal norms whose critical application functions as a standard for material norms. The critical evaluation and application is ultimately left to the acting individual (Pieper 2007).

The goals of ethics, which are of importance to humans from a psychological standpoint, may be summarized as the reflective enlightenment of the acting individual in regard to the moral conditions of his actions. With comprehension of freedom as an essential element for the human being, the critical power of judgment of moral actions, i.e., the critical differentiation between good and evil before the background of freedom as an unconditional principle, has to be practiced. A third crucial element represents the acquisition of moral competence and social responsibility (Pieper 2007).

### **The Psychic Development of Moral Competence as the Basis for Moral Conduct**

Two significant directions can be identified regarding the development of moral competence: the psychoanalytical view of Freud, complemented by several aspects from Jung, and the theories of developmental psychology ranging from Mead to Piaget and Kohlberg to Gilligan.

Kohlberg’s theory of moral development (Kohlberg 1984) is based on both Piaget’s stages of cognitive development and his division of moral development into a premoral, a heteronomous, and an autonomous stage analyzing the child’s changing awareness of rules. Founded on the results of his empirical research, Kohlberg

**Ethics and Ethical Behavior, Table 1** Stages of moral development

Level	Stage	Moral orientation
I. Pre-conventional level	1	Obedience and punishment orientation
	2	Self-interest orientation
II. Conventional level	3	Interpersonal accord and conformity
	4	Authority and social order maintaining orientation
III. Post-conventional level	5	Social contract orientation
	6	Universal ethical principles orientation

From Garz (2006, p. 102)

added three additional stages to those of Piaget and summarized these in three levels (Table 1).

These described stages of moral development may also serve as an indication of current social and historical development where moral conscience increasingly appears to be moving toward the discourse today (Lang 1992).

Kohlberg's stages of moral development are based on the conception of a moral of justice as proposed by Carol Gilligan (1982). She has elaborated Kohlberg's theory of moral development by introducing the concept of moral of caring, starting from the premise that both attitudes to morality are in a dialectical relationship. This approach is of particular interest because it complements the so-called "male" abstract moral with a "female" moral of human caring (Garz 2006, p. 117).

## Freedom and Psychoanalysis

Prior to Kant, psychology was a branch of Special Metaphysics. In contrast to General Metaphysics, i.e., ontology (science of the nature of being), psychology was regarded as Special Metaphysics concerning itself, as the "science of the soul," with questions of self-knowledge, identity, and oneness of consciousness. The focus of psychology has since then been on concrete psychic experience (Pieper 2007).

In addition to the development of moral competence, the question as to where the conscience

or morality can be located in the human psyche is of interest from a psychoanalytical perspective. In his theory of psychic structure, Freud names the superego as the judge or censor of the ego. The superego's functions comprise the conscience, self-observation, and ideal formation. This term therefore designates the presence of internalized values, commands, and prohibitions. The superego develops in the child after an extended period of need for support with the Oedipus complex and as a result of the fear of loss of paternal love. From a philosophical viewpoint, this would be expressed as follows: "The demand of the conscience (superego) may thus be seen as the advice to act wisely: Act in conformity with your conscience or you will lose the goodwill of the one whose protection and help you need" (Anzenbacher 1992, p. 207). Freud (1999) views morality as a strategy, in which culture, indirectly also serving the pleasure principle, attempts to defend itself against the destructiveness of aggression. Culture virtually installs the superego in the individual to serve as his conscience which constrains the ego; this leads to the development of a sense of guilt and the need for punishment and thus to the diminishment of aggression.

Freud considers the quest for the highest Good, the purpose in life, as emerging from the pleasure principle, which takes priority over everything else. This would, however, completely instrumentalize reason and cannot become practical as pure reason in the sense of Kant. This, in turn, would form the first result in the leveling of an independent meaning of morality (Anzenbacher 1992).

Jung (1995, § 825–857) asserts that ethics and moral are innate, because without the ability of the psyche to experience guilt there can be no sense of guilt. Furthermore, the omnipresent opposites are thereby raised to conscious awareness. Ethos is thus understood by Jung as a "special case of the transcendent function" which connects the unconscious with the conscious. Only in the conscious, reflective examination of one's own actions can what appears to be moral conduct be changed into ethical conduct. From a religious standpoint he

defines this as the establishment of a connection between reason and grace.

In relation to the principles of ethics, psychotherapy and psychoanalysis as applied psychology also have an important role. Psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic methods essentially consist of the dialogical working-through of the patient's emotional history. It is the aim of the therapy to free the individual from psychic constraints through the bringing to consciousness, emotionally working through and processing of complex- and conflict-charged events that prevent him from living life as a truly human being liberated on to himself. This is a moral aim in a twofold sense, as it also requires the analyst to be conscious of his own responsibility. However, in contrast to ethics, psychology does not aim to reflect on the conditions of moral conduct but wants to enable the human being to act morally. Through cognitive insight and emotional experiences, i.e., through self-knowledge, the individual shall recognize and integrate the constraining factors to achieve the capability of interaction. The discourse ethicist Habermas connects morality and psychoanalysis as follows: "Since the analysis imposes the experience of self-reflection on the patient, it calls for a 'moral responsibility for the content' of the disorder. Because insight as the aim of analysis is only this, namely that the *ego* of the patient is to recognize itself in the other represented by the disorder as his alienated *self* and identify with it. As in Hegel's dialectic of morality, the offender recognizes his own destroyed being in his victim, an act of self-reflection through which the abstractly separated entities perceive the devastated moral totality as their common ground *and through this* are able to return to it. Analytic knowledge is, at the same time, moral knowledge" (Habermas 1968, p. 288).

In contrast to Habermas, Drewermann (1982), who as a moral theologian, church critic, and psychoanalyst attempts to establish a connection between religion and the unconscious, describes psychoanalysis as inherently amoral. Psychoanalysis is essentially concerned with the confrontation with never questioned, internalized contents of the superego and so to decide against

prevailing norms. "Every psychotherapy renders a bit more conscienceless, egomaniac, unscrupulous. Every psychotherapy is therefore a kind of seduction, a lesson in immorality" (Drewermann 1982, p. 83). While he views this in one respect as positive in that it implies an increase in individual freedom, it is also from a Hegelian perspective a risk, because self-consciousness can be achieved only in a life and death struggle. At stake in this struggle are the concepts of free or not free, self-determined, or other-directed, but not of good or evil. In the course of the struggle the Old has to be cast off and combated, the subjectively accomplished acknowledgment of morality, i.e., the awareness of morality through a process of becoming conscious gained against the background of personal freedom can be reintegrated only in a second step according to Hegel. The New is then frequently identical with the cast-off Old, although now it is chosen self-determinedly and consciously. In the sense of Hegel, the moral dilemma would then be resolved. It remains, however, open to question if in the phase of self-discovery of the analysis, the second step is actually taken, i.e., if the reconnection to the prevailing morality is achieved or should even be achieved. This, in the sense of the goal of freedom, shall not be the aim of psychotherapy or psychoanalysis. If ethics were "repealed" and humans in their being good or being active would no longer find a justification for being or developing, there would nevertheless need to be another reason for the justification of being. Drewermann's stance is that this can be found in man's being held in the grace of God. For him it is God who is the ultimate reason for man's being, while the Moral is not the definitive measure of humanness. The aim of psychotherapy would then be the – humble – acknowledgment of one's own being and the assumption of responsibility for one's own life as a gift of God. His position is thus contrary to the basic principles of ethics, to find determinants for moral conduct outside of (religious) authorities.

**Acknowledgment** This text was translated by Gisela Rumsey, M.A.



## See Also

- ▶ Drewermann, Eugen
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Plato and Religion
- ▶ Plato on the Soul
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Ethics in Counseling

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A parish minister “reminds” a presurgical patient to be “right with God” in case death results from the surgery. Or a psychotherapist insists that a woman leave her abusive husband without considering how her “faith” might inform her decision. Professional counseling, particularly when religious/spiritual elements are present, can be both a powerful and dangerous resource in the healing process. Think of *religion* as a conscious and socially organized expression of spirituality, based on a formal belief system about divine presence. And think of *spirituality* as a person’s unique relationship with whatever is beyond human experience. Because the temptation is always present for professional helpers to impose their conscious or unconscious values, ethical practice can limit the chances of inadvertently harming their clients.

To help protect both counselor and client and to promote healing, this entry considers:

1. *Context* – how religious/spiritual elements affect the ethical dynamics of the professional relationship
2. Recommended *safeguards* for counselor and client
3. Useful *resources and approaches* that promote ethical practice

## Context

Spiritual/religious elements appear in two different settings:

1. When counseling parishioners, the pastoral role of the *religious professional*, such as a minister or priest, affects therapeutic transference including the counselee's projection of divine authority onto the counselor. The counselor's projection onto the client (e.g., This is the helpless person I am required to heal or save) is called *countertransference*. Both transference and countertransference are unconscious and, therefore, can only be utilized appropriately when brought to consciousness.

Example: A well-integrated religious professional would accurately identify and address the unavoidable dual relationship (pastor and counselor) affecting the counseling process and the exercise of the pastoral role. A poorly integrated religious professional might inadvertently use the power of the pastoral role to interpret the psychological frailties of the client (e.g., as "sinful") or clumsily psychologize the client's spirituality (e.g., as merely an attempt to explain the Divine Mystery), in either case potentially doing great harm.

2. *Secular counselors* who make use of religious/spiritual elements must understand the power of *spiritual/religious content* in the counseling relationship.

Example: A well-integrated counselor would possess a sufficiently broad understanding of the dynamics of religion/spirituality to assist a client in using them appropriately while honoring the client's religious/spiritual orientation. A poorly integrated counselor would purposefully (or inadvertently) impose the counselor's own religious/spiritual or secular framework onto the client's issues.

In both cases, the quality of integration between psychological and religious/spiritual concerns and roles necessarily affect *professional identity*. Furthermore, the well-integrated professional must understand the power of both

the pastoral role and the counselor role, including the heightened power of the combination and its consequent tendency to increase potential danger to the client. *Rather than indoctrinating or judging the client, ethically based counseling assists the client in self-exploration that makes use of psychological and/or religious perspectives.*

## Safeguards

Some ethical and practical considerations follow:

### Hippocratic Oath: "Do No Harm"

When a religious or secular professional engages in a counseling relationship with a client/parishioner, the potential to cause harm by overwhelming the client's healing process with the professional's expectations and unconscious agenda always exists. In a strictly *secular setting*, an example of harm is violating the client's personal boundaries, but *spiritual/religious* counseling can also play the needs of present life against the requirements of "salvation" (e.g., the Christian psychologist whose purpose for counseling is "soul-saving" rather than psychological healing). In these examples, religious/spiritual counselors must attend consciously to the conflict that may exist between present and eternal concerns.

### The Power of the Divine to Impose Eternal Judgment

The client's projection onto the dually equipped counselor/minister may include the idea of divine reward or punishment. To be answerable to God is hard enough, but projection of the divine can interject enormous *judgmental power* into the identity of the professional. When the professional can recognize the nature of the projection, then client is then protected from the fear of eternal harm (e.g., the woman wanting to leave her abusive husband hears the religious professional telling her that divorce endangers her eternal soul, so she believes she must remain in the situation).

### **Ministerial Access to More Areas in Parishioner's Personal Lives**

Professional counselors/psychotherapists are trained to create a safe counseling space, and professional literature and codes of ethics address safety issues. A religious professional, however, may have broader access to a parishioner's private world where appropriate professional boundaries may be less distinct and more difficult to maintain. Religious professionals must, therefore, adhere to clear ethical boundaries appropriate to their unique situation (e.g., counseling in the office, not the home).

### **Spiritual Intimacy**

While counselors and ministers are usually trained to be aware of the depth of *intimacy* in a counseling relationship, such intimacy in relationships around matters of spirituality may be less obvious and potentially more dangerous for client and counselor alike. Spiritual language can carry a subtle sexualized meaning that can easily lead to boundary violations (e.g., spiritual intimacy may invite inappropriate touching). Professional supervision/consultation serves to protect against the danger by providing a more objective perspective.

### **Maturity of the Individual Versus Reliance on Religious Strictures**

Many professional codes of ethics rely on prohibiting particular behaviors in the counseling relationship (e.g., sexual touching or economic transactions.) These useful guidelines do not replace the need for personal and professional maturity. Unexamined unconscious contents can too easily lead to violation of ethical boundaries, so supervision and the developing *maturity* of the professional remain essential. Professional maturity might include the following: attention to the potentially dangerous elements in counseling, awareness of one's own unconscious issues, and awareness of one's own needs and the ability to meet those outside of the counseling relationship. Maturity can also lower anxiety, helping the professional to be more intentional and thoughtful in the counseling relationship.

Professional maturity is more ethically reliable than rule-based obedience and compliance.

### **The Temptation to Impose One's Own Belief System onto the Client**

Every counseling professional runs the risk of imposing his or her personal and often unconscious worldview and/or theology onto the client with potentially dangerous consequences. For example, either a secular or religiously based counselor could, even inadvertently, impose the idea that a married couple must have a particular kind of relationship, for example, a hierarchical power structure or a completely equal relationship, rather than helping them make an informed choice and help them develop the kind of relationship they desire.

### **The Unexplored "Shadow" of the Religious Professional**

Codes of ethics for psychotherapists typically require significant self-examination so that unconscious issues are not projected onto clients. Self-examination, perhaps including personal psychotherapy, becomes particularly essential when religious content is the focus of the counseling. Good intentions, even when grounded in images of a benevolent divinity, do not eliminate the need for professional self-examination (e.g., a counselor who grew up with a judgmental parent could unconsciously impose the demands of a judgmental God onto clients).

### **Supervision and Consultation**

The standards of practice for psychotherapy and ministry at one time required supervision of clinical work only for those still in training and not yet fully authorized. The emergence of many professional ethical violations, sometimes resulting in expensive litigation, caused most counseling organizations to require all clinicians to get regular supervision in order to protect against ethical violations. Many religious organizations still need to update their ethical requirements to include ongoing supervision for ministry. Supervision helps keep both professional and client safer in the more flexibly structured parish environment.

### **Awareness of the Presence and Effect of Any Dual Relationship and the Resultant Power Imbalance**

Dual relationships, such as pastor/counselor or counselor/friend, are rare in some clinical settings and practically unavoidable in others. The ethical counselor will learn to be aware of dual relationships and how to manage them in the best interest of the client. An example comes from the Code of Ethics of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (Principle III. E):

E. We recognize the trust placed in and unique power of the therapeutic relationship. While acknowledging the complexity of some pastoral relationships, we avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of clients. We avoid those dual or multiple relationships with clients which could impair our professional judgment, compromise the integrity of the treatment, and/or use the relationship for our own gain. A multiple relationship occurs when a pastoral counselor is in a professional role with a person and 1) at the same time is in another role with the same person, 2) at the same time is in a relationship with a person closely associated with or related to the person with whom the pastoral counselor has the professional relationship, or 3) promises to enter into another relationship in the future with the person or a person closely associated with or related to the person. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, particularly within congregations or in family or couples counseling, we take reasonable steps to protect the clients and are responsible for setting clear and appropriate boundaries (e.g. It would not be ethical for the counselor to sell a car to the client. Fair bargaining would be impossible to achieve in light of the power imbalance.).

### **Evaluating Ethical Dimensions in Any Professional Counseling Relationship**

Professional codes of ethics often contain detailed lists of behaviors that support or detract from the ethical boundaries of the professional relationship. These behaviors might include rules about touching, appropriate settings for counseling, and adherence to particular religious beliefs. While these lists can be useful, they are limited by their specificity. Often these lists of prohibited behaviors do not fit the specifics exactly. Therefore, a framework for ethical analysis, like the one below modified from the *Faith Trust Institute*, provides an approach to identifying the

ethical elements of the professional relationship that can be readily applied to counseling relationships and other pastoral care situations.

### **Resources and Approaches**

The elements of the following ethical analysis can be used either by oneself or with a supervisor to help promote safe and ethical counseling practices.

#### **Violation of Role**

In a counseling relationship, the counselor is the one held accountable for ethical behavior.

*Does your behavior violate the role you are called to assume as a minister/counselor?*

Is your professional/pastoral role clear and generally affirmed by all concerned parties? Do you understand the legal and moral responsibilities of your position? (e.g., the responsibility to maintain appropriate *boundaries*).

Do you understand and know how to work with the unavoidable power imbalance in the professional relationship? (e.g., A person seeking help will usually feel less powerful than the professional helper. Identifying the power imbalance openly gives counselor and client the opportunity to minimize its effects).

#### **Misuse of Authority and Power**

*Do your actions constitute abuse or misuse of your authority and power as a minister/counselor?*

Are you aware of the power and authority you carry in your ministerial/professional counselor position and of the expectations that your congregation and/or clients have for you? (e.g., A parishioner may believe that the pastor knows precisely what God expects in the immediate situation. The pastor must be honest with self and parishioner alike about the appropriate limits to that professional power).

#### **Taking Advantage of Vulnerability**

*Do your actions violate the trust that your "relatively" vulnerable congregants/clients place in you?*

Do you understand that context and relationship strongly affect a congregant's/client's

experience of vulnerability and power and that the professional, too, can be affected by these? (e.g., When counselor and/or client believe that God will provide the necessary guidance, feelings of attraction can be misinterpreted as encouraging a sexual relationship).

### Meaningful Consent

*Do your congregants/clients have sufficient information and power to be completely responsible for the decisions they make in relating to you (and vice versa)?*

What congregant/client decisions are affected by a power imbalance in your relationship and how free are congregants/clients to say “no” to requests from the pastor/counselor? Also, how free is the professional to say “no” to requests from parishioners/clients? (e.g., A client may believe that the counselor’s suggestions must be followed rather than taking his or her own responsibility for choices.)

### Summary

Clearly, the presence of spiritual/religious elements in a counseling relationship can increase the power for and danger to the client. Professional Codes of Ethics are essential for client protection, but professional awareness of dual relationships, attendance to personal maturity, sufficient respect for the power of the spiritual, and the use of proper assessment tools for ethical and boundary evaluation are also necessary for appropriate care of clients.

### See Also

- ▶ [Countertransference](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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### Links to Examples of Codes of Ethics

(Others can be found on professional association or church denominational websites.)

*American Association of Pastoral Counselors*. (n.d.). <http://www.aapc.org/about-us/code-of-ethics.aspx>.

*American Association of Christian Counselors*. (n.d.). <http://www.aacc.net/about-us/code-of-ethics/>.

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*American Baptist Church*. (n.d.). <http://www.ministerscouncil.com/WhoWeAre/EnglishEthics.aspx>.

*The Evangelical Christian Church in Canada*. (n.d.). <http://www.ceconline.net/node/11>.

*The United Church of Christ*. (n.d.). <http://www.ucc.org/education/polity/pdf-folder/ordained-minister-s-code.pdf>.

### Examples of Professional Organizations

*FaithTrust Institute: Working together to end sexual and domestic violence*. (n.d.). <http://faithtrustinstitute.org/>.

*American Association of Pastoral Counselors*. (n.d.). <http://www.aapc.org/>.

*American Association of Christian Counselors*. (n.d.). <https://www.aacc.net/>.

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*American Counseling Association*. (n.d.). <http://www.counseling.org/>.

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## Ethics of the Fathers

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“Ethics of the Fathers,” called, in Hebrew, Pirkei Avot and more properly translated as “Chapters

of the Fathers,” is known as “Ethics of the Fathers” because of its content – a collection of laws, aphorisms, and guides to ethical behavior – wisdom literature that is over 2,000 years old. It asks and tries to explain what makes a good person and how to get along with family members, teachers, and the neighbors. *Pirkei Avot* is concerned with down-to-earth, hands-on, practical living – like an early self-help book.

The emphasis is on doing, embodying the religious life even in everyday actions. This accessibility makes it very popular, so it is included in many prayer books. Some famous teaching examples are:

- Shammai: “Say little and do much” (Shapiro 2006, p. 15).
- Hillel: “Don’t judge your fellowman until you are in his place” (Shapiro 2006, p. 21).
- Ben Zoma: “Who is wise? He who learns from every man. . . . Who is a hero? He who controls his passions” (Pirkei, Ch 4, Minsha 1).
- Hillel: “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” (Shapiro 2006, p. 15).

Hillel’s question, “If I am only for myself, what am I?” (Shapiro 2006, p. 15), underlies individual human development – the search for the self and understanding who the self is in relation to others. Psychotherapeutic interaction concerns itself with searching deep within to find what is true for the individual and then finding ways for the individual to make contact with others, a process leading from a narcissistic engagement with the world to a fuller, open, mature being, whose everyday life embodies a full engagement with God and the world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ethics and Ethical Behavior](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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Shapiro, R. R. (2006). *Ethics of the Sages Pirke Avot annotated and explained*. Woodstock: Skylight Paths.

## Etiological Myth

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Etiological myths are those myths that explain origins and causes. Creation myths are etiological, explaining how the universe or the world or life in the world came into being. Etiological myth does not have to situate itself at the beginning of all things; it can account for the creation of a new entity or activity within the established order of creation, just as much as for the creation of an ordered world out of primal chaos.

## Religion

Religions can be set along a spectrum from those primarily focussed on beginnings, on events within an established universe, and on endings. Although “etiological” is a term derived from classical Greek (*aition* meaning cause), the belief systems of classical Greece were oriented more to the afterlife, and most of their etiological myths concerned particular places and rituals. The Roman poet, Ovid, collected a large number of etiological myths of transformation in his long poem, *The Metamorphoses*. Such myths as Daphne’s transformation into the laurel were popular material for medieval and Renaissance writers and artists to interpret allegorically as intimating Christian truths. The Bible stories span the whole spectrum from creation to last things. The first part of the Bible, *The Book of Genesis*, offers etiological explanations for the creation of the world and its inhabitants, the origin of death, fear and hatred of snakes, and the pangs of childbirth, and the Noah story explains the origin of the first rainbow. An example of a religion tilted almost totally towards etiology is the Australian Aboriginal people’s Dreamtime, whose stories provide explanations for the origins of features of the landscape, its inhabitants, and their behaviors. While Dreamtime stories speak



of a time outside chronological time, those who still hold them sacred believe that the beings of which they speak still inhabit the land. Dreamtime etiological belief is taken into serious consideration by contemporary Australian Governments in legislating for commercial and recreational use of the land.

## Science

While the origins of the universe are currently not fully explicable in scientific terms (and perhaps never will be), such phenomena as the rainbow, geological features of the earth, and lunar eclipses have been well understood scientifically, so much so that scientific explanations have long been used as weapons to discredit myth in general via its etiological function. Romantic poets such as Keats and Wordsworth bewailed this triumph of the rational mind over what the poets saw as the truths of the imagination and soul. In the nineteenth century, believers in the literal truth of the Bible struggled with the challenges offered by science. The battle between proponents of the Darwinian theory of evolution and the creation story in Genesis still rages.

## Psychology

Psychologists who claim that their discipline belongs among the sciences have no interest in exploring etiological questions about the psyche, preferring close observational and experimental scrutiny of the ways in which children develop. Most psychoanalytic theorists also focus on the development of the individual psyche rather than its mysterious prehistoric origins. Post-Jungians tend to ignore Jung's own speculations about the prehistoric development of human consciousness. With the exception of Julia Kristeva, who terms this part of his work the "Freudian fable," post-Freudians say as little as possible about Freud's own etiological mythmaking in *Totem and Taboo* and *Moses and Monotheism*, where (with some proviso about the difficulty of

exactitude) he offers as literal truth a tale about the primal horde, the first slaughter of a father by his sons, and the guilt-ridden origins of sacrifice. Freud regards all later religions as attempting to resolve the filial sense of guilt. His primal horde tale offers an etiology not only for world religions but also for all human civilizations and the neuroses that afflict the human psyche.

## See Also

- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Kristeva, Julia](#)

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## Evangelical

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The term evangelical is a derivative of the Greek word *euangelion*, which literally means "good news" or "gospel." It is used to identify the four books of the New Testament that narrates the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The earliest usage of the term "evangelical" seems to be from Tertullian's writings (c. 155–222), where he referred to the

“evangelical and apostolic writings” as authoritative for the life and practice of the church.

Historically, the term evangelical was first used to refer to those who were part of the reforming parties in Europe before 1529. In the 1520s, it became popular in the polemical writings of early Reformers. During the Reformation period, an evangelical is one who believes that the Catholic Church should return to the beliefs and practices supported by New Testament Christianity. An evangelical emphasizes piety and righteous living, expressed in strict ethical codes, instead of adherence to external legal rules enforced by the Church.

Contemporary evangelicals share basic convictions inherited from their Reformation family, including the authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures, the necessity of salvation in Jesus Christ because of human sinfulness, the doctrine of the Trinity, belief in the resurrection and divine judgment, and the urgency of evangelism.

While the face of Christianity is rapidly changing, with the center of evangelical Christianity moving towards Asia, Africa, and Latin America, perhaps the strongest expression of modern-day evangelicalism is found in the United States. Because of the swift transplantation of evangelical beliefs and practices to the colonies, in Anglo-American history, the term evangelical now refers to a wide variety of groups, ranging from the major Protestant denominations like the Baptists and Presbyterians to Roman Catholics and to evangelical associations like the Billy Graham Association. In many parts of Europe, Asia, and Latin America, the word is often used synonymously with Protestant groups as distinguished from Roman Catholics.

## Commentary

While present-day evangelicals share basic beliefs, interpretations may vary depending on where they locate themselves along the evangelical spectrum. When nineteenth-century science began to challenge the authenticity of the Bible

and the credibility of Christian teachings, evangelicals found themselves divided. In response to what was perceived as a scientific onslaught on the Christian faith, traditionalists separated themselves from those who adopted a critical approach to the study of the Bible. Those who tried to adapt to the larger and more pluralistic culture, believing that there is no quarrel between the truth of religion and the discoveries of science, were considered liberals and modernists.

Each group adopts a distinct approach to answering the question of how one enters into and remains within the Christian life and communion. Although they share the belief that entrance into the Christian life is through faith in Jesus Christ, within the conservative branch, especially among the self-described “born-again Christians,” a conversion experience is the definitive moment of entrance into the Christian life and the Kingdom of God. Conversion happens through repentance of one’s sins and the acceptance of the forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

A definitive conversion experience meant that a person’s identity is changed by God’s grace. It is reshaped and transformed from the “old” into the “new.” With the new identity comes the adoption of new ideals and practices, which are often expressed in strict moral lifestyle, immersion in the life of the community, and fealty to religious teachings. Furthermore, this transformation of identity is accomplished through continuous participation in the ritualized practices of the local community like prayer, bible studies, small-group fellowships, and corporate worship.

Even though conservative evangelicals are found to hold disparate, nuanced, and diverse views on political and social issue, in general, they view the teachings of the Bible as sufficient to answer life’s problems and questions. The believer recognizes and submits to the authority of the Bible and the ordained leaders of the church. Because biblical teachings are authoritative for Christian life and practice, and because of the belief that the Holy Spirit guides the believer into obedient faith, conservative evangelicals are distrustful of any naturalistic explanation of

human experiences. If human psychology could explain and improve human behavior without the need for spiritual intervention, then belief in the power of God to influence human life becomes expendable.

The authoritative and supernatural place of the Bible and the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the community also serve as inoculation against outside criticism. Since there is an external source of authority to which members defer, the believer tends to have a diminished sense of personal autonomy and power. Questioning a belief or doctrine using other intellectual tools may also produce guilt. Finally, even though there is evidence that active participation in church life and commitment to religious tradition promotes a believer's psychological well-being, adherence to the prescribed moral code of the community could make it difficult for a believer to adapt to situations or subcultures that do not share her beliefs.

Meanwhile, evangelicals who had been influenced by the American civil rights and antiwar movements, as well as the advances in higher education, had come to adopt liberal views on political issues. Evangelical scholars who are interested in engaging the human sciences can also be found in some evangelical colleges. Many of these modern-day evangelicals have assimilated several central features of the dominant American culture, especially those pertaining to individual autonomy and tolerance of diversity. With a more positive view of cultural and other human disciplines, they are therefore more comfortable with engaging the broader culture while at the same time maintaining close communion with their religious communities.

Within this multivocal evangelical community, there are those who welcome the use of cultural and scientific approaches in the examination of their faith. In exploring the Christian life, evangelicals with liberal leanings accept the complexities of human personality and development. Although the Bible remains authoritative, they do not expect it to provide the solutions to all of the unique challenges of modern living. They feel free to evaluate life choices using other tools for analysis and moral reasoning that extend

beyond obedience to religious authority or tradition. They welcome the help of clinical therapists, for instance, with difficult issues like abortion, marriage, sexuality, work, and various psychological illnesses. Attempts toward the integration of theology and psychology reflect the openness of modern evangelicals to a progressive approach to the study of human development. Examples of such undertakings are expressed in publications like the *Journal of Theology and Psychology* and the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*.

### See Also

- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Conversion](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)
- ▶ [Grace](#)
- ▶ [Predestination](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Religious Identity](#)
- ▶ [Resurrection](#)

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## Everson, William

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After leaving St Albert's Dominican Priory, a Catholic monastery in Oakland, California, where he had practiced as a lay monk, poet, and spiritual counselor, under the name "Brother Antoninus" for 18 years, William Everson disrobed himself of his religious habit after an electrifying reading at the University of California at Davis (UCD) campus and donned the mantle of a traditional Native American buckskin vest and Lakota bear claw necklace, and when I took his celebrated course, "Birth of a Poet," in 1979 at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC), this is the way I first experienced him: a *poet-shaman*. It was Everson's humility, I believe, as a post-Christian monk that enabled him to wear this sacred mantle with an attitude of reverence, an attitude of modesty.

I say this in my opening statement of this entry because it is important to provide for the reader a sense of the poet's *presence* when I knew him. By the time I set eyes on him, Everson had already gone through two religious conversions: the first when he found his master, Robinson Jeffers, and the second when he had his experience of spiritual conversion to Catholicism. The third conversion, which I will speak about later, is his change into a poet-shaman following a dream that called him to wear this new regalia. It was in the Dominican Order, as "Brother Antoninus," that Everson learned the art of silent meditation and its importance in evoking the call to vocation, as it is "voiced" through dreams, visions, and ecstatic experiences.

After divesting himself of his friar's robes after the UC Davis reading, Everson began to pay careful attention to his dreams and visionary experiences. During his period of change from Catholic lay brother to University professor at UCSC, he heard a calling from the Self and surrendered to its powerful summons; new rhythms of the American earth were summoning him to

provide an answer to the world on the verge of spiritual rebirth at the cusp of the new millennium: to respond to a problem of how to live more harmoniously with the earth. Everson would play a pivotal role in helping to usher a new way of living in. (Today, we would call him an ecopsychologist). Everson's response to his inner/outer summons was to teach his celebrated course "Birth of a Poet" on the UC Santa Cruz campus, between the Fall of 1971 and 1981, where he taught on the "vocational archetype" – a destiny factor in the dreams and fantasy thinking of his students. Everson's way into this dimension of the psyche was mythopoetic. In 1980, Bill asked me to be his Teaching Assistant and lead dream groups for his course, where the aim was to help students locate their calling to vocation. This is the way I got to know Everson personally. I remained his close friend, until his death in 1994.

Everson was born in 1912, so the year 2012 happens to be his centennial year, the 100th anniversary of his birth, an occasion to rejoice and give praise for his life and work. I write this entry from my home in the wooded hills of Oakland, on the edge of Joaquin Miller Park, above the Dominican priory where Everson lived as a monk, before moving to Stinson Beach with his wife Susanna, and stepson Jude, where he wrote wild poetry on the Pacific coast. Everson found his final quaint home in the mountainous terrain of Davenport, California, near Big Creek where steelhead still run today, where there are plenty of hawks, right beneath twin towering *sequoia sempevirins*, two redwood trees he dearly loved.

From Everson's empirical research into the nature of dreams on the UCSC campus, he arrived at a place of personal and cultural transformation, from whence he could see across the vast course of human evolution in a new way; from a vista in the Native American cultural psyche, where the drumbeat and rattle of the shaman are experienced as the heartbeat of the nation. From this vantage point, he set out to chart a Post-Jungian Journaling method that could lead University students to discover the central factor of religious experience: the Self. His notion of the

vocational archetype provided the way in. Out of his spiritual center – the calling – Bill spoke to students at UCSC in an effort to reconnect them again to the creative element in everyone: the earth, the air we breathe, forests, our national parks, and the great solitude of Nature. Everson taught students that we have to follow the “star” of our destiny to our place of emergence, our place of manifestation as human beings, our place of *visioning*, if we are to survive as a species.

As his Teaching Assistant, I would observe students coming in to the class somewhat sleepy-eyed and they would either sit or lie down on mats around Everson in the center of the room. He was always standing upright and pacing about, with his hand beating against his blue jeans in a rhythmic motion (he had Parkinson’s disease); he would speak, read, and recite poetry at the center of the assemblage with the large circle around him. Often students were in half-dream states. Mainly they would be in a relaxed state, so that the psyche could have an opportunity to be stimulated by whatever he was saying. Sometimes, during his reading of poems, you would get this feeling of an incredible electrical current, an energy charge, coming right out of him. It was quite extraordinary, what Rudolph Otto called the “numinous” feeling state.

Everson had tremendous integrity and he held an empirical attitude towards the dream journals and the final essays of the students. He and I would read them together and they were sometimes quite eloquent. Language was Everson’s way to approach the unconscious. Journaling was his method. As a Post-Jungian, who was “analyzed” by Father Victor White, in the Dominican priory in Oakland, he looked at dreams from an in-depth religious angle. Vocational dreams hold a potentiality, he taught, and have a *telos*; they are goal directed. He learned this from Jung. It is the student’s task to discover what the vocation to Selfhood is.

Many students had vocational dreams, but how to bring the *calling* forth, to birth it, was the big question Bill left students with. How does one manifest one’s vocation in one’s life and bring it to birth? “Birth of a Poet” is the

name he selected for his course and the confirmation of the call was its central aim.

As I have said, Everson was very modest about what he was observing. It takes a long period of time to do deep psychological work and to manifest its fruits, its alchemical gold. But Everson did most of his work himself, without an analyst. He was basically self-analyzed. Victor White merely led him to Jung’s work. Despite his being virtually unanalyzed, it is my view that Everson made a significant contribution to Post-Jungian theory and to the new religion of the West. He did this from the literary angle as a poet, writer, fine press printer, and teacher. I view Everson as a Post-Dominican/Post-Jungian teacher, really, who contributed to our understanding of the *vocational archetype*, which he, and the Post-Jungian Journal workshop guru, Ira Progoff, developed primarily as a way to apply analytical psychological techniques to work with large groups of people, outside analysis.

Everson and I held office hours together, and sometimes students would come in on their own initiative and speak about their dreams with one or both of us and I learned a great deal from him. Everson was a vocational counselor, a spiritual counselor, and a Post-Jungian teacher. He distinguished between vocation and career in the following way: *vocation is where your motivation is, career is the impact of your vocation on the world*. Vocation is where one’s deepest source of motivation is and it comes from the Self (that part of one that allows one to truly expand and experience the cosmos), with a capital S. “Where is the expansion point in your personality, the point of transcendence?” Everson asks us to consider. This is what he was seeking.

When Everson spoke about the vocational archetype and its impact on individuals and the world, he was really speaking about that innate expansive potential in each of us. The important distinction he made between vocation and career is the impact of vocation on the world. Career has to do with one’s relationship to collectivity, group consciousness, culture, and the nation in which one lives; it is the impact of one’s work on the outside. It is not an occupation.

An occupation is really what we do for a living. It may not coincide with vocation, but it may be how one makes money. Vocation on the other hand relates to the notion of psychological and spiritual transformation because this is what vocational dreams do for us: they transform consciousness by *electrifying* us!

This electricity metaphor is basic to psychic energy, which, now with modern physics, we see that electromagnetic energy is present in atoms. Everson taught that one can access this source of psychophysical energy through writing, if one can find a way to tap into it. Everson's genius is that he had the intuitive insight to structure his course at UCSC so that he could open the way up for students at the early adult career transition to experience this. I experienced it first hand: Everson had an ability to activate the vocational archetype in student's dreams, in a way that was delightful. He had a unique ability to lead the active listener – the student – into a state of trance, or active visioning. As a Post-Jungian poet, Everson made transubstantiation through the vocational archetype transparent for us.

If one wants to know what one's vocation is, Everson instructed, look to the archetype. It is the archetype of vocation that makes all work sacred. All the great world religions and philosophical systems have their unconscious source in this archetype. Psychology is no exception to this rule, he taught. And all vocations, concerned with the preservation and protection of life on our planet, are ultimately united in a shamanic ground of existence, an indigenous source. Whether in the field of politics, agriculture, or art, Everson believed all vocations are concerned with maintaining a connection to a shamanic mode of existence.

Everson maintained a Christian attitude of humility under the mantle of poet-shaman, yet, as I said, when he read poetry on platform, he was a lightning shaman (Herrmann 2009). I don't say this lightly! The presence of the man, when he stood on platform, was simply awe inspiring! I can only speak from my personal experience here: his voice was spellbinding. During such moments when he read the envoys of divinity

spoke through him, I *felt* it in every fiber and fabric of my being. Everson was not only a religious poet; he was a teacher, who advanced Post-Jungian notions, based on his direct empirical experience, as an instructor and dream researcher. Some of his classes had 400 students enrolled at a time and by the time I took his course in 1979 I had to grab a class card from his hand so I could enroll. If I had not done that, my life would have taken a different direction.

I can remember, while sitting in a circle on the mats, with 100 students (UCSC eventually limited the number of students to 100) and hearing him read his poems, one in particular lit me through. This one was written during his Catholic period, and it is called "The Encounter." It describes his second conversion experience. Part of it reads like this:

... My Lord came to me in my depth of dross;  
I was as woman made and hung with shame.  
His lip sucked up the marrow of my mind,  
And all my body burned to bear His name.  
Upon my heart He placed His pouring pain;  
I hung upon him as the albatross  
Hangs on the undering gale and is sustained.

My Lord came to me and I knew, I knew.  
I was a uselessness and yet He came  
Shafted of the center of the sun.  
I was a nakedness and was of shame;  
I was a nothingness and unbegin.  
The look He leaned upon me lit me through.  
(Everson 1998, p. 80).

The idea of being "shafted of the center of the sun" suggests an experience of being burned pure with the brilliant shaft of psychic energy, and this I took to be equivalent to an experience of being struck internally by lightning, a direct experience of the Self.

This was Bill's second conversion. His first conversion came to him while he was a student at Fresno State University and pulled down by chance or meaningful coincidence (Jung's notion of "synchronicity" to which Everson ascribed) a book from the shelf, by the Carmel poet Robinson Jeffers. Everson speaks about this experience in depth in his book *Fragments of an Older Fury* as a type of "spiritual osmosis" that came over him suddenly, "something like the Oriental relationship of the sybarite to the *guru*":



What I sought was a presence, a spiritual and psychological substance. The force from his pages hit me as something almost physical... When I encountered Jeffers it was essentially a religious conversion, my first one. Not only so, it was the intellectual awakening. For the first time I grasped the corruptness of man and the reality of an Absolute against which that corruptness must be measured. For the first time I knew there is a God, and I knew where I was going to find Him—before my very eyes, as He is bodied forth in prime Nature. And I knew that place no longer had to be the Lake Country, or Nantucket, or fish-shaped Paumanok, or the Mississippi. The place was California, the coast. I saw that he was intensely, incredibly alive in my own region (Everson 1968, p. 4).

Everson's work in "Birth of a Poet" became his laboratory for an investigation into the nature of the vocational archetype. His research led him to make some chief discoveries, particularly in the area of one's spiritual calling. Today, looking back at his life 100 years after his birth, I would venture to say that after Whitman, Melville, and Dickinson, he was one of the most important poets America has yet produced. In many ways, Everson caught the spirit of Whitman's vision of the "poets to come" in "Song of the Redwood Tree" and created a sacred ritual for students to realize Walt's dream, each in one's own way. By recourse to the dream life and by listening, in silence, to the sequence of his meditations on the Santa Cruz campus, overlooking the Monterey Bay, beneath giant redwood trees and the open sky, students were open to a direct experience of the cosmos. What gave Everson the power to transmit his notion of vocation as a way to God so clearly was the power of the West Coast as a region.

*Archetype West: the West Coast as a Literary Region* was written at Stinson Beach between February of 1970 and February of 1971. The reason this book is so significant for purposes of my entry is that it was written just before he taught "Birth of a Poet" in the fall of 1971. His idea of the Western archetype is a fascinating notion as it unites his views on Post-Jungian psychology and religion: what it *means* to be a Pacific Coast poet. *Archetype West* was not published until 1976, and Everson asks certain questions in it that are quite illuminating.

Basically, he asks the following: "What does it mean to be a Western writer?" "What is the archetype of the West that is dreaming us?" "Who are its greatest literary exponents in California and Oregon?" and "What role has depth psychology, primarily the psychology of C. G. Jung, played in helping to define it?"

Everson wrote the book at the same time he wrote two pivotal poems: "Black Hills" in May 1971 and "The Scout" in June of that same year. This is an important period, because this was right before his teaching of "Birth of a Poet," and as I say in our book (Herrmann 2009) this Post-Jungian course was essentially structured upon the pattern of the Native American *vision quest*.

Everson felt that his situation and that of other California writers, at the far end of the West, was the term of the Westward migration, which "places him [Western writer/poet/printer] at the center, rather than on the periphery, of the American experience" (Everson 1976, p. xiii). And pantheism "is not only the basic Californian or Western point of view, but is essentially American, is indeed *the* characteristic religious and aesthetic feeling" (Everson 1976, p. 7). Everson makes another point that is vital here in considering his contributions to this Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion and, that is, that the Western writer is "more in line with the perspectives of the American Indian and hence closer to the roots of the land" (Everson 1976, p. 8). This explains Everson's adoption of Native American artifacts in his religious persona – his bear claw necklace was quite impressive and the buckskin vest that he wore was also a beautiful artifact to behold. Everson told me that after a dream, which took place in the Black Hills and forms the background for his third conversion experience – his calling to shamanhood – he went to a little shop in Mill Valley, after finishing *Archetype West*, and found these artifacts there and decided he was going to wear them during his teaching at UCSC. The calling to wear Native American regalia is something that was "in the air" in the collective psyche, as Everson pointed to Gary Snyder as perhaps the most popular California writer who answered the shaman's call for a new breed of earth poetry.

Although Everson modestly claimed to have been unread on the subject of the Western American novel, he welcomed the publishing venture to write *Archetype West* as a personal opportunity for him to recover “taproot.” While living on the edge of the Pacific Basin, he says the root energies of his vocation as a Western poet were unleashed out of his instinctive foundation and what followed is some of the best writing America has produced. The essay claims to be nothing more than a tentative probe into the underlying ethos of the Western locale, after two centuries of national experience on this continent. The book proves, however, to be much more than that. I view *Archetype West*, now long out of print, as one of the most important literary documents in American literature; it defines the central characteristics of the Pacific Coast like no other book of its kind. In Everson’s attempts to define what is unique about the Far West as a literary locale, he chose the most powerful centering device available to him at that time, namely, the “symbolic configuration of archetypal force” (Everson 1976, p. x), C. G. Jung’s hypothesis of the *archetype* (p. xi).

*Archetype West* was Everson’s first significant book of prose signaling his emergence as a Post-Dominican/Post-Jungian writer. Everson was introduced to Jung’s writings in the 1950s. This was a time of momentous change in American poetry. Allan Ginsberg published his masterpiece “Howl” in 1955, during the centennial year marking the publication of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*, and the beat generation was about to emerge onto the San Francisco literary scene, with Everson as the movement’s most prophetic figure.

As I noted above, it was Robinson Jeffers who gave Everson his pantheism. “I thought: My God! How *pre-Christian* his mentality is!” (Everson 1968, p. 27) Everson hypothesized that the Western archetype can be *experienced* best by way of its emotional resonance, *energy*, radiance, or soul power (Everson 1976, p. xiii). Grasping the *root* forces of this realization he began to speak forcefully out of what he calls the “mystery of place” (Everson 1976, p. xiii), and this is the kind of root energy he brought to his teaching in “Birth of

a Poet.” California writers feel their situation at the far end of the West, he says as the “*term* of the westward migration” (Everson 1976, p. xiii). Although *Archetype West* positions Whitman and Jeffers to appear as if they were opposites, Everson nevertheless reconciles their apparent contradictions by asserting: “Both in cosmic outlook and in originality of style they stand shoulder to shoulder, or rather back to back, since they look in opposite directions” (Everson 1968, p. 37). Everson viewed Jeffers’ apotheosis as the secret quest and inner impulse of democracy itself (Everson 1976, p. 15).

In literature, Everson wrote the archetype “is always trying to find its vehicle, its voice” (Everson 1976, p. 23). His intuition is that the Western archetype found its first voice in the epic poetry of Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick* and Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (Everson 1976, p. 23). In some ways, he writes, the Western archetype spoke in Melville and Whitman “more evocatively than it would ever speak again” (Everson 1976, p. 25). Everson’s central thesis, however, is Whitman’s vision of the “poets to come,” and he includes the writings of John Muir in this. It was “Muir fighting for the preservation of the Hetch Hetchy,” he says, “that elevated the implicit recognition of the divinity of nature to the most explicit testimonial.” “Dam Hetch Hetchy?” Muir asks in a widely quoted document that struck a keynote in the spiritual and psychological conscience of the nation, “As well dam for watertanks the people’s cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple ever existed in the heart of man” (Everson 1976, p. 53).

This is the historical moment, according to Everson, that marks the “main turning point in the spiritual life of the nation, perhaps the chief turning point, as far as the future was concerned” (Everson 1976, p. 53). For, according to Everson, this battle enabled Jeffers to take Muir’s intuitions about the divinity of Nature further. In Everson’s words: “he [Jeffers] assails all the American assumptions with the massive right of his invective consciousness—American optimism, American service, American wealth, American power” (Everson 1976, p. 69).

In concluding I do feel, as Everson's friend and colleague and collaborator, that the most precious gift he left us with, as a nation and a world on the cusp of ecological spiritual awakening, is a method for realizing the Self, as an immediate religious experience, via the keeping of a dream journal. No doubt, Ira Progoff played a role in popularizing Post-Jungian Journaling techniques in America and across other nations of the globe, and he came to his hypothesis of the *dynatpe* (or vocational enacting image) before Everson did, but Everson's way of evoking this central archetype of totality in the personality was more immediate, more forceful, and more psychologically alive, in the sense that his presence on platform, while reading poetry, was more electrifying. Let us celebrate, in this 100th year of his birth (1912–2012), then, California's great poet.

When I helped carry his coffin, at the Dominican cemetery, in Benicia, California, in 1994, with his brothers, students, friends, and family of all walks of life, hand in hand, I sensed, deep down in my bones, that I was walking in the living memory of a Holy Man. The great Oglala Sioux shaman, Black Elk, would have found in him a brother.

## See Also

- ▶ [Black Elk](#)
- ▶ [Pantheism](#)
- ▶ [Post-Jungians](#)
- ▶ [Progoff, Ira](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)

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## Evil

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There are two commonly accepted types of evil: first, the cosmic or natural evils such as fire, flood, earthquake, hurricane or epidemic, the sort discussed in the Biblical *Book of Job*. Secondly, there is interpersonal evil, man's inhumanity to man, on an individual or a large scale, murder or genocide. The first sort has a metaphysical cause and blame cannot be ascribed: these things happen and one must accept them. The second has connotations of innate malignancy and is bound up with theology and psychology and is the one under discussion.

Evil has an archetypal quality: theistic religions have an inherent dichotomy between good and evil. Loki's malice brought down the Norse gods; Lucifer's hubris brought about his expulsion from heaven and man's expulsion from Eden. What characterizes the religious explanation of evil is that the agent chooses the course of action that leads to whatever undesirable result awaits. Evil requires deliberate choice and action, whereas accidents are caused by an unwitting, nondeliberate agent. We can see this echoed in legal circles today in the distinction between murder and manslaughter and the relative leniency of sentencing for the latter.

## Relativism

The modern convention is that evil is relative. As Hamlet says, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*,

Act II, Scene 2). The question is whether evil is a necessary or a contingent attribute. Is it the person, or the action, which is evil? The social construction of evil permits anyone to perform an evil act, but whether that action renders that person irredeemably evil is open to debate. From social experiments like Milgram's experiment and the Stanford Prison experiment, we can see that ordinary people have the capacity to perpetuate evil acts and that the likelihood that they will do so is increased if they are given implied or articulated assurance that they will not bear responsibility. Authority may be diffused so that the giver of the order takes sole responsibility and thus absolves the actual agent of blame or the target group may be deindividuated ("the prisoners") or dehumanized, as with Rwanda's "cockroaches," as the Tutsis were labeled during the genocide. On the macroscale, genocide can be perpetuated through the socialization of the next generation to hate the target group and the dissemination of propaganda to ensure that hatred is continuous.

### Necessary Evil

M. Scott Peck articulates this non-equation of evil actions with necessary evil. He defines evil not by the committing of evil actions – because if this were the case, he argues, we would all be evil – or by the magnitude of evil committed. What makes a person inherently evil is self-deception and a lack of self-control; in psychiatric terms – pathological or malignant narcissism – evil is a form of mental illness. It is doubtful whether evil can be so neatly pigeonholed, and there is an obvious case for labeling all psychopathology as entailing evil because it also entails deliberate and serious human suffering. The other problem with this interpretation is that it does not allow for the possibility that a person who performs repeated and deliberate acts of evil may also be capable of performing repeated and deliberate acts of good.

A more humanistic interpretation can be found in Rollo May, who offers a construction of evil in terms of agency. There are contributory factors

such as war and interpersonal relationships or pressure at play, and there may indeed be an inherent evilness in each human – Jung's "shadow" or the daimonic – but what is key is the role the individual takes in choosing to perform the act. While psychopathology might entail evil as a necessary feature, human psychology allows for contingent, temporary evil.

### See Also

- ▶ [Job](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Evolution and Religion

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For many, the relationship between evolution and religion is either antagonistic or quietistic (cf. Barbour 1997). In the former category, individuals and groups from both the sciences and religion treat the other as participating in a form of discourse that violates a core principle of either science or religion. Examples of such a relationship in popular discourse are sundry: from the outright dismissal of religious claims found in individuals like Sam Harris (2005) or

Richard Dawkins (2008), to the dismissal of evolutionary theory or its foundational empiricist monism, found in, for example, the Southern Baptist Convention (1982). The latter category, quietism, draws on Stephen Jay Gould's conception of religion and science as "nonoverlapping magisteria," wherein both fields of discourse are seen as separate and distinct levels of inquiry, one metaphysical and one staunchly empiricist. Variants of such a relationship are found in thinkers as diverse as the German-American theologian Paul Tillich (2001), philosophers of religion such as D. Z. Phillips (2001), or many believers themselves. Either form of relationship, though, does not see the interaction between science and religion to be either fruitful or desirable.

Insomuch as the antagonistic or quietistic models foreclose discussion between evolutionary theory and religion, they also do not provide constructive or interesting models for a possible relation between the two fields. In this spirit, many have proposed that there are at least two other potential modes of relation between religion and science, namely, those of appropriation and mutual dialogue. Both categories are capable of capturing a number of interesting and novel forms of dialogue between evolution and religion, either in the form of scientific explanations which include religion as their chief source of inquiry and data or religious explanations which employ scientific data (namely evolution) for religious reflection. These two forms of dialogue are given in the discussion below.

### Evolutionary Accounts of Religion

In the past decade, considerable research has been undertaken to examine the evolutionary status of religious beliefs. Research from anthropology, sociology, neuroscience, game theory, and psychology has attempted to explain both the individual and social role religion has played in human evolutionary development.

Paradigmatic individualist accounts of the evolution of religion can be found in the work of Pascal Boyer (2002), Scott Atran (2002), and Jesse Bering (2011). For both Boyer and Atran,

religious beliefs are tied to the psychological capacity to imagine other agents which are both causally related to the world around us as well as possess the capacity to know relevant social information. In this way, religious belief acts in both an explanatory and socially significant way, altering the behavior of individuals in both small and large groups. This is reinforced by the way in which certain beliefs have "traction" with our brains; in a study conducted by Atran (2008), those beliefs which were "minimally counterintuitive" were found to have the greatest resonance in both memory and salience over time in small children. It is worth noting that, for both Boyer and Atran, religious beliefs did not evolve to meet an evolutionary need per se; rather, religious beliefs take advantage of evolved mental characteristics such as theory of mind and social transmission. This explanatory direction is furthered in the recent work of Jesse Bering, who examines the ways in which theory of mind allows for the formation of God concepts, the attribution of agency to otherwise banal events (he cites, for example, the French movie, *Le Ballon Rouge*, where the protagonist, a little boy, and the audience imbue a red balloon with mental characteristics), the creation of a narrative psychology, and the discovery of purpose within existence. As in Freud's *Future of an Illusion*, God concepts – such as explanations for traumatic events – are seen as a form of wish fulfillment in the work of Bering, as they co-opt certain evolved mental capacities and the desire for explanation.

In these and other more individualist approaches, certain themes emerge regarding the interaction between science and religion. First, though with some differences, researchers see religious beliefs as stemming from, or dependent upon, evolved mental characteristics responsible for agent attribution, theory of mind, or anthropomorphism. Secondly, the beliefs generated through such mental processes generally serve the more existential and epistemic functions of self and group enhancement, explanation, and narrativity.

Alongside such accounts are found hypotheses which examine the social dimension of religious

beliefs and the ways in which religious ideas generate prosociality, solve problems of cooperation, or enhance in-group/out-group tendencies. A thought experiment using economic game theory conducted by Dominic Johnson and Jesse Bering (2006), for example, concluded that the concept of divine punishment may promote cooperation and prosociality in large groups, as God concepts provide the specter of both unlimited observation and punishment. Similarly, experiments by Norenzayan and Shariff (2008) found that individuals given religious cues in economic games were more likely to give money to others than participants given nonreligious cues. The same study also found that religious concepts often promote trust and cooperation between unrelated individuals.

Other prosocial aspects of religious beliefs, particularly with respect to group persistence over time, have been extensively examined by Richard Sosis (2004). In one study, Sosis found that groups with greater religious demands (e.g., prescribed prayer, dietary restrictions, sexual abstinence), which he terms “costly signals,” increased religious group persistence over time relative to groups with fewer or nonreligious ritual demands. In other work, Sosis found that the group performance of prescribed rituals, such as prayer, promoted cooperation and giving in economic games (similar to those performed by Norenzayan and Shariff) between members of Jewish *kibbutzim* (Ruffle and Sosis 2007).

The physiological dynamics of these collective aspects of religious belief are exemplified in recent studies which examined a fire-walking ritual in Spain. There, researchers demonstrated a phenomenon known as “collective effervescence,” wherein both spectators and participants experienced synchronous arousal (i.e., elevated heart rate) and common memory recall of the event (despite initially differing accounts; see, for example, Konvalinka et al. 2011). This research demonstrates that there is likely a physiological foundation for collective religious rituals which strengthen group dynamics and forge a common identity amongst participants.

Taken together, recent research on the collective value of religious belief demonstrates that religious concepts may have evolutionary utility insofar as they promote group cohesion, cooperation, cost-free detection of free riders, community persistence, and even outwardly directed violence. Taken alongside the more individually oriented evidence presented above, the relationship between evolution and religious belief appears to be one in which religious beliefs depend upon certain physiological and cognitive adaptations, which in turn confer positive social and selective benefits upon both individuals and groups.

### Religious Interaction with Evolutionary Theory

Interesting forms of dialogue between evolutionary theory and religion can also be found within theology and the exploration of religious experience. Within the Abrahamic traditions, there is a clear history of theological reflection on the natural world, wherein natural phenomena are seen as indicating the goodness and providence of God. St. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, for example, made one of his “five ways” to see the existence of God dependent upon the revelation of the natural world, a proof he inherited from Muslim thinkers such as Ibn Sina (Aquinas 1999). Later, early modern scientists such as Robert Boyle saw the natural world as revealing of God’s handiwork (Boyle 1691/1692).

Though heavily politicized, I would argue that the recent intelligent design movement (e.g., Dembski 2002) draws on this natural theological tradition, insofar as it attempts to use evidence from the natural world to argue for the immanent creative activity of God. Similar to the natural theological tradition seen in Aquinas and Boyle, intelligent design does not deny evolution on the micrological or macrological scale; rather, it attempts to show that certain body forms could not have been created without divine influence, as they are “irreducibly complex.” This form of religious appropriation is consistent with much of the Christian theological tradition.



There are numerous other approaches, however, which have given even more epistemic ground to the sciences. Recent work by Sarah Coakley (2008, 2009), in conversation with evolutionary game theory, examines the evolution of cooperation in animals and humans throughout evolutionary history. This history, she posits, shows a minimum providential plan for creation in which prosociality, love, and altruism are allowed to develop naturally over evolutionary time. Coakley's theology (much like Aquinas), while clearly conceding considerable ground to the sciences, attempts to show the ways in which data from the sciences, particularly the evolutionary modeling of cooperation in large groups over time, points to the beneficent creative process envisioned by God.

Perhaps the clearest example of granting epistemic primacy to the sciences can be found in recent "emergence theologies," exemplified by theologian Philip Clayton (2008). For Clayton, evolution is to be seen as revealing various scales of irreducible complexity, such that chemistry is irreducible to physics, biology is irreducible to chemistry, and so on. In this way, the natural world consists of multiple levels which are both dependent upon each other and yet also independent. Each level also exhibits causal agency. Clayton, employing this model, sees God as a "level" of emergence analogous to human consciousness. Or, in other words, God emerges out of (and is prior to) the world just as cells emerge out of complex chemical interactions.

Clayton's theology represents an extreme along the continuum of theological reflection as it not only uses scientific data for theological reflection, but gleans the primary theological metaphors and intuitions from the sciences themselves. In this way, evolutionary theory becomes both the datum and foundation of theological reflection. As a result, and as Clayton concedes, as evolutionary theory changes, so too does theology.

There are, of course, other theologies which deal explicitly with the sciences, either through appropriation or mutual dialogue. Arguably, though, each exists along the continuum traced here between (a) the revelation of God in the

operation of nature, (b) the use of evolutionary theory as evidence for God, or (c) the use of evolutionary theory as a store of metaphors through which we can understand God. Each differs in the degree to which it accepts or allows for evolutionary theory to dictate the language and conclusions of theological inquiry.

Finally, the epistemic openness exhibited in the work of Philip Clayton can also be found in recent accounts of religious experience by Wildman (2011) and Taves (2011). For both figures, religious experience is no longer seen solely through the lens of either firsthand accounts or religious institutions, but is treated through a variety of perspectives, including phenomenology, sociology, and neuroscience. Such approaches, as Taves notes, contest the self-evidence of religious experience and open such experiences to multiple forms of interpretation, including evolutionary psychological accounts.

## Conclusions

The relationship between evolution and religion is often seen as contentious or indifferent. Though for many this may be the case, there is considerable contemporary research which benefits from a mutual dialogue between the sciences and religion. In the sciences, research which takes seriously both reported beliefs and the perceived benefits of religion has allowed for religious belief to be seen as a multifaceted way of being that draws upon physiological, neurological, and social inputs. In religion, those theologies and accounts of religious experience which take seriously both the methodology and conclusions of the sciences have a greater store of forms of interpretation upon which they can draw for religious reflection. For both fields, an increase in what constitutes evidence has allowed for new insights into both evolution and religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anthropomorphism](#)
- ▶ [Atheism](#)

- ▶ Cognitive Science of Religion
- ▶ Emergentism
- ▶ Neurology and Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Reductionism
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Tillich, Paul

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## Existential Psychotherapy

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Existential psychotherapy is based upon the principles of both humanistic and existential psychology, the latter being a movement with roots in the existential philosophy and writings of Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Ortega y Gasset, Dostoevsky, Kafka, Camus, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Tillich, Marcel, Buber, and others. Otto Rank, Medard Boss, Ludwig Binswanger, Karl Jaspers, Eugene Minkowski, Ronald Kuhn, V. E. von Gebattel, J. H. Van Den Berg, H. J. Buytendijk, and G. Bally were among the first to apply existential principles to the practice of psychotherapy (calling it *Daseinsanalyse* or existential analysis) in Europe, followed prominently by Viktor Frankl (Vienna), R. D. Laing (London), and Rollo May, J. F. T. Bugental, Thomas Szasz, Frederick “Fritz” Perls, and Irvin Yalom in the United States. It was psychologist Rollo May along with psychiatrist Henri Ellenberger who, in 1958, introduced the European existential

analysts to American clinicians in their groundbreaking book, *Existence: A New Dimension in Psychiatry and Psychology*.

Existential therapy is often misperceived as some morbid, arcane, pessimistic, cerebral, esoteric orientation to treatment. But in fact, it is an exceedingly practical, concrete, positive, and flexible approach. On any given day, an existential therapist might deal with mundane matters such as the patient's financial crisis, marital problems, health issues, addictive behavior, or psychopharmacological needs, while at other times working with dream material, archetypal motifs, spirituality, grief, anger, or the patient's creative process – all depending on the practitioner, context, and what seems most existentially pressing in the moment. Existential psychotherapy, despite its popularity in the decades following importation to the United States, declined dramatically toward the close of the twentieth century, a victim of the psychopharmacological, cognitive, and managed care revolution in mental health. But as consumers are increasingly confronted with the very real limitations of what managed mental health care, psychopharmacology, and cognitive-behavioral treatment can provide, existential psychotherapy is quietly enjoying a recent renaissance.

While existential psychotherapy is commonly seen as synonymous with the brooding, dark, despairing, nihilistic, atheistic intonations of European existentialism, it is crucial to differentiate the two: Existentialism is a philosophical movement, whereas existential psychotherapy is a psychological treatment. Existential psychotherapy was never intended to be a specific school unto itself, but rather a pragmatic, humanistic, holistic, corrective orientation to psychotherapy in general. "Existentialism," explains Rollo May (1986), "is not a comprehensive philosophy or way of life, but an endeavor to grasp reality" (p. 59). The existential movement in psychiatry and psychology arose as a reaction against the reductionism, determinism, dogmatism, and hyperrationalism of both psychoanalysis and behaviorism. As May (1986) indicates, whenever you perceive a person merely as a particular diagnostic disorder, biochemical imbalance,

genetic predisposition, or "as a composite of drives and deterministic forces, you have defined for study everything *except the one to whom these experiences happen*, everything except the existing person himself" (p. 25).

The objective and subjective revelation of one's own existence, the "I am" experience or sense of self, is an integral part of the process of existential psychotherapy. While the techniques of existential psychotherapy can include Freudian, Jungian, Gestalt, cognitive, behavioral, or other methods, the fundamental technique shared by all existential therapists is *phenomenology*. Phenomenology is based predominantly on the philosophical work of Husserl and Heidegger and refers to the setting aside or bracketing off of preconceptions, interpretations, expectations, bias, and rote intervention in an effort to discover the patient's actual, unadulterated subjective experience, his or her being-in-the-world, and existence or *Dasein* (being there). It is through this phenomenological refraining from forcing the patient onto a Procrustean bed of preordained theory or methodology that the true experience of the patient at any given moment can be understood and appropriately responded to by the therapist. In its purest form, "the existential-phenomenological view does not construct any explanatory models but tries to understand situations by exploring the immediate experience [of the patient]" (Cohn 1999, p. 43). Dogmatism and doctrine are excluded as much as possible, and the focus of treatment is primarily on the present, the here-and-now, and the current circumstance rather than on past traumatic or other formative influences, as in Freud's psychoanalysis.

Choice, personal responsibility, integrity of the personality, and authentically facing rather than habitually avoiding existential or ontological anxiety and guilt (which results in what Sartre termed *mauvaise foi* or "bad faith" with oneself) are central features of existential psychotherapy. The existential therapist is not limited to the passive and interpretive role of the psychoanalyst, though such a stance may be taken when called for. But the *courage* and *commitment* to truly and genuinely *encounter* each unique patient is required by the therapist, who must

not defensively avoid his or her own anxiety by hiding behind a rigid professional *persona* or distancing screen of therapeutic technique. Carl Jung, who was quite existential in his own approach, acknowledged the inherent mutuality and crucial role of the therapeutic relationship, recognizing that “in effective therapy a change occurs in *both* the therapist and the patient; unless the therapist is open to change the patient will not be either” (cited in May: 22). In existential therapy, the human relationship between patient and therapist takes precedence over technical tricks and, as now confirmed by research, is the primary healing factor in any psychotherapy.

### Existential Depth Psychology

Over the years, there has been a gradual theoretical trifurcation in the evolution of existential psychotherapy. Existential and humanistic psychology (sometimes so closely affiliated they become conjoined as “existential-humanistic”) developed simultaneously in America, under the influence of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Rollo May, among others. Both humanistic and existential psychology object to the dehumanizing and reductionistic application of the psychiatric medical model in the diagnosis and treatment of so-called mental disorders, proposing a less mechanistic, biological and deterministic, more positive, humanistic paradigm for personal growth and psychotherapy. But Rollo May’s own philosophical worldview and depth psychologically informed psychotherapy differs fundamentally from the rabidly anti-psychoanalytic, overly optimistic, perhaps even naïve “human potential” movement embodied by Rogers and is best described as an *existential depth psychology*.

Otto Rank, a close disciple of Freud and one of the seminal figures in the development of existential depth psychology, “accepted the categories of Freud, Jung, and Adler – mechanisms, patterns, and types – but found them useful only up to a point, after which they impeded therapy and even theory” (Lieberman, cited in Diamond 1987, p. 10). “Depth

psychology” (*Tiefenpsychologie*) addresses the phenomenology of the “unconscious,” the “not known” contents of the psyche. Existential and depth psychology seem antithetical and incompatible to some (especially certain members of the Society for Existential Analysis in London, a third tributary led by Emmy van Deurzen-Smith, Ernesto Spinelli, and the late Hans Cohn, who practice a purist version of “philosophical counseling” or “clinical philosophy”), but are reconciled as complementary in existential depth psychology. The Freudian notion of the unconscious is eschewed and rejected outright by many existentialists as a fragmenting, reified doctrine that diminishes integrity of the personality, free will, and personal responsibility in ways inimical and antithetical to existential therapy. However, while fully cognizant of these legitimate theoretical and practical dilemmas, existential depth psychology recognizes the clinical necessity of acknowledging the phenomena of repression and unconsciousness. Therefore, the phenomenological fact of the *unconscious* is retained, albeit in modified form, by American practitioners of existential depth psychology such as May, Bugental, Yalom, Perls, Schneider, and Diamond.

For Rollo May, the *unconscious* is existentially redefined as “those potentialities for knowing and experiencing which the individual cannot or will not actualize” (1983, p. 18). Moreover, May, unlike Rogers and others in the humanistic movement, held that “constructiveness and destructiveness have the same source in human personality. The source is simply *human potential*” (in Diamond 1996, p. xxi). This conception of human potentiality as a double-edged sword informs May’s controversial theory of the *daimonic*: his own phenomenological interpretation of the unconscious, similar though not identical to Freud’s “id” or Jung’s “shadow,” and eminently useful for comprehending the inherent human potentiality for psychopathology, destructiveness, spirituality, and creativity (see Diamond 1996). The *daimonic*, as May (1969) defines it, “is any natural function which has the power to take over the whole person. Sex and eros, anger and rage, and the craving for power are examples.

The daimonic can be either creative or destructive and is normally both” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 65). In existential depth psychology, the daimonic is an existential reality, the dynamic ground of being or existence, the indivisible source of vital, life-giving psychobiological energy or power. When chronically repressed, the daimonic becomes pathological but, when properly related to, contains valuable positive potentialities. Existential depth psychology embraces and makes therapeutic use of May’s model of the daimonic, encouraging its constructive integration into consciousness, *but never to the point of dogmatism*, and is not “defined by duration of treatment, technique or frequency of sessions *but rather by the degree to which it directly addresses the daimonic and the various other existential elements of life*” (Diamond 1996, p. 219).

As May, who was briefly a Protestant pastor prior to becoming a clinical psychologist explains, “I do not believe in toning down the daimonic. This gives a sense of false comfort. The real comfort can come only in the relationship of the therapist and the client or patient” (in Diamond 1996, p. xxii). Indeed, “it is only by moving through this suffering consciously, willingly, and developing a more philosophical or spiritual stance toward it, that patients approximate anything close to a ‘cure’ in psychotherapy” (Diamond in Hoffman et al. 2005, p. 197).

### Nihilism, Anxiety, and Spirituality

Spirituality entails the capacity to see life as it is – wholly, including the existential realities of evil, suffering, anxiety, and the daimonic – and to love life nonetheless. This *amor fati*, as Friedrich Nietzsche phrased it, “is a spiritual achievement of the highest magnitude” (Diamond in Hoffman et al. 2005, p. 197). It is in this regard, and in some of the striking parallels between phenomenology, Taoism, Hinduism, and Zen Buddhism, that existential depth psychology can be correctly called a secular spiritual treatment for the postmodern *condition humaine*. While not inherently a religious approach, and indeed in some

ways antireligious, existential psychotherapy addresses many of the basic questions and problems that concern traditional religions of all kinds: death, meaninglessness, loneliness, loss, suffering, imperfection, finitude, insecurity, anxiety, guilt, freedom, responsibility, evil, etc. These are the bare existential facts of life, what existential theologian Paul Tillich called “ultimate concerns.” *Nihilism* – the rejection of religion, spirituality, meaning, purpose, and value in life due in part to the presumed negating finality of death – is often associated with existentialism. Yet, nihilism is clearly neither the goal nor intended consequence of existential psychotherapy but, on the contrary, its starting point.

Equally important to the practice of existential therapy in general is the phenomenon of anxiety, in both its normal or ontological and neurotic or pathological aspects. Kierkegaard (1844) called anxiety “the dizziness of freedom” that inevitably accompanies recognizing our human potentiality and responsibility. Following Kierkegaard and Tillich, May defines anxiety as the “*experience of Being affirming itself against Nonbeing*” (1977, p. xxi), positing that when we chronically avoid existential anxiety, it only becomes more neurotic, destructive, and debilitating. In existential psychotherapy, *neurotic anxiety* is a pathological product of *normal anxiety*, and both are utilized in the therapeutic process rather than merely chronically suppressed psychopharmacologically or otherwise. To a significant extent, existential psychotherapy is the psychophilosophical treatment *par excellence* of post-modern nihilism, anxiety, and existential crisis manifesting as depression, stress, addiction, anger, rage, and other all-too-ubiquitous symptomatology. Viennese psychiatrist Viktor Frankl’s idea of neurosis resulting from an “existential vacuum” which human nature abhors due to a deeply rooted “will to meaning” is particularly relevant here. Fulfilling the will to meaning is one way of counteracting nihilism: “Meaning – given, found or created – enables one to love life and live it. We create meaning because we cannot exist without it” (Lieberman, cited in Diamond 1987, p. 2), thus the strong emphasis on the sense of *meaning* and *purpose* in existential therapy.



## Creativity, Courage, and Acceptance

Creativity can be another antidote to the toxicity of nihilism and provides a constructive channeling of anxiety. Hence, the purposeful focus in existential psychotherapy on creativity and the creative process: the creation of meaning, the creation of art, and the creation of self. The existential spotlight on “will” as central to the creation of self and a constructive, meaningful life was presaged by Rank, who held in his notion of the *artiste manqué*, that “the individual creates his own personality by creative willing, and that neurosis is due precisely to the fact that the patient cannot will constructively” (May, cited in Diamond 1987, p. 2). And, whether or not one concurs with Yalom’s (1980, p. 482) premise that “meaning, like pleasure, must be pursued obliquely,” his clinical focus on *engagement*, encouraging the patient’s commitment to and investment in life, is well taken: “Engagement is the therapeutic answer to meaninglessness regardless of the latter’s source” (Yalom 1980, p. 482).

Finally, existential therapy encourages the patient’s heroic acceptance of life’s inevitable tragedy, anxiety, suffering, and death’s inexorable reality. “Courage,” writes Paul Tillich, “is the power of life to affirm itself in spite of... [its daimonic] ambiguity, while the negation of life because of its negativity is an expression of cowardice” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 309). Sigmund Freud’s own existential (but not traditionally religious) attitude can be seen in his misunderstood, seemingly cynical, pessimistic comment that the goal of psychoanalysis is to transform neurotic misery into common unhappiness: like death, some suffering in life is existential, ontological, and inescapable. “Nowhere in religious... [symbolism] is this spiritual principle of accepting life’s suffering and acceding to one’s divine destiny more dramatically, movingly and elegantly illustrated than in the Crucifixion” (Diamond in Hoffman et al. 2005, p. 199). But, with or without religious faith, whether like Kierkegaard or Sartre, one can still freely choose the attitude taken toward such stark existential facts of life, a “willing affirmation of the must” to employ Rank’s felicitous phrase,

which is itself a type of spiritual transcendence. “It is,” says Tillich (1952), “the happiness of a soul... ‘lifted above every circumstance’” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 292). Paradoxically, along with the courageous affirmation of existence and its vicissitudes, including anxiety, alienation, insecurity, suffering, finitude, meaninglessness, and death, comes a deeper appreciation of life; a fuller capacity to care, feel, and love; and a heightened sensitivity to joy, awe, and beauty.

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## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [May, Rollo](#)
- ▶ [Persona](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Rank, Otto](#)
- ▶ [Repression](#)
- ▶ [Rogers, Carl](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Tillich, Paul](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Existentialism

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### Early Foundations

Existentialism began in the early nineteenth century with the writings of Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), though forerunners of existential themes can be traced centuries earlier to Sumerian mythology, Judaic wisdom literature, and early Greek philosophy. Existentialism arose and continues to address and challenge dualisms,

abstract, and mechanical ways of addressing human concerns, as it focuses on agency, accountability, and the discovery and/or creation of meaning. Although many histories have been written about existentialism, in this entry I will focus on the religiosity inherent in the tradition that extends beyond the typical differentiation between theistic and atheistic existentialism. I argue that even within atheistic existentialism lies the religious question as disclosed in the dance of nihilism and meaning.

Søren Kierkegaard proposed the rallying flag for existentialism with his pronouncement and commentary on truth as what is experienced, not systematically thought out, when living subjectively in the world. Addressing the experience distant abstraction of Hegelian systemics, as well as the institution of the church, Kierkegaard called for more authentic accountability for one's beliefs and comportment in everyday existence. What matters, for Kierkegaard, is the lived experience of individuals in their lived situations, rather than any presumptions about life discerned through abstract objectivity, particularly those of rationalism, empiricism, and/or speculative metaphysics.

These themes were furthered by existentialists too numerous to cover completely. One of the difficulties presented to any researcher in this field is that existentialism is notoriously slippery when one tries to define it as a movement. Walter Kaufmann, perhaps the most well-known commentator on existentialism, aptly noted that by definition existentialist resist collapsing or subsuming uniqueness into generic systems of creeds and other canons of civility (Kaufmann 1975).

Kierkegaard (1813–1855), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), and others warned against the fade into an undefined existence, co-opted by the crowd, the “herd,” or the “They.” One escapes to the crowd to avoid facing the call of existence to define oneself, to “stand out” in Heidegger’s language. Standing out in existence includes face-to-face encounters with dread, boredom alienation, the absurd, nothingness, as well as freedom, and commitment. Through such encounters one comes to understand the significance of one’s life, not an

easy task, and either accepts or rejects calls to more meaningful and fulfilling relationships and projects in life. Life is meaningful as we live it out. We do not first find meaning and then decide to live out our lives. Our “essence” is discerned only in our “existence,” as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) noted (1943/2003).

Existentialists are divided among themselves as to the authenticity and legitimacy of belief in God as well as to what one means by the term “God.” Theistic existentialists highlight the inevitability of our inherent tendency toward Otherness and understanding of ourselves in our situations in life in light of those encounters. Atheistic existentialists argue that displacement of one’s responsibility onto an external entity in hopes for deliverance from the complexities of contingent existence is a manifestation of moral cowardness.

### Existential Approaches to Psychology and Religion

Existential approaches to the field of psychology and religion have attempted various ways of resolving what they see as an unnecessary antagonism between atheism and theism. Paul Tillich (1886–1965), known primarily as a theologian, wrote extensively on the existential condition as well as on the psychotherapeutic care within those conditions (1952, 1957, 1966). Most particularly, Tillich called for our “courage to be” in spite of anxiety or our impending nonbeing and call to freedom. Erich Fromm (1900–1980) and Rollo May (1909–1994) furthered these concerns, albeit in different ways (Fromm 1941; May 1972). Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) established Logotherapy as a result of his own lived experience within a concentration camp in which he saw how the power of the will to live if there were a reason or person for whom to live. Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) wrote of “boundary situations,” “the Encompassing,” and communication almost in a sacramental way. R.D. Laing (1927–1989) brought the insights of existential phenomenology to humanize modes of psychiatry’s more instrumental qualities.

Contemporary existential psychotherapist, Emmy van Deurzen (1998), has written of the *Überwelt*, or the spiritual and encompassing world in which we discern our meaning. One could say that each one of these individuals above addressed the notion of “God” in less than orthodox ways; they all nonetheless saw the centrality of spirituality as essential to a meaningful life, albeit a spirituality that found within existence, rather than as an escape from it.

### Commentary

One of the misconceptions to clarify about existentialism is the claim that it is too individualistic. No doubt schizoid ways of being-in-the-world have bolted onto the existential tradition, which is understandable given a central theme of inherent loneliness. When existential thinkers refer to such concepts as subjectivity, loneliness, “standing out,” and so forth, one must understand these concepts as calls to distinctiveness and ownership of one’s lived, conditioned existence and comportment in the world rather than as statements about physically measured isolation. Subjectivity does not mean an isolated privation of existence, but a committed risk of being “all in” a particular situatedness, exercising agency amid and released by inherent limitations. What truly matters is experienced when taking this stance in relation to others. A true and authentic encounter comes from shared “all-in-ness” that is nonetheless respective of the incomparable stances taken by communal participants. A call to living a distinctive, differentiated, and accountable life is not an opposition to living a relational life. The existential position is not opposed to the sociology of others, but warns against a qualitative erasure of unique “callings to be” amid the counter pull to forfeit one’s incommensurability. In fact, we are ontologically relational. Our existence is foremost and forever a “being-with-ness.”

Another issue meriting commentary is the apparent antagonistic relationship between existentialism and religion. The relationship between

existentialism and religion is more integrated than one may presume. Certainly the Nietzschean hammer against slave morality, as he saw reinforced by Christian morality, and even the theist Kierkegaard's attack on Christendom have led to suspicion of the institutionalization of the spirit.

Theistic or not, however, freedom, transcendence, and meaning are cornerstones of this tradition. In spite of theistic existentialists throughout the history of this philosophical position, this approach to human meaning and significance is seen by some readers of this tradition as carrying an inauthentic and irreconcilable oxymoron. One can point to the broad strand of atheism or emphasis on the human person's responsibility to create his or her own meaning, so often expressed in existential literature, as cases in point. Yet, theistic and atheistic existentialists would agree that transcendence is not an escape from existence and impossible to accomplish anyway. The project of doing so discloses a "bad faith" (Sartre 1943/2003), "inauthenticity" (Heidegger 1962), and foreclosure on accountability for the burden of one's existence. Nevertheless, the counter challenge has its legitimacy as well: movement into the mystery of Otherness, even if paranormal, may be the most challenging Kierkegaardian leap of faith. Not being open to what is beyond our comprehension and control is another form of retreating into anonymity or herding.

I suggest an existential understanding of psychology and spirituality holds possibilities for the field's deepest foundation and most promising future. As human beings we are *homo religiosus*, or inherently religious, in which life *is* transcendence, meaning, purpose, and significance. Doctrinal and creedal statements of belief and ritual practices found in religious traditions are expressions of, or creations of, such experiences of meaning (Gilkey 1976). The absence of propositional assent to God as an entity need not nullify atheistic intentionality and "about-ness" that motivates movement through situations in one's daily existence – a secular faith. Moreover, an existential-phenomenological understanding of Otherness is nonetheless still an existential

*human* experience. This point grounds an understanding of existentialism as religious. This is an experience that is neither otherworldly nor merely created by the "thrown" person in the situation; we find ourselves in situations partly due to our agency and mostly a convergence of an infinite number of decisions and comportments beyond our control (van den Berg). Furthermore, emphasizing Otherness as the context of meaning and relationship as the necessity of self-understanding incarnates Otherness within existence. An existential-phenomenological understanding of religious experience as encounters with Otherness from situated stances testifies to the radical immanence of transcendence (Driver 1985). Transcendence, then, occurs with each possibility of transformation within the graced limitations of our coexistence.

### See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Laing, Ronald David](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)

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## Exodus

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*The Exodus* is the second book of the Jewish Torah and of the Old Testament of Christian Scriptures. From the Greek word *exodo*, which means “a road out,” the Exodus refers to the journey of the Israelites who were led out of Egypt by Moses after many years of oppression and slavery. While rooted in historical events, the Exodus story is primarily a foundational faith

experience, the core memory upon which the spiritual identity of the people of God is formed. Crucial to this testament of faith are the experience of a living, liberating God who hears and answers the cry of the poor, enslaved and oppressed, and the faith commitment of a people who live in remembrance of the divine redemptive activity.

The story of Exodus as a journey of moving away from enslavement and oppression into greater freedom and fullness of life also provides a template and guiding narrative for the individual in the continuing process of a search for identity and authenticity of self, wholeness and integrity, and healing and transformation. The beginning of the journey is marked by the recognition of the magnitude of suffering, the coming to consciousness of the intolerability of the anguish and agony of enslavement, and the deep longing for an end to its ruthlessness and devastation. In the *Book of Exodus*, the story of divine activity begins with the cry of the Israelites, who “groaned under their slavery and cried out” (Exodus 2:23), and of the divine response, God who “remembered . . . looked upon . . . and took notice of the Israelites” (2:25). The experience of enslavement can be external in nature, of an economic, political, social, or cultural dimension. Enslavement can also be internal, intrapsychic, and relational in nature. Depression and anxiety can enslave. Inadequate developmental environments and neglectful or erratic attachment dynamics in childhood can create psychological impoverishment and hardship in adult life and relationships. Trauma and abuse can grossly impede freedom of self-attunement and quality of engagement with others. Individuals can live many years without a conscious awareness of their being constricted by significant formative experiences in the past. They are unfree, estranged, and alienated from a sense of their true self, reacting from the protective defenses of the false self, relating consistently from a place of pain, an internal space of emotional vulnerability, psychic distress, and spiritual emptiness. The process of beginning the exodus journey of self-transformation involves the emergence of this pain and distress into consciousness, the

“groaning and crying out” that expresses an overwhelming longing to be freed from this enslavement, thus signaling the genesis of a commitment to the process of inner change and liberation.

The process of moving towards freedom, authenticity, and transformation will naturally meet internal resistance, especially after years of having lived with restrictive yet familiar dynamics and behavior patterns. The Israelites, after leaving Egypt and wandering through the wilderness, expressed this longing for the familiar ways of enslavement. When faced with fear and anxiety that accompanied the unknown, they complained to Moses: “What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness” (14:11–12). Relational ways are long standing, habitual, and familiar. Even if they have become maladaptive and self-damaging, they had provided a sense of security and comfort. New ways of perceiving, feeling, and doing involve venturing into a space of uncertainty. While health sustaining and life nurturing, these ways may paradoxically feel frightening and disorienting, seemingly overwhelming and out of control. The desire for newness and freedom can meet repeatedly with the yearning for the old and familiar. The pull to authenticity and health can oscillate with the wish to return to what is accustomed and habitual.

While the process towards freedom and wholeness involves ongoing inner work and effort towards engaging newness, it also presumes the need for active waiting that allows healing to happen. The words of Moses to the Israelites respond to their fear and anxiety around the demands of the exodus journey: “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the LORD will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still” (14:14). The exodus journey calls for determined movement and committed effort towards greater freedom and authenticity of self. At the same time, the exodus

journey necessitates the capacity for steadfast and quiet presence, the strength of reflective stillness that enables insight to be internalized, change to be metabolized, and self-transformation to take root. The process of healing from inner enslavement and oppression to authentic freedom and liberation of self happens with both movement and stillness, the dual dynamic of active and passive strength that both enables change and trusts the healing process to evolve, allowing transformation to happen in oneself.

The Exodus story teaches that the journey out of enslavement into freedom does not happen with immediacy. Traumatic wounding is multidimensional and extensive. The movement from psychic oppression and constriction takes the gentle respectfulness of time and patient hopefulness in the promise and imminence of newness and liberation. This process of healing from brokenness towards living from a space of authenticity and coming to a firmer sense of self-identity and fulfillment unfolds over one’s years. The Israelites, freed from slavery in Egypt, travelled for 40 years, wandering in the wilderness and sojourning to the land promised them. Their evolution of spiritual and communitarian identity as a people began with the liberation from slavery. Its shaping, consolidation, and development continued over time.

As the myriad challenges of journeying with hope towards wholeness and freedom are faced, the role of remembrance is essential. The story of Exodus began with the Israelites crying out to God who remembered the covenant and heard their cry. With their liberation from Egypt, their spiritual identity as God’s people is grounded in their remembrance of this saving act. The commandment and laws of the covenant have their wellspring in this redeeming memory: “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me” (20:1–2). The act of forgetting, of denying this foundational experience, creates internal fragmentation and spiritual disconnection from the space of self-authenticity and identity. When the Israelites did not remember their redemptive experience



and their liberation by God from slavery in Egypt, they fashioned a golden calf (Exodus 32). Remembering the experience of redemption keeps alive hope and enduring trust that one's cry will not go unheard, that the suffering from one's past will not eradicate the promise of change and newness in the future. Forgetting brings a loss of trust in and connection to one's self and the consequent despair when journeying through the demands and challenges of life. Remaining connected to the integrity of the true self and holding on to the belief that healing into life and authentic relationship are possible, in spite of the bondage of internal oppression and psychic enslavement, is the contemporary psychological echo of the redemptive memory that is the heart of the Exodus story, the pulse and energy that fuels the human journey to freedom of life.

## See Also

► [Trauma](#)

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## Extrasensory Perception (ESP)

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Extrasensory perception refers to the alleged processes of precognition, telepathy, and

clairvoyance that take place via channels other than the sensory system that biologists and psychologists have been researching with scientific means. Precognition is the knowledge of future events obtained not through logical reasoning but through dreams or other psychological awareness. Telepathy is the sending and receiving of message over a distance, through nonphysical means. Clairvoyance is the perception of an object that is out of normal sight. Some records exist of people who have such experience of anomalous information transfer. Goulding and Parker (2001) claim that 25–45 % of the western population may report some form of ESP or other paranormal experiences.

Some clinical psychologists regard such experiences as delusion and therefore associate them with mental disorder, while the more new-age-oriented psychologists do not agree with this correlation (Targ et al. 2000). Besides the psychopathological explanation, some cognitively oriented experimental psychologists attribute the experience to the experient's cognitive bias or defective probabilistic reasoning. Biological psychologists, on the other hand, search for brain dysfunctions. Needless to say, the ESP experience can also be veridical.

Besides anecdotal evidence reported in the popular press, empirical evidence of the phenomenon is being gathered in more rigorously controlled conditions (Bem and Honorton 1994). Using the “ganzfeld procedure,” the researchers shielded participants from visual and auditory stimuli. They then asked some to “send” to others one of four images, which was correctly received about one-third of the times. Bem and Honorton (1994) regarded this as better than chance, which is 25 %. However, a more recent meta-analysis that included additional studies suggests that the effects are small or statistically nonsignificant (Milton and Wiseman 1999).

Déjà vu experience is sometimes included in the class of ESP. This strange sense of familiarity with a place or event apparently new to a person (“been there before”) is regarded by some as evidence that people have previous lives before



the present one (an idea that originated from eastern religious beliefs in reincarnation). According to some psychologists, this phenomenon can be explained naturalistically. Brown (2004) listed at least 34 psychological explanations that are rested on neither parapsychological nor psychodynamic presuppositions. These explanations include subliminal exposure (in which a person had actually been there before but was never made aware of that) and differential neural transmission (in which there is a slight separation between two messages of the event received through two channels).

Besides investigating ESP in its own right, some researchers are interested in measuring people's belief in ESP. Paper-and-pencil instruments have been developed (see, e.g., Goulding and Parker 2001; Tobacyk and Milford 1983). We do not, however, know much about how belief in ESP might correlate with other psychological constructs. Future research may examine Myers' (2006) suggestion that the belief in ESP despite the lack of evidence could be due to flawed processing of information and a hunger for wonderment.

## See Also

► [Delusion](#)

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## Extraversion

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A psychological term formulated by Carl Jung in his book *Psychological Types* to describe the flow of psychic energy toward the outer world of people and things or “object.” The word extraversion comes from the Latin words *extra* and *vertere*, meaning to turn outward. Jung theorized extraversion and its opposite, introversion, as two fundamental, innate, and equally valid attitudes of people toward the outer world. Extraversion and introversion describe theoretical polarities on a continuum, with all persons using some degree of both attitudes in reality. Jung defined extraversion as a movement of psychic energy, or libido, outward from the subject to the object, with one's energy and interest being drawn as if by magnetic force from oneself to the outside world. People with a preference for extraversion both use and renew their energy by focusing outward and can feel drained by too much time alone or in reflection. Some general characteristics of an extraverted attitude include talkativeness; speaking quickly and with confidence; being demonstrative, expressive, and gregarious; and a tendency toward boredom and distraction. Extraverted forms of religious expression seek God in communion with other people through practices of group worship, oral teaching and study of the spoken word, discussion of religious concepts, and acts of service. Extraversion, like

introversion, offers both gifts and challenges, and self-awareness of one's preferred attitude can enable a person to function more in accordance with his nature and better achieve his potential.

### See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychological Types](#)

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## Faith

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Faith, *fides* in Latin and *pistis* in Greek, can be understood within a spectrum ranging from the content of a particular set of beliefs to the act of trust, usually in a particular community, doctrine, or Deity. In fundamentalist religions, the understanding of faith leans toward an emphasis on the content of belief, especially one's assent to a certain set of *beliefs*. In these contexts, faith has a noetic quality and is fixed within boundaries to define what is inside or outside its scope. To assent to the appropriate propositions of religion means to have faith, and to be outside these limits is to be unfaithful (or an "infidel," a term which derives from the Latin root of *fides*).

On the other side of the spectrum, faith is simply characterized as synonymous with trust, an attitude of believing, and thus refers more to the act of trusting than to the specific content of one's beliefs. Within this pragmatic emphasis, the psychological effects of comfort and release from anxiety and insecurity seem to be highlighted, even to the extreme of a marked absence of noetic content.

Most expressions of faith seem to exist in the middle, including an act of trust, with the

corollary of the promise of hope, and some particular content in which one's trust is placed (i.e., Deity, religious community, and sacred text). For both religion and spirituality, faith seems to have some particular, specific content that is reflected in the trust of believers. In Buddhism, the believer takes the "refuges," stating that "I take refuge in the Buddha, the *dharma* (Buddhist teaching), and the sangha (the community of monastics)." This tri-fold affirmation of faith points to the importance of the divine figure, the doctrine, and the community as the component location of spiritual strength and protection. In this affirmation, the individual/community dichotomy is addressed, in that the individual makes the affirmation of faith, placing trust in that tradition, in the midst of the tradition and in continuity with it.

## Commentary

Freud explained belief in a Deity as meeting the needs for a projected father figure, in service to cultural ideals of control and manipulation (Freud 1928/1961, pp. 21–22; Freud 1957). Freud was critical of the potential for faith to be used as denial and suggested that the more mature person would face fate (which he personified as the Greek goddess *Ananke*) without recourse to divine escapism (Rizzuto 1998, p. 170). Jung more positively identified with faith, but without an emphasis on its social or

doctrinal aspects. He understood it primarily in terms of *gnosis* (literally “knowledge”), as directly apprehended spiritual knowledge which the individual encounters and which brings about psychic healing through reconciliation of the opposite poles of one’s experience (Melanson 2002, p. 168). Object relations theorists modified Freud’s theories about projection and understood faith as arising from the liminal space between the mother and child in which the child creates and is grasped by transitional objects.

Perhaps no one used Freud’s theories with a more sympathetic eye to faith than Erik H. Erikson, whose developmental theories, formulated from his work with children and based upon a revised Freudian schedule of child development, led him to conclude that basic trust was the result of a positive resolution of the first childhood developmental struggle, between trust and mistrust. He concluded that an adult who had developed basic trust in this first stage would be more likely to have faith than one who did not. Therefore, the early experience of a child set the stage for a positive experience of religious faith in adult life.

Understood as a transformative experiential encounter of the individual, faith had strong significance in William James’ influential *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He suggested that persons who were divided, or troubled by psychic conflict, were more likely to experience surrender of oneself to an outside “something MORE” (James 1902/2007, p. 441). Faith can be seen, in Jamesian terms, as a resolution of a divided self through self-surrender, and thus a source of contentment and joy.

However, faith often occurs alongside doubt, and it could be suggested that the two belong in a dialectical tension. If these are seen in fruitful tension, faith can often be an expansive, life-giving experience. However, faith can also include a great deal of anxiety, about the potential for continuing in the faith and about being outside the limits of faithfulness. The Protestant Reformation can be seen as a way that this anxiety was addressed historically, with profound cultural and religious implications.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)

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## Faith Development Theory

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### Faith Development Theory: An Overview

Faith Development Theory is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the evolutionary process of the development of religious/spiritual values and behavior in the human life cycle. The articulation of faith development theory began in the 1980s with the work of James Fowler and colleagues, and it has found a significant place in theological discourse and in some cases cultural studies as well. Its genesis took place when Fowler was involved in his doctoral studies and was immersed in the work of theologian and ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr. Niebuhr’s prototype

of a faith development paradigm had in turn been stimulated by his contact with a portion of the work of Alfred North Whitehead. Fowler's theory is typically taught to theological students and is shared with practicing clergy and interested laypersons as a means of providing a process-based understanding of the way that faith changes and transforms in the lives of individuals. Feminists and others have criticized Fowler's theory for its perceived patriarchal bias and its dependence of on an exclusive Christian framework and anthropology. Application of faith development theory arose originally in the analysis of important historical figures and the life narratives of individuals who undertook to describe how their own religious/spiritual perspectives, values, ideals, and ethics had evolved over the course of time. Faith development theory has also been the subject of cross-cultural study investigation and comparison as well. It has been of considerable value to religious educators and pastoral supervisors for seminarians, both of whom are engaged in offering guidance and promoting insight in matters pertaining to spiritual formation.

### Framework of the Theory

The framework of faith development theory is organized along developmental lines and phases. It actively employs Erik Erikson's epigenetic principle, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, and Piaget's theoretical observations regarding cognitive function and development. Briefly stated, the process of faith development must be understood both theoretically and functionally as different from "belief" as that term denotes assent to propositions, traditions, rituals, ways of thinking, and hermeneutical approaches to sacred texts of a more or less consistent and often sectarian character. Faith, according to Fowler and colleagues, is a process that may or may not draw on a number of resources within and outside a tradition. It may have a traditional theistic focus or it may not. Faith development theory may be understood as a highly naturalized

concept of revelation that attempts to describe how a person moves through a series of psychospiritual conflicts and challenges needing to be engaged, if not resolved, and sometimes revisited. It is best understood as fluid and organic as it evolves over time in the direction of a nonstatic, though coherent, whole. While not teleological in a formal sense, faith development theory retains a retrospective epistemological methodology that may sometimes uncover patterns and intentions that are at once illuminating and may also be viewed as ontologically significant.

It is important to note that Fowler's theoretical framework has been modified over the years and yet has maintained its essential character. The theory begins with what Fowler calls "undifferentiated faith" that occurs in infancy. It is felt to be a pre-stage in that it is pre-conceptual and largely pre-linguistic. Fowler here relies on Ana Maria Rizzuto's description of the way self knowing first experienced in infancy shapes the information of consciousness and awareness of the other. Its conceptual value lies in its locating the basis of mutuality, strength, autonomy, and hope or their opposites that underline or undermine what takes place later on in the life cycle. It mirrors Erikson's understanding of *basic trust* and Winnicott's notion of *transitional space*. Stage 1 in the faith development paradigm is called Intuitive-Projective faith (ages 3–7) and is a fantasy-filled period whose emergent strength has to do with imagination. Stage 2, Mythic Literal faith, is identified with childhood until adolescence and is the occasion for the enhancement of the child's imagination through storytelling. It often demonstrates a tendency toward literalism and a moral sense that sharply divides "good" from "bad." Stage 3 is called Synthetic-Conventional faith and is identified with growth into adolescence. In fact, some individuals may not progress much beyond this point. Here persons form an individual "myth" in self-understanding in relation to both self and world. It is understood as a "conformist" phase where a person becomes more or less comfortable and avoids looking critically at their motivations, attitudes, values, and religious/spiritual

commitments. Stage 4, Individuative-Reflective faith, describes the transition from late adolescence to young adulthood. Here relationships to others and commitment to vocation become central, and there may be a necessary reevaluation of values and attitudes rooted in the thinking and behavior of adolescence. Perspectives of other traditions on matters of spiritual and ethical significance may likewise become important. Conjunctive faith (stage 5) represents the potentially transitional experience of mid to late adulthood where one reviews, reworks, and rediscovers one's past. There may emerge, according to Fowler, what the philosopher Paul Ricoeur calls a "second naivete" which requires a fresh look at symbols and stories formed during earlier periods of life. It is highlighted by an opening to the voices of a deeper self. This review and reworking of symbolic meanings and commitments resembles some of what William James meant by one's becoming "twice born." It results in a willingness to expend oneself in actions and relationships that embody the ethical norm of "respect for persons" and in an overarching responsibility in the caring for others. The last phase is what Fowler calls "universalizing faith" (stage 6) and it is extremely rare. Persons who reach this stage become "universalizers" of ideas and movements that come to have lives of their own. "Universalizers" become persons endowed with a "special grace" that makes them even more revered once they have died or passed from the world scene. And they often die or are eliminated by those they most wish to save or help. Their number might include such persons as Malcolm X, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Martin Luther King.

## Conclusion

Even though faith development theory is transparently psychological, it remains possible to connect Fowler's stages to religious/spiritual terms, ideas, symbols, texts, and historical figures outside the boundaries of its Protestant and Christian origins. The challenge to faith

development theory is to help persons from a wide variety of backgrounds and traditions make these connections. The theory is both pragmatic as a tool or "map" though the life cycle even as much as it is a methodological and theoretical challenge to more traditional and academic theological anthropologies.

## See Also

- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Revelation](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Faith Healing

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Faith healing refers to processes of restoration of well-being through religious rituals and submission to divine intervention. It involves the conviction that mystical power can remedy mental and physical affliction either through material medicines or without them. Private or communal rituals and devotion intended to influence supernatural beings to miraculously counteract affliction are key features of faith healing. However, the afflicted may or may not actively solicit the mystical healing as their faith makes them take for granted the solicitude of God or other divine beings. Believers may expect divine



beings to reciprocate people's trust, faith, and obedience with compassion and well-being. Similarly, human agents such as doctors or faith healers may not necessarily mediate the healing process (Dickinson 1995, p. 97). Faith healing is therefore a type of religious, magical, or symbolic healing resulting from direct or indirect ritual manipulation of supernatural forces (cf. Dow 1986, p. 57). Faith in an authority within a religious system defines quests for wellness and confidence in divine intervention (Sykes 1976). Faith has mental (cognitive) or intellectual and emotional or affective components that compel afflicted people to engage in religious actions to protect or restore their health (Levin 2009). The relationship between faith and expected positive health outcomes may be unintelligible, uncertain, and not be easily knowable (Clarke 2003). However, faith underpins the conviction that something ordinarily incomprehensible, such as miraculous healing, can materialize.

## Healing

Healing denotes a process of restoring and sustaining wellness (Mulemi 2010). The process reestablishes physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health and growth. It repairs and regenerates body organs and neutralizes forces that may undermine soundness or normal function (Dickinson 1995). Beliefs and religious practices related to healing shape the complex interactions between lived experiences of suffering and faith in mystical restoration of health. Therefore, healing provides a means for expression of suffering and hope, which may elude articulation in ordinary language. The expression brings to the fore concrete, physical, psychological, and social effects of therapeutic practices. Therefore, healing processes may help in determining what counts as illness requiring treatment and when health restoration has been effected (cf. Csordas 2002, p. 11).

Healing practices and beliefs manifest the reality of health as both a subjective and objective reality, which goes beyond wellness of the body to include vitality of the psyche.

These aspects involve psychological dimensions in conceptualization of *salutogenesis* (Antonovsky 1979; Levin 2008). Salutogenesis constitutes a paradigm for comprehending and harnessing underlying causes of comprehensive health and well-being, with regard to the body, soul, and spirit. Salutogenesis may account for why some people fall ill under stressful conditions while others do not (Billings and Hashem 2009). In this sense, healing provides coping resources that people may effectively use to prevent or deal with a variety of subjective psychosocial and objective physical stressors.

Belief in the agency in faith healing practices of divine forces and entities is ubiquitous because many forms of healing across cultures are religious (Csordas and Lewton 1998). This implies that healing is a prominent universal aspect of religious experience, and it is the most significant symbol in any religion (Sullivan 1987, p. 226). However, both religious and secular belief systems in most cultures primarily attribute a natural capacity for healing to biological processes in organisms. Cure of the body and the quest for wholeness through healing is an important expression of beliefs and attitudes about the invisible powers of the universe (Sullivan 1987). Adherents of religious traditions often extend beliefs about therapeutic power to ordinary agents and institutions associated with representation and transmission of supernatural healing power.

Where people anticipate or perceive delays in objective natural healing processes, they actively or passively pursue divine intervention. The quest for expedited healing and cure shapes people's patterns of resort to different forms of healing, including faith healing. However, medical reference to healing restricts its meaning. The biomedical use of the term refers to empirical signs of wound recovery and granulation of lesions. In this sense, healing denotes the biomedical perspective of treatment; attempts to stop the pathogenic process and the quest to prevent further tissue and organ damage (cf. Levin 2009). However, healing per se entails comprehensive restoration of health by reversing or neutralizing the pathogenic process, restoration

of prepathogenic states of health, or attainment a complete state of physical, psychological, and spiritual wellness. This constitutes the milieu in which faith healing as a process of reestablishing holistic equilibrium is embedded.

### Faith Healing and Equilibrium

Belief in miraculous power intrinsic in both medical and nonmedical resources characterizes faith healing. For Christian faithful, for example, a doctor may draw on God-given and divinely effective resources of wisdom and skill. Healers and patients use the resources to restore or preserve bodily or mental health and vigor necessary for active and purposeful life (Dickinson 1995). Faith healing thus provides an opportunity for people to assign meaning to their experience of suffering and recovery. In relation to this the inexplicable hidden power of healing and curing mechanisms are often the subject of faith and religious awe. Believers attribute the power of both medical and nonmedical processes to definitive divine sources. Curing results from technical work drawing on the esoteric knowledge of how to harness and utilize medicines. The medical expert – a physician, surgeon, or traditional herbalist – may enjoy divine favor of privileged access to cure and healing power, and this may present their work as an aspect of faith healing.

Faith healing is a long process involving interaction between human beings and among individuals with the community, environment, and divine beings. This implies efforts to reinstate stability in strained relationships between humans and fellow humans, environment, ecology, and the supernatural. The equilibrium people seek in healing activities includes physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions (Appiah-Kubi 1981, p. 81). Belief and trust in as well as commitment to safeguarding health through the agency of supernatural beings, environmental elements, and fellow human beings typify faith healing. The putative power that underlies healing derives from belief in invisible therapeutic energy in the universe, which flows through and is mediated by mind-body

interactions. Hope about the efficacy of faith healing derives from the convergence of belief, trust, and submission to God or the authority of a mystical entity.

### Faith Healing Behavior and Activities

Rituals of communal or private prayer, offering, sacrifices, laying on of hands, and ecstatic chanting characterize faith healing. These activities produce possibilities of healing through suggestion, which may counteract health inhibitions in the body or mind. The healing activities may also induce varying degrees of altered states of consciousness. The hypnotic effect, for example, contributes to self-sooth psychological adaptation, which mitigate pain and malaise. Healing activities affirm the conviction that participants can increase contact, communion, and personal relationship with supernatural beings that protect health and counter illness. Healing rituals reflect the belief that patients and their caregivers can effectively harness mystical power to restore health. The faith healing practices may also enhance believers' resiliency in the face of daily life stressors that burden and drain the mind.

Faith healing sessions and practices grant an afflicted person the opportunity to resolve issues that affect mental stability, body function, and immunity to illness. Communal faith healing sessions may facilitate disclosure of personal needs, pent-up emotions, and experiences to God or other divine beings and fellow believers. Healing communities, such as Pentecostal Churches, emphasize the practice of claiming healing. Believers not only experience healing privately but also have the obligation to testify about it publicly (Peacock 1984, p. 41). The declaration of healing reinforces it; hence faith healing activities may be expressions of psychological dispositions.

Transactional symbols such as sacred ideas, divine beings, and objects mediate faith healing. This relates to the belief that mystical entities can bestow different agents including human beings – with power to promote health miraculously. Faith particularizes the symbols from generalized

figurative media in cultural mythic worlds that link the social and the self-systems (Dow 1986, p. 63). Religious symbols shape hope and positive illusions that enhance health. The illusions affect physical and mental health through faith and their ability to control undesirable events through submission to supernatural authorities (Taylor 1983). In this sense faith healing practices contribute to composure that facilitates behaviors that improve both physical and emotional well-being in spite of stressful events.

Faith healing practices produce expected results through behavioral events (Kleinman 1980). Perceived efficacy of healing events materializes by uniting individual (psychobiological) and collective (sociocultural) aspects of the healing process (Peacock 1984). Consequently, faith heals through at least five mechanisms. First, it induces behavioral or conative processes that stimulate health promoting behaviors, such as therapeutic acquiescence. Second, an interpersonal mechanism ensues to connect the sufferer to people who encourage him or her and offers material and emotional support. By involving other participants apart from the patient, faith healing transforms private experience of affliction into collective experience (Peacock 1984). This results in action that partakers of the healing events believe can expedite healing. In the third place, a cognitive mechanism establishes a mental framework that strengthens the natural ability of the human mind and body to heal through self-renewal. Fourth, the affective mechanism links faith to healing by stimulating self-soothing emotions, which may prevent or ease pain and negative effects of stress. Finally, faith contributes to healing through a psychophysiological mechanism, which underpins hope. The psychosocial mechanism is an important aspect that defines resilience and endurance that make health-seeking behaviors meaningful and beneficial.

## Conclusion

Faith healing connotes processes, actions, and experience of health restoration drawing on

religious rituals and belief in divine intervention. The congruence in faith, trust, and hope in the power of the supernatural and its agents motivate adherence to faith healing practices, behavior, and beliefs. This facilitates subjective experiences of health restoration, which essentially materialize by psychophysiological means. However, the Supreme Being and other divine agents demand believers' submission in exchange with the promise of mystical or miraculous healing. Faith healing is in effect consistent with the notion of "healing of the whole person" (Berg 1980). It addresses the complex interdependence among mental, social, spiritual, and physical aspects of well-being.

## See Also

- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Possession, Exorcism, and Psychotherapy](#)

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## Fall, The

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### Orthodox View

The term given to the mythical event described in Genesis 3:1–24 in which God cast Adam and Eve out of the paradisaical Garden of Eden because they had disobeyed God in eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In casting Adam and Eve out, God said that in so eating the forbidden fruit, humankind had become “like one of us, knowing good and evil.” Although God had told the primal couple that if they ate the forbidden fruit they would die, instead God banished them from the Garden of Eden declaring that thenceforth Adam would have to work hard to produce food from the earth and Eve would be subservient to her husband and undergo great pain in producing offspring. The orthodox Augustinian interpretation of this event is that

Adam and Eve’s condition in the Garden of Eden was one of paradisaical perfection but that their rebellion against God led to a separation from God and hence a “fall” into sin, pain, and death. This theology understands the present reality of sin, evil, suffering, and death as flowing from this first dramatic rebellion – the exercise of the first humans’ God-given “free will” in disobedience of God. In a related line of thought, Augustine also developed the theology of Original Sin, contending that sin was transmitted from generation to generation through the act of procreation, beginning with Adam and Eve. It is often contended that Paul’s writings (Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22) lend scriptural support to Augustine’s understanding of the fall of humankind.

### Feminist Reframing

Because Eve was first tempted by a serpent to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with Adam eating the fruit only after Eve had already done so and offered it to him, ancient Christian fathers blamed Eve – the first woman – for original sin and hence all evil, sin, suffering, and death since the Fall. This reading of Genesis 3:1–24 has been zealously contested by contemporary feminist theologians who contend that this is a misogynist reading of the story of the primal couple. Rosemary Ruether lambasts Augustinian theology of the Fall and Original Sin as “patriarchal anthropology” (Ruether 1993, pp. 94–99). Reframing the story of Adam and Eve has sometimes led to an understanding of Eve’s action in eating the fruit as being a sign of creativity, curiosity, and initiative and the beginning of culture (see generally Susan Niditch 1992, p. 14 or Mary Daly 1973, pp. 44–68).

### Other Views

Although the orthodox theology of the Fall and original sin have descended from Augustine through Aquinas to Catholicism and into Protestant orthodoxy, there have been many other detractors and alternate lines of thought.

For example, Irenaeus, the second century Bishop of Lyons (c. 130–202) saw Adam and Eve not as perfect beings who “fell” into sin, but rather as imperfect, immature creatures who were at the very beginning stages of a long process of moral development which would eventually be brought to perfection by God. This approach was later developed by the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher who believed in a progressive development of God-consciousness in humankind from a mere potentiality to a reality in the future. A prominent contemporary proponent of this line of thinking is John Hick (1977), who contends that humankind, “created as a personal being in the image of God, is only the raw material for a further and more difficult stage of God’s creative work. . . God’s purpose for [humankind] is to lead [it] from human *Bios*, or the biological life of [humankind], to that quality of *Zoe*, or the personal life of eternal worth, which we see in Christ. . .” (pp. 256–257).

Paul Tillich saw the mythical eating of the fruit by the primal couple as the end of “dreaming innocence.” Prior to the Fall, he contended, “freedom and destiny are in harmony, but neither of them is actualized” (Tillich 1957, p. 35).

### Psychological Perspectives

Harold Ellens points to the array of Freudian symbols in the story of the Fall: “the serpent, virgin, flaming sword, nakedness, anxiety, shame, the phallic deity, and the initially nonphallic humans.” However, Ellens’ primary interest is in the use of developmental models of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, and Fowler to understand the story of the Fall as paradigmatic of “human growth from the childlikeness of Eden to mature kingdom building and cultural responsibility. In that growth process, the story plays the role that has equivalents in the human growth process of birth and adolescent disengagement from parents, both inherently healthy processes, and the subsequent independent adulthood” (Ellens 2004, p. 32).

Another line of thinking regarding the mythical significance of the Fall is that the mythic episode of Genesis 3:14–24 represents the

developing human animal’s first experience of the *shame* affect which, through the process of evolution, became part of humankind’s hardware script (McNish 2004).

### See Also

- ▶ Adam and Eve
- ▶ Augustine
- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Evil
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Original Sin
- ▶ Shame and Guilt

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### Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling

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Every religious tradition attends to family life through sacred texts, codes of behavior,

community memory, and practices of spiritual care. These organize gender roles, sexual practices, intergenerational relationships, and how power and resources are allocated. How a religious tradition understands “family” is dependent upon its history and its perceived social problems, social and economic structure, and local mores. Historically, religious and spiritual care of families has taken the shape of moral instruction to reinforce a tradition’s ethical vision for family life. This pattern changed in the early twentieth century, particularly for Jewish and Christian traditions in Europe and North America [The pastoral counseling movement emerged primarily as a North American Christian and Jewish phenomenon in the twentieth century (Townsend 2009)]. New knowledge from social sciences provided religious leaders with expanded knowledge about families that informed religious care of families. In the mid-twentieth century, family therapy was an important part of this new knowledge. Pastoral counseling developed as a professional specialty during the same time and benefitted from family therapy’s concepts, theories, and treatment methods. Contemporary pastoral counseling embraces family therapy as a significant model of treatment. It is common today for pastoral counselors also to be licensed as marriage and family therapists.

Contemporary professional pastoral counseling developed as clergy counselors pursued training in psychiatric contexts influenced primarily by psychoanalysis (see Supervision in Pastoral Counseling). For much of the twentieth century pastoral counseling was defined as theologically informed individual psychotherapy (Townsend 2009). In contrast, family therapy evolved as a dissident movement within the medical psychiatric establishment. Prevailing psychoanalytic and early humanistic models of treatment assumed that psychological problems often were related to neurotic conflicts and subjective beliefs patients had about their families. However, psychotherapeutic orthodoxy required that therapists follow Freud’s dictum: treatment is always an individual process. Therapists must have no contact with a patient’s family. Between 1930 and 1960, this insular

paradigm was challenged by “pioneers, iconoclasts, and great originals who somehow broke the mold of seeing life and its problems as a function of individuals and their psychology” (Nichols and Schwartz 2001, p. 13). Examples include Paul Popenoe (family planning specialist, Los Angeles), Emily Hartshorne Mudd (social worker, Philadelphia), and physicians Abraham and Hanna Stone (New York), all of whom opened counseling centers for married couples in the early 1930s. By 1940, child psychiatrist Nathan Ackerman was attending to family emotions in treatment and later experimented with therapist-family contact (Ackerman 1958). In the early 1950s, psychologist John Elderkin Bell developed a model of therapy that regularly included family members in treatment. Research in schizophrenia (1950s) prompted anthropologist Gregory Bateson to question the epistemological foundations of psychoanalysis. In its place, he proposed an ecological, interdisciplinary approach to psychological problems and their treatment based on communication theory and cybernetics. Research in schizophrenia also led psychiatrist Murray Bowen to develop natural systems theory as a replacement for psychoanalysis.

By 1970, family therapy represented a substantial paradigm shift away from traditional psychoanalysis and individual therapy. Family therapists rejected traditional views that (1) psychological problems are internal and personal, (2) relational problems are a result of individual pathology acted out in relationships, and (3) individual psychotherapy is the treatment of choice for most problems in living. Instead, family therapists claimed that problems must be evaluated and treated in the context of family and other human relational systems. All treatment – whether a single individual or an entire family was present in the therapy room – used and influenced relational systems. Family therapy rested on a multidisciplinary foundation that produced new models of therapy, strong leaders, and several influential training centers. Gregory Bateson, Jay Haley, and others founded the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto where they applied communication theory and



cybernetics to brief psychotherapy. Murray Bowen taught natural, intergenerational family systems at Georgetown University's medical school. Child psychiatrist Salvador Minuchin developed structural therapy at the Philadelphia Child and Family Therapy Training Center and highlighted the importance of family organization in human problems. Carl Whitaker (Emory University and University of Wisconsin-Madison) taught symbolic-experiential family therapy. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy (Philadelphia) developed Contextual Therapy based on intergenerational relational ethics. Through the 1980s and 1990s, family therapy became a vigorous discipline maintained by accredited academic programs and regulated by state licenses. Family therapy theory has evolved to accommodate new research, changing social conditions, multicultural understanding of the family, postmodern epistemology, and integrative theoretical models. Today, family therapy is a licensable discipline, an interdisciplinary approach to human problems in a relational context, and a constellation of diverse treatment methods.

Pastoral counselors have a history of concern for marital and family problems. However, prior to 1980, most central teaching texts interpreted pastoral counseling exclusively as individual therapy guided by variations of psychoanalysis (Wise 1951, 1980), Rogerian client-centered therapy (Browning 1966; Oates 1962, 1974), or humanistic growth therapies (Clinebell 1966). Premarital counseling, marital counseling, and intervening with family problems were based on models of "enrichment" suggested by these individual therapies. One exception was Clinebell's (1966) *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* which described new resources emerging from the family therapy movement that might be helpful to pastoral counselors. By the end of the 1980s, most pastoral counselors were aware of family therapy. Many saw it as a helpful secondary method of counseling, useful when counseling couples or families with problems. Pastoral counselor training programs began to require at least rudimentary knowledge of family theory and couple or family intervention. Some pastoral

counselors enrolled in family therapy training programs mentioned in the previous paragraph. For these pastoral counselors, family therapy became a primary commitment rather than an occasional alternative to individual therapy. This paradigm shift was not universally welcomed by the pastoral counseling community. First, it challenged a theological preference for individual experience found in the liberal protestant theology that supported pastoral counseling theory (particularly Tillich and Niebuhr). Second, it questioned the ethics of a theology and psychotherapeutic approach to care (psychoanalytic and Rogerian) that prioritized depth, individual psychological analysis available only to the socially and economically privileged and which tended to ignore relational systems. Though willing to use some family therapy techniques for specific couple or family problems, most pastoral counselors resisted this significant shift from their historic and theological roots.

For pastoral counselors, interest in family therapy as a paradigm shift increased with publication of Rabbi Edwin Friedman's book *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (Friedman 1985). Friedman's elegant application of Bowen's intergenerational family systems theory to congregational life showed that family systems theory could be a sophisticated, theologically informed alternative to individual psychological models. This text quickly became a standard for clergy training. It provided pastoral counselors an accessible introduction to "systems thinking" and lent legitimacy to assessment and treatment that was not based in depth psychology. In the 1990s, systemic epistemologies gained enough momentum to challenge long-standing preference for individual psychological paradigms. For example, feminist and LGBT pastoral counselors found contextual, systemic models helpful for evaluating power structures, challenging patriarchal systems, and deconstructing pathological concepts like the "schizophrenogenic mother" (Fromm-Reichman 1948). Multicultural family therapy (Hardy and Laszloffy 1995) offered pastoral counselors new

ways to interpret gendered, racial, class, and sexual orientation differences in social context. Systemic family theory also began to influence the pastoral theologies that supported pastoral counseling (Graham 1992).

Since 2000, pastoral counselors have constructed important integrative connections between postmodern family therapy and postmodern theologies. These theological and therapeutic models pay careful attention to how all social meaning, including family interactions and beliefs, are constructed in specific social contexts. Instead of universal principles of counseling that fit all people or families, these postmodern integrations use, for instance, narrative and collaborative family therapy to interpret care of women (Neuger 2000, 2001), stepfamilies (Townsend 2000), and lesbian couples (Marshall 1997). They also directly critique pastoral counseling's historic bias toward long-term and individualistic models of therapy (McClure 2010; Stone 2001).

Perhaps the greatest stimulus to connect family therapy and pastoral counseling was political. As healthcare changed in the mid- to late 1990s, payment for services required that a counselor be licensed. In all fifty states, family therapists lobbied successfully for licensure. Pastoral counselors gained licenses or certifications in only five states, which meant that most pastoral counselors needed a license in another discipline to qualify for jobs in interdisciplinary counseling centers or to receive payments from health insurance companies. Many sought training that would allow them to obtain a marriage and family therapy license. Several theological seminaries and freestanding pastoral counselor training programs developed educational models that were theologically integrated and license eligible in marriage and family therapy. Increasingly, pastoral counselors are finding a vocational home by integrating pastoral values in their work as licensed marriage and family therapists.

Professional pastoral counseling is a discipline that has always borrowed psychotherapeutic theory and reflected theologically on its application to ministry (Townsend 2004). Today, pastoral counselors may choose a family therapy

technique as an auxiliary to individual-oriented therapy practice or see marriage and family therapy as their primary theoretical commitment. In either case, theological or spiritual integration will define the pastoral counselor's work. Pastoral counseling guided by family therapy will at minimum: (1) frame individual life in a family context; (2) assess and treat problems as systemic (a product of family and social systems) rather than individual psychopathology; (3) observe how families and problems are structured and maintained through intergenerational patterns, repetitive interactional sequences among family members, organizational/structural patterns, or the shape of family narratives within specific cultural contexts; (4) attend carefully to the family life cycle in assessment and treatment; (5) consider the entire family as the unit of treatment in counseling; (6) describe change as ecological – that is, it is intricately related to changes and influences in the whole family, community, and cultural system; and (7) expect the therapist to be a facilitator of systemic change rather than a psychological healer.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Friedman, Edwin](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism](#)
- ▶ [Rogers, Carl](#)
- ▶ [Supervision in Pastoral Counseling](#)

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## Fate

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The concept of fate is as old as there is recorded literature about human interactions with the gods, crossing multidisciplinary boundaries. Whether natural phenomenon is anthropomorphized as shapers of life directions, or belief in supernatural providence as an explanation for wonders and woes, the experience of how one's life unfolds and of who or what (if anyone or anything)

orchestrates it must certainly rank as the most primary of questions for human beings across history and culture. Embedded in any account of fate, Homeric, Shakespearean, sacred literature, or otherwise, is an accompanying declaration or puzzlement about fate's relationship to choice, agency, and freedom (Anonymous 2150 BCE/1960; Eliade 1959; Homer 600 BCE/1999; Shakespeare 1623/1937). Moreover, fate is usually discussed with a melancholic intonation signifying the limitations of averting tragedy, perhaps a hasty conclusion that could overlook liberating factors that ease the burden of existence when fated in the world.

Fate was originally understood as the pronouncements of the gods about how one's existence was to proceed. Along with this preordination of task and vocation came a melancholic resignation believing that fate equaled doom. Fate was either discerned through premonition, such as in dreams, or was an interpretation of one's life offered retrospectively, the latter process, of course, establishing a frame of reference for understanding future projections of existence.

There are several important points to explore about fate that are central to the field of psychology and religion. Some of these points of discussion include the place of freedom in fate, the possibilities of alternative views of fate other than despair over impending doom, and the relationship of ancient understandings of fate to more contemporary expressions of fate. The latter issue necessitates addressing whether or not existence is fated by macrosystemic, biochemical, or genetic determinants: our postmodern pantheon of gods.

An original pondering on whether or not we have freedom in the face of fate is what the ancient world considered as the "idle argument" in relation to illness and remedy. One can seek the care of a physician by choice, but if one recovers or not, the seeking of the physician is irrelevant. Recovery or illness is fated, no matter what one does in response to it. The same conundrum can be found in various theological positions related to predestination and providence and in how one views developmental theory. Are events the result of random chance or are they predetermined? Are they *absolutely* determined,

even if one's development includes tragedy and suffering, and, if so, what would this imply about the gods? Is development and the place of divine – read as Otherness in various ways – intervention in that development a compromise between moderate determinism and free will?

These are ancient questions. Wisdom literature, Homeric literature, the Muslim will of Allah, Shiva's dance or Vishnu's Maya, ever-present and directing God, and the will of God the Father are only a small list of fateful descriptions that include wrestling with what seems to be fated. Struggling with what seems to be fated presupposes, as disclosed by the struggle itself, that one can argue with God, disobey the gods, or accept one's fate. The latter advice is what came to be known as *amor fati*, or the admonition to love one's fate. Acceptance, though, is a choice, even if the aftermath of one's choice is inevitable or not. Fate, though, need not be explained as the effects of historical causality and, instead, can be described as the factual givens of our "thrownness" in any given situation, to use Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) language (1962). Our existential givens as human beings situate us in each moment of our lives.

One may think that since the rise of scientism and logical positivism, and thus, the jettisoning of imaginal worlds populated by the gods as dictators of our daily happenings, we must be rid of external controls of freedom. On the contrary, causal displacement continues in full force. We are who we are as a result of our neurochemistry, our familial upbringing, our social construction, and our unconscious, among other unmoved movers and newer gods in our present situation. Moreover, there are fated aspects of choice itself. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) speaks of the condemnation to choose and the inescapability of deciding (1943/2003). Martin Heidegger (1962) wrote of the omnipresence of the call of conscience and the necessity of response, even if the response is an inauthentic privation of our projected being-in-the-world. Most importantly, for Heidegger, we are fated to die, which paradoxically invites a choice to live more fully. Life becomes full in our embrace of our situatedness.

It is paradoxical indeed when that which is given brings forth one's ownmost possibilities. Hence, despair need not be the only attunement to one's limitations and doom need not be the only outcome. Situatedness relieves us of our aspirations to be as the gods, which may be where most of the frustration lays for those whose like in kind projects are frustrated by fate. Even the gods fated to be as gods struggled with wishes for "more than" what was available to their situation. The irony, then, is that perhaps the most fated aspect of our lives is the inescapability of our freedom.

Resoluteness, for Heidegger (1962), is a comportment of agency within fated thrownness. Yet, fate, from this perspective, is not a causally driven phenomenon. It is created in my very resoluteness. I commit with openness, thus authentically embracing my historicity. We are fated by our thrown situations in history, but we are also "fating" in our decisive and authentic commitments to and Sartre allegiances with our given *existentialles* as human beings. This kind of *fait accompli* is not merely an acknowledgment of where I find myself as a recipient of thrownness but also as one called to respond and thus historicize ones accomplishments. To be fated is to be historical, and to be fating is to be free and able to own our ownmost possibilities amidst our limitations as well as to co-create our situatedness through our resoluteness.

## Commentary

The central aspect of discussions about fate related to the field of psychology and religion rests on the ancient understanding and critical redaction of how fate is a quality of relationship between the gods and humankind. Misunderstanding the meaning of being in this mythology and reducing these interactions to bicameral mindedness, as Julian Jaynes (1920–1997) (1976/2000) saw it, have not ceased politics with the gods – now understood as any external force that is presumed to determine one's destiny – neurology and macrosystemic influences being the two most prominent gods today.

We now know of the plasticity of the brain and that its dendritic branching rewires itself throughout our lives, particularly in dialogue with how we make sense of situations. As much as we find ourselves fated by existential givens, we can also create fate that is not there, as when we disown accountability for our moment to moment decisions in co-construction of our various situations. Liberation from oppression would not occur at all without the capacity to descend, overthrow, or cease participation in hegemonic patterning.

Therapeutic responses to fatalism need not find themselves pinned between the false dilemma of free will versus determinism. Theologically, those in therapy speak of providential intervention in their lives and most often not explicitly using that word. Instead, we hear statements signifying varying degrees of providential influence with comments such as “there is a reason for everything,” or “why did it have to happen this way, and why me?” or “this is simply not fair,” and, finally, “it’s all my fault.” We are still talking with the gods. When all is said and done, however, we are recipients of fate as much as we shape it. One could say that fate is surely co-constructed, even in each novel occasion’s invitation to create life as Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) would put it (1929/1979). Moreover, there are more available responses to us regarding our situatedness and historicity than hopeless resignation to impending tragedy, an interpretation made by our ancient predecessors to retrospectively make sense of traumatic experience. Even in the worst of traumatic experiences, we still have the burden or beauty to respond, and in doing so we find ourselves phenomenologically – though paradoxically – fated with freedom.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Father

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## Ancient Significance

Symbols of male and female parentage have been connected with the structure of the universe in religious and mythical imagination. In the understanding of many ancient cosmologies, the sky is seen as the father and the earth the mother, corresponding to the impregnation of the ground



with rain and the earth's generative capacities in producing plants (Jackson 1983, p. 88). In other ancient mythologies, the sun represents the male figure, while the moon represents the female (Jung and Kerényi 1949, p. 130). This identification of the terrestrial and heavenly forces with parental figures shows the importance of the original imprint of the parent upon the psyche of the culture.

However, the influence of the father has also come under close scrutiny. In discussions of prehistorical understandings of parenting, the debate has centered on questions about the father's role in procreation. On the one hand, some scholars suggest that the father had no understanding of his role in the conception of children, and women were seen as having mythical powers which sustained humanity, and that "man's part in this process was not as yet recognized" (Stone 1976, p. 11). Such a perspective is reflected in the Christian narrative about the birth of Jesus, in which the ostensible human father plays no procreative role. On the other hand, some scholars insist that the lack of understanding about biology in ancient times lent itself to the interpretation that men were the sole progenitors of children, women being simply receptacles for the man's creative powers (Morton 1985, pp. 35–36). This interpretation is reflected in Zeus' conception of Athena from out of his head or the birth of Aphrodite from a severed phallus. As speculative as these debates have been, they reflect the ambivalence surrounding the relationship of the male parent to his progeny.

### **The Changing Images of Fathering**

In modern times, the father's role in the family has been equally uncertain. Moving away from a unified idea of masculinity, the current period is experiencing flux as traditional patriarchal societies around the world come under challenge (Morgan 2002, pp. 280–281). The significance of the father has changed with the shifting involvement of fathers with their families and the cultural conditions in which the father interacts with a particular family. Psychology and culture are interrelated, as repeated patterns of

fathering have psychological effects that produce sons who father in similar ways (Chodorow 1978, p. 36). Nevertheless, significant shifts have also occurred over the last several centuries in how men in the United States father their children (Lamb 2000, p. 338).

In the early history of the United States, the father's primary responsibility was "moral oversight and moral teaching," namely, the cultivation of education for the purpose of studying of Scripture (Lamb 2000, p. 338). Many Asian cultures continue to retain the image of father as moral guide and authority, with strong meanings associated with fatherhood and obedience (Zhao 2007, pp. 72, 128). In the United States, this vision of fatherhood changed as industrialization moved fathers out of the home with their primary role becoming that of providing financial support. As many Black American men had to travel long distances to work in northern cities, this created a "father absence" for the sake of this breadwinning role (Lamb 2000, p. 338). The 1940s brought a new understanding of fathering which depicted the necessity for fathers to be a "sex-role model, especially for [their] sons" (Lamb 2000, p. 338). This interpretation, and the literature which it spawned, highlighted the "presumed or declared inadequacy of many fathers" (Lamb 2000, p. 338). Finally, as a result of the feminist movement, there has been a stronger emphasis on the nurturant roles of fatherhood. This has corresponded with more actual involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, especially when both parents work outside of the home (Lamb 2000, pp. 338–339).

All four of these images of fatherhood continue to play significant and often interchanging roles in the actual practices of fathering. Fathers often feel pressure both from within themselves and from the wider culture to exhibit aspects of these fathering styles that are consistent with cultural expectations of fatherhood.

### **Psychological Views of Father and Religion**

Freud believed "God" reflected the projection of a wished-for father figure, so that "the longing for



the father was the root of the need for religion” (Freud 1927/1961, p. 28). Freud calls God a “father substitute... a copy of the father as he is seen and experienced in childhood,” before one’s ideal image of one’s father is challenged (Freud 1923/2001, p. 46). This need for a father substitute came with a great deal of ambivalence, as can be seen in the mythology that Freud proposes. He suggests that in ancient times the “primal horde” of brothers conspired together and killed the father and that his power entered a totem animal that was sacrificed and shared so that his power could be distributed to all participants (Freud 1927/1961, pp. 28–29). In a similar vein, Freud suggested that Moses, as the father figure of the Jewish faith, was actually murdered by the Israelites and that his invention of monotheism was the great act of religious genius through which the image of the “repressed” primal father who had been killed could again be returned to consciousness (Rizzuto 1979, p. 20). This theory was a direct reflection of the oedipal drama, a “competitive sexual and aggressive conflict” in which the boy desires to take the place of the father in the family constellation (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 47). The ambivalence which attended the psychic representation of God the Father required that the “Devil” appear to absorb those qualities of envy and fear which were not adequately addressed in worship of a single God (Rizzuto 1979, p. 20).

Freud’s original hypothesis has been revised in a variety of directions by subsequent psychoanalytic thinkers. Most agree that the father becomes represented in the psyche in an important manner which is reflected in the person’s image of the Divine. In one case, David Bakan highlighted the father’s ambivalence about his children, including his fear of being rejected by them, suggesting a hidden theme of infanticide in the book of Job (Bakan 1968, pp. 110, 116). Ana-Marie Rizzuto claimed that Freud’s religious ideas were based upon the projection of his own disillusionment with his father and described how the God representation should be able to transform beyond the image left by a particular parent (Rizzuto 1979, pp. 46–47; Rizzuto 1998, pp. 51–52). In a quite different

approach, Jung saw the male element and female element as universal oppositional principles within the personality that needed to be reconciled (Jung and Kerényi 1949, p. 130). For Erik Erikson, the absence of a father to idealize led to his emphasis upon identity and the challenges that interfere with its formation, a theoretical agenda which found its fullest expression in his treatment of Martin Luther’s father complex (Capps 1997, p. 210; Erikson 1958, p. 70).

With the advent of ego psychology and object relations theory in the middle of the twentieth century, the emphasis within psychoanalytic psychology shifted from the oedipal phase to the preoedipal, and increasing significance came to be placed upon the mother (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 47). The significance of the shift cannot be separated from the sociocultural factors of the postwar period, in which the enshrinement of “motherhood” was connected with an effort to preserve the stability of the nuclear family within society (Chodorow 1978, p. 5). One result of this was that fathers were seen to have little place in actual caregiving but were a “third” element, which introduced the child to the outside world, establishing the gender identity of sameness with the boy child (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 257). Recent psychological discoveries have shown that fathers may have a more important role in the development of children, even in the preoedipal period (Phares 1999, p. 26; Lamb 2000, p. 340).

### Implications of Changing Views of Father

The Judeo-Christian religions have traditionally portrayed God as a male father figure, but the hegemony of this imagery is breaking up. Accordingly, fathers are in the midst of a shifting position, both in terms of their gender roles and self-definitions. As cultural trends continue to move toward equality between genders, fathers are increasingly providing care for children (Lamb 2000, p. 339).

The historical legacy of fatherhood has emphasized competence and power outside the home but

immaturity, weakness, and volatility at home. Fathers are frequently portrayed as incompetent in their fathering by the media, and they often seem to struggle with an internalization of this image (Mackey 1985, p. 126). Fathers also contend with issues of rage and abuse, as the cyclical patterns of violence are handed down disproportionately by men (Cooper-White 1995, p. 165).

With all of these indictments admitted, not enough attention has been paid, especially in depth psychology, to the significance of the father's expanding caregiving role in the lives of his children or the manner in which this caregiving becomes a part of the father's identity (Lamb 2000, p. 339). Positive psychological outcomes are associated with high involvement of fathers in caregiving practices (Lamb 2000, p. 340). With the increase of caregiving behavior among men in our society, along with a refashioning of traditionally patriarchal religions through an encounter with feminist thought, it remains to be seen whether the personal influence of fathers in the home will lead to a transformation of both psychoanalytic theory and the forms and symbols of religion.

## See Also

- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav

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## Fear

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After a brief definition of fear, this entry will explore functions of fear, spiritual and psychological meanings of fear of God, and religious responses to fear of death. It concludes with a summary of how religious ritual addresses fear.

## Definitions of Fear

The medical dictionary definition of fear is "an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by

anticipation or awareness of danger and accompanied by increased autonomic activity” (Merriam-Webster.com 2012). This raises several concepts that require further examination and discussion. The first is that there is a difference between fear and anxiety.

Fear is a normal and healthy response to a real threat to one’s life or well-being. If I am walking in the woods and I am confronted by a bear, my aroused alertness allows me to make a response for survival or protection. Anxiety is the fear of something that may or may not happen. If I never go hiking in the woods because of the fear of confronting a bear, I am controlled and limited by my anxiety.

Fear is processed in the human brain’s amygdala, which controls memory and emotional reactions. This means that fear is a learned or conditioned response; certain stimuli raise the emotion of fear based on past associations with those stimuli. We learn what is dangerous to us, and certain events, objects, and situations become associated with fear. If fear of a certain stimulus is a conditioned response, it can be reduced or extinguished by techniques such as systematic desensitization.

A frequent goal in pastoral counseling is helping persons to discern the difference between fear and anxiety and to decide upon a healthy response to each. A person might be afraid of the reaction of parents, spouse, siblings, or co-workers to their opinions, decisions, or behavior. The task is to move toward a realistic perception of these threats and thus be less controlled by unnecessary fear in living their life.

Another example is the fear experienced by persons with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A post-combat soldier with PTSD reacts with fear at the sound of hometown holiday fireworks because the sound takes him or her back to the battlefield, with all of the attendant feelings and fears associated with that experience. A person who has been physically or sexually abused will react to an aggressive individual with the feelings associated with the abuse instead of the present reality that is faced. A goal of therapy is to help the person develop skill and perception in staying “in the present”

and thus make a realistic distinction between present situations and situations that trigger fear based on past experiences.

## Functions of Fear

As suggested above, fear, like anger, can function as a positive emotion. Anger that is not managed well becomes destructive to relationships and health, but it also functions as a motivator to correct an injustice. Likewise, overwhelming fear can cause paralysis and an inability to act, whereas healthy fear is necessary in order to function effectively and decisively in the face of real danger; it is a necessary component of survival.

Austrian skydiver Felix Baumgartner, nicknamed “Fearless Felix,” recently completed an 18-mile skydive in which he reached a free-fall speed of 536 miles before deploying his parachute and landing safely. This was done in preparation for a 23-mile jump from space that will break all records for skydiving, including reaching a free-fall speed that will break the sound barrier with his body. To complete this, he will be using a newly developed space suit that must remain completely airtight in order to prevent his blood from boiling in the rapid descent. Baumgartner, a very experienced skydiver, is fully aware of the dangers and risk of life involved in this dive. When asked if he was afraid, “Fearless Felix” responded that of course he is afraid but that healthy fear is necessary in order to properly prepare. He went on to say that his fear is overcome by courage – the courage to contribute to the successful development of a suit that will make space travel more safe for future astronauts (ABC News 2012).

## Fear of God

In psychology of religion, “fear of God” might be seen as the same positive force in one’s life as Baumgartner’s healthy fear that literally spurs him to greater heights and contributions in life. Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible viewed

fear of the Lord as the source of wisdom and knowledge; it leads one to depart from evil (Prov. 1:7, Job 28:28). In Christianity, the Apostle Paul used this phrase in 2 Corinthians 5:11 to refer to the believers' faith and devotion to God in the same way that it was used to describe the postexilic faithfulness of the Israelites. It reflects a full awareness of the majesty and power of God, who promotes justice, opposes wickedness, and expects accountability. Like Baumgartner, living "in fear of the Lord" means respect for the power of God that motivates one to do the right thing and take seriously what is required of us.

German theologian Rudolf Otto (1958) was among the first to clearly articulate the relationship between nonrational feeling and ethical practice in religious experience. He referred to the nonrational awareness of the tremendous, the awful, and the mysterious as the *numinous*, the *mysterium tremendum*. *Tremendum* (tremor or fear) contains the element of awe or dread of the demonic-like wrath of God that can destroy enemies or those who disobey God; this is the primary basis for the Hebrew understanding of "fear of God" as described above. *Tremendum* also involves an overwhelming sense of the majesty of God as described in Psalm 8. Otto (1958) notes that this is akin to Schleiermacher's understanding of "creature-feeling" or feeling of dependence upon the Creator for one's very being and existence. It is the mystical awareness of the self in relationship to a transcendent reality. It is an awareness of a divine Energy that can powerfully love or powerfully destroy in the same fashion as Goethe's view of the demonic.

A primary dimension of Otto's view of *mysterium*, or mystery, is God as "wholly other." This wholly other is a divine being, a divine presence that is beyond human rational comprehension. That which we don't understand invokes fear in the negative sense; the phrase "knowledge is power" infers that we are less afraid of that which we understand. Especially in the Western world, any supernatural power, involving spirits or "ghosts," is feared for its possible connection to evil or the demonic. Christianity reframed the cultural view of "spirits" with the concept of the Holy

Spirit as an aspect of the nature of God. The Holy Spirit functions to defend one in time of trial or danger (the Paraclete in John 14:26) or to empower individuals or the body of believers (Acts 4:31). The transcendent but empowering nature of this wholly other God is felt but not fully understood; it inspires ethical practice in the positive meaning of "fear of the Lord" (Otto 1958).

## Fear of Death

A primary fear in human experience is fear of death or, perhaps more accurately, fear of one's mortality. Fear of mortality can cause compulsive work or activity, with the mistaken assumption that the more we do or produce, the more we have discounted the power of our mortality. Compulsive work is fueled by a religion that believes in salvation and righteousness only through works, through which one can maintain an illusion of omnipotence. Wayne Oates pointed out that this illusion "tends to erase awareness of personal death and leaves us with the assumption that we are not only all-powerful but immortal" (Oates 1971).

In psychology of religion, religious ritual and practice serve as a buffer against the fear of death. Wink (2006), in a study of 155 Christian men and women in their 80s, found that traditional, church-centered religiousness, as opposed to deinstitutionalized spiritual seeking, served to allay fear and anxiety about death. This raises the question debated in psychology of religion as to whether fear of death brings people to religious belief. Citing several studies on this question, Fontana (2003) concludes that "there is no strong evidence that religion is particularly sought as a defense against fear of death, even by those who have been or currently are close to death."

Related to fear of death is fear of eternal damnation as a basis for religious practice. The Roman Catholic Church developed an elaborate doctrine related to the fate of souls after death. Catholics were required to receive the sacrament of last rites before death as a last chance to repent and receive forgiveness before their postmortem

journey. However, this practice still did not guarantee direct entry into heaven; most souls would spend time in a state of purgatory to expiate their sins. The faithful would gather after death for a mass of Christian burial, asking God to mercifully shorten this purification period (Garces-Foley 2010). In the Middle Ages, the misrepresentation and selling of indulgences to speed this process was one practice that led to the Protestant Reformation.

Following the Reformation, the Puritans who settled the early colonies of the United States lived in anxious fear of eternal damnation, fueled by the Calvinist teaching that all humans are utterly depraved and only the elect would be saved. Because no human knew who the elect were, vivid teachings of hellfire and damnation dominated religious practice in the early colonial period as people made every effort to be spiritually prepared for death, still uncertain of their ultimate fate. The evangelical revivals of the early nineteenth century proclaimed that salvation was available to all who repented, not just the elect, and death became seen as a homecoming, where all could enjoy the presence of the Lord and other loved ones who had died before them (Garces-Foley 2010).

## Fear and Religious Ritual

Although Freud famously proposed that religion was a neurotic defense against fear and other feelings and impulses, Fontana (2003) cites other evidence to show that “far from being neurotic, ritual is an inborn psychological propensity, shared by all cultures, to mark life’s transitions, to strengthen social relationships, to cope with misfortunes, and to respond to life’s mysteries.”

This conclusion is reinforced by multiple studies of the use of religious ritual across cultures and faith traditions. In the Jewish tradition, life’s passages as well as a person’s relationship to God and to family are celebrated with careful observance of regular rituals such as the Sabbath, Passover, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, in which Jews prepare for the

inevitability of death by taking account of their life and making restitution with God and with other persons for misdeeds of the prior year (Alpert 2010).

In the Hindu tradition, the death ritual is considered the most important life cycle event. The death ritual confirms the Hindu belief that death is a part of life that happens to everyone. These rituals facilitate the deceased soul’s transition from this world to the next and ensure the continuity of family lineage. As in other traditions, the rituals are performed for the living as well, so that they can go on with their lives in the assurance of this continuity and transition. Finally, the rituals allow Hindus to maintain their cultural identity, even in the midst of primarily non-Hindu societies (Murata 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Breathing
- ▶ Death Anxiety
- ▶ Defenses
- ▶ Hinduism
- ▶ Immortality
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Surrender
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Violence and Religion

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## Feeling

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The conscious registration of an emotion or affect. Emotion is a physiological state of arousal governed by the brain's limbic system that places the body in an attitude of fear, rage, lust, disgust, etc. Emotions are automatic responses that occur before an individual has a chance to think about what is going on. Feeling occurs as the conscious recognition that an emotional state is already in effect.

In Jungian psychology, feeling is – along with thinking, sensation, and intuition – one of the four “psychic functions” for apprehending the two worlds: inner and outer. While “sensation” (the five senses) determines that something is there before me and “thinking” determines what it is, feeling *evaluates* the people, situations, and objects that I meet. Feeling establishes that something is attractive or disgusting, benign or threatening, gratifying or enraging, etc., and it does so on a hierarchical basis, determining which object is more lovable or inspiring than another. Because it sets the world in order, Jung calls feeling a “rational” function, along with thinking. Sensation and intuition are “irrational” in that

they only register the psychic facts that come before one, establishing no order among them.

In using the rational, ordering capability of feeling, an individual may remain self-possessed and take charge of the circumstances that present themselves in the moment. By contrast, emotion occurs as a psychological “shock” that lowers the level of mental functioning and narrows the field of awareness. Adequate everyday living, therefore, requires a capacity to use one's feeling in order to survey in detail the full world picture unfolding before one without the distortion of an overwhelming emotion. A differentiated and dependable “feeling function” is essential for satisfying and nuanced interpersonal relations and for social behavior, in general.

All schools of mysticism devote significant attention to training their students in differentiating the “introverted” aspect of the feeling function – that is, in applying the feeling function to make accurate assessments of one's own states of consciousness. Eastern schools take prominent note of the fact that an unmitigated emotional response always involves an attachment to a certain outcome or favored states of affairs. In training for detachment and the cultivation of equanimity, they make the differentiation of the feeling function possible. Meanwhile, most Western mystical traditions place “discernment” among the most valuable tools for advancement. For example, St. Ignatius of Loyola's “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits” employs a detached feeling evaluation of one's own recent mental states – whether they are relatively “consoling” or “desolating” – to assist one in removing obstacles to advancement and in determining “the will of God” for one in the present moment.

Feeling is arguably the most important psychic function for every religion, from the decisive experiences of its founders to everyday decisions in the lives of its adherents. Longing for succor and transcendence; awe, fascination, and trembling before that which is wholly other; bliss in union; and abasement in shame, guilt, and unworthiness – at bottom, it is feelings like these that characterize religious attitudes and inspire mythic narratives, theological constructs, and ethical codes.



## See Also

- ▶ [Ignatius of Loyola](#)
- ▶ [Introversion](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)

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## Female God Images

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Female God images can serve to balance the predominantly male God images of Western monotheism. Women who have not been equally supported to see themselves in personal relationship with the divine may need to express anger at the dominant religious paradigm and explore alternative images that express their sense of connection to the divine as female.

The lack of feminine God images in contemporary Western society is a common stumbling block for women's spiritual development. Religious historians wonder why God is so commonly depicted as male when feminine God images are as prevalent throughout history and may actually precede masculine ones (Baring and Cashford 1991; Leeming and Page 1994; Billington and Green 1996).

Those who seek images of the feminine divine discover an abundance of goddesses and female archetypes in the historical record. Ancient images of the divine are frequently primitive art celebrating generativity and birth. Archaeologists have uncovered pottery and cave art of the round fecund female figure, earthy and full of life. In countless early paintings, a pregnant female body gives birth to the family tree. Finds like these substantiate the claim that the divine feminine was worshipped prior to a shift towards masculine images of God (Edinger 1996).

In Eastern religious traditions, goddess images are still abundant. In Hinduism, there is Devi, Shakti, and Kali. In Buddhism, the goddess Tara has a variety of faces and traits. In the ancient West, the Egyptian goddess Isis and Sophia, the Gnostic goddess of wisdom, enjoyed popular appeal. In the modern West, female God images have dwindled. As the West coalesced into the major monotheisms, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, God became a unified male figurehead.

The lack of female God images in the Judeo-Christian West dates back to Biblical times. Female references to God in the Bible never occur as names or titles for God. They occur only in the form of similes (Isaiah 66:13), metaphors (Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 32:18), analogies (Isaiah 49:15), or personifications (Proverbs 8).

It appears that although the goddess Sophia had a rich lore surrounding her, Jesus and the male Logos later supplanted her identity and role. In *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah*, historian Peter Schafer (2002) asserts that both Jewish and Christian traditions have wrestled with the question of God's feminine nature from the time of the Scriptures throughout the Middle Ages. Schafer argues that Jewish mystical conceptions of wisdom and God's femininity share attributes with Gnostic Christian writings and even reveals cross-pollination of ideas between the religions. He identifies similarities between the Christian cult of Mary and the Jewish Bahir, which stresses the feminine nature of Shekhinah, God's earthly presence.

Female God images tend to focus on the maternal role, rather than other sexual/personality gender differences. Propagation and nurture are emphasized. For example, Virgin Mary is preserved as a maternal rather than a sexual female figure. Erich Neumann (1955/1963), a Jungian analyst, believed that there were two major characteristics intrinsic in the archetype of the Great Mother: the elementary (belly/womb) and the transformative (breast). These images call to mind the fertility icons of ancient civilizations and do little to bring sources of feminine identification outside the traditional role. Women have been traditionally linked with the body and the earth, thus representing humans' lower functions. Because of this, women have often been associated with the dark, irrational, or corruptible aspects of our personalities, such as the Genesis story depicting Eve's role in the Fall of Man. Yet it seems appropriate and natural to link feminine images to the earth and to God's indwelling presence in the world. Fecund and sensual, women and earth share generative capabilities in acts of creation and renewal, giving birth and bearing fruit.

Although feminine God images have likely existed for as long as religion itself, in Western culture they represent an undercurrent rather than the mainstream. Cults of the Goddess thrive in pagan or nature religions. Goddess imagery is willing to acknowledge the sexual power of women and the sex that leads to motherhood.

Feminist authors have provided resources for the exploration of the divine feminine in books such as *The Feminine Face of God* (Anderson and Hopkins 1991) and *A God Who Looks Like Me* (Reilly 1995). These authors challenge our indoctrination into a masculine theology. Reilly proposes that the masculine God image, culturally dominant for centuries, leaves a damaging legacy for women. That legacy is a learned belief in the exclusion, inferiority, and dependency of their gender. Girls imprint these cultural mores at an early age: Boys can be like God; girls cannot. Girls can be part of mankind, but not the part that is mentioned. Without available identification with God, girls can grow up feeling second rate. This legacy of male religious privilege enjoys

mutual reinforcement with patriarchal political and familial power dynamics, perpetuating a culture of gender inequality.

For example, in the Catholic Church, where exclusively male priests preside over the Mass, girls and women are deemed unfit for the Church's highest calling. Traditions of male leadership serve to reinforce the maleness of Jesus and God the Father, who together are the ultimate creator, authority, and redeemer. In contrast, the female Catholic icon, Virgin Mary, is in a comparatively peripheral support role, valued mostly for her maternal function. Since both the Father and Son of the Holy Trinity are male, girls may learn to believe that females need men to save them. When these girls become women, they may chafe under these gender dictums and seek the balancing, corrective experience of female God images.

Many find that female God images offer a warm acceptance that sets them at ease, feeling cosmically protected and cared for. Good mothering makes children feel nurtured and accepted, and as adults, we can derive a sense of safety and security from a protecting maternal God. Some people have replaced the doctrinal male God with a warmer, more maternal personal God. Perhaps surprisingly, this shift often occurs without leaving the community offered by their organized religion; instead, a quiet internal knowledge of the feminine nature of God is carried within. This occurs either consciously, for women who are tired of bearing an indirect image of God, or unconsciously, as men and women call upon God for maternal comforting and understanding.

## Commentary

When a person cannot feel a sense of identification with her God image, her sense of self is weakened. Many women have been raised with a masculine God image that may have felt patriarchal, distancing, and demeaning. A God image with characteristics of both genders is part of a healthy, balanced spirituality. The preeminence of masculine God images can be dangerous and

destructive to religious culture as well as our larger society.

While a man can relate to a male God by identifying with an idealized God image, a woman's relation to the deity is more indirect and even implicitly sexualized. There is a once-removed complexity to being a woman in relation to God when God is a gendered male, requiring a mother, daughter, or lover relationship instead of a simple identification. In the Gospels' Jesus narratives, women such as Mary Magdalene are hailed for their support roles, but not for their leadership. These traditional examples are offensive to many contemporary women for the way they influence current and future gender roles.

It is interesting to examine the roots of this gender inequality. In *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image*, author Leonard Shlain (1998) proposes that the written word is essentially a masculine enterprise, based on its "linear, sequential, reductionistic and abstract" characteristics; thus, all "writing subliminally fosters a patriarchal outlook." In contrast, our mental images are perceived wholly all at once, as a synthetic gestalt, which Shlain identifies as essentially feminine. Evidently, our methods of perceptions and communication are as influential as its content.

Do writing and the alphabet cause or reflect the masculine skew of the collective psyche? Shlain argues that his causal theory is the most plausible explanation for the correlations he reveals between alphabetic writing and patriarchy. Although it would be extreme to suggest that language is a tool of the patriarchy, Western language patterns reflect a clear masculine skew that affects all people's psychological constructs.

In therapy, if gender issues are behind a woman's negative relation to her God image, it is helpful to examine the sources of this alienation on the larger culture. The therapist can then point out some alternative images, examples of the divine feminine that are present in the culture of the individual experience of the client.

Culture and religion, whether consciously or unconsciously, are engaged in mutually reinforcing gender bias. Influences of the ambient culture shape

the individual's religious expression. This helps us understand why many Christians unconcernedly attribute feminine traits to the male-gendered God images, subsumed under a masculine Godhead. A common example is the tendency to credit a masculine God for acts of creation and generativity, ignoring the feminine nature of these important roles. Rather than subsuming feminine traits within the masculine identity of God, it is psychologically healthier to acknowledge and celebrate the presence and contribution of both the male and female aspects of the divine.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Male God Images](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Sophia](#)
- ▶ [Tara](#)

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## Femininity

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### Introduction

Femininity or womanliness refers to the physical and behavioral qualities characteristic of and considered appropriate for women. In recent years, these attributes have fallen under the label of socially constructed “gender” and as such have been distinguished from the biologically determined features of the female sex. This view has attempted to argue for an androgynous psychosocial quality of human nature and to relocate masculine and feminine functions in all human persons. However, in Western cultures femininity and masculinity have been treated as the two opposite ends of the spectrum of human personality and furthermore that the former resides in females, while the latter resides in males.

### Current Views on Femininity

In general, the popular understanding of femininity is made up of an amalgam of factors. In the biological category, femininity or femaleness consists of genitalia, high voice, less body/facial hair, less muscle mass and more fat (though thinness has become a new desired characteristic), and more estrogen than testosterone. In the category of parenting roles, femininity is associated with mothering which consists of providing nurturance, warmth, and care. In the social sphere, femininity is associated with the public role of worker (as opposed to boss) and the private role of wife and mother. Finally, in the personality category, feminine behavior has been associated with emotional expressiveness; feminine attributes have been generally classified

as soft, tender, and vulnerable; and feminine attitudes have been characterized by more subjectivity than objectivity. While these comparative differences between femininity and masculinity are relative, Western cultures have generally reinforced conformity to these dichotomous norms.

The fact that some of the above characteristics of femininity are purely biological, while others have clearly been socially designated, has had a confounding effect on colloquial designation of what is female (or male). Thus, beginning in the 1970s, the term “gender” has been used in psychological and sociological research to refer to the nonbiological traits, norms, and stereotypes that are considered typical and desirable for those who are designated as female or male. Since then, the academic literature has made efforts to clearly separate the terms “gender” and “sex” although colloquially they frequently continue to be used synonymously. While it may not be possible to fully separate the biological aspects of human identity and experience from the social, cultural, and psychological ones, many attempts have been made to discriminate between them so as to understand the relationships between them and to correct the misrepresentations of women and men that have been at the root of much of history of oppression and violence towards women.

While some of the representations of femininity can vary from culture to culture, such as the specific physical features as well as behaviors that are considered desirable, certain common themes, such as beauty, gentleness, and nurturance, appear to underlie its diverse expressions. In recent years, the concept of femininity has come under the close scrutiny of feminists who have pointed out that the cultural prescriptions for ideal feminine qualities have been carefully scripted to serve the perpetuation of the patriarchal order. As such, the complex aspects of the feminine gender which appear to be mysterious and threatening to the established male order are split off and rejected and replaced with seemingly benign ideals of feminine docility, domesticity, and conformity. However, such restrictions have

in fact been violently suppressive and have engendered oppressive attitudes towards women as well as men who do not conform to the traditionally patriarchal stereotype of masculinity. More recently, feminists have sought to challenge any universal definitions of femininity since no matter how empowering they may seem to be, they can always be turned into oppressive labels and scripted roles that ultimately restrict women's freedom.

### The Role of Religions in Shaping Femininity

Since religious beliefs and rituals have always played a crucial part in the formation and transformation of culture, their influence on sex and gender roles cannot be overstated. In the ancient polytheistic world, goddess worship was widely practiced. Some scholars have argued that goddess worship began much earlier, during the prehistoric era when matriarchal social systems are also believed by some to have existed. However, while there is not any clear evidence of a single "Great Goddess," in cultures outside the Judeo-Christian traditions, the Feminine Divine was an intuitive and prevalent concept and some cultures have maintained it to this day under different names and shapes (Schaup 1997).

A cult of a prominent goddess as well as her loving union with a male god was present in all ancient Oriental religions. In ancient Egypt, the Goddess Isis was the creator of the world, and her sacred wedding with the male god, Osiris, was believed to hold the secrets of life and death. In the southern Mesopotamian civilization of Sumer, the goddess Inanna was worshipped and her union with son-lover Dumuzi and later the Assyrian-Babylonian Ishtar and Tammuz. The goddess Kybele was revered in Asia Minor and in Rome under the name of Magna Mater, the Great Mother. The main goddess of the Phoenicians, Philistines, and Moabites was Astarte or Asherah whom some of the Israelites worshipped as well. The Greeks had the powerful goddess of

fertility and transformation, Demeter; the Greek Goddess of Wisdom, Pallas Athena; and the jealous and vengeful goddess of marriage, Hera.

The goddesses worshipped represented a myriad of associations which indicates that the ideas about femininity in the ancient world were quite diverse. One goddess alone could serve a variety of functions. For example, in Egypt, the goddess Isis was the goddess who gave birth to the heaven and earth, the source of pharaoh's power, and patron of nature as well as magic; the goddess of orphans, slaves, and the downtrodden; as well as the goddess of simplicity. Corresponding to these powerful and influential goddesses, women appeared to have the opportunities to hold positions of honor such as in ancient Egypt where women could be traders, crafts-women, priestesses, and queens.

The semblance of a goddess appears in the Old Testament as the concept of Wisdom – Chokhma (Hebrew) – Sophia (Greek), an autonomous female figure which emerges in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, as well as the apocryphal books depicting the Wisdom of Solomon. The Wisdom tradition featuring this female figure developed after the Babylonian captivity which seems to support the view that she was an adaptation of the foreign customs of the cult of the Goddess practiced in Babylon. This Divine Wisdom is depicted in the biblical text as authoritative, gracious, lovely, powerful in action, and a beloved of God and of mankind. At times she is portrayed as a divine person in her own right (Proverbs 8, Wisdom of Solomon, 7–8), but at other times she represents instruction, admonition, and fear of the Lord (Proverbs 2). Although the Old Testament authors could not conceive of a distinct Feminine Divine as in the old religions, they did however apprehend of a certain feminine Divine Wisdom which was close to God, sat besides God's throne and would decide for him what to do, was implicated in creation, loved human beings, and bestowed bountiful gifts on them. Overall, one may observe that this feminine figure wavers between a godlike figure endowed with attributes of regal

power and loftiness and the image of a homely housewife, virtuous and industrious, a model faithful fulfillment of the law. Some have pointed out that a split took place; on one hand the idea of Great Goddess of the ancient religions, the source of all life and wisdom, continued to exist in the biblical figure of Wisdom, but on the other hand she was modified and reduced by Old Testament authors to narrow morality, submission, and prudence. Furthermore, in an implicit fashion, on one hand the feminine idea depicted in the Wisdom literature has divine qualities, but on the other she is depicted as rotten, the beginning of all sin (the "foreign woman," the harlot, the idolatress, the temple prostitute, and other derogatory terms that were used for the priestesses and other female worshippers in the temples of the pagan goddesses).

The case of Lilith is a possible illustration of this split. Lilith, Adam's first wife, was the woman who rejected her position of sexual and social subjection to man. While originally she represented female strength and autonomy, over time, Lilith incorporated a myriad of dreadful qualities and thus became the shadow of the feminine which Israel was no longer able to integrate because it had split off and rejected along with the entire cult of the great pagan goddesses. Lilith became the antithesis of Eve, the submissive helpmate of Adam, and the positive model of a Jewish wife. From an interpretive standpoint, for the Jewish men in captivity, Lilith raised potency fears and threatened to endanger the physical survival of the nation in exile. She was henceforth transformed from a figure of female autonomy to one of purely evil qualities so as to make her abhorrent to women (one who murdered children and pregnant women) as well as men (the woman who withholds herself and causes semen to be spilled). The myth of Lilith entered many cultures under various forms from a witch to a beautiful seductress.

The split between an ideal virtuous femininity and a sexual, desiring, mysterious, and powerful woman was perpetuated in Christianity through the veneration of the Virgin Mary. As various

feminists have pointed out, the image of the desexualized, suffering, and silently loving Virgin Mother who is lifted into heaven continued to pose problems for ordinary women since it constituted an ideal that alienated women from their real selves and from the realities of the misogynistic cultures in which they lived. The mild, gracious, and ethereal Madonna could only offer women redemption and access to heaven through suffering motherhood, suppression of all negative emotions, and complete disembodiment of sexuality.

### Commentary

From a psychological standpoint, the patriarchal disparagement of the feminine figure in all of her complexity reveals a deep-seated male fear of the mysterious and uncertain aspects of female sexuality and personality. The archetype of the "evil anima" as well as the subdued "Mater Dolorosa" (suffering mother) reflects the disturbed relationship between man and woman. This alienation and hatred is explained in part by the historical suppression of the pagan goddess through monotheism as well as by the cultural subjection of women through the establishment of patriarchy. The evil anima archetype is an expression of man's fear of the feminine revenge, a fear that may be rightly justified, while the altruistic, asexual mother poses as the benign ideal of femininity that provides for the emotional needs of men but has no life of her own and as such poses no threat to the established patriarchal order.

For contemporary women, the psychological implications of the culturally inherited constructions of femininity have led to the dilemma between their desire for societal competence and their fulfillment of the feminine roles expected of them in their personal lives but devalued in society. Those who attempt to juggle the demands of both competence and sex-role identity are met with the burdens of physical and psychological burnout that accompany the



efforts to embody the colloquial “superwoman.” Feminists have argued that women need a redefinition of femininity (some have proposed a plurality of meanings, of “femininities” and “sexualities,” rather than any one universal definition) as well as of cultural expectancies for competence which will necessarily have ramifications for definitions of masculinity and societal expectations of male competence. Finally, since cultural concept of God has been shown to form the underlying connection between patriarchal religion and a society of violence, many have argued that no social, scientific, or ecological paradigm shift can take place unless the theological shift occurs which moves away from exclusively patriarchal images of God and includes the feminine aspects of the divine.

### See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Sophia](#)

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### Folk Magic

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Common to most, if not all preindustrial cultures, is a vibrant tradition of folk magic and ritual tradition closely linked to established mythology, folklore, and archetypal associations. These traditions vary enormously and are closely linked to a variety of social, historical, cultural, political, and economic factors. The many and complex networked structures of belief, ritual, and mythology that coalesce in magical traditions have long been studied and documented by anthropologists and folklorists.

From an analytical psychological perspective, one of the key ingredients of folk magical practices and rituals is that they serve as *prima facie* expressions of emotion. Malinowski, in his analysis of folk magic in Melanesia, argues that magical ritual is invariably constructed in patterns that evoke emotion and resonate symbolically within a culture. In this sense, emotion, and thus psychology, is at the heart of magical ritual (Malinowski 1948). The ritual serves as a symbolic representation of the desired ends, and the emotions that led to it are rendered symbolically through powerful and pervasive archetypes in that culture and thus directly relate to the social, cultural, and political issues that led to the rituals perceived necessity. Subsequently, each type and form of folk magic is derived from its own network of social formations and cultural forms and is fundamentally integrated with localized politics, social structures, conflicts, and economic uncertainties. This localized experience also serves to distinguish folk magic from ceremonial magic in that it is not born of an attempt to create abstract structures granting access to divine power, in a philosophical manner, but is an

### Femme Fatale

- ▶ [Monomyth](#)

organic socially derived network of practices and beliefs relating to deeply felt anxieties (Jung 1964).

However, while there are a vast array of bewildering forms, rituals, and beliefs surrounding folk magic practices, it is generally accepted that there are certain universal features and commonalities between varying magical traditions. One key issue identified by Frazer is that folk magic practices are often *sympathetic* in nature. That is to say, the items and rituals used in magic typically either symbolically resemble the target of the magical practice (*law of similarity*) or have come into contact with them and become ritually polluted with their essence (*law of contagion*) (Frazer 1922). From a Jungian perspective, these forms also relate closely to symbolic archetypes, whereby the symbols, the target of the magic, and its ritual practice are linked through archetypal association in the collective unconscious. Subsequently, these magical rituals also serve as a means to grapple with complex psychological issues and serve as an avenue into the unconscious (Jung 1938).

In this sense, folk magic is both derived from the heritage of past traditions and mythology and is also a living tradition which creates its own body of myth and folklore. Thus, folk magic is an intrinsically organic construct that both shapes and constructs its own mythology and folklore, yet is profoundly influenced and shaped by its contextual mythological base, politics, and culture. Consequently, the rituals, symbols, and cultural artifacts of folk magic serve as a powerful avenue into the complex interconnections of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche as manifested in lived experience within the social, cultural, and physical worlds.

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Forgiveness

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Every major religion endorses forgiveness as a virtue. The religious perspectives have brought forth numerous practical and theoretical understandings of forgiveness for centuries. In the last 20 years, the field of psychology has pursued the scientific study of forgiveness (Fehr et al. 2010). Can this study add to what millennia of religious thought and practice has taught humankind?

## Science as a New Tool

Peter Galison (2003) has put forth an understanding of scientific revolutions that attributes the seeds of change to the development of new tools. The invention of the telescope paved the way for observing phenomena that were not observable in Newtonian physics. The new data eventually created problems for the old paradigm. According to Galison, a revolution in a scientific field is due more to applying new tools to a phenomenon than simply to providing a reconceptualization of the phenomenon.

The study of forgiveness has brought a new tool to its study and practice – the method of careful, analytical science. Science forces us to define variables precisely and then subject the understanding of relationships among variables to empirical testing. Whereas theology and philosophy are likewise careful at defining concepts and test their definitions against logical criteria, authoritative texts, and teachings, science relies on a different source of authority – empirical observation.

### Basic Definitions

The results of the scientific study of forgiveness have been astounding. From 58 empirical studies identified in a review of the literature in 1998 (McCullough et al. 1998), the studies have grown to over 1800 by 2012 and continue to proliferate (see [www.forgivenessresearch.com](http://www.forgivenessresearch.com)). Our understanding of forgiveness has become more precise as science has focused on it. Transgressions (i.e., violations of psychological or physical boundaries) are appraised as to the amount of injustice inflicted – called the injustice gap. The injustice gap (Worthington 2006) is the difference between the way a person would like to see a transgression resolved (i.e., “I’d like to see her come crawling on her knees begging my forgiveness”) relative to the way the situation is perceived to be currently (i.e., “She’s so cold. She seems to have no remorse at all, and I’m afraid she’ll betray me again”). Bigger injustice gaps are harder for the person to resolve and are related to more unforgiveness. Unforgiveness is a complex combination of negative emotions, like resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, anger, and fear, rolled into an emotional experience interpreted by a person’s working memory as feeling unforgiving.

A person can reduce the injustice gap (and hence reduce unforgiveness) in many ways that do not include forgiveness (for a summary, see Worthington 2006). The person might inflict vengeance (i.e., a kind of vigilante justice), see justice done societally, observe a person getting her

just desserts, or see an authority like the courts administer justice. Or the person may reduce the injustice gap through passive acceptance. For example, the person might also simply accept that “stuff happens” and move on with his or her life. The person might forbear, suppressing negative emotions, or turn the matter over to Divine justice or simply relinquish the matter into God’s hands.

Forgiveness is one way of reducing the injustice gap and unforgiveness. Forgiveness involves internal changes that recognize the offense but choose not to hold it against the offender and (perhaps) to seek more positive feelings and motivations toward the offender (Fehr et al. 2010). There may be related interpersonal experiences around forgiveness, such as the offender asking for forgiveness, the victim communicating forgiveness to the offender, or either party telling others of the forgiveness. Thus, the context of transgressions is intrapersonal, but forgiveness is intrapersonal. Forgiveness is often confused with reconciliation, but forgiveness occurs within the skin of a person, while reconciliation is the restoration of trust between two people, through trustworthy behavior by the parties.

Forgiveness is of two types (Worthington 2006). *Decisional forgiveness* involves making a decision to change behavior intentions from negative to positive. It is not motivation, for the person can be motivated for revenge but still adhere to behavioral intentions to treat the person positively. Likewise, decisional forgiveness is not actual behavior, for a person could forgive a dead parent but no longer has the option to act directly with benevolence or conciliation toward the parent. *Emotional forgiveness* involves the experience of replacing negative unforgiving emotions with positive other-oriented emotions toward the offender. The replacement emotions most commonly discussed among forgiveness researchers are empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love. The replacement emotions begin by neutralizing unforgiveness, gradually reducing it. Usually, that is where people stop trying to forgive, especially in unilateral forgiveness, which is forgiveness where the transgressor is

either dead or no relationship continues. However, when a relationship is expected to be ongoing (i.e., interpersonal context), then people often continue to seek to experience more positive emotions in the relationship in order to make it “stronger in the broken places.” Decisional and emotional forgiveness may occur independently, but generally they affect each other. Thus, it is possible to forgive decisionally but not experience full emotional forgiveness and to forgive emotionally but never to have made a conscious decision to forgive. However, usually the two are psychologically linked.

Full forgiveness is usually better talked about as full decisional forgiveness, which usually occurs at a moment of decision. The person might ponder, for minutes or years, whether to make a decision to forgive, but usually the decision is dichotomous, like switching on a light. Or a person might experience full emotional forgiveness, which might involve merely getting to a place of neutral feeling toward the offender (in unilateral emotional forgiveness) or getting to a net positive experience toward the offender (often in interpersonal forgiveness). In contrast to decisional forgiveness, emotional forgiveness happens piecemeal, or more herky-jerky, as emotions are gradually replaced and influenced by the ebb and flow of any ongoing interactions with the offender. There is a time course within which most emotional forgiveness occurs. Usually, much forgiveness occurs early after a person begins to try to forgive, and then the rate of emotional forgiveness tapers off.

### Self-Forgiveness

When concepts of forgiveness are applied to the self, self-forgiveness often does not parallel forgiveness of others (Fisher and Exline 2006; Hall and Fincham 2005, 2008; Worthington 2013). When one transgresses and experiences shame, guilt, and self-condemnation, typically, one sees oneself more as an offender or dissembler of oneself instead of as a victim (in forgiveness of others). Namely, before dealing with

self-condemnation, people should seek to make things right with the Sacred (as one understands the Sacred). Then, one needs to try to make restitution with those harmed. It is necessary to curb rumination and deal with unrealistic expectations. Then, the person might forgive himself or herself for the wrongdoing. However, forgiveness might still not take care of the self-condemnation because self-condemnation might be due more to a failure to accept oneself as a flawed person than to guilt for a specific wrongdoing. For example, if a person steals money from the coffee room at work, the person might confess the crime to God, make restoration to the coffee fund, and forgive the self. However, even though self-forgiveness is complete, the person might still be self-condemning because before committing the theft, the person was not a thief. Now, the person is. Accepting a new self-definition might lead to self-condemnation even though the person has forgiven himself or herself for the actual theft.

### Religions and Forgiveness

The various religions treat forgiving differently. These cultural differences affect how forgiveness is understood and practiced.

In Judaism, forgiveness is usually seen within the context of *teshuvah*, or repentance of the offender (Rye et al. 2000). If an offender demonstrates true repentance – usually undergoing a series of demonstrations of sincerity of change and return to the path of God – then a victim is obligated to forgive. One tenet of Judaism is that victims must grant forgiveness, and forgiveness cannot be granted on behalf of the victim. Thus, logically, one who has murdered will never obtain forgiveness from the victim.

In Christianity, forgiveness is the centerpiece of the religion. Jesus’ crucifixion is said to have paid the full demands of justice for the injustices against God, and God compassionately and lovingly forgives a person who accepts that forgiveness (Rye et al. 2000). This is usually termed as Divine forgiveness, and it refers to the adoption

of a person as a child of God. Jesus tied Divine forgiveness of individual sins to a person's forgiveness – probably what we now think of as decisional forgiveness – of the transgressions experienced at the hands of others. In Christianity, God requires decisional forgiveness and desires emotional forgiveness.

In Islam, God is seen as the all-forgiving God, and forgiveness figures prominently in the Qur'an (Rye et al. 2000). However, generally justice is seen as one's due, and forgiveness is seen as virtuous. It is reward worthy if one wishes to forgive instead of exacting the justice that is one's due from a transgression.

In Buddhism, there is no explicit word for the concept of forgiveness in original Buddhist texts (Rye et al. 2000). Nevertheless, the notion of forgiveness is inherent in compassionate responses to wrongdoing or mindful responses to wrongdoing. Forgiveness is also a concept that is employed in order to help promote loving-kindness during meditation.

In Hinduism, forgiveness is valued (Rye et al. 2000). While there are a variety of understandings of forgiveness, it is generally seen as in line with dharma, the path of right living. It is often associated as a means to drive away sin and transgression.

Thus far, we have focused mostly on forgiveness within the bounds of organized religions, briefly alluding to the largest religions. Many people, however, consider themselves as spiritual and not religious (Zinnbauer et al. 1997). Spirituality can be rooted in an elevated view of humanity or attunement with nature. Thus, transgressions against oneself or perpetrated by oneself can disrupt the person's sense of harmony. This disrupted sense of harmony can motivate a drive for forgiveness or seeking forgiveness to restore a sense of positive spirituality.

A curious finding has been uncovered in the relationship of religion and forgiveness. People who are more religious, as a group, report themselves to be more forgiving than do people who do not endorse religion. However, when asked to recall a transgression, they often are not much better at granting decisional

forgiveness or experiencing emotional forgiveness than are people who do not endorse religion (Davis et al. in press). There are methodological reasons that such a finding occurs. Generally, people are asked to recall a hurt and they most easily recall one that is still an open transgression. It has been shown, however, that if people are asked to recall several hurts and the amount of forgiveness is aggregated over the variety of hurts, then the more religious a person is, the more likely he or she is to forgive individual hurts deeply and quickly (Tsang et al. 2005).

## Promotion of Forgiveness

Applied psychological science has shown that people who struggle to forgive can be helped to forgive faster and more deeply by participating in individual forgiveness therapy, couple therapy to promote forgiveness, or psychoeducational groups to promote forgiveness (Wade et al. 2005). Most interventions have been aimed at experiencing empathy and greater understanding of the offender's perspective. The more deeply empathy is experienced, the more deeply emotional forgiveness is experienced. Effortful thinking about forgiveness is generally needed to forgive, which puts some due stress on the self. In examining over 40 groups that sought to promote forgiveness, there was a strong dose–response relationship between the mere amount of time trying to forgive and the amount of emotional forgiveness a person actually felt (Wade et al. 2005).

Forgiveness is truly a concept that now can be claimed by both religions and psychology. The tool of psychological science has provided more nuanced understandings of forgiveness than was available a quarter of a century ago.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Confession](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness and the Brain](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)

- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Religious Coping

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## Forgiveness and the Brain

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The decade of the brain in the United States, 1990–2000, unleashed remarkable work on the dynamic of brain activity. It has remained for those in England to focus on the implications of brain studies for the dynamic of forgiveness. A major center for this work is the Sheffield Medical Center in Sheffield, England. Key names in this work are those of Thomas Farrow, Ph.D., and Peter Woodruff, Ph.D.

The development of brain studies moves at a pace that one can hardly keep up with it. Although one could reference books, the Internet appears to be the best resource for keeping in touch with the discussion.

Common to all these studies is first the discovery that the act of forgiving involves certain areas of the cerebral cortex – mostly in the left side of the brain. In what might be called the “executive” section of the brain, there is action that deals with feelings and dynamic activity in all of the brain – including healthy brains or brains afflicted with problems such as schizophrenia. The particular area where there appears to be the most activity when forgiveness becomes active is the left superior frontal gyrus, the orbitofrontal gyrus, and the precuneus.

Also common to all these studies is the discovery that the dynamic of forgiveness leads to certain degrees of health or improvement.

Across the world spectrum of religious or theological writings on the area of the brain and forgiveness, case after case has developed of the positive effect of the teachings of Jesus and Paul.

From a theological standpoint, two cautions, however, need to be noted in relation to these studies: the first is the fact that Paul seldom uses the word “forgiveness” and more often speaks of “freedom in Christ.” The second is that there are cultures in African and south Asian parts of the world that do not have the word “forgiveness.” Therefore, when talking about the experience of



forgiveness, as Feldman of the University of California has observed about all neurological discussion, precision is required. For the purpose of discussion, this entry recommends the view of Dr. Farrow that we follow the definition of the Oxford Dictionary: “Forgiveness is ceasing to feel angry or resentful to another.” To this we also do well to add, “forgiveness of self means a ceasing of being angry with oneself.”

Today, some of the most profound work in relating brain studies and religious practice is that guided by the current Dalai Lama. In that work, guilt and forgiveness get little if any mention. Yet considerable attention is given to meditation and processes that contribute to our understanding of the use of forgiveness in such matters as forgiving oneself and accepting the forgiveness of others – including God.

### See Also

- ▶ [Dalai Lama](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)

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### Fox, Matthew

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Matthew Fox (b.1940) is a preeminent creative American spiritual theologian who cuts a bold swath through thickets of rigid religious

opposition to create “Creation Spirituality.” He is a leader and shaker in awakening Christianity to a renewed ecumenical spirituality that puts human beings in touch with their deepest cosmic souls, free of stifling religious traditions, patriarchal domination, and mechanistic industrialism and open to the wonders of creation. He was influenced by Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Merton, Teilhard de Chardin, and others; he studied at the Dominican Aquinas Institute of Theology, then the *Institut Catholique de Paris* (1967–1970) (Fox 1996).

To Fox, the mystics resonate with his own insights. In Thomas Aquinas, Fox found support for his creation-centered theology. In Meister Eckhart and Teilhard de Chardin, Fox found a mystical connection with nature and science. In Hildegard of Bingen, Fox found feminism, music, art, healing, ecological spirituality, and courage to stand up to oppressive church authorities.

Fox was drawn to the writings of the post-Freudian psychologist Otto Rank. In Rank he found a profound connection between art, creativity, and spirituality. As Rank explored the intimate relationship between human creativity and psychological wholeness and well-being, he articulated a deep and powerful spirituality that Fox uncovered (Fox 1995).

With the help of Meister Eckhart (Fox 2000b), Fox developed a framework for an articulation of Creation Spirituality in *four paths*, elaborated in *Original Blessing* (Fox 1983/2000):

- (a) The *Via Positiva* is the path of awe, wonder, joy, and praise. This path celebrates the beauty and sensual delights of creation, nature, food, dance, and sexuality. In this experience and celebration of creation through our human senses, we experience ecstasy and the divine.
- (b) The *Via Negativa* is the path of letting go and emptying, of silence and of darkness, suffering, despair, and grief. The *Negativa* includes silence, the peace in meditation, stargazing, the dark womb before birth, and the soil where seeds sprout.
- (c) The gestation period of the *Via Negativa* gives birth to the *Via Creativa*, the path of

creativity. In their creativity, humans are closest to God/Goddess and most in touch with their own divinity. God is divinely creative, humans are creative, and the Universe is creative. When humans forget or deny their divine nature, they become destructive (see Rank on the *artiste manque*).

- (d) The Via *Transformativa* is the path of justice, compassion, and coming home. The *Transformativa* fosters community and calls us to action in creating environmental, economic, and social justice. The *Transformativa* is where we express the prophetic “No” to injustice that defends our mystical “Yes” to peace, compassion, and justice.

Matthew Fox is known for his theology of *Original Blessing* (Fox 1983/2000), a direct counter and biblical alternative to Augustine’s doctrine of original sin. He criticizes the flawed doctrine of original sin as a means to keep church members in line, shamed, guilt ridden, and afraid by making the Church into the indispensable dispenser of grace.

Fox sees the relationship between science, religion, and Creation Spirituality a creative path for knowing nature and ourselves fully and embracing the interconnectedness of all that is, including cosmic spirituality. He sees in the scientific story of evolution our own postmodern creation story, The New Cosmology, and has worked with scientists Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and Rupert Sheldrake (Fox and Sheldrake 1996).

Fox has brought fresh vision with new language such as:

- Deep ecumenism – All the religions of the world, as well as art, science, and all manners of creativity, are born of our common experiences as human beings on the planet Earth. World religions do not need to be *bridged* as much as simply returned to the common source of our origins, as explained in the deeply ecumenical *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths* (Fox 2000a).
- Reinventing work – In *The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time* (1993), Fox invites us to find work that

is not simply industrial cog-in-the-machine “jobs,” but meaningful work big enough for our souls, our Great Work. Those doing good work in the world constitute a “priesthood of all workers.”

- Reinventing education – Education cannot be narrowed down to the “mind.” If the body is sacred, education must include the body and touch all the chakras. *Body prayer*, which includes dancing, drumming, Tai Chi, Yoga, chant, song, prayer, is playful meditation and celebrates the body while stimulating both sides of the brain, facilitating full engagement of academic material. Fox founded the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality (ICCS) at Chicago’s Mundelein College in 1976. In 1983, he moved ICCS to Holy Names College in Oakland, California. In 1996, he founded the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland that includes Masters and Doctor of Ministry programs. Fox’s current educational project is YELL AWE (Youth and Elders Learning Laboratory for Ancestral Wisdom Education), a program for inner city youth where kids learn about meditation, martial arts, and creativity. See *The A.W.E Project: Reinventing Education, Reinventing the Human* (Fox 2006a).
- Art as meditation – Art requires focus that all meditation does. Thus, Art as Meditation can give access to deeper levels of creativity for doing study and work in the world, whether it is in theology, mathematics, and science, fighting injustice, or peacemaking and community building. *Creativity: Where the Divine and Human Meet* (Fox 2002) develops this theology of spirituality and art.
- Feminist theology/feminine images of God – Fox spent much of his time as a Catholic priest answering to authorities for his bold use of feminist images of the divine, primarily God as Mother. His use of “Kingdom/Queendom of God” in *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality* was an example of Fox’s constant attention to gender-inclusive language and balanced images of the divine.
- Men’s spirituality – As each wave of the feminist movement serves to reorient the world to

what it means to be female and feminine and empower women anew after centuries of destructive patriarchy, men must reinvent themselves also. This requires exploring new, postmodern mythologies of manhood/masculinity. Fox does this in *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine* (2008).

- Reinventing worship – Fox has taken issue with what he deems boring worship and ritual by rote. To counter the failings of ritual to keep up with the needs of modern/postmodern communities, Fox created the Techno Cosmic Mass (TCM), combining worship with rave-style dance and a multimedia visual experience. Later called simply the Cosmic Mass or Cosmic Celebration, this exciting, dynamic, and constantly evolving form of ritual includes projected imagery representing the theme of the Mass which has as a structure of the *four paths* of Creation Spirituality; intense “techno” dance music associated with rave culture; and representation of various religious traditions, music and drumming, rap, poetry, and grieving together. For many participants, the Cosmic Mass was their first experience of feeling a deep spiritual connection with any form of religious ritual or celebration. (<http://www.thecosmicmass.com>)
- Ecology and Cosmology – Fox’s Creation Spirituality is necessarily protective of the planet, because it is about resacralizing our relationship with nature and recognizing how it is through this relationship that we experience the divine. The New Cosmology – the 13.7-billion-year Universe story as told by science – provides a cosmic context from which humankind is invited to be as creative as the great universal mystery, a passionate panentheism, that gave birth to us. Cosmology, ecology, and theology/spirituality are intimately related in *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (Fox 1988).

Fox’s most profound theological contribution is overcoming the stale subject/object dualisms and naming of the interconnectedness of humankind with all of life on the planet and with the great divine mystery of the entire Universe.

In Fox’s case, once we have seen, named, and experienced the intimate relationships between what were previously considered separate categories, such as gender, science, cosmology, religion, art, and spirituality, we come to understand them as a complex, interrelated ecosystem. The disciplines are not separate pieces bridged by long-winded philosophical arguments; rather they are elements of a healthy, balanced spirit-body ecosystem that cannot be separated without causing harm to the whole.

Fox has endured much criticism for his activism in the world. Cardinal Ratzinger silenced Father Matthew Fox in 1989 for a year from teaching or writing because of Fox’s teaching on God as Mother. Fox saw this year as a welcome sabbatical and visited liberation theologians in Latin America who were similarly silenced. After 1 year, Fox published prolifically and began his popular lectures saying: “As I was saying 14 months ago when I was so rudely interrupted...” The standing ovations that Fox so often inspires in his audiences are testaments to the hunger for his message of spiritual activism and the mission to return deep communal and individual spirituality to religious life. In 1993, Fox was dismissed from his Catholic Dominican order. Fox came to see that “the Vatican had made me a *postdenominational priest in a postdenominational era*” (Fox 1996, p. 246). In 1994, Fox was welcomed into the Episcopal priesthood at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco (Fox 1996, p. 250). In 2005, Fox and friends went to Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther nailed his inflammatory 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church calling for a New Reformation, including No. 11: “Religion is not necessary, but spirituality is” (Fox 2006b, p. 65). He continues his challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, as in *The Pope’s War: Why Ratzinger’s Secret Crusade Has Imperiled the Church and How It Can Be Saved* (Fox 2011). In Spring, 2011, he nailed the 95 Theses in Italian to the door of Basilica di Maria Maggiore in Rome, overseen by Cardinal Law, formerly of Boston, and notorious for his role in the pedophile priest scandal.

Matthew Fox continues his work as a visiting scholar with the Academy of the Love of

Learning in Santa Fe and as author, freelance speaker, educational innovator, and social activist, connecting with the growing Occupy movement. His social activism includes inviting spiritual seekers into exciting new possibilities as a relevant postmodern spiritual force. Fox validates what many people intuit to be good, true, and beautiful, and he invites them to make positive, healing changes in the world. Matthew Fox's spiritual activism is the monumental work of a spiritually devoted, exceptionally gifted thinker who dares to cut through the museum-like institutional rigidity of a past era's remnants of religion and generate central elements of an exciting, bold new visionary era of cultural renewal.

## See Also

- ▶ Merton, Thomas
- ▶ Rank, Otto, as Mystic
- ▶ Teilhard de Chardin

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## Frankl, Viktor

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Viktor Emil Frankl, M.D., Ph.D. (1905–1997) is founder of logotherapy – meaning-centered psychotherapy. He is best known for his short book, *Man's Search for Meaning (MSFM)*. It was released in 1946 by Deuticke, Freud's Viennese publisher. It appeared in English in 1959 as *Death Camp to Existentialism*, and for more than half a century, it has remained an international best seller, published in over 30 languages, numerous English editions, audiobooks, and Braille. In 1991 the United States Library of Congress/Book-of-the-Month Club survey of lifetime readers named it one of the ten most influential books in America. Karl Jaspers labeled it “one of the great books of mankind”; Gordon Allport called it “a compelling introduction to the most significant psychological movement of our day.” Of Frankl's 32 books, others have been translated into multiple languages, including English.

Frankl first visited the United States in 1954 at the invitation of Norman Vincent Peale. Frankl lectured at Marble Collegiate Church, New York, where Peale had arranged for Christian symbols

to be covered with drapery out of respect for his Jewish guest. From that beginning, Frankl made 92 speaking tours to the United States and lectured worldwide – at 209 universities and to large public audiences on all five continents.

## Life and Context

Viktor Frankl was born March 26, 1905 at Czerningasse 7 in Leopoldstadt, the mainly Jewish quarter of Vienna. His parents were humble, pious Jews. At that time, the city was seat of a great empire and an international wellspring of music. The University of Vienna was a hub of creativity and at the forefront of medical science. But there was also a strong and longstanding current of anti-Semitism in the city.

In the year of Viktor's birth, 50-year-old Sigmund Freud was living near the University. Alfred Adler (1870–1937) was a founding member of Freud's inner circle and was living and practicing medicine at Czerningasse 6, right across the street from the Frankl home. Today tablets on the two buildings note the famous former residents.

When Viktor Frankl was a little boy, an obscure Adolf Hitler – in his 20s – was living in a men's hostel in the next district. No one could have imagined the future for Jews in Vienna, certainly including the Frankls and the older Freuds. Both lost close kin and friends to the Holocaust.

Sigmund Freud, Gabriel Frankl (Viktor's father), Alfred Adler, and eventually Viktor himself all attended the same high school in Leopoldstadt. Viktor was captivated by Freud's theories and writings, even introducing his classmates to psychoanalysis. All four of these men, in turn, attended the University Medical School; only Gabriel could not afford to finish. Though Viktor met Freud only once, they did corresponded with one another; and when Viktor sent one of his high school papers, Freud published it in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

While still a medical student, Frankl almost joined Freud's Vienna Psychoanalytic Society,

but already he was becoming disillusioned with psychoanalysis. Freud became intolerant of Adler's criticism and inventive ideas and had excluded him from the Society. The young Frankl joined Adler's new Society for Individual Psychology. But in the end, when Frankl expressed his own novel ideas, Adler expelled him. So Jung (who had parted with Freud in 1913), Adler, and Frankl started their own rival psychological movements. But of course the creative influence of Freud on them, on psychology and psychiatry, and on Western civilization was enormous.

By the time Hitler and National Socialism seized Austria and engulfed Europe, Frankl already had established his practice in neurology and psychiatry. But for the Frankls and for millions, life as they had known it came to an end. In September 1942, Viktor and his wife Tilly, his father and mother, and mother-in-law were forcibly deported in one of the ongoing trainloads of Jews from Vienna. During 2 years in the Theresienstadt ghetto, Frankl's father died from illness. The rest of the family were transferred to Auschwitz in October 1944, where Viktor and Tilly were separated and where his mother Elsa was sent immediately to the gas chambers. Viktor's brother and other family and friends met their deaths in the camps. He did not know the fate of his mother or of Tilly, who died at Bergen-Belsen, and he held out hope that he would be reunited with them after the war.

Frankl spent 3 days at Auschwitz (in Poland), then 7 months at Kaufering and Türkheim in Germany, where he nearly died of typhus. After two and a half years in the four camps, he was liberated from Türkheim by American forces in April 1945. On his return to Vienna, he learned that his loved ones had perished.

Now alone, Frankl threw himself into reconstructing his first book, *The Doctor and the Soul*, and wrote his second, *MSFM*. These tasks kept him going for a time. Then he married a young dental assistant, Elly Schwindt, at the Polyclinic where he had become chief of neurology. For more than 50 years, Viktor and Elly lived as spouses, parents, and colleagues in logotherapy, corresponding, writing, traveling the globe, and seeing the endless stream of



visitors coming from around the world. Viktor died in Vienna following open-heart surgery in September 1997 at the age of 92.

## Logotherapy and Existential Analysis in Context

Frankl's thought was shaped not only by the psychologists of Vienna but by great philosophers – the ancient Greeks, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel, Jaspers, Buber, etc. – and a number of the contemporaries he knew personally. What Frankl created, starting in the 1930s, is what he eventually called “logotherapy and existential analysis” (Frankl 1986, 1992; Frankl 1997a, 2004; Gould 1993; Klingberg 2001). “Existential analysis” in his scheme referred to its philosophical foundations in contrast to psychoanalysis and “logotherapy” to its therapeutic methods. When the term existential analysis was adopted by others and used more widely, Frankl simply used logotherapy to identify his body of work.

The Greek *logos* connotes, among other things, *meaning* – hence, therapy through meaning. By 1948 Wolfgang Soucek had identified logotherapy as the third Viennese school of psychotherapy, a designation that endures. The first school is Freud's psychoanalysis, marked by the “the will to pleasure” and by Freud's ingenious expedition into the unconscious and its sexual and aggressive forces – “depth psychology.” The second is the individual psychology of Adler, distinguished by the “will to power”, striving to overcome feelings of inferiority in our relations with other people, to achieve success and status. While Frankl acknowledged the work of Freud and Adler as foundational to his own, he asserted that the unique and most significant human motivation is the *will to meaning* – “height psychology.” Frankl was fond of quoting Nietzsche: “He who has a *why* to live can endure almost any *how*” (Frankl 1992).

This cornerstone of logotherapy was tested in the crucible of the death camps. Frankl never claimed that simply having a reason to live

could keep a prisoner alive against the odds. In *MSFM* he identifies many factors in his own survival in addition to his desire to see his loved ones again, to write his books, and to lecture again on logotherapy (Frankl 1992; Klingberg 2001). But he did insist that having a reason to live helped to keep up one's spirit and finding meaning in suffering could help one to bear it. Meaning was necessary but not sufficient for survival and could – all other things being equal – make the difference between life and death.

Logotherapy aims to help by assisting people in finding meaning in their lives. Frankl identified three primary ways to discover personal meaning. The first way is by *doing a deed*. This may include creating art or music, nursing a child, baking a pie, accomplishing a task, or loving another person. The second way is by *experiencing life*. One can enjoy the art and music of others, witness a sunset, accept kindness from someone, or rest in the affection of a loved one.

The third path to meaning is an anchor point of logotherapy: *meaning through suffering*. To suffer for nothing or to suffer when there is no point to it is unbearable. But if one can find a meaning in unavoidable suffering, it becomes possible to bear it, even to rise above it (Bulka 1998; Frankl 1978, 1992; Klingberg 2001). This helps to explain why so many people in life-threatening circumstances turn repeatedly to *MSFM* and give copies to others who are suffering. Logotherapy is complementary to other psychotherapies and fills a gap for people who no longer can take action to change their circumstances or who face an unavoidable fate.

*Transcendence* is a unique aspect of human nature, making it possible for us to rise above ourselves and our circumstances. Logotherapy has techniques that may apply to particular psychological disorders and mental illnesses (Frankl 2004). But it directly addresses the despondency of living life without meaning, especially amid setbacks and disappointments. The emptiness experienced by many in our time is what Frankl called “the existential vacuum.” And he insisted that despondency over the



meaninglessness of life is no mental disorder at all, but rather a sign that one is truly human, by nature summoned to tasks, causes, and relationships beyond self. This, then, is the opening for faith.

## Logotherapy and Religion

Logotherapy has a distinctive affinity for religion and for people of faith. But Frankl steered away from the sectarian, striving to make logotherapy useful to all people, religious or not, since the quest for meaning characterizes human nature. Individuals find meaning for themselves in many ways, and faith in a Supreme Being or adherence to a particular religion may be paths to meaning. So psychotherapy should respect this, as well as other paths to what he called *ultimate meaning* (Bulka 1979; Frankl 1997; Tweedie 1961). It never prescribes a particular meaning for another person but rather assists and encourages each person to pursue and discover both ultimate meaning and the moment-by-moment meanings of life.

Early on, Frankl identified the characteristics of being human: spirituality, freedom, and responsibility. Frankl clearly intended that those who choose faith in God be affirmed and assisted in bringing religious resources to bear upon their lives and struggles. Frankl's own writings reflect his openness to religion, though he remained steadfastly private as a person of faith. (Only a few very close to him knew of his daily prayers – without fail – from the time of his liberation from the concentration camps to the day of his death.)

Regarding human nature, Frankl rejected the negativity of psychoanalysis. He also criticized the unbridled optimism and self-centeredness of the American “human potentials movement” inspired partly by Adler. Ever since the Holocaust, Frankl has been reproached as too forgiving of the perpetrators and for his repeated assertions that good people and bad people are found in *every* race, *every* nation. All individuals and all groups are capable of great good and great

evil, and we must be on guard against all evils, holocausts and “ethnic cleansings.”

Frankl stands out among European psychologists of religion for placing *transcendence* at the center of logotherapy. Erich Fromm (1950), himself a Marxist atheist, asserted that both Freud (1961) and Jung (1938) had missed the point on religion. For Freud, the unconscious is the worst that is in us; for Jung, the unconscious is the best that is in us. For Fromm, the unconscious is simultaneously the best *and* worst in us, neither “a God whom we must worship nor a dragon we must slay” (Fromm 1950). In contrast, Frankl's insistence on transcendence leads away from unconscious processes toward the human ability to take a stand toward circumstances and to rise above them, as well as to address faith in transcendent terms. That is, the fact of transcendence in human nature points away from self and circumstances toward something or someone, some cause *other* than oneself, *beyond* oneself, and *greater* than oneself.

Thus, from Frankl's perspective it can be said that Freud, Jung, as well as Fromm – and William James (2002) and others, for that matter – *all* miss the point. Frankl might characterize them as reducing religion to merely psychological phenomena, to experience, conscious or unconscious, and ignoring the transcendent nature of human spirit, which may address or apprehend – or be apprehended by – a transcendent God existing in reality beyond. Frankl insisted that to find meaning, a person *must* go beyond oneself to a purpose to fulfill, a cause to serve, a person to love, or a God to trust if they so choose. And in transcending ourselves we become fully human and find meaning in our lives that carries us even above suffering.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)

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## Freud, Sigmund

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Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is most often mentioned today in relation to psychology and psychiatry, but he had little no training in these fields. In reality he was a well-respected neurologist who developed an approach to human behavior known as psychoanalysis. Freud was a man of enormous learning and huge capacities and talents. His writings, which fill up about

30 volumes, cover all aspects of human experience, culture, and history.

The creation of psychoanalysis offered at once a theory of the human psyche, a proposed treatment system for the relief of its ills, and a method for the interpretation of culture and society. Despite repeated criticisms and rejections of Freud's work, its influence remained powerful well after his death and in some fields far removed from psychology as it is narrowly defined.

Freud was trained as a physician and was drawn to neurology and psychiatry, but he was always more interested in theory than in practice. After starting his work with neurotic patients, he came to believe that many mental disorders are the product of unconscious conflicts. Freud suggested that humans are born with sexual and aggressive instincts, but starting early on in life, they must repress such desires, driving them away from conscious awareness. Some repressed desires do not disappear but unconsciously haunt our behavior and thoughts. Dreams, slips of the tongue, and neuroses are, Freud argued, distorted reflections of repressed desires that originate in childhood. Psychoanalytic practice aimed to uncover such hidden mental processes. Thus, dreams are the disguised expression of wish fulfillments. Like neurotic symptoms, they are the effects of compromises in the psyche between desires and prohibitions in conflict with their realization. Slips of the tongue and similar everyday errors, Freud claimed, had symptomatic and thus interpretable importance. But unlike dreams they need not betray a repressed infantile wish yet can arise from more immediate hostile, jealous, or egoistic causes.

Another kind of everyday behavior Freud analyzed was humor. Seemingly innocent phenomena like puns are as open to interpretation as more obviously tendentious, obscene, or hostile jokes. The powerful and joyful response often produced by successful humor, Freud contended, owes its power to the release of unconscious impulses, aggressive as well as sexual.

Two assumptions were suggested by Freud to characterize his approach. The first states that all psychic processes are strictly determined (no accidents, chance events, or miracles can be referred to as explanations), the second that

unconscious mental processes exist and exert significant influences on behavior. These unconscious forces shape much of the individual's emotional and interpersonal experiences.

We all are ready to admit momentary, fleeting, childish, and irrational thoughts, but we consider these experiences marginal. Psychoanalysis claims that they may be much more than trivial or marginal and that unconscious processes are possibly the main determinants of observable behavior.

The emphasis on unconscious processes in personality can be summed up as follows:

1. Large parts of the personality are unconscious, and these are the more important ones.
2. Unconscious memory is the repository of significant early experience.
3. In an adult, unconscious ideas are projected, creating severe distortions of reality, especially interpersonal reality.

Freud did not invent the idea of the conscious versus unconscious mind, but he certainly was responsible for making it popular. The conscious mind is what you are aware of at any particular moment, your present perceptions, memories, thoughts, fantasies, and feelings. Working closely with the conscious mind is what Freud called the preconscious, what we might today call "available memory": anything that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not at the moment thinking about but can readily bring to mind. No one has a problem with these two layers of consciousness. But Freud suggested that these are the small and marginal. The largest part by far is unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we cannot bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma.

According to Freud, the source of our motivations is unconscious, whether they be simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist. And yet, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in disguised form.

Freud devoted much attention to the development of sexuality in the individual. He described how this development is prone to troubling maladjustments if its various early stages are unsuccessfully negotiated. Confusion about sexual aims or objects can occur at any particular moment, caused either by an actual trauma or the blockage of a powerful urge. If this fixation is allowed to express itself directly at a later age, the result is what was then generally called a perversion. If, however, some part of the psyche prohibits such overt expression, then, Freud contended, the repressed and censored impulse produce neurotic symptoms. Neurotics repeat the desired act in repressed form, without conscious memory of its origin or the ability to confront and work it through in the present.

One great insight we were led to by classical psychoanalysis is that the child is totally confused by the notion of parenthood and family relations. Learning that we have two parents and that father and mother are also man and wife is beyond the child's comprehension at first blush. This Oedipal confusion stays with all of us forever, processed, accepted, and sometimes denied. The denial of birth is no less important than the denial of death in the making of cultural fantasies. Both lead to much psychic tension and sometimes to real violence.

Focusing on the prevalence of human guilt and the impossibility of achieving unalloyed happiness, Freud contended that no social solution of the discontents of mankind is possible. The best to be hoped for is a life in which the repressive burdens of society are in rough balance with the realization of instinctual gratification and the sublimated love for mankind. But reconciliation of nature and culture is impossible, for the price of any civilization is the guilt produced by the necessary thwarting of man's instinctual drives. Psychoanalytic ideas have been immensely influential in Western thought over the past 100 years, since the inception of this intellectual movement by Sigmund Freud.

Psychoanalysis is a theory of struggle, conflict, and compromise, assuming the dynamic nature of human behavior, always resulting from conflict and change. Additional assumptions

reflect the idea of overdetermination and the multiple functions of behavior. The overdetermination assumption states that any segment of behavior may have many preceding causes. This is tied to a developmental or historical emphasis, leading us to seek first causes in any individual's personal history and unique experiences.

Psychoanalysis proposes a universal sequence of psychological development, which becomes a basic epistemological ordering of the world and of individual personality, culture, and humanity. The universal experience of the human infant includes a developing awareness of three realms, always in the following order: first, one's body and its experienced needs; second, awareness of the existence of another human; and third, knowledge and emotional investment in relations between itself and other humans. All further experiences must be based on these early experiences, acquired in that order, and will be assimilated into that order. The existence of such a universal sequence cannot be challenged, and therein lies the attraction of psychoanalysis for those wanting to understand not only the human personality but also human society and culture.

The problem of childhood is a central issue defining psychoanalysis. The infant's unrealistic drive for wish fulfillment is supposed to be left behind by the adult, but childhood is always alive behind adulthood facade. The legacy of childhood is far from marginal, and it is coexistent with adult functioning. We can observe it on both the individual and the cultural levels.

Freud's ideas about development focus on what has come to be called psychosexual development, that is, the transformation, molding, and sometimes perversion of biologically determined erotic drives in early childhood. The focal point of psychosexual development is the Oedipus complex, woven around the child's attachment to its parents as love objects or identification models between the ages of 3 and 6. Early childhood experiences serve as historical precedents in every individual's life, and in the life of every human culture.

The psychoanalytic view of human motivation is often regarded as utterly pessimistic, but we

have to admit that it is realistic. Judging by their conscious and unconscious drives, humans are undeniably nasty and brutish, aggressive, and infantile. However, beyond this bleak picture of immorality and perversity lies the capacity for sublimation, love, and cultural creativity.

The psychoanalytic view of maladaptive behavior emphasizes its continuity with adaptive behavior and leads to viewing pathology as a useful analogy of cultural structures. Moreover, maladaptive behavior is analyzed through the detailed recognition of defensive sequences, that is, not only the final outcome – symptoms – but the internal sequences leading to it are carefully outlined.

The theory presents us with an ideal of flexibility and moderation which is presented, as opposed to rigidity which is pathological but inevitable. Rigidity in the form of rituals and ritualized defenses become one the sources of analogies for religion. The analytic starting point of symptom and syndrome, and their unconscious background, serve as the model for looking at religion.

Psychoanalysis assumes the psychic unity of mankind, which is significant when we deal with cultural traditions. Universality is found at the most basic level of body, birth, sex, and death. This working assumption has a particular relevance to the phenomenon of religion. Universal themes in religious mythology are the result and reflection of the psychic unity of mankind, which in turn is the consequence of common psychological structures and common early experiences shared by all mankind. The same basic psychological processes and complexes are expressed in individual products (dreams, stories, daydreams) and in cultural products (art, literature, folklore, wit, religion, law, science), because these complexes are basic and central to human experience.

Freud's writings are among the most ambitious attempts in history to present a comprehensive interpretation of religion. The topics Freud dealt with include, first of all, a developmental theory of religion, for humanity as a whole and for each individual. Freud also attempted to explain the functions and consequences of religion, for both society and the individual.

Freud's theoretical explanation for the origin and existence of religion is based on certain presumed universal psychological experiences and processes: the universal experience of helplessness, the tendency for compensation through fantasy, and the experience of early relations with protective figures. Every individual is psychologically prepared by these universal experiences to accept religious ideas which are obviously culturally transmitted. The question about the world of spirits is: Does this world exist "out there" and if it does not where is it. The psychological answer given by psychoanalysis is that it exists within, in our own mental apparatus and our own mental abilities to fantasize and project. The world of spirits, the supernatural world unseen and somehow felt in religious experience, is a projection of the internal world. Psychoanalytic theory explains both the origin of supernaturalist ideas and their specific contents.

Freud's theory does not suggest that the individual creates his religion on his own, out of nothing, but that childhood experiences within the family prepare the individual for the cultural system of religion. Belief in omnipotent gods is a psychic reproduction of the universal state of helplessness in infancy. Like an idealized father, God is the projection of childish wishes for an omnipotent protector. If children can outgrow their dependence, he concluded with cautious optimism, then humanity may also hope to leave behind its prevalent and immature fantasies.

Psychoanalysis has had more to say about religious actions than any of the various traditions in academic psychology. It is the one psychological approach to the understanding of religion which has had a major effect on both religion as an institution and on the study of religion. Psychoanalytic approaches to the question of culture and religion, and to the question of individual integration in society, have affected all social science disciplines. The psychoanalytic study of religious beliefs and institutions has drawn considerable attention on the part of scholars in the fields of religion, history, sociology, and anthropology. Psychoanalysis is the only major psychological theory which offers an explanation

of religion as part of a comprehensive theory of human behavior, in which religion is presented as an instance of general psychological forces in action.

In this area, as in many others, Sigmund Freud's writings offer a rich variety of hypotheses regarding various religious beliefs and practices. Some of the better-known hypotheses derived from psychoanalytic theory are the father-projection hypotheses, i.e., the idea that the images of the gods are derived from childhood experiences with paternal (and maternal) figures, and the superego projection hypothesis, i.e., the idea that the gods are a reflection and echo of the unconscious and severe conscience which all humans share.

Judging by their immense influence in all the academic fields which study religion, psychoanalytic ideas seem to be of truly enduring value for the psychological understanding of religion. We really have no other theory that matches the scope of psychoanalytic interpretations of culture and religion. Enlightening, that is the greatest compliment we can pay psychoanalytic ideas and that is exactly what psychoanalytic approaches wish to be. They represent the continuation of Enlightenment tradition in regard to human activities around ideas of spirituality and the sacred.

### See Also

- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [Primal Horde Theory](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Freud, Sigmund, and Religion

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Freud was notorious for his antireligious stance. He seems to have gone out of his way to offend believers, referring to the “barbarous god of volcanoes and wildernesses whom I grew to dislike very much” (Freud 1970, p. 102). Despite this, he accepts that in some cases the mild neurosis of religion was preferable to a more complex and distressing disorder and argues the parallels between religion and psychoanalysis are striking.

### Neurosis

Religion itself for Freud is a form of madness (Freud 1995a SE XII: 269). He draws an analogy between the faith-based belief of the religious believer and that of the paranoid, who clings to his or her paranoid delusion in spite of any and all evidence to the contrary. He draws another between the ceremony and ritual associated with religious practice and the obsessive’s need to engage in repetitive behavior. Religion can

rescue people from an individual neurosis, although it does not cure them: it merely substitutes a universal neurosis for a personal one:

In view of these similarities and analogies, one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of religion and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal neurosis (Freud 1995a SE XII: 11126–11127).

The distinction between religion and what is commonly accepted as neurosis is merely in the numbers of participants involved: the paranoid indulges in a *folie à un(e)*, the religious in a *folie à tous*. The ritual inherent in religion makes it an obsessional neurosis: as a result of the unresolved Oedipus complex in the adult, the rituals of religion are aimed at propitiating the father and preventing his anger. Alternatively, religion can be seen as illusory: a wish fulfillment through projection. A strong desire can be externalized and become a belief in the same way that, when we sleep, a strong wish fulfillment is projected as a dream. In the case of Christianity, the prospect of eternal life is a fulfillment of the wish not to die.

Freud’s assertion is that the Oedipus and Electra complexes are at the psychological core of all human beings. This sort of incestual tension necessarily has a negative effect on the family, and so the tension is neutralized through the transference of the desire for the parent onto a less divisive recipient.

In Christianity, God replaces the father figure and Mary the Mother of Christ the mother. The desire to kill the parent and thus escape the threat of castration is also accounted for in Christianity, argues Freud, through the crucifixion of Christ as part of the Holy Trinity. Christianity also allows for the expiation of guilt through its transference onto Christ, the perpetual sacrificial lamb. Religion is a sign that the Oedipus complex has not been successfully overcome.

### Transference

The key issue at hand here is that of transference: it is the mode of healing in both psychoanalysis and religion. Jung wrote of his first meeting with



Freud: “Suddenly he asked me out of the blue, ‘And what do you think about the transference?’ I replied with the deepest conviction that it was the alpha and the omega of the analytic method, whereupon he said, ‘Then you have grasped the main thing’” (Jung 1954, p. 8).

In transference in psychoanalysis, the analyst takes on the role of the parent, which is the role taken on by God in religious belief. This parallel was not lost on Freud, who despite his avowed disdain for religion recognized its potential as a healing mechanism as well as a symptom of neurosis.

Freud’s letters imply an uncertainty in his criticisms of religion that are not reflected in his work: he comments in a letter to Ferenczi that “I regard [*The Future of an Illusion*] as weak analytically and inadequate as a self-confession” (Jones 1962, p. 587). Also, when he found analogies to be insufficient proof against religion, he searched for historical proofs and delayed the publication of *Moses and Monotheism* because he was unable to find them and was therefore displeased with the work: “there is also the consideration that my contribution does not seem to me well founded enough nor does it please me much. So it is not the right occasion for a martyrdom. Finis for the time being” (Jones 1962, p. 622).

Freud attempted to dismiss the historicity of religion a priori with no regard for any information he might have received suggesting alternative theories to his already-concluded conclusion. For Freud, the belief in God is understandable to an extent, although he considered the belief to be unworthy of modern human beings and “to be understood on the pattern of the individual neurotic symptoms familiar to us” (Freud 1995b SE XXIII: 58):

We understand how a primitive man is in need of a god as creator of the universe, as chief of his clan, as personal protector . . . A man of later days, of our own day, behaves in the same way. He, too, remains childish and in need of protection, even when he is grown up; he thinks he cannot do without support from his god (Freud 1995b SE XXIII: 128).

What he found objectionable was not that these early and primitive people chose to accept the existence of a powerful God who would

protect them, but that the character of that God was changed to suit their own changing purpose:

[T]he Persian government of Egypt (of the fifth century BCE) conveyed information to them of the new rules of worship issued from Jerusalem. Going back to earlier times, we may say that the god Yahweh certainly bore no resemblance to the Mosaic god. Aten had been a pacifist . . . No doubt Yahweh was better suited to a people who were starting out to occupy new homelands by force (Freud 1995b SE XXIII: 63).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Oedipus Complex
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Friedman, Edwin

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Edwin Friedman (1932–1996) broke new ground in pastoral counseling by using Murray Bowen’s theory of intergenerational emotional family systems to explain complex interactions between religion, politics, and psychotherapy. Combining Bowen’s theory with his own rabbinical

experience, Friedman developed a model of congregational analysis and leadership that was broadly embraced by American church leaders.

A native of New York City, Friedman earned a doctorate of divinity from Hebrew Union College where he was ordained as a rabbi in 1959. During his distinguished career, he acted as Community Relations Consultant for the White House on desegregation issues (1964–1966), founded the Bethesda (MD) Jewish Congregation where he served as Rabbi until 1979, established a postgraduate training center for clergy and mental health professionals (Center for Family Process), and maintained a practice as a marriage and family therapist. Dr. Friedman was well known for his workshops for clergy, businesses, political groups, and military leaders.

As a family therapist, Friedman trained with Murray Bowen, a family therapy pioneer and professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. His landmark book, *From Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (Friedman 1985), is based on his observation that clergy stress is related primarily to family dynamics. He observed that clergy are involved simultaneously in three families: families within the congregation, the congregation as family, and the clergyperson's own family. These systems interlock and are governed by identical emotional processes that can be understood using concepts like differentiation, homeostasis, and triangulation drawn from Bowen's theory of family therapy. Friedman applied these concepts to clergy self-understanding, congregational life, and leadership.

*From Generation to Generation* (Friedman 1985) became a standard for clergy training and a platform for extending Bowen's theory through workshops and lectures. *Friedman's Fables* (1990) is a collection of stories that highlight family emotional dynamics in problematic human interactions. In his book, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (1997, published posthumously), Friedman integrated Bowenian theory with 40 years of observations about American politics and organizational systems. He proposed a universal

principle: all social and organizational pathology is related to denial of emotional processes. This denial results in a widespread, regressive, counterevolutionary trend that is countered only by differentiated leaders who understand emotional process. Such leaders manage their own anxiety while taking unpopular stands that are automatically resisted by others' reactivity. Friedman's model is sustained through the Center for Family Process, Healthy Congregations, and a host of books and workshops based on his work (Richardson 1996; Steinke 2006).

Friedman's work has been widely embraced by church leaders. However, his model faces at least three substantial critiques. First, Bowen and Friedman's concept of differentiation can be interpreted as an embodiment of masculine values rather than a universal emotional principle (Leupnitz 2002). Second, Bowenian theory overvalues culturally specific nuclear family emotional process. Third, Friedman's model assumes that universal nuclear family processes can be generalized beyond family functioning to organizational and societal functioning. There is little empirical research to support either universal nuclear family processes or generalization of principles to organizations and society.

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Emotional Intelligence
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Psychotherapy and Religion
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Religion and Mental and Physical Health

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## Fromm, Erich

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Erich Fromm, though one of the most prolific authors of social psychology and psychoanalytic theory, is oddly less well known than others of this period. This is largely due to Fromm's multifaceted, interdisciplinary approach, which makes it challenging to locate him within a particular camp of thought. Fromm brought together Freudian theories with humanism, existentialism, Marxism, neo-Kantian thought, elements of Biblical prophecy, Talmudic writings, mysticism, and Zen Buddhism (Burston 1991). Nevertheless, Fromm is most simply known as a sociopsychological theorist and analyst, who combined Freudian psychoanalytic thought with Marxist social critical theory.

Fromm's intellectual interests and pursuits were likely influenced by his upbringing as the only child in a pious, orthodox Jewish home, where he received extensive Jewish religious education. Although Fromm did not remain active in his Jewish faith, its imprint remained as he studied sociology at the University of Heidelberg (receiving his Ph.D. in 1922).

After his studies at Heidelberg, Fromm underwent psychoanalytical training in Frankfurt, Munich, and Berlin and then helped form the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute. In Frankfurt he became acquainted with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research and later was an early leader in "The Frankfurt School," a Marxist and Freudian influenced group of social scientists who developed social critical theory.

Fromm emigrated to the United States in 1934 and taught and worked with others who were critiquing and expanding Freud's thought – particularly in terms of interpersonal or social psychology – such as Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, Clara Thompson, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, and other "neo-Freudians." Following this he moved to Mexico City and taught the first courses of psychoanalysis as a part of the medical faculty at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Fromm defined himself as a nontheistic "radical humanist" yet acknowledged religion as a universal in human life (Fromm 1967). He did distinguish between authoritarian and humanistic religion but also asserted that religion in general has admirable goals for life and standards for living, such as truth, the decrease of suffering, autonomy, responsibility, the unfolding of human powers of love and reason, and the development of the higher nature or "soul" (Fuller 2008). Therefore, psychological disturbances occur because persons neglect the demands of the soul (Fuller 2008). Additionally, Fromm touched on similar existential tensions as theologian Paul Tillich and the ethical implications of Martin Buber.

Fromm's contributions were vast. First, Fromm was one of the first theorists to assert that the psychoanalyst is not a blank mirror as Freud believed; rather he or she must engage one's self and one's passion for his or her life and have the capacity for genuine empathy for the client in order to be helpful. Second, Fromm stated that self or "character" is developed and/or constructed socially and not merely via libidinal forces. Third, Fromm taught that a critical (social) theory is a prerequisite for contextualizing care for its hermeneutic of suspicion and

deconstructive impetus towards meta-discourse(s). All of these elements were very early forms of what are now common features of a postmodern psychological theory and practice.

### See Also

- ▶ Buber, Martin
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Mysticism and Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Talmud

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## Fundamentalism

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The term fundamentalism has been associated with a variety of meanings since its inception into the English language during the early twentieth century through Christianity. At the outset, it was intended to convey a belief in the need to return to *the fundamentals of faith*.

Increasingly, fundamentalism has been associated with a narrow, rigid approach to religious belief across various world religions. Fundamentalism, once a Christian term, can now rightly be applied to Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, and other forms of fundamentalism. When used in popular culture today, it often is intended to have a pejorative connotation to it.

### Fundamentalism as a Reaction to Modernism

Fundamentalism has often been understood as a response to modernity and the secularism that accompanied it. Several threats to religion accompanied modernity (Hoffman and Kurzenberger 2008). First, religion was displaced from its privileged position. In premodern times, the church and religious authority retained the most influential positions of power in shaping the masses. As modernism emerged, scientists, academics, and politicians emerged as the new sources of influence. Fundamentalism, in part, can be understood as an attempt to reclaim an authoritative place for religion.

Second, religious ways of knowing, which were generally based in claims of revealed knowledge from God or an ultimate authority, were called into question. In premodern times, religion did not need to defend its ways of knowing; they were a given. Fundamentalism served as a way of clearly defining what should be a given, or a fundamental of faith, that does not need to defend itself against scientific scrutiny.

Third, religion was changed by modernity. In premodern times, faith was sufficient. However, in modern times faith needed to be supported by science and rationalism. Systematic theology was replaced by apologetics. During modernity and into postmodernity, there was an increasing popularity in creationism and popular books, such as *The Case for Christ* by Strobel (1998), which claimed scientific evidence of the truth of religion. Although fundamentalism often incorporates selectively chosen scientific evidence to support its position, it also generally claims that there is no need for such evidence.

## The September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks and Fundamentalism

Although fundamentalism had already begun accumulating many negative associations, the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center Towers in the United States on September 11, 2001, powerfully impacted the way fundamentalism was understood. The terrorists were labeled “Islamic fundamentalists” and “Islamic extremists” by many in the news media and academic community. Through this, extremism and fundamentalism united as synonymous terms. The number of individuals who would self-identify as fundamentalists since this time has decreased.

The contemporary usage of the term fundamentalism is often used to distinguish a particular way of being religious or type of religiosity. Psychological measures, such as Fundamentalism Scale-Revised and Religious Fundamentalism Scale, have been developed to identify fundamentalism (Hill and Hood 1999). In these, fundamentalism is conceived as more absolutist and rigid. Fundamentalism is defined as being related to a less critical and more literal interpretation of sacred texts, more antagonistic and critical views of other religious groups, defensive of the correctness of a particular religious group or belief, and increased evangelistic fervor.

## Research on Fundamentalism

Since September 11, 2001, psychological theory and research attempting to understand and explain fundamentalism has become prolific. Most of this research can be seen in two broad categories: social-psychological research and personality research. Common to both approaches is the assumption that fundamentalism is often personally and socially dangerous and that fundamentalism often is a product of social and psychological forces more than religious factors.

Social psychological research emphasizes the role of the group or culture (Rogers et al. 2007). Terror management theory, one

social-psychological approach, suggests that mortality salience (i.e., reminders of death) increase in-group identification; these in-groups are often conservative or fundamentalistic. Friedman (2008), for example, found an increase in fundamentalism associated with mortality salience. Self esteem, however, is conceived as an intervening variable. Low self-esteem increases the influence of mortality salience, while high self-esteem serves as a buffer therefore lowering the impact. From the social psychology perspective, various personal factors such as psychopathology, tendencies toward conformity, and self-esteem may interact with contextual factors, such as mortality salience, to increase the likelihood of one developing a fundamentalist perspective.

Hood et al. (2005) represent one of the most thorough perspectives from the individual or personality side of fundamentalism. This is a more balanced perspective on fundamentalism, recognizing both the positive and negative sides of fundamentalism. From a more sympathetic viewpoint, fundamentalism often is part of a search for meaning and community. In general, however, fundamentalism has been associated with more negative concepts including authoritarianism, a rigid cognitive style, narrow-mindedness, and defensiveness against doubt (Spilka et al. 2003).

Empirical research has also associated fundamentalism with a number of outcomes. For instance, it is generally thought that fundamentalists have more oppressive patriarchal worldview, increased likelihood of prejudice, and domestic violence (Spilka et al. 2003). As has already been discussed, there is also a frequently hypothesized link between fundamentalism and terrorism.

## Conclusion

A complete understanding of fundamentalism must take into consideration the personal, social/cultural, historical, and religious factors that contribute to the development of fundamentalism. From scholarly and ethical viewpoints, it is necessary to take into consideration both the positive aspects of fundamentalism as well

as the potential dangers of fundamentalism when associated with more extremists and militant groups.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)

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## Gardens, Groves, and Hidden Places

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Gardens, groves, and other such “hidden” places are often sacred in religious stories. Gardens and groves and other hidden places can represent an earthly paradise, as in the Garden of Eden of the Book of Genesis in the Hebrew Bible. Like temples and walled cities, they are protected places, metaphors for cosmos, against ever threatening chaos. They are places of birth or rebirth. Jesus is born in a humble stable; the Buddha is born in a grove. Muhammad receives revelation in a cave, the Buddha finds enlightenment under a tree in a grove, and Jesus prepares for his passion in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Psychologically, the sacred space in question may be said to represent the preconscious mind, the center of the world for the individual, and the place where the ego resides and in which it achieves revelation or awakening to Self. It is also the place that can be threatened by outside forces such as those represented in the Abrahamic tradition by the Devil, who, in a sense, shares the garden – the psyche – with the individual.

### See Also

- ▶ Devil
- ▶ Jesus

- ▶ Self
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Gayatri

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Gayatri is one of the most ancient of Hindu goddesses, known to have been worshipped as “the Mother of the Vedas.” She is extremely powerful and is depicted with five heads (for the five elements of creation: earth, water, fire, air, and ether) and ten arms. In Hinduism goddesses are important because they represent the power (*shakti*) of their male counterparts.

The mantra dedicated to *Gayatri* is said to be the most potent of all *mantras*. It is a 14-word prayer for enlightenment and is also spoken whenever a devotee is endangered. Because of its power, the *Gayatri mantra* should not be treated casually.

Psychologically, *Gayatri* and her *mantra* can be beneficial for twenty-first-century spiritual feminists both as a feminine god image and as a source for prayer and/or meditation.

### See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Mantra](#)
- ▶ [Shakti](#)

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## Gender Roles

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Gender roles refer to the social roles with which a person identifies relating to their gender. As social roles, they are “shared expectations that apply to persons who occupy a certain social position or are members of a particular social category” (Eagly 2000, p. 448). Gender roles exist at the intersection between subjective experience and cultural understandings of what it means to be a man or a woman, referring to a set of conditions that are broadly consensual within a culture. As such, gender roles are “injunctive norms” which depict how persons should behave, “[producing] social disapproval and efforts to induce compliance” if they are broken (Eagly 2000, p. 449).

However, gender roles imply more than rational self-conscious participation in societal patterns. They also include “general mannerisms, deportment and demeanor; play preferences and

recreational interests; spontaneous topics of talk in unprompted conversation and casual comment; content of dreams, daydreams, and fantasies; replies to oblique inquiries and projective tests; evidence of erotic practices, and finally, the person’s own reply to direct inquiry” (Rudacille 2005, p. 105).

Gender roles have a close but not equivalent relationship to gender identity. Gender roles fluctuate between the poles of identity and action, self-identification, and the way one is defined by others. The concept of gender roles refers not strictly to whether one thinks of oneself as male or female, but the way this conviction is played out in the cultural arena, including “situational constraints” that can maintain behavior that “seems fitting” to men and women (Rudacille 2005, p. 56). These cultural patterns tend to reinforce the needs of a particular society. Societies frequently cultivate “natural” explanations of gender which can be seen to shore up certain social practices. This tendency has been called the “sexual division of labor” and has been linked to wider economic needs and interests (Chodorow 1978, p. 3).

“Natural,” or essentialist, explanations of gender tend to describe men and women as possessing fixed qualities which inevitably lead to certain kinds of behaviors. In this “sex/gender scheme. . . [people] identify sexual difference with both biological/physiological dimensions (sex), and dispositional/psychological and social characteristics (gender)” (Jones 2000, p. 27). The common epigram “anatomy is destiny” is a well-known distillation of this concept. The primary challenge to this view has come from the feminist movement in Western societies at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning again in the 1960s (Rudacille 2005, p. 43). The critique of gender has varied in degree, with some suggesting that the “raw material” of biological sex is the fundamental baseline which is then shaped by culture and circumstance. According to these theorists, the biological basis remains an “unalterable. . . given” that is fixed at a “chromosomal and genetic” level (Jones 2000, p. 35). Others suggest that the cultural construction of gender is even more thoroughgoing than this and that on an epistemological level, culture determines everything

we know about being man and woman. At this level, the self is seen as a “space through which cultural constructs move...are contested and changed” (Jones 2000, p. 37).

## Commentary

Psychoanalysis has placed a strong emphasis on the psychic impact of the memory traces of parents upon the development of the child. These memory traces are laid down through the activities of care for children and maintenance of the home, a province of activity that is adjudicated by gender roles (Bollas 1987, p. 24). The traditional oedipal story, which involves a boy’s desire for his mother and rivalry with his father, has been expanded in a variety of directions as gender roles have become more flexible, with the understanding that this earlier model depended upon the father as the breadwinner and the mother as full-time homemaker (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 257). More recent psychoanalytic explorations of oedipal conflict and sexual orientation have suggested multiple permutations of this myth, based in part upon rapid changes in gender roles in Western societies (Chodorow 1994, p. 42). Psychogenic explorations have demonstrated the manner in which gender roles are internalized through the “production” of men and women by the kind of parenting that they receive as children (Chodorow 1978, p. 36).

The parents’ practical activities of childcare contribute directly to their child’s image of God. In Freud’s projection theory, the image of God arises out of our experience of an ongoing need for the idealized father of childhood. Freud calls God a “father substitute...a copy of the father as he is seen and experienced in childhood,” before one’s ideal image of one’s father is challenged (Freud 1923/2001, p. 46). D. W. Winnicott shifted the psychic weight from father to mother, suggesting that religious belief was created in the same environment of care that transpired between the mother and child (Winnicott 1953/2005, p. 18). Ana-Marie Rizutto agreed that attachment to one’s parents is reflected in one’s images of God but insisted that Freudian theory must leave

room for religious images to develop as one’s understanding of one’s parents changes (Rizzuto 1979, p. 43). Scholars such as Diane Jonte-Pace and Margaret Hebblethwaite have contributed to the understanding of God that derives from the experience of motherhood, in direct contrast to Freud’s emphasis on the Divine Father (Miller-McLemore 2001, p. 453, 466).

It seems that further work must be done, following feminist thought, which would take into account the impact of shifting gender roles upon the psychological health and religious beliefs of modern persons. It has been demonstrated that mothers are spending more time away from the home, with fathers increasing their active care of children, even if not enough to compensate for the absence of the mother (Lamb 2000, p. 339). If mothers are less involved in childcare and fathers somewhat more involved in both childcare and caring for the home, what might be the psychological and religious consequences for the development of children? Recent research points to the fact that children who are raised in more androgynous environments experience “increased cognitive competence, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, and a more internal locus of control” (Lamb 2000, p. 340).

As guarantors of societal order, traditional religions have frequently reinforced gender roles through appeals to the authority of tradition and scriptures. In such mythology, men have been deemed as spiritual, while women seen as carnal, with bodies that need to be managed and controlled by religious authority (Hawthorne 2007, p. 1255). Women have only begun to be allowed into leadership positions in these religions in the last half of the twentieth century (Hawthorne 2007, p. 1254). In recent decades, “smaller religious bodies with more conservative convictions about the roles of women (such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, some Reformed churches, Anabaptists, and Mormons) [have been] marked by the greatest inequality between men and women” (Christiano 2000, p. 53). At the same time, in Mexico, religion has been an avenue for freedom from abuse and exploitation, as women have found an opportunity in religious communities to develop identities separate from their alcoholic

or abusive husbands (Fortuny Loret De Mola 2000, p. 365). Furthermore, women have frequently been involved from the inception in new religious movements and invited to take quite active roles within them (Hawthorne 2007, p. 1255).

Gender roles are changing in many societies around the world, with women experiencing more freedom and education and men more involved in activities such as childcare and the maintenance of the home. These changes lead to a sense of uncertainty, especially since gender roles reflect deep-seated beliefs about the nature of reality. It has been argued that for men and women, more gender flexibility means an increase in mental health and well-being, as well as a decrease in involvement in fundamentalist religion. At the same time, even in societies where women have increasing rights and responsibilities, they are often faced with “different expectations” than men even in the “same workplace role” (Eagly 2000, p. 448). While fathers are becoming more involved in the care of children, they still often take less responsibility for children than mothers, placing women in the difficult position of juggling responsibilities at work and home (Lamb 2000, p. 339). It is still far from clear how these changes will be adjudicated in a rapidly shifting society.

## See Also

- ▶ [Father](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Shakti](#)

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## Genesis

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*The book of Genesis* is the first book of the Jewish Torah and Christian Scriptures. The word “genesis” is of Greek etymology, meaning origin

or birth, and refers to the first verse of the book: “In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. . .” (Genesis 1:1). *The book of Genesis* has 50 chapters, which are generally divided into two sections: primeval history (Genesis 1–11) and the narrative cycles of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph (Genesis 12–50). Genesis 1–11 contains the well-known accounts of the creation story (Genesis 1–2), the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), the murder of Abel by his brother Cain (Genesis 4), the story of Noah and his ark, the great flood and the divine promise against destruction of every living creature symbolized in the rainbow (Genesis 6–9), and the confusion of languages around the building of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11).

While authorship of the *book of Genesis* was popularly attributed to Moses, biblical scholars recognize it as a redaction from four different sources or traditions. Taken as a whole or a single work of literary unity, the *book of Genesis* encompasses universal themes of creation, the existence of envy and hatred, sin, and strife, violence and evil, wholeness and brokenness, intimacy and isolation, independence and reliance, work and rest, call and response, security and sojourn, conflict and resolution, faith and doubt, hope and despair, the sacrifice of life and the promise of life restored, the destruction and fecundity of generations, and birth and death. The existence of the *book of Genesis* acknowledges the totality of universal experience, the breadth and depth of human reality. It embraces the presence of the Divine who creates and sustains, accompanies and wrestles with, is angered but yet remains constant and faithful to humanity that is formed in godly image and likeness.

The recognition of origins and beginnings in the *book of Genesis*, of creation from chaos, of evil, sin and destruction, and the divine promise of faithfulness, resonates with the deep understanding of human dynamics as shaped and rooted in early personal history and developmental origins. While some therapeutic interventions may focus on the here and now of current thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, the psychoanalytic perspective recognizes the fundamental importance and value of encountering the genesis of the individual and

attending to sources of childhood wounding and root experiences of trauma, noting how these contribute to the complexity of the dynamics of the individual’s life experience. The *book of Genesis* focuses primarily on the story of one lineage, recounting the history of first generations and their descendants. A psychodynamic orientation to treatment regards the historical dimension of self with comprehensiveness and depth, considering family of origin influences on the formation and development of the individual. It also acknowledges the reality of trans-generational and intergenerational transmission of trauma, addictions, psychological wounding, and illness. The *book of Genesis* presents the Divine Being neither absent nor distant but present, at times in the space of silence and attuned rest yet always creatively emotionally and relationally engaged in the journey of the spiritual ancestors. The *book of Genesis* also recognizes the interweaving congruence and evolution of the past, present, and future. Movement and progression in psychoanalytic treatment involves often intense and complex processes of working through transference and countertransference in the safety of the holding environment and consistency of frame of the therapeutic relationship. The space of silent yet attuned presence held by the analyst holds and receives communication that is verbal, at times nonverbal, with unsymbolized expressions often reenacted from unconscious or fragmented relational dynamics of the client’s past. Analytic listening is creative and engaged, relationally sensitive, aware of and wrestling with varied nuances and symbols, dreams, fantasy and imagery, the multiple layers of meaning and yet unformulated experiences, all the while attuned to the being of the client, past unfolding into present, and the limitless play and possibility of the self-becoming in the future.

### See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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## Genetics of Religiosity

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The field of behavior genetics is concerned with identifying genetic and environmental effects, which are sources of individual differences in behaviors and traits. While it may at first appear that religiosity would not be influenced by genes, studies have shown that genetic effects contribute to individual differences in a wide array of traits and behaviors, including social attitudes, personality, vocational interests, IQ, and religiosity. The idea that religiosity is a heritable trait is not a new one. In his 1869 book *Hereditary Genius*, Sir Francis Galton wrote that "... a pious disposition is decidedly hereditary" (Galton 1869/1978, p. 274).

Twin studies, which are one method of observing genetic and environmental effects, take advantage of the fact that monozygotic (MZ) twins share 100 % of their genes, while dizygotic (DZ) twins share on average 50 % of their segregating genes and are no more alike genetically than non-twin siblings. Therefore, differences in MZ twins provide evidence of environmental effects, whereas differences in DZ twins can result from the effects of genes or the environment. A greater similarity in MZs than DZ twins is generally seen as evidence for a genetic contribution to the observed behavior or trait. In twin studies, the variance observed in a trait can be partitioned into the latent variables' additive

genetic effects, common environmental effects, and unique environmental effects. Common environmental effects are those environmental effects that make twins more similar (e.g., a shared upbringing in the same household), while unique environmental effects make twins different from one another (e.g., an experience had by one twin but not the other).

Behavior genetic studies have shown that nearly all psychological traits, including religiosity, are moderately to substantially heritable. A small number of twin studies to date have shown that the degree of observed genetic influence on religiosity is affected by variables such as age, sex, and what aspect of religiosity is being measured. Specifically, at least one twin study has found less genetic influence on religiosity at younger ages and a larger genetic influence on the expression of religiosity in adults. Several twin studies have reported differences in the magnitude of genetic effects on religiosity in females compared to males. Unfortunately, there are not enough twin studies to make definitive conclusions about the relationships between additive genetic effects and age and sex on the expression of religiosity. The degree of genetic influence on the expression of religiosity also appears to be influenced by what specific aspect of religiosity is measured. Studies examining certain single-item measures of religiosity such as religious affiliation (i.e., whether one is Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, etc.) have found little or no evidence for genetic effects. On the other hand, studies that have used multiple items to more broadly measure the religiosity construct have typically found evidence for genetic effects.

These findings must be viewed within the context of the limitations of twin studies. First, very large sample sizes are typically needed to detect common environmental effects, that is, the effect of those experiences that make twins similar, also called the family environment. Most twin studies are underpowered to detect the influence of the family environment. Furthermore, two twins may experience the same environmental event but respond differently to the event. This event would be represented in a twin study as



a unique environmental effect, although it was experienced by both twins in the same environment. Despite these limitations, a small number of studies to date suggest that certain aspects of religiosity are influenced by additive genetic effects.

## See Also

### ► Religiosity

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## Gimbutas, Marija, and the Goddess

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The work of Marija Gimbutas has been crucial to the growth of feminist spirituality, feminist religious scholarship, feminist psychology, and the liberating implications that the existence of a goddess tradition can bring to women everywhere. Whatever the reactions to Gimbutas’ theories, it is important to acknowledge the larger implications of the idea of an embodied Sacred Feminine that preceded patriarchy (Fig. 1). As Charlene Spretnak writes:

Gimbutas’ work, which was illuminated by her sensitivity to spiritual matters and to sculptures of all eras, has radical implications for the history of both Western religion and Western philosophy. In each of those fields, the early belief systems and schools are not seen to be *bridge* traditions. That is, the attention in both the Greek “mystery cults” (demeaned as pre-Christian pagan irrationalism) and the pre-Socratic philosophers to unitive dimensions of being and a cosmological wholeness was an attempt to preserve the remnants of Old European wisdom (Spretnak 1997, pp. 403–404).

Gimbutas’ work helps us entertain the hope that the oppression of patriarchy did not always exist. If a culture did exist in peace approximately 8,000 years ago, prior to the Indo-Europeans, that would certainly be a model of a mythos and psychology for the twenty-first century.



**Gimbutas, Marija, and the Goddess, Fig. 1** Owl, Fig. 300, *Language of the Goddess* illustration materials (boxes 252, 253). Marija Gimbutas collection, copyright OPUS archives and research center, Santa Barbara, CA

From her excavations in 1973 and 1974, she found temples and sculptures that began to influence her views that the sculptures represented goddesses. She and her associates discovered certain bird head sculptures in the temples and sculptures of pregnant females in the courtyards. There were neither weapons in the graves nor fortifications in the villages. From this, she concluded that this was psychologically and ethically a very different culture from that of the later Indo-Europeans: it was peaceful.

Citing evidence from her excavation of cemeteries, settlements, the historical records of the continuance of a matrilineal system, from portrayals in frescoes and from folklore and similar evidence in the Minoan culture of Crete, Gimbutas concluded that Old Europe was a matrilineal society with a female deity. “Motherhood determined the social structure and religion because religion always reflects social structure. Old Europe was a matrilineal society where the queen was on the top and her brother next to her” (Gimbutas 1990).

In *The Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*, Gimbutas (1974) writes:

The Fertility goddess or Mother Goddess is a more complex image than most people think. She was not only the Mother Goddess who commands fertility, or the Lady of the Beasts who governs the fecundity of animals and all wild nature, or the frightening Mother Terrible, but a composite image with traits accumulated from both the pre-agricultural and agricultural eras. During the latter she became essentially a Goddess of Regeneration, i.e., a Moon Goddess, a product of a sedentary, matrilineal community, encompassing the archetypal unity and multiplicity of feminine nature. She was giver of life and all she promotes fertility, and at the same time she was the wielder of the destructive powers of nature. The feminine nature, like the moon is light as well as dark (p. 152).

The ancients knew and accepted this cycle of death and rebirth central to Goddess spirituality through their physical observation of nature and their seasonal observations of death and regeneration. For example, the Greeks celebrated this in ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries honoring the return of Persephone each year bearing a single ear of wheat, symbolically reassuring the people that life endures beyond death. At Eleusis, Kore came in answer to the call. She rose from the dead. She appeared. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, the people participated in making the gods come alive and partaking of their gifts (Downing 2010, p. 27). At this time in the twenty-first century, we are also asking Kore, as symbol of the sacred feminine, not only to ascend from the underworld and bring us a symbol of civilization but also to be present for us in the moment of our death, to give it meaning and comfort us.

Through her archeological discoveries and deciphering of the artifacts, Gimbutas reimagined what might have been a culture that was not afraid of death, but instead honored the divine powers that oversaw death and regeneration. Death was seen as just a transition immediately followed by regeneration. Through the archeological work of Gimbutas, as well as the interpretation of the myth of the Greek Demeter and Persephone by Downing, we are drawn to the Eleusinian Mysteries to remind us that the psychology and spirituality of the sacred feminine continue through the centuries to bring back the life force.

As Marija Gimbutas has said in many interviews, it was her “fate to do this work” because of her family background and the pagan heritage of her country (Gimbutas 1990). She grew up in Lithuania, the last country in Europe to be Christianized – it did not take root until the sixteenth century – and as a child she experienced respect for Mother Earth. Each day she saw people kiss the earth in the morning and say prayers in the evening. She experienced the sacredness of wells, streams, water animals, and trees, all of which were considered to have healing power. Hers was an embodied psychology and spirituality from her earliest memory.

Gimbutas was raised in an atmosphere in which family spirits and the spirits that infused folk art were respected. Her family collected thousands of folk songs and examples of folk art. She studied Indo-Europeans at Harvard University as a visiting scholar and wrote a book on the Bronze Age, but the militaristic patriarchal psychology of the era disturbed her. “I devoted at least 10 years of my career studying Indo-European war gods and weapons and that was too much for me” (Gimbutas 1990). Her life changed when she moved to California and taught at UCLA. This was the beginning of her exploration of the culture that preceded the Indo-Europeans.

Between 1968 and 1980, Gimbutas directed four excavations of Neolithic cultures (7000 BCE–2000 BCE) in southeast Europe in Sitagroi, Greek Macedonia; Anza, Macedonia; Thessaly, Greece; and Manfredonia, Italy. She found thousands of Neolithic artifacts throughout eastern Europe that spoke of an ancient aesthetic different from the material culture of the Bronze Age. Gimbutas determined a “culture existed that was opposite of all that was known to be Indo-European and this led me to coin a new term ‘Old Europe’ in 1968” (Marler 1997, p. 15).

In 1979 Gimbutas organized the first interdisciplinary conference in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, to stimulate new research on the radical shift of economic, religious, and social structures that took place between the fifth and third millennia BCE. She became convinced that the art of Old Europe reflected a sophisticated psychological and religious symbolism (Marler 1997, p. 16).

She developed an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry she called “archeomythology,” a union of archeology and mythology. She stated, “They cannot be separated because this helps us reconstruct the spirituality of our ancestors” (Gimbutas 1990). She wrote, “interdisciplinary research requires the scholar to view a problem with an entirely different mental focus, which means learning to assemble the data with a goal of seeing all details at once, in situ” (Marler 1997, p. 21). Her work drew from mythology, linguistics, ethnology, folklore, comparative religion, and historical documents.

Her work on the Bronze Age was accepted by archeologists because it had nothing to do with religion or symbolism, but they did not accept her deciphering of a goddess religion because they rejected the notion that a religion could be extrapolated from the artifacts. Yet, she felt it was important to move beyond the limits of scientific materialism alone and use all possible sources to understand the ancestors (Gimbutas 1990).

In an address in 1992 at Interface in Sudbury, Massachusetts, Gimbutas said, “If you say anything about the ritual side of the culture they will say you are cracked. You cannot say anything about the spiritual side of the culture. I don’t care if I will be accepted or not accepted. I care only for the truth. What is the sense of being a scholar if you have to be afraid of some other forces?” (Gimbutas 1992).

Gimbutas’ work in both *The Language of the Goddess* and *The Civilization of the Goddess* has been criticized by archeologists because of her insistence on her interpretation of the figurines as objective evidence of the existence of a goddess religion and on her “lack of precision, and uncorroborated speculations, particularly in view of her earlier esteemed scholarly work” (Long 1996, p. 16). In a 1993 review, in *American Anthropologist*, Ruth Tringham criticized her for stating there is unequivocal evidence to support her psychological interpretation of Goddess symbology and for denying the validity of alternative interpretations. She writes:

Feminist archeological research is based on a celebration of the ambiguity of the archeological record and a plurality of its interpretation, and the subjectivity of the pre-histories that are constructed

is a part of its discourse. Gimbutas, however, has mystified the process of interpretation and has presented her own conclusions as objective fact (Tringham 1993, p. 197).

On the other hand, Tringham and her colleague, Margaret Conkey, feel that Gimbutas' work reviving goddess religions provides important new perspectives on archeological concerns and challenges the androcentric structure of archeology viewed by many of its professionals. They write:

We have come to see that our enquiry is just as much about key issues in contemporary archeological interpretation as seen through the topic of the Goddess as it is about how the Goddess movement uses archeology (Conkey and Tringham 2000).

Even though they take issue with many of Gimbutas' assertions, they find the paradigm shift to which she contributed to be valid and forceful (p. 200). Feminist archeologist Lynn Meskell questions Gimbutas' use of an archeological past – convinced that there was an egalitarian culture prior to the Indo-Europeans – to bring about social, psychological, and political change in the twentieth century. But she gives credence to Gimbutas' work as a form of “mythopoetics whereby a cultural identity is constructed or reconstructed” (Long 1996, p. 16). This is the psychological part of Gimbutas' hermeneutic – mythopoetic images are highly psychological – as Jung and Jungians have shown repeatedly.

If we believe, as Jung did, that the whole history of the human race is in some ways always alive in the psyche, we can reclaim images of the Sacred Feminine. The Sacred Feminine, or the Mother Goddess, is an eternal archetype in the human psyche. She has shown herself to us from the earliest times of our civilization in cave drawings and primitive sculpture, in the great mythologies, and she appears in many guises in our present cultures. She is part of the very fabric of our being. Whether or not an individual grew up in a tradition that honored an image of the sacred feminine, she is part of the collective unconscious accessible to everyone. Jung assured us that nothing which is part of the psyche is ever lost.

It took Gimbutas 30 years of research and deciphering to understand the symbology in

excavated places; her background in myth and folklore helped her see the symbology in the sites and figurines she excavated. In *From the Realm of the Ancestors*, Joan Marler (1997) writes, “Joseph Campbell said that if her work had been available earlier he would have written things differently. He neglected goddesses because there was no way to find out more about them” (p. 19).

Gimbutas knew that to reconstruct the social structure of a culture, researchers had to look at cemeteries and study burial rituals to discern how people were buried and with what kind of gifts. In the tombs she excavated there was no hierarchy of males over females; the burial sites showed an equalitarian society. From this, she extrapolated that men and women lived in harmony with each other without one having power over the other. She revolutionized the field by demonstrating that Neolithic settlements of Europe prior to Indo-European influence (around 4400 BCE in eastern Europe) were radically different than later societies. It is Charlene Spretnak's understanding that this is now accepted by most archeologists (Spretnak 1997, pp. 401, 2011).

Villages from 7000 BCE had workshops and a temple proper. In the temple the people prepared pottery for rituals. Gimbutas found in many female graves “cult objects filled with red ochre buried next to houses. These houses were the core houses of the village where the main family lived” (Gimbutas 1992). She found “middle aged women and girls richly equipped with beads, figurines and a model of the temple.” She speculated that these girls might have been in the line of priestess showing a matrilineal system. In contrast, no cult objects were found in men's graves. Men's graves were “equipped with craft tools, axes, hoes, trade objects, obsidian for knives, some stone or flint. Clearly men were in trade, which was very important” (Gimbutas 1992). This gender burial difference must have shown the esteem and honor afforded to the feminine.

Finding thousands of female figurines, female-honoring ritual artifacts, and temple models, Gimbutas concluded that women were highly respected in the cultures of Old Europe. The feminine was revered psychologically and spiritually

as the giver and nurturer of life. Gimbutas speculated that the female figurines were used in ritual: some standing on altars waiting for a ritual to begin and others found around bread ovens. “In northern Greece in Thessaly they had rituals before the baking of bread and during the baking of bread. Women made small figurines at the same time they were making the bread; bread was sacred” (Gimbutas 1992).

Gimbutas found 100 pregnant goddess figures in Achilleion in an excavated area little more than 100 m<sup>2</sup> and more than 200 clay figures in northern Greece. “This site revealed that certain types of female figurines (bird goddess, snake goddess, nurse) were temple or house gods. Others, such as the pregnant goddess, were worshipped in the courtyard at specially prepared platforms with offering pits near bread ovens. These pits were for sacrifices and we found organic remains of plants or grains that were sacrificed. From the 200 figurines found at Achilleion, only two fragmented ones represented a male god, seated on a stool with hands on his knees” (Tringham 1993, p. 22). Gimbutas found a ratio of 98 % female goddess figurines to male gods.

Gimbutas did not use the term “matriarchy” but rather “matrilineality” because unlike women in patriarchy, men were not suppressed. Men were very important in society in trade, architecture, shipbuilding, and crafts. There was no marriage; the mother had a consort but no husband. From the Sumerian and Egyptian myths that were subsequent to the society of Old Europe, we know that this practice existed in many cultures. Until men discovered their biological contribution to the fertilization of new life, women were free to propagate, and their ability to give birth was viewed as sacred.

Gimbutas became convinced that the art of Old Europe reflected a sophisticated religious symbolism, and she categorized the energies of the goddess in terms of life-giving, death-taking, and regeneration. She identified life-giving goddesses such as the bird goddess, snake goddess, and the bull; death-taking goddesses such as the vulture and owl and symbols such as the tomb/womb; and goddesses of transformation such as the egg and the frog. Gimbutas’ find of the

thousands of archaic goddess figurines calls for an important hermeneutic shift, because it has serious psychological implications for the interpretations of archaic history and human nature: women have had esteemed roles in history that refute long-distorted patriarchal arguments against female equality with men.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dark Mother](#)
- ▶ [Earth Goddess](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Feminism](#)
- ▶ [Matriarchy](#)
- ▶ [Moon and Moon Goddesses](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)

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## Girard, René

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The wide-ranging work of René Girard (1923–) has led to a theory of culture, often called the mimetic theory, that understands the development of religion through the implications of two ideas about human psychology and behavior: *mimetic desire* and *the scapegoat mechanism*. The two are related through the story they tell about the origins of violence and its significance in the formation of society, including religious institutions.

### Mimetic Theory

Girard holds that human desire is fundamentally imitative, or, to use the term he prefers because it suggests the lack of conscious intention to imitate, mimetic. Many, he notes, have treated the importance of imitation in human development, but few

have included desire as imitative, and modern individualism, which links desire closely to self-hood, is especially allergic to this claim. Yet beyond the most physiological appetites, and even shaping the way one chooses to satisfy those, desire is formed through imitating the desire of others. Advertisers know that showing an attractive model of desire for an object is more powerful than showing the object itself. In a world of finitude and scarcity, however, mimetic desire leads to conflict and rivalry. The fundamental means for managing the violence that ever threatens to erupt is the scapegoat mechanism.

Girard imagines a heuristic primal scene in which mimetic desire pits all the members of a community against each other. Suddenly, triggered by an essentially random mark that differentiates one member of the community from the rest, the crowd's violent energy is mimetically directed against that one, who is expelled and collectively murdered, as by stoning. In the peaceful but temporary unanimity that results, the community misremembers the victim as a savior who delivered the community from a mysterious crisis, thus concealing memory of the murder beneath the seeds of mythology. Sacrificial rituals emerge in order to repeat the scapegoat mechanism in more controlled ways in order to keep violence in channels. Prohibitions are made in order to deflect desire from the objects most prone to rivalry. Thus, management of mimetic violence through scapegoating accounts for the most basic elements of religion. Legal systems, judicial rituals, and the entire universe of symbolic representation can also be seen to a large extent as outgrowths of concealed and forgotten scapegoating.

### Career and Works

After receiving a degree in medieval history and paleography from the Ecole des Chartes, Girard earned a Ph.D. in history at Indiana University in Bloomington in 1950. It was through teaching French literature, however, that he discovered *mimetic desire*. In his first book, *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Girard 1961/1965), he argues that the great novels of



Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky, and Proust portray the many permutations that mimetic or mediated desire leads to in triangular relationships of desiring subject, model of desire, and desired object. He makes a basic distinction according to the relative status of subject and model. If they are of different status or operate in different domains, he calls their relationship *external mediation*. In this case, imitation does not lead to conflict because the model and object are out of the subject's reach and the model is an insurmountable obstacle: Don Quixote can imitate Amadis of Gaul without conflict because Amadis is fictional, and Sancho Panza's imitation of Quixote is also external because they are of different social classes. When subject and model are similar in status, Girard calls their mimetic relationship *internal mediation*. Then imitation leads to conflict and rivalry (Girard 1965, pp. 1–10). Subject and model tend to become doubles of each other: "Eventually, the subject will become the model of his model, just as the imitator will become the imitator of his imitator. One is always moving towards more symmetry, and thus always toward more conflict, for symmetry cannot but produce *doubles*, as I call them at this moment of intense rivalry" (Girard 2007, p. 57). Intense rivalry becomes contagious as others find themselves attracted to the same object of desire. Many literary works merely portray what Girard calls the romantic lie that desires are spontaneous, but the great literary works reflect a conversion on the part of their authors to the insight that desire is mimetic. Girard has returned throughout his career to literary works that he argues disclose the mimetic theory, above all the works of Shakespeare (Girard 1991).

The implications of the mimetic theory for religion begin to emerge in *Violence and the Sacred* (Girard 1977). There Girard looks at evidence of sacrificial ritual and myth and explains their origin through a crisis of mimetic violence resolved through *the scapegoat mechanism*. He finds mythological narratives to have the primary function of both concealing and justifying violence toward scapegoats. At the same time, he explores Greek tragedy as a partial bringing to light of the reality of human violence behind

the forms of religion. The myth of Oedipus, for instance, conceals the scapegoating of a victim marked as different by his limp behind a story of persecution justified by the guilt of patricide and incest. The Oedipus tragedies of Sophocles, while maintaining the protagonist's guilt, also begin to make visible the structural symmetries between the communal crises which demand a scapegoat and the familial crises of which Oedipus is accused. Similarly, Euripides' *The Bacchae* shows Dionysus to be the symbol of successful collective violence, but dramatizes this myth coming under suspicion, such that violence, when it is no longer accepted as transcendent, breaks out of its channels and threatens to engulf the community (Girard 1977, pp. 68–142).

Girard's interpretation of Oedipus leads him also to a reappropriation of some of Freud's theories as specific instances of more general patterns. The Oedipus complex is not unique but rather a basic example of mimetic rivalry, and patricide is an instance of scapegoating (Girard 1977, pp. 169–192, 208–209).

In his pivotal *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (Girard 1987a), made more accessible by its interview format, Girard summarizes and extends his previous work into a full theory of human origins, including religion, before offering a reading of the Judeo-Christian scriptures as an unveiling of the mimetic mechanisms behind mythology. While biblical stories share much in common with other myths, they are decisively distinguished by telling these stories from the perspective of innocent victims rather than their persecutors. Cain and Abel is a typical story of founding violence, like that of Romulus and Remus, yet the victim's blood, rather than being condemned as guilty or concealed by divinization, cries out from the ground (Girard 1987a, pp. 144–149). The story of Joseph, while it has many similarities to that of Oedipus, shows him to be the innocent victim of his brothers and again of Potiphar's wife, and his story ends with staging a potential scapegoating of Benjamin in order instead to reconcile with his brothers (Girard 1987a, pp. 149–154, 2004, pp. 107–113). The Ten Commandments, which

resemble other religious prohibitions, end with one that forbids desire for a neighbor's possessions and thus implies the mimetic origins of the violence proscribed in those that come before (Girard 2001, pp. 7–18). Above all, in what he calls this anthropological rather than theological interpretation of the Bible, the Gospels provide fullest possible exposure of the dynamics of mimetic desire and scapegoating. Yet, he argues, historical Christianity has often misunderstood this part of its revelation, in particular by reading the atonement as a sacrifice needed to appease the wrath of God (Girard 1987a, pp. 158–262).

Much of Girard's later work has added to his anthropological interpretation of the Bible in contrast to myth. He reads the book of Job as primarily a rehabilitation of a potential scapegoat, yet framed by a mythologizing preface about Satan (Girard 1987b). In *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, he interprets Christ's discussions of Satan and miracles of casting out demons as symbolic of intense mimetic rivalry and victimage and explicates the closely related language of scandal or stumbling block as identifying how a model of desire becomes an obstacle and a focus of both fascination and hatred (Girard 2001, pp. 32–46). In Girard's reading of the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 8), to take another example, Jesus writes in the dust in order to avoid the eye contact that would allow her accusers to project onto him a mirror of their own aggression, brings to recognition the problem of the first stone that could become the model of those that would mimetically follow, and begins instead a contagion of nonviolence (Girard 2001, pp. 54–58). In *The Scapegoat*, Girard introduces the idea of *stereotypes of persecution* used to justify collective violence, such as that against the Jews in the late Middle Ages, which he argues are transmitted by myths and provide a key to demystifying them under the guidance of the biblical revelation (Girard 1986). In *Sacrifice*, he finds traces of an unveiling of the mimetic origins of sacrificial ritual also in the Hindu Vedas (Girard 2011).

After teaching at various universities in the United States, Girard finished his career at Stanford University, where he retired in 1995.

He was elected to the French Academy, the highest honor for French intellectuals, in 2005.

## Reception and Influence

While Girard's reception among biblical scholars and theologians has been controversial, it is perhaps here that he has gained the most influence, at least in the English-speaking world. A practicing Roman Catholic, Girard has refrained from writing as a theologian and left open questions about the degree to which his anthropological interpretations of the Bible are compatible with theological interpretations (Kirwan 2009). He is acknowledged as a source for much recent work on atonement theology in particular (e.g., Heim 2006). The most prolific and widely read theologian working under Girard's direct influence is James Alison (<http://www.jamesalison.co.uk/>).

While Girard's work depends primarily on the interpretation of texts, he has invited collaboration with empirical science and claims scientific reliability for his theory. Jean-Michel Oughourlian, one of his interlocutors in *Things Hidden*, has extended the mimetic theory to major issues in psychotherapy (Oughourlian 1991) and applied it to marital counseling by way of a mimetic reading of the opening chapters of Genesis (Oughourlian 2010). The discovery of mirror neurons, which establishes a physiological basis for mimetic desire, has stimulated attempts to combine mimetic theory with the results of psychological and sociological studies of imitation (Garrels 2011).

An international organization for those interested in pursuing the implications of his work both in academia and beyond, the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, was founded in 1990, and a foundation dedicated to furthering the mimetic theory, *Imitatio*, in 2007.

## See Also

- ▶ Dionysos
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Oedipus Myth

- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Scapegoat](#)
- ▶ [Violence and Religion](#)

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## Glossolalia

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Glossolalia is derived from two New Testament Greek words: *glossai* meaning “tongues” or “languages” and *lalien*, “to speak.” Glossolalia or speaking in tongues has most often been identified with Pentecostal and Charismatic faith traditions. Glossolalia is usually but not exclusively a religious phenomenon. Glossolalia consists of words and utterances made by an individual that resembles a language unknown to the person speaking. Individuals practice glossolalia in private or public worship settings in which the speaker may also be in an excited psychological state or may enter into a blissful and peaceful meditative or prayerlike stance. Groups within Pentecostal and Charismatic movements agree that glossolalia is a manifestation or gift of the Holy Spirit, but disagree as to whether or not it is the certifying initial evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Pentecostals and Charismatics believe that through the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit, they are speaking a spontaneous and unpremeditated heavenly language praising God or giving a prophetic word. They teach that glossolalia or speaking in tongues is a distinctive gift as a result of the baptism in the Holy Spirit. What they do not agreed upon is whether glossolalia is the initial evidence proving baptism in the Holy Spirit or if it is a distinctive and desirable gift but that other manifestations may indicate that a person has been baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Glossolalia and the doctrine of the baptism in the Holy Spirit are based on events occurring on Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:1–4. This event was predicted by Jesus to the assembled men and women in the Upper Room (Luke 24:49) and again just before he ascended into heaven (Acts 1:4–5 and Acts 1:8). When the day of Pentecost came, the disciples were meeting together when the foretold event occurred. The author of Acts states that “Suddenly a sound like the blowing of

a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” (Acts 2:2–4).

Glossolalia and the charismata, spiritual gifts, of the Holy Spirit were paramount in the birth and growth of the fledgling church during the first and second centuries. By the time of Origen in the third century and Augustine in the late fourth and fifth, it is clear that church leaders considered the charismata as attributes only for the early church. Augustine established the belief held by many today that the charismata, including glossolalia, ended with the deaths of the original apostles.

Notwithstanding Augustine’s belief, there is evidence of the continuation of glossolalia and the charismata of the Holy Spirit throughout the more than 2000 years of Christian Church history. However, the start of the modern Pentecostal movement is generally credited to Charles Fox Parham and the students of Bethel Bible College in Topeka, Kansas, in the early 1900s. From Topeka across the United States including the Azusa Street revival held by William Seymour, a new Pentecostal revival had begun.

The most significant tenet of faith derived from the revival at Topeka and reaffirmed at Azusa was the verbalization that glossolalia or speaking in tongues was the biblical initial evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. This monumental doctrine offered an objective criterion for the seeker of the baptism in the Holy Spirit and others to determine whether that event had occurred or not. This doctrine shaped the modern Pentecostal movement as it spread across denominational lines, establishing new denominations and nondenominational faith groups until it is now the largest and fastest growing Christian religious movement worldwide.

## Commentary

Glossolalia is not limited to Christianity or to religion. Ecstatic utterances similar to those used in the

first century church at Corinth were also found at the oracle of Delphi, a shrine of the Greek god Apollo. Some consider the chants of voodoo witch doctors, African animists, and the Tibetan Buddhist monks; the prayers of Hindu holy men; and the basic primeval sounds produced by others in their religious setting as glossolalia. Many of these worshipers make sounds and utterances that approximate purported languages found in the glossolalia of Pentecostal and Charismatic worship services. The difference is source and content. Pentecostals and Charismatics believe that any glossolalia not originating from the Holy Spirit and not worshiping God and Jesus is a demonic counterfeit.

Glossolalia can occur in some known psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive psychosis or as the consequence of neurological disorders. Earlier psychological studies viewed glossolalia as a by-product of an unhealthy mind or a personality disorder. Some researchers viewed glossolalia as hysteria, mass hypnosis, regression, an altered state of consciousness, or a learned behavior. Recent psychological studies have successfully challenged these views and have shown that glossolalia is a legitimate religious activity and not psychopathological. Generally, Pentecostals who speak in tongues have a healthy and normal personality, and speaking in tongues may be conducive to good physical as well as mental health. Some practitioners claim that glossolalia may relieve psychopathology. However, a major study of religious glossolalia concluded that there is no consistent evidence supporting curative effects.

Linguists in recent years have made studies of glossolalia with some claiming that Pentecostal glossolalias are languages that can be understood by anyone who knows the language. Other linguists maintain that the sounds and utterances of glossolalia are actually unrelated syllables of the speakers’ own known language and are not a true language. Early Pentecostals believed that glossolalia was given to the church for the purpose of world evangelism. Many of them left for foreign mission fields fully expecting the Holy Spirit supernaturally to give them the language of the native peoples. This initial

expectation and the resulting experience was a bitter disappointment to aspiring missionaries who did not want to invest years in language study. Most Pentecostals have come to the realization that it is not God's divine purpose to bestow languages for missionary work and have had to reevaluate the biblical understanding of glossolalia. Glossolalia is not a human language and cannot be interpreted or studied as a human language. Glossolalia is a language of faith. The person speaking in tongues is speaking in an unknown language from the soul or spirit directly to God.

### See Also

- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Holy Grail](#)
- ▶ [New Testament](#)
- ▶ [Possession](#)
- ▶ [Possession, Exorcism, and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Spirit Writing](#)
- ▶ [Violence and Religion](#)

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## Gnosticism

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### Origin of Gnosticism

The word “Gnosticism” derives from the word *gnosis*, the Greek word for knowledge. Gnosticism has its roots in pre-Christian Jewish and Hellenistic pagan thought that emerged around the Mediterranean in the first centuries CE. Christian Gnosticism is based on the belief in secret knowledge as a means to salvation, not the death and resurrection of Jesus. This belief made Christian Gnostics heretical in the eyes of the early church.

When the Gnostics spoke of knowledge, it was specifically the knowledge of God to which they were referring. They refer not to an objective knowledge of God, but a profoundly subjective knowledge in which the knower is radically transformed both by God and by the very experience of knowing. German philosopher Hans Jonas (1903–1993) wrote one of the first texts on Gnosticism, *The Gnostic Religion* (1958), written before he had access to the Nag Hammadi scrolls. He writes:

“Knowledge” is not just theoretical information about certain things, but is itself, a modification of the human condition, charged with performing a function in the bringing about of salvation. . . the ultimate “object” of gnosis is God: its event in the soul transforms the knower himself by making him a partaker in the divine existence. Thus in the more radical systems like Valentinian the “knowledge” is not only an instrument of salvation but itself the very form in which is the goal of salvation, i.e., ultimate perfection, is possessed (Jonas 2001, p. 35).



## Theology of Gnosticism

The main theological tenet of Gnostic thought is the radical separation of the all-good, all-light transcendent God from the dark, evil world. The transcendent God did not create the world, nor intervene in it. The cosmos was instead made and governed by rulers or Archons who ruled humans, body and soul, entrapping them in natural passions so that they would never escape their power by returning to the Transcendent God. Archons were often named by the Hebrew names for God: Iao, Sabaoth, Adonai, Elohim, El Shaddai. The name of their leader was the Demiurge, who was “often painted in the distorted features of the Old Testament God.” The name for the tyrannical world-rule is *heimarmene* (Jonas 2001, pp. 44–45).

Such a theology could not help but lead to a radical dualism. Though the Archons ruled humans, body and soul, making them unconscious of their true nature, there was the chance that humans could be enlivened through a *pneuma* or spark from the Transcendent God. The spark could not leave the Transcendent God directly because this God does not intervene in human life, but the Gnostics believed there was a messenger able to leave the Transcendent and plant a spark in the human soul. This is a Being of knowledge and light, in existence even before the beginning of creation that is able to enter the world as a messenger, outwit the Archons, and bring knowledge to slumbering humanity. We see references to this concept in the personification of “Sophia” (Proverbs 3:13–20) in the Hebrew Scriptures, the hymn of “The Word” in the prolog to the Gospel of John (John 1:1–18), and, of course, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. When humanity receives this knowledge, then they are able at death to escape the powers of the Archons and to rise to the Transcendent God (Jonas 2001, p. 44).

As Gnosticism was a theology of emphasizing how the evil gods governing this world separate humans from their true home with the Transcendent God, much of Gnostic literature was concerned with the question of how humans got separated from the Transcendent God in the first place. One of the best-known pieces of Gnostic

literature is the *Hymn of the Pearl* which describes the journey of the soul as a royal child’s journey from heaven to retrieve a pearl in the bottom of the sea. The pearl is round and thus whole, luminous and created by layering over an irritant, thus the perfect symbol of the self. When the child retrieves the pearl, he returns to his true home in the sky where he is lauded and given his rightful place.

## The Gospel of Thomas

For centuries Gnostic literature was known mostly through early Christian polemics against it, but in 1945, 12 jars containing scrolls were found in a cave in Egypt. These texts have come to be called the *Nag Hammadi Library*, written about 350–400 CE and probably hidden in the cave at a time of persecution. The library contains a number of theological texts, alternative gospels, and poetry such as “Thunder Perfect Mind.” The best-known writing from the Library is the Gospel of Thomas, a gospel purportedly written by Jesus’ twin brother. There is some debate if this is actually a Gnostic text, because it contains no cosmology, which dominates many Gnostic writing, but the Gospel of Thomas does proclaim salvation by knowledge and never mentions the passion and death of Jesus. The gospel includes much material found in the synoptic gospels, plus additional material, often about knowledge. For example: #5 “Jesus said, Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you. For there is nothing hidden that will not be revealed.” Probably the best-known passage from the gospel: #70 “Jesus said, ‘If you bring forth what is within you, what you have will save you. If you do not have what is within you, what you do not have within you [will] kill you’” (Robinson 1990).

## Gnosticism and Psychotherapy

Gnosticism is no longer an active religion, but the search for the secret knowledge that will transform informs studies in philosophy, theology,



and psychology. Gnosticism holds in common with psychotherapy the belief that meaning is internal, that words of themselves can alter the human condition, and that secret knowledge, be it spiritual or psychoanalytic, transforms. Both Gnosticism and psychotherapy undertake the inner journey to find the self.

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ God
- ▶ Self

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## Gnosticism and Psychoanalysis

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## Introduction

Gnosticism and psychoanalysis, more so than many within this Encyclopedia, requires a multifarious entry. Attention must be given to

the ancient sources of modern terminology, the rise of psychoanalytic – particularly Jungian – interpretations of Gnostic texts by psychoanalysts, the adoption of psychological approaches by scholars of Gnosticism themselves, and the blending of psychoanalytic approaches to gnosis and Gnostic religion in contemporary forms of Gnosticism itself.

## Gnosis, Gnostikoi, and Gnosticism

In ancient Greek, *gnosis* referred to a form of knowing akin to a personal acquaintance or relationship in contradistinction to the more common term for knowledge of facts, *episteme* (Filoramo 1993; Liddell and Scott 1889; Pearson 2007). Gnosis, and its opposition to *pistis*, faith, was a dominant theme in the religious discourses of the first centuries CE, with *gnosis* of divine secrets seen as a possession of those with special religious knowledge – the Gnostics, or *gnostikoi* in the Greek. These *gnostikoi* claimed that the revelation of gnosis was a personally transformative experience, most often through the transcendence of materiality (*hyle*) and the soul (*psyche*) to the realm of pure spirit (*pneuma*) (Culianu 1983). As such, adoption of doctrines of gnosis within the psychological realm carries a significant linguistic and conceptual disconnect despite the notable resonances between soteriology and therapeutic healing.

Although no ancient linguistic counterparts exist for the neologism Gnosticism, a term first used by Henry More in the context of interdenominational polemics in the seventeenth century, at the Congress on the Origins of Gnosticism Messina in 1966, the term was adopted to represent a set of movements within the Ancient Near East in the second and third centuries CE that claimed access to saving gnosis (King 2003; Rudolph 1977). This umbrella term now refers primarily to movements such as the Naassenes, Ophites, Simonians, Valentinians, Sethians, Carpocratians, Manichaeans, and Mandaeans, as well as singular figures such as Basilides of Alexandria or Simon Magus. Both the Manichaeans, who eventually dispersed as far as China and survived through

the seventeenth century, and the Mandaeans, who still exist today in both Iraq and diaspora factions in the United States, remained in existence long after Late Antiquity. Moreover, a number of Gnostic churches have arisen in the last two centuries that claim an unbroken succession going back to these original Gnostics or a doctrine of saving gnosis akin to them (Hoeller 2002; Puma 2011; Smith 1995).

### Carl Jung and Gnosticism

Carl Jung is the first psychologist to conduct a significant study of the ancient Gnostic literature, and his influential interpretations have guided most later psychoanalytic and religious approaches to Gnosticism. Although there are no references to Gnostic literature in *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, his first foray into a psychoanalytic interpretation of religion and mythology published by 1912, he did begin to carefully read the Gnostics available in Patristic sources by 1915 (Jung 2009). His paranormally inspired *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*, or “Seven Sermons” given pseudepigraphically by Basilides of Alexandria, as well as sections of the *Liber Secundus* of the recently published *Red Book*, exhibits this initial acquaintance with these Gnostic writings. Additionally, secondary literature by early scholars of Gnosticism such as Albrecht Dieterich, Charles King, and G. R. S. Meade was available in his personal library at this time (Jung 2009; Noll 1994).

It is not until significantly later in his life that Jung would conduct a formal, systematic reading of Gnostic texts. In *Aion*, specifically “Gnostic Symbols of the Self,” Jung offers an interpretation of various Gnostic writings from the Patristics, particularly the “Naassene sermon” (Jung 1951/1978). Jung interprets the immaterial Godhead as the unconscious in its primordial form, while various key symbols of the Gnostic cosmology – Christ, the Son, Primordial Man, Anthropos, and God – all represent his psychological doctrine of the Self. Conversely, the Demiurge, as well as the matter which he creates and presides over, comes to represent the creation

of the ego followed by the latter’s ignorance of the collective unconscious. The common appearance of the higher God to the Demiurge, then, comes to represent the call of the ego to reengagement with the unconscious contents in order to form the Self (Jung 1951/1978). Elsewhere, Gnostic tales of the Godhead’s retrieval of the divine sparks in matter are read as the ego’s engagement with the collective unconscious towards individuation (Jung 1955, 1968). Jung also read the exile of the spirit in matter as a prefiguration of the psychoanalytic doctrine of projection (Jung 1968).

Yet Jung did not think that the Gnostics of old had a doctrine of the unconscious or archetypes as they exist in his psychology, but rather argued that these writings projected the individuation process in terms of a drama of redemption as enacted with reified metaphysical concepts (Jung 1971). As such, Jung supposed that these Gnostics had practiced something similar to his own practice of active imagination that had furnished the visionary narratives he captured in *The Red Book* (Jung 1968, 2009). Much as he did with alchemy, Jung approached the Gnostic writings as a valuable comparative material in proving and amplifying his doctrine of the collective unconscious (Jung 1951/1978, 1963b).

### Psychologists Interpreting Gnostic Texts

Most psychological approaches to Gnostic texts have followed the Jungian hermeneutic outlined above. After the translation and publication of the Nag Hammadi Library, major figures in the Jungian community such as Marie-Louise von Franz, Murray Stein, and June Singer each published such interpretations of texts Jung would not have had access to, such as the *Apocryphon of John*. Singer’s work expanded the Jungian hermeneutic in offering feminist and postmodern psychoanalytic readings of *The Exegesis on the Soul* and *The Gospel of Philip*, although her works were generally written less for academic than popular audiences (Singer 1990, 1992).

Robert Segal has pointed to the shortcomings of this hermeneutic in approaching Gnostic texts.

Segal has specifically questioned how the equation of individuation and Gnostic soteriology can be accurate when the primary motivation behind many of these myths is to disengage from materiality and return to the Pleroma. Read in Jungian terms, this regression of the ego to the unconscious would be seen as inflation. He has suggested that Jung's misreading of Gnostic texts could perhaps be attributable to Jung's tendency to read these texts as related both historically and motivationally to alchemical texts, where readings suggestive of unconscious and conscious integration have better support (Segal 1992, 1995).

### Scholars of Gnosticism Using Psychological Hermeneutic

Jung's close associate Gilles Quispel was one of the foremost scholars of Gnosticism in the twentieth century. Having met at the famed Eranos conferences after Quispel sent Jung his study of the second-century Alexandrian Gnostic Valentinus, Quispel eventually enlisted Jung in 1953 to help purchase Codex I (later known as the "Jung Codex") of the Nag Hammadi Library in order to ensure that the other 12 codices would be released for serious study by the Egyptian government (Quispel 1978). Throughout his career, Quispel would write appreciatively of the perspicacity of the Jungian hermeneutic in approaching Gnostic texts, albeit with the important caveat that the reading not be seen as psychologically reductionistic (Quispel 1972). Insofar as Jungian psychology is one of the personal, transformative experiences within the psyche – whatever ontological ground that it may point to – Quispel sees it as capable of elucidating Basilidean and Valentinian gnosis, as belonging with a tradition of western gnosis that comprises much of what later fell under the umbrella of western esotericism (Quispel 1949, 1968, 1972, 1978).

Jungian readings fell out of fashion within the scholarly community by the 1980s. Since then, psychological approaches to the Gnostic texts have been performed through various appropriations of cognitive psychology. Ioan Couliano, the

Romanian historian of religions, utilized the theories of Howard Gardner as well as early theorists of artificial intelligence to support his theoretical position of historical morphodynamics. Relying heavily on Levi-Strauss's Structuralism, Couliano posited that the human mind could process an "ideal object," such as dualism, in only a limited number of ways due to our cognitive limitations, and that the interpretations that result from acceptance of a such an ideal object lead to predictable, if elaborate, systems such as Gnosticism (Culianu 1992). Gnostic mythology is then read as the result of human minds cognitively engaging Genesis 1–3 having accepted the ideal object of dualism.

More recently, scholars of Gnosticism have looked to cognitive linguistics in order to more fully explicate Gnostic myths and the world in which these figures participated. Hugo Lundhaug has approached the images of birth and rebirth in *Exegesis on the Soul* and *The Gospel of Philip* from the perspective of "cognitive poetics," essentially a reading through the twin lenses of cognitive blending and conceptual metaphor theory. April DeConick has also turned to cognitive linguistics, particularly conceptual blending and frame theory, in the creation of her Network Criticism method. Critiquing earlier models of Historical Criticism for ignoring issues of embodiment and attempting to construct linear descriptions of how sources came to be in particular texts, DeConick takes biblical and Gnostic texts as cultural productions that serve as capital within in a conversation cloud, shifting the historical emphasis from historical sources in a text to the web of interacting interpretations both within the text and of the text in the larger cloud. In practice, this method attempts to situate groups who have evaded clear understanding via Historical Criticism, such as the Naassenes and the Ophites, within a particular historical-temporal conversation (DeConick forthcoming).

### Modern Gnostics and Psychoanalysis

Contemporary Gnosticism and Jungian psychology are common bedfellows, illustrated most

clearly in the *Ecclesia Gnostica* as presided over by Bishop Stephan A. Hoeller. Born in Hungary in 1931, Hoeller fled the country during the Nazi occupation of World War II, immigrating and studying over the continent while getting his Ph. D. in Comparative Religions and training for the Catholic Priesthood. Hoeller encountered a private edition of Jung's *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* as a young Catholic priest, an event that kindled a lifelong passion for Jungian psychology. In 1958, Hoeller became Bishop of the Pre-Nicene Gnostic Church in Los Angeles, subsequently renamed *Ecclesia Gnostica*, where he presides to the present day.

Hoeller's presentation of Gnosticism is almost identical with those of Jung himself, and several of his books, as well as lecture series, have been dedicated to explicating the Nag Hammadi texts from a Jungian perspective (Hoeller 1982, 1989, 2002). Hoeller presents Jung's doctrine of individuation as coterminous with Gnostic soteriology, with the individual ego striving to regain its authenticity from alienation through recognition of its true self – the spark – and the withdrawal of projections leading to a relationship with the collective unconscious, or Pleroma. However, Hoeller departs from the Jungian psychologists above in arguing that Jung was not denying the metaphysical potential of his psychology, but rather than he persisted in being open to the possibility that the psychology could open up into metaphysics (Hoeller 1982, 2002). Hoeller has argued that Jung is the latest “prophet” in the tradition of Gnosis, a stream flowing from historical Gnosticism through figures such as Ficino, Blake, and Helena Blavatsky (Hoeller 1982, 2002). As such, modern Gnosticism can be seen as appropriating psychology as religion in much the same way as modern New Age and Metaphysical religions (Hanegraaff 1998; Jonte-Pace and Parsons 2001).

## See Also

- ▶ Active Imagination
- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Archetype

- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Consciousness
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Dualism
- ▶ Gnosticism
- ▶ God
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Inflation
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psyche
- ▶ Reductionism
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Unconscious

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## God

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The word "god" is an Anglo-Saxon term of Teutonic origin meaning "one who is greeted" as the object of religious worship. The conception named God is an analogical expression pointing directly toward incomprehensible mystery. That mystery is to be greeted as the inconceivable ultimate Being who ignites all life. God is the creative source of existence within and beyond time and space. God is self-sufficient, absolute spirit, eternally transcending, and pervading every dimension of reality.

## Philosophy

In Western philosophy there are three classical arguments for the existence of God. (1) The



Teleological Argument asserts that the universe exhibits both design and purpose. Objects, persons, and events have an aim or goal. Their relationship is fashioned by God who guides and directs them toward the fulfillment of their natural directions. That is to say, God exists as the purposive cosmic designer of all that has been, is, and will be. (2) The Cosmological Argument contends that the universe could not have come into existence by itself. There is a first cause of all existence, a cause that is uncaused. This primary cause must be God because nothing but God could exist without being caused. (3) The Ontological Argument insists that God is the most perfect being possible, and since that which is perfect but lacking existence is less than perfection that does exist, God exists. Barrels of medieval ink have saturated countless volumes on each of these arguments – many in refutation. In general, modern philosophy believes that the existence of God cannot be proven or rationally demonstrated.

## **Anthropology**

The discipline of anthropology studies religion as belief in a supernatural or nonempirical force and the action patterns related to that belief. God, as an object of religious worship, is evolutionary. Anthropology, with the support of archeology, suggests that the basic conception of God lies in the awareness of numinous which developed into primitive tribal animisms and sympathetic magic. These tribal beliefs and practices became more articulate as polytheisms developed. The Graeco-Roman pantheon is a prime illustration of the view that there are many gods affecting human history. Henotheism is a species of polytheism exemplified by ancient Judaism. It is the belief in one God in the presence of many others. The worship of such a god is monolatry.

Monotheism developed as a reaction to polytheism. For instance, classical Jewish monotheism developed out of henotheism as did its derivatives, Christianity and Islam. The foundation of Islam is a conviction that there is no God

but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet. Muhammad drew upon Jewish and Christian resources in the design of a monotheistic belief system for Arabia to spread worldwide. He differed radically from Jesus the Nazarene in that Muhammad never claimed to be God or expected that he would be resurrected by Allah. On the one hand, Islam claims Muhammad, though not divine himself, was divinely inspired more than anyone in human history. He was also the driving force of jihad (an internal effort of reform) and, most importantly, Allah's secretary for the Koran. On the other hand, Christianity claims that the God of the Jews was physically articulated in the historical Jesus whose resurrected personality or Holy Spirit became a Real Presence directing people toward the mindfulness of love, as well as the value of collective worship in the assembly called church – the metaphorical house of God. Conceptually, this monotheistic Trinity was strongly enabled by Greek philosophy which clarified "substance," or *ousia*, so that a model of three persons of the same property or nature reveals God, like expressions or manifestations of water in liquid, ice, and steam. This unity of Three-in-One and the One-in-Three is eternal and immutable. Christianity claims that Jesus' relationship with God and the Holy Spirit is a monotheism of metaphysical unity. God became a specific man who lived through and beyond death, leaving his Holy Ghost or personality to guide disciples into the mindset of God's will or kingdom.

## **Psychology**

Philosophy and anthropology are components of psychology, a science that concentrates on the mind and behavior of living beings. As a perspective and a discipline, psychology centers on the mental and behavioral effects of believing in God. In this instance, it is the conceptual reaction or belief that matters and not the reality or nonexistence of a deity. For Freud, the founder of modern psychology, belief in God could be explained via problematic



relationships with father figures. His argument rests on an illusionary model of God growing out of the Oedipus complex. Many depth psychologists disagreed with this reductionism. In general, psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and psychology now agree that God concepts develop out of a matrix of intrapsychic and interpersonal components. As a result, most social sciences approach the subject of God with less anthropomorphism than ever before. This is most evident in the growth of spirituality as a dimension of strength and comfort embraced by modern health-care services and contemporary pastoral theology.

## Theology

The current emphasis on spirituality is not a unique insight of postmodernism. In many respects it is a consequence of God being the object of intractable religious customs and symbols. When religion attempts to define God literally, faith is subordinated to reason. Anthropomorphism and idolatry are common results, as well as descriptions of God that may or may not be logical. God, in such instances, is usually portrayed as a noun who sustains mankind in the face of threats and tragedies. This mindset commonly fails to recognize God as a verb revealed in ethical mindfulness and humane behavior.

Theology, as a discipline, seeks to articulate dynamics, properties, characteristics, or attributes of God that personally involve human beings whether they know it or not. However, these divine traits are not definitive. To acknowledge God as the “creator,” “redeemer,” and “sustainer” is a descriptive interpretation but not a definition in any complete sense, for God cannot be comprehended. Yet there are characteristics of God that are absolutely central to traditional theology.

For a theist, the three essential characteristics or properties of God are (1) omnipotence or God’s infinite power to create, conserve, and destroy anything, anywhere, at any time;

(2) omniscience or the knowledge of all that is possible to know; and (3) omnipresence or being everywhere without spatial necessity. These absolute properties, along with God’s timelessness and perfect freedom, naturally raise questions around events of tragedy, illness, and death. Such queries are the focus of theodicy, a dimension of Natural Theology that attempts to justify God’s benevolence and justice in a world where misery and evil exist as constant challenges to human development and moral growth.

The fundamental component of theodicy is Providence, a belief system that confronts the tension between ideal good and the ever-present reality of evil. God, in this sense, can be recognized as evil turned against itself. Such recognition offers faith that mankind is not a natural accident in a purposeless universe. For God is to be greeted as the essential vitality of all existence – physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Providence](#)
- ▶ [Theodicy](#)

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## God Image

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To the best of our knowledge in all cultures, supernatural beliefs occupy a central and extremely important place in the lives of the overwhelming majority of people. Apparently, only scholars in Western societies have attempted to understand and study the beliefs, behaviors, and experiences of those who accept such views. A basic, apparently innate, feature of our mental apparatus is the formation of images of reference objects wherever possible. More specifically, research indicates that a probable genetic component is part of such religious systems (D'Onofrio et al. 1999). Though these do not explicitly identify God images as part of this complex, many scholars imply that they are part of such a mental framework (Ellis 2000).

Research in this area concerns two idea patterns: a descriptive set of images and certain cognitive and behavioral characteristics. Strictly speaking, God image refers to the former; the God concept is the latter. Concept also includes divine intentions and purposes. These generalizations have unclear limits. Hence, serious overlap is present. Commonly, writers indiscriminately mix the two realms. Where relatively little study has been conducted on the images, most has been directed at God concepts for over a century. Certain widely employed terms seem to share both concept and image features. For example, God as male or God as Father brings to the fore physical and psychosocial traits. These also vary by age of the respondent (Harms 1944).

Attention to the gender of God really began with the woman's movement of the 1960s and appears to have stimulated a number of ingenious researches involving female development (Randour and Bondanza 1987; the differential influence of God language on the sexes McMinn et al. 1993) and related considerations (Foster and Babcock 2001). God images have also been

related to aspects of personality such as self-esteem and locus of control (Benson and Spilka 1973; Saussy 1991). The objective assessment of God image has also been attempted via the construction of an inventory (Lawrence 1996). Again, we encounter the problem of overlap between image and concept.

Another conceptual avenue that ties image and concept together derives from Freud (1928) and his psychoanalytic successors. Even though these ideas are popular, hypotheses about parental roots have not always eventuated in God-father associations. This literature has also yielded God-mother and God-self imagery. Strong cultural influences obviously enter into and muddy this research.

A fine overview of research in the area up to 1977 is Pitts bibliography, the God concept in the child. More exacting but still inclusive of both realms is the work of Ladd et al. (1998) which deals with the God image drawings of almost 1,000 children.

Though a few projective image analyses stressing personality have been attempted, exacting, reliable treatments of God drawings are largely yet to be reported. Piedmont and Muller (2006) have, however, opened that door conceptually and methodologically. They tie God image to object-relations psychodynamic theory and God concept to cognition. Though they appear to have derived many direct God image measures, these are not discussed in relation to their indices of God concept. Still, indirectly, they claim a moderate relationship between the two. This is an area that requires further conceptual clarification.

### See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [God Image in Dreams](#)

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## God Image and Therapy

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The God image, rich in myth and symbolism, is a door to the unconscious, providing a wealth of material for the psychotherapist. At face value,

a client's God images reveal his or her relationship to transcendent reality and are a factor in psychological stability. By examining God images in depth, a therapist can symbolically interpret a client's religious projections as expressive of psychological needs. As a diagnostic tool, God image can be useful for therapy. Therapy can also help a client's God image by disabling a limiting God image or regulating an imbalanced God image. The consideration of God image in therapy can help mental health professionals and their clients gain valuable insight into the client's inner psychological and relational world and can lead to improved intrapsychic and interpersonal functioning.

God images are strongly influenced by early parental relationships. Therefore, they have a vast therapeutic relevance and potential. God images can be explored for insight into a client's self-image and early relational environment.

God images can have a positive or negative psychospiritual function. Psychotherapy can draw upon the strength of a beneficial relationship with God or address negative, conflicting or one-sided God images in a variety of psychotherapeutic forums. It is important to work with the God image according to the client's particular relational matrix, developmental history, and level of psychic balance and integration.

Every person has internalized images of God that undergo developmental changes over the life course based on individual, cultural, and spiritual influences. Our God images are mirrors of ourselves. Clinical studies reveal that a person's experiences of God and self are related and mutually influential (Benson and Spilka 1973; Francis et al. 2001; Greenway et al. 2003). Therefore, it makes sense to use the God image in the psychotherapeutic effort to understand and improve the self.

The God image occupies a transitional space between the internal self and the external other. In this transitional space, God is both found and made. Martin Buber's *I and Thou* (1970) recognizes the relational space between self and other as a spiritual place, where God exists in "the between" of relationships, and seems to be at once both self and other.

In *Playing and Reality* (1971), Donald W. Winnicott implied that God could be seen as a transitional object that changes with a person's needs and desires. Winnicott's theory of transitional objects has become a core component of the object relations theory of God image. Winnicott advises the therapist to "play" with the client by joining in exploration of the intermediate space between reality and fantasy. Similarly, Moshe Spero (1992) states the importance of being able to find a way to buy into a client's God image, thus preserving the therapeutic alliance and allowing God image to be a part of the treatment process and opening pathways to greater understanding of the God image and its psychic functioning.

Our relational expectations limit our experience of God and our ability to live full, balanced lives in harmony with our environment. By expanding our relational paradigms, therapy can alter God image without being an overt topic of treatment. The therapeutic relationship offers an affirming self-object function that is paramount to the success of therapy, resulting in a realignment of the personality's deep relational structure. In the course of treatment, the client's interaction with the therapist affects the client's other relationships. Due to the strong interdependence between the client's relationships with therapist, God image, and self-image, a successful treatment will improve all aspects of the client's relational matrix, including the God image, without direct focus on the God image.

Therapeutic methods that incorporate direct access and conscious exploration of God images can facilitate the process of psychospiritual insight and maturation. Interventions may seek to strengthen positive God images and improve or limit the damage done by negative God images. The current use of God image theory in psychotherapy is mostly focused on mitigating damage of negative God images, but it is also used in identifying and improving relational patterns – with others, self, and God.

God images can first be evaluated during psychotherapeutic assessment. "[C]areful exploration of the subjective description of an individual's God representation and the vicissitudes of the relationship with God may reveal

precious information about the type of psychic and interpersonal events that led to the particular characteristics attributed to God. In this sense the God representation has the potential of a projective test" (Rizzuto 1991, p. 56).

Even if the relationship with God is not a presenting problem or an easily identifiable source of distress or impairment, ambivalent or conflicting God images exact a psychic toll on the whole person. Strongly negative God images exacerbate psychological problems and inhibit recovery and therefore require clinical intervention. Healthy and helpful God images are a powerful source of psychological resilience and can be drawn upon to enhance coping and facilitate healing.

Psychotherapists can look for the source of God images in early parental relations, other significant relational experiences, religious history, and religious paradigms shared by the larger culture. God image, self-image, and world view are all developed in the context of our early relationships and continue to be mutually influential throughout the life course. The relationship between God image and the client's relational patterns can be explored in therapy for their mutual influence on a client's current relational functioning. Interpretive gains may be made "by concentrating on a person's felt bond with the sacred and conceptualizing that bond as a reflection of the inner object world and by listening through that bond for echoes of internalized affective patterns of relationship" (Jones, 1991, p. 110).

The work of therapy often brings the client's adult understanding to attend to the repressions of his or her inner wounded child. Similarly, when images of God are openly discussed, a current mature understanding can shed light on past and present relationship with the divine. Therapist and client may identify multiple or conflicting God images that cause enduring psychospiritual conflict and/or distress. Conscious beliefs and unconscious expectations of God may collide. The damaging weight of repression and its dangerous backlash can result in an underlying suffering that is not understood. This may mean that early religious images and beliefs should be unearthed, even if a client believes they are

irrelevant and no longer believes in them. Therapy can examine the implicit assumptions we have about God and facilitate greater balance and individuation.

The therapist invites the client to be curious about the psychological function and/or fallout of his or her God images. By taking a religious history and attending to religious associations, the therapist may identify a pattern of psychodynamic motives. The God image can be used in the service of regression, progression, avoidance, resistance, companionship, or as an Oedipal object (Rizzuto 1993, pp. 27–29). The God image can be a link to a sense of divine mystery or an obstacle/false idol that prevents a healthy and helpful relationship to God. Disavowed God images may indicate the existence of restrictive or implausible God images that preclude the possibility of spiritual experience. Dysfunctional God images need to be examined and deconstructed to make room for healthy God images that are relational and dynamic, balanced, functional, and relevant.

God image therapy can take place in a religious or secular therapeutic environment. There are situational advantages to each, and both seek to promote self-reflection and insight, healing and development. People often take religious problems to religious counselors because they feel more understood by someone with a similar background or belief structure. When an insider may be too close to a problem, an outside perspective can be helpful. A secular therapist with no religious predispositions may offer a client more freedom for doubt and exploration.

Spiritual counselors have the unique benefit of clients who are interested in working directly on their relationship with God. Spiritual counseling and spiritual direction focus primarily on the client's relationship with God, whereas secular therapy will examine a client's inner psychic structure and ways of relating to God, self, and others. Both techniques will affect a client's God image and self-image by altering the client's sense of place and purpose in the world, as derived from his or her relation to God.

Mary Lou Randour notes, "But not all religious and spiritual experiences are God-centered,

although I would argue that all are object relational" (Randour 1993, p. 4). Sometimes a client is faith-based or spiritual without being God-centered. In this case the client's object relations with spiritual reality or background of faith can be examined for the client's underlying existential safety net or for the conflicts or dilemmas that prevent its formation. In clinical cases where it is evident that the concept of God is a central guiding cognitive structure, God images are clearly worth examining directly. However, focusing on religion in therapy could worsen emotional crises if a client has a strongly negative God image. Alternatively, if a parental interpretation of a client's relationship with God is felt as explaining away a deeply held religious belief, the clinical relationship could be jeopardized.

The respectful consideration of God image in therapeutic assessment and treatment requires the therapist to maintain neutrality and prevent his or her own beliefs from interfering with the client's. The therapist needs to inquire into the dynamic meanings of God images and conflicting images without attempting to modify religious ideation.

Spiritual and psychological experiences are linked because they share the goal of integration, the coming together of the fragmented self. Psychological and spiritual development can occur in tandem, mutually aiding or hampering each other. In therapy, as images of self, others, and God are examined, rethought, and rearranged, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether psychological health influences perceptions of the divine or vice versa. In some cases, increased self-acceptance permits the belief that God also cares, and a new sense of self demands a new God image to go with it (Jones 1991, pp. 73–85). In other cases, new possibilities for whom or what God is can loosen the hold of a judging, rejecting God image from early childhood that restricts adult development.

## Commentary

Just like religion, the God image is neither good nor bad but depends on how it is used. It can be the source of problems or their solution.



By recognizing what is helpful and harmful about our God images, therapy can work through psychological issues from our religion, improving relationships with God, others, and ourselves.

Some may question whether religious beliefs and/or spiritual practices are within the purview of the psychotherapist and may argue that God should be left in the hands of religious leaders. However, traditional religious instruction may not foster a progressive developmental direction and can create a one-sided religious faith that results in psychological imbalance. Organized religion tends to resist a dynamic God image, preferring a stabilizing one. With its emphasis on goodness, religion can shame and vilify lesser impulses, exacerbating psychic rifts. Religion should not be an escape from the unconscious, seeking to focus on the good and repress the undesirable aspects of our psyches. At their best, religion and spirituality represent the culmination and completeness of life. Healthy God images are relational and dynamic, functional and mature, balanced and unified, and integrated and encompassing. These God images stabilize and perpetuate psychospiritual health and well-being.

A therapist's neutrality can aid a client in the exploration of his/her own beliefs, providing a therapeutic environment for rediscovering and strengthening or for questioning and reformulating the client's theological system. In any work with the God image, it is important to balance psychological attention to the God image with the spiritual reminder of God's transcendence of our understanding. Our God images are not God, but they mediate our ability to experience and relate to divine reality. "Much can be learned from our particular route to or away from God, from our projected images, as well as about the God we let reach us through our projections" (Ulanov 2001, p. 105).

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [God](#)

- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [God Image in Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Male God Images](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## God Image in Dreams

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Dream characters and images are reflections of ourselves and our images of God.



Sleep gives the brain the opportunity to process and store information from the day. It also provides the opportunity to anticipate the future and practice behavior and decision-making in a variety of contexts.

According to Freud, dreams provide wish fulfillment of impulses left over from conscious waking life. Freud wrote that dream material is based in “residues of daytime life. . .struggle for expression during the night” (Freud 1965, p. 593). These residual impulses come from what we have failed to deal with consciously, due to circumstance, our own limitations of capacity or capability, or our unconscious struggles that are rejected or suppressed in the daytime.

God images, like self-images, are ubiquitous in the form and frequency they take in dreams. The dreamer may encounter a dream character, object, or place that evokes the sublime, an experience of awe, or a sudden epiphany of peace or understanding. God may be directly called upon in dreams, with miraculous results.

Dream images of a cosmic struggle between good and evil reflect internal discord and existential fear. In nightmares, dreamers frequently report being pursued by an evil person or entity, bent on hurting or destroying the dreamer. Although the dream image may be that of an anti-God, or demonic figure, the dream content is still religious in essence, in that it seeks to come to terms with our unconscious demons and the presence of evil in the world.

In psychotherapy, dream images are examined and interpreted for symbolic significance and the thoughts and feelings they evoke. Cultural archetypes are explored for personal resonance. Scriptural parallels may be discussed. Connections are drawn to the present context in order to widen the client’s understanding and deepen the personal meaning of his or her God images. When the dream image is considered in light of the client’s present situation, client and therapist become aware of significant patterns or underlying conflicts that can now be consciously explored.

Frequently, clients report dreams in which they felt surprised by God. Some dream material did not reflect the client’s conscious God images, and they felt disturbed enough to bring the dream into

therapy. The dream image can provide the opportunity for the examination and expansion of consciously held God images, furthering the developmental maturation of the client’s God images.

## Commentary

Dreaming “changes the channel” of our particular everyday reality; therefore, dreaming expands our personal horizons and may even be practice for death and what may exist beyond this life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Male God Images](#)

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## Goddess Spirituality

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Goddess spirituality is the reverential experiencing and expressing of divine female energies within the universe. It emerged among our early human ancestors in Africa during the Paleolithic Age, and it continues to the present in societies around the world, because it meets profound needs in the psycho-spiritual life of adherents.



**Goddess Spirituality, Fig. 1** Artemis, Goddess of Ephesus, many-breasted Mother of Heaven and Earth, Mistress of Animals, wearing necklace of zodiac signs and costume of sacred animals, bees, and flowers. Votaries called her “Great, Magnificent, Queen, Commander, Guide, Advisor, Legislator, Spreader of Light, Savior, and Controller of Fate.” Ephesus Archaeological Museum, Selçuk, Turkey. Photo courtesy of Diane L. Martin (2001)

Goddess spirituality played a major role in the Neolithic Age with its agrarian revolution and emphasis on the fertility of the Earth, perceived as Great Mother, Bearer of all Life. Artemis of Ephesus is a late expression of this Goddess, here wearing a necklace of zodiac signs and costume of sacred animals, bees, and flowers. Votaries called her Great, Magnificent, Queen, Commander, Guide, Advisor, Legislator, Spreader of Light, Savior, and Controller of Fate (Fig. 1).

This kind of multi-faceted Great Goddess continued to be worshipped into the Bronze and Iron Ages, although Goddesses generally became subordinated by male-dominant societies that worshipped male Gods as supreme. Goddess spirituality has persisted in most indigenous cultures

of Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas. But the male-oriented monotheistic Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have extensively suppressed Goddess spirituality in regions they came to dominate, due to superior military might and sometimes through brutal tactics such as the witch persecutions in medieval and early modern Europe, in the Christianized Americas, and in Africa.

How is it that humans can imagine, feel, and relate spiritually to a Goddess as symbol, metaphor, psycho-spiritual energy, cosmic and ontological reality? For much of human history, people believed they were created by deities and so invoked their powers and gifts through religious rites. Modern secular psychologies and philosophies have reversed the causal relationship by claiming that humans created deities – as the “projections” of human ideals (Feuerbach), “wish fulfillment” (Freud), or the “opiate of the masses” (Marx). Yet, the epidemics of violence, despair, and apathy afflicting even the young in contemporary cultures point to the emotional and spiritual need of individuals to find a spiritual and moral compass and to celebrate aspects of life that offer love, companionship, family, health, well-being, community, ecological balance, and purpose. Goddess spirituality offers these benefits through the prism of divine feminine energies, energies of the cosmos that generate female beings and the capacity to bear and nurture female and male offspring.

Goddess traditions around the world have guided persons transiting the most intensely intimate passages in the human life cycle – birth, sexual initiation, procreation, disease and death, and the prospect of rebirth. Goddess religion (like other religions) prescribes rules and regulations regarding the everyday necessities of food and nurture, survival, and healthcare. It provides answers for perennial questions about the meaning of life, our place within the cosmos, and our relationship to the Source of all being and becoming. Sacred stories and myths about Goddesses portray their interactions with humans, giving divine meaning and inspiration to key life experiences. Generally, Goddesses and their priestesses provide archetypal energies and role

models for women and girls, while Gods and priests provide archetypal energies and role models for men and boys. However, many scholars argue that evidence shows that Goddesses sometimes presided over whole cities and civilizations and were worshipped as the primary deity by men and women alike (e.g., in Anatolia, Crete, Old Europe, India, Japan, Hawaii, Brazil, and numerous North American Indian tribes) (Allen 1991; Biaggi 2005; Gimbutas 1991; Goettner-Abendroth 2009, 2012; Monaghan 1981; 2011).

Beginning in the 1970s in the United States and Europe, there rose a great popular returning toward the Sacred Feminine, mostly but not exclusively by women – in Goddess circles, neo-pagan groups, scholarly studies, and the arts – as a way to access the psycho-spiritual and political empowerment that accompanies the affirmation of the Divine as female. Mary Daly's work *Beyond God the Father* (1973) catalyzed the desire of many women in the North/West to come to terms with the male centeredness of the religions in which they had been raised. Marija Gimbutas' archaeological study of *Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe* (1974/1982) and her subsequent books provided a window into Neolithic European societies that worshipped a Goddess or Goddesses of birth and nurture, death, and regeneration as their primary deity – as immanent within the procreation of all life, a transcendent principle of the cosmos, and sometimes accompanied by a stimulating and fructifying Sacred Male God. A sharp debate continues in academia about the significance of Gimbutas's discovery of a "Goddess Civilization" in Old Europe and her groundbreaking interdisciplinary archaeomythological methodology (archaeology, linguistics, mythology, and folklore) for interpreting ancient religious symbolism (Spretnak 2011).

In 1975, 1,800 women attended the first women's spirituality conference in Boston. Ntozake Shange's 1976 Broadway play, *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*, dramatized women's embrace of a female God for the sake of survival and strength, with the exuberant exclamation,

"I found God in myself and I loved her fiercely!" Also in 1976, Merlin Stone gathered scattered fragments of evidence for ancient Goddess worship, *When God Was a Woman*, tracing changes in religious symbolism from matrilineal or mother-centered cultures to patriarchal father-centered cultures. Stone relied on archaeological studies such as those of James Mellaart at Çatalhöyük and Arthur Evans at Knossos, Crete; and ancient literatures such as the *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian myth of the primordial Goddess Tiamat being defeated by the young God Marduk, and the account in *Genesis* 3 of the Hebrew Bible of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, where the snake in the tree is interpreted as representing knowledge of the early Goddess-centered culture being rejected by promulgators of the new Yahweh-only religion, with the cultural shift during the Bronze Age toward patriarchy and male dominance. In 1978, Charlene Spretnak published *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece*, reconstructing the Hellenic Goddess myths from a pre-Olympian, pre-patriarchal point of view, portraying Greek Goddess archetypal qualities free from androcratic distortions.

At the conference on "The Great Goddess Re-Emerging" at the University of California at Santa Cruz in the spring of 1978, Carol P. Christ delivered the keynote address, "Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections." Christ proposed four compelling reasons why women might turn to the Goddess: the affirmation and legitimation of female power as beneficent, affirmation of the female body and its life cycles, affirmation of women's will, and affirmation of women's bonds with one another and of positive female heritage (Christ 1979).

Present-day Goddess priestesses began creating community rituals and publishing books about how to create personal and communal ceremonies that invoke the Goddesses: Z Budapest, Starhawk, Luisah Teish, and the antinuclear activist women of Greenham Common in England. In 1987 Monica Sjoo and Barbara Mor produced *Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*. Many Goddess spirituality activists and authors emphasize that the multicultural women's

spirituality movement is not an escape from political engagement with urgent social and environmental issues, as critics argue, but a way to connect with them in deeply personal and powerful ways.

Building on earlier Goddess studies by Arthur Evans, Jane Ellen Harrison, G. Rachel Levy, Martin P. Nilsson, Robert Graves, Eric Neumann, Carl Kerényi, N. N. Bhattacharyya, and others, many feminist scholars formed powerful arguments for the existence of pre-patriarchal Goddess-worshipping cultures that had been subsumed by male-dominant cultures: Riane Eisler, Patricia Monaghan, Gerda Lerner, Elinor Gadon, Paula Gunn Allen, Mara Lynn Keller, Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, Asphodel Long, Cristina Biaggi, Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum, and Max Dashu. A deep and rich history of Goddesses was being resurrected. For example, the myth and ritual of Demeter and Persephone in Greece comprised a popular mystery religion celebrating the birth, sacred marriage, death, and rebirth of all life; it is again infusing seasonal Goddess rituals with its affirmation of the mother-daughter bond and its sense of the kinship of all beings (Fig. 2).

Inspired by Goddess spirituality's embodied sense of self, nature, and cosmos, many artists created paintings, poetry, songs, novels, and films about Goddesses, such as Judith Anderson, Jennifer Berezan, Susan Seddon Boulet, Janine Canan, Meinrad Craighead, Rose Wognum Frances, Tricia Grame, Vijali Hamilton, Sue Monk Kidd, Audre Lorde, Mary Mackey, Alexis Masters, Burleigh Muten, Mayumi Oda, Donna Read, and Lydia Ruyle. Some curated Goddess art exhibits or published magazines, encyclopedias, or beautiful collections of Goddess scriptures and sacred art. Others made pilgrimages to ancient Goddess sites or devoted themselves to Goddess avatars. More and more Jewish and Christian women explored the feminine aspect of God and invoked the Feminine Divine and Sophia/Holy Wisdom.

In ancient cultures, religion and psychology were conjoined. The Greek word *psyche* means *spirit* and *soul*. The ancients conceived of Spirit as a dynamic life force or essence manifest in particular material forms, including male,



**Goddess Spirituality, Fig. 2** Demeter, Persephone, and Ploutos (Plenty) sharing the gift of grain for feeding humanity, from the Eleusinian Mysteries that celebrated the birth, sacred marriage, death, and rebirth of all life. Pentelic marble relief. Eleusis, Greece. c. 440–430 BCE Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Public Domain. This figure is licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eleusis2.jpg>

female, and androgyne genders. In the modern era in North/West sectors of the globe, psychology has to some extent supplanted religion, addressing the emotional well-being of individuals who in many cases no longer (or never did) turn to religion for sustenance, solace, or significance. Freud's secular approach to psychology was countered by Jung's spiritual approach called archetypal psychology, which named *sacred feminine* and *sacred masculine* aspects of the human psyche and theorized that both were to be found in individual women and men – undercutting the extreme dualism of masculine vs. feminine entrenched in European and Euro-American societies. While acknowledging the valuable contributions these two fathers of psychology made to



a deeper understanding of modern human emotions and behaviors, feminist psychologists critiqued the patriarchal bias in both theorists. Others criticized the use of notions of gender altogether.

Goddess spirituality can be understood psychologically in the concepts of conscious and unconscious gestalts that result from personal experience, family interrelationships, and transpersonal constellations of behaviors as mother, father, daughter, son, spouse, lover, healer, oracle, wise elder, etc. Archetypal energies may have been repressed from conscious memory but remain encoded in psycho-spiritual patterns, having profound influences on the choices of one's day-to-day life. Many spiritual feminist psychologists, including Jean Shinoda Bolen, Kathie Carlson, Virginia Beane Rutter, and Tanya Wilkinson, build on the work of Jung, using mythic archetypes of the ancient Goddesses to assist contemporary women in developing a deeper sense of self, spirituality, and fulfillment.

Key themes debated within *Goddess theology* reflect the psychological, religious, and political diversity among Goddess-spirituality people. Is the Goddess one and/or many? Is she immanent and/or transcendent? Is she only of the female gender, bi- or multi-gendered, and/or beyond gender? Is she metaphor, symbol, and/or reality? Is she anthropomorphic (having human form), therianthrope (having animal-human form), and/or aniconic (without an image)? Is she knowable and/or mysterious and ineffable? Is she all-inclusive (encompassing good and evil, sacred, and profane) or all-good? Is Goddess spirituality political or apolitical? Many Goddess devotees hold a *both-and* epistemology that accepts (linguistic) contradictions and embraces the paradoxical nature of the Female Divine with her multiplicity of attributes and unitary Oneness. This inclusive and pluralistic understanding offers complexity and expansiveness, affirming diversity as limitless as nature itself and seeing humans embedded within the Great Mysteries of life.

The tremendous resurgence today of Goddess spirituality has grown in tandem with the worldwide women's liberation movement. Both seek to

meet the material and psychological needs of peoples and the planet to redress the over-masculinization of cultures and associated fundamentalist patriarchal religions, stresses, and devastations from overly aggressive ways of life. This is reflected in mass phenomena such as devotional festivals to Goddesses attended by millions in India or Brazil, the globally popular movie *Avatar* with its Earth Goddess-centered spirituality, and the best-selling Dan Brown novel *The Da Vinci Code* with its themes of the Christian Church's suppression of the Sacred Feminine and the Sacred Marriage, and the irrepressible yearning for their return.

Despite ongoing efforts by androcentric and thea-phobic religious traditions and sectors of academia to denigrate or deny Goddess spirituality, it continues to blossom in Goddess Studies (notably at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco), Goddess conferences (the Association for the Study of Women and Mythology), Goddess-related journals (*Goddess Theology Journal*, *OCHRE Journal of Women's Spirituality*, *Journal of Archaeomythology*), and the closely related field of Matriarchal Studies, advanced by Heidi Goettner-Abendroth and Peggy Reeves Sanday, that documents matriarchal cultures where Goddess spirituality has persisted through millennia. All this affirms the continuing presence of the Goddess in the hearts and minds of millions of adherents around the world.

### See Also

- ▶ [Ashtoreth](#)
- ▶ [Bridget of Ireland](#)
- ▶ [Cailleach](#)
- ▶ [Cybele and Attis](#)
- ▶ [Dark Mother](#)
- ▶ [Demeter/Persephone](#)
- ▶ [Earth Goddess](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Gimbutas, Marija, and the Goddess](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)
- ▶ [Isis](#)

- ▶ [Kali](#)
- ▶ [Lilith](#)
- ▶ [María Lionza](#)
- ▶ [Matriarchy](#)
- ▶ [Moon and Moon Goddesses](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)
- ▶ [Our Lady of Guadalupe](#)
- ▶ [Pele](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage for Girls](#)
- ▶ [Sarasvati](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)

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## Golden Bough, The

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### James G. Frazer

*The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, written by the Scottish anthropologist and classicist James George Frazer (1854–1941) at Cambridge University, was a culminating comparative study of world religions seen through the eyes of major themes in nineteenth-century European scholarship. Macmillan published it in two volumes in 1890, in three volumes in 1900, and expanded it in the third edition into 12 volumes by 1915. Due to its wide popularity, a one-volume condensation has been published since 1922. Frazer's originality is that no one before him had ever dug up so many of the "primitive" elements of the religions of Greece, Rome, and the eastern Mediterranean. More boldly, he first compared these on a global scale with the religions of "savages." His work was part of the Enlightenment project of studying one religion not as self-evidently true, but as one of many religions uncovered since the world expanded after Columbus. From the start, *The Golden Bough* was generally a critical and popular success, yet it expressed the sunset of the confident European speculative, imperialistic view of superiority over earlier world cultures. The Greek and Roman classics, long the core of European education, were soon dethroned and world cultures were slowly admitted to the academy via anthropology.

The title "Golden Bough" is taken from the small evergreen plant mistletoe, which, when dried, turns a golden color. It seemed magical to ancients because it grows on the branches of other trees, high above the ground, green when the host tree is bare in winter. Its seeds are carried from tree to tree by birds and grow as parasites on the branches of larger trees. According to classical authors such as Pliny and Virgil, mistletoe, believed to hold divine fire sent from the gods by lightning, was carried by Aeneas to the underworld and was cut from oak trees with a golden blade by Druid priests for magical purposes (Frazer 1922, Chap. 68).

### Science and Primitives

The *Golden Bough* is a leading exponent of the naturalist, empiricist, skeptical philosophy of the Enlightenment, led in Scotland by David Hume. Its avowed purpose is to treat religion in a "scientific" way, seeing it as part of the evolutionary view of the crude, ignorant savage society over the centuries evolving into an enlightened rational Victorian culture. In a positivist fashion, Frazer reduced religion to a kind of deluded intellectual speculation, but he was often really doing psychology, as when he saw terrified fear leading even to bloody sacrifices as major motives for magic and religion (Frazer 1922, p. 111). This was unlike others, such as William Robertson Smith, who saw in religion the work of more benevolent emotions, such as love and gratitude (Smith 1889/2002). Frazer sought evidence for the emotions and motives of ancient prehistorical peoples, and his psychology was rather individualistic rather than social. In nineteenth-century fashion, Frazer assumed the heroic great-man principle of historical change. He assumed that humans seek primarily to control nature and have, throughout history, tried three major methods.

Frazer's cultural development scheme has three stages: magic, religion, and science. Each was essentially an intellectual system, the first two clumsy and superstitious and the last triumphant. But evolutionary theory dictated that each

corrected some errors and built on other surviving elements of the earlier one, notably the annual quest to assure the continuing fertility of life. The *magical* cultures, which Frazer thought were illustrated by the Australian Aborigine cultures, he proposed, evolved elsewhere into *religious* cultures, characterized by gods and goddesses. This was not enough, however, for as each system's flaws in dealing with nature and society emerged, *science* was bound to replace the earlier, outdated systems (Frazer 1922, Chap. 69).

The colonialist reports of global indigenous cultures brought back to Europe gripping accounts of practices and beliefs that challenged Western cultural assumptions and stimulated many scholars like Frazer to seek to explain these strange cultures to a fascinated audience, condescending to relegate the stranger customs to an inferior, barbaric position, a "low mental stratum" (Frazer 1922, p. 64). Frazer's Victorian goal was to explain how "primitives," desperately seeking food, health and security, terrified of death, childbirth, and destructive weather, badly misunderstood the world. The logic of religious evolution in this schema is not valid, however. The priest and ethnologist Wilhelm Schmidt (1868–1954) argued that religion was earlier in evolution than magic, and he saw in primordial high gods the seeds of monotheism (Schmidt 1926/1935). And today, amid a largely scientific culture, we see hints of "survivals" of magic in rituals such as video games, the continuation of religion in mega-churches, and new age spiritual developments. And even behind the intellectual principles of science, we can find psychological roots, such as the belief in domination over nature, that have led to the ecology crisis. As we are seeing in the effects of global warming, one-sided industrial "progress" was blindsided by the neglected environmental factors that are now biting back. Frazer's view that the purpose of these three systems is to dominate nature is flawed; while magic and science may seek this goal, religion has other purposes, such as ethics, morality, social cohesion, refining instincts, and beliefs about life after death.

Early anthropologists like Frazer called their method of comparative religion "scientific," meaning a neutral approach to religions not favoring their Christianity, and the method of

hypothesis-testing with empirical data. But, by later standards, their early efforts at applying scientific principles to religion, and its social and psychological meanings found in global societies, were sloppy. Frazer's idea of the comparative study of religion was to make wild leaps to similar practices in other cultures around the world, but without carefully examining the cultural contexts that might have shown a different interpretation. Plus, his theories were not always consistent. He waffled on the question of whether ritual precedes myth and the question whether myths are diffused from one source or spontaneously arise in many locales. But his themes were captivating, as belief in "progress" peaked before World War I's devastations.

His encyclopedic collection of "savage" practices, blended with accounts from classical literature, was pulled together in a grand theory that followed in the tradition of comparative religion. This method of comparing the religions of different cultures was as old as Herodotus' (c. 484–c. 424 BCE) *Histories*, where he compared the Egyptian and Greek religions, arguing that the Greeks had borrowed many Egyptian religious themes (Herodotus 1954, pp. 116–135). After Columbus, this method exploded as local doctrines lost their certainty, and by the nineteenth century, grand theories of comparative religion had developed, such as those of Tylor, Müller, and Mannhardt.

Edward Tylor (1832–1917) developed comparative anthropology along the lines of a theory of a cultural evolution, "animism," or the belief in soul in nature. He also assumed the idea of "survivals" of archaic practices still present in tribal cultures and the global uniformity of human nature. He explored the question of cultural diffusion versus independent origins of similar themes. He viewed myths as crude efforts at reasoning, rather than symbolic expressions, and tried to extract historical nuggets from their narratives (Tylor 1994). Frazer adopted these general themes.

Max Müller (1823–1900) virtually created the newer discipline of comparative religion, aided by his remarkable 50-volume collection of translations of *Sacred Books of the East*. He stressed

philology or a linguistic basis for comparative religion, showing how the words for common things such as numbers were very similar from India to Europe. For example, he says that word for “one” in Sanskrit is “*ekas*,” in Greek “*eis*,” and in Gothic “*ains*” (Müller 1869, Vol. 1, p. 51). He interpreted myths and religions as personifications of natural forces, especially the sun (Müller 2002). Frazer’s version of comparative religion was not linguistic, but rather focused on rituals, followed by myths, that he saw as intellectual, rather than symbolic, and euhemeristic, or revealing factual historical events, rather than psychological. Both of the latter are largely flawed assumptions.

Wilhelm Mannhart (1831–1880) was a folklorist who studied archaic tree and grain cults whose indwelling spirits (*korndämonen*) had to be annually helped in producing fertility by magical and religious practices, which was a key theme adopted by Frazer (Mannhart 1868/1978).

The general shift in the academic effort to understand world religions was away from the dogmatic, exclusivist certainties of familiar faiths and toward evolutionary theories and sociological analysis. Today, we view these theories as early, hasty generalizations of “armchair” anthropologists, rather than the careful field studies characteristic of current anthropology. Indeed, the overzealous generalizations of these Victorian theorists, while popular, stimulated twentieth-century anthropologists such as Franz Boas (1858–1942), although friendly with Frazer, to reject hasty, broad generalizations in favor of living among the people he studied and limiting his theories to the cautious boundaries of observed societies (Boas 1994). In view of such critiques, we see today that the themes explored in Frazer’s work still have some explanatory value, but not the universal implications that he proclaimed.

## Blood and Fertility

From his chair at Cambridge, Frazer mused over a riddle that had long fascinated classical scholars. The Greek geographer Strabo told of a

temple near Rome where a runaway slave who killed the former priest-king became the next priest-king. Macaulay’s poem “the Battle of Lake Regillus” tells the riddle:

From the still glassy lake that sleeps  
Beneath Aricia’s trees –  
Those trees in whose grim shadow  
The ghastly priest doth reign,  
The priest who slew the slayer,  
And shall himself be slain – (Fraser 1990, p. 33).

Frazer devoted most of his life to collecting parallels from travelers, mentally leapfrogging around the world, seeking to make sense of this nugget of mystery. His theory turned into a major popular epic that concluded the Victorian era’s bold but reckless efforts to sweep world religions into a single dustbin of superstitions that fall before the powers of science. Nevertheless, this kind of work was a beginning for the study of world religions with a neutral eye.

If you follow Rome’s Ancient Appian Way out of the Porta Sebastiano southeast out of the city for about 10 miles, passing through a dry land with ancient Roman gravestones lining the road, you will come to a hill on the left. At the village of Genzano, you can follow the road around the base of the hill and ascend to the settlement called Nemi. Here, classical scholars knew, from classic texts such as Strabo and Ovid, that this place long ago was a sanctuary of Diana. Now, a few remaining columns overlook a lake nestled in a volcano’s remains, called “Diana’s Mirror.” Beneath the surface of contemporary small farms of olive, grapes, and strawberries was once a sacred shrine where have been found numerous votive statuettes and an image of a goddess, including one with an inscription to Diana: “as blessing men and women with offspring, and granting expectant mothers an easy delivery” (Fraser 1990, p. 5).

With a flourish of imaginative rhetoric, Frazer undertook to explain the meaning of what he thought took place long ago on this site: a “barbaric” custom in the sacred precinct related to a goddess-queen, in which a priest-king, once a runaway slave, must constantly carry a sword and be on the lookout for attacks. Any man who can pluck a bunch of mistletoe high in the sacred

tree, then kill the ruling priest-king, can assume his role, but he will then be doomed to the same fate. Frazer argued that similar rituals were practiced far and wide, expressing patterns of human nature and society, sinister, sensuous, and bloody. His psychology was an empiricist, rationalist effort to reduce passionate themes to past nonsense, but ironically, the undertone was psychological: an unconscious collective fascination with these passions – killing the king, mating with the queen (Oedipal), and mingling with the natural world.

Frazer's thesis unfolds as he conjectures that the King of the Wood at Nemi, Virbius, was likely the mortal lover and king of the goddess Diana (Artemis in Greece), whose spirit was to be found in the tree he guarded. Comparing this pair to other mortal men and goddesses such as Adonis and Venus, Hippolytus and Phaedra, and Attis and the Cybele, Frazer proposes that the ritual at Nemi recapitulates the known mythic accounts of the goddess of fertility taking a lover who dies as in the annual death of planted seeds and is magically reborn in their rebirth as new vegetation. His theory is that the ritual led to myths about the annual cycles of vegetation, its winter death and rebirth in the spring that needed to be magically helped along by bloody and erotic human rites. The sacred marriage custom of priest-kings mating with priestess-goddess figures was the ritual of ensuring the fertility of the land. Diana was not known as a goddess of fertility, however. Her predecessor in Greece, Artemis, was a virgin huntress, but other more fertility-related goddesses such as the Greek Demeter and Gaia, the Babylonian Ishtar, Egyptian goddesses, notably Isis, and others that Frazer describes, he offered as testimonies to this practice as characteristic of archaic societies.

From the writings of world travelers, Frazer assiduously tried to link all this to other strange, faraway customs, such as those described by Captain James Alexander, Fifth Duke of Hamilton, an adventurous Scottish sailor who had wandered from the Cape of Good Hope to India and Japan for 35 years. In 1728, he published his *New Account of the East Indies*, where he reported kings committing suicide before their term of

rule had expired. Another king at the end of his 12-year reign would throw a jolly feast for 12 days. If any of the guests could fight their way through his thousands of guards and kill the king in his tent, they would become the new king (Fraser 1990, pp. 50–52). This apparent parallel to the Roman conundrum excited Frazer and became one of his many examples of what he claimed to be widespread practice of slaying the king and thereby grabbing his throne (Frazer 1922, Chap. 24; Hamilton 1728). Just under the surface of the supposedly rational concern lurk psychological fascinations with fear and blood, political rule, religious sacredness, and erotic fertility.

## Taboo and Totem

Frazer elaborated on the reports with the concept of taboo, the sacred or cursed thing or person, like an electric force field, for example, possessing a king that spreads from his person to whatever he touched, sending divine power that promotes the growth of life on earth (Frazer 1922, Chaps. 19–22). Taboo was a concept fascinating to nineteenth-century anthropologists that Frazer used to help unify his collection of cases of “the king must die, long live the king.” It first appeared in English in the journal of Captain Cook, who stumbled onto the exotic practice of forbidden things in the Tongatapu Islands in the South Pacific (Cook 1785, Vol. 2, pp. xi, 410). Soon “taboo” came to describe many things, found also in the Bible, that were sacred and cursed, both unclean and untouchable, strong yet vulnerable, such as kings, blood, and corpses. Taboo was expanded to explain several practices, including the biblical scapegoat (Leviticus 16), used to ritually expel threatening evils from a community.

The totem was another recently uncovered practice that fascinated Europe. In 1885, John McLennan, the Scottish author of *Patriarchal Theory*, having discovered totems “thick under the feet” in the Arabic peninsula, lectured at Cambridge. Frazer was in the audience, and he quickly integrated totemism into his theories. He saw it in various ways as this thought developed.

In his “depository theory,” he interpreted totems as containers for one’s soul that kept it safely separated from the body that might be killed. This was expanded into the chapter on the External Soul (Frazer 1922, Chaps. 66–67). He saw the mistletoe, or “golden bough,” as a totem hanging high in the oak tree above the king who was defending his rule from attack. His view of the golden mistletoe as a totem he connected to the reports of the Celtic Druid priestly ritual of cutting the plant with a golden sickle. But it is an imaginative stretch to portray the same sense of mistletoe, or any mistletoe, in an Italian shrine.

Studies of the Australian Aborigines shifted the interpretation of totemism toward the idea of a totem as an image of a clan’s founding ancestral spirit. It was used in the initiation of young men into adulthood in the outback and was part of the emphasis on exogamy, where a man could only marry outside his totem’s social group. A man might say of his totem that it is his brother, meaning his eternal soul participates in the same species as that totem animal, thus defining what he can kill. Hunters are typically forbidden to kill their totem animal, since it is a relative, except for special sacred occasions, Frazer explained (Frazer 1922, p. 799).

## Fertility Religion

Frazer’s vegetation deity theory agreed with that of William Robertson Smith (1846–1894), coeditor of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, who had a large impact on Frazer, and invited him to write articles for it. Smith saw primitive religions as social institutions for the preservation of society, not as individual creeds for the saving of souls. This debate between those who see myth and religion as primarily social or as more psychological continued between the anthropologists (Boas 1994) and psychologists (Jung 1979). Smith also stressed the literalism of primitive religions, where tribal beliefs believed the people to be literal descendants of a fatherly god in whose blood his descendants participated. He believed that primitives saw gods not as remote and transcendent, but as

limited to specific earthly places – grand trees or mountains. Such gods need not be anthropomorphic, but could be portrayed as plants or animals. Smith envisioned religion developing from demons to totems (such as the Semitic Arabic *jinns*), to local gods, to national gods, to universal gods. Smith’s use of the comparative religions method was to take a specific example, such as the *jinns*, and then draw on other, perhaps far-reaching, parallels to confirm his theory (Smith 1889/2002).

Smith saw ancient sacrifices as the food of the gods. He insisted that sacrifices are not gifts to bartering gods, but communion between people and spirit beings. Quite unlike Freud, he saw this communion unstained by notions of moral and psychological sin or guilt, but as positive relations with a spirit. Unlike Hume, Frazer, and others, Smith argued that religion is not based on psychological fear, but on a happy sharing of the sacrificial food with the spirit being and with the community. The notion of sacrifice as atonement for sins developed later, he thought, when sacrificial animals (or humans) came to be seen as property to pay a divine debt (Smith 2002).

The priest-king was a role known to classicists such as Frazer for some time. Greek kings in Homeric literature were seen as sacred or divine, Frazer says, and that the rule of a good, healthy, strong king would bring fruitfulness to the land – wheat, sheep, fish, and babies would multiply plentifully. The principle was that if a king lost his virility, became sick, or unable to father children, the land’s fertility would suffer. The next step was the belief in the need to kill a weakening king and transfer his power to a stronger successor before the power faded. Frazer believed this to be illustrated in the riddle of the priest at Nemi, anxious to protect his life from attackers (Frazer 1922, Chap. 24).

Now we approach the core of Frazer’s theory. As he expanded his research and the number of volumes of *The Golden Bough*, he increasingly strengthened his central thesis that the core of “savage” magic and religion was the obsession with assuring the continuing cycle of divine powers for the growth of vegetation and animal reproduction (Frazer 1922, Chap. 28, p. 349). His thesis



was centered on a vegetation religion – not a tribal totem religion, not a spiritual, transcendent god of morality religion, but the first rituals he thought to be repeatedly enacted to assure the fruitfulness of life on earth by keeping strong the divine powers of the priest-king. Frazer amplified his argument with similar cases worldwide, as well as the development of the sacrifice of a substitute for the king – humans, animals, plants, or other valuables. The divine energy could be shared in the people’s feasts following the ritual, which came to be called sacramental meals:

The worshipful animal is killed . . . that each of his worshippers may receive a portion of the divine virtues that are supposed to emanate from the dead or dying god (Frazer 1922, p. 623).

This suggests that the “other” religions who sacrificed and ate foods such as pork, opposed by “our” religion, might give our priests a way of forbidding us from joining them by making their sacramental foods psychologically taboo for us. Thus, Jewish and Muslim taboos on eating pork, for example, may come from the priests who saw their neighboring “pagans” eating pork sacrificed to Demeter in Greece and to Baal in Canaan.

## Dying and Rising Gods

Still controversial is Frazer’s argument that there have been numerous examples of dying and rising gods. He had no trouble finding examples in classic studies of eastern Mediterranean cultures: Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysus, Persephone, and the “Corn-Mother” or “Corn-Spirit” (corn = grain) in plants and animals worldwide. Building on Wilhelm Mannhardt’s theory of the *korndämonen*, Frazer interpreted these and many others as examples of his core theory: (a) the divine force behind the planting of seeds seems to die underground, (b) the growth of the plant is a resurrection of the apparently dead divine force, and (c) the rituals and myths of the dying and rising gods and goddesses express this fervent belief:

Under the names of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, the people of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and revival of life,

especially of vegetable life, which they personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead (Frazer 1922, p. 378).

Frazer’s critics, such as Andrew Lang, rejected the centrality of the vegetation spirit practices (Lang 1901), broadly attributing illogical archaic myth, ritual, and religion to the premodern failure to distinguish between humans and other things in the world (Lang 1887, Chap. 3). Lang and others also rejected the comparative method, saying that he glossed over too many details that make the cases different (Boas 1994), thus making the concept of dying and rising gods impossible (Jonathan Z. Smith), but others today argue that the similarities are strong enough to make the comparative method valid and the dying and rising gods a convincing concept (Mettinger 2001).

## Heady Non-Psychology

Frazer sought to find an overarching logic, however mistaken, in prescientific magic and religion. He tied the vegetation spirit theme into wider practices: the expulsion of evil in the scapegoat (Frazer 1922, Chaps. 55–58), the winter solstice fire festivals in Europe (Frazer 1922, Chaps. 62–63), including burning human sacrifices or effigies, and the myth of the death of the Nordic Balder by mistletoe (Frazer 1922, Chap. 65). This heady mixture made for a sweeping theory, pulling a vast range of ritualized phenomena into his single theory of the vegetation deity’s annual cycle.

Frazer’s theory was daring and exciting to Europeans waiting for explanations of other cultures’ strangely erotic and bloody practices. In the guise of a thoroughly pragmatic, materialist theory that assured the fertility of the crops and animals, Frazer in theory rejected any role of emotion – no social or psychological motives are necessary, Frazer thought. But then he would hint at deeply psychological motives such as fear in this frothy mixture of bloody murder, political domination, erotic rituals, and life overcoming death, all happening among the “others,” just beneath the proper surface of his Victorian consciousness. Denying psychology, he elaborated on it with a flourish.



Though he was friends with and initially inspired by Frazer, Bronislaw Malinowski became a leader of the new, more empirical, field-oriented, revealing functionalist, twentieth-century anthropology that rejected the old-style reckless armchair comparative speculations and insisted upon careful observations of behavior, limited to the context of an observed tribal society. His ethnography in the South Pacific set a new standard because he learned the language of the natives he was studying, became friends with some, and developed the classic theory of participant observation, a new anthropological methodology (Malinowski 1948). This development soon made Frazer professionally irrelevant among anthropologists, although the themes that he explored remained fascinating to them.

The myth and ritual school, a group of classicists, also called the “Cambridge Ritualists,” was influenced by Frazer, notably in their quest for the primitive roots of classical Greek ritual, drama, literature, society, and the theory of the priority of ritual to myth. They included Jane E. Harrison, Gilbert Murray, A. B. Cook, and Frances M. Cornford (Ackerman 1991).

## Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud soon picked up on the unconscious elements in Frazerian themes, such as totem and taboo, with his Oedipal interpretation but gave more credit to the power of unconscious incest dynamics. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913/1950), Freud saw totems as ancestral fathers. But for him, this was a continuation of the historical events in his speculative theory of the “primal horde.” The strongest male mated with as many females as desired, and as his sons grew into puberty, lacking women, they killed him and mated with his wives. Thus, they were able to become men themselves, but felt terribly guilty, so set up a sacred totem animal as a substitute to be revered for the murdered father. The guilty sons felt the need to atone and reconcile with the dead father. So the sacrifice of the totem animal expresses both sides of the ambivalent totem psychology – anger

and reverence – echoing the primal murder and penance for it down the generations. The whole ritual was saturated with Oedipal guilt and is thus filled with taboos. The strongest taboos in this situation are the taboos against disrespecting the fatherly ruler and dealing with corpses. Freud sees these taboos as Oedipal guilt aversions. This was an elaboration on Freud’s theory that unconsciously, God is nothing more than an exalted father (Freud 1913/1950, p. 147), an extension of the primal totem, and so Christian communion is an unconscious repetition of the guilty primal murder of the father. Freud’s venture into anthropology was at least as reckless as Frazer’s, both extending the daring speculations of nineteenth-century thought. Freud fares better in the realm of clinical psychology, where unconscious dynamics are openly acknowledged (Freud 1913/1950).

## Carl Jung

Carl Jung’s archetypal psychology of the collective unconscious shares some themes with Frazer, such as the comparison of motifs from cultures around the world. But Jung is interested not in grand theories of history based on myth, nor in evolution, magic, or fertility, but in healing. He focuses first on the patient’s feelings and dreams, his unconscious production of images that have parallels in collective images, such as the ego, the lover (*anima/animus*), or the shadow (Jung 1979, para. 1–42). Jung’s comparative method is much more focused and disciplined than Frazer’s speculations, even when he ventures into cultural reflections. Jung developed a strong theory of archetypal images that has had a major influence (often unacknowledged) on psychotherapeutic psychology, such as his archetypal image of the introvert and extravert typology.

For Jung, the divine is not Frazer’s vegetation spirit or Freud’s exalted father, but a far more refined archetypal experience that he named the “Self” (Jung 1979, para. 43–126). Subsequent Jungian analysts refined Jung’s thought even further. Jungian feminists corrected Jung’s prefeminist views, exploring the goddess archetypal images (Bolen 1984). James Hillman

criticizes Frazerian theories that portray themselves as doing science and revisions them as imaginative mythologies. While anthropology was striving to become more factual, Hillman's archetypal psychology revisions old nineteenth-century concepts such as Tylor's animism and Freud's Oedipus complex into archetypal mythologies (Hillman 1975, pp. 12, 18).

The development of Frazer's theory took place in the context of the development of the rise of Protestantism's higher biblical criticism, originating in Germany. Frazer came out of the Calvinist Presbyterian and Free Church struggles in Scotland and the debates in England, where Christianity was wrestling with issues such as the importance of a state church versus the need for nonconformist independent churches. Also, the German-based free-thinking biblical criticism that was taking the Bible apart as a historical document, heavily indebted to the customs of its time and editing processes, challenged the literal readings of the Bible (Kee 1997). This was consistent with the rise of comparative religion.

A fascinating blend of highly imaginative literary speculations with a page-turning effort to plumb the depths of the mysterious practices of societies strange to proper Victorian England, *The Golden Bough* has been thoroughly deconstructed but still carries some cultural impact. The 1922 condensation has not yet gone out of print. Although (or because) Frazer never traveled beyond Greece and had no interest in actually meeting a "savage," his book resonates in the collective unconscious of Western culture. It still carries a fascination that Cambridge Classicist Mary Beard recognized as a "metaphorical voyage into the unknown, the wild, the Other" (1992, p. 221). Much of its appeal has to do with its effort to separate European knowledge from the new societies appearing in the Europe's expanding horizon and to affirm the certainty of European epistemologies by denigrating the magical and religious practices of the "savages." Its oversimplified and shocking exposés served as a reassuring effort to legitimize European imperialism (Beard 1992, p. 217). It allowed readers to fantasize scandalous, dramatic, bloody, and fantastic rituals while striving to keep them at

a distance as alien superstitions, by shoving their psychology into the unconscious.

Yet Frazer's work is not just a charming, tawdry antique. It has serious implications for the interpretation of Jesus' death and resurrection that the study of world religions inevitably brought forth. If the dying and rising god theme was indeed common in Jesus' time, this was not the only account of a god on earth who died and was resurrected. But, the argument goes, the earlier cases were strictly vegetation deities, and Christ was a moral and spiritual reformer, not an image of the life-death cycle of plants. This, of course, was not enough for church leaders, who saw his theory as an intolerable attack on traditional Christianity's view of Jesus' resurrection as unique. Though an agnostic or atheist, Frazer attended church and had an uneasy conscience and a naive sense of the powerful impact that his kind of work would have on religions. He saw himself as a scientist who must seek truth despite the social consequences or sentiment, yet he held onto a conventional Christianity (Fraser 1990, p. 134; Sharpe 1975, pp. 87–94).

Although his material and methods have stimulated many, such as Freud and Jung, Frazer's preliminary use of the comparative method has become an easy target of criticism of the comparative studies of religion in general (Boas 1994; Malinowski 1948; Smith 2005). Thus, his research provides a major locus for exploring the value of that method in the study of world religions. However, the *Golden Bough* is a monumental compendium of material, accurate and inaccurate, recklessly speculative, naively rationalistic, and blandly confident in the archetypal mythology of "progress." Not unlike Freud's achievement of revealing the unconscious in psychology, and Jung's archetypal psychology, Frazer roughly sketched in broad outline many of the deep archaic roots that trouble contemporary society, far more erotic, bloody, mysterious, religious, and fascinating than the modern rational veneer that has developed since those dark, passionate rituals flourished. Subsequent psychological interpretations of the dramas that he described take a deeper approach. How Frazer's material might

help us understand “irrational” behavior in current politics, society, and personal life remains an important topic of debate. For the study of world religions using the comparative method, the question lingers whether this method will undermine religion or generate new religions and new “ecumenical” tolerance.

In 1959, Theodor Gaster published an updated, abridged version called *The New Golden Bough*, which sought to eliminate unreliable field reports and updated others, and modified Frazer’s theory somewhat in view of recent scholarship (Gaster 1959). But it was seen as a “misguided facelift,” not the needed critique (Hyman 1959, p. 439).

Frazer inspired many artists, such as James Joyce (*Ulysses*) and T. S. Eliot (Eliot wrote that in the *The Waste Land*, his reference to the Tarot’s “Hanged Man” card: “is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer.” in Abrams, 1968, p. 2584). Discussing Joyce, Eliot also says: “Psychology... ethnology and The Golden Bough ... make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method we may now use the mythical method.” in Abrams 1968, p. 2626). In 1959, Stanley Hyman’s book *The Tangled Bank: Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers* interprets Frazer’s work as literature, which Frazer himself acknowledged, while still trying to cling to a scientific method (Hyman 1959, p. 244). Hyman (1959) points to Frazer’s “vast argument from analogy” (p. 237), using root metaphors, such as cultural evolution (p. 247), the mystical communion of “savages” as philosophers sharing in the spiritual powers of nature (p. 224), the image of explosives and electricity to describe the power of a king’s tabooed energy (p. 251), nature as a machine (p. 235), and the military metaphor of the long, slow war against superstition (p. 251). Hyman also pointed out the inconsistency of Frazer’s waffling theory of myth as intellectual, historical, or ritual in origin (1959, p. 239). Frazer certainly did write in the literary style that combined what was thought of as science in his time with the flowery rhetoric of an English gentleman. He could not describe a scene without elaborating on it artistically.

Mircea Eliade later developed a more careful and refined comparative study than Frazer’s, using the newer phenomenological method, blended with more reliable anthropological and historical studies. In his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958), Eliade explored “hierophanies” or appearance of the sacred in phenomena such as the sky, sun, moon, water, stones, earth, fertility, temples, time, and myths. He echoed Frazer dimly in his studies of vegetation and rites of regeneration in agricultural fertility cults. But for Eliade, “there has never been any real vegetation cult, any religion solely built upon plants and trees” (Eliade 1958, p. 325). The cycles of death and life are evident, although rooted in sacred hierophanies, not efforts to manipulate nature, which to science is mechanical. Eliade edited the first edition of the classic *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987, 2nd ed. 2005), now the standard encyclopedia for the study of world religions. He was criticized, mostly from the empiricist anthropological side, for overgeneralizing and lacking sufficient observed support. But, having closely studied Hindu Yoga, for example, he believed that the symbolism of experiences of the sacred is based on reality (however it may be misinterpreted), not illusion. This was offensive to critics committed to the non-spiritual, non-symbolic scientific metaphysics (Smith 2005).

The debate continues over comparative religion’s value, wrestling with these themes. On the one side, how much should scholars of world religions acknowledge the reality of the sacred for believers and how much should they find some truths in symbolic, poetic language? On the other hand, how much should they use more scientific methods that do not acknowledge the reality of the sacred, even for believers, and emphasize the higher value of detailed, logical, more literal language and anthropological studies of specific societies? This is a major hermeneutic, methodological debate in our culture. Jonathan Z. Smith’s rejection of Frazer’s category of “Dying and Rising Gods” represents those who seek a more “scientific” method for comparative religion. Kimberly Patton’s *A Magic Still Dwells* represents those who think that meaningful

symbolic comparisons can be made based on authentic experiences of sacred realities which cannot so easily be discredited by the scientific hermeneutic. Even scientific and postmodern skepticism about truth claims are not neutral, she argues, since they are based on imaginative and metaphysical presuppositions [such as the human right to dominate an alien nature], not simply evidence. Nevertheless, situating general themes in various social contexts far more carefully than Frazer did, as well as carefully examining truth claims, is essential as comparative religion continues.

## See Also

- ▶ [Atonement](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Hanging and Hanging God](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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however no coercion in grace: it may be accepted or rejected by the one on whom it is bestowed.

In St. Paul's commentaries on faith, the necessary exertions of the will are displaced from seeking to keep the law to accepting, through grace, the salvation that is freely given by God: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8–9).

In psychological terms, grace can be seen to be the matrix within which healing energies can pass between psychotherapist and patient. It is grace that allows the patient to safely express any and all life experiences with the assurance that they will be accepted and not harshly judged. It is also grace that enables the therapist to maintain professional detachment and not become destructively involved with the patient when the patient emotionally attacks, challenges, and tests the psychotherapist in the course of transference.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)

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## Grace

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Grace seems to be a particularly Christian concept. The Incarnation itself is commonly referred to in Christian writing as an act of God's grace. "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Grace as an element of Christian faith denotes God's unmerited favor toward all people and, though a free gift with "no strings attached," is often linked with the human will to do good and seen as the means by which a person is empowered to make right choices. There is

## Great Mother

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## The Great Mother Archetype

From a psychoanalytical perspective, the Great Mother is the archetypal manifestation of the



collective cultural experience of childhood development. More specifically, the influences exerted on children are not so much the product of the mother herself, as an individual, but rather the product of the archetypal mother image rooted in the collective unconscious. As such, the image of the Great Mother reflects both the feelings of maternal support, comfort, and love for a child and the negative capricious experience of vulnerability, helplessness, and dependence experienced by the child in development. In this sense, the archetypal image of the mother is nurturing and loving but also capricious, mysterious, and linked to feelings of vulnerability and seduction (Jung 1968).

Thus, there is an intrinsic duality to the archetypal representation of the Great Mother. The imago of the divine feminine is paradoxical, serving as an archetypal manifestation in the collective unconscious but also, precisely because of the power of the symbol in the human psyche, as the focal point of a vast array of projections from both men and women. The Great Mother is seductive and capricious, virginal and pure, mothering and supportive yet mysterious and cruel. Jung commented on this sense of a fractured and split symbolic configuration of the Great Mother, observing that such splits are common in powerful symbolic representations and furthermore that as a fundamental part of childhood development, a child has to come to terms with their biological mother as a fully formed human being and reconcile these contradictory perceptions within the infant-mother dyad if they are to fully develop into psychological adulthood and relate to their mother as an individual rather than as a symbol. Closely linked to this experience of reconciling divergent symbolic forms associated with the archetype of the Great Mother is Jung's hypothesis that the Great Mother is experienced differently by males and females. Jung argued that the intrinsic alien qualities of femininity to a masculine psyche would lead to the representation of the Great Mother being more deeply impressed in the unconscious aspects of the psyche of a male and thus would exert a far deeper influence. Similarly, the feminine

experience of the Great Mother is far more closely linked to a woman's conscious representation of the self and thus exerts less of a hold on the unconscious (Jung 1968).

It is this sense that the symbolic manifestation of the Great Mother in the form of Mother Goddesses is perhaps the most illuminating. The breadth and depth of Mother Goddess representations and worship through history and across cultures is remarkable. Mother Goddesses, as the symbolic manifestation of the Great Mother archetype, are associated with all major aspects of life such as death, birth, initiation, fertility, agriculture, warfare reproduction, and wisdom. Indeed, the sheer diversity of Mother Goddess representations closely aligns itself with Jung's paradoxical union of opposites intrinsic to the Great Mother archetype (Jung 1968).

### **The Great Mother in Goddess Worship**

While a full discussion of the manifestation of Goddess worship or deification of the archetypal Great Mother and the complex and often controversial claims surrounding claims of Neolithic widespread Goddess worship is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting some common themes that resonate throughout cultural patterns of deification or sacralization of the Great Mother archetype. Sacred images of the Great Mother archetype range through the vast proliferation of the Goddesses of antiquity and contemporary Hinduism to the sacralization of the Virgin Mary in many catholic traditions to the Gnostic veneration of Sophia. Despite this proliferation, there are certain common themes and distinctions in the way the feminine imago is manifested. Typically, these themes also reflect the varied and diverse associations of a reified femininity as experienced in cultural life (James 1983).

### **The Great Mother and the Holy Virgin**

The manifestation of the Great Mother is commonly associated with virginity. Perhaps, some



of the most visible representations of this model of reified feminine sacrality are the iconic figure of the Virgin Mary in Catholicism and the Hindu Goddess Kannagi who is goddess of both chastity and the sacredness of motherhood. Similarly, Mother Goddesses are typically associated with nurturing, protection, and healing. Overtly, this relates to the aforementioned experience of childhood and infancy combined with the socially ascribed role given to women in most cultures. However, it also relates to anthropological notions of pollution and taboo through which the purity associated with motherhood or the sacred virgin serves to purge people of corruption and contamination. Goddesses in general tend to be attributed with nurturing qualities serving as the symbolic wellspring of life. Similarly, images of the sacred feminine are commonly constructed in local mythologies as wives and consorts of gods, also linking the role of the Great Mother with established social structure and practice. Conversely, the Great Mother is also commonly associated with violence and destructive power; as illustrated by the triple aspected Morrigan of Celtic folklore, the Balinese Goddess Rangda and the Hindu Goddess, Kali. These Goddesses, while having nurturing and loving sides to their personas, are commonly represented as capricious, destructive, and cruel. This pattern closely reflects Jung's notion of the Great Mother as represented archetypally in religious forms, having a distinct duality which reflects the sense of helplessness and vulnerability experienced by infants in development and growth.

### **The Great Mother and the Earth Goddess**

Goddesses are also commonly linked with the earth and with natural phenomena. A contemporary manifestation of this is the Earth Goddess of many neo-pagan traditions or James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis. Developing in the nineteenth century, this notion of a universal Mother Goddess linked to the earth has become widespread in western culture (Hutton 1999). However, while Earth Mother goddesses are very common, there

are numerous exceptions to this rule of feminine Mother Goddess and earth association. For example, Egyptian goddesses are rarely Earth Mothers; indeed, Sky Goddesses and Earth Gods are more common, as in the Japanese Shinto tradition. The Venus figures found by archaeologists in the Neolithic period are often taken to represent a universal monotheistic Earth Mother religion preceding a later degeneration to patriarchal religious traditions. However, while there is evidence for this, the Paleolithic Earth Goddess hypothesis has come under severe historical critique due to the often indiscriminate manner in which various symbols were uncritically configured as intrinsically representative of an Earth Goddess while contemporary use of similar figures by indigenous peoples rarely corresponded with the Great Goddess hypothesis. That being said, many of these images and artworks clearly relate to examples of ritual use of feminine images and artwork and indicate the importance given to the sacred feminine in the ancient world (Gimbutas 1982; Hutton 1993).

### **The Great Mother as a Religious Manifestation**

The Great Mother as a religious manifestation is demonstrated throughout history and across cultures and continues to undergo renewal and redevelopment within many new and well-established religious movements. The Mother Goddess image has played an incredibly important role in prehistory, throughout the development of agriculture and contemporary civilization and in urban life, and continues to play a significant role in all religions and cultures. Nevertheless, it is important to evaluate the significance and symbolic import of these representations within the context of the culture and society in which they operate. It is also worth noting that, from a Jungian perspective, while the Great Mother serves as the archetypal source for a host of religious representations, it is not the same as the deified images of femininity and motherhood that exist across cultures. For Jung, the

fundamental nature of the mother–child dyad meant that the Great Mother as an archetype would be a universal symbol within the collective unconscious. However, this is a far cry from reifying the cultural manifestations as existent manifestations of a universal deity (Jung 1968).

## See Also

- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Mary
- ▶ Sophia

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## Green Man

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The Green Man (Fig. 1) is an ancient depiction of the foliate face of a man, woman, or animal with vegetative growth around the face or sprouting from the mouth. He is a personification of the transcendent power behind the growth of life and the psychology of human desire to reproduce. He was an archetypal pre-Christian vegetation god image that was then accepted in church



**Green Man, Fig. 1** Photo courtesy of the author; molding of original church art by oakapple designs.co.uk

architecture for centuries. He appears in many countries, in thousands of churches and pub names, as well as in dances, such as the English Morris Dancers, where he is a man dancing around, totally covered with leaves, chasing girls, similar to “Jack in the Green.” This expresses his embodiment of the joyous natural psychological desire to reproduce. He is often part of a dying and rising ritual, expressing his personification of the winter disappearance of many plants and the spring reappearance of plants and births of new animals. He is prominent in Europe, especially in Ireland and England, in medieval churches and cathedrals, sometimes also as a woman or animal. For example, several Green Men with bright golden leaves were carved on the pulpit of Elisabethkirche in Marburg, Germany, around 1340 (Anderson 1990, p. 64).

The Green Man is a masklike version of the spirit of many ancient vegetation gods, such as Osiris, Dionysos, Tammuz, Adonis, Attis, and Cernunnos, when he was related to the Great Goddess as lover and, as a divine power of life in plants and animals, is her reborn or resurrected son (Anderson 1990, p. 21). In the days when agriculture was understood as a gift from the divine, the Green Man was thanked for the crops. When life was more subject to disease and death, people psychologically felt more

reverence and thanks for the Green Man as an image of sustenance. In pre-Christian Europe, trees and groves were commonly the focus of sacred presence, and the head was also venerated as a locus of soul. Yew trees, for example, have long been felt as sacred in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Many remain today in churchyards and cemeteries. In the USA one can feel that sacred presence in the giant redwood and Sequoia forests in California.

The Green Man was a figure in many legends, in rowdy adventures with Jack and romances with girls (Anderson 1990, p. 10ff). The Green Knight was humanized in the medieval Arthurian romantic legend *Sir Gawaine and the Green Knight* (Armitage 2007). Green Man songs and poems include clear identification with both plants and human love:

Like antler, like veins in the brain the birches  
Mark patterns of mind on the red winter sky;  
'I am thought of all plants,' says the Green Man,  
'I am thought of all plants,' says he.

...  
The alders are rattling as though ready for battle  
Guarding the grove where she waits for her lover;  
'I burn with desire,' says the Green Man,  
'I burn with desire,' says he (Anderson 1990, p. 12).

The power of reproduction present in plants, animals, and sexual desire was symbolized by this age-old Green Man, burning with desire to reproduce and keep life going. Ultimately, reproduction is deeper than biology, desire deeper than psychological instinct. It is also a sacred wonder, a "greenness" emerging from the ultimate reality that keeps life going on this planet. This image is a deep archetypal image that is transferable to other cultures and religions. The Hebrew Tree of Life is central to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9). Jesus used a vegetative image, saying "I am the true vine. . ." (John 15:1). The medieval nun Hildegard von Bingen emphasizes the image of *viriditas* – "greenness" in her creation spirituality, God's creative power appearing in nature. She called Jesus "Greenness Incarnate" (Metzner 1999, p. 140).

From the Renaissance onward, the Green Man continued to appear in stained glass, manuscripts, and metalwork. But as the separation between

humans and nature grew in the age of science, the Green Man faded from consciousness. However, he was revived in the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. The Green Man then appeared in contemporary times in many artists' works (Araneo 2006). In 1939 Lady Raglan stirred his reawakening with her anthropological study. Many international and current appearances of this enduring vital life-energy figure have been documented (Green Man). In Kenya, Wangari Maathai, Ph.D. (1940–2011), embodied the "Green Woman" spirit. She founded the Green Belt Movement, focused on planting trees, environmental conservation, and women's rights. For this, in 2004 she became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. The Green Man [and Woman] point through the power of plant and animal growth, down to their ontological roots. He/she can transform the psychology of desire to a deeper, much broader sense of the sacredness of reproduction. The "Green" image is now gaining a renewed power, expressing the depth of the ecological psyche in its struggle against industrial pollution.

### See Also

- ▶ Animism
- ▶ Dying and Rising Gods
- ▶ Ecology and Christianity
- ▶ Golden Bough, The
- ▶ Re-Enchantment
- ▶ Resurrection

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## Grief Counseling

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This entry begins with some of the theorists who guide grief and bereavement counseling. It then considers cross-cultural and spiritual issues in grief and bereavement. Next, it examines two modalities of grief practice, individual and group, as well as the core skills necessary for grief counseling. Finally, it raises the current controversy about the diagnosis of prolonged grief, now under consideration for the DSM-V.

### Freud

Freud was one of the first to conceptualize the differences between healthy and complicated bereavement. In “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917), he wrote that grief was not itself a pathological state although it often feels that way. All griever feel dejected, exhausted, and depleted. They are preoccupied with the lost person and withdraw their energy from the outside world while intensely holding onto memories of the deceased. They do not relinquish those memories easily, as no one ever abandons love willingly. But with time and reality checks, mourners begin to redirect their intense energy back to the world in order to love and live again. How does this occur? Through identifying with aspects of the lost person, Freud wrote that the “shadow of the object falls upon the ego,” speaking to how loss shapes the mourner’s self in new ways (Freud 1917, p. 249). Thus, mourning can be seen as potentially changing the mourner’s identity and even ideals (Loewald 1962).

But Freud (1917) added another dimension to grief, which he called *melancholia*, and which others have called complicated or prolonged grief. In Freud’s view, when there has been a conflicted relationship with a person who has died, unconscious anger toward that person is directed at the self, leading to a loss of self-esteem, self-criticism, self-blame, worthlessness, loss of appetite or sleep, and, in its worst, suicidality. Pathological grief does not end. It is debilitating to internalize an unresolved and conflicted relationship and difficult to treat, due to its unconscious and denied roots.

### Children

Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) added to the discourse in his study of children’s grief. He studied children who had been separated from their mothers. The babies he observed in hospitals first protested with much wailing and screaming. When that failed to restore their mothers, children wept, pined, searched, and yearned for them. When their mothers still failed to return, some infants became detached, denying their needs for emotional attachment altogether. He theorized that grieving children experience four potentially painful stages of grief including numbing, yearning and searching, disorganization, and despair. But he added the fifth stage of reorganization, suggesting the importance of resilience and the capacity to adapt to loss that many children and adults have.

### Adaptation

Lindemann (1944) also defined normal and pathological grief as varying forms of adaptation. Studying those who lost loved ones in the Coconut Grove fire in Boston, Mass., he saw grief as always including physiological symptoms, preoccupations with images of the deceased, feelings related to not having done enough for the deceased, and anger at other professionals for not having saved the deceased. He saw pathological grief as symptoms resulting

from unconsciously incorporating the lost person, overactivity, manic behavior, marked hostility, or self-destructiveness. He noted the value of being able to anticipate a loss in order to prepare for and cope with it.

## Kubler-Ross

While Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980) and Lindemann (1944) suggested specific stages of grief, Kubler-Ross (1969) was even more specific in delineating specific stages of grief, seeing grievers moving through linear sequences. First, mourners denied the loss; next, they felt anger, and then they tried to bargain. Next, they experienced depression and finally they moved into acceptance. In fact, we now know that no one actually grieves in such linear ways. Stroebe and Shut (1999) note that grief is always a dual process. Loss is never static but moves back and forth between expressing grief and living life.

## Positive Aspects

Many contemporary grief theorists (Baker 2001; Bonnano 2004; Stroebe and Shut 1999; Worden 2009) therefore emphasize some of the positive aspects of grief. For example, most current grief theorists report that mourners never relinquish their ties to the dead, but maintain continuing bonds with those who have died; their relationships continuing to grow despite the loss. Further, loss and even traumatic loss can be occasions for growth. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2006) note that after a traumatic loss such as in combat or after tragedies such as 9/11 and in natural disasters, mourners create new meanings, even monuments, to those who have suffered, often fighting on their behalf, so others suffer less.

This view of grief sees mourners not as passive recipients of loss but as active participants in their grief, creating new narratives and meaning (Neimeyer et al. 2011) and often making profound social and political changes as a result of the loss (Berzoff 2010). For example, mothers against drunk driving, or those who testified in

Congress about lax security after 9/11, or the Susan Komen Foundation offers us a few of so many everyday examples of how mourners use their grief experience to activate social and systemic change.

## Postmodern Views

A more postmodern view also deconstructs the values embedded in Western theories of mourning. In many Western cultures, the emphasis on separation and autonomy leads to the view that grief can be worked through and resolved. But in many cultures, grief is not expressed verbally but through the body: a pain in the belly, or a “wind” in the heart (Corwin 1995). For some groups who have been oppressed, death may be experienced as emancipation from suffering. Many Native American, African Indian, and even White cultures encourage contacting the dead for counsel. Most cultures see the goal of mourning as maintaining a spiritual involvement with the dead. In Hindu cultures, sacrifice is often a part of bereavement, with offerings made from birth to death to ensure the dead’s entrance into Nirvana. There are also different expressions of feelings of bereavement. The Balinese are expected to project a happy and smooth outer appearance in mourning (Wikan 1990) while African Americans and Jews consider stoicism at funerals to be pathological (Imber-Black 1991).

## Groups

How do these many ideas inform grief counseling? First, counseling not only occurs in individual work but in group work as well (Silverman 1986). Groups for the bereaved can destigmatize grief; they can be ways to share resources, offer social support to mourners, normalize tragedy (Sutton and Leichty 2004), and offer spiritual connection so that loss is linked to something greater than the self. Groups can include family loss groups, children’s groups, and bereavement-specific groups (i.e., widows, adolescents, or



parents who have lost a child). For many in groups, participation is a sign that recovery has begun to occur (Silverman 2000).

## Individual Counseling

In individual counseling, the emphasis is on finding both meaning to existential suffering (Neimeyer 2002) and on maintaining enduring connection to the deceased in the midst of embarking on a new life (Worden 2009). While grief counseling may focus on understanding and dissolving more pathological bonds to the deceased (Freud 1917), another part of the work is in recognizing that there will always be waves and paroxysms of grief (Didion 2005). Grievers need to tell their stories and should be encouraged to do so: through bringing in pictures, blogs, and objects of the dead, since literal objects of the dead can connect the mourner to the deceased person (Berzoff 2004; Volkan 1981). Clients should be encouraged to tell their stories again and again, reconstructing the meaning of the person's life and death. Grief counselors should always elicit cultural practices, rituals, and prayer, which provide solace and support. Clinicians should listen for the client's belief system, meaning-making system, and spiritual connections.

## Grief Counselors

What does the grief counselor need in order to do this work? First, self-knowledge and an open heart are essential (Farber et al. 2004). Grief counselors need to know how they have faced their own losses and mortality. They must hold a clinical stance of authenticity, respect, and the capacity for surprise (Berzoff and Silverman 2004). Grief counselors need to be able to bear witness, be present to, and to tolerate suffering without undue anxiety or fear (Cassell 1982). They need to be able to elicit multiple forms of legacy building that commemorate the dead. They need to be able to attend to each individual or family's way of expressing grief, and to be able to bear a range of feelings including anger, sadness, and hopelessness.

They also need to be able to offer hope. Grief counselors need to recognize that there is no one right way to grieve and to be aware of the values, expectations, developmental stages, strengths, and ways of coping that each mourner has used in the past (Ferris et al. 2002).

This is not work for the faint of heart. Compassion fatigue is always a risk, and so clinicians must find forms of renewal in self-care, supervision, meditation, or exercise. Sometimes self-care comes from the satisfaction of helping another; sometimes it emerges through helping others change the environments in which their loved ones died (Berzoff and Silverman 2004).

## Prolonged Grief

Currently, there is a debate over whether to make "prolonged grief" a diagnostic category. Prigerson et al. (2002) have conducted research for over a decade in support of this diagnosis that includes having trouble accepting death, death interfering with life, being bothered by intrusive images, avoiding uncomfortable previously enjoyed activities, and feeling cut off from others, for more than 6 months. While the potential value of such a diagnosis may be reimbursement for grief counseling, we must ask whether these criteria do not describe every mourner, healthy and pathological? Placing a time limit of 6 months on grieving may lead to stigmatizing, problematizing, and pathologizing mourning itself. The medicalization of grief may also undermine a bereaved person's self-esteem and even encourage dependency on a grief counselor (Parkes 2011) when there may be no need for counseling given that grief is an inevitable part of the human experience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhist Death Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Compassion Fatigue](#)
- ▶ [Death Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)



- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jewish Mourning Rituals
- ▶ Postmodernism
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Purpose in Life
- ▶ Rebirth
- ▶ Reincarnation
- ▶ Resurrection
- ▶ Rites of Passage
- ▶ Theodicy

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## Guanyin

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*Guanyin* is one of the most popular deities of East Asia. In China she is known as *Guanyin* (also Kuan Yin or Kwan Yin). She is a Bodhisattva also called *GuanShiYin* (观世音), *Guan Zi Zai* (观自在), or *GuangShiYin* (光世音), meaning “She who hears the voices in the world crying for help.” Cantonese variations are *Kwoon Yam*, *Kwoon Sai Yam*, or *Kwoon Chi Choi*. In Japan she is known as *Kwannon Bosatzu* or *Kwannon Sama*, in Vietnam as *Quan Am*, and in Korea as *Kwan Seum Bosal*. In *Daoism*, *Guanyin* is called “*Ci Hang Zhen Ren*” (慈航真人) “Immortal of the Benevolent Ship,” “*Guanyin Da Shi*” (观音大), or “*Ancient Buddha of the Southern Sea*” (南海古佛). The male Bodhisattva *Avalokiteshvara* was brought from India to China, and his name was translated to the Chinese as *Guanyin*. Then it was slowly blended with uniquely indigenous Chinese elements. Although often oversimplified as simply an emanation of *Avalokiteshvara*, *Guanyin* is actually a uniquely Chinese goddess who synthesizes Buddhist, Daoist, Confucian, and indigenous shamanic elements.

## History

Buddhism was first introduced to China during the Han Dynasty (206–220 CE), and *Guanyin* soon appeared as a male Chinese version of *Avalokiteshvara* in art as a monk with a thin mustache. Then, over the next several centuries, *Guanyin* was widely transformed into a woman. As early as 483–493 CE, an emperor had a vision of a feminine *Guanyin* (Stein 1986, p. 23). This presents a problem: some scholars cannot explain why the masculine changed into the extremely

popular feminine *Guanyin* in China. This feminine transformation must have come from somewhere with good reasons. The answer has historical grounds and psychological, social, and spiritual reasons among the people who made her so popular. Of all the imported Buddhist deities, *Guanyin* was the only one to become a genuine Chinese figure. Many Chinese are not even aware of her Buddhist roots (Yu 2001, p. 223).

Although *Guanyin* is now commonly regarded as a female deity, she may still appear as a man or a woman. For example, the current Dalai Lama is said to be an incarnation of *Guanyin*. In Buddhism today, when a person becomes enlightened, they may become a Buddha, no matter whether the person is a man or woman. Similarly, when a Buddhist swears to serve people heart and soul without any selfish desires, the person becomes a Bodhisattva, regardless of their gender, because ultimately the Buddha mind is beyond gender, although humans connect to the transcendent strongly through gender characteristics.

One historical reason for her popularity is that during the fourth through the sixth centuries, invaders from the north (“*caitiffs*”) invaded China and forced the government south into the Yangtze River valley. Amid this chaos, when traditional Confucianism struggled to maintain order and civility, people likely welcomed the warm, compassionate, saving spirit of *Guanyin*, who was portrayed as responding immediately to sincere cries for help from people in desperate situations. *Guanyin* miracle tales spread, telling of her saving people from warriors, drowning, sickness, and infertility, often stressing a conversion experience (Campany 1996).

Psychologically and socially, *Guanyin's* modern Buddhist egalitarianism goes against the ancient Confucian views of women as inferior, even polluted. Chinese goddesses helped remove women's supposed pollution related to reproduction. Their followers might seek purity by resisting marriage, not consummating their marriage, living in celibate women's communities, or providing their husbands with a concubine. Belief in goddesses still supports mothers and sisters who want to reduce family conflicts, such as paternal domination. The more

inclusive goddesses also help unite various village territorial groups (Sangren 1983, pp. 11–17). These important social and psychological functions of goddesses like *Guanyin* give many women a countercultural social group and goals outside family.

## Spirituality

The Buddha told Inexhaustible Intention Bodhisattva, “Good man, if any of the limitless hundreds of thousands of myriads of *Kotis* of living beings who are undergoing all kinds of suffering hear of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva and recite his name single-mindedly, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva will immediately hear their voices and rescue them” (Kuo-lin 1977). This is different from the traditions emphasizing study or meditation. This also goes against the ancient hierarchical traditions of Asia, in which the high gods were allied primarily with royalty. While celestial, *Guanyin* is also very close to people. *Guanyin* and the Bodhisattva *Da Shi Zhi* (大勢至) are two important assistants of Amita Buddha. The three are called “Three Saints in the Western Paradise.”

For Chinese Buddhists, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not only exist in the spiritual world. Nor are they just the statues in the temples or pictures in the altars. Some old gods were deified government officials exercising imperial territorial rule. But Buddhist deities are universal and “present” among the common people in daily life and emphasize individual salvation. But unlike some Buddhist practices that suppress the senses, *Guanyin* is more Tantric, appearing in sensation, sight, touch, hearing, and fragrances. *Guanyin* was the first Chinese deity to leave heaven and appear with saving powers when people were in crisis (Campany 1996, p. 256) (Fig. 1).

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have many forms, including appearing as common people, giving spiritual guidance, and performing miracles (including resurrections) (Yu 2001, pp. 190–191). Accounts of miracles and divine wonders were well known in China before *Guanyin*, but many of hers contained the new



**Guanyin, Fig. 1** Retrieved from “Forum/bbs” at <http://qiankunzhiyi.aa.topzj.com/forum-3926-1.html>.

Buddhist psychological emphasis on conversion to a new Buddhist life. The first known compiler of eyewitness accounts of *Guanyin* miracles was Fu Liang (374–426).

## Iconography

*Guanyin* is said to have 32 forms. Some of these were imported with *Avalokiteshvara* (such as the thousand-armed image), and some were indigenous Chinese images (such as giving a child):

1. The oldest known indigenous Chinese image is of the “Water Moon *Guan Yin*,” white-robed with a large moon halo (Yu 2001, p. 184).
2. *Guanyin* holding a willow branch and a narrow vase of her “sweet dew” of compassion and healing.

3. *Guanyin* with a fish basket, indicating *Guanyin* saving people in ocean storms (and in life).
4. *Guanyin* with a lotus flower (a traditional Indian image of beautiful new life on water, growing from mud [life's messes] yet remaining pure) indicating that she always helps people to become enlightened.
5. *Guanyin* in white (pure) clothes, indicating *Guanyin* going to the secular world to help people.
6. *Guanyin* in red clothes, indicating *Guanyin* staying in the temples to help people.
7. *Guanyin* with four arms or eleven faces on her crown or one thousand hands and eyes, indicating her many powers (a traditional Indian image).
8. *Guanyin* standing on a dragon (a traditional Chinese image), indicating her great powers to redeem sea animals.
9. *Guanyin* with a horse's head, indicating her going to the animal world to redeem animals.
10. *Guanyin* with a child, indicating her sending children to infertile women.
11. *Guanyin* seated in the casual "Royal Ease" pose, with legs apart and one arm resting on a knee raised high (like Hindu royal images).

But *Guanyin's forms* are countless. That is why there is a saying "If you be humble and modest, you will meet *Guanyin* everywhere." You can see *Guanyin* even in an oyster. In ancient times, there was a king who was very cruel and killed a lot of people and animals. He liked to eat oysters very much. In order to persuade him to love others, *Guanyin* made his/her image into all the oysters he got. So when he opened every oyster, he found the image of *Guanyin*. Then his Buddha nature was evoked and he realized *Guanyin's* intention, so later he became a very good king.

## Festivals and Pilgrimages

There are three annual *Guanyin* festivals. In the Chinese lunar calendar, February 19th is *Guanyin's* birthday, June 19th is her day of receiving *Dao* (becoming enlightened), and

September 19th is her day of achieving *Dao* (having the ability to apply the *Dao* perfectly to help others). Celebrations are held in each temple, and monks or nuns lead ceremonies such as singing "Praising Incense," reading the names of many Buddhas, reading "Da Bei Zhou" (大悲咒) (Mantra of Great Sympathy), singing "Praising of *Guanyin Da Shi*," reading "Poems of Bodhisattva *Guanyin*," and returning the benefits of prayers to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and to parents, children, relatives, friends, and even one's enemies in previous and present lives. *Guanyin's* Ritual of Repentance and Forgiveness is also popular (Yu 2001, pp. 263–265).

*Guanyin's Dao Chang* (道场) (main place of spreading the *Dao*) is on *Pu-tuo* mountain in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, in the bay south of Shanghai. *Pu-Tuo* was a Daoist haven from the first century BCE Han period. It has been destroyed by wars and pirates and rebuilt repeatedly. It became Buddhist by the eleventh century. It is a busy pilgrimage island where people seek blessings and visions at temples, monasteries, rocks, and caves full of surging waves. It is one of the traditional four major holy mountains in China. It is part of *Guanyin's* connection to China's South Sea, where miracle stories tell of her appearing in light or floating on a cloud to save drowning sailors.

Hang Zhou has also been a major *Guanyin* pilgrimage site. In 1987 an estimated two million pilgrims went there for her birthday. At such temples, pilgrims typically light incense and candles, chant and pray, burn spirit money to ancestors, and incubate dreams to be interpreted by monks. Pilgrims may beat on a hollow wooden "fish" and chant a *dharani* such as *Na Mo Da Ci Da Bei GuanShiYin Pu Sha* (Homage to the greatly compassionate, greatly merciful GuanShiYin Bodhisattva) (Blofeld 1977, p. 26).

## Texts

There are numerous *Guanyin* texts, notably "The Universal Gateway," which is the 25th chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. The oldest version we have of this was translated by Dharmaraksa in 286 CE

(Yu 2001, p. 161). Later it was translated from the Sanskrit into Chinese by Kumarajiva. It stresses how that people in need can call the name of *Guanyin* and they will be assisted immediately. It promises deliverance from swords, chains, demons, and bandits and offers sons to women who call out to her. There is some debate about her name's translation from the Sanskrit to the Chinese, but this is traditionally the text where the name for *Avalokiteshvara* was translated to *GuanShiYin*, meaning "Lord who perceives the cries of the world."

Early texts were found in a sealed cave at Dunhuang in northwestern China – wall paintings and banners of *Guanyin* saving people from distress, 1,048 copies of the Lotus Sutra, and almost 200 separate copies of the *Guanyin Sutra* (Campany 1996, p. 83). Another cave at Fangshan, near Beijing, revealed a treasure of hidden texts, stone slabs, and art about *Guanyin* (Yu 2001, p. 111). They showed that ancient kings often had *dharani* (invocations) carved on stone steles with sculptures, erected them around the country, and ordered monastics to memorize and chant them, seated in front of a *Guanyin* image.

A very popular text is the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) novel called *The Journey to the West*. This long, multivolume, historically based legend blends a Buddhist picture of *Guanyin* with indigenous Chinese local gods, Daoist *Xian* spirits, and various folklore scenes of dragons and monsters. The novel is based on the journey of the historical Tang (618–907) monk *Xuanzang*. His autobiography records a 17-year round-trip journey along the Silk Road from China to India to get the Dharma in sutras to take back to China. In the Ming novel he is called "Tripitaka," which is an honorary title for a monk. The story was made into a popular 1979 Chinese television series. *Guanyin* plays a major role in the tale. First she is sent by the Buddha to China to find a suitable messenger to come and get the Dharma. She chooses Monkey (symbol of ego), who struggles on his way with various monsters (shadow beasts). *Guanyin* graciously appears and converts each one – Sandy, Pigsy, and Dragon – with forgiveness for their sins and their vows to behave and help along the

journey. The highly allegorical and action-filled adventure shows *Guanyin's* refined Buddhist theme of psychological conversion.

A famous ancient *Guanyin* text was inscribed on *King Kao's Guan-ShihYin Sutra* stone votive stele (550–577), now in the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco (Yu 2001, p. 110). *Lu Kao's More Records of Kuan-shih-yin's Responsive Manifestations* (in Chinese) is a typical collection of miracle stories (Yu 2001, p. 579). A series of *Guanyin* poems are used in divination, such as this one telling of her role since the beginning:

From the beginning of Creation, everything had meaning:

The lucky day brings everything fruiting to ripeness...

Then revelation comes - and don't take it lightly -  
The pure-hearted will be graced by the Divine One  
(Palmer et al. 1999).

## Background

*Guanyin's* background is multifaceted. The Buddhist tradition of the shift from a male to a female divinity needs historical and psychological explanations. *Guanyin* traditions are clearly rooted in Buddhist goddesses such as Tara, archaic shamanic Chinese goddesses such as The Queen Mother of the West, and Daoist goddess such as *Ma Tzu*; in these historical roots and current practices are several psychological factors, such as women's pollution relief.

The representations of *Guanyin* holding a child are rooted in the archetypal maternal desires expressed in China as early as archaic Neolithic (c. 500–2500 BCE) Chinese female figurines, called "fertility goddesses," and temple ruins found in Mongolia, with female names on buried shamanic oracle bones and later bronze vessels. This feminine side of Chinese culture was absorbed into *Guanyin*, who is invoked to grant pregnancy and easy deliveries of both boys and girls (Yu 2001, pp. 127–140).

The popular legend of *Miao Shan* ("Wonderful Goodness") had a powerful role in feminizing *Guanyin* (Yu 2001, p. 349). The oldest known account was carved on a stele in Honan in the eleventh century. With many variations and



psychological implications, the story is that *Miao Shan* was a princess who refused her father's command to marry (a refusal of filial piety, an Oedipal/Jocasta conflict, and a feminist assertion of Buddhist celibacy and archetypal purity). He pressured her and she retreated to a convent. He angrily burned it down and her spirit ascended above (transcendent function). Then her father fell ill (psychosomatic illness) and heard from her in disguise that the only medicine for him would come from a person who had never been angry (transformation of archetypal shadow). He sent for it and she returned him a medicine made of her arms and eyes, willingly sacrificed. When he healed and learned of her astonishing filial sacrifice (submission of ego to higher Self), he took the family to her and they all took refuge in the Buddha (submission of ego to higher Self). She was *Guanyin* in human form all along (presence of transcendent in daily life). The dominant themes of are conflicting: Buddhist celibate opposition to marriage; women's resistance to traditional roles, yet Confucian filial piety; and her self-sacrifice to heal her father. Self-sacrifice with a slice of flesh (*ke-ku*) to heal parents was a known practice in ancient China, although Confucians officially opposed it (Yu 2001, pp. 333–334). Pious Chinese were thereafter often named *Miao Shan* (Yu 2001, p. 303). Many Chinese deities are described like her, either as humans later deified or as deities in human disguise.

The image of *Guanyin* holding a fish basket is based on a legend also known as “Mr. Ma's Wife.” In the Tang Dynasty (809 or 817), the story emerged that one day a lovely woman appeared in a village carrying a basket with a carp in it. She attracted many men's marriage proposals. Her selection process was a contest – who could memorize the entire *Lotus Sutra* that she carried under the fish, in 3 days. Only a Mr. Ma could do it. But just before the wedding, she mysteriously died. They buried her and later a monk came and showed that her bones were linked by a golden chain, indicating that she was a great sage, and he carried her up to the sky, as in a resurrection. Many were converted to Buddhism and she was recognized as *Guanyin*.

The archaic Queen Mother of the West (*Xi Wang Mu*, 西王母), also known as the Eternal Mother (*Wu Sheng Shen Mu* 无生圣母, *Yao Chi'ih*, *Wang Mu Niang Niang* 王母娘娘), is an ancient goddess who never appears on earth (thus remaining pure) and grants children. She was adopted by the Daoists and gives the gift of immortality and the secrets of eternal life. She is worshiped by both the elite and the masses. She was the most famous Chinese goddess before *Guanyin* and may well have been a model for *Guanyin* (Yu 2001, p. 480). She provides the best archaeological evidence of archaic goddesses – bone carvings from the Shang (1760–1122 BCE) (Despeux and Livia 2003, p. 25; Yu 2001, p. 409). During a drought in 3 BCE, she was worshiped by masses of people with straw manikins of her singing, dancing, and drumming around fires (Yu 2001, p. 410). She rules from the mythical Mt. Kunlun; she saves people and dispenses peaches of immortality, notably to emperors. Her cult involves ecstatic spirit possession. The Queen Mother is the essence of cosmic and bodily *Yin* and teaches how to balance *Yin* and *Yang* in life, including sex, and thus live a long life and become enlightened (Despeux and Livia 2003, pp. 25–47).

An important Daoist goddess is *Ma Zu* (*Ma Tsu P'o*, *Mazipo*), a fisherman's daughter from Fujian (Perkins 1999, pp. 319–320). She refused marriage and developed herself spirituality until she was able to project herself and influence nature. She used her powers to rescue her brothers and father, who almost drowned. She died early but continued to safeguard fishermen and traveling traders. She is also known for granting children and is very popular in Taiwan (Sangren 1983, p. 8). Integrated into the Daoist pantheon in the fifteenth century, she is still a popular deity in southern China. Like *Guanyin*, she remained celibate and made a vow to rescue all, and in her immortal form she responds to the sincere chanting of her name (Despeux and Livia 2003, p. 65).

Tara (“eye”), originally a Hindu goddess, in south Asian Buddhism is one of the primary emanations of *Avalokiteshvara*, born from his tears or a ray of light from his eye. The white *Tara* reveals her compassionate side. Whether



called a Bodhisattva, Buddha, or deity, she is a savior who hears the cries of those suffering in *samsara*. Tara appears in art at the side of *Avalokiteshvara*, and *Tara* and *Guanyin* are also called “sisters of *Amitabha*” (Stein 1986, p. 35). The eye appears in *Guanyin* art also. John Blofeld sees *Tara*, who comes to the aid of needy mortals, and *Guanyin* as identical, although *Tara* is not well known in China (Blofeld 1977, pp. 53–64, 40–41). Many important themes from her predecessors were woven into *Guanyin*’s tradition.

## Psychology

Exploring why *Guanyin* became feminine, we must look at traditional Chinese gender relations. Does *Guanyin* offer a psychologically tame balance for the ancient traditional role of women as subservient, portrayed in the saying “I was born a woman because of evil karma in a previous life” and the scornful relegation of women to an impure role in life due to their reproductive functions (“The Blood Bowl Sutra” – 1194 CE)? Women were taught to detest their bodies and could only hope to escape Hell by being reborn as a man (male repression of shadow by projection onto women).

Or does *Guanyin* function as a more bold, compassionate, saving contrast to that repression, even a feminist opponent to that? The answer is that both themes are offered, as in the story of *Miao Shan*, who rebels against women’s subordinate position in marriage demanded by Confucian filial piety, by seeking to become a nun, but then sacrifices her own flesh to save her father, which shows loyalty to filial piety, as well as her Buddhist role as savior (Boucher 1999).

Daoism also views the feminine in an ambivalent way. It sees the *Yin* energy as a positive cosmic force in women but in contrast with a strongly patriarchal view of *Yang* from the Confucian tradition that suppresses women and sees them as polluted by their reproductive functions. The strong Confucian preference for a son to carry on the family name is a social denigration of girls not easily overcome by a Daoist balance of *Yin* and *Yang*.

Male-dominated Han Dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) rulers and their formal heavenly gods pushed aside the goddesses and subordinated women, so, despite women’s stronger roles in Daoism and ancient traditions such as the Queen Mother of the West, their needs went largely unmet until they were filled by *Guanyin*. The personal and more inclusive needs of men and women of all classes were also met by *Guanyin* (Yu 2001, pp. 412–416). Goddesses cannot assure the political empowerment of women in a patriarchal society, but they can provide deep-seated spiritual guidance, comfort, and some amelioration of patriarchal authority. The Maoist revolution did free women from much ancient oppression, and now religions in China are expanding.

*Avalokiteshvara* is primarily a Bodhisattva of compassion and a cosmic savior from perils but was also commonly identified with royalty in Southeast Asia and Tibet. In imperial China the emperor was legitimized by the Confucian “Mandate of Heaven.” By contrast, *Guanyin* was not identified with any kings or queens, although she does appear in a royal court in the novel *The Journey to the West*. People of all social classes, especially women, and even great sinners knew *Guanyin* more for her mercy and kindness. No one native Chinese goddess before *Guanyin* had all of her qualities (Yu 2001, p. 5).

Chinese spirituality is highly syncretic and unique and spread across East Asia. Sometimes people do not even realize that they are blending Buddhist meditation, Confucian filial piety, Daoist Yin-Yang exercises, and archaic ancestor or *Xian* worship. Therefore, it is not surprising the *Guanyin* is a syncretic blend.

*Guanyin* is a strong goddess who helps balance ancient patriarchal traditions, providing women with access to divine power, giving them pride (ego strength), and counteracting patriarchal assertions of pollution (shadow projection). She provides a more egalitarian alternative to Confucian hierarchical class traditions. She helps women wrestle with ancient Chinese versions of Freudian family dynamics (filial piety and conflict). She helps people of all parts of society transform their shadow archetypes

patterns (monsters, tyrants) into higher spiritual devotions to the Buddha. She is a warm, maternal spirit of divine compassion.

Unlike remote divinities or sages who appeared long ago, *Guanyin* is very “present,” in methods of bringing the unconscious depths to the surface through ritual and spontaneous altered states – chanting, singing, fasting, dream interpretation, and visions. The numerous reports of her saving miracles continuing into the present show an active openness to numinous powers available at any time. This contrasts with the “disenchantment” of industrial societies that seeks to strip the world of transcendent wonder. Accounts of her conversions emphasize not just her overwhelming power, but people making decisions to change their lives, which in Western Jungian terms maintains free will as the divine savior archetypal image transforms the ego. *Guanyin* follows the ancient Asian Tantric pattern of Kundalini as she transforms the shadow effects of the lower chakras by moving them upward, as in the “Monkey” conversions of dragons and monsters into devoted seekers of the Dharma and in the lotus image. *Guanyin* is a widespread, uniquely Chinese goddess with a Buddhist core and background of Daoist and indigenous goddesses.

## See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Popular Religions](#)
- ▶ [Tara](#)
- ▶ [Women in Chinese Religions](#)

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## Gurdjieff, George

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A century has passed since George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, born in Armenia (1866–1949), offered an esoteric teaching based on knowledge and methods of “awakening” long forgotten in the West. His mystical teaching focused on self-awareness, as is shown by the title of his book

*Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* (1999). The outer form and character of his teaching changed considerably during Gurdjieff's lifetime in response to changing external conditions, to the needs and understandings of his pupils, and to make possible the continued transmission of his life's work. The record of accounts by his pupils, the growing influence of his writings, and the living legacy of centers established throughout the world attest to the remarkable scale encompassed by his vision.

## History

George Ivanovich Gurdjieff was born in Alexandropol (now Gyumri, Armenia) on the Russian side of the Russo-Turkish border, probably in 1866. We know of his early life from his own account in *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (Gurdjieff 1963/1975/1985). Gurdjieff was deeply influenced by his Greek father, an *ashokh* or storyteller with an encyclopedic knowledge of traditional songs and folklore, who exemplified qualities of integrity, honesty, conscientiousness, impartiality, and inner detachment despite external misfortune. Gurdjieff was also influenced by his tutor, Dean Borsch, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, who introduced him to such perennial questions as how to conceive of God, the nature of the soul, and the basis for objective morality. A third influence was the extraordinary paranormal phenomena that Gurdjieff witnessed as a boy, which neither his studies nor his teachers could explain.

As a young man, Gurdjieff moved to Tiflis (now Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, east of the Black Sea) and became an interpreter for the Transcaucasian Railway Company. His burning question became a search to understand the meaning and aim of existence. He expressed this as "an irrepressible striving to understand clearly the precise significance, in general, of the life processes on earth of all the outward forms of breathing creatures and, in particular, of the aim of human life in the light of this interpretation" (Gurdjieff 1933–1974). Convinced that transmission of forgotten knowledge

must still occur, for more than twenty years, Gurdjieff embarked on wide-ranging journeys from North Africa and the Middle East to Tibet. These travels led to intimate acquaintance with schools of esoteric knowledge from sources including esoteric Christianity, Muslim Dervish orders, and Buddhism.

In 1912 Gurdjieff began to assemble pupils in Moscow and St. Petersburg and offered the comprehensive teaching that he had so painstakingly sought, drawing from diverse religious, philosophical, psychological, and cultural (folk wisdom) sources. He soon attracted a number of prominent pupils, including P.D. Ouspensky, a Russian journalist and author of several books on spiritual search, the Russian composer Thomas de Hartmann, and his wife, Olga.

It appears that Gurdjieff planned to establish an institute where his teaching could be studied and put into practice. However, the Russian revolution made it necessary for him and his pupils to move, first to Essentuki in the Caucasus, then by an arduous mountain journey on foot to Tiflis, then to Constantinople, Berlin, Dresden, and eventually to France where he was at last able to establish an institute in secure conditions. Throughout this period of emigration, the published record of his pupils attests to intense training designed to educate and harmonize all parts of a human being and to correct the lopsided development resulting from contemporary culture and education (de Hartmann 1964; Ouspensky 1949–2001). It was during this time that Gurdjieff met the artist and theater designer Alexandre de Salzmann and his wife, Jeanne, a Dalcroze-trained dancer. Jeanne became his foremost pupil and worked to spread his teaching after his death.

In 1922, Gurdjieff opened the Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Prieuré in Fontainebleau-Avon, outside of Paris. Leading intellectuals and artists, among them A.R. Orage, editor of the British periodical, *The New Age*, from 1907 to 1922, and mentor of an entire generation of notable authors, were among those attending the Institute. The regimen included vigorous physical work, evening lectures, and practice in the Sacred Dances. In a unique

collaboration, Thomas de Hartmann converted often complex melodies, presented briefly by Gurdjieff, into complete piano compositions that were then played for the assembled community. In the daily life of the Institute, Gurdjieff used methods, both challenging and often remarkably compassionate, for helping his pupils to work on themselves and bring the three parts of a human being – head, feelings, and body – into a state of balanced awareness. This first awakening opened a new possibility of consciousness necessary to become what Gurdjieff called “a man without quotation marks” (Gurdjieff 1973–1991, p. 91).

Public demonstrations of the Sacred Dances, also called Movements, and meetings took place in Paris, New York, and other cities in 1923–1924. Groups formed in New York and continued to meet with Orage until 1930. In July 1924, a car accident not far from the Institute left Gurdjieff in critical condition for several months. As he recovered, he began delineating his ideas in a series of three books: *All and Everything: Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (1950/1963/1992), *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (1963/1975/1985), and *Life is Real Only Then, When 'I Am'* (1974/1978/1999).

Until the early 1930s, when the Institute closed owing to the worldwide Depression, students from Britain and the United States would go to the Institute to work directly with Gurdjieff, and he established a pattern of frequent travel to the United States to work with his pupils. They were the first to hear his still evolving literary works, characteristically read aloud in small circles. During the Nazi Occupation, Gurdjieff continued to meet at his apartment in Paris with small groups of mainly French pupils.

After the war Gurdjieff traveled to the USA again, and many of his older pupils, with their own students and children, returned to work with him in France during the last years of his life. In his cramped Paris apartment, he hosted elaborate lunches and dinners, remarkable teaching occasions often ending with Gurdjieff's own music, which he played on a harmonium. In these conditions and in the presence of Gurdjieff, many

students, by their own accounts, experienced moments of intense self-discovery. Gurdjieff died in Paris in October 1949.

## Gurdjieff's Ideas

Gurdjieff offered a comprehensive framework for inner development in the context of a cosmology. The Gurdjieff Work, his method and ideas, are commonly referred to as the Fourth Way. He taught that the other three ways – the way of the yogi, the fakir, and the monk – focus on one or another of the parts of a human being (mind, body, feeling) and often call for a retreat from life. Gurdjieff believed it to be essential to address all three parts at the same time in the midst of life. The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man was the blueprint for what is practiced at Gurdjieff centers today, which includes practical work, sacred dances, meditation, and the study of ideas. The aim was to help the three centers of an individual function in harmony, removing barriers to inner development and deepening receptivity to more subtle influences than ordinarily perceived. The essential step in the Gurdjieff Work is to sincerely face one's actual situation, in this moment, now.

Gurdjieff taught that our psychological and spiritual development is ordinarily incomplete and imbalanced. For human beings four states of consciousness are possible – sleep, the waking state, self-consciousness, and objective consciousness – but we ordinarily live only in the first two. Human beings must “work on themselves” in order to realize their full capacity and manifest their true nature. However, as we ordinarily are, we are incapable of maintaining the psychological effort necessary for self-knowledge and inner transformation. A common analogy is that we are “asleep” or “in prison” – slaves to the domination of an associative mind that fosters an illusory self-image and obscures a truer vision of what we are. Gurdjieff asserted that the knowledge required to correct these distortions and to enter the path of self-transformation exists and has been passed down

to the present time. He often referred to fragments of this knowledge remaining evident in religion, art, music, folklore, and science.

In order to begin the process of inner development, Gurdjieff believed that we need to see our situation as it truly is. A human being's three aspects – mind, body, and emotions – do not work cooperatively but interfere with each other, causing a loss of the energy that is needed to become more deeply aware of our being and purpose. Through what he called “self-observation” and “self-remembering,” Gurdjieff indicated that we could begin to have a true sense of our situation, which is that we are not fully present or aware, but are instead lost in imagination. We begin to see the false sense of unity, our multiple “I’s” that vie for supremacy, chronic tensions, identifications, unfounded reactions, and judgments of ourselves and others. It becomes evident that we do not direct our lives, although we imagine that we do. These insights resonate with Freud’s and Jung’s psychological views of the therapeutic power of becoming aware of one’s unconscious as well as the Buddhist view of the need to “awaken.” But what is missing from modern psychological theories, unless they are informed by some spiritual influence, is the idea of other levels of consciousness beyond our ordinary waking state and of the efforts required to reach or maintain these (Skynner 1996, p.136).

With this understanding of our true situation comes a feeling of something missing, an emergent intuition that our participation in our lives is a shadow of what it could be. Rather than seeking to escape this feeling of lack by ignoring it or blindly trying to overcome it, Gurdjieff taught that the effort to continuously observe this situation allows us to open to a finer level of experience than ordinarily perceived. It is from these impressions that a new sense of oneself and one’s place in life can arise.

Only through sincere acceptance of our situation can we begin to live our birthright as human beings and manifest our true potential, living in touch with objective conscience and with our three parts in harmony. And only by the practice

of “self-observation” and “self-remembering” can we rediscover that we are composed of two natures: an ordinary nature necessary for functioning in life and an inner nature through which we can be connected to more subtle influences.

## Gurdjieff Work Today

Today, more than 60 years since the death of Gurdjieff, the Gurdjieff Work is active and thriving in groups around the world. Before his death in 1949, Gurdjieff entrusted Jeanne de Salzmann and other close pupils to help continue to transmit his teaching. Major centers were created in New York, Paris, London, and Caracas and more in many other cities.

## Methods

While the specifics may vary, all groups related to the four main centers engage in the following forms of work:

*Group Meetings:* Most groups have weekly meetings as peers or facilitated by more experienced students, where pupils explore their understanding gained through study of Gurdjieff’s ideas, from the experience of exercises, and from the effort to face one’s situation while being in the present moment.

*Movements:* Gurdjieff left a great many Sacred Dances or Movements derived from his encounters with esoteric and religious cultures in which sacred dance remained a living vehicle for self-study. The Movements are a precise series of positions, often complex and beautiful, accompanied by Gurdjieff’s and de Hartmann’s piano music.

*Meditation:* Most groups have a regular sitting practice, which serves as a support for individual and collective inner search.

*Practical Work:* Preparation for “work in life” is explored as a community during intensive periods, from one to ten days, with activities such as cooking, crafts, and carpentry combined with study, Movements, and sittings.

A large volume of literature, music, film, and other material exists from and about the Work. However, it should be noted that the Work is an oral tradition. While the materials can be inspirational, thought-provoking, and supportive, the actual transmission of the teaching can only occur directly through what is today called “the work together” – and not only by reading or conventional study or thought. The Work is a living teaching, now in its third and fourth generations.

## See Also

- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Dance and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Music and Religion](#)

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## Hafiz

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It is an Arabic word used to identify the one who entirely memorizes and recites the Qur'an, the holy book of Muslims, which is over 600 pages with more than 6,000 verses. The word *hafiz* is also used for those who memorize the sayings of Prophet Muhammad in certain numbers, but these are rare.

The first to memorize the Qur'an was naturally Prophet Muhammad as the Qur'an was revealed to him. Given that the Prophet was an unlettered man, his early followers eagerly recorded and memorized each new revelation as it was revealed. By the time the Prophet passed away, many had memorized its entirety. This custom has been kept up throughout the Muslim world, and hundreds of thousands have memorized it. Although the number of those who endeavor to memorize the whole Qur'an seems to have been decreasing in the age of computerization, it is still one of the highest goals in Muslim life to become a human repository of the Qur'an. Being hafiz is still one of the most rewarded honorifics in Muslim society. The *hafiz* feels a psychological pressure on himself/herself to be a committed, decent, and virtuous member of the society as she/he is believed to bear a sacred trust in his/her mind.

Prophet Muhammad encouraged his followers to read and recite the Qur'an, if not to memorize its entirety, and cherished such followers. In the first centuries of Islam, mosques were used to memorize the Qur'an, but later, special courses in *madrasas* (Islamic school) or a special school called school of memorizers (*dar al-huffaz*) were opened. In the beginning, teachers developed various techniques of their own, but these have been evolved into specific methods over time. Some asked students to memorize verses in fives first before going into the next ten. Some favored memorizing page by page to repeat the already memorized page the following day. Students begin memorizing the Qur'an at very early ages and many memorize the whole Qur'an before adolescence.

## See Also

- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Qur'an](#)

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## Hajj

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Hajj is an Arabic word meaning to face and visit a sacred place. It is one of the five pillars of Islam.

The *Ka'bah*, in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the house of God (Allah) built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael, is the only pilgrimage site in Islam. It is a duty of Muslims to visit the *Ka'bah* once in a lifetime if one can afford it financially and physically. Currently, three million Muslims make hajj every year.

The ritual of hajj is performed on certain days of the year, the first days of the twelfth month (*Dhul-Hijjah*) of Islamic calendar, followed by the Festival of Sacrifice. Visits to the *Ka'bah* at other times are called *umrah*. The obligatory rituals in *hajj* are to circumambulate the *Ka'bah* for at least seven times and stay at the hill of Arafat, not too far from the *Ka'bah*, for some time on the 9th day of the twelfth month. Other rituals include symbolic pebble throwing at an effigy of Satan as well as walking quickly between two locations called *Safa* and *Marwa*, also in Mecca, between which Hagar, the wife of Prophet Abraham, searched for drinking water for her son Ishmael. One who performs the hajj is called "*haji*" (pilgrim), a highly respected title in the Islamic world, which encourages one to live a moral and religious life by keeping away from sinful acts. All pilgrims are supposed to wear white garments (a pilgrim's special dress called *ihram*) during *hajj* which represents the fraternity of all races and nations.

The ritual of hajj is supposed to affect the pilgrim deeply and transform him/her spiritually. It covers many symbolic and sentimental acts. The white gown, having no other belongings, represents physical and spiritual purity to make the pilgrim feel humble and that she/he is nothing but an ordinary being ever dependent on the Lord. It also symbolizes that the person is bereft of worldly desires and ready to return to the Creator as she/he was born. Millions from every color, race, and nation meet around the *Ka'bah* to feel united in a spiritual ambiance leaving all differences behind. Pilgrims place their hands on the black stone (*Hajar al-Aswad*), which is believed to have descended from heavens, located on the corner of the *Ka'bah*, at every turn of circumambulation to renew their submission. Pilgrims walk in patience between the hills of *Safa* and *Marwa* renouncing unwanted habits.

By throwing pebbles at an effigy of Satan, they symbolically remove themselves from Satan, who endeavors to lead humans astray. And they finally slaughter an animal to show that they are ready to sacrifice what they have for the sake of their Lord. Hajj, more than anything, is a practice for the Day of Judgment with millions of people from all over the world gathering around the house of God. Pilgrims therefore feel the imminence of the Day of Judgment when they will account for their acts in this world.

### See Also

- ▶ [Circumambulation](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Ka'bah](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)

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## Hallucinations

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Numerous theories have been put forward to account for the origin and persistence of hallucinations among the human species. Historically, endogenously arising hallucinations were seen as evidence of either divine or demonic possession – usually the latter. Orthodox psychodynamic theories view hallucinations as unconscious projections of neurotic conflicts or as externalized wish-fulfillment fantasies, while biologically situated theories interpret them as dysfunctions of the brain – typically involving the neurotransmitter dopamine. Hallucinations may occur in any sensory modality – visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, etc. – with auditory and visual being the most frequent and the most frequently associated with psychotic disorders such as schizophrenia.

Hallucinations may be stimulated exogenously with the imbibition of certain psychoactive substances. Pharmacologically classified as

hallucinogens, these substances would come to be known in common culture as psychedelics (mind-manifesting) and later as entheogens (god-manifesting). Regardless of moniker, the constellation of effects produced by compounds belonging to this group includes altered perceptions of reality and self, intensifications of mood, visual and/or auditory hallucinations, distorted sense of time and space, and an enhanced sense of meaningfulness. Modern pharmacology distinguishes psychedelic agents from other classes of drugs in their unusual ability to produce the aforementioned effects that are known only to occur in dreams or “times of religious exaltation.” Prevalent medical models reductively view hallucinations as the result of disrupted information processing in cortico-striato-thalamo-cortical feedback loops that facilitate the filtering of external stimuli.

Entheogens maintain an important, albeit controversial, place in the history of religions. There is ample evidence to suggest that mind-altering compounds have been used since remotest antiquity by virtually all peoples of the Earth to induce altered states of consciousness. Particularly important in the shamanic context, the ritual consumption of substances (*ayahuasca*, *peyote*, *mescaline*, *Salvia divinorum*, etc. – all plants and plant extracts which generate powerful hallucinations) extends across all cultures and throughout all times, including Siberia, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. Approximately 150 psychoactive plants have been identified in recent ethnographic research as still being used in indigenous religious customs today.

As the academic study of religion began to develop at the dawn of the twentieth century, efforts were redoubled to apprehend the historical opacity of religious texts and to link the mythic places and potions of the past with physical locations, actual plants, and historical people.

The amateur ethnomycologist R. Gordon Wasson is perhaps best known for his work on the ancient Vedic god Soma. In a book as internationally reviled as it was universally lauded, he put forth the theory that Soma was one in the same with the fungus known as *Amanita muscaria* – or the fly agaric – which,

once imbibed by the officiating priests, was then passed through the body and voided by the bladder only to be drunk again, the process resulting in dramatically altered states of awareness. He theorized that the entirety of Eastern religion owes its modern philosophical orientation to the ecstatic visionary states that Soma produced once consumed.

In a later work written in conjunction with Albert Hoffman, discoverer of LSD, he put forth the theory that the beverage known as *kykeon*, an intoxicating brew central to the rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries, was, in fact, a fermented derivative of barley containing ergoline alkaloids from the ergot fungus, from which LSD was originally synthesized.

In a similar vein, the Pythia of Delphi is believed by some to have entered states of ecstatic trance after inhaling the noxious and hallucinatory fumes rising from the fissures of her subterranean abode before offering oracular advice. The alleged identities of these vapors have spanned the entire spectrum of hydrocarbon gases, but most authorities agree that ethylene, which has been empirically confirmed as producing trance-like states in persons exposed to sufficient quantities and concentrations, is the most likely candidate. These are but three of many such theories attempting to link the intoxicants of antiquity with known mind-altering compounds of the present.

The post-Enlightenment lenticular structures of the modern age have been brought to bear on the issues of entheogens. Inquiries from fields as disparate as psychology, neurology, theology, and medicine have all made significant impacts in advancing our collective understanding of these perplexing substances and their even more perplexing effects. Beginning in the 1950s, government sponsored research projects on psychedelics ranged from efforts to “cure” schizophrenia (as the effects were seen to temporally mimic psychotic states) to the treatment of alcoholism. More existentially oriented projects such as psychedelics’ effects on quality of life as well as exploration into how transcendent states are neurochemically mediated were soon to ensue.

Psychologists were quick to take note of the transformative potential of psychedelics, particularly of how a confrontation with death in a ritual context could lead to a reduction in the fear of mortality. Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert (1995), all on faculty at Harvard, began a series of experiments investigating the effects of LSD on initiating transcendent mystical experiences. This psychologization of spirituality would prove to be inextricable from the transmission of Eastern religious traditions to the West, although this indebtedness toentheogenic sources would remain infrequently acknowledged.

Research was to effectively cease in 1963, when access to these substance became restricted, making them nearly impossible to procure. Due to the incendiary rhetoric surrounding the dangers to both society and self that hallucinations purportedly posed, public interest soon subsided along with the Academy.

## Commentary

Presently, entheogenic research is enjoying a scientific recrudescence. Experimental treatments for addiction using ayahuasca, psilocybin, and ibogaine have already been met with impressive success. New research on ketamine and the inducement of near-death experiences (NDEs) holds much promise for the continued unlocking of the mysteries of the mind. Perhaps the most beguiling question of all becomes then: how can we understand alleged alterations of consciousness without first understanding consciousness itself? This crucial question is central to the concerns of both psychology *and* religion and will continue to unveil progressively deeper accounts of these mysteries as inquiries of this nature continue to unfold within the fields of psychology, religion, and the meeting of the two.

## See Also

► [Eleusinian Mysteries](#)

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## Hanging and Hanging God

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Deriving from two Old English words *hangian* and *hon*, and supported by the Old Norse *hengjal* / *hanga*, “to be suspended,” *hanging* is also influenced by the Sanskrit *sankata*, “hesitate,” and the Latin *cunctari*, “to delay, defer, suspend.” Despite the fact that the terminology “hanged” is usually reserved for legal language, the word has also extended into metaphoric usage (e.g., *I'll be hanged*, *hang-up*, and *hanging out*). There are affinities in Hebrew (תָּלָה, *tālā*, “hang up, let down, dangle, put to death by hanging,” Genesis 40:22, 2 Samuel 21:12; Esther 9:14) and Greek *kremamai* and *kremannymi* (Κρεμάμαι in the LXX (Septuagint), but seven times as Κρεμάννυμι in New Testament, referring to dependence on the entire law and the prophets (Matthew 22:40), execution of the two crucified with Jesus (Luke 21:39), and specifically to “crucifixion” in Galatians 3:13, even though it is derived from the Deuteronomic code (לִיּוֹלָא, *tālā 'al* in Hebrew for “hanging after execution”). With the prepositions *around* and *on*, this Greek usage also literally meant hang, as in the millstone hung around one's neck (Matthew 18:6) and the snake that bit Paul on the hand

(Acts 28:4), respectively. Hanging upside down, as St. Peter reputedly suffered, is a mark of humiliation and derision, a reversal of what the person stood for prior to being hanged. Such a method of hanging was called “baffling” (Spenser 1978, p. 956).

Hanging was, according to the Old Testament, allowed but seems to have occurred *after* a person was executed. In compliance with Deuteronomic law, the body was to be removed before nightfall so as not to pollute the land given by God as an allotment. Even as early as the story of Joseph in Egypt, hanging consisted primarily of beheading followed by the displaying of the decedent’s head on a pike. King David’s eldest son Absalom caught the long locks of his hair in the low branches of an oak tree during his flight and was left hanging “between heaven and earth.” Disregarding the order to spare the king’s son, Joab, David’s chief general, kills Absalom with three spears to the heart (2 Samuel 18:9–15).

A liminal feature occurs in hanging. This is particularly true with regard to hanging gods such as Jesus the Nazorean who claims oneness with God, Odin the Norse All-father, Attis, and Osiris, who prior to his Dionysian dismemberment hung like Jesus for 3 days. According to Frazer (1914/1936, 1922/1996), the Phrygian satyr of Lydia, Marsyas, along with Adonis, Artemis, and even the fair Helen, ought to be included in this list of hanging gods. We might ourselves include Herman Melville’s Captain Ahab who had a crucifixion in his face (Melville 1967, p. 111) and the twelfth card of the Major Arcana in Tarot known as the Hanged Man. This liminal feature is *intermundia*, a state of being suspended between worlds suffused with death and rebirth – it is the presence of the absence of *ananke*, or necessity. It is not-space space and not-temporal temporality in much the same way as the alchemists called the *lapis philosophorum* the not-stone stone, or *lithos ou lithos* (λίθος ού λίθος). Cicero (2000), in his *De natura deorum*, translates Epicurus’ term *intermundia* as *metakosmios* (μετακόσμιος), the place wherein he consigns the Greek pantheon. *Metakosmios* is derived from the verb *metakosmeō* (μετακοσμέω), *rearrange, modify, and changed in aspect*. Metaphorically it is a new

arrangement, a change of condition, even a change of character, indicating its transformative aspect.

Hanging, this pathos of the god, even human hanging, often occurs outside the city wall. Jesus was crucified on the green hill of Golgotha outside of Jerusalem. Odin underwent hanging on the windswept World Ash Tree, Yggdrasil, away from human and divine contact, yet rooted to all and none. Osiris was encased in Set/Typhon’s beautifully wrought sarcophagus that became hung up and further entombed in the trunk of a tamarisk tree after floating down the Nile, which is also “up” as it would be northward, for as above, so below. Attis, who in alchemy is synonymous with the Egyptian god Osiris, performs his self-mutilation under a sacred pine tree and, in accordance with later ritual, is portrayed in effigy and hung on the pine tree as the officiating leader of the Attis-Cybele rite sheds his own blood to promote the fertility of the crops for the coming year. The Attis-Cybele myth is linked to the Artemis-Actaeon myth (and that of Isis-Osiris) and those of the respective fragmentations of Dionysus and Orpheus, whose misogynistic “madness” causes the Thracian maenads to tear him apart. The spirit of union not yet extracted is still part of the greatest dilemma of human beings today, according to Schwartz-Salant (1995). This is the “conclusion” to the problem and recognition that fragmentation, rather than repression, has a greater significance for development and pathology. Thus, being wounded to the point where one is branded a heretic or even an apostate necessarily moves the soul to action.

Prayers and other cultic acts carried out in the hope of fertile land and crop abundance occur in the rites of Tammuz. Ezekiel 8:14 refers to the lamentation of the women over the death of Tammuz (תַּמְזֻז, Θάμμουζ) as an abomination to the Lord in the kingdom of Judah. Tammuz, or Dumuzi (whose name means “proper son [or child]”), was the Sumerian shepherd who married Inana, died, and was resurrected by her. Even Inana must be executed and hung like a piece of rotting meat in the underworld. When she ascends, she gives up Tammuz in her place.

He escapes, then is captured, only to be freed by the love of Inana. Like Persephone, Tammuz is to spend half the year in the underworld, the other half upon the earth. The mythology of Inana-Tammuz is reckoned to date back to 3000 BCE and encroached upon ancient Palestine, being given some recognition in various circles of the culture of Jerusalem. Ezekiel's astonishment is at seeing the lamentations of the Tammuz cult infringe upon the sacred center of Jewish religion. Despite such lamentations being viewed as supplementary to the worship of YHWH, the abomination of it lies in its being an insult to the "living God" and nothing short of apostasy.

Tammuz is related to Osiris and also to the mythology of the Phoenician Adonis, whose origins are not of the Greek classical period but semitic. According to Zimmerli (1969/1979), the lament of the death of Adonis (the Phoenician vegetation god type) is also attested in the Septuagint versions of 1 Kings 14:13 and Jeremiah 22:18 (242). Adonis' name derives from *adon* (אדון), meaning "master, ruler, lord." *Adōn* is the aleph and tav, alpha and omega, the one who was, is, and *is to come*. The Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) uses *Adonai* to refer to the tetragrammaton YHWH, and this would connect Tammuz/Adonis/Osiris with Jesus in this respect. Not only this, it freights the reading of Ezekiel 8:14 with difficulty, imbuing it with a kind of fundamentalist repression, for example, "If you are not with me, you are against me."

The liminal state involved in hanging may be long or short. The unusual swiftness of Jesus' execution, which only lasted a matter of hours, comes as both a surprise and astonishment. Performed as a deterrent against rebelliousness, many Roman crucifixions lasted as long as 3 days. Jesus was forced to carry the *patibulum*, or cross-beam (also "dungeon," "torture"), probably several hundred meters to the execution site where the seven-foot-tall stipes (vertical beam) would have been erected and awaiting him. Curiously, the vertical pole, called *stipes* in Latin, means both "tree trunk" and "instrument of torture."

The chronicling of Osiris the great Egyptian god of resurrection, found primarily in Plutarch (1936), had nine watchers and nine mourners,

aligning it with Odin's nine whole nights and nine songs. Like the division of the uroboros in the *Pistis Sophia* into twelve aeons, Osiris' night realm was divided into twelve parts. In Kabbalah, the number twelve represents the philosopher's stone. Twelve also is represented by the Hebrew letter *lamed* (ל). Lamed is the heart and central letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Because it towers over the other letters, it represents the King of kings, an attribute also given to the Hanged Man, the twelfth trump of the Tarot's Major Arcana. The poles of this Tarot card could refer to the Egyptian two-finger amulet that was placed either in the swaddling of the mummified remains of the deceased or loose in the coffin. These amulets represented the two fingers of the god who helps Osiris ascend the Ladder of Rē.

The Norse god Odin's hanging lasted nine whole nights, according to the *Hávamál* of the Poetic, or Elder, Edda. Like Jesus, Odin suffered impaling with a spear, screamed as he reached for the runes, which might perhaps have been tinged with the horror of forsakenness (as he received no bread or drink-filled horn), and sacrificed himself to himself. In the process, he learned nine powerful songs. As his wisdom grew he came to know 18 powerful charms or runes, the twelfth of these, curiously, concerning the freeing of a hanged man for conversation. This death of god to become god is not unlike the death of Jesus on the cross. It is the death of God effected *in* God, the breaking of old patterns that bind, limit, or restrict one's nature – the interface of *religare* (religion as tied or bound back to a previous state of existence) punishing *religere* (religion as embodiment of reflection and connection) or remembering versus unforgetting, as in the alchemical representation of the winged and wingless birds forever attached to one another. Odin, like Teiresias, goes through a purgation through suffering in token of new insight. Thus the metaphor of hanging as transformative act demonstrates that the hanged god moves through a transition from knowing about to becoming being, as in the movement from knowledge/curiosity to unknowable ultimate reality (K → O).

Like Odin, the Hanged Man card of Tarot's Major Arcana is often depicted with his head



deep in the earth, seeing its secrets as Odin saw the secrets of Yggdrasil. With the card turned upside down, the hanged man appears to be dancing in the abyss over which he had been suspended. This curiously links Odin with trickster associations. Connected with this is the sense of eutony (εὐτόνέω, *eutoneō*), meaning “having or possessing faculties.” Its shadow aspect includes the meaning “distension.” Kestenburg (1978) describes eutony as a stretching out, “transsensus.” Characterized as breathful flowing, eutony/transsensus is similar to the diaphragmatic breathing practiced in yoga and tai chi, as well as choral and opera singing, and the playing of wind instruments that spiral us back to the Phrygian satyr Marsyas and the vanity of his musical challenge of Apollo. As a follower and comforter of Cybele following the death of Attis, he was renowned as a flautist, and because of his fame, he provoked Apollo into a musical contest. Marsyas would have won had not Apollo dared Marsyas to play his pipes upside down. Marsyas lost the duel, with the result that Apollo hung and flailed him upon a pine tree.

Such suffering, then, is helpful to us. It can indeed, as Moltmann (1974) asserts, be spiritually healthy. Despite being vulnerable, afraid, and alone, we wait for what will come and we are on the verge of something greater than we can know or about which we can think or attain through action. That is beginning to experience a new level of consciousness without preventing the advent of what can come, if indeed it is on its way.

## See Also

- ▶ [Crucifixion](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)

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## Happiness as a Goal

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Two questions require attention at the outset. First, whose goal is this? Second, what exactly constitutes a working definition of happiness? This entry does not attempt to address the second question in its short form due to the many

assumptions inherent in the use of the word across all cultures and in all languages. The Chinese word for happiness, for example, is made up of two other words “open” and “heart.” As poetic and evocative as this usage may be, it does not aid in arriving at an actual definition. The term happiness must then be bracketed.

That happiness is a conscious goal at all seems to be a product of the Enlightenment. One such famous example can be found in the United States Declaration of Independence which groups the word among what modernist discourse deems to be basic rights by guaranteeing everyone in America (excluding slaves and women) the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

To begin to address the second question, a definition of happiness must be both deepened and broadened. Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs provides an excellent model with which one can address the psychological experience and physiological requisites that might form such a definition. By classifying five categories of needs in ascending order (physical, security, love/relationship, esteem, and self-actualization), Maslow overlays humanist assumptions with universal needs. This parallels the generally held assumption that happiness as a goal is a universal phenomenon. Maslow goes one step further by proposing that self-actualization, the highest level in his hierarchy, is a need just like any other (water, food, sleep) but one that the individual is unlikely to address until all of the needs underlying it have been met.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ethics and Ethical Behavior](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Refusal of the Call](#)

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## Hasidism

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What is Hasidism? How has it been related to psychology and to the psychology of religion?

## What is Hasidism?

The term “Hasid” occurs quite widely in Jewish texts, particularly those concerned with ethics, generally referring to righteous individuals. Hasidism also refers specifically to the pietist movement which developed in eighteenth-century Ukraine under the leadership of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov (literally “master of the good name,” sometimes abbreviated to BeShT). Hasidism raised morale after the ills of the seventeenth century: the 1648 Chmielnitzki pogroms, which destroyed many communities and the religious disorientation caused by the antinomian Sabbatian movement. Hasidism is often seen as an attempt to dismantle the elitism of Eastern European Jewish life, in which prestige accrued to religious study and to wealth. Hasidism asserted the spiritual worth and potential of every individual. The movement spread rapidly, as the Baal Shem Tov and his disciples traveled with the purpose of freeing poverty-stricken Jews imprisoned for debt, disseminating Jewish teachings including the “inward” aspects, based on kabbalah (Schneerson 1980). Leadership passed to the Maggid of Mezritch and then branched out into a number of schools each headed by a Hasidic Rebbe emphasizing a particular style of divine service. In the second and third generations, the movement was opposed by the mitnaggedim (lit. “opponents”) who obtained the support of the famous Rabbi Elijah Gaon of Vilna, himself a kabbalist and a recluse. He thought Hasidism was yet another form of an antinomian movement. Around 1800 a distinction emerged between the Habad school, which emphasized the primacy of

intellectual understanding in order to arouse spiritual feelings, and the so-called Hagat style, which emphasized the primacy of emotional fervor in worship. The term “Habad” is an acronym for the intellectual divine attributes: wisdom (hokhmah), understanding (binah), and knowledge (daat). “Hagat” is an acronym referring to three first of the seven emotional attributes: kindness (hesed), severity (gevurah), and beauty (also understood as mercy) (tiferet). Hasidic teachings can be seen as the latest stage of the Jewish mystical tradition (Scholem 1941).

By the late nineteenth century, it was estimated that well over half of Eastern European Jewry were identified as followers of one or other Hasidic Rebbe. Eastern European Jewry was particularly devastated by the holocaust, but post-World War II has seen the revival of Hasidic life particularly in Israel, the USA, and Europe, also in Australia and South Africa. Habad Hasidism has been particularly active in deploying emissaries to hundreds of Jewish communities worldwide, forming nuclei of outreach activity. Other schools of Hasidism live in enclave-style communities, and such communities have proliferated and enlarged in Israel, Europe, the USA, and elsewhere. Hasidism is a salient force in so-called “haredi” (strictly orthodox) Judaism, although mitnaggedic and other non-Hasidic styles of strictly orthodox Judaism are also important.

The twin themes of Hasidism are love of God and love of fellow humankind. In practice this involves scrupulous and inspired maintenance of the divine commandments (mitzvot), religious study including the “inward” aspects of Jewish teaching (especially among Habad), and care for others. Dress is distinctive: for men, black frock coats or suits, hats, and sidelocks and, for women, modest dress including sleeves below elbows, skirts below knees, and hair covering.

Other strictly orthodox Jews adhere to a similar dress code and scrupulous observance of the commandments. What distinguishes Hasidism is the close adherence to the charismatic and inspirational leader, the Rebbe, whose advice and blessing may often be sought, which entails a close-knit social community.

As mentioned, Hasidism is informed by kabbalistically based teachings, the so-called

“inward” aspects of Jewish teaching. A classic text is *Tanya* (Shneur Zalman of Liadi 1796/1973), which is of considerable interest to psychologists of religion. Features of this work include a description of the human spiritual yearning to be united with the divine, the incessant spiritual struggle between the good impulse, based on the divine soul, and the animal impulse, towards selfish comfort. Hasidic teaching is not strictly speaking ascetic: the material world is to be used appropriately, according to Jewish law, and in this way the divine sparks that are trapped in creation will be raised to Godliness. The soul has a natural desire to be united with its divine source, and this can be achieved in prayer and in right action. Particular emphasis is placed on charity and kindness to others. Hasidic psychology is thus underpinned by strong moral and spiritual themes. Human psychic structure is a microcosm of the macrocosm, which involves a progressive down-chaining of creation from its divine source, through the four “worlds” of emanation, creation, formation, and action, each comprising the ten divine attributes (wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and seven emotional attributes), until practical action is achieved. This scheme derives from Lurianic kabbalah and expounds the cosmic significance of individual actions.

Hasidic teaching is not addressed solely to Jewish audiences. Rabbi Menachem Schneerson thought that the second section of *Tanya*, which presents a system of contemplation of the spirituality of existence, has universal relevance. He taught that “right living” involves the performance of those commandments obligatory on the particular individual, and for non-Jews this involves the seven commandments of the descendants of Noah (see Clorfene and Rogalsky 1987; Cowen 2003), including belief in the unity of God, the practice of sexual morality, honesty, and avoiding cruelty to animals.

There have been a number of attempts to apply Hasidic insights into the practice and understanding of psychology, some written for lay audiences and others for academic and professional clinical audiences. The latter genre includes Rotenberg (1995), Weiss (2005), and Berke and Schneider

(2008). These authors have used and examined Hasidic and kabbalistic teachings and concepts in relation to psychological and psychoanalytic understanding of behavior and feeling. Rotenberg, for example, suggests that the kabbalistic paradigm of creation may lead to a less assertive-aggressive style of communication, sexuality, and communication compared to the Western norm.

Another genre has been the psychological study of Hasidism and its distinctive features of social organization and spirituality. Schachter-Shalomi (1991) has examined the dynamics of the relationship between the Hasidic leader (Rebbe) and the follower (Hasid) in the one-to-one encounter (sometimes known as *yechidut*) in which the Hasid seeks advice and blessing. Winston (2005) has studied young men and women who have chosen to leave the (Satmar) Hasidic lifestyle; Satmar is often said to be particularly strict in its outlook. El-Or (1994) has studied the beliefs and values of Hasidic women from the Gur group, in *Educated and Ignorant*, in which women emphasize the value they place on their role as the center and foundation of the home. Other studies of Hasidic women have often focused on the outreaching Lubavitch group, for instance, Loewenthal's (1988) study of religious development and commitment in this group and Levine and Gilligan's (2003) *Mystics, Mavericks, and Merrymakers*, a study of adolescent girls. Another important genre involves the attempt to examine the inspirational fervor of Hasidic worship and to distinguish it from psychopathological states: Idel's (1995) work on ecstasy and magic and Mark's (2009) work on mysticism and madness in Braslav Hasidism are noteworthy examples.

A striking feature of Hasidic life is the high value placed on family size: bearing and rearing as many children as possible is a feature of strictly religious Jewish life, with an average of six children per family. Children are seen as a blessing. Family size has an impact on the well-being of the women, men, and children concerned, and this impact is often positive, as has been the impact of the value placed on marital and family stability (e.g., Frosh et al. 2005; Loewenthal and Goldblatt 1993; Loewenthal et al. 1995).

In conclusion, it may be stated that Hasidism, a pietist movement within Jewish orthodoxy, has inspired considerable interest, not only among those looking for New Age-style spirituality but among academic and professional psychologists. Its intense spirituality and kabbalistically based teachings have important psychological content, in which human psychology is depicted as driven by spiritual and moral striving. Aspects of Hasidic life have been studied by social scientists and psychologists, and there is clearly scope for further work.

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## See Also

- ▶ Baal Shem Tov
- ▶ Kabbalah

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Although the Hawaiian religion officially was abolished by the monarchy in 1819, these various *heiau*, dedicated to a particular god, goddess, or purpose, still engender awe and respect from the Hawaiians who step lightly into their confines.

For the Hawaiians, though, sacred places included not only the *heiau* and *luakini* but also other significant locations that related to the religious and social system of the people. Among some of these sacred sites included Halema'uma'u Crater on the island of Hawaii where the goddess *Pele* dwelt; the birthing stones at Kukaniloko on Oahu where *ali'i*, royalty, had been born; and the places of refuge *pu'uhonua*, such as the one at Hōnaunau on Hawaii island where violators of the law or defeated warriors could seek sanctuary. The Hawaiian religious system not only consisted of beliefs in multiple and powerful gods and goddesses but also regulated the social system of the people that guided the customs and actions of the people. Sacred spaces are not so much architectural as natural, since Hawaiian religion is so much a part of soul in the natural world.

## Hawaiian Religion

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### Sacred Spaces

Near the sandy shores of the Hawaiian Islands and up in their fragrant mountains exist remnants or restorations of ancient Hawaiian temples, *heiau*, of which there were several types. Larger, sacrificial ones were known as *heiau-luakini*, dedicated to the god *Kū* (Malo 1951), the god of war. These could only be erected by a king or *mo'i* of an island and were the only ones at which a human sacrifice could be made (Mitchell 1992). A chief, *ali'i*, could erect a *heiau mapele*, dedicated to the god of agriculture *Lono* (Malo 1951). A third type, *heiau ho'ola*, was a healing site and was located in each district (Mitchell 1992).

### Kapu

Many aspects of the Hawaiians' lives were based upon the religious beliefs and system. "Every aspect of life was carried out in accordance with deeply implanted religious beliefs" (Mitchell 1992, p. 70). Fishing, planting, eating, healing, and playing were all aspects that connected directly to the gods and *kanāwai*, laws that governed the people. This system commonly has been referred to as the *kapu* system. *Kapu* means sacred or forbidden. Hence, the system identified those aspects of life that were sacred, including persons, places, and events. Briefly, the foundation of the *kapu* system lay within the religious beliefs of the community, with its poly- and pantheistic focus that incorporated animistic tendencies that believed in the habitation of gods and goddesses in the natural surroundings. The *kapu* system first and foremost honored the gods and goddesses. It also kept the presence of the divine in the psyche. For example, since the



ali'i (chiefs and chiefesses) not only represented but also were descendants of the divine, their persons and personal effects were guarded closely to maintain the kapu, the sacredness of the gods within them. Also, as the ali'i walked abroad, māka'ainānā (commoners) prostrated themselves and could not be close enough to be touched even by the shadow. Psychologically, the divine is present in the kapu and its mana (spiritual power) required boundaries.

## Major Gods

All Hawaiians, whether chief or common people, worshipped four major gods: *Kū*, *Kane*, *Lono*, and *Kanaloa* (Malo 1951). *Kū*, as mentioned previously, was the god of war and also represented “the male generating power” (Mitchell 1992, p. 72). In addition, the rising sun was called *Kū*, and the third to sixth nights of the lunar calendar were named and sacred to him as well (Mitchell 1992). The second god in this pantheon was *Kane*, which means male. *Kane* was the creator of the world,

according to Kepelino (2007). One of the names associated with *Kane* was that of *Kane* of the long night, *Kane-i-ka-pōloa*, because he dwelt alone in the darkness and created it (Kepelino 2007). From *Kane* also came light, heaven, and earth (Kepelino 2007). The third god in the pantheon was *Lono*, whose primary concerns were agriculture, fertility, and peace (Mitchell 1992). One major annual festival, *Makahiki*, was dedicated to *Lono*. Lasting for about four lunar months, beginning about mid-October, the *Makahiki* season was a time of rest for all Hawaiians. During this time, no work could be done; no war could be waged; regular religious observances were suspended (Malo 1951). *Kanaloa*, the last of these four gods, was associated with the ocean and ocean winds and was also credited as being the god of the octopus (Mitchell 1992). “In the *Kumulipo*, *Kanaloa* is ‘Kahe’ehaunawela,’ the evil smelling octopus” (Mitchell 1992, p. 74). *Kamapua'a* (“hog child”) (Fig. 1) was fertility-god of agriculture associated with *Lono*. He was a trickster who pursued the goddess *Pele* persistently. His persistence transforms her hot lava into fertile soil (*Kamapua'a*).



**Hawaiian Religion,**  
**Fig. 1** Kamapua'a.  
Hawaiian fertility figure.  
Maui Historical Society,  
Old Bailey House,  
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii.  
Public Domain. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamapua'a>



## Cosmic Genealogy

The *Kumulipo* was one of the many genealogical and cosmological chants of the Hawaiians. Hawaiians, like other Polynesian groups, had several cosmology stories. They had the narrative of *Papa* as Earth Mother and *Wakea* as Sky Father, but their version did not contain the Maori's forceful separation of the primal parents. As with other Polynesian stories, Hawaiian cosmogony narratives did begin in darkness. Within the first few lines of the *Kumulipo*, darkness, or night as it is translated, is the source of life. Psychologically this suggests an emergence of identity and awareness from the dark unconsciousness. As a religious image, the darkness from which life emerges indicates the vast cosmic depth of divine powers and the coming of human awareness:

Hanau ka pō – Did night give birth.  
 Hanau Kumulipo i ka pō, he kāne; Born was  
 Kumulipo in the night, a male  
 Hanau Po'ele i ka pō, he wahine; born was Po'ele  
 in the night, a female (Johnson 1981, p. 3)

This genealogical chant of more than 2,000 lines followed with a description of how the sea, its creatures, the rest of the natural world, and the human family began.

## From the Ground

Still another Hawaiian cosmogony narrative recorded by Kepilino (2007) also begins in a darkness of deep intense night, when only the gods dwelt at this period, the gods of *Kāne*, *Kanaloa*, and *Lono*. Furthermore, these mythic stories also included a symbolic growth of life, including human life, as emanating from the ground up. This is an image of identity and life coming from the sacred foundation of existence. A Hawaiian story from the *Naua* tradition related that *Wakea* had a child by *Ho'ohokulani* who was born not as a human being but as a *Lauloa* taro taproot. As the taro grew, *Wakea* named the stalk *ha loa* "long footstalk" (Kepelino 2007, p. 192). Later, when a child is born to them, the child is named *Haloa*. Kepilino (2007) wrote, "Now you

must understand that the children born from *Haloa*, these are yourselves" (p. 192). The taro plant itself represented, therefore, each person's connection to the ancestors from below as the deep roots, the grandparents as the corn, the parents as stem, and the children as the leaves. As individuals grow older, their life cycle changes to grow downward to generativity as the major role to fulfill. Thus, psychologically, one's soul emerges from the ancestors underground and emerges from the ground up into a human body.

## Care

Thus, the cosmogony myths provided a sense of identity and location in that the peoples themselves are directly descended from the gods who formed them and also provided the land itself. Because of this direct connection to the gods, the rest of human life was governed by a psychic relationship to the gods, the land, and each other. This psychic relationship was lived by maintaining proper relationships not only with the gods and goddesses but also among the people themselves. There existed a reciprocal relationship built upon a common understanding of the nature of the gods, goddesses, humanity, and the natural world lived as rooted in the land engendering a positive attitude that *mālama*, *care*, existed at all levels of the social structure and within one's personal life. Who one was and one's connection to others and the land depended psychically on this social system. Hence, a psychosocial understanding of human life was rooted in religious beliefs, and its primary feeling is personal and social care.

## Classes and Mana

The social system consisted several strata or classes of human existence, with the *ali'i*, the chiefs and chiefesses, as the highest stratum. They were believed to be descended directly from *na akua*, the gods, and had the greatest *mana* or spiritual power as a result. The direct descent from the gods meant that an *ali'i's mana*, if sustained,

was *kapu* and sacred. Being near an ali'i meant being close to *na akua*, so much so that a safe physical distance was maintained.

The next stratum, the *kahuna* (plural form), was in charge of the religious life of the people and conducted the major religious ceremonies associated with various aspects of life, not just sacrifices to the gods. *Kāhuna* were experts in their particular fields, whether it was offering *pule*, prayers, to *na akua*, healing the sick, or selecting the best koa tree for building. Since the religious life was inseparable from daily life, the *kāhuna* offered the proper *pule*, prayers that were associated with an activity, often at the aforementioned *heiau* sites.

However, one kind of *kahuna* (singular form) instilled fear within the people. That was the individual *kahuna* 'anā 'anā who had the power to pray people to death. People believed in the *mana*, spiritual power, that this kind of *kahuna* possessed and carefully guarded their personal items, including fingernails and hair, so that the *kahuna* 'anā 'anā would not be able to pray them to death. This kind of *kahuna* was utilized to bring death to one's rival or enemy and psychologically was the archetypal shadow or the theological source of evil.

The largest stratum, the *maka'āinana*, was the laborer of fishing, planting, and building. While the people in this stratum outnumbered the ali'i, their fear of the retribution of the gods and goddesses in any breaking of a *kanāwai* and *kapu*, their recognition of the strength of the ali'i's *mana*, and their reliance on the knowledge and *pule* of the *kahuna* maintained the position in society to which the *maka'āinana* adhered. Even after the influx of Westerners and later Christianity, the *maka'āinana* would continue to show deference to the monarchs who led them.

## 'Ohana

All these various social strata knew what their individual responsibilities were in regard to working with one another. A clear demarcation of life and duties with reciprocal responsibilities sustained the social system and provided persons

with a sense of their identity in the overall culture. While later immigrants would consider Hawaiians to be lazy, "Hawaiians seek to nurture human relationships rather than to accumulate material wealth. Commitments to relatives and friends take precedence" (Linnekin and Poyer, p. 44). The religious and social system provided the foundation and basis for relationships that still exist for Hawaiians today, with their emphasis on 'ohana, family. Among Hawaiians, individualism and materialism were not the values consistent with the religious understanding of interconnectedness of humanity to one another and to the natural world. Hawaiians realized their personal identity only as part of the 'ohana that stems from the gods and goddesses themselves. Furthermore, this sense of interconnectedness extended to the ancestors. Even to this day although the *heiau* are not used as places of worship as before, offerings are left at *heiau* in honor and tribute to the ancestors who once believed in the gods and goddesses.

## See Also

- ▶ Deity Concept
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ Māori Religion
- ▶ Pele
- ▶ Soul in the World

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## Healing

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### Introduction

Healing is a concept and experience that is used by many world religions and professional disciplines including medicine, psychotherapy, pastoral counseling, and family therapy. Parsons (2002) defines healing as the “restoration to wholeness.” Graham (1990) includes body, emotions, mental functioning, family and social relationships, and spiritual life in this restoration to wholeness. In the Hebrew Scriptures, healing is related to *shalom* (peace) and results from righteous living in accordance with the covenant (Graham 1990). Healing is linked to salvation. God is the author of all healing. Often sin is linked to illness and healing of illness occurs when there is reconciliation with God. The *Book of Job* in the Hebrew Scriptures is the exception to the notion of illness as a result of sin.

### Some Religions and Healing

Within Islam, healing is based on the Qur'an and is holistic, i.e., involves the whole person and includes the moral aspects of living (Isgandarova 2005). Muslim physicians were highly trained in the art and science of medicine and included the spiritual in their care for the patient. Avicenna (980–1037 CE) is one such doctor. The traditions (*hadiths*) of the Prophet Muhammad required the building of hospitals and care of the sick. Prayer and reading from the Qur'an are important Islamic practices of healing. In Hinduism, healing is seen as the restoration of balance. The science of medicine is known as the “science of longevity” (*ayurveda*). Illness occurs when the different elements of the body and one's life get out of balance. Healing is achieved through restoring balance involving the use of herbs and

other remedies. In Taoism, illness is connected to the context and healing requires the achievement of integration both internally and externally.

In the Christian Bible, the ministry of Jesus involves healing. Many healing miracles stories are presented in the gospels. Pilch (1998), however, challenges the view that the healing miracles of Jesus are about cure. He argues that these healings are about new meaning and restoration of the ill person to the community. Healing in the Christian context involves the whole person as well as relationships in the community. Christians in the early centuries established hospices to care for the sick and pray for miracles. The focus was not on cure but on care. There is the belief that sin brings illness. Dedication to God and keeping the commandments brings health. However, there is also the notion that sickness could be part of God's plan and the ill were urged to offer their trials for their own sanctification and the sanctification of others. Some Christian denominations such as Roman Catholic and Anglican developed sacraments of healing (Sacrament of the Sick) to heal the sick both physically and spiritually.

### Medicine and Family Therapy

As medicine developed in the Enlightenment period, a split took place between body and soul based on the philosophy of Descartes and Newton. Medicine addressed the body and religion addressed the soul and both sought healing. The physician brought the cure of the body and the priest the cure of the soul. Clebsch and Jaekle (1967) note that healing is an important function of pastoral care and counseling within the Christian church. In modern medicine with the advance of antibiotics and other medical interventions, healing became synonymous with cure. The dualism of body and soul began to break down. Medicine became interested in the whole person and the view developed that the emotions, mind, and spirit are all integrated in the human person and could influence the health of the body. Sagar (2005) and Koenig et al. (2001) see religion/spirituality as offering healing to the

body and mind. O'Connor and Meakes (2005) document an explosion of research and publication on the relationship between spirituality and health in healthcare journals. Medical research agrees that religion/spirituality can be an excellent coping mechanism for challenging health conditions. The more controversial issue is whether religion/spirituality can be a determinant of health and bring healing.

In family therapy, healing is viewed as restoring family relationships. Family therapy emphasizes a systems approach which sees the human person as part of a vast web of relationships. The focus is not so much on the individual but on the relational. Abuse, addictions, violence, disrespect can damage the web of relationships. Healing in these family relationships means striving to facilitate the I-Thou articulated by Martin Buber. Healing involves listening to each other, not being reactive, seeking the good of each other and forgiving. Strength-based and solution-focused approaches assume that there is a healing process within families that is part of their experience (Walsh 1998). Spirituality is one means to facilitate such healing (Walsh 2009). Rovers (2005) uses the theory of Bowen and Bowlby to heal the wounds between couples, and spirituality plays an important role.

### Childhood Pain and Healing

There is some skepticism about healing the wounds that are experienced in childhood. Therapy and life experience can uncover these wounds. The therapeutic relationship is one way of healing the pain and hurt. Bowen and Bowlby addressed the deficits in childhood that resulted from family relationships. Both thought therapy could be helpful but did not believe in total healing. The goal is to manage the pain and seek to develop better relationships as an adult. Pargament (1997) uses the term coping instead of healing in describing the impact of religion on challenging experiences. Coping involves conservation of one's identity and transformation of identity. In psychiatry, the development of new drugs has helped persons cope with depression, schizophrenia, mood

disorders, etc. This biological approach is not viewed as healing the illness but rather helping the person manage and function with the illness.

In our post modern era, healing is experienced in multiple ways: psychotherapy, medical interventions, meditation, walking the labyrinth, prayer, reading sacred texts, talking to friends, exercise, rituals, family therapy, diet, using alternative medicines, silence, belonging to a community, etc. One of the challenges of our age is healing the animosity between groups. Religion and spirituality can work effectively with psychology and science in facilitating the restoration to wholeness (healing).

### See Also

- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Qur'an

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## Heaven and Hell

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Heaven and hell seem, at first glance, to be ubiquitous to religious systems. However, there are many ancestor- and spirit-based religions in which there is no such term and in which there is no concern for what happens after death or as a reward or punishment (Boyer 2001). However, in the major religious traditions with developed cosmologies, heaven and hell are described as both cosmological regions (the heavens, the abode of God) and representative of religious consequences. Psychologically heaven and hell refer to experiential states and can be found in common sayings such as “war is hell.”

Although the description and function of heaven and hell vary widely with religious tradition, heaven is usually thought of as peace, bliss, or happiness and hell of course with suffering and punishment.

In the Hebrew Bible, the closest thing to a reference to hell (heb. *Sheol*) can be found in Isaiah (38:18), the Psalms, and Job (7:7), although since there was no concomitant conception of heaven (apart from as an abode of God and the heavenly beings), and since *Sheol* can well be translated as grave, there was not a highly differentiated idea of heaven and hell.

In the Hebrew bible, ideas of heaven and hell developed only very late, finding final form only

in the Book of Daniel. Early on, Job comments scornfully that the dead “lie down alike in the dust” (21:26), indicating that it’s all the same after death. This conception changes slowly, until Psalm 73 identifies moral categories: the false are dispatched “far from thee” and the loyal “near God.” Finally in Daniel we find the introduction of the resurrection (12:20) and differential consequences – the good enjoy everlasting life, while evildoers suffer everlasting defeat. This all changes with medieval Jewish mystical speculation, especially in the Zohar. With the introduction of Kabbalistic traditions, we find a complex system of multiple heavens and their attendant angels.

By the time of the New Testament, however, Zoroastrian speculation had changed the vocabulary of heaven quite a bit. Not only that, very different types of places or experiences are implied by the different usages. For example, in the Gospels heaven is referred to in different places as “the great reward,” the “abode of the Father,” “life everlasting,” “paradise,” “the city of God,” “the kingdom of God (or Christ, or heaven),” and “the joy of God.” We can see in this a huge variety of meanings, especially when Jesus alternately refers to this state as “within you,” “among you,” and “according to your deeds” (cf. the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3), ...of the Father (Matthew 13:43), life (Matthew 7:14), life everlasting (Matthew 19:16), the joy of the Lord (Matthew 25:21), great reward (Matthew 5:12), the kingdom of God (Mark 9:45), the kingdom of Christ (Luke 22:30), the house of the Father (John 14:2), city of God (Heb. 12)). From a psychological point of view, we see the beginning of great differentiation of inner states which finds its apex in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. In this work, Dante is concerned not so much with punishment but the mystery of how we injure ourselves (this is also the psychological meaning of sin). A saying in the Talmud runs, “The evils others do to me are as nothing compared to the evils I do to myself” (Blumenthal 2009). From this perspective hell is the experience of betraying one’s self and the price that is paid in the moment, not at some future point.

Other major religious traditions have very developed ideas about heaven and hell as well. There is a huge geography of heavens in Buddhist tradition. The *Vinaya* sutra describes seven hells and 26 heavens, each specific to a type of karma (not unlike Dante's formulation). A central Buddhist concept (illustrated by the Bhavacakra mandala) involves the six worlds of rebirth – each represents the results of karmic past and run from the horrific world of hungry ghosts to that of demons, animals, humans, titans, and gods. Although being reborn as a human is not the highest karmic reward, it is the only realm from which one can attain nirvana (Webb 1975). This implies, psychologically, that being fully human is the optimum place from which to grow – regardless of idealizations or collective values.

In Chinese mythology, the concept of heaven was understood on one hand as a synonym of *Shangdi* (supreme deity) and on the other hand as a synonym for nature, especially the sky. Heaven was a state both attainable and manifested in the world and its rulers. The Chinese word for heaven, *Tian*, is a cognate of the name of the supreme deity, and Confucian theorists such as Mozi understood that while heaven is the divine ruler, the son of heaven (the King of Zhou) is the earthly ruler. In fact, heaven would be manifest on earth to the extent that the ruler lived according to the *Tao*.

The Qur'an explains that good deeds lead to an afterlife in Eden. Heaven itself is described in the Qur'an in verse 35 of Surah Al-Ra'd: "The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised! Beneath it flow rivers. Perpetual is the fruits thereof and the shade therein. Such is the End of the Righteous; and the end of the unbelievers is the Fire." Since Islam rejects the concept of original sin, Muslims believe that all human beings are born pure. In Islam, therefore, a child who dies automatically goes to heaven, regardless of the religion of his or her parents. Furthermore, anyone who has worshipped no other god but Allah will go to heaven, thus including all Christians and Jews. However, there are many levels of paradise depending on how righteous a person is on Earth. The highest level that all Muslims are

encouraged to ask for is *Jannatul Firdaus* (*The Belief in Heaven in Islam*).

The collective projection of what human behaviors lead to suffering changes over time and is always developing. The Vatican recently clarified the gender difference in the experience of heaven and hell. Men, apparently, will go to hell for the sin of lust and will suffer from burning brimstone. Women, on the other hand, will go to hell for the sin of pride and will be broken on the wheel.

In all of these traditions, we find a veritable taxonomy of psychological experience as well as a prognostic system: some hells are harder to recover from, some people are less likely to develop in this life, or will not develop at all. The question to ask is why these nearly ubiquitous other realms have been so widespread. There may have been a time when people genuinely feared the threat of eternal damnation, but a psychological view would look toward a combination of the world-shaping power of the imagination and the innate dissociability of the psyche as the factors which allow human beings to experience and describe very subtle or vague aspects of mind and to offer them in salient, that is, usually concrete form. This also explains why there is no end to metaphysical speculation, since there appear to be an ongoing (and so far untapped) geography of inner states.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Heidegger, Martin

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Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) is considered by many as the founder of existential or hermeneutical phenomenology. Heidegger's work has been a meeting place at the interstices between Daseinsanalysis (Binswanger 1967; Boss 1963, 1979), continental philosophy of religion (Caputo 1978; Crowe 2006), and existential theology (Tillich 1966; Bultmann 1953; Macquarrie 1999). Given how his work provides the convergence of these disciplines that result in an existential approach to psychology and religion, it behooves us to attune to Heidegger's influence and inspiration for this field of study. What is more, Heidegger's work is thoroughly inspired by his life story, a story that is a tapestry of religious moments and happenings that belie presumptions of his apparent atheism. Martin Heidegger's place in the field of psychology and religion may surprise others who are more likely to consider him as a continental philosopher.

Martin Heidegger was born in Messkirch, Germany, and raised as a Roman Catholic. His father was a sexton in the local parish. He studied theology at a Jesuit seminary in Austria and then at the University in Freiburg. Putting together

his foundation in theological reflection with the genesis of his commitment to phenomenology as it relates to philosophical psychology, Heidegger wrote his dissertation, entitled *The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism*, and later finished a thesis on Duns Scotus.

Although presumed to be an atheist, religiosity as a phenomenological experience was central to Heidegger's entire being and works. John Caputo (1978), John Macquarrie (1999), and more recently Benjamin Crowe (2006) have all written extensively on the mystical and religious elements in Heidegger's thought, as a biography about his life that also highlights this religious dimension for Heidegger appropriated titled, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil* (Safranski 1999).

The relation of Heidegger's work to other religious traditions beyond Christianity may also be surprising. Heidegger contributed to the translation of the Tao Te Ching, and much has been written about Heidegger's work in relation to Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism (Caputo 1978; Crowe 2006). Heidegger's contextual understanding of both situations or events and human existence was ripe for these kinds of comparisons between Heidegger's thought and the deep richness of the world religions. It was out of his religious interest that he came to philosophical psychology and the philosophy of existence, and it can be soundly argued that his religious interests never dissipated; they only morphed over his life as he continually tried to clarify them. His journey was his own variance of faith seeking understanding, but not a faith in propositional or doctrinal beliefs. Heidegger's faith was awaiting for the gift of Being's disclosure.

Much of Heidegger's work was written in his small hut lodged on the hillside of Todtnauberg in Germany's Schwarzwald. There, Heidegger grew more and more appreciative of, and adopted, the simplicity of a peasant's lifestyle. He wore peasant clothing, cut his own wood, and believed the lack of distractions provided the best atmosphere for doing phenomenology. Not only did he write about dwelling *as* building, he lived it. In the *habitas* of his obvious ascetic

proclivities, Heidegger's radical or hermeneutical phenomenology, and its subsequent destruction of metaphysics, offers profound implications for a deeper understanding of homo religiosus.

Hermeneutical phenomenology, pulsating with an ability to open up experiences beyond our typical ways of seeing events and things, offers an existential transcendence from static, mundane, and profane conceptions and comportments in existence to a more open and unfolding of Being. It is not just what one discovers that is transcendent, as the very *process* of interpretation itself that discloses authentic existence, or *Dasein*. *Dasein* is the showing of Being's presence in its coming to "be there" each moment of our lives (Heidegger 1962).

*Dasein* is not a fixed object or thing, as the ego or self is often understood, but the process of "clearing" in which human existence is understood. *Dasein* finds its ownmost possibilities when confronting its own death. By accepting one's finitude, facticity, and what Heidegger called "thrownness," we are freed to value and respond to harkenings for us to stand out in our own specificity and uniqueness in the world. Our ways of being-in-the-world find their significance in light of the circumstantial webs of meaning in any given instance, with each subsequent happening or event carrying its ownmost possibilities for us as enframed by our ever-present and inescapable being-onto-death.

Two Swiss psychiatrists, Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1976) and Medard Boss (1903–1990), brought Heidegger's work on *Dasein* to the attention of psychiatric medicine and later to clinical, phenomenological psychology in what became known as Daseinsanalysis, or existential analysis (Binswanger 1967; Boss 1963, 1979). Daseinsanalysis is practiced around the world, and has its organizational home in the International Federation of Daseinsanalysis, that includes countries such as Brazil, Greece, Belgium, France, Hungary, Austria, Canada, England, the Czech Republic, and, of course, Switzerland. Moreover, it is not uncommon these days to see various international conferences addressing Heidegger's thought in relation to religious phenomena.

What is even more interesting from an existential-phenomenological understanding of the psychology and religion field is Heidegger's infamous "turn" during the period of his latter thinking and writing that led him away from a focus on *Dasein* in the world toward an analysis of *Ereignis*, or happening, event, or circumstance that gives rise to *Aletheia*, or the disclosure of truth. Truth, however, for Heidegger is the very disclosure of Being itself. One can hardly ignore the similarities with theological reflection on revelation. Furthermore, Heidegger's asceticism shows itself again in his invitation toward a meditative rather than calculative approach in understanding phenomena. *Gelassenheit* is called for, or releasement, thus allowing things to unfold in their time and uniqueness.

At the same time, admittedly, an initial view of Heidegger's being-onto-death certainly seems to preclude any otherworldly understanding of spirituality as the possibilities of metaphysical entities residing in a dualistic world. Yet, hermeneutically, even reflections on otherworldliness arise from the circumstantial "thrownness" in which we come to think of such matters. Nevertheless, I do believe Heidegger opens for us another understanding of spirituality that influenced many existential theologians, including Paul Tillich (1966), Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), John Macquarrie (1999), and Langdon Gilkey (1976), among others.

In one, concise summation of his relationship to spirituality, Heidegger believed that it is only through an understanding of transcendence do we come to a proper experience of *Dasein* (Heidegger 1977). This conviction locates him squarely, even if unwittingly, within the field of psychology and religion, albeit altering much of what we have heretofore understood about this field. Through Heidegger, we are offered a Daseinsanalytic perspective of psychology and religion.

## Commentary

Perhaps Heidegger's typical absence from historical accounts of psychology and religion, apart

from his destruction and overcoming of metaphysics, may be due to a cautionary ambivalence felt by most people regarding his unfortunate membership and participation in the Nazi party during World War II. Heidegger was strangely silent on this matter both during his membership and up to his own death. Nevertheless, Heidegger's position on these matters is notoriously complicated as he had deep and committed relationships with a variety of prominent Jewish scholars during this time, for instance, Hannah Arendt, Herbert Marcuse, Karl Lowith, and Hans Jonas, and he refused to appoint Nazis officials to administrative posts while rector at the University of Freiburg and openly disagreed with Nazi ideology on racial genetics and other matters, which resulted in being monitored by the Gestapo (Burston and Frie 2006). Heidegger eventually resigned from his appointment as Rector at the University of Freiburg, and withdrew from politics and much of public life, remaining silent on the whole affair. Nevertheless, it is hard pressed to find how Heidegger's life works on how the authentic life is lived by *not* succumbing to *Das Man*, or The They, could in anyway suggest a profascist position. Again, similar to how Nietzsche's *Übermensch* was grossly and tragically misunderstood as a Aryan proposal, Heidegger's disclosure of Dasein in the event of existence was not an inaugural trumpeting for the Third Reich, the latter movement being the opposite of Dasein and more ominous than Heidegger himself even foresaw.

Heidegger leaves us with the possibility of understanding the field of psychology and religion from a Daseinsanalytic perspective. Paul Tillich's (1966) use of Heidegger to shift our understanding of God as *a* being to *Being* itself need not leave us with a false dilemma of choosing theism or atheism. For Heidegger, ontotheology has long since confused the ontic with the ontological or concrete things with the life that clears space for things to be-in-the-world. His destruction of metaphysics, as Benjamin Crowe (2006) has pointed out, may very be influenced by Martin Luther's thought, particularly after Heidegger's break from Catholicism. What is specifically significant is the influence of Luther's *destructio* both

on Heidegger's insistence on humanity's "thrownness" as a conditioning of freedom and of the necessity of clearing space beyond the distractions of *Das Man*.

Finally, Heidegger shows us the inescapability of what I call our "enactments of significance" that are lived out every moment of our lives, which returns us to the hermeneutics of religiosity as well as the religiosity of hermeneutics. When we are left in situations in which Heidegger himself agreed that "only a god could save us," we can be certain that the saving god will be-in-the-world, clearing space and unburdening the heaviness of constricted existence so that we may share in *Dasein's* call toward authenticity and uniqueness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Heresy

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From the Greek word *haireisis* meaning choice (and by implication that which is chosen by a faction of believers), heresy is that which emerges within the Church which is contrary to orthodox teaching as it has been revealed by God and is thus rejected by the Church as false or “heretical.” Aquinas (1224–1274) describes heresy as a “species of infidelity” in which believers corrupt the dogmas of Christianity. Functioning like a gangrenous disease which infects the body, heresy subverts the faith of the Church and, from an orthodox standpoint, must be removed. Excommunication, military action, inquisitions, and burnings at the stake all feature as means of combating heresy in the history of the Church.

The New Testament exhibits a concern about emerging factionalism within the Christian movement and is replete with warnings about “heresy.” Paul talks of divisions among early Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:19) and warns the Church of Philippi “Beware of the dogs!” a reference to those who mutilate the faith. He

warns believers in Jerusalem of “savage wolves,” men within their group who “will come forward perverting the truth” (Acts 20: 29–30). Peter also warns of “false teachers” who introduce “destructive heresies” and thus bring damnation upon themselves (2 Pet 2:1). In Tit 3:10, purportedly from Paul, we read of what should be done with a heretic: offer a first and second warning and then break of contact with the person. They are “perverted and sinful” and condemn themselves.

The word “heresy” gains ascendancy in the writings of the Church Fathers. In the second century, for example, Irenaeus of Lyons used the word “haireisis” to describe opponents whom he categorizes as those who did not hold to his “orthodox” beliefs.

Multiple examples of heresy emerge in the early Church, most of which focus around exaggerations of either the humanity or the divinity of Christ, the second person of the Trinity. The Docetists, condemned as heretics by Ignatius of Antioch (d.c. 107), taught that Christ was divine and only *seemed* to be human. Representing orthodoxy, Ignatius noted that if Jesus were not fully human, he would not have been able to save humanity. The Ebionites (also known as Adoptionists) taught that Jesus was the adopted Son of God. In response, Irenaeus of Lyons (d.c. 200) said that if Jesus were not “of God,” he could not have saved us. Arianism taught that Jesus is of like substance (*homoiousios*) to God the Father. The Council of Nicea (325 CE) condemned the Arian heresy and proclaimed that Jesus is of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father. As can be seen from these three examples, the emergence of heresy within the Church led not only to a condemnation of heretics but to a clearer articulation of Christian doctrine. This articulation finds its expression in the Creeds of the Church. An excerpt from the Nicene Creed, for example, reads, “We believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, one in being with the Father. . . .” The response to the heresies of Adoptionism and Arianism is clear: Jesus is not adopted, he is “eternally begotten of the Father, God from God”; he is not *like* God in substance but “one in being with the Father.”

## Commentary

Freud has little to say about heresy, other than that it was condemned and punished by the Catholic Church. For Jung, on the other hand, heresy is much more important. He believed that heresy (as that which is rejected) needed to be reincorporated (“reintegrated”) in the interests of wholeness. He thought, for example, that the Christian doctrine of a Trinitarian God who is the *Summum Bonum* was deficient because it neglected the shadow side of the God image. Thus for Jung, that which had been rejected by orthodoxy as heretical because not in accord with revelation – such as the dark side of God – needed to be recovered and brought back to the whole.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ God
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Orthodoxy
- ▶ Quaternity
- ▶ Revelation

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## Hermeneutics

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## Hermeneutical Origins

Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. Originally used to interpret texts, initially

Biblical texts and then extended to other texts, hermeneutics evolved into not only a way to interpret literature but also a way to interpret any human experience. In fact, hermeneutics became known as a way to describe how existence works as a whole in that life is an undulating dance between concealment and revelation.

The etiology of the word, “hermeneutics,” is based on the mythical character, Hermes, the messenger, who delivered and interpreted messages from and between the gods. As hermeneuticists and historians Richard Palmer and Norman O. Brown have pointed out, Hermes was a trickster as well and known for his deception and thievery. Hermes stands in liminal space that is neither here nor there but a bridge between one place and another – though not identified with either one (Palmer 1969; Brown 1969). This description of Hermes is apt given the profound potential for bestowing blessings or wrecking havoc as a result of the interpretive process.

Hermeneutics, although addressed by figures as early as Plato and Aristotle, originated as a more formal practice with Rabbinic and Early Church Father concerns for how to interpret sacred scripture. Central to this debate was whether or not scripture should be interpreted literally or allegorically, particularly when application to contemporary concerns was an issue at hand. Adjudicating between conflicting allegorical understandings led to “rules” established for interpreting texts, thus leading to an exegetical approach to interpretation. Historical, contextual, literary, and grammatical frameworks became privileged as essential contexts in which texts should be understood.

Medieval thought and debate led to the continuation of exegetical and allegorical analysis of symbolism, with annotations accompanying interpretations, thus facilitating better possibilities for lifestyle applications. During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, further exegetical tools were developed for use in interpretation, though this time expanding the purview of textual material to any secular text. Hermeneutics continued in this vein until the thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834). Schleiermacher saw the



central task of hermeneutics as a guard against misunderstanding between the author's intentions and the interpreter's grasp of textual meaning. Empathy for the author's intention, and aligning one's own intentions and experience with that of the text, Schleiermacher thought, would lead to better understanding of the text's meaning (Schleiermacher 1977).

Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), though, proposed that understanding is best achieved when actual life situations are the focus of hermeneutical analysis. Hence, he saw hermeneutics as a method by which one could understand the inner meanings of artifacts, actions, products, and experiences of others within human existence and, consequentially, argued that hermeneutics should be applied beyond texts to any human experience (Dilthey 1989). Dilthey also brought to our attention how mediated experience is for us and held firm to his conviction that we cannot understand inner meaning and experience related to any person, artifact, or text without moving through linguistic and cultural filters. These convictions prepared the ground for further developments in hermeneutics.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), one of Edmund Husserl's (1859–1938) students, was highly influenced by Dilthey's work, shifted the focus of hermeneutics beyond being a functional tool of interpretation, for texts or human experiences, and, instead, saw the hermeneutical process as descriptive of being itself (Heidegger 1962). The interpreter's very existence is an enactment of interpretation. The truth of one's existence unfolds in the interplay of call and response, of seeking to understand while also disclosing oneself to be understood. We are called to our "ownmost" possibilities and discover them only when we allow ourselves to be interpreted and delimited by our limitations, contingencies, and finitude in each moment of our lives. From the moment we rise from sleep, or even during sleep, we are perpetually interpreting experiences happening around us as well as unfolding ourselves to others in light of their inquiries and engagement with us.

Each significant piece of writing, text, expression, experience, action, or otherwise gains its disclosed meaning when seen against the

backdrop of one's historicity or immediate enactment of one's life story. Moreover, Heidegger, furthering the Augustinian focus on faith seeking understanding, argued that only through our risked and invested pre-understandings within the delimitations of our horizons can we come to know anything. What can be known, though, is not something that can be isolated and held static, as being is perpetually becoming itself through the undulation of concealment and disclosure. Existence only partially discloses itself in any given moment and depends on solicitude or care and concern, to clear space for its further disclosure – which is never complete.

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002) integrated Heidegger's emphasis on the situatedness of meaning and Schleiermacher's emphasis on the importance of the interpreter's psychology for interpretation and saw the hermeneutical project as facilitating the meeting of horizons. Horizons are the capacities one has to understand, communicate, meaning make, and exist within the given historical and cultural traditions demarcating one's lived experience and perspective (Gadamer 1989). Horizons are inherently limited, thus necessitating dialog for truth to disclose itself. Hermeneutics as being, then, always and already discloses existence's inherent relationality.

Among other seminal figures in the history of hermeneutics, two other names stand out: Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005) and Jürgen Habermas (1929–). Ricoeur's utilized hermeneutics to integrate the field of semiotics with religious experience (Ricoeur 1967). More specifically, Ricoeur sought to understand the existential modes of existence embedded in and mediated through religious symbolism, particularly symbols of sin and evil. Jürgen Habermas (1975), working from within the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, utilized the power of hermeneutics to critique oppressed social structures and practices.

## Hermeneutics in Psychology and Religion

Michel Foucault (1926–1984), Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), John Caputo (1940–), Hans



Koegler, and Charles Winquist (1944–2002) have all offered various critiques and developments of hermeneutics. Foucault critiqued and reframed how power operates in discourse and relationships through genealogical and archeological analysis of various practices of control. Derrida deconstructed presumptions that discourse could fully represent meaning and experience, by exposing all that is missed in “presencing” practices (Derrida 1980). John Caputo further radicalized Derrida’s deconstructive project by viewing deconstructive analysis as a type of religious experience that functions much like a type of negative theology or apophatic mysticism (Caputo 1987, 2000). Hans Koegler, a contemporary critical hermeneuticist, combines Foucaultian genealogy and Gadamerian hermeneutics to establish a critical hermeneutics that exposes oppressive power practices in relational patterning and dialogical discourse, thus allowing for horizons to meet without domination or submission. Finally, Charles Winquist established a practical hermeneutics in which he invites pastoral practices toward depth relating with others in contemporary cultural situations by allowing interpretations of story and symbol to take us toward deeper dimensions of existence (Winquist 1980).

## Commentary

It is important in the field of psychology and religion that prior to hermeneutics being a way of interpreting texts or human experiences, this art and science was, and still it, a process of “discernment” in general and a “discerning the spirits” in particular. Similarly, “diagnosis” is an art of “completely seeing through or into” another person or situation and also predates contemporary diagnostic practices by hundreds of years. Hermeneutics, therefore, is itself a sacred activity in that its very process unfolds being itself. What is often forgotten is that “divining,” from which the word “divine” arises, is an interpretive process. One could say that the divine, or sacred, is the process of

hermeneutics itself. In this way, the experience of grace, then, is the experience of being truly understood.

Hermeneutics is not a mere “cognitive” activity of neocortical executive functioning, but a holistic comportment of desire that intends communion via the mutual grace of understanding and of being understood. What makes us homo religiosus is our never ceasing desire to understand, as Bernard Lonergan (1904–1984) noted, so that we can become discerning, interpreting, responsible, and loving human beings toward one another (Lonergan 1973/1990, 1957/1992).

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Hermes

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Hermes was a primordial Greek god, son of Zeus and Maia, a trickster and uncanny rogue, a night fellow, prince of thieves, phallic rascal, and lover of nymphs (Ovid 1955, lines 269–290). This rogue symbolizes the clandestine violation of boundaries and laws. So he was the bad boy of proper society, the thief in the night, and the evasive sneak who bothered with no scruples. He had chthonic roots that were primitive and unheroic, known for evasion and invisibility. Yet he was also called *Argeiphontes*, a heroic “Argus slayer” for killing a monster with 100 eyes, to aid a maiden in a dispute between Jove

and Juno (Ovid 1955, lines 591–780). His Greek presence was marked not by temples, but by herms, the upright phallic stone prisms marking boundaries.

He stole Apollo’s cattle but, pretending childish innocence, denied the whole thing. When Apollo caught him, he saw through his crafty lie. Yet Hermes charmed Apollo with his newly invented lyre and gave it to him, who then gave Hermes a magic golden wand and appointed him god of barter and cowherds. One of his more nurturing images is a youth carrying a ram over his shoulders. He was the guide of souls (*psychopomp*), to underworld Hades, but was also a phallic fertility figure (Homer 1976, Hymn No. 4). Rogues that both steal and bring new life still sneak about at night – that is, in dark shadowy unconsciousness.

For his clever, unscrupulous dodges with words, Hermes was also the god of psychological rhetoric, for the language of tricksters guides the wordsmiths of political speech writers inflating their client’s views, no matter how deceptive, and shooting attacks, no matter how manipulative, onto their opponents. Hermes guides public relations writers promoting a product without mentioning any flaws. He guides financiers devising deceptive schemes and all kinds of profitable trickery. And trickery is a basic part of military strategies.

Hermes, known in Rome as “Mercury” (that shiny, slippery, evasive metal), could put unsuspecting people to sleep or awaken sleepers (Ovid 1955, Pt. 2, lines 32–33). He was a bearer of dreams (Homer 1976, pt. 4, line 14), so psychologically this evasive night fellow carries the unsuspecting sleeper down into the unconscious realm of dreams that baffle the proper Apollonian ego-consciousness – or is he serving Apollonian consciousness?

When mythic Odysseus was on Circe’s island, she gave a potion to his sailors that turned them into swine. But Zeus sent swift Hermes to give a magic protective potion to Odysseus, to prevent him from becoming piggish. Hermes, of the golden staff [says to Odysseus]:

...your friends are here in Circe’s place, in the shape of pigs... Here, this is a good medicine [moly], take it and go into Circe’s house; it will

give you power against the day of trouble (Homer 1967, Pt. 10, line 277ff).

Here Hermes, in the magical depths of myth land, gives the lost heroic Odysseus the secret from a god of how to avoid becoming a beastly swine, under the spell of an enchantment. How many dangerous unconscious blunders could be avoided with knowledge of Hermes' magic transforming potion? Here he serves the Apollonic divine, showing how to avoid the beast.

Hermes' magical tricks take him across the chasm between many opposites, including life and death. At the end of the Trojan war, when the Achaians, led by Achilles, defeated the Trojans and killed Hektor, Zeus sent Hermes to soothe the enmity. Hektor's grieving father Priam wanted to take a ransom of gold to Achilles to trade for Hektor's body. But he dared not approach the Achaians without risking attack. So Zeus sent Hermes to work his magic and lead Priam across the boundary between the armies and ask Achilles to return his son's defeated body. Zeus says to Hermes:

... go now on your way, and so guide Priam inside the hollow ships of the Achaians, that no man shall see him... immediately [Hermes] caught up the staff, with which he mazes the eyes of those mortals whose eyes he would maze, or wakes again the sleepers... (Homer 1951, Pt. 24, lines 335–344).

Hermes led Priam with "many treasures through the swift black night" (Homer 1951, Pt. 24, line 367) across the battlefield. He "drifted sleep on all, and quickly opened the gate ... and brought in Priam" (Homer 1951, Pt. 24, lines 445–47). Priam fell at the feet of Achilles and both these calloused warriors wept for the immense slaughter they had inflicted (Homer 1951, line 509ff). Achilles granted Priam's wish and returned Hektor's body. Thus, Hermes brought together opposites and enabled the release and transformations of grief. Even today the urgency of returning the dead warrior's body home is still enacted in many a town's solemnly grieving ritual parades and burials of fallen warriors.

Jung (1956) saw in the trickster "the reflection of an earlier, rudimentary stage of consciousness" (p. 201). When cultures such as the Olympian Greeks reached a somewhat higher level of consciousness than the chthonic Titans that they

threw into the underworld, they could tolerate the archaic trickster, and even give him a more refined, heroic place in the pantheon. But they could not eliminate his dark shadowy tendencies. He became both a bestial and divine being, bridging two collective psychic realms. He is not really evil, Jung says, but does foolish things out of unconsciousness. The trickster is a collective shadow figure that is surpassed in some ways, yet lingers in the slippery darkness of even supposedly advanced cultures. So the integration into consciousness of the rowdy, dangerous trickster shadow is a constant challenge.

## See Also

- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Liminality](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Trickster](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Hermits

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A hermit is a person who lives a solitary life as part of their spiritual path. The etymology comes

from the Greek “eremos,” meaning desert. This reflects the history of the hermit in the Christian tradition. The first Christian hermits sought out the solitude of the desert. Hermits generally live a monastic life, though not all monks are hermits. Some modern hermits in the Roman Catholic Church are lay people living solitary lives in their own apartments in the city.

Western hermits began living in desert regions in the third century of the Common Era, in Egypt and Syria. St. Anthony (251–356 CE) is among the most famous of the early desert fathers and mothers, men and women whose life of seclusion and self-denial marked the first Christian monastic tradition. Most, but not all, contemporary hermits are part of recognized monastic order in Christianity.

Judaism, with its emphasis on marriage and family life, does not have an eremitic tradition. Islam also does not have many hermits, though some Sufi mystics were known to be solitary wanderers.

In Eastern religions, there is also recognition of the value of the solitary life. Hindus have several orders of monasticism. “Sannyasa” refers to those who have taken vows to give up the secular household life and live celibately in community and sometimes in solitary states. The “sadhus” are among the most widely known of sannyasi who often take up life as a solitary hermit. Buddhists also have monks who live off in long-term meditation retreat but are attached to the larger monastic community for their basic support. They periodically come out of retreat and engage in teaching meditation to monks in community or lay devotees. Taoism was founded by Lao Tzu who reputedly left his work, *The Tao Te Ching*, with a border guard as he walked off into the wilderness alone. So its founding figure was a hermit and through the ages others have followed his path of solitude. Confucianism, like Judaism and Islam, emphasizes the importance of family life, so it does not support a tradition of hermits.

It is difficult to live completely alone and be able to sustain oneself. Thus, most hermits are attached to either a lay community or a monastic community for sustenance and support. In the

Christian tradition this is the difference between an anchorite (hermit) and a cenobite (monk living in community). St. Pachomius (292–348) is considered the founder of the communal tradition of monastic life in the Christian tradition. But as much as possible the hermit seeks solitude.

The eremitic life is a continuum of self-denial or asceticism, which can range from simple living with some comforts to strict discipline and practices involving self-mortification of the body. After practicing such harsh disciplines, Siddhartha Gautama decided that a middle way of ascetic practices was better and thus struck a new path as he became the Buddha, eschewing extreme practices but seeking simplicity and nonattachment.

The hermit was portrayed in the Rider-Waite Tarot deck as holding a lamp to illuminate his and other’s paths. This symbolism affirms the primacy of the role of seeker after wisdom which is associated with gnostic traditions in the West as well as the more orthodox Christian forms of solitary life. There is a long tradition of solitary practitioners of Hermetic spirituality, including magicians, rosicrucians, and others in the Western esoteric tradition.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Occultism](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Hero

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### The "Great Man" View of History

It is commonly said that where in the twentieth century impersonal forces were believed to make history, in the nineteenth century heroic individuals were believed to make history. The epitome of this nineteenth-century outlook was the English man of letters Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881). Carlyle opens his *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (1841) with a statement that has come to epitomize the "Great Man" view of history: "For, as I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here" (p. 1).

Carlyle's concern with outward accomplishment sharply distinguishes his conception of heroism from that of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) in his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1885) (see part 1). The achievement of Nietzsche's *übermensch*, or "overman," is personal, not societal. Rather than praising the *übermensch* for changing his society, Nietzsche praises the society that produces him.

Carlyle's most vitriolic contemporary critic was the pioneering English sociologist Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), for whom the attribution of decisive events to the talents of individuals rather than to the fundamental laws of physical and social evolution is a hopelessly primitive, childish, romantic, and unscientific viewpoint. In Spencer's famous summary phrase in *The Study of Sociology* (1874), "Before he [the great man] can re-make his society, his society must make him" (p. 35).

The twentieth century has spawned still stronger skepticism toward the impact of heroes, even in the face of the seemingly all too real impact of dictators like Hitler and Stalin. Defenders of heroism nevertheless remain. Best

known is the American philosopher Sidney Hook (1902–1989), author of *The Hero in History* (1943/1955). Hook argues for a sensible middle ground between crediting heroes with everything, which he assumes Carlyle to be doing, and crediting them with nothing.

### Modern Heroes

Some heroes, or kinds of heroes, fit only certain periods. For example, it is hard to imagine an aristocratic hero like Don Juan surviving into the twentieth century. Other heroes do survive, either because their appeal continues or because they are protean enough to adapt to the times. Heracles, the greatest of ancient heroes, was by no means confined to the crude image of him as Rambo-like – all brawn and no brains – but on the contrary has been depicted as the embodiment of wisdom, the exemplar of virtue, a tragic hero, a glutton, and even a romantic lover.

In the twentieth century, as in prior centuries, not only have traditional heroes been transformed, but new heroes and new kinds of heroes have emerged. If distinctively nineteenth-century heroes were the romantic hero (Byron's Childe Harold) and the bourgeois hero (Flaubert's Emma Bovary), distinctively twentieth-century heroes include the ordinary person as hero (Miller's Willy Loman), the comic hero (Roth's Alexander Portnoy), the schlemiel as hero (Singer's Gimpel the Fool), and the absurd hero (Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon). Far from divine, the contemporary hero is hopelessly human – mortal, powerless, amoral. The present-day hero is often lowly even within the human community – more the outsider than the insider, more the loser than the winner, and more the villain than the savior. The contemporary hero is not a once great figure who has fallen but a figure who never rises. Sisyphus, not Oedipus epitomizes contemporary heroism. Yet Sisyphus is still to be commended for never giving up. Persistence replaces success; survival replaces achievement. Old-fashioned heroic virtues like courage and duty give way to new ones like irony and detachment. Today's hero is heroic in persisting without success.



Yet it would surely be going much too far to argue that traditional heroism has died out. Present-day heroes in sports, entertainment, business, and politics are admired for their success, not for their mere persistence, and the acclaim conferred on them often reaches the same divine plateau as in times past. They are “idolized” and “worshiped.” At most, the notion of heroism as persistence has arisen alongside the traditional notion of heroism as success.

## Hero Myths

Stories of heroes take the form of myths. The study of hero myths goes back at least to 1871, when, in *Primitive Culture*, the pioneering English anthropologist E. B. Tylor argued that many of them follow a uniform plot or pattern: the hero is exposed at birth, is saved by other humans or animals, and grows up to become a national hero. In 1928 the Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp, in *Morphology of the Folktale* (trans. [1968] 1958), sought to demonstrate that Russian fairy tales follow a common biographical plot, in which the hero goes off on a successful adventure and upon his return marries and gains the throne. Propp’s pattern skirts both the birth and the death of the hero.

Of attempts not merely to delineate patterns but also to determine the origin, function, and subject matter of hero myths, the most important have been by the Viennese psychoanalyst Otto Rank (1884–1939), the American mythographer Joseph Campbell (1904–1987), and the English folklorist Lord Raglan (1885–1964). Rank later broke irreparably with Sigmund Freud, but when he wrote *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1909) [trans. 1914], he was a Freudian apostle. While Campbell was never a full-fledged Jungian, he wrote *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) as a kindred soul of C. G. Jung. Raglan wrote *The Hero* (1936) as a theoretical ally of James Frazer. Because Raglan’s approach is nonpsychological and even anti-psychological, his will not be considered here.

## Otto Rank

For Rank, following Freud, heroism deals with what *Jungians* call the first half of life. The first half – birth, childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood – involves the establishment of oneself as an independent person in the external world. The attainment of independence expresses itself concretely in the securing of a job and a mate. The securing of either requires both separation from one’s parents and mastery of one’s instincts. Freudian problems involve a lingering attachment to either parents or instincts. To depend on one’s parents for the satisfaction of instincts or to satisfy instincts in antisocial ways is to be stuck, or fixated, at a childish level of psychological development.

Rank’s pattern, which he applies to 30 hero myths, is limited to the first half of life. It goes from the hero’s birth to his attainment of a “career”:

The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by a humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves rank and honors (Rank 1914, p. 61).

Literally, or consciously, the hero, who is always male, is a historical or legendary figure like Oedipus. The hero is heroic because he rises from obscurity to the throne. Literally, he is an innocent victim of either his parents or, ultimately, fate. While his parents have yearned for a child and abandon him only to save the father, they nevertheless do abandon him. The hero’s revenge, if the parricide is even committed knowingly, is, then, understandable: who would not consider killing one’s would-be killer?

Symbolically, or unconsciously, the hero is heroic not because he dares to win a throne but



because he dares to kill his father. The killing is definitely intentional, and the cause is not revenge but sexual frustration. The father has refused to surrender his wife – the real object of the son's efforts. Too horrendous to face, the true meaning of the hero myth gets covered up by the concocted story. Rather than the culprit, the hero becomes an innocent victim or at worst a justified avenger. What the hero seeks gets masked as power, not incest. Most of all, who the hero is becomes some third party, a historical or legendary figure, rather than either the creator of the myth or anyone stirred by it. Identifying himself with the literal hero, the myth maker or reader vicariously revels in the hero's triumph, which in fact is his own. *He* is the real hero of the myth.

Literally, the myth culminates in the hero's attainment of a throne. Symbolically, the hero gains a mate as well. One might, then, conclude that the myth fittingly expresses the Freudian goal of the first half of life. In actuality, it expresses the opposite. The wish it fulfills is not for detachment from one's parents and from one's antisocial instincts but, on the contrary, for the most intense possible relationship to one's parents and the most antisocial of urges: parricide and incest, even rape. Taking one's father's job and one's mother's hand does not quite spell independence of them.

The myth maker or reader is an adult, but the wish vented by the myth is that of a child of three to five. The fantasy is the fulfillment of the Oedipal wish to kill one's father in order to gain access to one's mother. The myth fulfills a wish never outgrown by the adult who either invents or uses it. That adult is psychologically an eternal child. Having never developed an ego strong enough to master his instincts, he is neurotic. Since no mere child can overpower his father, the myth maker imagines being old enough to do so. In short, the myth expresses not the Freudian goal of the first half of life but the fixated childhood goal that keeps one from accomplishing it.

## Joseph Campbell

Where for Freud and Rank heroism is limited to the first half of life, for Jung it involves the second

half – adulthood – even more. For Freud and Rank, heroism involves relations with parents and instincts. For Jung, heroism in even the first half involves, in addition, relations with the unconscious. Heroism here means separation not only from parents and antisocial instincts but even more from the unconscious: every child's managing to forge consciousness is for Jung a supremely heroic feat.

The goal of the uniquely Jungian second half of life is likewise consciousness, but now consciousness of the Jungian unconscious rather than, as in the first half, of the external world. One must return to the unconscious, from which one has invariably become severed, but the ultimate aim is to return in turn to the external world. The ideal is a balance between consciousness of the external world and consciousness of the unconscious. The aim of the second half of life is to supplement, not abandon, the achievements of the first half.

Just as classical Freudian problems involve the failure to establish oneself in the outer world, in the form of working and loving, so distinctively Jungian problems involve the failure to reestablish oneself in the inner world, in relation to the unconscious. Freudian problems stem from excessive attachment to the world of childhood; Jungian problems, from excessive attachment to the world one enters upon breaking free of the childhood world: the external world.

Just as Rank confines heroism to the first half of life, so Campbell restricts it to the second half. Rank's scheme begins with the hero's birth; Campbell's, with his adventure. Where Rank's scheme ends, Campbell's begins: with the adult hero ensconced at home. Rank's hero must be young enough for his father and in some cases even his grandfather still to be reigning. Campbell does not specify the age of his hero, but the hero must be no younger than the age at which Rank's hero myth therefore ends: young adulthood. While some of Campbell's own examples are of child heroes, they violate his scheme, according to which heroes must be willing to leave behind all that they have accomplished at home and violate even more his Jungian meaning, according to which heroes must be fully developed egos ready to encounter the unconscious from which

they have largely become separated. Campbell's heroes should, then, be adults.

Rank's hero must be the son of royal or at least aristocratic parents. The hero of the egalitarian Campbell need not be, though often is. Where Rank's heroes must be male, Campbell's can be female as well, though Campbell inconsistently describes the hero's initiation from an exclusively male point of view. Finally, Campbell's scheme dictates human heroes, even though many of his examples are of divine heroes. Rank's pattern, by contrast, readily allows for divine as well as human heroes.

Where Rank's hero returns to his birthplace, Campbell's marches forth to a strange, new world, which the hero has never visited or even known existed. This extraordinary world is the world of the gods, and the hero must hail from the human world precisely to be able to experience the distinctiveness of the divine one. The hero has sex with the goddess and marries her – the reason the hero must here be male. He clashes with the male god and defeats him – the additional reason the hero must here be male. Yet with both gods he becomes mystically one and thereby becomes divine himself.

Where Rank's hero *returns* home to encounter his father and mother, Campbell's hero *leaves* home to encounter a male and a female god, who are neither his parents nor necessarily even a couple. Yet the two heroes' encounters are seemingly akin. But in fact they are not. Because the goddess is not the hero's mother, sex with her does not constitute incest. And the conflict with the male god is resolved.

When Campbell writes that myths "reveal the benign self-giving aspect of the *archetypal* father," he is using the term in its Jungian sense (Campbell 1949, pp. 139–140). For Freudians, gods symbolize parents. For Jungians, parents symbolize gods, who in turn symbolize father and mother archetypes, which are components of the hero's personality. A hero's relationship to these gods symbolizes not, as for Freud and Rank, a son's relationship to other persons (his parents) but the relationship of one side of a male's personality (his ego) to another side (his unconscious). The father and the mother are

but two of the archetypes of which the Jungian, or collective, unconscious is composed. Archetypes are unconscious not because they have been repressed but because they have never been conscious. For Jung and Campbell, myth originates and functions not, as for Freud and Rank, to satisfy neurotic urges that cannot be manifested openly but to express normal sides of the personality that have just not had a chance at realization.

By identifying himself with the hero of a myth, Rank's myth maker or reader vicariously lives out in his mind an adventure that, if ever directly fulfilled, would be acted out on his parents themselves. While also identifying himself – or herself – with the hero of a myth, Campbell's myth maker or reader vicariously lives out in the mind an adventure that even when directly fulfilled would still be taking place in the mind. For parts of the mind are what the myth maker or reader is really encountering.

### See Also

- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Rank, Otto](#)

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## Hero with an African Face

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Joseph Campbell's (1949–1967) classic *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was built on Carl Jung's breakthrough theory of the collective unconscious and its mythic, psychological symbolism that appears in cultural forms such as folktales, literature, and religion and films such as *Star Wars*. Campbell inspired much popular and scholarly thinking about myth and comparative religion, and his "monomyth" theory of a single mythic overarching story has appealing echoes that link world mythic consciousness. But critics saw this theory as an insufficiently supported grab-bag of myths. Each fit into his archetypal paradigm about the ego's descent into the unconscious, encounters with various beings, notably divine, and a return to consciousness enriched with the wisdom of the collective underworld. He wrote his book during the late 1930s and published it after World War II, in 1949.

In the next decades, as world religion and myth studies expanded, partly due to his books, his earlier approach came to seem preliminary and lacking in scope. For example, he had not included the newly feminist approach to heroines and goddesses. So Maureen Murdock wrote

*The Heroine's Journey* in 1990. Africana scholars called attention to more mythic themes in Africa, so Clyde W. Ford learned Swahili, travelled to Africa for extensive research, and wrote *The Hero with an African Face: Mythic Wisdom of Traditional Africa* in 1999. Ford sought to find African myths that can help heal the shadowy pain of African-American slavery. Such expansions of Campbell's theory can be seen either as the emergence into consciousness of new elements in Campbell's large archetypal theme, or alternate patterns.

Great Africa, with huge steaming jungles, thirsty deserts, and vast plains filled with exotic plants, animals, and many kinds of people, has the distinction of being the birthplace of the human race, and thus the birthplace of many mythic heroic journeys. Most of North Africa is now primarily Muslim, and the south is a very diverse cultural region. But it can be divided into major regions by language families. The various mythologies of these regions are rich with themes such as creation, virgin birth, heroes, tricksters, magicians, death, and resurrection. These have roots going back as far as 30,000 years, deep in the human collective unconscious, far older than contemporary major religions. The regions are:

1. *The Nilo-Asiatic* region's mythology is primarily centered on Egyptian culture, especially the myths surrounding Isis and Osiris. Osiris was a dying and rising god, Isis was a wife and mother goddess who heroically retrieved Osiris from death. She is mother of Horus, Osiris' son who becomes his royal successor, despite the battle with Set, personification of evil. The Egyptian obsession with the afterworld divided the world into three realms: (a) the upper world of gods and goddesses, (b) the middle world of living beings, and (c) the underworld of departed souls, led by Osiris to their judgment and fate.
2. *The Nilo-Saharan* region, around the sources of the Nile and west of there, a high myth begins with the creation, in which Heaven and Earth were very close, connected by a rope. But humans neglected their responsibilities to the gods, so the rope was cut. This culture group has a high abstract divinity

(*nihilic* in Dinka) that envisions God far above all earthly images of divinity, as a state of being or a way.

3. *The Niger-Congo* (non-Bantu) region in the western Horn has very sophisticated and psychological mythologies of the gods. The Yoruba people have a rich pantheon of divinities (*orishas*) that express major archetypal patterns. In Bambara myth, the world emerges from and dissolves back into the root sound “Yo,” similar to the Hindu “Om.” The Dogon creation account emerges from a series of divine Words, and Dogon villages are laid out on a diagram of the human form, which is seen as a locale of oracles.
4. *The Niger-Congo Bantu* language region, around the Congo River and southeast, sees the sun and moon as expressions of immortality (Sun) and mortal consciousness (Moon). Their mythology is a rich collection of heroic journeys that tell of dramatic adventures in the underworld of dead spirits, full of monsters, and the heavenly realm of divine figures.
5. *The Khoisan* region, in the southwestern Kalahari Desert, is comprised of the Khoi (Hottentots) and the San (Bushmen). In an important sacred ritual, entranced dancers report direct experiences of the divine. San rock art going back 30,000 years expresses ancient myths. Bushmen animal masters, such as the *mantis* and the *eland*, are prominent (Ford 1999, p. xvii).

Campbell’s comment, drawn from Jung’s thinking that “Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream” (Campbell 1949–1967, p. 19), echoes the tradition of the Elgon people in central Africa. For them “little” dreams are not important, but “big” dreams require that the dreamer gather the community and tell it to them, thus opening the door to mythology (Ford 1999, p. vii). The people who live in a mythic world live in the soul’s collective world. And myths often open into the realm of Being, the source of existence, as Jung showed. The symbolic language of dream and myth is many faceted and paradoxical, where numinous divinity can be expressed coming through a pond glowing with wondrous inner light or as a green tree goddess overflowing with love (Somé 1994). Myths can

heal psychological and spiritual wounds such as the pains of slavery and despair. Sadly, slavery has been a terrible commonplace throughout history for conquered people, from Turkish or Chinese palace eunuchs guarding a harem to Africans picking cotton under the blazing sun, survivors of the 30–60 million slaves brought to the colonial Americans in one of the worst holocausts in history.

How can mythology help assuage the blood and grief of such slavery? The theme of a hero’s journey points to the inward passage from soul-breaking misery to a heroic consciousness cultivated by stories told, sung, and danced around campfires that can conquer evil and bring hope. Myths and masks can transport and transform souls. They can teach courage and orient the soul to its higher destiny, its part in the greater mysteries of existence. Today, the BaKongo people tell stories of their ancestors captured and sold to white men in ships. It is said they were taken first to the realm of Mputu. This refers to “agitated waters,” to Europeans, and to the land of the dead. It is seen as the mythic realm where heroic souls travel to battle magical beings. And they had to endure white-faced masters with whips and a male God imagined to be white. But from there each heroic soul is not lost. It is brought home and reborn in the cycles of life and death. “We’re waiting for them,” the BaKongo say (Ford 1999, pp. 5–6) (Fig. 1).

## African Creation

The vast ancient origin of the universe hides deep in mysterious cosmic energies. Religions seek to give answers to this archetypal question beyond rational or empirical knowledge, if not literally, then as psychological and spiritual foundations of the deepest layer of life. Myths of creation are commonly reenacted annually to keep creation going or to keep the archetypal image in consciousness. For example, annual rituals repeat a primeval myth of creation by egg, tree, or breath, returning to “yonder time” (*in illo tempore*) thus regaining and keeping that creative energy going (Eliade 1958, pp. 410–417; Ford 1999, pp. 170–191). The African Bambara of Mali



**Hero with an African Face, Fig. 1** Ritual mask. Fang people. Gabon, west-central Africa. Louvre Museum. Photo by Marie-Lan Nguyen (2006). Public Domain ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fang\\_mask\\_Louvre\\_MH65-104-1.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fang_mask_Louvre_MH65-104-1.jpg))

commonly chant “Yo” because they believe that the universe began with this sound, this energy, and continues as the ground of existence. So to chant “Yo” is to harmonize with the deep songs of one’s being, the origin of all the planets, life-forms, and consciousness. This is a sophisticated philosophical intuition of participation in cosmic depth that gives a solid ground to the collective Bambara life journey. It also raises the psyche above the cruder aspects of its archetypal strivings up to refined presence. Primordial divinities such as the biblical God create the world by speaking words, and primordial heroes such as the Chinese “Heavenly Emperor” Fu Hsi create culture. The Hindu original and ever-present “Om” is the primordial creative word full of wisdom (Campbell 1949/1967, pp. 315–317). The Nigerian Yoruba hear the creative cosmic word as “Hoo.”

## African Heroic Journeys

The patterns of African mythology often reflect themes highlighted by Campbell, but not in his “monomyth” order. His hero crosses a first threshold, with complications, such as resistance and a threshold guardian. Ordinary ego consciousness is then left behind and the soul enters a mysterious Wonderland, for “myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation” (Campbell 1949–1967, Prologue, Part 1, “Myth and Dream,” pg. 3). The story of the South African Zulu hero Uncama begins with him crawling down a hole chasing an animal and entering an underworld symbolizing the collective unconscious *mosima*, the abyss where the dead dwell. He crosses the threshold into myth-land, where dynamic creatures come alive and guide souls.

In Angola, the Ambundu people tell of a culture hero whose father called his son Kimanaeuzo to go on a journey. When he returned, all his family and property had been destroyed by an enemy, the Makishi, but his wife had survived, and they started a family again. Their first child Sudika-mbambi at birth was miraculously able to speak, saying “In the sky I set an antelope.” This miraculous birth was immediately followed by a second son, saying: “I am Kabundungulu. . . You will see all the miraculous things that I am going to do.” And he led spirits of nature to build a new house for the family (Ford 1999, pp. 29–30). The tragic suffering of defeat and loss gives way to new beginnings with miraculous powers. This is the hope that lifts the hearts of victims, the magic of myth’s sparkling ability to raise the soul from earthly suffering to see the powerful transcendent saving “antelopes” in the sky.

## The Soul’s Great Adventure

Once past the threshold and its ordeals, the heroic journey begins in the realm of the gods and mythic creatures. These may have no “objective” existence, for their enchanted realm lies below the subject-object dichotomy. But they serve to



dramatize the soul's and the culture's need for transformation, to overcome life's challenges, such as suffering, anxiety, or despair. Today, even apparently totally technological events, such as the journey to the outer space, have mythical purposes deeper than their rational surface ego motives, such as "progress," technological, and national pride. The Chaga people in Tanzania tell of Kyazimba, a poor man whose life felt hopeless. He encountered an old woman who, when he told her his problem, wrapped her robe around him, soared with him above the earth to the zenith of the sun's daily journey at midday. A brilliantly shining chief came up and prepared a feast. The old woman asked for his help for Kyazimba. The chief blessed the man and sent him back to earth and a prosperous life (Ford 1999, pp. 53–54).

Another major African theme is the Sacred Union, a transcendent marriage of a mortal to a divinity that produces a miraculous birth of a culture hero.

In Rwanda the tale is told of the wife of Kwisaba, whose husband was away at war for so long that she finally fell ill with despair and collapsed, unable even to chop firewood. She cried out for the help of someone, even the Thunder of Heaven. Suddenly her hut darkened, clouds gathered above, and in a flash of lightning appeared the Thunder of Heaven, in the likeness of a man. He chopped all her firewood in an instant, lit her fire, and said, "Now what will you give me?" She was struck silent, but soon he said, "When your girl baby is born, will you give her to me for a wife?" Trembling, she stammered "Yes!" and Thunder disappeared. Her daughter was born and named Miseke. Her human father returned home and commanded her to stay inside to avoid the return of Thunder. But she could not be restrained and played outside. Soon when she laughed, to everyone's astonishment, beautiful, valuable beads dropped from her mouth. Soon Thunder returned and claimed her for his wife and carried her above. She soon overcame her fear and loved her husband and had children. But she yearned to return to her earthly family, and Thunder granted her wish. She encountered adventures and challenges there. A friendly boy killed an ogre that had swallowed her children,

and she took them back to their heavenly home, never to be seen again on Earth.

There are several important archetypal themes in Miseke's story, such as a powerful sky god, mating, divine child, soul transformations, and overcoming suffering (Campbell 1949–1967, Pt. II, Chaps. 2 and 3; Eliade 1958, Chaps. 2 and 7; Jung 1979, Vol. 16, para. 214). Her mother was saved by a transcendent figure who "cut her wood" and "lit her fire" with his "axe." She miraculously gave birth to a half-divine child when the father was away. As she grew, from her happiness emerged beautiful jewels, like little eggs. She was initiated into marriage and had heavenly children. Then she struggled with earthly troubles until rescued by a heroic boy, then returned to heaven. This myth gives mothers and girls fruitful symbolic images to prepare them for their successful heroic journey as adolescents, wives, and mothers and in touch with their higher power, like Thunder (Ford 1999, pp. 52–59).

## African Goddesses

In traditional African culture, goddesses are complex and take many forms. They are not so much carved images as powers experienced in nature – reproduction, stars, plants, rivers, or serpents. They are the transcendent power behind nature imagined as feminine, such as Gleti, a moon goddess and mother of all the stars in Dahomey tradition in Benin. In Yoruban tradition in Nigeria, Oba is the Orisha spirit of the River Oba. In South African Zulu culture, Malambo is the snake-like goddess of rivers. In Ethiopia, Buk is goddess of women's fertility, and Atete is goddess of Spring and fertility. For the Southern Nuba of Sudan, the "Great Mother" gave birth to Earth and humanity. The Fon of Dahomey envision a 4-day creation through Mawi, who had the assistance of Aido-Hwedo, the Great Serpent, who helped her and ended coiled, tail in mouth, as a carrying pad under the Earth. This circular serpent image is the widespread archetypal image of the *uroboros*, symbol of the endless round of birth, life, and death. African goddesses are often paired with male figures, such as Mwetsi, the



creator figure Wahungwe people of Zimbabwe. When he touched the creatrix goddess Massassi (the morning star) with a drop of oil, she swelled and gave birth to plant life. His second wife Morongo (the evening star) coupled with Massassi and she gave birth to chickens, sheep, goats, boys, and girls. Later she gave birth to lions, leopards, snakes, and scorpions. The snake brought them trouble and death, and they returned to Disvoa, the heavenly realm (Ford 1999, pp. 114–132). Isis was the great goddess of Egypt who, with her husband Osiris and son Horus, symbolizes many archetypal themes, such as culture bringing, birth, death, and resurrection. The goddess in Africa may also appear as half of an androgynous figure.

Many other archetypal heroes with transcendent powers fill African myth, such as the sacred warrior, the master animals, and the divine self. But intuitively, many people understand that divinity is beyond human form or gender, for it makes both. Rituals, especially initiations, shape the consciousness of traditional Africans to experience and know these many divinities (Somé 1994). The African hero is one image of the supreme power, the fathomless spirit, the ontological mystery that creates Earth and the cosmos, with their many wonders, and is present in its many guiding forms and healing dynamics.

## See Also

- ▶ African American Spirituality
- ▶ African Diaspora Religions
- ▶ African Traditional Religion
- ▶ Animal Spirits
- ▶ Archetypal Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Campbell, Joseph
- ▶ Female God Images
- ▶ Goddess Spirituality
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ Isis
- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Osiris and the Egyptian Religion
- ▶ Participatory Spirituality
- ▶ Re-Enchantment
- ▶ Soul in the World

- ▶ Uroboros
- ▶ Yoruban Religion in Cuba

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## Heschel, Abraham Joshua

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## General

Born in Warsaw, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972) was designated from his youth as the heir to the great Hasidic court of Apt over which his father and grandfather before him had presided. Following a rigorous traditional Jewish education, Heschel enrolled at the University of Berlin in 1927 where he earned a doctorate in Bible while simultaneously studying at a liberal rabbinical college devoted to the critical study of religious texts. Heschel remained in Berlin through the 1930s writing poetry in Yiddish, publishing scholarly works in German, and teaching at a number of Jewish institutions during the rise of Nazi power. German officials deported

Heschel to Poland in 1938, where he taught briefly before escaping to America via England. His mother and two sisters were killed in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1941. Heschel moved to New York in 1945 where he taught for the remainder of his life at the Jewish Theological Seminary, publishing several major works of theology both in Hebrew and English.

## Theology

Heschel believed in a God intimately concerned for human beings. He rejected the Aristotelian view of God, which had entered Jewish thought through Maimonides, as a Prime Mover who himself is not moved. Instead, Heschel laid out a theology of divine pathos in which God is deeply affected by human actions. God, in Heschel's view, reaches out to form relationships with human beings, but humans often ignore God's overtures, blinded by arrogance and a fatal underestimation of our own limitations. Faith begins with humans recovering a sense of awe – an awareness that God is present around us and challenging us to appreciate the ineffable mystery of existence.

Heschel elevated theological concepts such as awe, wonder, and mystery in his writing. Consequently, he was profoundly skeptical of social sciences that selectively ignore those aspects of human life not easily quantified or described in scientific language. He criticized the psychology of his day for its “empirical intemperance” which dismissed questions about ineffable dimensions of existence. He also rejected the idea that religion reflects human beings' need to believe in God. Conversely, Heschel wrote that religious feelings arise as individuals become aware of God's need for them. Heschel consistently maintained that evil acts were rooted in human egocentricity. He accused psychology of “intellectual narcissism” to the degree that it placed ultimate confidence in the power of the mind, dismissed questions of morality, and professed that man can attain his own salvation without resort to God.

Heschel also strongly critiqued religious orthodoxies which mistakenly view ritual piety as an end in itself. While Heschel was traditionally observant in his own life and wrote several moving works about the importance of observances such as prayer and the Sabbath, he understood religious rituals as a spiritual tool to help one continuously redirect his or her attention back towards the mystery of God's presence. Heschel simultaneously argued that ritual observance itself, even in the absence of belief, can help to open the individual's consciousness up to God's intimate love for humanity. Heschel famously wrote that Judaism does not demand a leap of faith but rather a leap of action.

Heschel refused to interpret the Bible as a document describing historical events. He wrote that scripture is not the object of divine revelation but rather a human commentary on revelation itself. The biblical text represents not what God said but rather a human effort to render into words a genuine experience of the divine which far transcends logic and language. Heschel read the prophetic message as demanding that individuals actively engage in a relationship with God by behaving morally and by developing an awareness of the sacred. In his own life, Heschel interpreted this to require his active participation in the American Civil Rights movement and his protest of the Vietnam War.

## See Also

- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Hasidism](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Hestia

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In Greek mythology, Hestia was the firstborn of Cronus (Saturn) and Rhea. Since it had been prophesied that one of his sons would overthrow him, Cronus swallowed each of his children; first Hestia, then Demeter, Hera, Hades, and Poseidon. When Zeus, her third son, was born, the infuriated Rhea hid him and gave Cronus a stone to swallow. When Zeus grew to manhood, he forced Cronus to disgorge his brothers and sisters. Hestia, the first to be swallowed, was the last to be released.

Hestia, like her Roman counterpart Vesta, is best known as the Goddess of the Hearth. While she was sometimes portrayed in human form, she was more often represented by images of flames or glowing coals. She had the most awesome responsibility of the Olympian gods. She became involved in none of the caprices and disputes that characterized her family because she was the one charged with keeping the flame alive, reminding us of the critical dependence of early humans on fire. It was Hestia who invented the art of building a house as a place to safeguard the flame and contain its light and warmth. She eschews the blood sacrifice; her preferred offering is sweet wine. She obviates the need for humans to steal fire because she gives it freely as a gift.

Hestia is one of the Goddesses that Jean Bolen used in her explication of archetypal feminine patterns. She represents an inward focus in a woman's psyche. Her identity is not tied to external circumstances or to outcomes. She looks inside herself to find meaning, peace, sanctuary, and the sense of being related to others in a common spiritual bond. Her focus is on the inner flame, her own values and what is personally meaningful to her. Her concern is with the spiritual, with being centered and being connected. She stays in the background, seeking anonymity, tranquility, and solitude.

As the Goddess of the Hearth, Hestia represents the relationship of women to the domestic sphere of life for whom household tasks are a central activity. She also has a social role as the hearthkeeper for the temple of the collective. Just as Hestia's flame is an image of the spirit that animates a home, it also represents the spirit that sustains the life of a culture. Her role, like that of the priestesses of Vesta in classical Rome, is to hold the soul of her culture, steadfastly to keep the flame alive whatever the turmoil of the outer world. Her inward search for meaning is not for herself alone but to sustain the spirit that gives meaning to the culture. Sometimes this task requires her to sacrifice her tranquility and anonymity and step out of the background to remind her culture of who they are, what they value, and what they have forgotten.

As well as the flame in the domestic and communal hearths, the Homeric Hymns identify Hestia as the fire at the center of the world in Delphi. While Apollo made himself the presiding deity of the Delphic oracle, Hestia is the fire that ignites the prophecy. The flame is often used to symbolize psychic processes such as inspiration, intuition, and imagination, and Hestia represents these ways of knowing that were celebrated by Ovid in his hymn to Vesta. The story of Hestia's wooing is an image of a feminine way of balancing the tension between conscious and unconscious. She was desired by Poseidon, who as God of the Sea is often taken to represent the power of the unconscious, and by Apollo, who is an image of rational thought, art, science, and language. To keep peace in Olympus, Hestia vowed to remain a virgin. She is ever poised between the two gods and, between the rational and the irrational, yet ever complete in herself. In gratitude, Zeus declared that the first and last libations would always be hers, and, in Greek religious rituals, Hestia was always the first god to be honored.

However, Hestia lost this honor when a new god, Dionysios, was born. To make way for him among the 12 places on Mount Olympus, Hestia, weary of intrigue and arguments, gave away her position, knowing that she would be welcome wherever she chose to settle. In this ending of the myth, the Greek religion and Western culture

suppressed an element of the feminine spirit and moved into the dualistic patriarchy defined by Nietzsche in terms of the polarity between Apollo and Dionysios.

### See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)

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## Hierophany

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Hierophany is a term for manifestation of the divine. It is a broader term than the more familiar term, theophany, because it allows nonpersonal forms of the divine to become manifest. The term was popularized by the noted scholar of comparative religion, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986). His major thesis (1959) is the distinction in human experience between the sacred and the profane modes of life. Our ordinary lives are profane, but he does not use this in a pejorative sense but as simply the opposite of sacred, so a better term for contrast would be ‘mundane’. When we are in contact with the divine ground of being, we are in “sacred space and sacred time,” and when we are out of contact, we are in a profane or ordinary mode of existence. Whether it is in a formal worship service or a private experience of mystical communion with the divine, we have the capacity

to enter into a new and more profound mode of being in the world. In this world of the spirit, we experience some type or degree of communion with the divine. Hierophany is the unfolding of that experience of contact, connection, or communion with a transcendent power or person.

For many people, it takes the form of a feeling of warmth, love, and connection to and receiving inspiration from a deity. For others, there is a “dark night of the soul,” a profound experience of suffering, unworthiness, and alienation. Either the positive or negative inner and private experience we associate with mystics is what Rudolf Otto (1917/1958) referred to as the experience of the numinous. Even the relatively frequent experience the normal worshiper has of connection with the divine during the act of worship is an example of hierophany. Experience of and with the divine does not have to be dramatic and earth shattering; it can be quiet and secure. The experience of oneness with nature while in nature, likewise, can be the basis of a spiritual connection. This was articulated by such writers as the American Henry David Thoreau, whose spirituality centered on a sense of connection to the natural world.

In the Western religions, hierophany is experienced as theophany, since the divine takes on the form of a person. Buber (1958) characterizes this as an encounter of an “I” with a “Thou,” the highest quality of relationship that one can aspire to. There can be experiences which involve only part of senses, for example, ‘auditions’ or ‘locutions’ are the experiences of voices of the divine or their angelic representatives and “apparitions” are the visual manifestations of the divine or angelic beings. The many appearances of the Virgin Mary are examples of this type.

Another type of hierophany is revelation. This can be dramatic and life changing. The classic example is the experience of Saul, who on the road to Tarsus experienced an epiphany and turned from being a persecutor of Christians to become St. Paul, one of its most effective missionaries. Muhammed, likewise, experienced the dramatic visitation of an angel heralding the beginning of the revelations that became the Q’uran.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Locutions](#)

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## Hierosgamos

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## Introduction

*Hierosgamos* is a composite of two Greek words ἱερός (*hieros*) and γάμος (*gamos*), meaning “mystical marriage” or “sacred ceremony.” The word occasionally appears transliterated as two (*hieros gamos*) as it is presented in Greek. Often used interchangeably with *coniunctio*, the hierosgamos is recognized as the highest form of the union of opposites (e.g., King and Queen, Sol et Lunae) in the alchemical opus. Hierosgamos is found chiefly in the literature and theoretical work of analytical (Jungian) and archetypal psychology; nevertheless, it may possess implications for acting out of Oedipal vicissitudes observed in Freudian and psychodynamic psychology.

*Hieros* means “filled with or manifesting divine power, supernatural, holy.” Of this latter meaning, the word refers to the sense of being hallowed or consecrated, for example, holy scripture, even *hieroglyphics*.

*Gamos*, on the other hand, means “wedding,” “marriage,” and even “wedlock.” Pythagoras

uses *gamos* as a name for the numeral *three*, which is masculine frequency. This would account for the motif of the divine child (produced by the union of the king and queen, Sol et Lunae, gold and silver) being usually male, e.g., Christ and Marduk. The usage of *gamos* for the number three allows for the realization of the hierosgamos as the divine third. In this sense, it is connected with the Trinity in much of the writing of C. G. Jung.

Whereas Pythagoras designates *gamos* as three, Plutarch uses *gamos* for the number *five*. This immerses us into the symbolization of the marriage aspect of the ‘Hierosgamos as it is the combination of the feminine aspect (even frequency, i.e., two) and the masculine aspect (three or odd frequency). Rendering *gamos* as “five” could also refer to the alchemical *quinta essentia*, the quintessence that is the fifth element or red tincture that is indexed to the void or chaos encircled by the tail devouring serpent, or uroboros.

Further usage of *gamos* reveals it to denote the number *six* as used by Iamblichus (1998). In this sense,  $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$ , where six is viewed as a symbol of harmony or balance. It thus fits Islamic alchemist ibn Umail’s projection of the *coniunctio* in his *Hall ar-Rumuz*: one equals the observer of the hierosgamos, two equals the feminine aspect, and three equals the masculine aspect. For ibn Umail, six therefore symbolizes the union of polarity which thus creates balance and harmony.

## The Prominence of Hierosgamos

As the highest form of the *coniunctio oppositorum*, or union of opposites, hierosgamos is the spiritual wedding of matter and psyche. We see this in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, wherein Âpsu and Tiâmat are not simply the ancestors of the pantheon of gods, but they are also matter and divine spirit united and coexistent.

Often used as a metaphor in reference to the union of two divinities, the hierosgamos can also refer to the union between a human being and a god or goddess, as in the Sumerian story of

Tammuz (Dumuzi) and Inanna (Ishtar/Astarte), Zeus and Leda, and the Holy Spirit and Mary. Even Christian mystics such as St. Teresa of Avila and Hildegard of Bingen describe such experiences in their ecstatic visionary writings. The hierosgamos can also refer to a ritualized public sexual union between a king and a *hierodule*, or sacred prostitute, as a reenactment of such stories as that of Tammuz and Inanna. While popularized in *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), such reenactments were believed to increase potency not only of the king but of the land's continued fertility. The alchemical text known as *Rosarium philosophorum* (Smith 2003) depicts the hierosgamos that occurs during the alchemical opus in the creation of the homunculus (little man). This homunculus is the divine child resulting from a more often than not incestual pairing within the hierosgamos. It is the potential for the hierosgamos to be incestual that leads an analytical relationship toward being inflationary (a wedding of the gods) or to sexual acting out – and that may have Oedipal ramifications.

Religious literatures are replete with the imagery of the hierosgamos. We have already noted its depiction in the Sumerian account of Tammuz and Inanna, which is wrought in erotically charged language. The hierosgamos occurs within reenactments of the Egyptian Osiris dramas of death and rebirth, which again has affinities with fertility cult rites. Union of the Kundalini (as Shakti) with Shiva is also equivalent to a hierosgamos. The Babylonian genesis account, *Enuma Elish*, presents the hierogamynous aspect in its depiction of Âpsu and Tiâmat. In Kabbalah, we find the hierosgamos in the union of Yahweh with the Shekinah, who is often portrayed as Sophia (wisdom). In *Sefer Zohar*, we find in the thought of Adam as an androgynous being that without a hierosgamos, without male *and* female being one, God does not place God's abode in their midst (Matt 2004, p. 314). Adam is the primordial image of the hierosgamos. Interestingly, though, Adam in the Old Testament represents the *imago Dei*, whereas the hierosgamos reflects the godhead. It is the genius of *Sefer Zohar* to point out

that even the *imago Dei* is linked to the godhead, for male and female God created *them* – not *him* – and God called *them* Adam.

It is within the corpus of New Testament literature that we find more allusions to this sacred marriage. In Matthew 25:1–13 (Aland et al. 1998a, pp. 71–72), for example, we have a hint at a hierosgamos in Jesus' parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The hierosgamos itself psychologically indicates a hostile, emotional outbreak of the divine element which destroys the world of consciousness – Jesus' coming to bring not peace but a sword is indicative of this; however, the deeper significance of the sacred marriage implicated within this parable is that the anima is made pregnant and initiates a new birth, that is, a further and more comprehensive incarnation with God. This is the psychological meaning of the need to be born from above in the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 (Aland et al. 1998b, pp. 252–254). It is an archetypal incest in which the god must join with the *imago Dei* in order to produce a new creation. Such an irruption of the hierosgamos and the devastation it causes is not unlike the irruption one encounters when Lacan's Real forcefully breaks into one's consciousness. Such devastating irruptions implicate the difficulty many Protestant Christians have with religious vocation, as the call to become (and be) a minister of God – let alone a religious – means at least metaphorically being wedded to the divine and not to the immediate environs or the world.

The potential unity of the cosmos is indicated in the seed motif (cf. the Christ's image of having as much faith as would fill a miniscule mustard seed in Matthew 17), but it also possesses an intrapsychic meaning as the germ of conscious realization of the self. Whereas this takes fertility rites such as those practiced in Osiris cults to deeper and higher levels – for as above, so below – such seed motifs were apparently abused. As reported by Iranaeus, the gnostic sect known as the Marcosians celebrated a hierosgamos as a sexual initiation of women into their fold, a sacred marriage both inflationary (of the gods) and incestuous in its acting out. The *Corpus Hermeticum* relates that



God sows virtue, reason, and *gnosis* in the human mind, and the thirteenth treatise describes the inner rebirth of man from intelligible wisdom (*Sophia*) and the seed (*spermata*) of goodness that comes from God (Scott 1993).

It is in the apocalypse (Revelation) of John in which we witness more hierogamynous imagery. For example, the banquet of Christ alluded to in Revelation 3 (Aland et al. 1998c, p. 639) has been interpreted as a hierosgamos with God. And in this sense, the celebration of the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) furthers the image of our union with God to bring about and perpetuate the vision of the new heaven, new earth, and new Jerusalem. A similar image of the banquet occurs in the pseudepigraphal *Odes of Solomon*, and its precursor is to be found in the Sumerian story of Inanna/Ishtar's descent to the underworld.

As the Sol et Lunae joining, the hierosgamos results in not just an inner reality. It is total reality according to the fifth parable of the alchemical text of the *Aurora consurgens* (von Franz 1966, attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas). The *Aurora's* vision of the union of Sol et Lunae is no doubt influenced by its appearance in Revelation 21:9 (Aland et al. 1998, p. 676) in which the pair is joined in the image of the Sun-Moon Woman. She gives birth to the *complexio oppositorum* (complex of opposites), the uniting symbol which is a result of the union of the god and human sacred marriage. What is born is tantamount to a  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , a "not-Christ Christ" (not-Messiah Messiah), who not only separates/fragments, but also unites.

The phenomenal popularity of *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown 2003) has prompted much speculation and debate on the hierosgamos relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, even including the grail mysteries' sexual reenactment of the hierosgamos to insure the Magdalene's rose, or blood, line. This subject has been previously broached in other texts such as Kazantzakis's *Last Temptation of Christ* (1960), not to mention the inferences contained in the gnostic texts of the Nag Hammadi, Berlin, and Tchakos codices. The question has been raised regarding the figure on Jesus' right in Leonardo's fresco of the Last Supper. Is it John who is the beloved disciple or

the woman, Mary Magdalene, since she it is Jesus loves best? It is known that male youths were often painted with female attributes, perhaps as a nod to the inner feminine, and in early Christianity John was occasionally referred to as "maiden" (*parthenos*, i.e., "virgin" or "chaste man"). He is indeed Lacan's *jeune homme*, a *sinthome* – playing on the words *saint home* – possessive of rejuvenating qualities. In the gnostic Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles, John is charged to be a doctor of souls, a healer of the heart (Meyer 2007, p. 365). Perhaps it is no mistake, then, that transliteration of the Greek  $\dot{\iota}\epsilon\rho\varsigma\ \gamma\acute{\alpha}\mu\omicron\varsigma$  transitioned from two separate entities (*hieros* and *gamos*) to become one: *hierosgamos*.

Still, the transferential field posited by the hierosgamos within guided image therapy and active imagination, or even its context within the relationship between analyst and analysand or therapist and client brings to bear all the rich symbolism of this *coniunctio* or sacred marriage, awakens our awareness of the unconscious connection, and allows us to witness firsthand the numinosity of *coniunctio*. Balance and harmony must be stressed, for on the one hand, conscious evolution of the symbolism of the hierosgamos' numinosity can have very creative and releasing consequences; on the other hand, the shadow side of the unconscious development of this same symbolism can have deleterious and destructive consequences. The hierosgamos is thus linked to the uroboros as life-giving/renewing qualities as well as for its ability to take and/or destroy life.

## See Also

- ▶ Revelation
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Uroboros

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## Hillel

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Rabbi Hillel (born in Jerusalem, traditionally c.110 BCE–10 CE) was a famous Jewish

religious leader and scholar associated with the development of the Mishnah and the Talmud. He was renowned for his love of learning and his compassion.

He asked: “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?”

Hillel’s question “If I am only for myself, what am I?” underlies individual human development—the search for the self and understanding who the self is in relation to others. Psychotherapeutic interaction concerns itself with searching deep within to find what is true for the individual and then finding ways for the individual to make contact with others, a process leading from a narcissistic engagement with the world to a fuller, open, mature being, whose everyday life embodies a full engagement with God and the world.

Hillel also said: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow: this is the whole Law; the rest is the explanation; go and learn” (Shab. 31a). With these words Hillel recognized as the fundamental principle of the Jewish moral law the Biblical precept of brotherly love (Lev. xix. 18).

He is also reputed to have invented the “Hillel sandwich,” many centuries before the Earl of Sandwich, who is more commonly held responsible for that culinary morsel. The Hillel sandwich is eaten at the Passover Seder. Ashkenazi Jews eat horseradish on matzoh as part of the Seder meal and call that the Hillel Sandwich.

## See Also

- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Hillman, James

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James Hillman (1926–2011) was a trickster *extraordinaire*, the radical rethinker of post-Jungian psychology who challenged many cherished assumptions of psychology and religion and pointed the way to a bold new way of seeing psychology as a variety of religious experience. Hillman studied in Paris, Dublin, and the University of Zurich, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1959. That year he became Director of Studies at the Jung Institute until 1969. In 1970 he became editor of *Spring Publications* and made it a stimulating forum for new ideas in archetypal psychology for many years. He taught at the Pacifica Graduate Institute near Santa Barbara for several years, where most of his library is archived. While he agreed with Jung on many themes, such as the centrality of archetypal images, and expanded Jung's view of the shadow, Hillman disagreed with the centrality of Jung's monotheistic central Self as the divine within, symbolized by the circle mandala, and instead stressed a polytheistic view of divinity and soul in the world. In his 1964 *Suicide and the Soul*, he urged therapists to stop seeing thoughts of suicide as symptoms to be cured but as symbols of philosophical life issues.

Hillman challenges psychology to expand out of its medical roots and to see its *poetic and religious depths*. He makes especial use of Greek gods and goddesses to make his point that all soul events, like therapy, are rituals of gods. For the many gods are living personifications of the depths of soul and world. They are not "in" our theoretically subjective psyche, but we are in them, like being in love is being in Aphrodite. While the theoretical ego of modernism enjoys its illusion of being in control, the gods are images of more powerful forces in us and in the world. He decenters religion into a polytheistic company, each with a shadow that

cannot be ignored. Jung pushed open the door to seeing many images of divinity – stones, trees, animals, and goddesses – but still focused on one God. Hillman flung this door further open, exploring the power of many divinities.

Hillman slips out from under the moral assumptions of much psychology and shakes the reader into facing the unthought surprising turn-arounds of many concepts. Mars is active flexing his muscles in war. Dionysus dissolves our egos with ecstatic passion in the flashing lights, thundering music, and seductive dancing of night-clubs. Hillman is not interested in reviving old faiths, but in portraying gods as ever-present numinous images (Hillman 1975, pp. 35-36).

Hillman renames his jumping off from Jung as *Archetypal Psychology*, rather than Analytical Psychology or Jungian Psychology, taking the postmodern path of stressing that "archetypes" are never perceived, but are theoretical constructs behind experience. So we should never speak of substantive "archetypes" as basic forms governing the psyche, as if we could see or know them, any more than humans could perceive Platonic forms. What we can experience are archetypal images that are not contained in the mind, thus limiting psychology to individual psychoanalysis. They pervade the world, not just in the collective unconscious, but in all experience. So all soul's experience has an imaginative, fantasy element, pervading culture and cosmos:

Thus, archetypal psychology's first links are with culture and imagination rather than with medical and empirical psychology, which tend to confine psychology to the positivistic manifestations of the nineteenth-century condition of the soul (Hillman 1975, p. 48).

Hillman focuses on keeping the images in dreams central, not boxing them into a conscious theory, like an Oedipus complex or a Shadow archetype. Symbols don't stand for anything else, Hillman says they are the soul itself in its visible imagination. He developed this theme in his major *Re-Envisioning Psychology* (Hillman 1975) that was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, encouraging "staying with the images" or "personifying." He also sees therapy not as always healing but perhaps pathologizing – staying with

a pathology's falling apart long enough to see through its literalism to what the soul's images and stories cry for. Similarly, archetypal psychology is not humanistic, not staying at the human level, but seeing the gods as metaphors for "cosmic perspectives in which the soul participates" (Hillman 1975, p. 169) – personified images of lovers, warriors, tricksters, death, and life itself. Therapy is not science but hermeneutics – interpreting soul's images, not proving anything for ego's sake.

In *The Dream and the Underworld* (Hillman 1979a), Hillman says let the ego go deep into the underworld of the soul, where it is no longer in control, and listen to the mythic pattern of a dream's images, such as a serpent. In the underworld, let the images speak and bring their surprising, even shadowy revelations. A symbolic serpent's bite is poisonous not only to the ego but to the soul, it may bring transforming wisdom and intuitive insight. Listen for the opposites of what ego expects. Death may be the death of an archetypal part of the soul, outworn, painful assumptions that need to die to allow new life and soul to be born. Get out of ego's materialistic literalism and subjective humanism. Dive into the mysteries of soul and swim in its vast ocean of archetypal dramas. Ride a whale, kiss a mermaid, and dissolve yourself into the greater mysteries. It's only imagination but full of meanings.

In *Puer Papers* (Hillman 1979b) Hillman develops the themes of the archetypal, mythic Senex or Chronos, a wise old man who favors conservative, static, family history, and approaching death, like Captain Hook. Puer, like Peter Pan or Icarus, is the eternal youth, playful, creative, innocent, revolutionary, and irresponsible. These extremes pervade and overlap in every life and can capture one's ego-consciousness or be welcomed to help negotiate life's journeys, each in turn as needed.

In the challenging book *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse* (Hillman and Ventura 1992), Hillman, in conversation with Michael Ventura, charges that psychotherapy has been so individual, inward, and subjective that it has stifled its ability to see

soul in the world and analyze the world's cultural pathologies. Therapy has helped us work on our relationships and feelings but meanwhile has a blind spot: ignoring the world's need for psychotherapy, disintegrating in poverty, pollution, and the decline of industrial society. The sicknesses are out there – the financial institutions, the buildings, the cities, and the schools – decaying in the Cartesian dualism that sees the world out there as a dead resource bank for human power and pleasure. Archetypal psychology can restore our way of seeing soul in the world – *anima mundi*. "We are abused and victimized less by our personal lives of the past than by a present system" (Hillman and Ventura 1992, pp. 38–39). What's sick is the rigid mental dualism between inner fantasy and outer reality. "Reality is always coming to you through a pair of glasses, a point of view, a language – a fantasy" (Hillman and Ventura 1992, p. 39). The self is an "interiorization of community. . . . If I am not in a psychic field with others – with people, building, animals, trees – I *am* not" (Hillman and Ventura 1992, p. 40).

This can and should open soul to ecology and social conscience, but, like all psyche, it also has a shadow. For example, feverish adolescents may be addicted to their electronic "friends" but unaware of the inner and outer soul. Still innocent and seeking acceptance by peers rather than being helped to listen to their souls, they drive recklessly while texting or sexting. New research indicates that "stress arises largely from "the irritations of daily life," which I take to mean again the aesthetic disorders of the environment, such as racism, noise, crowding, traffic, air quality, crime fears, . . . violence fears . . . school systems. . ." (Hillman and Ventura 1992, p. 81). Jung said that the collective unconscious is the world, and the psyche is not in you, but you are in the psyche (Hillman and Ventura 1992, p. 83). A city is a soul – Brooklyn's ethnic variety or Houston's cowboy swagger.

Materialism and its literalism, blind to its soul, is the disease of our time, so "Trying to break through to non-material experience is the real number-one crime in America today." Despite the dangers of drugs, "the so-called drug war is

a war against seeing reality in any but a strictly materialist, Puritan way” (Hillman and Ventura 1992, p. 149). Hillman agrees with others that the conventional psychology profession is so competitive, repressive, moralistic, and concerned with credentials, income, and status that it has become mediocre and oppressive, blind to fresh insights such as seeing the imaginative basis of thinking and soul in the world (Hillman and Ventura 1992, p. 155).

In his 1996 *The Soul's Code* that became a *New York Times* best seller, Hillman challenges the psychoanalytic focus on the family drama as major shaper of character. Instead, he argues, each soul is born with a seed, like an acorn, that wants to grow in a certain direction. It may be bent by the environment, but many children have shown early tendencies that blossomed into great talents, despite parental or school disapproval. Picasso cared little for school except drawing. Such children should not be forced to stifle their inborn talents.

Hillman's irony takes off with his 2004 *A Horrible Love of War*. He argues that war is normal, inhuman, sublime, and religious – and of course, we love it.

– *War is normal*. Hillman opens with Patton's WWII quote, as he strode around the bloody aftermath of a battle and exclaimed: “I love it, God help me I do love it so; I love it more than my life” (Hillman 2004, p. 1). We can never prevent war unless we explore how the soul's mad love for war makes it interminable. Tolstoy believed that war is determined by some force beyond human will (Hillman 2004, pp. 6–7).

Americans invented the nuclear weapons that have been imitated as a sign of national pride worldwide and have raised the level of everyday anxiety. Now we just suffer the unending parade of smaller terrible wars around the world that inflict enough tragedy and risk the financial solvency of any nation like the USA that tries to put out the fires of the ones that seem to threaten its own imagined security. But during the 5,600 years of recorded history, 14,600 wars have been recorded (Hillman 2004, p. 17). Hillman says: “Though saying ‘war is normal’ shocks

our morality and wounds our idealism, it stands solidly as a statement of fact” (Hillman 2004, p. 21). No matter how many bodies return mangled or dead, no matter how much posttraumatic stress disorder maims the survivors, no matter how much the military budgets threaten to undermine governments, as it did in the Soviet Union, all these are outdone by the barking dogs of the next round of manic aggressiveness. Hillman admits the unvarnished dark truth that “the necessity of war is laid down in the cosmos and affects life with the unbearable, the terrible, and the uncontrollable.” So “Normalcy” must adjust (Hillman 2004, p. 41). Americans must ask, who invented the repeating gun, nuclear weapons, and all the Pentagon's massively expensive machines of war?

– *War is inhuman*. When millions are killed annually and when normal social norms are wiped away by sanctioned rape, robbery, torture, and child abuse, these are age-old horrors of war that just won't stop. The war god of Rome, Mars, lives on triumphant, a mythic enactment of national glory and territory, paranoid fear, and ruthless phallic domination. Like a spooked horse, wars thrive on some invisible, frenzied autonomous transcendent divine power beyond normal control (Hillman 2004, p. 77). Or is that from our ancient animal instinct? The seizure of a soldier by an animal instinct is like the Norse “going berserk” which meant “to wear the bear coat” (Hillman 2004, p. 78). Soldiers tell of feeling immortal, untouchable by death, fearless, and wild (Hillman 2004, p. 80). Is war so untouchable that it must become a sacrament, a holy power of destruction? Do goddesses of death/life like Kali picture today's war lust? How is the inhumanity of war sustained?

– *War is sublime*. Mars and Venus made sublime love in Roman myth, as did Ares and Aphrodite in Greek myth. The mythic Trojan war was fought over the love of Helen. A member of Gen. Patton's staff wrote his wife that the most gorgeous sight he ever beheld was an enemy bomber smashing into flames on a mountainside (Hillman 2004, p. 116). This kind of spectacular, horrid but



sublime beauty fills the souls of fighters, alongside their fear, feelings of immortality, and heroic bravado. War is a defining moment in warrior's lives, when they face death and thus elevate bravery to a sublime moment. Glorious gods are experienced in facing death, the guns, the loyalty to comrades, and the ecstasy of combat.

- *Religion is war*. “War is a force that gives us meaning,” Hillman says, “because war raises life into *Importance*. . . the infinitude in the finite” (Hillman 2004, p. 178). Belief is the short fuse that sets off the explosions of war. The monotheistic religions are especially bellicose, dogmatically claiming their god is the only god, and all others are heathens and infidels (Hillman 2004, p. 185). Americans sing “God Bless America,” Enemy WWI Germans wore belt buckles inscribed “Gott Mit Uns” (God is with us). Both claimed the same God. The Jewish God is a god of war. Islam breeds a warrior spirit. Soldiers of Christ are at war with the world, the flesh and the Devil, easily projected upon other nations (Hillman 2004, p. 188). How many nations’ proclaimed religious innocence conceals such passive-aggressive hypocrisy? (Hillman 2004, p. 189). The fog of war throws together lies about enemy threats and hymns to blind patriotism. Mob hysteria takes over. Rash promises of quick victory are believed. War is bred by pious, self-righteous religious faith.

Hillman strips off the surface reasoning of psychological and religious constructions and drags us down into the dank underworld of soul and culture, to see anew what ego has missed.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetypal Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [New Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)

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## Hillman, James, and Alchemy

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It has been said often that James Hillman is one of the most original American psychologists of the twentieth century. He is the founder of Archetypal Psychology, considered by some to be an orientation or school within the larger context of Jungian analysis and by others as a radical departure from it. In its own regard, Archetypal Psychology has had wide influence both in the United States and internationally and has impacted not only psychology, analysis, and religion but also the wider range of the cultural imagination as well. Hillman's work on alchemy is an important part of his overall vision and has its origins in the work of Carl Jung.

## Jung's Psychology of Alchemy

Jung, too, had thought about alchemy in a way that few others before him had imagined. Rather than understanding alchemy as a protoscience of chemistry, he concluded that the alchemists were speaking in symbols about the human soul and



were working as much with the imagination as with chemical materials. In short, the gold that they were trying to create was not a common gold, but an *aurum non vulgi* or *aurum philosophorum*, a philosophical gold (Jung, 1963). For Jung, “alchemy represented the projection of a drama both cosmic and spiritual in laboratory terms. The opus magnum had two aims: the rescue of the human soul and the salvation of the cosmos” (Jung, 1977, p. 220). This move brought our understanding of alchemy into the realm of both psychology and religion. A vital part of Jung’s work soon began to address these disciplines. In and through his work on *Psychology and Alchemy* (1953/1968), his essay “Paracelsus as a Spiritual Phenomenon,” and other works, Jung was led to discuss alchemy as a form of religious philosophy (Jung, 1963, p. 209).

As Jung continued to grapple with his personal experience of alchemical transformation, questions continued to surface and shed light on his ongoing relation to Christianity. For Jung, Christianity was of central importance for the Western psyche, but he also felt it cast a collective shadow that needed to be addressed if it was to remain vital to the spirit of the times and relevant to modern men and women. Jung’s attempt to bring analytical psychology into relation with Christianity ultimately led to the question of Christ as a psychological figure. From Jung’s alchemical view, Christianity had depreciated the body and “the feminine” and, in so doing, ultimately had devalued “nature.” Alchemy, with its emphasis on matter, compensated for this lack in Christianity and thus offered the possibility of the further development of the religious psyche.

### Hillman’s Alchemical Psychology

While Jung critiqued Christianity via his alchemical vision, for James Hillman, Jung’s psychology was still overly influenced by Christian psychology, its images and its metaphysics. This led Hillman to make a distinction between a psychology of alchemy and an alchemical

psychology, the former representing Jung’s views and the latter Hillman’s. For Hillman, the transformation of the psyche must be differentiated from the Christian idea of redemption. For Hillman, images speak more directly when their Christian and metaphysical coverings are set aside; then the “level of the collective consciousness can be peeled away, so that the material may speak more phenomenally. Then pagan images stand out: metals, planets, numerals, stars, plants, charms, animals, vessels, fires and specific locales” (Hillman, 2003, p. 101).

In short, alchemy’s curious images are valuable not so much because alchemy is a grand narrative of the stages of individuation and its conjunction of opposites, nor because of its reflection on the Christian process of redemption, but “rather because of its myriad, cryptic, arcane, paradoxical, and mainly conflicting texts [which] reveal the psyche phenomenally” (Hillman, 2003, p. 103).

For Hillman, imagining alchemy within the narrations of metaphysics, Christianity, and Jung’s psychology led to a “psychology of alchemy,” a psychology in which the powerful images of alchemy were reduced to generalized abstractions. He, on the other hand, proposes an innovative move away from a “psychology of alchemy” to an “alchemical way of psychologizing.” In so doing he hoped to restore an alchemical way of imagining (by seeing through concepts, both deliteralizing and rematerializing them, “giving them body, sense and weight”) (Hillman, 1980b, 1981a, pp. 37–39).

The work of soul-making requires corrosive acids, heavy earth, ascending birds; there are sweating kings, dogs, bitches, stench, urine, and blood . . . I know that I am not composed of sulfur and salt, buried in horse dung, putrefying or congealing, turning white or green or yellow, encircled by a tail-biting serpent rising on wings. And yet I am! I cannot take any of this literally, even if it is all accurate descriptively true (Hillman, 1980a, pp. 37, 39).

Through the use of the alchemical imagery and concrete metaphor and by seeing through them, his alchemical psychology seeks to find those qualities of human life which act on the very substance of personality.

## Development of Hillman's Perspective

This move toward concreteness was present in Hillman's earliest lectures in Zurich in 1966 and continued to run through his papers beginning in 1970 with "On Senex Consciousness." In 1978, Hillman published "The Therapeutic Value of Alchemical Language," which set the stage for his continuing reflections.

What followed were a series of papers: "Silver and the White Earth, Parts I and II" (1980, 1981a), "Alchemical Blue and the Unio Mentalis" (1981b), "The Imagination of Air and the Collapse of Alchemy" (1981c), "Salt: A Chapter on Alchemical Psychology" (1981d), "Notes on White Supremacy: The Alchemy of Racism" (1986), "The Yellowing of the Work" (1991), "Concerning the Stone: Alchemical Images of the Goal" (1990), "The Seduction of Black" (1997), and "The Azure Vault: The Caelum as Experience" (2006), which is a revision and elaboration of his paper "Alchemical Blue." Hillman's alchemical papers have been published in the Uniform Edition of the Writings of James Hillman, Volume 5, entitled *Alchemical Psychology*. To his published papers to date, he added "Rudiments: Fire, Ovens, Vessels, Fuel, Glass," which completes his texts on alchemical psychology. Like alchemical texts themselves, the content of these papers is complex and difficult to summarize in any unified narrative, but if there are any themes that run through them, it is in his turn to the nuances of language and image, the importance of the imagination and attention to alchemical aesthetics, and to color as an organizing focus for reflection.

## See Also

- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy

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## Hiltner, Seward

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If one line would describe the contribution of Seward Hiltner (1910 to November 19, 1984),

it would be this: he put the “theology” into practical theology. In Dr. Hiltner’s work, developed at the University of Chicago in the 1950s, the personality sciences and the theological or religious field came into dialog.

### Pastoral Theology Defined

For many the phrase “practical theology” meant simply techniques of doing ministry. For some the techniques had to do more with manners than with the practice of care – proper dress and appropriate behavior rather than the “care” or “cure” for the parishioner. Seward Hiltner saw pastoral theology as the theology of the practice of ministry.

Every science has a method and the method for the personality sciences, especially when related to religion, was the “perspectival method.”

### The Perspectival Method

Therefore, to understand Dr. Hiltner’s approach, one must first understand his concept of perspectives and the perspectival method. As early as the 1950s, he developed “the perspectival method” of research and evaluation. Today the perspectival method has been picked up by people such as Jerome A. Feldman (2006) in the field of cognitive theory.

For Dr. Hiltner, there were three perspectives from which to look at the total work of the pastor – the communication perspective, the organizing perspective, and the shepherding perspective. The “shepherding perspective” he identified with pastoral theology.

In his basic book, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Dr. Hiltner gave a review of the development of the “cure of souls” – care of souls – that preceded what became pastoral care and counseling. To develop his approach he dipped into history and the work of an Ichabod Spencer – a nineteenth-century pastor in Brooklyn who, according to Dr. Hiltner, was among the first to develop case studies of his pastoral work.

It was in Spencer that Dr. Hiltner came to focus on pastoral care as the province of the shepherding perspective.

### The Shepherding Perspective

The significance of this perspective lay in not identifying pastoral care just with counseling or times of calling on the sick. The perspectival approach meant that one could look at preaching, church administration, and Christian education as much from the shepherding perspective as much as the moment when someone said, “Pastor, I have a problem.”

Dr. Hiltner, therefore, identified pastoral care as related to the shepherding perspective. He saw this perspective as particularly a function of the parish minister in practice. Although his work resulted in a profession of pastoral counselors and of pastoral counseling centers, that development was never his intent. Dr. Hiltner understood this shepherding perspective as strictly part of a pastor’s pastoral ministry in the context of the parish congregation itself. The ministry was not something done outside of the parish in a context unrelated to a particular parish.

### Pastoral Counseling Centers

Dr. Hiltner’s approach laid a foundation for bringing science and faith together as the cornerstone of the work of the pastor. Contrary to his expectations, the clarity with which this foundation developed in Hiltner’s books resulted in people who developed a specialty in such a ministry just as others developed a specialty in Christian education. As a result, this specialty soon broke out of the congregational realm and became a freestanding profession in itself. Ministers with a specialty in pastoral care and counseling soon became members of church staffs. More than that, centers of pastoral care and a profession of pastoral counselors emerged.

In some instances, these centers were adjuncts of congregations. More and more, however, the profession of pastoral counseling broke off into

its own discipline with standards of practice and criteria for both certification and evaluation of pastoral counselors. In several instances around the United States, counseling centers emerged. One such example is the Lloyd Pastoral Counseling Center connected with San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California.

This major diversion some see as a contribution of Seward Hiltner. Yet Dr. Hiltner himself always saw pastoral care and counseling as in the context of the pastorate, not the context of a center unrelated to a congregation.

This matter of context was not just a passing interest of Seward Hiltner. In a book authored with the late Rev. Dr. Lowell Colston entitled *The Context of Pastoral Care* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee), the picture was given of the contrast between counseling done at a Center and counseling and care in the context of a parish community. The argument was made that there is a basis for seeing the counseling done in the context of a congregation as having, for many, a greater rate of success in healing than in a setting where there is no relation to a community of people.

The other two perspectives that Dr. Hiltner identified with the work of ministry are “organization” and “communication.” Note that he did not speak of preaching, counseling, educating, or administration as perspectives. Each of those he saw as a *function* that could be viewed from the three perspectives. One could ask, “what is the shepherding dimension of preaching?” just as one could ask, “what is the communicating dimension of pastoral care?”

Seward Hiltner represented the second generation of leaders in the movement of pastoral education who related the insights of the personality sciences – especially individuals such as Freud, Jung, and Adler – to the professional practice of ministry. The fountainhead or “father” of this direction was Anton Boisen of Boston.

In the course of time, Seward Hiltner was ordained a Presbyterian Minister. He became the secretary for the department of Religion and

Health of what became the National Council of Churches. His first book related to the interplay between the personality sciences and religion. He then wrote on Pastoral Counseling and *The Counselor in Counseling*. The very title of the encyclopedia in which this article appears would not exist without the pioneering work of Boisen and the key “disciples” that moved out across the United States and developed what they had learned.

In 1950, Seward Hiltner was tapped by the Divinity School of the University of Chicago to join with Dr. Ross Snyder in developing a doctoral program. No longer was pastoral care seen as a technique. The University of Chicago called the field “Religion and Personality.” Because “personality” referred to personality studies such as psychology, psychiatry, sociology, and anthropology, subsequent years saw changes in the title. The breakthrough came, however, in that first program that pioneered the field of pastoral care as an academic discipline and as seen at the doctoral level.

Under Dr. Hiltner’s leadership, the program involved not only the Divinity School but the Medical School of the University of Chicago and the Counseling Center of the university established by Dr. Carl Rogers.

The impact of the program was tremendous. Of the first graduates who earned the PhD, most went to establish similar departments in divinity schools and seminaries across the United States, in Australia and New Zealand, and in the United Kingdom.

Dr. Hiltner himself wrote ten books and over 500 articles. Those who graduated from his and similar programs around the world have added much. Whole sections of libraries in both secular and theological schools now have space to hold the work of this relatively young theological discipline that relates science and theology in the academic world.

## See Also

► [Pastoral Counseling](#)

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## Hindu Women Gurus

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Hindu female gurus are a highly visible phenomenon in the contemporary world. Several Hindu female gurus have a high-profile existence as spiritual leaders who frequently travel across the globe for sessions with their numerous devotees; examples include Anandmurti Gurumaa, Gurumayi Chidvilasananda of Siddha Yoga, Karunamayi Ma, and Mata Amritanandamayi (Ammachi). Distinctively, Mother Meera, who garnered initial fame by her association with the famous gurus Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, tends to remain at her ashram in a small town in Germany, where she provides her devotees with viewings (*darshan*). In a different register, Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati, who experienced *mahasamadhi* on April 13, 2012 (in Hinduism, when a great spiritual leader passes away, this is called *mahasamadhi* or “consciously leaving the body”), received numerous awards, including the Gandhi Foundation Award in 2007, in recognition of her service in advocating for people living with HIV/AIDS including caring for infected persons at her Kashi Ashram in Sebastian, Florida. All of these gurus have official websites on the Internet. The international fame and authority of these female gurus stands in marked contrast to the long historical pattern in Hindu tradition that the role of authoritative guru who has a public presence is limited to men. The study of Hindu female gurus contributes to our understanding of the psychology of the teacher-disciple relationship and recent changes to it.

## History

“Guru” is a classical term and role in Hinduism. It has several meanings including “weighty” and “dispeller of darkness” (Grimes 1989, p. 133). In the corpus of the earliest texts in Hinduism, the Vedas, the term is used in the philosophical Upanishads, where it describes a male figure who has ultimate knowledge. Teaching, knowledge, initiation, and devotion are hallmarks of the guru in these texts (for these terms as describing distinctive guru paths, see Cornille 2005). The earliest references are found in two Upanishads that probably date to about 300 BCE. In the Mundaka Upanishad, a “great householder” named Shaunaka approached the Vedic sage Angiras and asked him: “Blessed one, what must one know for [knowledge of *brahman*, the ultimate] to become known?” (MuU 1.1.3; Roebuck 2003, p. 319). The sage provided a detailed reply, which included a description of the necessity to become detached from the world and its swirl of action through teaching by a guru who is centered in the ultimate principle, *brahman* (MuU 1.2.12; Roebuck 2003, p. 322). A second early reference is from the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, which refers to knowledge of *brahman* as a “supreme secret” that “should not be given to one who is not at peace, nor yet to one who is not a son or a student.” The text also speaks of the necessity of devotion towards both god and guru (SU 6.23; Roebuck 2003, p. 315).

Other classical texts apply these teachings to the life of an upper-caste boy. His studenthood, which transitions him from child to adult, is spent with a guru. Initiation (*upanayana*) takes place for boys of the permitted castes between the ages of 8 and 12. It is an important life cycle rite (*samskara*) that initiates the boy into three domains: human society, study of the Veda, and practice of the fire sacrifice. It transitions the boy from biological birth to social status, replacing the mother (Smith 1986, 67). It transforms the boy through sacred knowledge imparted by a guru, with whom the child was said to have a more intimate relationship than with his biological father (Smith 1986, pp. 73, 75–76).



Living with the guru, known as *gurukula*, highlights the seriousness of the relationship and the teaching for boys, while it indicates that this system excluded young girls. Girls only left their family homes after marriage and after puberty – marriage is the most important *samskara* for girls, and it is the counterpart to the boys' *upanayana*. When we hear of educated women in classical Indian tradition, they are firmly located in the family context. For example, the female sage Gargi Vachaknavi, who acts as a guru to male disputants in a debate in one of the earliest Upanishads, the Brihadaranyaka (ca. 700 BCE), is not represented as having studied with a guru; rather, she is in the family line of the renowned sage Garga. Later texts in which women are explicitly portrayed as gurus, such as the *Yoga Vasistha* (YV) and the *Tripura Rahasya* (TR) (both ca. thirteenth century CE), represent them as wives who are gurus to their husbands, again joining women's knowledge with family location. This suggests that for women family is *gurukula* – one learns from a relative who is a sage, or one takes spiritual instruction together with one's husband from a guru (Pechilis 2012).

These same stories reveal that female gurus added a new dimension to knowledge acquisition by joining spiritual knowledge to personal experience in the world (Pechilis 2012). Within the dominant tradition of male gurus, personal insight is valued in the context of structures such a guru lineage, received teachings, and emulation of a specific guru as practiced in the intimacy of the *gurukula* system. In contrast, a prominent theme in the tradition of female gurus is personal experience both in the sense of independent spiritual realization outside of initiation in a lineage (many female gurus are self-initiated) and a pragmatic orientation that relates experience of the world to spiritual knowledge. Personal experience was especially significant to women and served as a cornerstone of their authority since they were not originally included in the definition of guru; thus, instead of relying on the de facto qualification by gender open to men, women who wished to have the authority of

a spiritual teacher (guru) innovated with what was at hand (Pechilis 2004, 2012).

Stories of historical female gurus from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries make it clear that for a woman to be publicly known as a guru was controversial (Pechilis 2004, 2012). This barrier was definitively breached by female gurus in the mid-twentieth century who were supported by men and became internationally famous, such as the Mother (Mirra Alfassa 1878–1983, who was the appointed successor of Sri Aurobindo) and Anandamayi Ma (1896–1982, whose husband was her disciple; see Hallstrom 1999, 2004). Contemporary female gurus have a very public presence which they enhance by a pronounced emphasis on public service (*seva*) well beyond the traditional devotional service of keeping up the ashram; female gurus today have established social service agencies such as schools for children, hospitals, food programs for the poor, and prison programs (Pechilis 2004; Saha 2007; Warriar 2005). Spiritual growth is thus intimately linked both to personal experience in the world and public social service in the modern path of female gurus.

## Psychological Aspects

For the devotee, the path is one of transformative personal experiences guided by a guru. Classically, the aim of the guru path is the breakthrough in consciousness constituted by the realization of *brahman* (ultimate reality). This may be described in diverse ways, but a common one is that the guru leads the devotee to experience the unity that underlies the multiplicity of phenomena. This path is in many ways the antithesis of individuation. The process is to restore the *citta*, “the fundamental concept in the Hindu model of the human psyche” that is “very similar to the id,” to its natural state “in which its fundamental aim of ‘I’ awareness and the non-duality of ‘I’ and ‘other’ can be realized” (Kakar 1978, p. 12):

The presence of a guru to guide and monitor this process is essential. But the guru's function is not to help to strengthen the ego's autonomy or to enlarge its domain through insights into the hidden



reaches of the mind. Rather, given the goal of calming *chitta* and the gradual merging of the ego and the (transformed) id, the guru's role ... is to sanction and facilitate this process of integration while all the while keeping a watchful eye on the 'patient's' ego lest it be prematurely engulfed. The presence of the guru provides the necessary support against the danger of psychotic breakdown. Unlike the alert, sanctioning support conveyed in words in most Western psychotherapies, the guru's support is given through 'look, touch and silence' – the language of the *citta* (Kakar 1978, p. 25).

From a Jungian perspective, there is a "feminization of the psyche," in which "the feminine is both an aspect of divinity as well as a psychological experience...in which human consciousness must put itself into a receptive state in order to experience the divine" (Ahmed 2002, p. 84). The guru orients the ego to the divine inner Self.

Traditionally, surrender and loyalty are due to the guru, which amplifies the vulnerability of the devotee within a relationship that is in many ways comparable to a relatively common power differential (parent–child, teacher–student, boss–worker). The female gurus offset this vulnerability by embodying the nurturing persona of mother, evident in their titles (*ma*, *amma*) and behavior (such as Ammachi's hugging) (Charpentier 2010), and by the public dimension they cultivate, such as visibility, accessibility, service, and teachings on their websites. Controversial aspects of the 1960s popular male gurus' paths, such as a closed and secretive residential campus, are outmoded. Still, to what extent a specific guru operates in an authoritarian mode and a specific devotee's response to a guru renders the guru authoritarian for her or for him does need to be assessed, since there remains the potential for the devotee to be overwhelmed by the relationship (Cornille 1991, pp. 23–30; Kramer and Alstad 1993; Storr 1997).

Significantly, there has been a healthy skepticism of the guru in Indian tradition, especially on the issues of the acquisition of money and sexual exploitation. Also, it is worth remembering that, in the traditional model, study with the guru prepared a man to move into a healthy, socially meaningful life of work and marriage; it was not generally speaking an end in itself. These nuances,

coupled with female gurus' emphasis on life experiences, are now beginning to inform western reflections on experiences of the guru path. What we see emerging are personal critical reflections that more calmly and less polemically reflect on areas of disappointment in or perceived limitations of the guru, written by former devotees who reflect on their experiences with the guru in the context of a longer view of their own evolving life experiences; I have called these a "discourse of constructive disappointment" (Pechilis 2012, p. 127). Such reflections have emerged mainly around female gurus, for example, Gurumayi of Siddha Yoga (Caldwell 2001; Szabo 2009) and Gurani Anjali of Yoga Anand Ashram (Chapple 2005), although the genre includes reflections on experiences with male gurus (Gold 2012).

## See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Women in Hinduism](#)

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in the formation of the Indian civilization in the second millennium BCE. This mixture entails the inculcation of the Aryan nature deities or *devas* including Agni as fire and altar, Indra as storm and warrior, Vayu as wind, Ratri as night, and Surya as sun. These deities appear in some of the earliest hymns dating possibly to 1500 BCE. The hymns relate a mystical bond between worshiper and the natural world indwelt with spirit. The *Brahman* or supreme Godhead has special qualities as one from whom the cosmos comes forth and moves (*Katha Upanishad*, 2.3.2). His power “reverberates like thunder crashing the sky,” and those who “realize him” go beyond the sway of death (*Katha Upanishad*, 2.3.2). Priests called brahmins used hymns as part of worship and ritual sacrifice. They also produced commentaries to explain the meaning of religious rituals. Together with the hymns, they constitute the Hindu scripture, *Veda* (Sanskrit, *vid*, “to know”), which occur in four family traditions: Rig, Sama, Yajur, and Atharva. Each of these traditions consists of two parts. The first, *karma-kanda*, contains the hymns and interpretations of the sacred rituals. The second part of each tradition, named *jnana-kanda*, contains wisdom material addressing fundamental questions about the meaning of life and the nature of the Divine. The *jnana-kanda* includes the Upanishads, which translates “sitting down” – a reference to the student sitting attentively at the foot of the illumined teacher who gives inspiration based upon personal experience. Ancient sages composed individual Upanishads, ten of which are thought to be the “principal Upanishads” according to the prominent eighth-century mystic named Shankara. The Upanishads are unique in the Vedic tradition as writings which are introspective with a focus upon human consciousness. According to the *Mandukya Upanishad*, there are four kinds of consciousness. In the first, called Vaishvanara, one lives with all the sense turned outward, “aware only of the external world” (3). In the second, Taijasa, one lives in a dreaming state with the senses turned inward to enact the “impressions of past deep and present desires” (4). In the third state of consciousness, Prajna, one exists in deep sleep of neither dreams nor desires, neither mind nor separateness (5). In the fourth state of consciousness,

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## Hinduism

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Hinduism has its roots in the fusion of two ancient cultures, the Aryan and the Indus Valley, resulting

there is neither inward nor outward, but a beyond sense and intellect “in which there is none other than the Lord. He is the supreme goal of life. He is the infinite peace and love. Realize him!” (7). In Hinduism Aum (OM) stands for the supreme reality and occurs as a symbol for past, present, and future. It is the symbol of the Godhead, and by realizing it one finds “complete fulfillment of all one’s longings.” It is of the “greatest support to all seekers. Those in whose hearts OM reverberates/Unceasingly are indeed blessed/And deeply loved as one who is Self” (*Katha Upanishad*, 1.2.16). According to the *Aitareya Upanishad*, “the self,” which is inseparable from Aum, existed before all other things, and it is the self who creates all other things – the worlds, Purusha (God), the elements of earthly existence, and human creatures (1.1.1 f.). The self is realized through a personal desire to know the self: “Those who long for the Self with all their heart are chosen by the Self as his own” (*Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.2.3). The self does not come through the intellect, discourse, or the study of the scriptures (*Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.2.3). To realize the self is to enter into a higher state of consciousness, breaking through “the wrong identification that you are/The body, subject to birth and death” (*Kena Upanishad*, 2.4). To see the self in all goes beyond death (*Kena Upanishad*, 2.5). The Upanishads have as their starting place mystical experience and the realization of the self comes through concentrated attention given to the meaning and significance of such experiences. The overall movement of Hinduism concentrates inwardly toward intense introspection and a heightened state of “illumination.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Hispanic American Pastoral Counseling

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### Culture and Diversity

The term Hispanic or Latino people does not do justice to the diversity that characterizes the Latino people state Medina and Montilla (2006).

The US Census Bureau in 2010 defines the designation Hispanics as follows:

(Referring) to persons who trace their origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Spanish speaking Central and South America countries, and other Spanish cultures. Origin can be considered as the heritage, nationality group, lineage, or country of the person or the person’s parents or ancestors before their arrival in the United States. People who identify their origin as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race.

This definition emphasizes the presence of the Spanish culture and heritage in the ancestry of the addressed population. Nevertheless, Medina and Montilla (2006) would counter: “Latino Population is a polyculture combining a very heterogeneous and multicolor group of people with a combination of ethnicities, an array of languages, a variety of religions and of diverse socio economic and educational status that although diverse maintain distinctive features and principles that make it “one” particular people.” In the “official” definition of Hispanic American, the communality of language is stressed over the ethnic and racial diversity. This might induce service providers, be them ecclesiastical or otherwise, to develop initiatives insensitive to the rich diversity within the Hispanic American population. Some Hispanics have lived in North America for hundreds of years prior to 1776 and others have a more recent arrival as illegal or undocumented immigrants.

The emerging importance of the Hispanics is underscored by the findings of the US Census Bureau in 2004. It reports that as of July 1, 2003,

there were 39.9 million Hispanics in the USA, not counting 3.9 million Puerto Ricans living in that territory of the USA. The composition of this Hispanic population was 66.9 % of Mexican origin, 14.3 % Central and South American, 8.6 % Puerto Rican, 3.7 % Cuban, and 6.5 % are of different Hispanic origins. It is expected that by 2050 Hispanics will represent 25 % of the population.

## Religion and Demography

A closer look at the Hispanic Americans is provided by the *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life* in their report of 2007: *Changing Faiths: Latinos and The Transformation of American Religion*. The Forum found that more than two-thirds of Hispanics (68 %) identify themselves as Roman Catholics.

The next largest category, at 15 %, was made up of born-again or evangelical Protestants. Nearly one-in-ten (8 %) Latinos do not identify with any religion. They also noted that differences in religious identification among Latinos coincide with important differences in demographic characteristics. For example, Catholics are a more heavily immigrant population than evangelicals.

Regarding religious practices and beliefs, for the great majority of Latinos, regardless of their religious tradition, God is an active force in everyday life. Most Latinos pray every day, most have a religious object in their home, and most attend a religious service at least once a month. By significant majorities, Latinos who identify with a religion believe that miracles are performed today just as they were in ancient times. For Latinos, God is alive and acting in their midst.

## Positive Characteristics: Familismo, Compadrazgo, Personalismo, Community, and Popular Religiosity

The Hispanic community has positive characteristics that contrast with its surrounding culture. Prominent among these is the importance of the family vs. the hyperindividualism in the

surrounding culture. Family is the primary source of support, guidance, care, and healing in the Latino population. Family is seen as a community of people connected by blood or adoption, marital agreement, or emotional bonds.

In this respect, Hernandez et al. (2010) also note the institution of the *Compadrazgo*, that is, the selection of non-blood relatives for co-parenting for life, vs. the isolationism from nonrelatives in the dominant culture. As in the larger culture, the family is confronting challenges and is increasingly vulnerable to disruptions, breakdowns, and erosion of values. Nevertheless, the Hispanic family is a sturdy, yet flexible, and resourceful institution that confronts these challenges with resiliency.

Along with the importance of the family and the institution of *Compadrazgo*, we find *Personalismo* which is based on the cultural idea that individuals are valued more than material belongings. *Personalismo* can be described as the partiality for close personal relationships. It privileges very personal approaches over against impersonalism. In a Hispanic parish, a phone call will not suffice, but a visit will. The primacy of the communal and close personal relationships inform every community, be it the church as community or the neighborhood as a larger community.

Goizueta (2009), a Cuban-American theologian, in his book "*Caminemos con Jesús*," points out that the popular religiosity of the Hispanic Americans serves as a powerful source of identity. He distinguishes "popular religiosity" from official church dogma or rituals, as the rituals and symbols that arise from within the peoples' religious practices in community.

Hernandez et al. (2010) point out that closely knit families and a high rate of church attendance correlate highly with general health. These characteristics are of paramount importance in determining the locus, the center of the pastoral care agenda and its initiatives.

## A Contextual Theology Informs the Agenda of Hispanic Pastoral Counseling

Liberation Theology is a theological current that began in Latin America after the Second

Vatican Council and the Medellin Conference in Colombia, 1968. The council opened October 11, 1962, and closed on December 8, 1965.

Boer (2007) argues that the political ideologies of liberation emerged in the Third World in centers of exclusion and poverty in the occidental world around the 1960s. Fundamentally, it was the fruit of an explicitly theological work. An example of this fermented area of theological work was the labor of Gustavo Gutiérrez. His classic book *Una teología de Liberación* came about in 1969, precisely 1 year before James Cone's (1970) book *The Black Theology of Liberation*.

The methodological interest of this theology is the examination of reality from the perspective of the oppressed, from the context of oppression. The salient characteristic feature of this liberation theology is the primacy of praxis.

The goals for transformation emerge from the needs of "the here and now," a society with equity and justice where reciprocity is predominant over the dominion of others and where the exploitation of humans against humans is abolished. In the theology of liberation, we observe the preferential option for the exploited, the oppressed, and the poor. The major ethical task is for the practice of social justice and the abolishment of exploitation.

### **Context and Community: Poverty, Racism, Oppression and Marginalization, and the Agenda for Hispanic Pastoral Counseling**

#### **Poverty**

The US Census declared that in 2010, 15.1 % of the general population lived in poverty. Since the 1960s, the United States Government has defined poverty in absolute terms. The "absolute poverty line" is the threshold below which families or individuals are considered to be *lacking the resources to meet the basic needs for healthy living, having insufficient income to provide the food, shelter, and clothing needed to preserve health*.

The breakdown figures were 9.9 % of all non-Hispanic white persons, 12.1 % of all Asian persons, 26.6 % of all Hispanic persons (of any race), and 27.4 % of all black persons lived in poverty. That is, the percentages of Hispanics or Blacks living in poverty in 2010 were three times larger than the percentage of all non-Hispanic white persons. This inequality occurs in ethnic and racial groups that have lived for centuries in the USA and historically have been the object of oppression, discrimination, and marginalization.

#### **Priorities**

The above negative socioeconomic indicators, which are the context of the Hispanic community, sets the agenda for Pastoral Care and Counseling: food, shelter, legal immigrant status, adequate livelihood, safety from violence, and health-care promotion and breaching the gap of access to health care. The above calls for justice and compassion, love, and empowerment, as Chinula (2009) and Kuyawa-Holbrook and Montango (2009) propose.

#### **Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counseling**

Given the context of the Hispanic community, pastoral care is inextricably linked to justice and compassion. "Pastoral Care becomes not what one trained professional does for the hurting, but what the community of faith does for each other," De La Torre (2009) states. We must note that trained pastoral counselors have been a rarity among the ethnic minorities. Chinula (2009) found that in 1993 of the total of 3,187 members of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), only between 25 and 30 were from the ethnic communities of African American, Hispanic, and Asian. This represented only about 0.78–0.94 % of the total membership.

"Because of its primary focus on the individual," Chinula (2009) affirms, "the hyperindividualistic model (of Pastoral Counseling) lacks serious critical social theory and analysis to inform its praxis." He further notes "the hyperindividualistic" model lacks a serious role for the church in its intervention repertoire." Pastoral Counseling could be done outside of the local church, or parallel to it, not necessarily from within it. Furthermore, "the interrelated nature of



context and community suggest that pastoral care is a holistic practice that attends to whole persons—mind, spirit and body—in community” as Kuyawa-Holbrook and Montango (2009) note.

Again, Chinula (2009) proposes that more sociocultural oriented perspectives should guide Pastoral Counseling rather than the more “hyperindividualistic” models. He names the following five alternative models: the individual psychology of Alfred Adler, the structural perspective of Salvador Minuchin, feminist psychologies, ethnic psychologies, and the growth empowerment model of Howard Clinebell.

We must note that at present, there are significant efforts to leverage the unique strengths of faith-based communities to decrease disparities in mental health and substance abuse. The American Association of Pastoral Counselors recently developed training to prepare *Pastoral Care Specialists*, which do not require the same graduate-level academic preparation as the pastoral counselors, as another effort to eliminate mental health disparities that underserved populations suffer.

Another initiative has been the *Mental Health and Substance Abuse Curriculum for Laity* by Uceda et al. (2011). The goal is to train members of faith-based communities to identify persons in need within the church and their communities and develop a network of government, nongovernment, and church-related services be them clinical, social, familial, or behavioral in order to make appropriate referrals. These efforts appear pertinent and promising since they are faith based and the resources human and institutional function within the community.

## See Also

- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Evangelical](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Migration and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Protestantism](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)

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## Holocaust

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The term holocaust, or “the Holocaust,” is most commonly used to describe the persecution and murder of some six million European Jews during World War II. The term is derived from Greek *holos*, “completely,” and *kaustos*, “burnt.” The Hebrew term is *Shoah* – “destruction” or “desolation.”

Other victims of Nazi persecution and murder included Gypsies, Russians, ethnic Poles and other Slavic people, the disabled, gay men, and political and religious dissidents, bringing the total number of victims to 9–11 million.

There is no individual psychological equivalent of the Holocaust, which stands as a uniquely horrifying cataclysm in the annals of European history and attempts to “explain” the Holocaust in psychological terms have been singularly unsuccessful. Jung devoted much attention to the study of mass psychoses and observed a “psychic inflation” of the individual in which ego consciousness is flooded by the unconscious with resulting mass psychotic behavior.

### See Also

- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Holy Grail

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The Holy Grail is one of the most profound and complex psychological and historical symbols. In terms of mythology, literature, and popular culture, the grail mythos deeply permeates Western culture as a symbol of perfection, struggle, purity, and sacred quest. However, it is worth noting that despite its ubiquity in Western European culture, it was far from well known in Eastern Orthodox nations and in many predominantly Catholic regions, such as Spain and Latin America until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Typically, the grail mythology, in its many forms and variations, focuses on two archetypal narratives. Firstly, there is the grail itself as a symbol of purity, completion, the divine, and plenty. In the *Parsifal* grail myth and *Arthurian* cycle, the grail serves as the panacea, curing sickness and devastation brought to the land by the ailment of the king as the spiritual embodiment of the land and guardian of the grail. The grail as a symbol of wholeness and purity reconciles the king to the source of his ailment and thus leads to the restoration of the land. This theme is well developed by Jungian analyst Robert A. Johnson who utilizes Parsifal’s search for the Holy Grail as a metaphor for the development of wholeness in masculine psychology and reconciliation between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche. The absence or loss of the grail, from this perspective, represents a symbolic dissonance between the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche, leading to neurosis, insecurity, and depression. The grail itself becomes the symbol of psychological wholeness and well-being achieved through the completion of the quest and reconciliation with the unconscious and shadow aspects of the psyche (Johnson 1989).

## The Grail Quest

The quest itself forms the second part of the grail narrative in mythology and literature. The quest is a symbolic manifestation of a spiritual pilgrimage towards psychological wholeness and well-being. The quest, comprising three levels, separation, initiation, or trial and return, serves as a parable for the growth of the psyche and the journey towards psychological wholeness and adulthood. Indeed, the narrative of quest or pilgrimage closely follows the pattern of pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phases engaged in ritual and symbolism by all cultures to mark transitional phases and focal points of doubt, turmoil, and anxiety identified by anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep. In this case, the grail serves as the ultimate focal point of resolution to turmoil, unhappiness, and neurosis (Van Gennep 1960).

## The Origins of the Grail Myth

There are other powerful symbolic and psychological associations to the myth of the Holy Grail. However, in part, they depend upon perceptions of the historical antecedents of the grail mythology. For example, one school of thought championed by historians and folklorists such as Roger Loomis, Alfred Nutt, and Lewis Spense is that the grail mythology is a Christianized derivation of the Celtic myths and legends surround the Goddess Cerriden's "Cauldron of Inspiration." In early Welsh literature attributed to the mythic figure *Taliessin*, for example, the vessel recovered by Arthur and his companions is a cauldron set with a rim of jewels and pearls, the fire beneath kindled by the breath of nine maidens, and it would not cook the food of a coward. Similarly, Celtic myth and folklore is replete with images of a cauldron from which issues knowledge, unlimited food and drink, or cauldron-born warriors. The cauldrons in Celtic myth are associated with a variety of gods and goddesses and serve as a symbolic womb of birth, creation, and wisdom and recur continually

throughout Celtic mythology and legends. From this perspective, the Holy Grail is a Christianized myth popularized in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In this sense, the grail also has powerful symbolic associations with the psychological feminine, the notion of rebirth, and the sacred mother or divine feminine (Spence 1994; Mathews 1991; Hutton 1993; Nutt 1965; Weston 1957).

## Criticisms of the Grail Mythology

However, this theory of the grail's origins, and thus its symbolic associations, has come under historical criticisms. Ronald Hutton, for example, comments that aside from the superficial similarity of both being a vessel, the grail as a small dish or platter carried by a singly maiden as a symbol of purity, wholeness, and reconciliation to the divine has little in common with the gigantic cauldrons of the Celtic gods kept perpetually filled with inexhaustible food, wisdom, or cauldron-born warriors. An alternate school of thought, led by writers such as Richard Heinzel, Joseph Georing, Wolfgang Golther, and Rose Peebles, among others, suggests that the grail mythology is primarily a Western Christian invention. In particular, this school of thought links the rise of the grail myth to the overwhelming preoccupation with the doctrine of transubstantiation in twelfth-century Western Europe (Hutton 1993; Goering 2005). As the wellspring of all communal chalices, the grail became the focal point of this preoccupation with the physical manifestation of the divine and the bridging between the realm of the spirit and the flesh that distinguished Christianity from the proliferation of dualist heretical movements of this era. Thus, the grail served both as the symbol of ultimate purity and wholeness but also as symbolic bridge between the realm of the flesh and the divine, connecting humanity to the *imago dei*. In this sense, the grail also becomes the epitome of the struggle for spiritual transcendence endemic to Christian belief, and for that matter, the search for enlightenment and the lapis that lay at the core

of medieval alchemy and the hermetic tradition of medieval Neoplatonism (Yates 1972).

However, despite the competing historical origins of the grail mythology, in terms of archetypal symbolism and psychological association, both interpretations of the grail's origins have deeply inspired contemporary symbolic representations and interpretations of the grail myth. Indeed, there are clear antecedents within both Pagan Celtic and Christian mythic structures for the contemporary manifestation of the grail mythology. In either case, the image serves as the focal point of the mythic quest for psychological wholeness and development and the wellspring or birthplace of wisdom, nourishment, and purification. As such, it remains one of the most profound, ubiquitous, and complex archetypal forms in Western culture.

## See Also

- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Quest](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Homo Religiosus

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The phrase, *homo religiosus*, refers to the idea that human existence is inherently religious. There is a long lineage of scholars that have proposed this idea, including Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831), Soren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), William James (1842–1910), Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), Rudolf Otto (1884–1939), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890–1950), Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), Paul Tillich (1886–1995), Erich Fromm (1900–1980), Abraham Maslow (1908–1970), Erik Erikson (1902–1994), Langdon Gilkey (1919–2004), and David Tracy (1939–). The inherent religiosity, these and other theorists refer to, is not a person's creedal beliefs or institutional commitments per se but refer to our existential drive toward transcendence, freedom, and meaning-making, no matter the differences of religious or a/religious backgrounds or convictions.

Various phenomenologists of religion have helped us view religion as more than collective, institutional practices and beliefs and, instead, helped focus us on the nature of religious experience itself and its impact on how we come to understand ourselves as human beings. Soren Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, described human development, particularly the development toward deeper subjectivity, as an ethical, aesthetic, and religious progression in becoming a "knight of faith" (1843/1954). William James demonstrated that we use religious symbols, words, and practices for pragmatic reasons and that such religious artifacts and activities represented existentially significant aspect of human existence (James 1902/2007). Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) wrote of the

centrality of hierophanies, or experiences of the sacred breaking into mundane existence (Eliade 1959). Eliade further disclosed how we mythologize the significance these experiences in our lives, which in turn become narratives that orient our own identities as human beings. The stories and myths describe our relationship to both sacred and profane orchestrations of our everydayness. Rudolf Otto (1917/1958) focused on the phenomenology of the “holy” as a numinous experience, that is, as terrifying, attractive, and wholly other to us, and how such encounters clarify who we are in relation to the numinous (Otto 1917/1958). Otto’s emphasis on numinosity is taken from the Latin, *numen*, meaning “deity.” The deity, from this perspective, is not a thing or substantial entity, but a qualitative experience, albeit one of otherness. Nevertheless, if the numinous is a qualitative human experience and a most intense one, then it inescapably influences the development of human being.

Our relationship with the numinous is particular. Given the power and awe evoked in its presence, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1893/2007) described our relationship to the divine as that of “absolute dependence,” noting the predication of human identity on that which is more than itself (Schleiermacher 1893/2007). Gerardus van der Leeuw (1933/1986) described the numinous as one of “power,” which, for van der Leeuw, should be understood in experiential ways rather than in objectified, political, or sociological ones. Much like Otto, van der Leeuw noted that the experiential encounter with the numinous is an encounter with that which is completely overwhelming (van der Leeuw 1933/1986). We come to understand ourselves better as we see ourselves in perspective when confronted with such power. Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), the existential psychiatrist, addressed this phenomenon as well (Jaspers 1919). He wrote that we inevitably experience what he called “shipwreck” in our lives when we stumble into what he called “boundary situations.” Boundary situations, namely, conflict, death, suffering, chance, and guilt, bring us into contact with “the

encompassing,” thus moving us toward the need for each other and the desire for free and meaningful communication. Boundary or ultimate situations, for Jaspers, initiate our transition as human beings from mere *existence* as functional and biological creatures to what Jaspers considered existential, meaningful *Existenz*. Finally, a survey of central figures in the phenomenology of *homo religiosus* must include Paul Tillich (1886–1965). Tillich emphasized the inescapable nature of our intentionality as human beings toward what is of “ultimate concern” (Tillich 1952).

The ideas offered by these thinkers in this survey on the phenomenology of religion include several points to consider: the idea that the sacred is experiential, that consciousness presupposes and is dependent on otherness, that transcendence is related to our intentionality toward otherness-as-ultimate concern, and that ultimate concern as enactments of significance are ever present in our everydayness. These issues are present and show themselves throughout the life span. “Otherness” is the particular qualitative distinction in experiencing the sacred and one that does not reside “in” human consciousness as much as in the “betweenness” co-constructed from our openness to the other and its call for us to dialogue.

If we start with an analysis of our formation as human beings, we find that we come to consciousness about ourselves only in relationship to another, thus suggesting that our very formation relies on the mutual exchange with otherness. Hegel’s (1770–1831) dialectical development of consciousness is one way to understand this process and challenges our conceptions of ourselves as self-contained (Hegel 1807/1979; O’Neill 1996; DuBose 2000). Independence presumes interdependence, so, consequentially, we are not sole creators of ourselves. We desire to complete ourselves through engaging with the other, who in turn desires to engage with us. The unceasing call and demands of alterity, or otherness, as Mark Taylor’s (1987) survey of continental thought reminds us, demonstrate the centrality of alterity and interdependency in identity formation, which nonetheless is not

a formation of the human being as a static and self-contained thing, such as “person.” If we mean by “religiosity” that we are absolutely dependent on the other, as Schleiermacher proposed, and if it is a given that we develop as a result of this dialectic, then the human being is necessarily *homo religiosus*.

We are also desiring creatures, thus disclosing the transcendent nature of our existence. Erich Fromm (1900–1980) described how the “x” experience, or God experience, is a desire for ultimate values in human existence that requires a letting go of egoism (Fromm 1966). Letting go of egoism is often forced when the impact of significant experiences beyond our control jar lose our grip on life. Many thinkers have written on these kinds of “limit” or “boundary” experiences inherent in human existence (Jaspers 1919; Tracy 1996) and at times have called them experiences of the impossible (Bataille 1988; Blanchot 1992), the abject (Kristeva 1982), and unresolvable aporias (Derrida 1980) or as an unreachable other (Lacan 2007). For Jaspers, *homo religiosus* communicates within boundary situations by way of “ciphers,” or symbols of the encompassing, which signify what is experienced by us as beyond our ability to confine and reduce its nature. This “absent presence” is transcendence for Jaspers (Schlipp 1957). Although these thinkers would differ widely in their theological proclivities, they all highlight the centrality of how “that which is more than we are” shapes who we are as human beings.

## Commentary

There are differences of opinion as to whether or not *homo religiosus* refers to a “peak experience” (Maslow 1970) and whether or not *homo religiosus* describes an exceptional person, such as those individuals who have reached rare and higher levels of faith (Fowler 1981) and moral development (Kohlberg 1981), or is a description of the very constitution of any human being. David Wulff (1997) has written about how Erik

Erikson’s (1902–1994) project of comparing Luther and Gandhi was an exploration of *homo religiosus* and emphasized the resolution of life crises in development, starting with our basic trust in the world. For Erikson, basic trust is the cornerstone of *homo religiosus* (Wulff 1997; Erikson 1958). Also for Erikson *homines religiosi* are those individuals in history who have offered us a new set of images and ways of being that promise renewed lives. As Wulff reads Erikson, the journey of *homo religiosus*, which is indeed a lifelong journey, brings one to a sense of centeredness, wholeness, a settled presence, and a greater sense of self and other awareness and well-being. Nevertheless, reserving the title of *homo religiosus* for exceptional individuals such as Mahatma Gandhi or Jesus of Nazareth perpetuates exclusivism and rank-ordered hierarchy of spiritual elitism, thus mitigating against the incomparable uniqueness of transcendence in our lives. Moreover, an elitist position for *homo religiosus* inattends to how meaning-making, transcendence seeking, encounters with numinosity, and finding oneself in the intimacy of relational engagement, even though unique in how these experiences are taken up, are also existentialles in the ontology of human existence as a whole.

Another separatist assumption is found in the popular distinction between religion and spirituality, which is spurious if we heed the wisdom of seeing human nature as inherently religious. To be a human being is to be an enactor of significance in each moment of our lives. Living out significance, or what matters most to us, is the heart of being *homo religiosus* in the world. The original etymology and history of the role of the psychologist was as an “*iatros tes psyche*,” or “physician of the soul.” The logical positivist agenda of only accepting what is observably real contributed to the dissection of the theologian from the psychologist. Yet, lived experience itself is invisible, immeasurable, and incomparable, as life is lived rather than isolated, extracted and objectified, as the French phenomenologist Michel Henry (1922–2002) has argued (Henry 2003).

Hope, significance, emotions, creativity, and intuition are expressions of the soul that propel our everyday decisions and are nonetheless invisible. The objectification of *homo religiosus* leads to the death of *homo religiosus*, which leads us back to the wisdom of Kierkegaard as we close. Access to our natures as *homines religiosi* is found in the radically subjectivity and intersubjectivity of our lived experiences and in the enactments of significance accompanying them.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Homo Totus

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*Homo totus*: [Latin origin: the Son of Man, the *homo maximus*, the *vir unus*, *purusha*, etc.]

## Analytical Psychology

Says Carl Jung (1971: para. 419), the *homo totus* is an archetype of the Self, the beginning and the end of psychic process, an exercise of Platonic anamnesis, a memory of wholeness, and an *apocatastasis* that restores an original wholeness that preexists the consciousness of the human ego.

Jung speaks of the *homo totus* in the context of the alchemical process, the chemistry of the Middle Ages, or the art of transmuting metals, which was primarily a psychological process expressed in projective form. Jung says that “The moral equivalent of the physical transmutation into gold is self-knowledge, which is a re-remembering of the *homo totus*” (1968: para. 372).

In Jungian psychology, the notion of individuation indicates the personal journey in which the unconscious is the universal mediator and the all-embracing One (Jung 1971: para. 419) out of which consciousness discovers itself. Consciousness then separates itself out of the unconscious and distinguishes a series of pairs of opposites which unfold in an endless multiplicity in human life. By relating to all the opposites in the process of individuation, we “arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time” (Eliot 1963, p. 208). This place is the knowledge and experience of the Self, the goal of individuation. The Self, in archetypal psychology, is a psychic entity more intensely unified than the unconscious, possessed of and by a oneness equaled only in its own archetype, the *imago Dei*.

## Christianity and Analytic Psychology

In the Christian tradition, the objective referent of this archetype is the *imago*, or image of God. The Christian formulation of this symbolic figure, or *homo totus*, the archetype of the Self, was Christ within whom all the opposites were reconciled and no longer divided; thus, death was conquered. If we bring Jungian psychology into dialog with the Christian perspective, we might say that we individuate toward the goal of living in this image.

Yet, the fact that Christianity produced what would psychologically be considered an archetype of the Self, or archetypal god-man, is not unique to Christianity nor original to this one tradition. Because the *homo totus* is an archetypal idea, it is by definition universal in occurrence.

The *homo totus* is capable of autochthonous revival, “an image arising from the depths of the ‘chthonic’ unconscious” (1968: para. 26), anywhere, at any time. In other words, wherever there is psyche, there are archetypes, and wherever there are archetypes, the archetype of wholeness, or the archetype of the Self, will be foremost in primacy, always at the center of the psyche as a self-regulating force within the individual personality.

Jung tells us, when this archetypal idea emerges, it is a reflection of the individual’s wholeness, i.e., of the Self which is present in the person as an unconscious image (1971: para. 230). Christianity succeeded and sustained itself for over 2,000 years largely influenced by the archetype of the Self that constellated in the soul of those persons in the first century (and after), who responded to the Christian message. The result was that the concrete, human Rabbi Jesus was rapidly assimilated by the constellated archetype. Christ realized the idea of the Self, representing the culmination of all psychic processes to that point in the history of human consciousness.

Christ did so in that he represented the symbolic ultimate in individuation in which many are entirely subordinated to the One, the One being God. As symbolic, the *imitatio Christi*, living in the image of Christ, was not meant to be

a superficial imitation (Jung 1971: para. 522) but a self-realization. Such an exemplar reaches back before Christianity to the Empedocleans and Platonists who believed in a transmigratory supernatural self, the daimon of Empedocles. To realize this Self was to attain the philosopher's goal in the highest degree and to ascend to the *eidos* of humanity, in the philosophical sense.

Christ, then, is an image of the psyche's inherent oneness. Christ depicts the living image of unity-in-complexity and the very nature of the structure of the psyche itself in that psyche insists upon a system with a center that repeats itself archetypal in the unconscious realm of all humankind for all time to be discovered and related to on the journey into wholeness.

If we interpret the content of experience of the *homo totus* by a particular faith, we tend to identify with our subjective interpretation of the manifestation, Jung tells us. To do so would be to lay absolute claim on only one specific image of the godhead, and Jung believes instead that, at least psychologically speaking, we should interpret images of the godhead by comparing all traditional assumptions of faith without insisting upon one over the other. His emphasis is upon the unconscious that expresses itself in a multiplicity of images and symbols.

## Absolute Knowledge

In Jung's own confrontation with mystery, he was not slow to pronounce that there is such a thing as "absolute knowledge." Absolute knowledge pertains to the existence of an a priori knowledge, a preexisting order, and an order before the ego comes to consciousness (Jung 1960: para. 947). Absolute knowledge is knowledge as the formally directing fact that activates and directs the archetypal field of the Self "as a deeper regulating and ordering field" (1960: para. 947, pp. 47–49).

Author James Olney concurs that the Self reflects absolute knowledge as it contains the marriage of the opposites of consciousness and unconsciousness in a marriage, a *hieros gamos*,

a unified One. In this Unity of Being, "because the microcosm is identical with the macrocosm, it attracts the latter and this brings about the *apocatastasis*, a restoration of. . .original wholeness" (Olney 1980, p. 323).

Absolute knowledge is Self-knowledge, knowledge of the Self, which is an anamnesis, a memory of wholeness represented by the *homo totus* as an archetypal idea "by definition universal in occurrence and capable of autochthonous revival anywhere at anytime" (Olney 1980, p. 323).

In essence, we are speaking of a dynamic inbreaking of the collective unconscious, the notion of spirit coming toward us, summoning us in conjunction with culture and the unfolding of human history. The *homo totus* is a repeated expression of unitary reality in the psyche and is emblematic of that which is unconscious and needs to be made conscious again and again in our intrapsychic and collective lives as a symbol of individuation.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Homosexuality

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Same-sex attraction, love, and relationships have existed from very early times, though the ways in which they have been understood have changed over time and across cultures. Scholarly debate continues between “essentialists” and “constructivists.” Essentialists see sexual orientation as a stable trait recognizable across history and culture. Being “gay” or having a gay sensibility is a persistent and universal potential among humans. Social constructivists hold that our modern categories of ‘gay,’ ‘straight’ or ‘bisexual’ have been more recently created. Human sexual orientation is a more fluid characteristic. In any event, out of similar but slightly differing interests common ground is shared by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people.

What is unquestionably true is that modern communities of self-identified lesbians and gay men, existing within most industrialized Western societies as open members of the social whole, are a relatively recent phenomenon. The political movement of gay liberation, which began in Europe in the late nineteenth century, has resulted in significant changes of both attitude and practice in those societies. Elsewhere, even now, the existence of homosexual communities is less common in many parts of the world, and it is still viewed as either criminal, sinful, or a type of mental illness.

Since history has been written mostly by men, it is not surprising that we know more about same-sex love among men than among women. In sexual politics, what the dominant gender does is of greater consequence and thus has been more likely to be recorded and given attention. This means that the negative attitudes about homosexuality have been particularly focused on males,

often ignoring altogether female homosexuality and women in general.

In terms of spirituality it must be recognized that there is no spiritual tradition that is uniformly accepting and favorable toward persons with same-sex attraction. While people with same sex attraction have likely existed through all human history, only recently have people taken on a label distinctive of sexual orientation and been visible as a community. Having said that, there is a range of opinions within each of the major world religions as to the status of persons with different sexual orientation. It is important to note that the formal views expressed in the scriptures or writings of prominent religious figures may be more negative than the actual practice within any given spiritual tradition. As theology is translated into pastoral care, there may be more willingness to accept the human condition in its variety.

The Western monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have been the most explicitly rejecting. Modern gay Jews, Christians, and Muslims face a long history of scriptural condemnation and outright persecution. The Eastern religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, have generally been less rejecting, though neither have they been positive nor affirming. Throughout most of human history, the family, comprised of mother, father, and children, has been the social focus of spiritual teachings. Thus, alternate forms of sexual expression or emotional and social attachment have received considerably less attention. Strong condemnation of many forms of sexual expression, heterosexual or homosexual, which do not support biological reproduction has characterized the official pronouncements by religious leaders across all major types. As long as individuals did their part in producing offspring, there was often little concern with any additional emotional or physical involvements. Bullough’s (1976) work, despite its age, remains the most comprehensive history of sexual variance across time and culture and chronicles the

varying approaches of different religious traditions.

It is widely believed that the most favorably disposed culture toward homosexuality was found in classical Greece. However, the form that it took in that society is quite different than the forms in the current world. Men who sought out relationships with other men to the exclusion of marriage were shunned: viewed as odd and unfortunate. However, society was relatively tolerant of an adult male (termed an “erastes”) having a social and sexual relationship with an adolescent (termed an “eromenos”) up to the time when they began growing a beard (approximately 16–18). The older man was responsible for the moral education of the boy and often presented him with his first spear, shield, and armor as he joined the ranks of adult male citizens of the polis. There was sometimes a mock abduction and the pair would go off to the mountains for a period where sexual activity, male bonding, and education in the ways of adulthood took place. This sort of initiatory sexual relationship had broad social tolerance. Femininity was ridiculed as was excessive lust. In light of contemporary attitudes about the sexual abuse of adolescents and children, this model is no longer found acceptable.

Another model for same-sex desire and relationships involves gender transformation. Many cultures had rigid definitions of male/female characteristics but allowed those who did not fit the mold to switch roles and live as the opposite sex. Several native American tribes allowed this in one form or another. The older term “berdache” has more pejorative connotations and is now replaced by the term “two-spirit” people, to emphasize the presence of both masculine and feminine features in people we would view as lesbian, gay, or transgender.

The modern lesbian and gay culture continues to grapple with the mixed heritage from the world’s spiritual traditions. There are gay-friendly advocacy and support groups in most Christian denominations (Fortunato 1982), within Judaism, Islam, and among Buddhists (Leyland 2000) and Hindus. Many GLBT

individuals wish to remain in the traditions that reject them to one degree or another, and among gay Christians, a thriving market exists for books with more favorable scriptural exegesis. But a gay spirituality movement seeks to trace out the more same-sex-friendly aspects of the world’s religious traditions and craft a synthesis. Animistic and pagan perspectives from a variety of traditions, not just classical Greece, are often woven together (Conner 1993; Johnson 2000).

From a psychological standpoint, the treatment of GLBT persons by established religion leaves deep wounds and feelings of alienation. It is a sore spot in terms of both individual counseling and psychotherapy as well as in the larger arena of group to group relations. So called “reparative therapies” seeking to change sexual orientation are now widely considered inappropriate except by their conservative religious proponents. Gay affirmative therapies seek to repair damage done by both religious and secular discrimination and rejection. The movement for a gay affirming spirituality is underway. Yet the movement toward a gay-affirmative spirituality is well under way.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Hope

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Hope is an expectation of positive outcomes for future events. Hope is more than a mere wish as hope implies a belief and confidence that positive outcomes will be attained.

Hope is usually viewed as a positive attribute; however, the ancient Greeks were an exception to this view. In the myth of Pandora's Box, when the box was opened, all the evils of the world flew out to torment mankind. Hope, however, remained in the box. The Greeks were ambivalent as to whether hope was a blessing and consolation to mankind or a curse. Some modern writers have also voiced the view that hope is an evil. For example, Nietzsche stated that hope is the greatest of evils, because it prolongs mankind's suffering.

Hope is a prevalent and positive theme in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the Old Testament, hope is placed in God or directed toward God (Psalm 42:5), rather than toward other, less sure means of deliverance (Psalm 33:17; Isaiah 40:31). Those who place their hope in God will not be disappointed (Isaiah 49:23). Hope is also associated with a future provided by God (Jeremiah 29:11).

In the New Testament, hope is one of three enduring theological virtues, along with faith and charity (love), described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Hope is an attribute of love (1 Corinthians 13:7). In the New Testament, there is a specific object of hope – hope in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which believers themselves are redeemed (Romans 8:24; 1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Peter 1:3). Hope in the resurrection steadies believers during times of suffering. This hope is described as a “living”

hope, one that is not frail or perishable (1 Peter). Functionally, hope serves as an “anchor” for believers (Hebrews 6:19). Hope is confidence that God's plans will be realized (Romans 5:2).

Psychologically, hope has been conceptualized as a goal-directed cognitive process consisting of pathways to achieve goals and the perceived ability to use those pathways. Using this operational definition, C. R. Snyder and colleagues have conducted extensive research on hope. In this program of research, hope is positively related to positive outcomes in academics, athletics, health, and psychotherapy.

Clinically, one function of psychotherapy is to instill hope for change or healing. Karl Menninger called hope a “basic but elusive ingredient” in his comments to the American Psychiatric Association's 1959 annual meeting. Hope also falls broadly under the category of positive psychology, which focuses on strengths and resilience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)

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## Hormic Psychology

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William McDougall (1871–1938) was one of the giants of early psychology, yet his legacy has gone

largely unheralded, and his name is seldom recalled outside students of the history of psychology. His brand of psychology, termed “hormic” psychology, serves as one of the foundational frameworks for understanding the wide range of human motivational forces. The term “hormic” comes from the Greek word for impulse and according to Hilgard (1987) was drawn from the work of T. P. Nunn, a British colleague.

McDougall was born and raised in Britain and studied biology at the University of Lancaster and later medicine at Cambridge. He completed his medical training at St. Thomas’ Hospital in London, with some additional physiological research under Sherrington. He went on to study experimental psychology under G. E. Müller at Göttingen.

His current lack of popularity in part stems from his taking up the cause of Lamarckian evolutionary theory, the notion that acquired traits can be inherited. He also supported the eugenics movement which was popular in the early twentieth century but became tainted by its association with forced sterilization of the retarded, as well as its use by Nazi lawmakers as a rationale for their race laws. He also defended the concept of instinct at a time when behaviorism was rising to ascendancy and instinct declining.

One of his less well-recognized contributions that are with us today is his advocacy of “three fundamental faculties, of knowing, of striving, and of feeling” (McDougall 1923, p. 378, as cited by Hilgard 1987, p. 813). This is now taught as the ABC of psychology, affect, behavior, and cognition, though behavior is substituted for the faculty of conation, or will.

His views on religion were unconventional. In his 1911 book, *Body and Mind* he espouses an animistic world view. Like Gustav Fechner before him, he finds that life and mind are characteristic of all entities in the natural world. His view are more consistent with the notion of modern panpsychism rather than the spiritual views of animists.

## See Also

► [Psychology](#)

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## Hospice

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“Hospice” refers to a system of palliative – that is, comfort-oriented – care designed for patients in a terminal phase of illness. *Hospice* should be understood as a philosophy of care rather than a place where care is offered. It is important to recognize that such care can be offered in a wide range of settings including free-standing hospices, hospital-based hospice programs, individual homes, nursing homes, and even prisons.

## The History of the Hospice Movement

### St. Christopher’s Hospice and the Beginning of the Modern Hospice Movement

Dame Cicely Saunders founded the first modern hospice movement in 1967 in Sydenham, a southeast section of London. Saunders herself was a deeply spiritual woman, heavily influenced by Evangelical Christianity. The name she chose – St. Christopher’s Hospice – had deep religious roots.

The first hospices were established by religious orders, such as the Knights Hospitallers to care for pilgrims, including the sick and incurable, as they journeyed to the Holy Land. The Knights took great pride in offering not only spiritual care but also the finest food and dignified treatment to dying and sick nobility, even as the Knights dined plainly and lived simply (Connor 2009). Later, the term was used by the Irish Sisters of Charity, a religious order that saw its mission as



caring for the dying poor. In fact, Saunders worked with them for a while developing her own philosophy of hospice care. St. Christopher, of course, was the patron saint of travelers.

Saunders was a remarkable woman. She began her career as a nurse and then became a social worker, before finally training as a physician. She sought to develop a facility that would not only offer excellent care to dying cancer patients but would also be a research and training center. St. Christopher's became the culmination of her vision.

### The Development of Hospice in the United States

Saunders' development of hospice was both part of and an impetus to a growing interest in thanatology – the study of death and dying. In that period, there was an emerging academic interest in death evidenced in the publication of Kübler-Ross' epochal *On Death and Dying* (1969), the beginnings of thanatology journals such as *Omega: The Journal of Death and Dying*, and the development of professional organizations such as *Ars Moriendi*, the Forum for Death Education and Counseling, and the International Work Group on Death, Dying, and Bereavement (Doka 2007). The result of this was that the vision of Saunders and the work being done at St. Christopher's generated intense interest.

Among those interested were Florence Wald, the Dean of Nursing at Yale, and Dr. Sylvia Lack, a physician who had trained at St. Christopher's. They founded the first hospice in the USA in Branford, a suburb of New Haven. While this hospice first offered community-based, home-based care, later it shifted to the model of St. Christopher, centering care in a free-standing hospice. By the mid-1970s, a hospice movement was beginning in the United States. In these early years, this interest was generated by a wide range of organizations including churches and synagogues, junior leagues, women's groups, and other community organizations.

Two factors facilitated the growth of hospice. The first was the development of a model of

hospice care as exclusively home care. Dr. William Lamers, a California physician, also trained at St. Christopher's. However, though Lamers left enamored of the concept of home care for the dying modeled there, he also had two other thoughts. The first was simply that he did not want to spend the next few years of his life raising money for a facility. Second, he believed that the best homelike atmosphere – a theme of St. Christopher's – was to provide care in the patient's own home. Lamers' model of hospice as home care could be readily duplicated by the many groups interested in beginning hospices.

While home remains the predominant mode for the delivery of hospice services in the United States and the emergence of such a model was a great impetus to the growth of hospice, hospices have also centered in other residences. Some hospices have created free-standing hospices much like St. Christopher's. In other cases, hospice services have been offered in nursing homes, dedicated sections of hospitals, and assisted living facilities. Some prisons have even included hospice services within prison infirmaries and hospitals. Hospice is less a place than a philosophy of care that can be offered in a range of settings.

The second major factor was that in 1982, United States Medicare allowed reimbursement for hospice services. This allowed a stable funding mechanism for hospice. Now there are over 4,700 hospices in the USA – almost evenly divided between nonprofit and proprietary programs (Connor 2009). Hospice clearly has been one of the most successful social movements in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In addition, it has become more professionalized. The National Hospice Organization (NHO), now the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), began in 1978 as a trade/professional organization representing hospices and later palliative care programs. Other organizations such as the Hospice Foundation of America offer educational programs and resources. There are even specialized journals such as the *Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care*.

### **The Development of Palliative Care**

The development of hospice, in general, and St. Christopher's, in particular, strongly influenced the development of palliative care. A Canadian physician Balfour Mount also visited St. Christopher's and decided to apply the principles learned there to dying within the hospital. Mount's work in this area at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal is generally considered to be the beginning of the mainstream palliative care movement (Mount 1997). This movement has made considerable progress in its attempts to incorporate the concepts of palliative care within the mainstream health system. Many hospitals now have palliative care programs, and in 2007, the American Board of Medical Specialties recognized palliative care as a specialty (Connor 2009).

### **Hospice Development Throughout the World**

The concept of hospice has spread throughout the world. There are now hospice programs in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, as well as North and South America. In reviewing the worldwide growth of hospice, Kastenbaum and Wilson (1997) conclude that the hospices can be developed in a wide range of cultures and the concept of hospice and palliative care transcends the phase of economic development, any given religious tenets, or any one spiritual base. They also note that hospices can draw from historic cultural strengths such as the emphasis on family.

Yet throughout the world, hospices have encountered and, in most cases, overcome resistance from varied quarters. In some cases, this may be a taboo about dying. In other cases, it may be unwarranted fears about the use of opioids leading to either addiction or hastening death. Finally, hospices may have to struggle to develop both sources for sustainable financial support and to find a place within existing structures of health care.

### **Philosophy of Hospice Care**

Wherever hospices are and in whatever form they are offered, hospices do share a common philosophy of palliative care. Central to this philosophy are the following components.

### **Pain Management and Symptom Control**

Key to the philosophy of hospice has been the notion that the heart of palliative care is effective pain management and symptom control. In terminally patients, there may be multiple sources of pain. Thus, hospices will try to carefully assess a patient's pain and apply a variety of strategies – including pharmaceutical approaches, radiation, surgery, alternative therapies, and psychological support – to alleviate pain. Hospices have developed common principles in treating chronic pain. First is that the patient is the best judge of his or her own pain. Second is that pain medication should be given around the clock as needed. This avoids the pain cycle where patients become anxious that the pain medication will cease to be effective before the next dose is scheduled. Finally, pain medication needs to be titrated to allow the best balance between effective management of pain and unwanted side effects or sedation. In addition to pain management, hospices also seek to control, as much as possible, unwanted symptoms such as nausea, diarrhea or constipation, loss of appetite, confusion, or dyspnea (breathlessness).

However, hospices recognize that while managing physical pain is essential, there are other forms of pain as well that add to patient's sense of suffering. Patients may experience psychological pain such as anxiety. They may grieve the many secondary losses such as the loss of mobility and independence that are inherent in late-stage illness. They may be fearful for their family's survival. They may encounter existential pain as they consider their life or death. There may be spiritual pain as dying patients struggle with religious or philosophical themes such as forgiveness, uncertainty of the afterlife, or fears of judgment. A central tenet of hospice is that all forms of pain need to be assessed and treated.

### **A Holistic and Team-Centered Approach**

Since pain is so multifaceted, care must be holistic. Hospice programs emphasize that dying is not only a physical crisis but a social, familial, and spiritual crisis as well. This necessitates a team approach that includes not

only physicians and nurses but also social workers, pharmacists, chaplains, volunteers, and varied therapists such as art and music therapists, physical and occupational therapists, or massage therapists.

### Family-Centered Care

The other aspect of hospice care was to see not only the patient but the patient's intimate network as the focal point of care as both among those who are to receive and to give care. Since the family, interpreted broadly, was the focus of care, services to the family continued after the patient's death. Bereavement care for the survivors became an essential component of hospice care.

### Future Challenges

While the hospice movement has experienced dramatic growth since inception, in the United States, it faces continuing challenges. It is beyond the scope of this piece to consider all the challenges that hospices will encounter – especially as hospices emerge in varied cultures throughout the world. However, a few challenges do seem primary.

One of the major challenges that hospices face is that it is often late in treatment when patients and physicians can accept that fact that the goal of treatment is now palliative rather than curative. The result is that whole populations – such as children – may be underserved by hospice and that often referrals can be so late in the illness that the benefits afforded by hospice care are unrealized. Many hospices have responded by offering “bridge programs,” that is, programs where patients continue curative or life-extending therapies even while receiving palliative care through the hospice team. This may ease the transition to hospice care as the patient continues to decline. In many ways, this may require continued integration of hospice within health care systems.

Hospices were originally developed to treat cancer patients. In recent years, hospices have begun to treat a variety of other illnesses including advanced forms of dementia, AIDS, and other diseases such as ALS. In such cases,

as well as in cancer treatment, it may be difficult to offer a prognosis that death is likely within 6 months (a precondition of the Medicare Benefit) even though care can no longer be curative.

Finally, hospice home care often requires a primary caregiver. If hospices are going to effectively serve clients living alone, they may need to develop increased flexibility in the services that they offer. All of these challenges may require modifications in the regulations such as Medicare that govern funding.

In summary, the development of hospice has led to the continued development and improvements in the nature of palliative care. It has highlighted the importance of offering bereavement services to families and communities. By creating the option of holistic, family-focused, humanistic care, hospices have markedly changed the ways individuals die.

### See Also

- ▶ [Attachment and Loss](#)
- ▶ [Buddhist Death Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Crisis Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Death Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Death Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Grief Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Near-Death Experiences](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Reincarnation](#)
- ▶ [Resurrection](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Care](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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## I Ching

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The *I Ching*, or Book (*I*) of Changes (*Ching*), belongs to the greatest treasures of religion; it is hierarchically the first of Old China's Five Classics (the four other Classics are the *Shu Ching*, or The Book of History (rules for Politics); the *Shih Ching*, or The Book of Odes; the *Li Chi*, or The Book of Rites; the *Ch'un Ch'in*, or The Spring and Autumn Annals, annals of one Chinese province where Confucius lived).

### A Twofold Structure: Oracular Formulae and (Official) Commentaries

Ten centuries of successive stratifications of practices and texts frame this monument of Chinese wisdom, whose secrets have not yet all been discovered by archeologists, philologists, and after them theologians or thinkers. Out of divination customs from the Shang dynasty (1750–1050 BCE) appeared, during the Chou dynasty (1050–771 BCE), the ancestor of the *I Ching*, the *Chou I*, or Changes of Chou, a compilation of oracular formulae. From the eighth century before the Common Era to the second of the Common Era, hundreds of commentaries joined the collection. Carefully

selected and corrected under the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), they became the official Ten Wings which “protected” the *Chou I* and allowed its understanding. The twofold structure of the *I Ching*, the compilation and – its hermeneutical ground – the official commentaries, was then fixed.

The eastern *Chou I* consists of 450 oracular formulae attached to each of the 64 hexagrams of the book and to each of their constituting six monograms or lines. A line, as the result of a divinatory casting, can be broken and *yin* (—) or unbroken and *yang* (— —). The opposition and the complementarity of these two principles are emphasized in the two opening hexagrams of the compilation, which each possess a supplementary formula ( $64 + (6 \cdot 64) + 2 = 450$ ). Made of six unbroken lines and six broken lines, the first hexagram, “The Creative,” and the second one, “The Receptive,” are the immanence of *yang* and *yin*. *Yang* is first, *yin* second, and together they give birth to all the “existents,” all the things that exist in the three levels heaven, humanity, and earth.

The Ten Wings provide numerous keys and rules for the reading and casting of the oracle. Some are technical and theoretical; others are more philosophical. The respect of hierarchy and the correctness of the position characterize the two main guiding principles of the Wings. All the 64 hexagrams and the complex rules of their trigrams and lines are assumed to symbolize all situations likely to happen in the course of the universe. For instance, there are inferior, nuclear,

and superior trigrams at work in the hexagram; the sixth line is the king's line, the fifth the prince's, the first, third, and fifth lines are correct if unbroken but have also to behave with regard to their neighbor lines, etc. Hence a casting of the oracle supplies the reader with a statement which is the present correct position in the Tao he or she has to follow. The sixth and the seventh Wings form the *Ta Chuan*, The Great Treatise, a major work of the Chinese thought. First attributed to Confucius himself, it was in fact written after his death. Integrating both Taoist and Buddhist thoughts, it expresses the Old Chinese vision of the world, where reality is the daughter of the process of the Tao and where humans, thanks to the right attitude of morality, have to find their way between heaven and earth. The eighth Wing is the *Shuo Kua*, the "Discussion of the Trigrams." These trigrams belong to the mythology of the *I Ching*.

The wise ancestor Fu Hsi is, for the tradition, the first of the four authors of the *Book of Changes*, with King Wên, the Duke of Chou, and Confucius. He is the one who discovered, rather than created, these eight original trigrams, the eight possible combinations of three unbroken and broken lines, the symbols (or images, *xiang*) of heaven, the earth, the thunder, the water, the wind, the fire, the wind, and the lake. This is the naturalist and cosmological foundation of the *Book of Changes*. The natural "Resonance" (*kan-ying*) heard between all existents (see Le Blanc 2003) allows the *I Ching*'s operation of connecting together the structures within the perpetual process of the Tao, the Changes. This Chinese theory is close to the Western notions of macro and micro cosmos, to Goethe's elective affinities, and to Baudelaire's correspondences. The *I Ching* is thus supposed to be the impression and the symbol of the everlasting wholeness and emptiness of the wise man which relate the reader to its correspondence of the moment, to its affinity and duty.

### Philology and History (of the I Ching)

Near to the traditional myth of the book stands its scientific history which does not cancel out

the philosophical hermeneutics of the work but rather enlightens its oldest utilizations and goals. Recent archeological discoveries (see Kalinowski 2006) showed that the *I Ching* has been used differently than was previously thought. The three assumed separate and successive stages of the book – religious, divinatory, and philosophical – are no longer taken for granted, reality proved to be more complicated. The religious age was characterized by the casting of the oracles – turtles or stalk of milfoil – which allowed humans to communicate with their ancestors or gods. The collective procedure testified to the fear for the gods who were asked for authorizations to act through the intermediate of the oracle which transmitted both questions and answers. The utilization of the *Chou I* – the different compilations of oracular sentences and the turtle or milfoil material – within a sheer divinatory context had different goals. Individuals from all groups used to consult local wise men, having expectations on their future. The philosophical age supposedly drained these too numerous practices around the *Chou I* to give birth in the second century to the Commentaries which would form the *I Ching*. In fact, the recent discovery of inscriptions on carapaces of turtles showed that religious purposes remained till high antiquity. In this period, divination still belonged to religious rituals. As early as the fourth century BCE, there appeared the philosophical stage with Confucius using the *Chou I* in order to spread Confucianism. This political concern coexisted with the divinatory use of the compilation, like religion had coexisted with divination.

Since the fixation of the work at the second century till now, many commentaries by the most eminent Chinese thinkers have secured the actuality of the living aspect of the book, like new other wings. The desire to penetrate the intrinsic mystery of the "Classic of the Classics" remains. In the twentieth century, the work became known in the West thanks to the German Protestant missionary Richard Wilhelm's translation, itself retranslated into English by one of C. G. Jung's pupil, Cary Baynes.



## (I Ching) Jung and Spirituality

C. G. Jung discovered the *I Ching* with James Legge's translation in the 1910s, but the reading of Richard Wilhelm's met his understanding of the huge symbolic aspect of the canon, disregarded by Legge. After the rift with Sigmund Freud in 1911, the *I Ching* was the superior voice, intuition embodied, which intimated Jung to find his own way. Companion of the personal Jung, the *Book of Changes* sometimes entered his consulting room, but never really reached the sacred area of his works until 1948 and 1949, the dates of the two forewords of Baynes's translation (see Pilard 2009).

The writing of 1948 constitutes the published foreword of 1949's draft, but the significance of the differences between the two texts allows the designation of the first and second foreword to the *I Ching*. The text of 1948 reveals the first risk taken by Jung: introducing the intuitive book among Western rationalism by a personal casting of the oracle rather than a simple theoretical commentary. The text of 1949 constitutes the second risk: introducing the Eastern theoretical background of the *I Ching* within his own Western thinking. It is the public birth of synchronicity. Both risks were considerable but, to Jung's eyes, indispensable. A sheer commentary would have let Jung be an observer, seemingly objective, in front of the masterpiece. The traditional casting of the *I Ching* involves subjectivity in order to correct it and to redirect it in the Tao, by providing the objectivity the reader cannot pretend to have a priori. Jung chose to render this necessary implication in a living dialog between him and the book. He interrogated the *I Ching* about its introduction in the English-spoken world and his own role on the event, getting from it an optimistic answer the future would confirm.

The second foreword of 1949 replaces five pages out of 20 in order to introduce, for the first time, the notion of synchronicity. Jung's contemporaneous correspondence shows the significant role of the Physics Nobel Price Wolfgang Pauli in the psychologist's decision to reveal his controversial concept. Since Albert Einstein,

whom Jung had met years earlier, and current discoveries of atomic physics, objectivity and the laws of causality had been ipso facto challenged, but science had not found any competitor yet among thinkers for this crucial debate.

Within rational language, synchronicity means acausality. Two events happen not to be linked by causes and effects but by meaning grounds. This is the translation of the Chinese theory of Resonance in one scientific hypothesis. Practically, the "meaningful coincidences" between the two events reveal the theory, but do not prove it, as they happen only once. The *I Ching*, as the agent likely to connect all the existents, is the one able to repeat, at will, these meaningful coincidences between the question of the reader and its symbolic answer. Synchronicity does not undermine causality but on the contrary completes it. It is a working but needed hypothesis based on the inability of reason to grasp the whole reality.

## Religious Attitude and Depth Psychology

The efficiency of synchronicity hence resides in any personal casting of the *I Ching*. However, the right interpretation of the esoteric language of the book belongs to the right attitude of the reader. The religious attitude towards the book that Jung thinks the reader must keep corresponds to the accurate attitude that one must have towards the unconscious. The remarkable inner knowledge that the messages of the *I Ching* provide to moderns should remain as respected as these provided by the same medium to ancients then understood as the gods' orders. This idea appeared in Jung's foreword embodied in the casting of the hexagram of the Caldron, the *ting*. In Old China, the *ting* was a ceremonial vessel used in banquets to link humans to gods. In Jung's casting, the *I Ching* saw himself as the Caldron. Thanks to Baynes's translation and Jung's foreword, it was thus able to connect gods to humans, East to West, and past to present. This symbolic object contained Jung's will to transmit the respect towards the book the reader

must have. Since individual, with no support of social or collective instinct, a modern casting requires humility and simplicity before any interpretation, the same way the psychologist depicted the correct attitude towards a dream.

The *I Ching* entered Jung's world and life by intuition. His recognition of it was immediate. Jung saw archetypes in the 64 *xiang*, symbols in each line. He instinctively used his method of amplification to translate one monogram in his foreword. He could have seen in the *I Ching* a manifestation of the Self. But above all, Jung recognized that the *Book of Changes* was an impression of the world in its wholeness in symbols. No language, either psychological or rational, can exhaust its meaning, its process, and its vitality. Those interested in the Old China wisdom can read and cast the *Book of Changes*. Anybody who asks himself the question "What do I have to do in order to . . ." can use the oracle. A fortune teller could answer by a prediction but then would stop one's implication in the process of the event. A friend could offer an advice, but some acts must be decided alone. The *I Ching* is supposed to provide a perspective: some radial point of view whose center is the question of the reader. The more the question is clear and necessary, the more accurate the answer will appear to the "humble" and "simple" asker.

## See Also

- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Ibn al-'Arabi

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An Islamic mystic, known as the "Greatest Master" (*Shaykh Al-Akbar*), Muhiyuddin Ibn al-'Arabi (1165–1240 CE), grew up in Seville, where Islamic, Jewish, and Christian mysticism flourished with mutual enrichment. He was educated by Sufi masters in alchemy and esoteric studies as well as Moslem scriptures and traditions.

Ibn 'Arabi possessed prophetic gifts and psychic abilities and was thought to be a "dazzling mental force" (Husaini 1996, p. 6f).

The lives of mystics provide psychological insight into the upper reaches of consciousness where we discover, in the psychological processes of highly evolved persons such as Ibn 'Arabi, a broader and deeper understanding of the essential issues involved in psychospiritual development to its fullest potential.

All Moslems seek to live under the sovereignty of God, since "Islam" itself means "surrender." God is viewed as active in human affairs, and each person aims to fulfill His Will. A central objective is unity with God (*tawhid*). Among medieval Sufis, asceticism and renunciation were highly valued, and Ibn 'Arabi was tenacious in his efforts to perfect himself so as to be worthy of divine union. His life was totally dedicated, aiming to achieve personal annihilation in the Divine Presence.

Following an internally mediated sense of "call," he traveled widely in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East. When disciples were attracted to his spiritual power, he taught with clarity and spiritual authority, always emphasizing quotations from the Qur'an and traditional stories of the Prophet Muhammad [*Hadith*] while interpreting and embellishing the scripture with the fruits of his own experiential wisdom.

He lived several years in Mecca where he frequently circumambulated the Ka'ba in rapture, repeatedly receiving mystical experiences.

His most prolific writings began in Mecca and were continually sustained by his mystic insights. Finally, at age 58, he settled in Damascus where he lived his last 15 years, finishing his major writings: *The Meccan Revelations*, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, and *The Diwan*.

## Dreams and Visions

At midlife Ibn 'Arabi had a dream: "I was wedded to all the stars of the sky. There was not a single star left, and I married every one of them with great spiritual pleasure. Then I married the moons" (Ibn 'Arabi cited in Husaini 1996, p. 6). This dream of mystical marriage reveals his spiritual expansiveness and forthcoming awareness of divine union.

Islam characteristically emphasizes prophecy, with dreams seen as typical ways that God communicates with humanity. Like Muhammad before him, Ibn 'Arabi claimed his writings (over 400) were in obedience to divine command. *The Bezels of Wisdom*, for example, was given to him in a single dream. By surrendering his own will, he followed the Sufi path of heart, obeying the Prophet's summons to vision (Corbin 1969, p. 232). In a visionary's life, complete annihilation (*fana*) in the Divine opens the doors to imaginative perception of Divine Realities. This marriage, when the visionary and God are united, is a common theme.

Divine Messengers frequently inspired and brought him insights. In Mecca a powerful vision of a female Beloved had great influence on his writing and his experience of Divine Love: "While circumambulating the Temple [ruminating]. . . [s]uddenly there emerged from the shadows the feminine figure who was for him the earthly manifestation of *Sophia aeterna*" (Corbin 1969, p. 278). She rebuked him for seeking intellectual answers to questions that were essentially mystical, and she taught him to trust the illuminations and wisdom of his heart. Ibn 'Arabi alluded to this young woman as an "apparitional figure," both "sublime and divine," one who "manifested. . .visibly. . .with such sweetness as to provoke. . .joy and happiness"

(Ibn 'Arabi cited in Corbin 1969, p. 139). Another of Ibn 'Arabi's archetypal Messengers was Khidr, the Verdant one, associated with Elijah and Shi'ite liturgy. "[T]he fact of having Khidr for a master invests the disciple, as an individual, with a transcendent, 'transhistorical' dimension. . . it is a personal, direct, and immediate bond with the Godhead" (Corbin 1969, p. 54).

Immersed in the divine milieu, Ibn 'Arabi developed to the point where he consciously experienced all life as manifestation of the Divine. He saw theophany everywhere and would interpret even the smallest coincidences as symbolic communications. Night and day were God filled, living in mystic love and gnostic intuition.

In summarizing Ibn 'Arabi's psychospiritual development, it appears that his mystical experiences began with dreams, progressing with the appearance of fleeting dreamlike images during wakefulness, as well as locutions that voiced Divine Commands quite directly. Then, as he became more attuned to subtle messages, more surrendered, and more obedient to the Divine Intent, the visions appeared more full bodied, more human, and "real." Finally, all life became a communication from God for himself as mystic lover.

## Active Imagination

For Ibn 'Arabi, intuition occurs in the heart as "Active Imagination" (*alam al-mithal*), an intermediate world – neither matter nor spirit – but some sacred space between, similar to Jung's Collective Unconscious. He distinguishes premeditated imaginations evoked consciously, from those imaginative products that present themselves to the mind spontaneously like dreams (or daydreams). The spontaneous process or "autonomous imagination" (*munfasil*) is the special locale of dreams, fleeting images, and spontaneous visions, which were commonly reported by the Prophet Muhammad and by many Sufis.

In the intimate relationship between matter and spirit, the energy flow of Active Imagination

is bidirectional. The human (matter) evokes Spirit, reaching up, with prayers of the heart, expressing needs and inviting spiritual intervention. God reaches down, sending a message (e.g., the image of an angel); thus, Spirit is made matter. In these transmutations of energy, matter becomes Spirit and Spirit becomes matter in the intermediate world of the creative Active Imagination.

For Ibn 'Arabi, God uses the human faculty of imagination for Self-revelation, entering consciousness through the door of imaginative processes. "Unveiling ... is knowledge that God gives directly to the servants when He lifts the veil separating Himself from them and 'opens the door' to perception of invisible realities.... Unveiling is an everyday occurrence for prophets [and] for the friends of God [Sufis]" (Chittick 1998, p. xxii f).

Ibn 'Arabi discovered, as have many other mystics, that rational thought actually blocks spontaneous imaginal processes. Anyone can fall into intellectualization, but those who think they know are not open to receiving revelations. The role of the gnostic, the prophet, or the Sufi is to temporarily suspend rational judgment in order to perceive through the imaginal pathways. The desire of the heart is what the aspirant brings to the mystic encounter. Surrender of the ego in a state of annihilation (*fana*) allows the individual to release the illusion of separateness and to perceive the unity underlying all life. "The mystic is then the medium, the intermediary, through whom the divine creative power is expressed and manifested" (Corbin 1969, p. 228).

Ibn 'Arabi's world of imaginal reality predates contemporary psychoanalysis by over 600 years, but one finds understanding of the unconscious, such as Freud's idea of dreams as wish fulfillment and Jung's idea that psychic energy is found primarily at the region where the opposites meet.

### Conjunctio Oppositorum

The theme of unity of opposites (*conjunctio oppositorum*) was a predominant alchemical preoccupation, one that fascinated Ibn 'Arabi, even

as it did Jung six centuries later. For Jung, the union of all opposites comprises the ever-emerging psychospiritual Self, while for Ibn 'Arabi, the union of opposites is experiential evidence of the underlying Oneness of Being. Thus it seems that the one theorist (Jung) was working at the level of the Immanent, the other (Ibn 'Arabi) at the level of the Transcendent. But even this duality must be encountered in unity. The Immanent Divine and Transcendent Divine are essentially the same. Ibn 'Arabi recognized this unity: "There is but one Essence.... He who is universal is particular [while] He who is particular is universal" (Ibn al-'Arabi 1980, p. 150). Self and God are One. For those who can see, multiplicity and oneness are similarly linked. Ibn 'Arabi writes, "...he who has attained to realization sees multiplicity in the One, just as he knows that essential oneness is implicit in the [multiple] divine Names" (Ibn al-'Arabi 1980, p. 153).

Another duality to transcend is the polarity of active and passive. In a full life, both action and contemplation are needed. Ibn 'Arabi also grappled with paradox: how apparent passivity may, in fact, be activity and vice versa. Reflecting on the Qur'an verse, "You will not will unless God wills" (*Qur'an* 76:30), Ibn 'Arabi sees the question as: Whose action is it? When one shoots an arrow, who really shoots? Who really hits the mark? His commentary on this paradox is related to predestination versus human choice.

We say, concerning the relation of choice, that God created for the servant a will through which he wills as a property of this relation. This newly arrived will derives from God's will. God says, "You will not will unless God wills." [76:30] Thereby He affirms will for Him and for us, and He makes our will dependent upon His will (Ibn 'Arabi cited in Chittick 1998, p. 59).

Here the mystic delights in paradox, a dance of opposites that cannot be separated. The question of "Who wills?" has implications in conscious experience: if one has surrendered entirely to God's Will, then one is essentially passive (in terms of self-will and control) even while being thoroughly active (in terms of behavior.) Thus, as *conjunctio oppositorum*, activity and passivity are one.

The ultimate *conjunctio oppositorum* is God, both Manifest and Unmanifest. For Ibn ‘Arabi the omnipresence of God is central. He perceives the Godhead as having five levels and infinite variety of manifestations in a vast Oneness of Being.

The first of these five planes of Being... is Reality in its first and primordial Absoluteness or the absolute Being itself. It is the Absolute *before* it begins to manifest itself, i.e., the Absolute in a state in which it does not yet show even the slightest foreboding of self-manifestation. The four remaining stages are the essential forms in which the Absolute “descends” from its absoluteness and manifests itself on levels that are to us more real and concrete. This self-manifesting activity of the Absolute is called by Ibn ‘Arabi *tajalli*, a word which literally means disclosing something hidden behind a veil (Izutsu 1983, p. 20).

The remaining levels of unveiling are the Absolute manifesting itself as:

1. God: the One of many Names (Allah, Yahweh, Brahman, etc.)
2. Lord: Divine Incarnation (e.g., Jesus)
3. Human: half-spiritual, half-animal beings
4. The sensible world: every aspect of the cosmos (animal, vegetable, and mineral)

Ibn ‘Arabi was thus a pantheistic monist. “[E]verything in Ibn ‘Arabi’s world-view, whether spiritual or material, invisible or visible, is *tajalli* [manifestation] of the Absolute except the Absolute in its absoluteness” (Izutsu 1983, p. 20). From the smallest to the largest element of the universe, all is a manifestation of the Divine, and to that Divine Source, all will ultimately return.

In Ibn ‘Arabi’s writings, the Active Imagination is the locus of unification, the matrix out of which the *conjunctio oppositorum* arises. Essentially God is unity, so is humanity. And humanity – good and evil alike – is part of the Godhead, the great Oneness of Being.

As we in the twenty-first century observe our global community in its struggles to unite, we find that we have much to learn from those wise mystics who understood unity at its deepest levels. Christian, Muslim, and Jew can still learn from one another. Psychology can

contribute by modeling respect and the capacity to listen and ponder in depth the worldview and spiritual perspectives of other cultures.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Iconography

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Since the earliest times of human evolution, we have communicated with each other by visual means as well as verbal. In semiotics, which is the study of signs and their meanings, the term icon refers to any kind of visual sign. Thus, in a religious context, iconography is the study of the spiritual or religious significance of visual signs or symbols. These can be concrete objects in three dimensions (statues, even buildings) or pictorial representations of symbols in two dimensions or even gestures by live actors used

in religious settings. Iconography is often seen as a subdiscipline of art history.

Religions differ with regard to the status of visual representations of the person of God or significant religious figures. In the Western monotheisms, there is a prohibition of the use of idols to represent the divine. In Christianity this has been relaxed somewhat with regard to portrayals of religious persons, especially in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican traditions. Statues of Jesus, Mary, and a wide variety of saints are found in most churches, cathedrals, or other buildings. In Judaism the use of personal images of religious figures is uncommon, though some illustrations of prophets or other personages are not prohibited. In Islam there is a strict prohibition of portrayals of God or the Prophet Muhammad. Islam has developed its own form of visual decoration using plant and animal motifs in tiles as decorative aspects to sacred buildings and widely uses calligraphy, especially in the stylized Kufic script of Arabic to visually present scriptural material from the Qur'an.

Hinduism has no qualms about representing the various forms of divinity in sculpture or painting. While Buddhism has less emphasis on the personhood of the divine or transcendent, there are numerous representations of the Buddha, various bodhisattvas, and, especially in Tibetan tradition, a whole panoply of demigods, demons, major religious figures, and founders of significant schools of Buddhism. The classical pagan religions of the ancient world were likewise quite comfortable in portraying divine or semidivine persons graphically. It is, however, an oversimplification to say that the pagans worshiped idols. They were quite aware that the statues of their deities were representations for persons or powers that transcended the physical manifestations. It is also true, however, that the deities could come to dwell within their statues and be physically present to the worshipers.

Especially when dealing with complex polytheistic pantheons, iconography is important to distinguish exactly which deity is being portrayed. Thus the basic human shape in male or female form was enhanced by certain clothing,

physical characteristics, objects held, and so on. In Egypt, many of the deities are therianthrope, that is they were portrayed as half human and half animal. For example, Thoth could be distinguished from Horus, as the former had the head of an ibis, whereas the latter had the head of a hawk. In both Hinduism and Buddhism, the human form could go beyond the literal form and have many arms. In each hand the deity could grasp a different implement and these represented various qualities of the deity or bodhisattva.

Likewise, among Christian saints, St. Sebastian is usually portrayed as pierced by numerous arrows, his means of martyrdom. St. Roche, the patron of the plague, is portrayed lifting his tunic and revealing the buboes on the inguinal part of his leg. St. Francis is often portrayed in the brown habit of the order he founded with birds or other animals. Blue has come to be associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her mantle usually takes that color.

Gesture is likewise a party of iconography. For Christians, making the sign of the cross is part of the Mass, or Eucharist, which is initiated by the priest and copied by the laity. The gesture of prayer, orans, is made with arms open at or above waist level, palms facing up. The gesture of blessing is made with two fingers of the hand. In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, various hand gestures, known as mudras, are performed in the act of worship or meditation. Indeed, all the bodily postures of yoga, the asanas, have a quasi-representational quality; the plow, the locust, and the thunderbolt are used both as mnemonics for the pose itself but embody aspects of the thing the pose represents.

Recently, the understanding of the origins of Paleolithic rock art has been understood in light of the neuropsychology of altered states of consciousness (ASC). The cross-cultural similarities in very early, largely geometric designs have been linked to shamanic visionary experiences (Lewis-Williams and Dowson 1988). Entoptic (behind the eye) phenomena are common to many ASCs, and while cultural significances may still vary, the possibility of an iconography of primitive spirituality and religion is enhanced.



Iconography catalogs and explains the meaning of all the graphic devices used to convey religious or spiritual significance. Whether it is in the form of personal representations of the deity, saints, or other religious figures, or whether it is in the form of symbols representing abstractions, or whether it is in the live use of gesture during worship, visual signs are a major part of most religious traditions.

Psychologically speaking, iconography is the playbook by which visual imagery of the divine and the unfolding human understanding of spiritual experience is encoded and recorded. We can use the playbook to unlock meaning in existing visual representations and to create new ones through modification and combination of visual elements. Thus, as our spiritual experiences continue vary, iconography provides sources of continuity and a fertile field for change.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Id

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## Introduction

The Id is the Latin translation of Sigmund Freud's "das es." A direct English translation of "das es" is "the it." This translation is used in the Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud. The id is the psychical agency in Freud's structural topography of the psyche which is unconscious, containing repressed innate instincts and primordial objects and adapted or psychically determined drives and objects. For Freud, the goal of psychoanalysis is to tame and transform the energy and objects of the id, moving them to the ego and superego in the service of civilization.

The id has no formal place in religious and spiritual literature. Freud acknowledged that his "it" was significantly influenced by the physician analyst Georg Groddeck, whose "it" concept is both compatible with and divergent from Freud's. Groddeck's "it" is "all" and "The Other" of human experience, lending itself to interpretations of the innate presence of the Divine or the godhead in human existence.

## Psychology

1923: Georg Groddeck published *The Book of the It*. Groddeck "it" is all, and the experience of ego "I" is illusion. Words like id-iom and id-iosyncratic suggest the authentic individuality of the personality is id derived (Bollas 1992). While comparisons have been drawn between Groddeck's "it" and the Tao and detachment, his influences are from Greek philosophy and German Romanticism (Durrell 1949).

1923: Sigmund Freud published *The Ego and the Id*, which contained the first mention of the id.

In his earlier writings, Freud laid out conceptual models of the workings of the mind in metatheory or metapsychology which are fictional representations of mental processes. The first topographical metapsychology has three psychical agencies: system unconscious, system preconscious, and system perception conscious. The second topography, the structural model, consists of the Id, the it; the Ego, the I; and the Superego, the over-I. The second topography was primarily laid out and elaborated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and *The Ego and the Id* (1923). Both topographies were efforts to describe and explain the movement of libido to occupy or cathect the psyche's agencies and developmental zones. Freud acknowledged Groddeck's influence in conceiving the second topography: "by following Groddeck in calling the other part of the mind into which this entity extends and which behaves as though it were Ucs, the 'id'." Freud called the id the "great reservoir of libido." The movement of libido between id, ego, and superego is the subject of Freud's Economic metatheory; the conflict between id, ego, and superego is the topic of the dynamic metatheory. The second topography was driven, in part, by Freud's Revision of the Theory of Instincts and the conflict between the sexual instincts and the ego instincts (LaPlanche and Pontalis 1973).

Freud said "where id was, ego shall be." He stated that the goal of psychoanalysis was "to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and to enlarge its organization, so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. If it a work of culture not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee" (1933).

Both Groddeck and Freud acknowledge their "it" concepts as influenced by Nietzsche's "it" of general causation. Groddeck embraced the "it" and minimized the primacy of the "I"; Freud's "it" was to be tamed in the service of the "I."

## Religion

1923: Martin Buber published "I and Thou." The concept of "it" as opposed to "thou" is central to that work. I and Thou seek to model

subject-object relations as well as man's relation with God. Buber seeks to transform God from an "it" object to be worshiped to a "you" with whom a subject had a relationship. Freud and Buber met and found much to admire and respect in each other, but their "its" are vastly different.

## Commentary

Bruno Bettelheim (1982) challenged the Latinization of Freud's id, ego, and superego metapsychology. The psyche itself is a Latin translation of "Die Seele," the soul. Bettelheim posits that Freud accepted these mistranslations for two primary reasons: his wish to have the infant field of psychoanalysis accepted as a scientific discipline and his well-documented atheism.

The three "its" of Buber, Freud, and Groddeck were born in the English-speaking public's consciousness in 1923. Only the it of Freud is the id. Existential psychoanalysis, as exemplified by, but not limited to R.D. Lang, finds place for some synthesis of the three "its" (Burston 2000). The "its" diverge and overlap in an effort to differentiate and facilitate a subject to subject relationship between self and self, self and other, humanity and the dehumanized, and man and god.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Dualism](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Instinct](#)
- ▶ [Libido](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)

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## Ignatius of Loyola

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Born of a noble family in the Basque region of Northern Spain in 1491, Inigo of Loyola was a great saint and mystic of the Church. His story is a rich study in the dynamics of *spiritual conversion* and psychological decision-making, i.e., how a young man in his late 1920s, a strong-willed soldier filled with zeal became a saint and mystic, deeply in love with God. His *Spiritual Exercises* document his process of grappling with life's major questions, i.e., to whom and what is one to commit, how to assess the goodness of one's choices, and how to live in accord with that which gives life and freedom? Inigo's spiritual journey brought him into profound contact with Jesus Christ. His discernment

of spirits and *Examen of Consciousness* provides tools for ongoing living in spiritual awareness.

## Conversion

Inigo was born the youngest of 12 children to an aristocratic family. His mother died shortly after his birth. He was likely destined for the clerical state but by age 14–15 it became clear that he was much more interested in romance and chivalry. He trained to be a knight in the service of the King of Spain. He was described as full of life, with a strong ego and strong sense of vanity. Sword and cloak symbolized his identity. At age 20, in the service of the Duke of Navarre, he led a largely outnumbered body of Spanish soldiers against a French invasion of Pamplona. He was a fierce fighter, but within 6 h, the battle was over and he suffered a shattered knee and a seriously injured other leg. Two weeks later the French carried him by litter back to his family castle of Loyola. His convalescence did not go well. Surgeons had to rebreak and set the broken knee. Even then one of the reset bones protruded, and Ignatius demanded that it be cut away. William Meissner notes "His willingness to undergo the torment of the surgery is a measure of the extent the ego-ideal dominated his life and behavior to that point" (Meissner 1991, p. 41).

Following the second surgery Ignatius was confined to bed rest. His only reading material was a book on the lives of the saints and a book on the life of Christ. After reading and reading, he would fantasize himself "outsainting the saints" at one moment and at another pursuing knightly deeds in the service of a noble woman. He began to notice a difference in his moods after daydreaming. The aftereffects led on the one hand to stillness, peace, and joy and on the other hand to turmoil and dissatisfaction. He began to recognize God as directly instructing him; when he considered following Jesus' way of life, he was excited, and the excitement persisted. When he considered returning to his previous life of courtly pursuits, an initial excitement quickly turned to emptiness. Ignatius felt himself being moved by two spirits, that of God in the former

and that of evil and Satan in the latter. Thence began his lifelong love affair of God revealed in Jesus Christ. He wanted to go to Jerusalem and experience the Gospel accounts firsthand; he left Loyola castle in 1522.

He travelled to the Benedictine monastery of Montserrat where he surrendered his knightly attire and took on pilgrim clothing. He confessed his sins in great detail and emerged with a stronger spiritual identity. He departed Montserrat with intentions of staying a few days in the remote hill town of Manresa on route to Barcelona and then on to Jerusalem. Ignatius in fact stayed in Manresa for 10 months, living in a hillside cave, fasting and begging, and praying for long hours. His health became poor and he suffered from severe depression. During this time, as back in the castle at Loyola, Ignatius continued to “conduct his experiments” in consciousness, attending to his mood shifts/“movement of the spirits” and recording notes about the Gospel passages influencing him. These were to become the basis for the *Spiritual Exercises*. At the end of the time at Manresa, along the river Cardoner, Ignatius had a profound religious experience, “the great illumination of his life.” He came to understand his faith in powerful new way. Ronald Modras notes “Manresa made him a changed man; at the Cardoner he was given a purpose” (Modras 2004, p.18).

Experience taught Ignatius that God was acting in his and other’s lives; that all people can have this direct, personal encounter with God in Jesus Christ; that all we have and are is gift from God; and that we are loved in spite of our limitations and sinfulness, and in realizing and appreciating these things, we are called to love and service.

Ignatius would go on to preach the Gospel, “help souls,” and engage in spiritual “conversations.” He realized the need to be educated; studied Latin, the Classics, philosophy, and theology; and was ordained. He continued to refine his notes on and give the *Spiritual Exercises*. A small group of fellow students and companions gathered around him in Paris to share the Exercises and Ignatius’ transformative vision. Together they were intent on becoming missionaries and putting themselves at the service of the Pope.

The group practiced “discernment of spirits” and together, in 1540, founded the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits. Ignatius, its first Superior General, would remain in Rome until his death at age 65 in 1556.

## The Spiritual Exercises

Ignatius developed a keen interest in the inner life and the interplay between desire and the feelings and thoughts that follow from entertaining various desires. As he recuperated in Loyola castle and on pilgrimage at Montserrat and Manresa, he became convinced that God was acting in his life. He read and reflected on Christ’s life and the lives of the saints and felt himself being drawn into an intimate relationship with God in Jesus. He continued to take notes on these experiences and refine the notes over the next 20 years. His notes became the basis for guiding others on a similar spiritual journey. The intention of the Exercises is to bring one’s spiritual journey into focus and to help clarify a sense of life purpose, ultimately grounding that life in the fullness intended for each of us by God. The Exercises provide a very concrete and adaptable method for spiritual guidance that was quite distinct from the more logical, ritualized forms of religious practice dominant in the sixteenth century. They provide a highly positive view of God’s action in the world, a world that continues to be created and which invites human participation.

The Exercises encourage a variety of prayer forms including imaginative reflection on the Gospels, lectio divina, breathing and full use of the senses, dialogue with inner wisdom/God, and especially paying attention to the movements of one’s heart. Prayer sessions begin with attention to the desires of one’s heart. The structure of the Exercises is “4 weeks.” These are not chronological weeks but rather periods of focused prayer seeking specific graces. Week 1 focuses on the “purgative way,” examining one’s faults (“doing one’s personal inventory” in other spiritual language) with the goal of choosing God over sin. Week 2 focuses on the “illuminative way” with the intention of better knowing, loving, and

serving God. Week 3 and 4 focus on the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ, the “unitive way,” identifying with his suffering and then with his joy, with the intention of strengthening one’s commitment to follow Christ.

The *Spiritual Exercises* are not a book to be read but rather notes for the director to use with a retreatant. They are given in a variety of forms. The more extended form is a 30-day retreat. Each Jesuit typically makes the “30-day retreat” twice in his life. They are also given in an 8-day retreat, often yearly for the retreatant; a third form is the more extended 9-month retreat entitled the “Nineteenth Annotation,” designed for lay people who wish to make the Exercises in the context of ongoing life. The Exercises are offered and tailored to individuals and to groups.

### Examen of Consciousness

Central to the practice of Ignatian spirituality is the Examen. Originally understood this was an examination of conscience, a twice-daily reflection on the shortcomings of one’s life. A contemporary understanding is an examination of consciousness and a tool for living a more spiritually aware life. Typically five steps are recommended (Hamm 1994): (1) pray for light, to understand how God’s Spirit is acting in our life; (2) review the day in thanksgiving for “gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with God”; (3) review the feelings that surface in the replay of the day, pay attention to any and all the feelings that arise; (4) choose one of those feelings, positive or negative, and pray from it; choose the feeling that most drew your attention; and (5) look toward tomorrow and turn your feelings and thoughts into a prayer. Close with the Lord’s Prayer. The Examen has been much examined and adapted. One adaptation by Linn, Linn, and Linn (1994) is particularly helpful in family and marital contexts. The authors encourage prayerful reflection on two questions, “for what moment today am I most grateful” and “for what moment am I least grateful,” and to then share reflections with each other.

### Discernment of Spirits

Ignatius was just into his 1930s when he was recuperating from the cannonball wounds at the Loyola castle. He needed to choose a life direction; was it a return to the knightly and chivalrous life or a move into the future following Christ? Which king or standard, Satan or Christ, was he to follow? During these and the following months, he developed the habit of attending to what was going on in his psyche, especially to the feelings that were evoked in response to his reading and reflection, in response to considering his desires. He became convinced that God was acting in his life; he tuned into God’s actions by listening to the movements of consolation and desolation in his heart. Ignatius developed his rules for discernment to help “people understand the typical patterns of compulsion and grace in their lives so that they are not unwitting victims of their own biases” (Dunne 1991). Discernment of spirits is a means by which persons determine their unique personal vocation; it is also a means by which persons deepen their faith and relationship with God. Discernment calls into question one’s image of God, taking of responsibility and freedom of choice. For Ignatius God was clearly loving and generous, available and self-giving; relationship with God called forth Discernment can be either a personal or communal process. Discernment requires humility, openness/detachment, love, and courage. In the *Spiritual Exercises* Ignatius detailed his “Rules for Discernment of Spirits.”

Ignatius of Loyola continues to have a powerful influence on contemporary spirituality 450 years after he lived. His *Spiritual Exercises*, rules for discernment of spirits, and use of the Examen continue to be valuable guides for many on the spiritual journey today.

### See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Conversion](#)
- ▶ [Discernment](#)
- ▶ [Jesuits](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)

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## Immanence

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Immanence is the experience of the divine as within and among us. The immanence of the divine within the natural world is often found in pantheism. Indeed many forms of pantheism equate the totality of the natural world with the divine. The term “divine” will be used because the doctrine of immanence is found in both theistic and nontheistic forms of spiritual world views. It is dialectically linked to the term transcendence and they constitute a primal contrast in the philosophy of religion. In the psychology of religion, the same dichotomy is conceptualized as the difference between self and other. In theistic spirituality the relationship between humans and God or the forms of the divine is a relationship between persons. Buber (1958) conceptualized all relationships as either I/It or I/Thou, either instrumental or fundamentally personal and mutual in its very constitution.

In this context, immanence refers to the experienced presence of the divine within the mundane world and transcendence as the experience of the ultimate “alterity” or the divine as other. In transcendence, we experience of the divine as more than us, something beyond our

capacities and knowledge. In immanence, we can experience the divine as a continuous background presence or as a specific epiphany, a concrete manifestation limited in space and time.

An alternative experience is the absence of the divine, a void. Emptiness can be nihilistic, a cold material world decayed into the completely random state of total entropy, which is the ultimate end of the universe in physics taken in context of materialistic monism as an ontological position. But emptiness can also be experienced as fruition and completeness. This is at the heart of Madhyamaka Buddhism, which is the experience of total emptiness as enlightenment, completely nondual being. Nagarjuna, the late Indian Buddhist sage, and a key figure in Tibetan Buddhism, is the clearest exponent of this position.

The presence of the divine within us can be seen as the source of all spiritual experience, a recognition of self by self. It was first seen in the myth of Narcissus, self-compounded by recognition of self. But the magic of spiritual experience is to shuttle the immanence and transcendence of the divine. This is the basis for not only the fear and trembling in awe in the presence of the mysterious and totally other; it is also the source of the experience of warmth and loving presence at the other end of the spectrum of spiritual experiences. Whether in joyous ecstasy or through the dark night of the soul, we shuttle between the experiences of immanence, transcendence, and emptiness.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Pantheism](#)

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## Immortality

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Human beings, as far as we know, are unique in the ability to understand that each one of us will die at some point. Although we are forever on this side of the “undiscovered country/from whose bourn no traveler returns” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act III, scene 1), this other type of time or place has been a concern of philosophy and religion from very close to the beginning of human history. Anthropologists consider the transition from living to nonliving to cause a basic cognitive dissonance so extreme that the nascent Neolithic consciousness as well as modern humans are incapable of making sense of it. In the ancient caves of Lascaux and Trois Freres, we see what may be indications of shamanic transformations – the precursors of conceptions of the soul and the beginning of the idea that there might be something more at the end of life than merely stoppage. Funereal remains have also been uncovered from this same period in the Neolithic age, suggesting a conception of something going on after the death of the body. This is developed a bit more in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, which contains a section in which the hero-king Gilgamesh searches for the herb of immortality. He is tricked by a snake, however, and misses his chance. In this very early (twenty-second century BCE) epic poem, we see an approach to the afterlife that has already gained some momentum.

Not far away in Egypt, there developed perhaps the most highly differentiated conception of multiple souls, their judgment and fate, and the proper internment of the body – at least for the Pharaoh, found in the ancient world. It seems that the common person did not have access to the soul nor of course to much in the way of a pyramid-like tomb in which to transition. This would have to wait for religions of the masses, such as Christianity in the West and Buddhism in the East. The Pharaoh’s body was preserved so

that he himself might have real existence in the Otherworld of the Celestial regions, and in various texts, we can trace a variety of beliefs regarding the manner in which he was supposed to reach the sky. Some early and late texts told of a ladder similar to that which Jacob saw in his dream – “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to Heaven and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it” (Genesis 28:12). In both of these examples, there is the sense that something beyond the body must exist – what we understand psychologically as the psyche – and that there is a veritable hierarchy of unconscious states which are only dimly perceived as instincts, urges, muses, ragings, and all the other demonic or divine possessions to which humans are susceptible.

Another version of immortality is fame, as defined by the story of Achilles. It was prophesied, according to his mother, that he could either have eternal fame and a short life or a long life, children, satisfaction, and perhaps just a few generations of being remembered by his children. Ovid wrote that although “his ashes would hardly fill an urn,” he fared better because “his fame now fills the world.” Although Ovid states clearly that “fame makes the man,” there is a later scene in which Odysseus finds him in Hades and tells him there is no man more blessed. To this Achilles responds, “By god I’d rather slave to another man on earth than rule down here over all the breathless dead” (Ovid, 12, pp. 615–619). This episode shows the social value (perhaps the ideology) of the concept of immortality and the ways in which it can form behavior.

Of particular interest just after the era defined by Gilgamesh are the mystery religions and their role in the development of the concept of the soul and its eternal or immortal destination. The Eleusinian Mysteries are believed to have begun about 1600 BCE. This Mycenaean age was marked by a new turmoil about the fate of the soul. Before this, in most Western traditions, the soul just went to the place of the shades or went with the ancestors, whereas suddenly a level of doubt about what happens after death ran through the Mediterranean world. The Mysteries were intended to *elevate man above the human sphere into the*

divine and to assure his redemption by making him a god and so conferring immortality upon him (Nilsson 1947, pp. 42–64). Of course the mysteries were only for the upper classes who could afford to travel to Eleusis and pay the high fees of the priests. In periods of cultural transition, there is often a deep rearrangement of core unconscious values. These values, as well as the symbols which can translate and contain them, are often communicated through metaphysical assumptions. When the anxiety about mortality and the soul reached the general public (exacerbated by the relativization of local ancestor cults by the religion of the Emperor), a new solution was needed of a more global scope. This is, psychologically, the explanation for the advent of the Christian symbol system.

A completely different form of literal, bodily immortality was posited and pursued almost contemporaneously by Taoist sages and medieval alchemists (Wilhelm 1962 or Dorn, etc.). For both the Taoists and the alchemists, it was thought that the correct bodily nutrients along with a state of mind that corresponds to the way (or Tao) would lead to endless life. In both cases the search was for the *elixir vitae* or potion of life. In fact, the elixir is a concept of great breadth. It is found in Arabic texts where it is referred to as the *elixir of immortality* or *Dancing Water* (in Persian, *Aab-e-Hayat*). The elixir is sometimes equated with the alchemist's philosopher's stone. As well, it can be found in the myths of Enoch, Thoth, and of course Hermes Trismegistus (Thrice-blessed Hermes). In all of the myths, the hero has drunk "the white drops" (liquid gold) and thus achieved immortality. We can even find a reference in the Qur'an (Sura 18; the Khidr), and it is mentioned as well in one of the Nag Hammadi texts. In all of these references, we can derive a psychological image of how a particular relationship with the physical world could lead to a very different experience of temporality.

We can see similar attempts in the efforts of the believers in cryogenic research and other futurist enterprises. Indeed some very simple organisms do live in a kind of immortal existence in that they don't die unless killed, and the

futurist community believes this may be possible in relatively near future. Of course millennial groups have always thought that the end time, or better, the end of time, was impending. If it were not, let's say it was predicted in a few 100 years, then it would have very little personal urgency. This urgency is an important psychological mechanism, since the degree of urgency is what motivates change, and change, as we have seen, is behind the image of rebirth.

The state of immortality, being the province of the gods and divine beings of many sorts, would seem to be desirable – especially if we factor in the "good" immortality conferred by the reward of going to Heaven. However, thinkers of many types have posited that human mortality is critical to development. Jorge Luis Borges explored the idea that life gets its meaning from death in the short story "The Immortal," and Ernst Becker, in *The Denial of Death*, explains that a lack of grappling with the fact of death leads to neuroses of different kinds (Becker 1997). Instead, a confrontation with limitation, especially the limitation represented by the barrier of death, leads to a grounded personality and frees the creative potential which can be thought of as a playful interweaving of elements within a given structure or set of limitations.

In most religious traditions (especially the monistic ones), the status of immortality is confined to heavenly beings and of course the soul. However, depending on whether one (or rather, one's soul) ends up in heaven or hell, immortality can be experienced as either bad or good. Indeed in these traditions, there is often an idea of some sort of eternal reward or punishment. It's not hard to see the anthropological view of this as a coercive social mechanism, but again that tells us little about why it comes about in this form. We can therefore translate the form of this very widespread belief as an intuitive experience of something *other* than normal consciousness, especially in terms of temporality. Wittgenstein may have been referring to this, saying in the *Tractatus*, "If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present" (Wittgenstein: 6.4311). Psychologically this

points to the a-temporal and synchronous aspect of the psyche which does not conform to the rules of efficient or necessary causation nor to the usual rules of the time-space continuum (see especially Jung 1973).

One of the most perplexing types of immortality is that defined by metempsychosis or the dynamic of the soul's reemergence in a new body life after life. In both the Hindu and Buddhist (and Jain) forms, life is seen as negative, the realm of *samsara* or illusion and suffering, and the goal is to end the round of rebirth through extinguishment (that being the literal translation of *nirvana* – a blowing out of the flame of life), or for the Hindu tradition, *moksa*, a liberation which ends individual existence. One of the most sustained and beautiful contemplation of the nature of time and being is found in the Japanese Buddhist monk Dogen Kigen's work *Uji*, written in the thirteenth century (found in lots of places, but a nice scholarly work is by Heine 2006, p. 56). Although it would be ridiculous to paraphrase it, he pushes the understanding of time and timelessness to a point and with a subtlety perhaps still not excelled. These religious conceptions of rebirth can be translated as the experiential understanding that after major change we are, in fact, a different person: there is a discontinuity with the past when a major threshold is passed. Liberation is not very far from a psychological concept to start with, especially given that a subject's reconnection with the numinous core of a given collective symbol set relativizes the personal ego and also frees the subject from ideology.

## See Also

- ▶ Eleusinian Mysteries
- ▶ Gnosticism
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav

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## Inanna/Ishtar

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The Sumerian goddess Inanna, whose Babylonian name was Ishtar, was probably the most important of Mesopotamian goddesses. The stories we have of her date to at least as early as the third millennium BCE. Uruk was her primary city. There she was "Lady of the Date Clusters," a title suggesting her role as fertility figure. It is clear, however, that she was more a goddess of sex, love, and war than a "great mother" nurturer. As "Mistress of the *me*," the *me* being the essential laws and offices of civilization – kingship, godship, sexual practices, marriage, and political power – Inanna was the equal of the great male deities of the Sumerian pantheon. In fact, her primary title was "Queen of Heaven."

Inanna's consort and lover was Dumuzi, the shepherd. Inanna, as the goddess of love and fertility, calls on Dumuzi in love songs central to the Mesopotamian ritual of the sacred marriage, words which, though more sexually explicit, remind us of the love poetry of the biblical *Song of Songs*. Inanna urges her lover to fill her with his love: "My vulva, the horn, the Boat of heaven, is full of eagerness like the young moon. My untilled land lies fallow."

The most famous myth about Inanna is that of her descent to the underworld ruled by her sister, Ereshkigal. This aspect of her story calls to mind the archetype of the descent so common in the hero myth. Like the myths of such figure as the

Greek Persephone, the Egyptian Isis and Osiris, and Jesus, it involves the great themes of sacrifice and resurrection and power gained from the perilous descent into the world of death. There is also in Inanna's descent an implicit agricultural element involving "planting" under the earth and ultimately productive decomposition.

The descent myths tell how as Queen of the Above, Inanna, longed to know the World of the Below of her sister Ereshkigal. Inanna knows life fully, but she knows nothing of infertility and death. Before leaving for the underworld, Inanna instructs her faithful helper Ninshubur to arrange official mourning for her and to approach the other great deities for help if she should fail to return. Leaving her lover Dumuzi as king, she clothes herself in the sacred *me*, which take the form of seven pieces of magnificent clothing and jewelry, and in this state of great pride, she knocks on the gates of her sister's domain demanding admittance. Neti, the guardian of the gates, informs the naked Ereshkigal of the imposing and prideful visitor decked in the seven *me*. Furious at the intrusion, Ereshkigal allows Inanna through the seven locked gates of her realm but only if she gives up one of the seven objects (the *me* as ornaments and clothing) at each gate. Inanna agrees and, as a result, when she arrives at her sister's throne, she is as naked as her host and is thus effectively stripped of her great earthly powers. Such powers are, of course, useless in death. When Inanna attempts to usurp her sister's throne, she is condemned to death by the underworld judging gods, the Anunnaki. Inanna in fact dies and is hung up on a wall like a piece of meat.

Back in Uruk, the "real" world, 3 days and nights have passed, and Ninshubur follows her mistress's orders, declaring a period of deep mourning and asking the gods Enlil and Nannu for help. Both deities refuse, blaming Inanna for arrogance of her decision to attempt sovereignty over the underworld. Only Enki, the wise shamanic god, who from his home in the underground waters of the *abzu* has his ear to the underworld, agrees to help. Enki understands how negatively Inanna's absence is affecting the world, depriving it, in fact, of its source of fertility. From the mud

under his fingernails, Enki creates two creatures without gender, creatures which will not offend the infertile underworld, where Ereshkigal is howling in pain as she gives negative birth, perhaps to the stillborn of the earth. Enki gives the Plant of Life and the Water of Life to the two sexless creatures and instructs them to comfort Ereshkigal. When Ereshkigal offers the creatures gifts for having brought her relief from her suffering, they demand the body of Inanna, as instructed beforehand by the clever Enki. They revive the body with the Plant and Water of Life. But the Anunnaki demand a substitute for the revived Inanna. The goddess departs from her sister's land, gathering up her clothing – her old *me* and power. Entering her own world after 3 days in death, she is once more the glorious Queen of Heaven. But she is accompanied by demons whose job is to ensure the payment of the sacrificial substitute. When the great goddess and her underworld demons arrive at Uruk, a cheerful, well-dressed Dumuzi is acting as king, apparently having forgotten his once-beloved wife. Inanna, enraged by his attitude, offers him to the demons. Terrified, Dumuzi begs for help from the gods, but even when he is turned by the sun god into a snake, he cannot escape. Dumuzi is taken away, but his sister Gestinanna arranges to spend 6 months of the year in the underworld so that he can spend those months back in the world above. This detail reminds us of the arrangements made for the ravished Persephone in the Greek myth. The 3 days in the world of death followed by resurrection remind us of a similar pattern in the story of Jesus.

The psychological significance of the Inanna descent myth is suggested by Samuel Noah Kramer. Inanna lives in the world of consciousness, the world Above, but she must retain contact with the dark world of the unconscious below: "Inanna must not forget her neglected, abandoned older 'sister' – that part of herself that is Ereshkigal" (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983, p. 161). In the same way, Kramer suggests, Dumuzi, the sacrificial scapegoat, must experience the dark world of Inanna's other side, Ereshkigal, in order to become a "truly 'great' king" (Wolkstein and Kramer, 1983, p. 163).

A dominant approach to the psychology of Inanna's descent has focused on the goddess as a representation of the psychic journey of women. In this paradigm the Inanna-Ereshkigal dichotomy represents the divided feminine and the struggle of women to achieve wholeness in a repressive male-dominated world. By descending to Ereshkigal, the woman experiences her repressed side and returns to the conscious world above with some of her dark sister's power. Others, while not disagreeing with this analysis, stress the fact that most heroes, male and female, must confront the "dark side" in order to achieve the goal of wholeness. In this sense, Ereshkigal is the unconscious hidden and repressed self which needs to be integrated with the conscious self which is Inanna. In descending into the dark world of the unconscious, Inanna must surrender the elements of her authority and personal power, her accepted assumptions about herself. This denuding represents what for anyone is the dangerous and difficult psychological process of self-examination and psychological growth, the willingness to die to the old life to be born into the new. After fully experiencing the world of what Jung would call her Shadow, Inanna returns to consciousness with some of her sister's knowledge. In this approach Inanna stands for all of us who explore the unconscious in order to integrate it with consciousness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Incarnation

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Literally, the act of being "made flesh"; the earliest and most common usage is in reference to the Christian doctrine about the divine nature of Jesus.

### Historical Overview

Belief that the divine manifests in human form is as old and diverse as religion itself. Cave art from the late Paleolithic Age depicts masked figures thought to represent the divine animal spirit; sacred heavenly visitors are portrayed in the art of premodern societies. Many Native American religions teach that souls of the dead return to earth in human or animal form and also that the divine incarnates itself from time to time. Some Australian indigenous peoples teach that the human has two souls: one mortal and the other immortal and believed to be a particle of the totemic ancestral beginnings.

Ancient Greek Gnostics believed that the human being is a duality of material body and immortal soul. The souls turned away from contemplation of the One and fell from the divine realm to be incarnated and imprisoned in the body. These ideas combined with the mythologies of Olympus which told of the gods' interaction with humanity, very often taking on human or quasi-human form. Pythagoras, Empedocles,

and Plato, for example, taught that the immortal soul sinned, fell from an original blissful state, and suffered repeated incarnations until achieving spiritual restoration to bliss. Pythagoras and Plato were themselves thought to have been gods made incarnate.

Several centuries before the Common Era, the ancient Persians believed that Mithra, the God of light, would incarnate at the end of history. Mithra would be a universal king and savior, God born of a woman. Human kings were believed to be the divine Horus in ancient Egypt. In China it was taught that the emperor, as Son of Heaven, was the representative of Heaven on earth. Since the inception of Buddhism in China, emperors have from time to time been believed to be incarnations of the Buddha, and for the ancient Japanese, the emperor was *akitsumi kami*, god manifested in human form (Waida 1987).

Among present-day religions, in the avatar of Hinduism, we find what may well be the oldest clearly developed exposition of divine incarnation. In its earliest form, divine descent in Hindu thought was described as *pradūrbhāva*, manifestation. By the fourth century, before the Common Era, the term *avatar*, from the words meaning “to cross over” and “down,” had come into usage, primarily in relation to the earthly presence of the preserver god Vishnu (Parrinder 1982). In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, says, “To protect men of virtue and destroy men who do evil, to set the standard of sacred duty, I appear in age after age” (*Bhagavad Gita* 1986, 4, pp. 6–8).

In some forms of Buddhism, emphasis has shifted away from the historical Buddha to the Eternal Buddha, a transcendent being said to embody universal truth. The Mahayana Buddhist doctrine of *Trikāya*, the “three bodies,” teaches that the Buddha is known as *dharmakaya*, True Body (the essential Buddha who is ultimate reality independent of all and yet the “thatness” of all), *nirmanakaya* (Body of Transformation, that by which the earthly historical Buddha was enabled to work the good), and *sambogakaya* (the Body of Bliss or celestial Buddhas and bodhisattvas, those who have attained

enlightenment but choose to return to earth to help others reach *nirvana*) (Gard 1963). In Japanese Buddhism, the doctrine is further developed into a cosmic theism wherein creation is believed to be the embodiment of the Buddha Mahavairocana. This cosmic figure is both immanent, through embodiment of himself in the six constitutive elements of the universe – earth, water, fire, wind, space, and mind – and transcendent, absolute, eternal (Waida 1987).

It is widely held that Judaism is adamantly non-incarnational and yet according to some mainstream Jewish scholarship, the texts of normative Judaism present God in terms of incarnation and that in fact, incarnation as a concept is integral to Hebrew Scripture (Neusner 1988; Wyschograd 1996). Even in Islam, which is a faith based firmly in insistence on the absolute unity of God, there are sects that teach something very like incarnation. Although for the majority of Muslims the idea of incarnation is the greatest form of sin, some Shi’a believe the Imam was the actual embodiment of the divine light. For the Druze of Lebanon, for example, the Imam has been said to be the literal incarnation of God on earth (Martin 1982; Parrinder 1982; Waida 1987).

## Psychological Interpretations

Given the nature of the claim, the idea of divine incarnation is not subject to experimental or laboratory examination. It can be addressed, however, from the psychoanalytic point of view. Strictly Freudian approaches tend toward explanatory claims, whereas other depth psychological approaches attempt to address the question from a functional point of view.

For Freud, religion and all its expressions are infantile regressive defenses. He believed that Christianity is an especially clear manifestation of dynamics at work in the Oedipal complex. The longing to eliminate the father and take possession of the mother is, in a sense, the original sin which gives rise to the guilt from which we must be redeemed. Christ, as both Son of God and God Incarnate, atones for us through his own death. Freud’s focus in his writings on Christianity was



primarily on the meaning of the Eucharist (as symbolic and defensive reenactment of the Oedipal wish to both eliminate and identify with the father), but it can be inferred that the idea of incarnation is an expression of the infantile wish to become the father.

Early in his career, Carl Jung accepted Freud's stance that religion expresses infantile wishes, but as his own understanding of the self evolved, he came to see religion in a more positive light. Writing about the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, Jung (1948) suggests that this symbol is an expression of individual psychological maturation. The Father symbolizes the original state of unreflective acceptance similar to the way we function in childhood. The Father gives birth to the Son, which correlates to growth in discrimination and differentiation from parents, and the Spirit corresponds to a new level of consciousness involving the mature incorporation of the unconscious and discriminatory aspects. In one of his most controversial works, *Answer to Job*, Jung expands this thesis and interprets the idea of Jesus as God incarnate as a manifestation of evolution of the God-image. Cautioning that "the image [of God] and the statement [about God] are psychic processes which are different from their transcendental object; they do not posit it, they merely point to it," Jung argued there that the book of Job tells the story of God coming to consciousness through encounter with Job (1976, p. 556). In the story, God is capricious and jealous, allowing Satan to torment Job without justification. Job remains steadfast in spite of his suffering, and in the end God, not Job, is changed. Remembering that for Jung religious ideas are symbolic expression of aspects of the human psyche, we see that the incarnation of God in the human Jesus is the necessary next step in evolution of the Western God-image. God must become human in order to atone for the wrongs committed against humanity; expressed in psychological terms, the appearance of the symbol of God incarnate reveals the maturation of Western humanity's internalized image of God. The fact that we find incarnation in many religions demonstrates, for Jung, the universality of the God-image archetype.

In object relations and self psychologies, religion is a potentially positive expression of human psychic experience. It can promote wholeness through enhanced object relations and/or provide a bridge between inner psychic and outer social experience. Although the idea of divine incarnation tends not to be directly addressed by psychoanalysts in these schools of thought, the ubiquitous nature of the idea lends support to the thesis that narcissism is basic to human psychological development. For self psychologies, narcissistic libido is a basic energy that functions in the cathexis of objects felt to be a part of ones' self (selfobjects). The challenge of psychological maturation involves redirection and integration of narcissistic cathexes. The God-image, one of the most important selfobjects, is derived from early parent/caregiver relations and changes over time (Rizzuto 1979). Conceptions of divine incarnation, then, may be said to be manifestations of the tension between narcissism and internal object relations.

## Theology and Psychology

Some theologians with expertise in psychology have made interesting use of these theories to develop a range of new understandings of the doctrine that incorporate explanatory and functional aspects of interpretation. C. Burns (2001) interprets incarnation in terms of the human capacity for intersubjectivity made possible by the innate processes of empathy, sympathy, attunement, and entrainment. In a more classic psychoanalytic mode, J. Moltmann (1973) interprets the powerlessness of the crucified God incarnate as a counter to the Oedipal father imagery of the Hebrew Bible. The image of God crucified opens us to the depths of our own humanity and prepares us to accept the moral responsibility that accompanies freedom of the will. H. Heimbrock (1977) expands on Moltmann's thesis to include the claim that the death of God incarnate on the cross signifies renunciation of the grandiose self which leads to transformation of narcissistic fantasies.

## See Also

- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Avatar
- ▶ Christ
- ▶ Christ as Symbol of the Self
- ▶ God
- ▶ God Image

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## Indigenous Religions

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Indigenous religions are the ancestral religions of peoples who are native to particular landscapes. Their religions help them achieve the goal of living successfully in those places. Thus, indigenous religions vary, just as the places their practitioners inhabit vary. Yet, the many religions practiced by indigenous peoples share common themes. These themes include emphases upon relationship and place. The practicing psychologist or scholar of psychology and religion should pay close attention to manifestations and implications of these themes, as they are the basis of behavior and identity among indigenous peoples.

While a strong thread of tradition runs through most indigenous religions, colonized, often-relocated peoples have had to adapt, borrow, or even establish new religious practices to live in new cultural and/or geographic environments. When the “newness” of these religions is particularly evident, we refer to them as “indigenized” religions. These religions also often fall into well-known categories such as “new religious movements” and “pan-cultural movements.”

Indigenous peoples who continue to practice contemporary versions of their ancestral religions

typically view their landscapes as animate. The animate aspects of their environments include things that nonindigenous people do not consider alive. Moreover, all of these living things possess a potential for personhood. That is, they can interact with and lend aid to humans, if treated respectfully and generously. Therefore, an ethic of reciprocity is found across indigenous cultures (Harvey 2005; Lokensgard 2010b). This ethic is expressed in the social protocols and formal rituals performed by indigenous peoples. Thus, indigenous religions help human practitioners establish and maintain positive relations with other beings, including creator figures, who can aid humans in their quests for successful lives.

Of course, the other-than-human persons inhabiting the environments of indigenous peoples can reciprocate or even initiate poor treatment. Consequently, indigenous peoples must be mindful of their actions at all times. They must follow the ethic of reciprocity in every area of existence. Therefore, religious phenomena are not so easily distinguished in indigenous worlds from political phenomena, economic phenomena, and so on.

Scholars of the past often characterized indigenous religions as less evolved than others by labeling them “primitive” (Geertz 2004, pp. 46–52). One of the reasons they did so is that they misunderstood indigenous ontologies. When we take indigenous ontologies or classifications of being and beings seriously, we understand that indigenous peoples truly understand the worlds around them as alive and personal; their worlds are not just metaphorically alive. This understanding often carries to their language, imagery, and material culture as well. They often consider words, pictures, and ceremonial items to embody other-than-human beings. These things are *not* simply symbolic of other beings.

Past scholars also viewed indigenous religions as primitive because indigenous peoples emphasize oral communication, rather than written. Certainly, some indigenous peoples possessed highly developed forms of pictorial communication before the introduction of abstract writing by colonizers. Yet, to this day, orality remains important. This is not only because there is

vitality to language but also because language facilitates relationships between persons. Thus, it is used very, very carefully by indigenous peoples. Indeed, its misuse can offend others and jeopardize the relationships upon which indigenous peoples depend to live successful lives. Language, then, is thought of in much more complex ways that earlier scholars often understood. Indeed, among indigenous peoples, spoken language and other means of communication have the sort of value that only poets and other artists and intellectuals ascribe to them in nonindigenous societies.

By ignoring the inherent value of religious material culture, the physical world, and the truly effective power of language among indigenous peoples, past scholars often reduced the importance of indigenous religions to the psychological (Evans-Pritchard 1989, pp. 20–47). It is imperative, now, that professionals in the mental health field and scholars of psychology and religion, who work with indigenous peoples or even indigenized peoples, recognize that the external, physical, often personal world is of enormous importance to them as well. The lives of indigenous and many indigenized peoples are governed by the need to maintain proper relationships (Gonzalez 2010; Lokensgard 2010a). This simple fact means that psychologists and scholars must consider those things, beings, etc., to which indigenous peoples relate.

Just as personhood is determined by one’s interactions and relationships with others, so is identity among indigenous peoples. For example, the Blackfoot Peoples of the northwest plains in the USA and Canada refer to themselves as the *Niitsitapiiksi* or “Real Persons.” This name indicates that there is a behavioral dimension to their identity; they are the people who know how to interact with the beings around them *as* persons. This last point is key, as some conservative Blackfoot traditionalists argue that one can only be a “Real Person,” if she or he remains in Blackfoot territory. In fact, Blackfoot warriors of the nineteenth century would consciously put aside their personhood and become “mad wolves,” when they left their lands to raid (Lokensgard 2010a, pp. 78–82).

The Iroquois Peoples of the eastern USA and Canada refer to themselves as the *Haudenosaunee* or the “People of the Longhouse.” Again, ontological status is indicated by this name, and the importance of place is explicit. The names of indigenous peoples as diverse as the *Ainu* of Japan and Russia, the *Yolgnu* of Australia, the *Bosotho* of southern Africa, and the *Yupit* of Alaska all emphasize personhood and, by extension, the behaviors that define personhood for these peoples. Names of other indigenous peoples simply emphasize place. Nevertheless, in all cases, a concern for relationship, expressed interpersonally or geographically, is implicit. This illustrates that identity, for most indigenous peoples, is based upon the notion of relationship.

As stated earlier, the social protocols and formal rituals of indigenous religions, though they manifest differently across cultures, help indigenous peoples maintain the relationships that are so important to them. The protocols and rituals always involve an expression of generosity, respect, or material gift giving. Sometimes all these things are expressed through bodily sacrifice. Such actions demonstrate that the practitioners of these religions embrace the ethic of reciprocity and that they are worthy of whatever help they may need from the other-than-human persons or the creator. These actions are also undertaken to give thanks for help already received. If one takes the necessity of reciprocal behavior seriously, after all, then one lives a life marked by continual giving, receiving, and offering thanks.

Today, almost all indigenous peoples have been introduced to foreign religions, such as Christianity, through the process of colonialism. As a result, many contemporary indigenous peoples practice religions that were unknown to or even resisted by their ancestors. When embraced fully, the foreign religions represent a great departure from the ancestral religions, since the former are not place-based. Their efficacy is supposed to be universal, as they focus almost exclusively upon a figure who created all peoples. Moreover, these colonial religions, particularly certain forms of Protestant Christianity, place

less emphasis on the consequences of one’s actions upon the earthly, immediate relationships that help define one’s life. Most nonindigenous people do not see their worlds as filled with life, let alone with other-than-human persons. So, for them, there are fewer relationships available. In their religious lives, they emphasize the relationship they have with their creator. Even this relationship is sometimes very abstract, since the creator is often viewed as transcendent.

Before continuing, it must be noted that many people, who are not of indigenous ancestry, find indigenous religions attractive. This is a new type of “primitivism,” to be distinguished from the evolutionary primitivism of earlier scholars, discussed above. The new primitivism valorizes indigenous religions, but it is still a damaging phenomenon. Primitivists have appropriated indigenous ceremonial materials, imagery, and rituals. Not understanding the true importance of place and relationship in indigenous worldviews, they have misinterpreted these things and used them in social and geographic contexts in which they were never meant to be used. Moreover, some of the more enterprising primitivists have commoditized indigenous cultures, charging money for the ideas and items they have appropriated. One can easily see how such actions are offensive to indigenous peoples and even damaging to the relationships they maintain.

From a psychological perspective, however, the new appreciation of indigenous cultures is understandable. Many mainstream Americans, Europeans, and others are unhappy with the state of the world and blame technology, in its many forms, for the world’s ills. They contend that technology limits our relations with other people and with the land, it damages the “natural” world, and so on. By embracing what they consider as the simpler, healthier, more community-oriented lives of indigenous peoples, they are protesting technological “progress.” Ironically, the modern primitivists see indigenous peoples as existing at the other end of an evolutionary continuum, just as scholars of the past did (Geertz 2004). In reality, of course, most contemporary indigenous people embrace technology as

strongly as anyone else does, and they suffer the negative effects of certain technologies as well.

Finally, there are those contemporary people of indigenous backgrounds who seek to live the spiritual views of their displaced ancestors. Many such peoples' concurrent beliefs include elements of both "indigenized" religions and Christianity. Notable among these religions are those collectively referred to as African diaspora religions. Primarily oral traditions, these religions involve a system of African spirituality that spread throughout the Americas as individuals from many distinct groups were forcibly brought to places such as Brazil, Cuba, Hispaniola, Trinidad, and the southern United States. In order to live successfully, which involved deriving meaning from their condition of slavery and surviving, slaves reimagined their African homeland in terms of the new geography. Exchanges among individuals with different tribal practices and contact with local indigenous practices and European beliefs, as well as geographical adaptations that substituted the new fauna (such as the Cuban *hutia* for the African *aguti*) and flora for that found in the African homeland, led to the indigenization of these African beliefs and practices.

These practices evolved with the slaves' descendents, and contacts and adaptations had a specific locus relative to the landscape in which they took place, but all maintained a congruent African spiritual orientation to reality that remains evident today. This spirituality is one where a primal force holds the cosmos in balance and animates all things; a supreme but aloof being is above a pantheon of semi-divinities; semi-divinities interact with humans; ancestor veneration is coequal with the semi-divinities; animal sacrifice, herbal preparations, and foods are utilized for divine protection, to elicit a boon, or to appease a semi-divinity or an ancestor; rites of passage are emphasized; and consecrated drums are used to invite spirits and divinities to possess followers (Gonzalez 2010).

In African-derived religions, just as in traditional indigenous religions, religious practices are not compartmentalized from other practices, nor is the "spiritual" readily distinguished from the material world. An instance of this

non-compartmentalization is the *Yorùbá-Lukumí* oracular tradition, where all aspects of a person's life are important and where the material can cause a spiritual imbalance and vice versa. Additionally, because of their animistic base, African-derived religions do not proscribe belief or practice in other spiritualities. The ancestors must be appeased, as they can offer guidance, but they can also cause a spiritual imbalance, as is the case in Cuban *Yorùbá-Lukumí*. Spirits can also, for better or worse, become attached to an individual. Or spirits can inhabit an artifact that takes on personhood, as with the *gnanga* caldron, which is a receptacle for a deceased spirit and *Bantu nkisi*, in the Cuban *Palo Mayombe*. Often we see a pantheon of semi-divinities, or divine spirits, who must be cared for and demand action, such as the *orishas* in *Yorùbá Lukumí*, *orixás* in Brazilian *Candomblé*, and the *loas* of Haitian *Vodoun*. These semi-divinities, who are often other-than-human persons associated with "nature" or tribal/cultural heroes, can also possess the practitioner and offer guidance or demand an offering or that some action be taken.

Besides New World religious cross-fertilization among African tribal peoples, one can detect Christian, indigenous, Spiritist, and even Muslim elements. For example, Cuban *Lukumí*, and Brazilian *Candomblé* and *Ubanda* adapted the structure of Kardecian Spiritism as another way of communicating with the dead, spirit guides, and as a structure to supplant *egungun* (death) rites lost with the Middle Passage. Ethnobotany, which can have both African and New World indigenous roots, is employed for both spiritual and physical healing, and as element to keeping the semi-divinities alive and happy, and is an important aspect of African and Diaspora spirituality. But spirits can be indigenous and non-African as in the case of the *caboclos* of Brazilian *Candomblé*, who possess practitioners, or spirits can become attached as in Cuban *Lukumí*. Here, then, one can see how indigenized religions might also be categorized as "pan-cultural," that is, they often draw from a variety of cultures. Traditional indigenous religions, on the other hand, usually remain unique to the people who practice them.

Practitioners of traditional indigenous religions and newly indigenized religions alike, who are in need of medical or other special help, often rely first upon their own rituals and religious specialists, before approaching nonindigenous professionals. This may be an important point for practicing psychologists to remember. They should also remember that indigenous peoples, including those who come from displaced communities, often carry with them the legacy of colonialism. Even among the most traditional or dedicated of such individuals – those who continue to rely upon their ancestral traditions or even upon an indigenized version of those traditions – the impact of having been branded “primitive” or essentially less-evolved than members of the colonizing society can be tremendous. Of course, there are those many indigenous peoples who no longer practice *any* version of their traditions, precisely because those traditions were denigrated by outsiders. These people, who can no longer base their identities upon maintaining relationships with all the inhabitants of their ancestral environments, have to seek new identities. The practicing psychologist working with these people will have to deal with this fact. Likewise, the scholar of psychology and religion should pay close attention to the extent to which the people with whom she or he is working engage in their ancestor’s social protocols and rituals. If the scholar finds that they do so to a large extent, then the scholar should open his or her mind to the fact that different ontologies are at work in indigenous and indigenized religions. Failure to do so will lead the scholars to overlook the importance of the external, physical, and very personal environments in which indigenous religions are practiced. Such failure will also prevent scholars from understanding the nature of identity among indigenous peoples, and the role that relationships play in those identities.

### See Also

- ▶ [African Diaspora Religions](#)
- ▶ [African Traditional Religion](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings](#)

- ▶ [Hawaiian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Hero with an African Face](#)
- ▶ [María Lionza](#)
- ▶ [Native North American Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Spiritism](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Yoruban Religion in Cuba](#)

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### Individuation

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### Jung’s Definition of Individuation

C. G. Jung defined individuation, the therapeutic goal of analytical psychology belonging to the second half of life, as the process by which a person becomes a psychological individual, a separate indivisible unity or whole, recognizing



his innermost uniqueness, and he identified this process with becoming one's own *self* or *self-realization*, which he distinguished from "ego-centeredness" and individualism. The self, the totality of personality and archetype of order, is superordinate to the ego, embracing consciousness and the unconscious; as the center and circumference of the whole psyche, the self is our life's goal, the most complete expression of individuality (Jung 1916/1928, 1939a, 1944, 1947/1954, 1963). The aim of individuation, equated with the extension of consciousness and the development of personality, is to divest the self of its false wrappings of the persona, the mask the personality uses to confront the world, and the suggestive power of numinous unconscious contents. While individuation appears to be opposed to collective standards, it is not antagonistic to them, but only differently oriented and never isolated from collective relationships and society. Nevertheless, the stunting of individuation by the individual's adherence to social norms is injurious to his vitality and disastrous for his moral development (Jung 1921, 1916/1928).

### **The Spiritual Nature of the Individuation Process**

In his later writings, Jung claimed that individuation is as much a spiritual as a psychological process, uniting instinctual with religious experience. Affirming individuation to be the life in God, insisting that man is not whole without God, and identifying numinous symbols of the self with those of the deity, he conjoined psychological with spiritual development, frequently identifying the former with latter. By sacralizing psychology, as well as psychologizing religion, Jung's writings on individuation, celebrating the union of man and God and matter and spirit within human consciousness, anticipated a widespread contemporary movement away from traditional religion towards detraditionalized and privatized, New Age forms of spirituality recently examined by sociologists and historians of religion (Jung 1951, 1951–1961, 1952/1954, 1956–1957,

1963, Heelas 1996; Hanegraaff 1998; Tacey 2001, 2004; Forman 2004; Main 2004).

Individuation, closely associated by Jung with the transcendent function, is the "teleological" or "synthetic" healing process, underlying all psychic activity, of balancing, mediating, or uniting conflicting psychic opposites, which overcomes psychological disequilibrium and initiates the experience of "wholeness" of the personality. Distinguishing between a consciously realized individuation process and a natural one that runs its course unconsciously, Jung insisted that the former requires the difficult integration of projected, numinous, archetypal, unconscious contents – for example, the shadow, the anima/animus, the wise old man, and the self – into consciousness. Through this union of the opposites of consciousness and the unconscious, frequently triggered by Jung's dissociative technique of active imagination, the clarity of consciousness is intensified, a unity of being is realized and recognized as objective, the individual is freed from emotional attachments to the outer world, and the individuated ego is enriched by the understanding that it is not that something different is seen, but that one sees differently (Jung 1931/1962, 1939b, 1952/1954, 1963). The individuated ego senses itself as the object of an unknown and superordinate subject, the self, the God within us, which, while strange, is also so near to us, wholly ourselves while still an unknowable essence transcending our powers of comprehension. The function of the transcendental postulate of the self, which Jung acknowledges does not allow of scientific proof, is to point to this experience of the incarnation of God in human consciousness, encountered so frequently in his empirical research (Jung 1916/1928, 1939b, 1963).

### **Synchronicity, *Unus Mundus*, and the Mandala**

However, one should not conclude, as many of his critics have, that individuation was understood by Jung to be a wholly intrapsychic experience divorced from the world and human relationships. His metapsychological concept of individuation

was gradually broadened and enriched by his theory of synchronicity, identifying experiences of meaningful, numinous, archetypal, acausal connections or correspondences between inner psychic and outer physical events. These experiences confirmed, for Jung, that individuation does not shut one out from the world, but gathers the world to oneself. However confused Jung's theory was, it succeeded in drawing attention to a baffling reciprocity between human consciousness and the outer world, a zone of experience where physical events appear, mysteriously, to collaborate with and support the individuation process (Jung 1947/1954, 1952; Aziz 1990; Mansfield 1995; Main 2004). Jung's theory of synchronicity led him, in turn, to his concept of the *unus mundus* (unitary world), which, drawing heavily on alchemical sources, affirmed that man as microcosm is of the same essence as, or indistinguishable from, the universe and identified his own midpoint with its center. While his concept of *unus mundus* was inconsistent with his professed metaphysical agnosticism, it enabled him to distinguish three phases of the individuation process: (1) the wholly intrapsychic process of withdrawing projections of unconscious contents from the material world, thereby separating consciousness from it; (2) the reunification of transformed consciousness with the material world, as in synchronicity, and with the body; and (3) the experience of unification of the whole psyche, the microcosm, with the macrocosm, during which time and space are transcended. Jung identified this third phase with the alchemical image of Mercurius as a conjunction of opposites, which he believed anticipated the interconnectedness and ordered unity of the multiplicity of contents of the collective unconscious (Jung 1930–1934, 1941/1954, 1942, 1955–1956, 1958, 1963; von Franz 1975).

Jung also argued that the ultimate unity of the archetypes of the collective unconscious as well as of the multiplicity of the phenomenal world, equated by him with his concept of the *unus mundus*, is expressed with particular clarity by the symbol of the mandala. The mandala, an instrument of contemplation frequently used by Eastern and Western religious traditions to

provide spiritual instruction, is a magic circle, square, flower, cross, or wheel, divided into four or its multiples, which emphasizes a central point of orientation and an ordered unity of its many parts. While refusing to identify the individuation process with the soteriological perspectives and goals associated with these religious symbols, he recognized them to be numinous, archetypal images signifying the wholeness of the self, the microcosmic nature of the psyche, and the divinity incarnate in man. As early as 1916, Jung began to produce his own mandalas and to understand them as cryptograms of the development of the self and the psychic process of centering taking place within him. This practice, which he encouraged his analysands to emulate, led him to the conviction that the mandala expresses the path to the center of psychic totality, the goal of individuation, realized through the circumambulation of the self. Moreover, Jung interpreted the frequent appearance of mandalas in the modern clinical setting, in his analysands' paintings and drawings as well as their dreams and visions, as either psychic images compensating for conscious confusion and disorientation or as instruments of contemplation facilitating the transformation of such psychic chaos into order (Jung 1931/1962, 1934/1950, 1950, 1955–1956, 1958, 1963).

### **The Conjunction of Opposites and the Unknowable Nature of the Self**

Acknowledging the perils of the individuation process, psychosis on the one hand, and spiritual inflation of the ego by numinous unconscious contents, particularly the self, on the other, Jung insisted that the individuation process is the product of a conjunction of two sharply opposed orientations. On the one hand, there is a tremendous experience of expansion, of an opening to the transcendental (an experience which the alchemist Gerhard Dorn described as the opening of a window on eternity), and on the other, an experience of the concentration of one's being, an emphasis on the value of the uniqueness and particularity of the personality requiring

considerable ego strength. There is at the same time an experience of a boundless enlargement and of the narrowest of limitations in the ego. Only consciousness of our narrow confinement in the self forms the link to the limitlessness of the unconscious. The individuated person experiences himself concurrently as both limited and eternal. However, he is never more than his own finite ego before the deity who dwells within him (Jung 1952/1954, 1955–1956, 1963; von Franz 1975; Aziz 1990).

Jung also insisted that the individuation process can never be fully realized in this lifetime. He argued that there is little hope of our ever being able to reach even approximate consciousness of the self, since however much we may make conscious, there will always exist an indeterminate and indeterminable amount of unconscious material which belongs to the totality of the self (Jung 1906–1950, 1916/1928, 1952/1954, 1963). Clearly, for Jung, because the self is unknowable, the individuation process is qualified by its suspension between the opposites of the known and the unknown. Individuation is incompatible with unconditional acceptance of unqualified claims to religious knowledge; rather, it requires a humbling acknowledgement of the relativism of all knowledge and experience, albeit one grounded in numinous experience of the self. However, for Jung, this agnosticism is experienced not only as a limitation but also as an invitation, even a challenge, to consciousness to further explore its unknown psychic background, thereby extending its boundaries and understanding (Jung 1963; Hauke 2000; Rowland 2006).

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Circumambulation](#)
- ▶ [Coincidentia Oppositorum](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Inflation](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Objective Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Reductionism](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Synchronicity](#)
- ▶ [Transcendent Function](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Inflation

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### Jung’s Definition of Inflation

C. G. Jung defined inflation – an unconscious psychic condition – as expansion of the personality beyond its proper limits by identification with the persona or with an archetype, or in pathological cases with a historical or religious figure. It produces an exaggerated sense of one’s self-importance and is usually compensated by feelings of inferiority (Jung 1934–1939, 1963). Most of Jung’s comments about inflation are concerned with an identification of the ego or consciousness with the numinosity of an archetype (Jung 1934/1950, 1952), leading to a distortion or even dissolution of the former. The key to avoiding inflation is knowledge of the proper boundaries of the ego or

consciousness, and this is achieved by discrimination between it and the archetypal contents of the collective unconscious – the self, anima, animus, and shadow – which possess psychic autonomy. When the ego can distinguish what belongs to itself from what belongs to the objective or transpersonal unconscious psyche, it will be free of inflation (Jung 1951).

### Psychopathological Manifestations of Inflation

However, the psychic discrimination necessary to avoid inflation is very difficult to achieve, because the integration of archetypal materials into consciousness typically leads either to a ridiculous self-deification or to a moral self-laceration. The individual makes himself either a god or a devil (Jung 1917/1928, 1951; Edinger 1995), as the archetype through its power of fascination seizes hold of the psyche with a kind of primeval force and compels it to transgress the bounds of humanity. This causes exaggeration, a puffed-up attitude of inflation, loss of free will, delusion, and enthusiasm in good and evil alike. Jung equates inflation with the experience of godlikeness or of being superhuman, an extension of personality beyond individual limits. In such a state, a man fills a space which normally he cannot fill, and he can only do this by appropriating to himself contents and qualities which do not belong to him, because they belong either to someone else or to everyone or to no one (Jung 1916/1928). This experience may lead to fathomless transformations of personality, such as sudden conversions, as well as to a transitory or permanent disintegration of the entire personality. In all cases, whether inflation is the product of some innate weakness of the personality or encountered during an individuation process, the real clinical difficulty is to free patients from the power of fascination by archetypal figures (Jung 1916/1928, 1951–1961).

The identification of consciousness with eschatological knowledge of the collective unconscious is one of the most frequent expressions of inflation, which can either be equated

with megalomania or a form of prophetic inspiration providing a renewal of life for the individual. In either condition one can be so puffed up or overpowered by new knowledge as to be hypnotized by it and thus foolishly believe that one has solved the riddle of the universe and that all previous understanding is worthless. But this is almighty self-conceit (Jung 1916/1928). When lucky ideas from the unconscious come to the ego, it should not take the credit for them, but begin to realize how dangerously close it had been to inflation (Jung 1955–1956). Jung even speculates that inflation by knowledge, leading to a dangerous extension of consciousness, may be the nature of the deadly sin represented by the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in Genesis 2:17, 3:5 (Jung 1916/1928, 1934–1939, 1941/1954, 1948, 1963; Edinger 1973).

The issue that Jung constantly returns to is our need to be aware of the pitifully limited nature of the ego, especially during individuation when the great psychic danger is that ego-consciousness will be identified with the *self* (Jung 1950, 1958). Inflation and man's hubris between them have elected to make the ego, in all its ridiculous paltriness, lord of the universe, and this is productive of nothing but anarchy and destruction (Jung 1938). If the ego has a spark of self-knowledge, it can only draw back and rapidly drop all pretense of power over the unconscious (Jung 1916/1928). Indeed, every encroachment by the ego into the realm of the unconscious which brings about inflation is followed by an encroachment into the realm of consciousness by the unconscious. An inflation is always threatened with a counterstroke from the unconscious, which in the Bible took the form of the deluge, the great flood of Genesis which destroyed civilization (Jung 1952/1954, 1944).

What this means in clinical terms is that inflation so enlarges the normal ego-personality as to almost extinguish it. The result of such inflation (whether leading to megalomania or to a feeling of annihilation of the ego) is the same: an experience of a serious lesion of the ego (Jung 1946). Alchemy expresses this through symbols of death, mutilation, or poisoning, or the curious idea of dropsy, the desire to drink so much

water that an individual melts away, expressing the experience of suffering from a surfeit of unconscious contents and psychic dissociation. Paradoxically enough inflation is a regression of consciousness into unconsciousness. This always happens when consciousness takes too many unconscious contents upon itself and loses the faculty of discrimination, the *sine qua non* of all consciousness (Jung 1944). This is why Jung argues that, when dealing with extreme cases of inflation, it is far more necessary to strengthen and consolidate the ego than to understand and assimilate the products of the unconscious (Jung 1934/1950). The decision in which way to proceed must be left to the diagnostic and therapeutic tact of the analyst.

### **Inflation, Deification, and the Shadow**

The key to overcoming inflation lies in the recognition of the projection of the shadow and its painful integration into consciousness. Inflation by an archetype is irreconcilable with deflationary acceptance and befriending of the shadow. The conclusion to be drawn from this observation is that we Europeans in a state of unconscious possession must become scared of our god-almightiness (Jung 1944). If we do not, if we unconsciously accept a religious inflation, then we are in danger of putting the divine germ within us to some ridiculous or demoniacal use (Jung 1942/1948). In other words, the danger of accepting such a portentous claim as Nietzsche's that "God is dead" is that in becoming gods ourselves and thereby unconscious of our shadows, we are capable of a level of violence and destructiveness towards our fellow human beings never before known in human history. At the same time, Jung observes that the inflationary effect of declaring God is dead is that one is forced to assume an awful responsibility for intrapsychic experiences, such as one's own dreams, which were hitherto believed to be caused by God (Jung 1934–1939).

Significantly, the danger of inflation of the ego by spiritual knowledge and experience is examined in the writings of Christian mystics and Sufis (Underhill 1961; Welch 1982;

Sviri 1997; McLean 2003), as well as transpersonally oriented psychologists (Wilber 1980; Naranjo 1987; Rosenthal 1987; Assagioli 1989; Caplan 1999). However, unlike these writers who can find no value in the experience of inflation for spiritual transformation, Jung acknowledges that inflation is one of the unpleasant consequences of becoming fully conscious, instrumental in the discovery of the boundaries of consciousness during the individuation process, a painful but necessary Luciferian deed of disobedience to both God and the unconscious (Jung 1916/1928, 1934–1939, 1948, 1963).

### **See Also**

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Objective Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Initiation

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Initiation is a part of most religious traditions; at its heart it is a ceremony for beginning and an important part of the spiritual journey. Van Gennep (1909/1960) coined the phrase “rites of passage” to refer in general to those moments of transition where one moves from one social status to another. There are age-graded rituals, rites of passage from childhood into adulthood, from single to married status, and the final rites of burial after death. But in addition to these major life passages, there are in each society a number of special groups one can join or is invited to join that have their own initiation rituals as part of entering into the community.

Initiation is an essential component of most esoteric constituencies within larger traditions; but rites of passage are also celebrated in the exoteric or more publically available forms of the tradition. Initiation is a particular type of beginning, one marked by a special process of preparation, often involving physical or psychological separation from one's current space and social status, which is moving toward the formal rite of transition. There is a basic distinction between being a spiritual seeker and an initiate into a particular tradition; the seeker has only an etic, or outsider's perspective on the group and its beliefs or practices, whereas the initiate now enters into an emic, or insider's perspective. The rite often is done in a very private, even secret ritual; only other initiates are allowed to participate. Given the possibility of people not being able to connect with a group, but wishing initiation, some esoteric authors have provided means for self initiation Ashcroft-Nowicki (1986). But not all initiations are secret; regular Christian baptism is part of public worship even though it is a type of initiation into the community of the faithful. Likewise, ceremonies validating conversion to a religion are public for reasons of affirmation of group identity.

Most attention, though, is given to initiation as a ceremonial entry into an esoteric tradition. The esoteric/exoteric distinction not only refers to the private versus public nature of the gatherings and communities but refers to an additional level or type of teaching that is conveyed. This special knowledge, or gnosis, is a teaching that is reserved for more dedicated students who take the opportunity to study beyond the basic level. Esoteric groups generally have "outer court" teachings which are conveyed through the most public means as a way of attracting prospective initiates. The "inner court" teachings then follow for those who show consistent interest. The process begins when a seeker attaches her- or himself to a teacher in the tradition. There is a period of preparatory study before initiation and often tests of worthiness to continue. After the initiation ceremony, the student is now part of a community in which there may be additional levels or grades of initiation. A common example

is Freemasonry where the Scottish Rite has 32° to reach the pinnacle of gnosis.

Among the oldest initiatic groups are the mystery religions of classical antiquity. In Greece the most popular initiatic group was the Eleusinian mysteries, into which Plato was admitted. The rites of Dionysus, Orpheus, and others flourished as well as mystery religions from Egypt (Isis) and Syria (Cybele and Attis). Persia was the source of the Mithraic initiatic tradition. In the Western esoteric traditions, most adherents of magic or witchcraft were structured as initiatic systems. In the nineteenth century, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn became the quintessential initiatic system and the origin of most contemporary systems of ceremonial magic. The spelling of magic with a k is a convention used by adherents to distinguish the spiritual practice from stage magic or the art of the illusionist.

In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, initiation is closely linked to the strong relationship between the teacher (guru) and the disciple or student (chela). In the Western spiritual traditions, the teacher is not viewed as other than human, but in the two forms of Indian spirituality, the teacher is seen as the literal embodiment of the divine, as an incarnation of the deity. This imbues the relationship with a special intensity. If you see your teacher as divine, then obedience and veneration can become blinded to the humanity, leading to an increased potential for abuse. In the first generation of Indian gurus moving into the West, several teachers became embroiled in sexual and financial scandals with former disciples. But when the teacher maintains the proper role, then there is an effective transmission of both teaching and experiential practice that allows the student to grow in their chosen faith.

In the late Indian Tantric tradition, with both Hindu and Vajrayana Buddhist streams, the initiation takes on special significance and is termed an empowerment. The teacher not only gives teachings but gives primary instructions in particular meditational practices. The teacher gives the student power to practice the technique under guidance. While it is not denied that in the modern world one can find texts of formerly secret Tantric initiations and can practice them without initiation, the teachers would add the proper use of the techniques

under guidance that can only come from someone who is deeply grounded in the meditation technique.

Initiation across all traditions is a liminal process, that is, it is a vehicle and a process for bringing about transitions. Beginning at the transition from seeker to initiate, the ceremony moves the person from one state of development to another. As other degrees of initiation are conferred, the process of transition is repeated. At each juncture the ceremonial leader acts as a psychopomp to aid the person into a deeper understanding of the path on which they have embarked. The act of initiation can be seen as a parallel concept in the psychology of religion to the rite of passage in anthropology. The common thread is the crossing of a threshold from one state of being to another.

The psychology of initiation is likewise characterized by liminality, the movement from one phase of development to another. The rite of initiation itself marks off the boundary between ordinary time and sacred time, between ordinary space and sacred space, and between our ordinary way of being and a sacred and spiritual mode of being (Eliade 1959). Crossing boundaries involves gaining gnosis, or sacred knowledge, and also the core instructions for further practice of whatever spiritual techniques are taught. It is likened to climbing a mountain, or perhaps diving deeper and deeper into a well, but however the lived experience unfolds it is transformative. Initiation is just the beginning of a series of changes often interspersed with periods of stasis. One can have several initiatory experiences across a lifetime, each one unfolding a new mystery which may yet be seen as a continuation of the first mystery into which the seeker was drawn.

The process of counseling and psychotherapy can be likened to an initiatory process, as Jung understood through his own studies of esoteric lore which informed his depth psychology. Particularly with clients new to therapy, there is some teaching of how to talk, what to talk about, and what limits there are to expression of feeling or rehearsing of new ways of acting. As the process unfolds over time, it deepens because of the cumulative nature of therapeutic dialog. The goal is to give the client the necessary tools

to continue life without the help of the therapist, but with their own renewed and enhanced set of personal skills and values.

## See Also

- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Liminality](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)

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## Instinct

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## Introduction

Biological instinct is the innate, inherited fixed action patterns of responses or reactions to certain stimuli, both internal and external. These responses or reactions are intermittent and fairly predictable within a specific species. Freudian instinct differs from strictly biological instinct in the uniquely human experience of a consciousness of the pressure to respond, the sometimes consistent presence of such pressure with or without identifiable stimulus, and the variation within the human species. Freud used the words

*instinkt* and *treib* (drive) to describe such instinctual pressure, often interchangeably.

Inconsistency about mind/body dualism is a core component in Freud's writings about instinct. Freud feared monism would make psychoanalysis a religious or mystical discipline and compromise its place in a scientific *Weltanschauung*. Biologically driven forces shaping humanity remain a problematic topic in religious thinking. The polarized debate between biological evolution and intelligent design persists. Segments of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam acknowledge the presence of instincts and a struggle with animal instincts but view the instincts as implanted by the Divine, fundamentally embracing a material monism. The Eastern, Islamic, and mystical Judeo/Christian objective in the struggle with the instincts is to achieve enlightenment and/or union with the Divine. Pragmatic elements of Judaism and Christianity incorporate the thoughts of Aristotle (350 BCE) and Descartes seeking to free and/or transform the energy of the instincts into rationality and free will, as did Freud.

## Religion

### Islam

In the *Sahih Muslim*, a collection of the hadith or oral transmission of the words of the prophet, Chapter 16, verse seven, states, "Indeed God specified one portion of His Mercy to the word, and with that a mother cares for her young and wild animals and birds care for each other." Modern commentators use this portion to argue Darwin's natural selection, stating that there is no scientific explanation for instincts other than of Divine origin.

### Judaism

The *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* (c.700–900 CE), considered to be a minor tractate of the Talmud, speaks of the *Yetzer Tov* and the *Yetzer Hara*, the inclination towards good and evil, as Divine forces driving human behavior. The *Yetzer Tov* is sometimes viewed as the voice of God in conscience.

1187: Moses Maimonides wrote the *Guide for the Perplexed*, drawing upon Aristotle and Descartes, to position Providence as the source of instinct, whose direction impels mankind towards free will.

### Christianity

1265–1274: St. Thomas Aquinas wrote *Summa Theologiæ*. His thoughts are similar to those of Maimonides, sharing the influences of Aristotle and Descartes. He states that animals are moved towards the future without knowledge of future by instinct, but instinct is planted in them by the Divine. He defined freedom from instinct as free will.

## Psychology/Evolution

1809: Jean-Baptiste Lamarck publishes *Philosophie Zoologique*, theorizing the direct inheritance of characteristics acquired by an individual during its lifetime.

1853: Charles Darwin publishes *Origin of the Species*. Darwin's thesis of the interplay of natural selection and diversity contributing the modification of inherited instinctual inheritance behavior and motivation.

1896: James Mark Baldwin publishes "A New Factor in Evolution," proposing that acquired characteristics could be indirectly inherited based on an organism's ability to adapt to external stimuli during its lifetime (Turney et al. 1996).

## Psychoanalysis

The index of *The Standard Edition of the Works of Sigmund Freud* (1975, XXVI) contains nearly 1000 references to instinct, often contradictory, sometimes returning to previously rejected ideas. The primary areas Freud investigated are:

1. The transmission of inherited instinctual ideas  
Freud grappled with the Darwinian-Lamarckian debate in scientific circles in turn of the century Vienna and was aware of Baldwin's theory. Throughout his body of work, he touched upon the theories of Darwin

and Lamarck, starting with a biological parallel to Darwin, touching upon a monistic theory of instinct dedifferentiating much of the mind/body split, and returning to biology in his last works (Freud 1887–1902, 1933). Most Freudian scholars reject the accusation of Freud as Lamarckian (Garvey 2001).

The instinctual, inherited motivations that captured Freud's imagination include the incest taboo, the primal scene – a child's experience and/or fantasy of his parent's sexual intercourse, the murder of the Father of the Primal Horde, and the Oedipus complex (Freud 1913).

2. The breaking down of sexual instincts into its components in the theory of perversion.

Freud theorized that instincts have (1) a biological source a psychosexual zone; a body part cathected, or occupied, with libido most often but not exclusively referring to the mouth, the anus, and the genitalia; (2) an aim, an action to relieve the unpleasure of the sources of excitation; and (3) an object, the thing that would facilitate relieving built-up excitement. If the sexual instinct broke down into its components, the aim and object were dedifferentiated and the sexual perversions resulted. That is, in exhibitionism, the flasher will experience release of unpleasure in the act of exposing himself without orgasm or intercourse, thus merging the aim and object of the instinct. In Freud's teleological, evolutionary perspective, the perversions eclipsed the object of heterosexual genital intercourse, the necessary action for the survival of the human species (1905).

3. The conflict between sexual and ego instincts in the theories of neurosis, sublimation, and culture.

Freud's (1905) initial instinctual opposites were sexual and ego instincts, the forces of the Pleasure Principle and the Reality Principle. The sexual instinct sought release of unpleasure *unlust*, and the ego instinct attempted to odulate the pressure for release within socially and psychically approved places. When such congruence could not be reached, either a neurotic solution – sometimes

called a compromise formation, or sublimation – the de-sexualizing of the instincts towards the object of art, civilization and religion, satisfied the need to release while disguising any violation of Reality Principle. The Superego became the psychological agency responsible for regulating instinctual pressures (Freud 1920). The metatheory of libido (Freud 1923) is inextricably linked to the metatheory of instinctual forces (Freud 1915).

4. Observations of the failure of the pleasure principle.

Freud conceived of a time in human development without conflicting instinctual demands in the idea of primary narcissism (1915). When Freud could not integrate the compulsion to repeat often painful experience with the metatheory of pleasure-seeking instincts, he formulated the concept of the death instinct (1920). The dualistic couple was of Eros and Thanatos. The death instinct was conceived along biological terms of an organism's urge to return to an inorganic state, free of object and desire.

5. The psyche's effort to represent instinctual life and bring it to consciousness.

Freud conceived a primary process as the psychological method of processing instinctual, biological sense impressions into thought that is understandable by the conscious mind. The elements by which these instinctual sense impressions are translated into thought are displacement, condensation, reversal, symbolization, secondary revision, and dramatization (Freud 1900).

## Freud's Contemporaries and Post-Freudian Thought

Freud's (1915) formulation of primary narcissism opened a door for a Freudian instinctual monism, a concept embraced by Carl Jung and one of the theoretical points leading to Freud's break with Jung. Freud returned to his fundamental dualism, modifying his death instinct, thinking and positing opposing forces of life and aggressive instincts. The aggressive instinct was at first

a concept of Alfred Adler and a key factor in the Freud/Adler break. Freud's Id (1920), the "great reservoir of libido," the source of instinctual energy, was an elaboration of an idea of Georg Groddeck. Both Freud and Groddeck "acknowledge the influence of Nietzsche in their 'its'." Groddeck's "it" is a structure of unity with no such material or instinctual dualism split. For a brief time, Freud's primary narcissism permitted a harmonious overlap with Groddeck and Jung. While Groddeck himself viewed his "it" from a Hellenistic rather than spiritual source, spiritual and existential psychoanalytic thinkers have used the Groddeck "it" in a spiritual context. Jung further posited that the instinct to worship, create, and play is innate, whereas Freud (1927) considered creativity, religion, and worship to be expressions of neurosis and/or sublimation, although recognizing the soothing and civilizing effect of religion as a life-affirming adaptation (Gay 1988; Greenberg 1990).

Ego psychology, notably represented by Heinz Hartman (1955), emphasized the ego's role in adaptation of the instincts, further solidifying a rebuttal of the Lamarckian implication. Early Object Relations Theory as conceived by Fairbairn emphasized the instincts seeking objects and internal or external representation of a soothing or persecutory person and/or idea into or against which to discharge instinctual pressure. Modern Object Relations Theory emanating from the British Independent School and then from American Object Relations has little reference to instinct. The death and aggressive instincts remain a critical component of Adlerian, Kleinian, and Modern Psychoanalysis, but the biological death instinct has not survived in psychoanalytic thought. Heinz Kohut (1976), founder of Self Psychology, criticized Freud's reification of instinct and particularly challenged the innate nature of destructive or aggressive instincts, calling such phenomena an adaptive reaction to an inadequate environment. Attachment Theory posits an infant's instinct to emotionally and psychically attach to the mother as instinctive. Freud also spoke of the anaclitic, or helpless and dependent phase of the infant;

attachment disorder may be seen as Freud's anaclitic depression, a failure of the object of the infant attachment instinct. Attachment Theory draws upon modern neurobiology, each of which refers back to Freud's 1902 biological perspective and rejects the biological death instinct (Fonagy 1999).

## Commentary

The perspective of material dualism applied to Freud's writings about drive and instinct (LaPlanche and Pontalis 1972) might suggest that a good deal of Freud's writing about instinct would be more accurately defined as psychically determined drive. Perhaps Freud's inconsistency with the two terms reflects his own uncertainty about material dualism. On Narcissism (1914) suggests Freud's uncertainty in his commitment to instinctual dualism, and one wonders about the fate of such uncertainty without the Freud/Jung rift. Lorca's (1955) *Duende* "the energetic instinct" of the dark forces in flamenco and bullfighting may be seen as a synthesis of Jung's monadic creative instinct and Freud's dualistic death instinct. Ironically, Freud's thoughts about the nature of man were influenced by Aristotle and Descartes as were Maimonides and Aquinas, but Freud's own conflicts about religion prevented his being able to integrate his science with spirituality. Thoughts about struggle and material nature of Freud's opposing instinctual forces have much in common with thoughts about good and evil, and God and the Devil. While Maimonides and Aquinas are monists as to the substance of God, they are dualists in differentiating God and man.

The nature of libido – the energy of the sexual instinct – and its counterforce or split-off force of death and/or destruction, and maintaining that source of that energy as biological, occupied a good deal of Freud's energy. Jung opened the door for the Divine source of instinctual libido in psychoanalytic theory, the substance responsible for all human instinctual energy much as Aquinas envisioned. William Blake's summary in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is what



eluded Freud, but implicit in religious and Jungian monism:

Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound and outward circumference of Energy.

## See Also

- ▶ Adler, Alfred
- ▶ Drives
- ▶ Dualism
- ▶ Duende and Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Id
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Libido
- ▶ Maimonides, Moses
- ▶ Providence

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## Interfaith Dialog

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Interfaith dialog is a specific type of interaction between religious groups intended to build bridges and foster understanding between religious groups. The terms “interreligious dialog” and “interchurch dialog” often refer to the same process. Interfaith dialog is intentionally more inclusive in that it can refer to dialogs within a religion (i.e., intrachurch dialog) or between religious groups (dialogs between sects or denominations). Dialog between and within religious groups can occur on multiple levels of communication ranging from the individual level to the institutional level where a designated spokesperson represents beliefs held by the group. As the size of the groups engaged in dialog increases, so does the risk that political motivations will impede understanding of the other’s position (Magonet 2003). For this reason the essential purpose of interfaith dialog is to understand the other’s faith as they experience it.

## Distinguishing Interfaith Dialog from Other Religious Conservations

The motivations for the conversation distinguish interfaith dialog from other forms of interactions between faith groups and individuals. *Evangelism* is a type of conversation intended to persuade the other into sharing one’s own religious belief or faith. *Debate* is intended to use rational means to prove or convince the other party that one’s own views are correct. *Assimilation* refers to the forceful adaptation to a secondary religion. *Apologetics* is a type of conversation, often initiated without the other party present, intended to provide a rationale or defense of faith. Apologetics is often an interaction between faith groups and science with the motivation of defending faith against science. *Teaching* assumes a power differential in which was in educating the other individual about a belief system. Mentoring, similarly, assumes a power differential in guiding one into a particular belief system. *Excommunication* refers to the banishment of an individual from a religious group. *Revelation* refers to communication between an individual and a metaphysical source.

An interfaith dialog, conversely, emphasizes equality between participants to facilitate learning from the other. The purpose is not to change the other’s faith or belief system, but rather in fostering understanding, deepening one’s beliefs, and potential adapting one’s beliefs. In the tradition of Martin Buber (1965), dialog often is referring to openness to being changed by the encounter. Several motivations can exist as to why one would enter into an interfaith dialog. First, it is useful in the ecumenical purpose of establishing common ground as a deterrent to stereotypes, conflict, and terrorism. Many Protestant denominations have entered into interfaith dialogs in order to establish an ecumenical relationship with other denominations in which they share resources such as ministers and theologians. Moreover, interfaith dialog is a strategy that can be used to encourage open worship across denominational lines and to better serve the needs of a diverse congregation. Second, interfaith dialog is often

engaged in to promote understanding. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, on the pentagon and World Trade Centers, many religious institutions, including Christian, Muslim, and Jewish, perceive the need to dialog on differences and similarities (Takim 2004). A primary intention of these dialogs is to dispel misunderstandings that led to the other group being perceived as a threat or danger. Similarly, many attempts at promoting peace in the Middle East have utilized interfaith dialogs to help establish a more respectful understanding of religious differences. This ties to a third motivation for interfaith dialog: promoting peace. An emergent theme of interfaith dialogs is to promote an understanding that all major world religions value compassion and peace. These dispelled the grossly mistaken perspective that some religions advocate for war, acculturation, and even genocide. Although most of the major world religions have a history of engaging in genocide and war, interfaith dialog clarified that this is the result of mistaken, misused, or misguided theology, not an essential proclivity for violence and killing within the religious group. Last, some of the deepest forms of interfaith dialog return to Buber's ideas of the openness to change and growth through dialog. Some religious groups believe that while retaining the core tenets of their belief system, they can grow through interfaith dialog. This may include incorporating beliefs of different religions or may refer to sharpening one's own beliefs through comparison and conversation. An example of this is the interfaith dialog between Judaism, Christianity, and Buddhism engaged by John Cobb, Jr., Maslo Abe, and others (Cobb and Ives 1990).

### Barriers to Interfaith Dialog

Challenges to interfaith dialog are evident for some religious groups. Religious groups with strong evangelistic beliefs often deem the only purpose for engaging in conversation with someone of another belief system is to work toward conversion. These groups generally are

associated with fundamentalist values and a rigid theology. They fear that interaction with people of different belief systems may be a threat to one's own belief. Therefore, they often prohibit or discourage relationships with people outside of their religious group unless there is an underlying goal of conversion. This, however, has led to distrust of the motivations for why many engage in interfaith dialog. Many religious groups who have a minority status or who have been subjected to prejudice and discrimination are fearful of other religious groups that show interest in them. The suspicion of ulterior motives makes it difficult to establish the trust necessary to engage in genuine interfaith dialog.

Psychology, especially peace psychology, has played an important role in researching, assessing, and promoting interfaith dialog. Psychology's interests are often in increasing peace and conflict resolution. However, interfaith dialog is also relevant on a personal level. As interfaith marriages and families increase, a need for assisting couples and families becomes important for many therapists and counselors. At the institutional level of communication, business and organizations frequently turn to psychology for assistance in dealing with religious differences as the work environment becomes more religiously diverse.

### See Also

- ▶ [Evangelical](#)
- ▶ [Revelation](#)

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## Intersubjectivity

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*Intersubjectivity*, a term originally coined by the philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), is most simply stated as the interchange of thoughts and feelings, both conscious and unconscious, between two persons or “subjects,” as facilitated by empathy. To understand intersubjectivity, it is necessary first to define the term *subjectivity* – i.e., the perception or experience of reality from within one’s own perspective (both conscious and unconscious) and necessarily limited by the boundary or horizon of one’s own worldview. The term *intersubjectivity* has several usages in the social sciences (such as cognitive agreement between individuals or groups or, on the contrary, relating simultaneously to others out of two diverging subjective perspectives, as in the acts of lying or presenting oneself somewhat differently in different social situations); however, its deepest and most complex usage is related to the postmodern philosophical concept of constructivism or, in social psychology, *social constructionism* – the notion that reality is co-constructed by participants in a relationship and in society. The term *subject* is preferred to the term *self* by many postmodern philosophers and psychoanalytic theorists because *subject* suggests fluidity, mutability, and contingency in relation to influences from outside oneself, while *self* suggests a reified entity, structure, or even essence (somewhat akin to the term *soul*). “Intersubjectivity,” then, denotes a more reciprocally influential and dynamic interaction than a “subject-object” relationship in which one partner in the dyad (the “object”) is characterized by the gaze of the other (the “subject”).

In sociology, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann used the term *intersubjectivity* initially to highlight the *distance* between the immediate sense of reality presented by one’s own bodily experience and the awareness that

others operate in the world from a parallel but different locus of bodily experience of their own. However, it is precisely in negotiating between one’s unquestioned everyday reality and externally perceived “provinces of meaning” that others’ experiences may, at least temporarily, become definitive for one’s own, expanding one’s sense of reality or even transporting oneself to “another world.” Socialization, then, plays a central role in defining what “reality” is, and reality itself is socially constructed. They point out that “aesthetic and religious experience is rich in producing transitions of this kind, inasmuch as art and religion are endemic producers of finite provinces of meaning” (Berger and Luckmann 1967, p. 23).

Social psychologist Kenneth Gergen has written extensively on the ways in which knowledge of oneself, others, and the world are constructed not in the isolation of individual minds, but in and through relationships. Rejecting the notion that knowledge is purely empirical and cumulative, Gergen has argued that “truth” is always value laden and, therefore (drawing from critical theory), “reality” is not immutable, but always is understood via interpretation. More attention, then, should be given to the outcomes implied by any given assertion of reality, rather than to its “accuracy” as measured by its supposed correspondence to absolute truth. In place of either foundationalist claims to truth or unmoored relativism, Gergen has advocated for the mutual construction of relational “discursive imaginaries” that would not be defended on the basis of their claims to reality, but rather on the basis of “scenarios that could support a common desire to pursue viable futures” (Gergen 2007, p. 365). Gergen finds this as compelling for religion as for science, and relevant for virtually any cultural discourse threatened by schism over competing claims to absolute truth. Gergen’s constructionist vision, and that of other social psychologists and sociologists of knowledge, has been influential in some family therapy circles (Flaskas 2002) and has also provided a philosophical impetus for various forms of narrative therapy where the construction of life-giving personal stories and

the deconstruction of internalized hegemonic or oppressive interpretations are a focus of therapy (White and Epston 1990).

The concept of intersubjectivity has also been a central theme in contemporary psychoanalysis. The emphasis has shifted from a one-person psychology (*intrasubjective* or subject-object) to a two-person psychology (mutually influential or subject-subject) (Aron 1996). Two initially separate but similar psychoanalytic movements developed in the 1980s that utilized intersubjectivity as a key to understanding therapeutic action and the therapeutic relationship. Emerging from Self Psychology (drawing on the Chicago analyst Heinz Kohut's theories of empathy and "vicarious introspection"), American analysts Robert Stolorow, George Atwood, Bernard Brandchaft and Donna Orange developed "intersubjectivity theory" to describe the mutual influence of the conscious and unconscious minds of patient and therapist and how the unconscious relationship could become a tool for deeper empathic understanding of the patient's psychic structure and therapeutic needs.

Roughly at the same time, drawing from both philosophy and contemporary trends in object relations theory, Jessica Benjamin developed a theory of intersubjectivity that was a central concept in the emergence of "relational psychoanalysis." Drawing on constructivism and the idea that reality is co-constructed by participants in both conscious and unconscious relationship, relational psychoanalysts have advocated for a shift in psychoanalysis from a one-person to two-person psychology (e.g., Hoffman 1991; Mitchell and Aron 1999; Mitchell 2000) as well as a recognition that the therapeutic relationship itself formed an "analytic third" (Benjamin 1998; Ogden 1994, pp. 61–95) – a shared subjectivity that in some sense had a life and a mind of its own. Countertransference is emphasized as a positive tool for understanding the patient in this branch of psychoanalysis, because via intersubjectivity, it came to be understood that the patient's inner world could influence the subjectivity of the therapist, providing an empathic entrée into the patient's own subjectivity. The therapeutic relationship is no longer viewed as

existing between two entirely separate individuals, but rather as a shared pool of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, bodily sensations, and other subjective experiences that may be tapped for shared understanding by both partners in the therapeutic enterprise. Transference and countertransference, similarly, have come to be understood not as two opposing psychological forces in the treatment, but rather as a continuum of psychic experience and a bridge for empathy. These ideas are not entirely new in psychoanalysis and harken back to Sigmund Freud's (1915/1957) statement, "It is a very remarkable thing that the Unconscious of one human being can react upon that of another, without passing through the Conscious" (p. 194).

In recent years, theorists from the intersubjective school and relational psychoanalysis have begun to dialogue and, as schools of thought, have converged via conferences and publications – especially the journal *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. Recently, Jungian analyst Andrew Samuels has also contributed to the evolving articulation of relational psychoanalysis and intersubjectivity theory, constructing a bridge between American psychoanalysis and British Jungian analytical psychology while, slightly earlier in Italy, Jungian analyst Silvia Montefoschi was also exploring "*interdipendenza e intersoggettività*" in the analytic relationship (see also Stevens 1986).

The psychological theories presented above have been further validated by infant observation studies that demonstrate how the psyche of an infant is formed (and/or damaged) in the context of mutual influence and regulation (or dysregulation) of affect between the infant and his or her primary caregiver (Beebe and Lachmann 2005; Stern 2000). The idea of a mutual influence and interplay of minds is further validated by the discovery in neuroscience of "mirror neurons," which function to allow one person to think, feel, and even construct another's motor activity and even the motives behind it, based on the observed actions of another (summarized in Blakeslee 2006). Neuroscientist V.S. Ramachandran (2009) has stated, "There is no real independent self, aloof



from other human beings, inspecting the world, inspecting other people. You are, in fact, connected not just via Facebook and Internet, you're actually quite literally connected by your neurons." It is these "Ghandi neurons," Ramachandran claims, that enabled empathy among primates and, on a much larger evolutionary scale, made civilization itself possible via imitative learning and cooperation.

There is an emancipatory ethic implicit in the theoretical shift from objectivity to intersubjectivity. Indeed, the modernist valuing of "objectivity" (especially since the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century) – the idea of a pure and undistorted neutral view of the "other" as object – is replaced in intersubjectivity theory by an appreciation of the irreducible otherness of each partner in a relationship and of the mutual influence inherent in any encounter. Inherent in this shift is a further appreciation for the fallibility of any final or definitive understanding of the other as well as a rejection of a utilitarian view of the other as an object to be defined or used for one's own individual ends. In the larger context of culture and society, including religious institutions, the recognition that reality is socially constructed is the first step toward unmasking the dominant paradigm or prevailing worldview in any given society as just one discourse among many—but a discourse of power that underlays and justifies unequal social structures and institutions. This analysis draws back the curtain to reveal how power has masqueraded as the only way to truth, thereby opening the way toward empowerment of and dialogue among a wide variety of perspectives that have been marginalized and suppressed.

González et al. (1994), among others, have also shown the application of social constructionism to therapeutic work with culturally different clients, as a way for therapists to decenter their own cultural biases and assumptions that reinforce social injustice and inequality. Feminist theorists have also found the relationality of intersubjectivity theory and constructivism to be congenial to advocating for non-patriarchal, non-hegemonic psychological theories and therapeutic approaches

(e.g., Benjamin 1998; Chodorow 1986; Gilligan 1985, 1986; and by extension, the writings on "relational-cultural therapy" from the Stone Center at Wellesley College, e.g., Jordan 2009). Complex arguments regarding the relationship of self and other have been further developed in both philosophy (e.g., Levinas 1969; Merleau-Ponty 1945; Ricoeur 1992; Schutz 1972) and postcolonial studies (Bhabha 1994; Spivak 1996). Ethical questions arising from these writings exceed the scope of this entry, but their diverse reflections are conceptually linked to intersubjectivity via a common turn from positivism to hermeneutics and discourse studies; from the positing of an essential self to a constructed, social, and/or narrative subject; and from a value for oneness to a valuing of difference and the other.

Intersubjectivity theory and relational psychoanalysis have begun to be incorporated into pastoral theology, care, and counseling, providing an avenue for rapprochement between the disciplines of pastoral counseling and psychoanalytic theory (e.g., drawing on relational psychoanalysis and intersubjectivity theory, Cooper-White (2004, 2007, 2010), and Hoffman (2010); drawing on Kenneth Gergen's psychology of knowledge, Doehring (2006); and drawing on constructionism and narrative therapy, Neuger (2001)). The inherent emancipatory ethic of intersubjectivity is a natural fit for the contemporary emphasis in pastoral theology, care and counseling on social justice and the valuing of diversity.

There are several natural theological dialogue partners for this attention to intersubjectivity in both pastoral theology and the psychology of religion. The work of the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, especially his formulation of the "I and Thou" relationship, is perhaps the clearest theological articulation of intersubjectivity (without using the term *per se*): "Inscrutably involved, we live in currents of universal reciprocity" (Buber 1970, p. 67). For Buber, this ephemeral contact with the "Thou" of the other participated in the divine. In Christian theology, there has been a turn toward relationality, especially working in overlapping terrains of feminist, postmodern, and Trinitarian theology



(e.g., Cooper-White 2007; Johnson 2002; Keller 1988, 2003; Milbank 2009; Tanner 1997).

Finally, it should be noted that the term *intersubjectivity* is scarcely needed in the same way in non-Judeo-Christian religious traditions. Eastern cultures and religions have never been so characterized by the individualism that Western intersubjectivity theory interrogates and contests. However, further exploration by psychologists of religion into eastern concepts of self, other, mind, and consciousness would be fruitful for the continuing development of intersubjectivity as a lively and critical concept in the West.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Countertransference](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Levinas, Emmanuel](#)
- ▶ [Narrative Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Intimacy

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Although “intimacy” is commonly understood to refer to experiences characterized by a sense of closeness and connection, scholars who study intimacy agree that no generally accepted, formal definition of intimacy exists. Thus, attempts to study intimacy have taken a variety of approaches, two of which dominate. Within psychology, several branches focus on intimate *interactions*, especially those that take place within couples. Others follow in the tradition of Erik Erikson (1950/1963) who described intimacy as an *individual capacity*, naming the sixth stage of psychosocial development “Intimacy vs. Isolation.” This “dual” understanding of intimacy as primarily relational and/or as a state of being is reflected in dictionary definitions.

*Webster's Third New International Dictionary* defines intimacy as a "close personal relationship especially marked by affection or love (as in close friendship)," one "marked by depth of knowledge or broadness of information." *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., defines it as "The state of being personally intimate" rooted in the Latin word *intimus* meaning "inmost, deepest, profound or close in friendship." As an adjective, intimate first refers to "most inward, deep-seated; pertaining to or connected with the inmost nature or fundamental character of a thing; essential; intrinsic."

Few encyclopedias or dictionaries of psychology include an entry on "intimacy" with the exception of *Encyclopedia of Psychology* (Archer 2000) and virtually no theology or biblical series contains one. Given these common dictionary definitions, however, it is not surprising that language of intimacy infuses descriptions of religious experience. In this context it is used to refer to persons' relationship with God, experiences of worship, prayer, engagement with holy texts, and a sense of spiritual interconnectedness and communion with other persons that may extend to all of creation (Thorne 2003). Although it has increasingly become the domain of scientific study, attempts to articulate intimate experiences have long been the domain of lovers, poets, mystics, novelists, and theologians, those who try to express that which is "inmost, deepest, and profound."

Historically, the *OED* traces the appearance of the word intimacy in English to the mid seventeenth-century. Fletcher (2002) asserts that an academic exploration of intimate relationships in the West goes back at least to Plato's *Symposium*. Perlman and Fehr (in Perlman and Duck 1986) date the formal study of experiences of intimacy in modern times to the early twentieth-century writing of Georg Simmel, neo-Freudians such as Sullivan and Fromm who "emphasized our need for 'chums' and 'unity'" in the 1930s, and to the attachment theory work of Bowlby and others.

It has only been in recent decades that attempts to study intimacy empirically have multiplied, making it a core theme in the emerging field of relationship science. It now comprises a topic of

interest to researchers, theorists, and clinicians and to those who come from a variety of fields including social psychology, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, family studies, and communication studies. Since studies have been so diverse and unsystematic, in their *Handbook of Closeness and Intimacy*, Mashek and Aron (2004) sought to compile some of the most salient research from what is now a "critical mass" into a single volume. They acknowledge, however, that "the study of closeness and intimacy has not yet gelled into a fully coherent field with researchers regularly citing (or in some cases even being aware of) each other and building on each other's work" (2). Thus, as part of the "new science of intimate relationships," it requires further refinement, integration, and theoretical clarity.

A variety of challenges confront scholars who study intimacy (Prager 1995). These include the difficulty of determining what distinguishes it from other similar or overlapping concepts such as love, attachment, commitment, sexuality, and closeness; whether it is primarily an individual capacity or relational process; what constitutes an appropriate "unit of study" (interactions or the relationship); how to measure it; whether and how factors such as mutual self-disclosure, power, sexual orientation, and gender impact intimacy; verbal connection in contrast to physical touch and sexuality; and how different cultural understandings of the self affect research outcomes.

An assumption that has been repeatedly reinforced through research suggests that intimate interactions and relationships provide significant health benefits, function as buffers against stress, and support relationship satisfaction and stability. Generally speaking, intimacy has been perceived to be beneficial and an ideal toward which to strive. However, some scholars wonder whether there is a "dark side" to intimacy, recognizing that partners do not always desire or may not be capable of the same degree of closeness (Mashek and Aron 2004). Others challenge the intellectual dominance of the North American construction of the self as an independent entity who voluntarily seeks connection and closeness. Intimacy looks different from

the perspective of interdependent constructions of the self found in many West African settings where interconnectedness with others is a given (Adams et al. 2004). From the perspective of these African contexts, North American expectations of intimacy are seen to unhelpfully destabilize practices common to this region such as arranged marriage, polygamy, and the need for protection from enemies and evil spirits. When viewed cross-culturally, the presumptive psychological “goodness” of intimacy becomes more ambiguous.

Aspects of the Judeo-Christian tradition include some of this same ambiguity about the role of intimacy. On the one hand, relationships celebrated as intimate ones abound in the Bible’s first and second testaments. Biblical commentators consistently refer to the relationship between David and Jonathan, Ruth and Naomi, the ambiguous lovers in Song of Songs, and Jesus and the disciples, especially the Beloved Disciple, as intimate ones. On the other hand, these same relationships can be seen to challenge, even subvert, past and sometimes current social norms in provocative ways.

For those who believe in a “personal God,” the emotional dynamics that characterize human relationships find an analogy in the relationship between human beings and God. In the words of Old Testament scholar, Renita Weems, “I suppose you can say that everything I know about God I have learned in the muck of intimate human interchange” (Weems 1993, p. 11). Some scholars and theologians maintain that the emotionally charged encounters between persons and God constitute a form of intimacy, one that although never fully mutual or even completely “safe,” still bears the earmarks of friendship (Lapsley 2004). Moses, the patriarchs, prophets, and the psalmists provide prototypes for this kind of intimacy with God. As Luke Timothy Johnson underscores, “spiritual intimacy is intimated but not adequately expressed by those passages in the New Testament that speak of Christians being ‘in Christ’ (I Thess. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:22; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil. 2:1; Col. 1:2) or of Christ being ‘in them’ (Col. 1:27; Eph. 3:17)” (Johnson 1999, p. 69). Teachings and images such as “Abide in me as

I abide in you” and “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15: 4–5) serve to break down barriers and invite intimacy between Jesus and those who follow him.

In Christian theology, the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation rely on notions of intimacy. A *perichoretic* or social understanding of the Trinity refers to an intimate, interpenetrating “dance” among the three persons, one which some see as providing a guiding image for human relations as well (LaCugna 1992; Moltmann 1981). The relationship between Jesus’ divinity and humanity that lies at the heart of the Incarnation also reflects a unique intimate union that remains shrouded in mystery despite centuries of doctrinal explication.

Connections between knowing and loving and knowing and sexual intimacy are motifs that recur through both testaments as well. In the worlds of the Bible and in common human experience, knowing and being known result in a certain kind of vulnerability which makes one susceptible to being exploited and betrayed by this same knowledge. Intimacy entails risk for all involved. The need to protect participants from the risks of intimacy especially when power differentials exist has resulted in a body of literature in pastoral care and counseling circles about the importance of maintaining ethical boundaries (Ragsdale 1995). All therapists, but spiritual care-givers in particular, are uniquely charged with staying conscious about the intimate nature of their care for persons who confide in them. Thus as noted in the *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Madden 1990/2005), there is a place for distance and the maintenance of safe boundaries as part of “risk management” in care-taking relationships.

In conclusion, intimacy comprises one of the most meaningful dimensions of human relationships and, for many, lies at the heart of religious experience as well. Researchers in various psychological disciplines seek to ever more fully delineate the contours of intimate interactions and relationships along with factors that enhance or inhibit its expression. These findings can helpfully inform clinical and pastoral interventions. They may also illuminate fresh aspects of biblical narratives and of persons’ relationship

with the Thou who is God (Buber 1970). In turn, the I-Thou depiction of the intimacy that can exist between persons and God and between persons believed to be created in the image of such a God, may enrich and relativize scientific understandings of intimacy. Religious sensibilities remind those who study intimacy, of the ultimately mysterious, meaningful, and wondrous nature of intimate encounters and push against the demarcations and precise definitions that science seeks to establish. The truth and power of intimacy lies at this intersection of scientific specialization and that which presses toward relational integration and the search for transcendent and embodied union.

## See Also

- ▶ [Attachment and Loss](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Merton, Thomas](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Personal God](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religiosity](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)

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## Introversion

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A psychological term formulated by Carl Jung in his book *Psychological Types* to describe the flow of psychic energy inward, toward the inner world of ideas and emotions or “subject.” The word introversion comes from the Latin *introvertere*, meaning to turn inward. Jung theorized introversion and its opposite, extraversion, to explain the two fundamental and innate attitudes of people toward the outer world or “object.” Introversion and extraversion describe theoretical polarities on a continuum, with all persons using some degree of both attitudes



in reality. Jung defined introversion as a withdrawing of psychic energy, or libido, from the object into the subject. People with a preference for introversion both use and renew their energy by focusing inward and can feel drained by focusing energy on the outside world. Some general characteristics of introversion include a preference for solitude and solitary activities, for one-on-one and small-group interactions, and for listening more than talking; an ease with concentration; and a reserved nature. Introverted forms of religious expression seek the God within and the inner spiritual journey through practices of reflection and contemplation like meditation, solitary prayer, and study of the written word alone or in a small group.

### See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychological Types](#)

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### Intuition

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The largest place conferred on intuition by the modern psychologists belongs to C. G. Jung. The notion had several meanings in his production depending on whether intuition belonged to

Jung's psychology of consciousness, to his psychology of the unconscious, or to his interest in religion and esoterism as an expression of religious movements or of extraordinary gifts.

### Extraordinary Intuitions: Visions and Revelations

"Intuition is a function of perception which includes subliminal [i.e., unconscious] factors, that is, the possible relationship to objects not appearing in the field of vision, and the possible changes, past and future, about which the object gives no clue" (Jung 1936/1960, para. 257). The function of intuition allowed, for everyone, the perception of the possibilities inherent in a situation. For more intuitive individuals, this perception could become a *Ahnung*, which meant both the presentiment of future events and the premonition of things unknown, secret, or mysterious. "Visions" belonged to this category, whereas "revelations" were closer to the German term *Einfall*, which described the way ("fallen") one intuition suddenly arose in consciousness. Paul's sudden conversion to Christianity in his way to Damascus was a revelation, but the voice – enumerating complex alchemical principles – heard by the gnostic Zosimus was a *Ahnung*. The *Einfall* had reached its end in consciousness, giving a "hunch" or a sudden clarity to a content, such as Paul's faith. By contrast, the *Ahnung* lays between the unconscious and consciousness, allowing the perception of a content not clearly – or not yet – differentiated from other ones, such as Zosimus's potential alchemy.

Jung's *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, written in 1916, has been seen and studied as a vision of his whole future work (see Maillard 1993). This episode proved to be the climax of Jung's years of confrontation with the unconscious. The description Jung made of this period in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* revealed this visionary aspect. Jung writes: "The years when I was pursuing my inner images were the most important in my life," – in them everything essential was decided. It all began then; the later details



are only supplements and clarifications of the material that burst forth from the unconscious, and at first swamped me. It was the *prima materia* for a lifetime's work (Jung 1961/1995, p. 225). This *prima materia* was a *Ahnung*, it would require to be clarified in consciousness, but it was so strong a vision that it would represent Jung's whole psychology.

### Intuition as Type and Function of Consciousness

Psychological types constituted Jung's main work of his psychology of consciousness. There Jung made intuition foundational by elevating it to one of the four basic functions next to thinking, feeling, and sensation. Which function one most relies on constituted the individual's psychological type, such as the intuitive type. A type characterized the dominant psychological attitude (*Einstellung*) of consciousness. It was "an *a priori* orientation to a definite thing . . . a readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way" (Jung 1921/1971, para. 687). The intuitive type could be either extraverted, directing his intuitions onto external objects – for example, being attracted to anything new and in the making – or introverted, thereby prone to remain strongly attached to internal visions. Seers and prophets belonged to this second category.

Jung distinguished intuition from instinct, fantasy, fantasies, and empathy. The fact that "all psychic processes whose energies are not under conscious control [we]re instinctive" (Jung 1921/1971, para. 765) disqualified intuition from being the same as instinct. In consciousness, intuition was a function which made assimilate a content – even new and sudden – whereas instinct remained an impulse. "Fantasy" or "imagination" was, for Jung, the general expression of psychic life and had no other specific meaning when used as a single term and in the singular. "Fantasies" were also distinct from intuitions. While one made fantasies, one had intuitions. Fantasies were artificial and required reason. Intuitions were natural. They were given direct perceptions beyond reason. "Empathy," for Jung, defined in consciousness, a form of extraversion well

rendered by the German term *Einfühlung* (*ein*: in; *fühl*: feel). One felt oneself in an external object or projected one's feeling onto the object – projecting one's own fears or likings onto someone else, for instance. There empathy did not involve intuition, but occasionally, Jung used the term *Einfühlung* to describe an intuitive capacity required for the interpretation of dreams.

### Intuition and Archetypes

Beyond consciousness, lay the instincts and the archetypes, to which intuition was attached. In the collective unconscious, "intuition is a process analogous to instinct, with the difference that whereas instinct is a purposive *impulse* to carry out some highly complicated action, intuition is the unconscious, purposive apprehension of a highly complicated situation" (Jung 1919/1960, para. 269). "Apprehension" was the key word that linked intuition to archetype. Archetypes were inborn "forms of intuitions," but the exact German expression *Archetypen der Anschauung* is better explained than approximately translated. *Anschauung* characterized, in this context, intuition as one's apprehension, a perception by way of the unconscious, by one's ability of representation, of perceiving everything imaginable and everything in images. Translated into the standard single term "archetypes," the locution *Archetypen der Anschauung* loses a significant part of its meaning. It omits the dependence of archetypes on intuition revealed by the genitive. Correctly understood, the expression thus avoids any association of the archetype with any inherited image that the ancestor of the term, the "primordial image" (*Urbild*), might have suggested. As a capacity to represent, *Anschauung* inherently attached to archetypes depicted an *a priori* tendency, a *facultas praeformandi*, rather than the forms themselves.

In the collective unconscious, archetypes differed from instincts as "archetypes [we]re typical modes of apprehension," whereas "instincts [we]re typical modes of action" (Jung 1919/1960, para. 273, 280), the manifestations of which were always regular and recurrent. In both cases, however, *Anschauung* was required to reach

consciousness. Later, Jung would even assimilate instincts to archetypes as not differentiable entities of the collective unconscious.

### From Empathy to Synchronicity

In Jung's psychology of the unconscious, the term *Einfühlung*, empathy, had a different meaning than in his psychology of consciousness. Whereas *Anschauung* linked archetypes to a differentiated consciousness, *Einfühlung* described a link close to identity between the collective unconscious and varied forms of not differentiated consciousness. The first form depicted the "primitive," who lived in a state of almost unconsciousness by identifying himself with the nature or with ancestors as a mechanism of defense. Jung also studied two other, more elaborated, forms of *Einfühlung* through the experiencing of the annulment of the other. They both concerned esoterism, in its historical religious sense. Psychologically, absolute disregard of the ego was the aim of certain oriental meditations; voluntary identification of the ego with the collective unconscious was the aim of mysticism. In these two cases, mind and body were trained to become themselves the invisible tool intuition and consequently the sheer receptacles of the archetype in consciousness. The frontier between the archetype and consciousness could also be reduced in the phenomenon of synchronicity (see entry). This time, intuition did not fall into consciousness in the form of a feeling (the dreadful effect of numinosity), but of a "meaningful coincidence" which challenged thinking and the law of causality.

### Intuition in Jung's *Answer to Job*

Intuition is a key to understanding the role accorded by Jung to Sophia and to the Holy Spirit in his *Answer to Job*. The symbol of God, or *Imago Dei*, evolved from God the Almighty, to Jesus, to the Paraclete, and to humanity. Between the composition of *Job* and that of the New Testament, Sophia appeared in many writings in many parts of the world. Peoples longed for her

Wisdom in front of God's power. Sophia personified in the unconscious the changing consciousness of the end of the previous era, the intuition of new times. She was pregnant with the unconscious hopes of the peoples. Ancient civilizations had projected their patriarchal culture onto the image of an omnipotent God, leaving His first fiancée stayed in the background, as a latent archetype. By reappearing in the writings, Sophia became the function of intuition which would reunite the unconscious to consciousness. She would fall into her symbol in consciousness Mary, to give birth to Jesus, thereby intuitively creating and enabling the perception (*Anschauung*) of the new symbol of God.

From the unconscious to consciousness, the drama proceeded. The Holy Spirit, symbolized by the Paraclete, continued to ensure the link between the Self – the eternal God – and the evolving self of humanity. The Holy Spirit reduced the gap between Christ (divine), unique son of God, and the God incarnated – realized – in each human, who, like Job, gave God the "conscience" that God had not had. Once God incarnated, each "son of man" had to realize the power of the god within. The H-bomb opened the era of man the almighty, who became responsible of his fate. Man received the duty of the power and the truth of his intuitions. The Holy Spirit and Sophia were neither God nor human – neither the archetype nor its future symbol – but the factor which reunited the two: intuition. They were the entity expressing the hitherto unconscious will of people to get involved in the divine drama. For Jung, religion, rather than disappearing in contemporary times, became conscious.

### Intuition and Mandalas

After his rift with Freud, Jung's confrontation with the unconscious gave birth to the method of active imagination (see entry). Intuitively driven, Jung drew circles to reunite his consciousness to the unconscious. Jung had then the same intuition as his cousin Hélène Preiswerk, when she had held the role of medium during spiritist sessions. In his medical dissertation, Jung had studied the

psychological meaning of the trances of H el ene. During the last sessions, she had had the intuition, the clairvoyance, of a “gnostic system.” She had drawn circles representing a higher and higher level of gnose (knowledge of ultimate realities), the content of which she could not have possibly read or heard of. These circles were the intuition of her next stage in life: adulthood, such as these drawn by Jung intuited his own psychology freed from Freud’s theory.

Jung would later recognize these figures as *mandalas* – the oriental religious symbols of unity, emptiness, and resolution of opposites – and see them as one of the best symbols of the Self. The religious function of the psyche described a specific moment of the method of active imagination, when the third term, the symbol such as Jung’s and H el ene’s *mandalas*, was created from the opposition between consciousness and the unconscious. The tension at once revealed and created the symbol, which intuitively understood, led to a new level of comprehension. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, the last *mandala* painted by Jung appeared at the end of the chapter “Confrontation,” just before the chapter “The Work” (Jung 1961/1995, p. 224). *Mandalas* were intuitive symbols which led Jung to his next stage: work. The religious function of the psyche and Jung’s historic-psychological interpretation of religion through *Answer to Job* depicted religion as official or secular, or even personal, but always as an experience where intuition was involved.

## See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychological Types](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Synchronicity](#)

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## Isaiah

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The Book of Isaiah in the Hebrew Scriptures presents the prophecies of Isaiah, an eighth-century BCE Israelite prophet. The book in the form we have today was known to the Jewish writer Ben Sira by 180 BCE and has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Christian New Testament makes much use of Isaiah, notably John 12.38, “spoken by the prophet Isaiah.” Jewish tradition holds that the book consists of the prophecies of Isaiah, written into book form by King Hezekiah of Judah and his scholars (*Talmud*, Bava Batra 15a). Rabbinic tradition accepts the book of Isaiah as the work of one prophet, although Abraham Ibn Ezra (twelfth century) suggests that some of the later chapters may be from a different hand. Some of the

prophecies may have been written down by Isaiah himself (8.1).

Modern Bible criticism beginning with German scholars of the 1780s generally supports the view that the book is the work of two or more people, dividing most sharply between chapters 1 and 39, which deal largely with events and conditions of the late eighth century, and chapters 40–66 which deal with the Babylonian exile of the sixth century and the more distant future even into the messianic era. Today terms like Deutero-Isaiah and Trito-Isaiah are commonly used to designate different parts of the book. Judeo-Christian religious tradition still largely maintains its belief that the Book of Isaiah was wholly the work of one prophet (Friedman et al. 1971, p. 45).

Isaiah's prophecies began ca. 740 BCE, the year of King Uzziah's death (or illness), and continued through the reigns of Kings Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and possibly Manasseh in the early seventh century. Tradition holds Isaiah to have been of the royal family, and his lofty style is contrasted to the more down-to-earth style of Jeremiah, who grew up in a small town (*Talmud*, Megillah, 10b).

The period of Isaiah's work saw a change of course in Judah and in the Middle East in general, as an aggressive imperialistic Assyria expanded its power and conquests. Feeling threatened by his neighbors, King Ahaz of Judah made himself subservient to the Assyrian emperor Tiglath-Pileser. Later his son King Hezekiah rebelled against the Emperor Sennacherib, who invaded Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem in 701 BCE. The book relates that Hezekiah went to the Temple to pray, and God sent Isaiah to the king with the message that the Assyrians would not "enter the city neither shall he shoot there an arrow. . . ." (Isaiah, 37:34). Sennacherib's army was smitten by a plague, and he returned to Nineveh, his capital, where he was assassinated by his own sons (Isaiah, 37:38).

Isaiah's call to prophecy is described in the magnificent vision in chapter 6. Praying in the Temple, Isaiah saw, as it were, God seated on His throne, hovering over the Temple as though departing from it and surrounded by hosts of

angels. When God called for someone to bear His message to the people, Isaiah answered "Here I am. Send me." When Isaiah hesitated on the grounds of dwelling among a people of unclean lips, God sent a seraph to bring a coal from the altar to touch to Isaiah's lips, both to reassure him of divine support and to indicate that the spiritual fire had not yet totally gone out, although diminished, and also that Isaiah should be careful how he spoke of his people.

A central theme of Isaiah's work was to reawaken the feeling for God among a people who had become dulled and spiritually unmotivated. People had begun to take the Temple for granted; paying their dues to its upkeep but life could have full meaning only if the entire world and not just the Temple would be dedicated to God. The description of God as hovering above the Temple can be seen as a sign of God beginning to remove Himself from it. It is critical to emphasize that in no sense did Isaiah reject or invalidate the Temple or its rites. He criticized only the people's tendency to complacency (Isaiah, 66:3 and 1.11–15; Hirsch 1997, pp. 98–99). Another important theme is Isaiah's castigation of injustice and immorality (e.g. Isaiah, chapters 1, 3, 5, and 7) and his reprimand of those who conspired with his people's enemies (Isaiah, 8:5–18).

Chapter 1, the *chazon*, or vision, again calls attention to the decline in spiritual awareness. Even the ox and the donkey are aware and grateful for the master and for his corn crib from which they eat, but the Judeans lack awareness of God and His bounty to them. Israel was to be a nation of God's Law and God's will, ready to teach God's message to the world. Yet they have become estranged from God. They cannot see that their materialism is causing their land to decay. They are losing their way and can hardly sense the differences between their religion and the idolatrous cults of their neighbors. The Temple service is wonderful but has no meaning unless it is carried on with true commitment and feeling.

Isaiah often expresses the view that politicians and kings may think they run the world, but the world is in fact God's. The difference of view is made dramatically clear in the story (Isaiah, 7–8) of Isaiah's meeting with King Ahaz. Judah was

threatened by the Kings Pekah ben Remaliah of Israel and Rezin of Syria. Bringing along his young son Shear-Yashub, Isaiah met with the king in the Washers' Field to convey the message that God would protect Judah and that Ahaz need neither fear invasion nor seek an Assyrian alliance. The king, however, would not listen at all and rejecting an offered sign of divine support made a treaty with the Assyrians, who welcomed the pretext to come and conquer both Israel and Syria. However, once invited into Judean affairs, the Assyrians stayed until they invaded Judah too, not many years later in Hezekiah's time.

Eventually the Babylonians conquered Israel and took most of the people into slavery in Babylon. Isaiah 40 opens a new series of prophecies in which Israel is comforted after its long Babylonian exile (587–539 BCE), which will be seen as an important if painful learning experience. The Persian King Cyrus freed the Jews from Babylon to return to Israel, where they began to rebuild the Temple, as the Bible records in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Israel will have learned from its tribulation and will be imbued with the consciousness of its historical mission. In all the uncertainties of history and diaspora, God will remain the shepherd of His people, and He will not let the world go unfulfilled. Nations will find meaning in their recognition of God, for it is He who rules history and before whom princes and judges are as naught.

Chapter 42 depicts God as having created the world and still creating it. He will hold Israel's hand and guide it toward perfecting His ideal of righteousness. All will recognize and give honor to God, and human leaders who misused their power will cry in pain and fury. Israel will be a state founded on divine laws of morality and not mere power and force. The prophet goes on to talk at length about the messianic future. The final prophetic vision, chapter 66, paints the future when all humankind will go hand in hand dedicating themselves to God (Isaiah, 66:19–24).

Isaiah's vision has important psychological implications. He continuously calls for the integration of sincere spiritual depth with practical behavioral actions. Concrete symbolic actions do

not substitute for ethical behavior, but they are not to be disregarded either. This integrated view represents a centerpiece of Judaism's emphasis of the interconnection of inward emotional life and outward actions. In this way Judaism is often said to be a religion of deed rather than intention. This understanding of Judaism as a religion of action is encapsulated by the biblical verse in which the Jews standing at Mount Sinai signal their acceptance of the Torah with the words "*na'aseh v'nishma*" – "We will do and we will hear/understand." In other words, the Jewish people promise first to observe the laws of the Torah and only afterward to study these laws. In traditional Jewish culture, this statement has come to epitomize the Jewish commitment to concrete actions rather than simply underlying intentions.

Isaiah's integrated view has received full expression in the simple yet profound sequence in *Fiddler on the Roof*. When Tevye asks Golde, his wife of many years and mother of his children, "Do you love me?" she at first responds incredulously. "Do I love you? For twenty-five years I've washed your clothes, cooked your meals, cleaned your house, given you children, milked the cow. After twenty-five years, why talk about love right now?" However, Tevye persists "I know... But do you love me?" Golde muses out loud: "Do I love him? For twenty-five years I've lived with him, fought him, starved with him. Twenty-five years my bed is his. If that's not love, what is?" Tevye again asks: "Then you love me?" Golde responds "I suppose I do." Tevye, finally satisfied, responds in kind: "And I suppose I love you too."

Though overly simplistic, this description reflects the centrality of *mitzvot* (commandments) in Jewish life, as well as the rabbinic conclusion that, in most cases, a person who performs a mitzvah without focusing on its significance has nevertheless fulfilled his or her religious obligation at least partly.

One must ask oneself if a starving person really is more concerned with a passerby giving him food or the purity of his motives in feeding him. The answer is obvious, and overconcern with one's spiritual life at the expense of helpful behavior toward another implies a narcissistic

self-absorption very far from Isaiah's vision of a healthy integration of spiritual depth and concrete actions and the beautiful interchange between Tevye and Golde described above.

This view has greatly influenced psychological theories such as cognitive dissonance theory postulated by Leon Festinger (1957), emphasizing the drive to consistency between outward behavior and inner attitudes and beliefs. This integration is critical to a healthy view of human psychology, rejecting on the one hand empty ritual but on the other hand spirituality devoid of practical behavioral consequence. For Festinger, change in behavior will likely lead to a change in underlying attitude, because of a need for the behavioral manifestations of an act to be affectively and cognitively consistent with one's inner life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Care and Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Prophets](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Talmud](#)
- ▶ [Western Wall](#)

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## Isis

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Isis was originally an independent Egyptian goddess in the predynastic era in the Nile Delta, prior to 3100 BCE. She was daughter of Geb (Father Earth) and Nut (Mother Sky). She was brought into the Heliopolitan tradition with Osiris, Set, and Horus. She was a great Mother Goddess and Savior. She is portrayed with her brother-husband Osiris, or having large wings and a crown of a disc between cow's horns, or seated as a mother suckling her infant son Horus, the archetypal origin of all Pharaohs. She protected children and could appear as a kite bird (Fig. 1). There are various versions of their mythology, and this is a condensed one.

Isis helped Osiris give people civilization. As Earth Mother, she taught people agriculture, instituted marriage, the arts of grinding grain, spinning flax, and weaving. She was a great Enchantress, knowing magic and medicine, that she taught humanity. There are many versions of their myth; this is a common one: Osiris' jealous brother Set was a wicked god of the desert. One night at a banquet, Set displayed a decorated chest that was made to fit only the king. Several tried, but only Osiris could fit exactly. Then Set and his minions slammed it shut, nailed it tight, and threw it into the Nile.





**Isis, Fig. 1** Isis with wings of one of her forms, a kite bird (Art courtesy of the author, 2002. Public Domain)

Isis was distraught at this wicked sibling rivalry and grieved mightily. She cut off half her hair, and began the search for her beloved husband's body. Some children told her they had seen it floating toward the Sea. A revelation told her that it had floated north to the city of Byblos in Phoenicia. There a great tamarisk tree grew around it. The King had cut down the tree for a pillar in his palace.

Isis came to Byblos, where the Queen Astarte had given birth to a son. Isis was appointed to be the nurse of her newborn son, and at night she secretly held him above the fire's flames to magically burn away his morality and make him divine. But she was discovered by Queen Astarte, who was furious. But great Isis revealed her true identity. The King cut down the tree and gave it to Isis, who cut it open and found Osiris' coffin. She fell upon it weeping. The King gave Isis a ship to return to Egypt. By her magic she and Osiris conceived in her the child Horus, so Osiris would have an heir to take the throne. On her return to Egypt, Isis took the coffin to a hiding place in the marshes, to hide from Set. But wicked Set discovered them and again attacked Osiris. This time he cut Osiris' body into 14 pieces and scattered them up and down the Nile. Grieving mightily again, Isis set off searching for Osiris' body. She found

all parts except his phallus. At each place where she found part of his body, a temple was built. Isis modeled a phallus substitute and, with the aid of her sister Nephthys, reconstituted Osiris' body and anointed it with precious oils, thus performing the first ritual of embalment. For Egyptians, the soul depended upon the body for resurrection. Thus, Osiris was restored to become the Lord of Eternal Life. Isis managed to evade Set and gave birth to Osiris' heir Horus, who regained the throne from Set. Each night Osiris steered an underworld bark below the Nile, taking the dead to the afterlife to be judged. Isis was often pictured with him, protecting the dead with her wings.

Psychologically, Isis gave strength to the many archetypal patterns of women's lives: she symbolized the mythic primordial Mother Earth who protected children; aided those who prayed to her, rich or poor; taught the arts of civilization, from farming to healing magic; faced evil, struggled to keep her family together. Isis suffered the loss of her beloved to his wicked jealous brother, grieved, and brought him home. She mothered her son Horus and protected and nourished him to become the first Pharaoh. She resurrected her beloved Osiris, not to earthly life, but, since he was a god, he returned to be the Lord of the Dead in Eternity. Thus, she modeled many archetypal patterns, from strong Mother Earth to suffering wife, mother of a fine child, Queen, and powerful goddess of resurrection and salvation, overcoming grief, evil, and earthly death.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)

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## Islam

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Islam (Arabic “submission”) aligns itself with the monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity and the belief in the prophets whose attestation to the sovereign, ongoing and active purpose of the one God: “We believe in God and that which was revealed to us; in what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes; to Moses and Jesus and the other prophets of the Lord” (Sura 2:135). It is founded upon a succession of religious vision experiences by Muhammad (b. ca. 570 CE), a poor and probably illiterate Arab who struggled through much of the first 40 years of his life. Around 610 CE while meditating in a cave in Mount Hira near Mecca (Saudi Arabia), he receives revelations from the angel Gabriel. The angel “who is powerful and mighty” (Sura 53.5) imparts the “Book” into the heart of Muhammad who is instructed to ‘*iqra*, “recite” (*Al-Quran*, “The Recitation”). Through the encounter Muhammad understands himself to be an emissary of God as the last and greatest of the Judeo-Christian prophets. He attracts a small following and eventually the hostility from the wealthy merchant class, causing him to flee to Yathrib (Medina) north of Mecca. His flight (*hegira*) marks the starting point of the Islamic calendar (16 July 622). The Koran consists of a collection of a range of teachings having to do with faith, religious ritual practice and worship, and codes of behavior for day-to-day life. The work is arranged in sections called “Suras” so as to impart “gradual revelation” (Sura 17: 106). As the “*Book of Revelations*,” it includes “good news and warning” (Sura 41: 2). A range of subjects receive attention such as Kneeling, Muhammad, The Moon, The Dawn, Clots of Blood, Alms, The Poets, and Women. For “true believers” the Koran is a balm and a blessing, while for the “evildoers” it is “nothing but ruin” (Sura 17:82). For those who do not adhere to Islam, their deeds

will be brought to nothing (Sura 47:1). Those who do believe are promised Paradise to enjoy divine forgiveness, every kind of fruit, rivers of purest water, ever-fresh milk, delectable wine, and clearest honey (Sura 47.15). Those who follow base desires will reside in hell eternally drinking “scalding water which will tear their bowels” (Sura 47:15–16). According to the Koran, Satan seduces those who once received divine guidance but have opened themselves to those who abhor the Word of God. These ones will lose their souls (Sura 47: 26–27). Unlike various religions including Judaism and Christianity, Islam does not evidence the development of ecclesiology or a priestly hierarchy. Rather, its requirements for piety and attention to revelatory experience especially through the mellifluous intoning of Koran verse are collective practices which inherently resist the formation of institutional structure and dogma. Believers are expected to practice a disciplined, conscious life of patience and prayer: “Turn your face towards the Holy Mosque; wherever you be, turn your faces toward it” (Sura 2:144). They are to recite prayers at sunset, at nightfall, and at dawn and to pray during the night as well (Sura 17:78). Each is to show kindness and give alms and make regular pilgrimage to Mecca during which time abstaining from sexual intercourse, obscene language, and argument (Sura 2:197). Islamic culture is known for its contribution to alchemy especially through the work of Muhammad ibn Umail at-Tamimi, known as Senior. A Muslim Shiite, he lived and worked during the tenth century. His *De Chemia (On Chemistry)*, translated into Latin during the twelfth or thirteenth centuries, describes Senior’s entry into what he calls a *barba* – an Egyptian pyramid tomb in his quest for the alchemical secret. There he and his colleague see amid the “fiery prisons of Joseph” (*carceres Ioseph ignitas*) a statue in the middle of the chamber sitting on a throne and holding a tablet (*tabula*). The images of the sun and moon on the tablet relate ancient Greek notions of the processes of the *coniunctio*, the coincidence of opposites. The text reflects Islamic interest in Egyptian mummification as

the source of alchemy. It also evidences parallels with the ancient Emerald Tablet (“all things were made from this one, by conjunction; the father is the sun, the mother is the moon”) attributed to the Egyptian god Thoth and Greek god Hermes Trismegistus. *De Chemia* shows the significant role Islam played in the interpretation and transmission of religious ideas and symbols from ancient Egypt, Greco-Roman, and medieval cultures into the time of the Italian Renaissance and the work of figures including Roger Bacon and Isaac Newton. Al-Razi (ca. 850 CE-ca. 924 CE) and Jabir ibn Hayyan (ca. 721 CE-ca. 815 CE) also play important roles and make significant contributions in Islamic-Arabic alchemy and the pursuit of the elixir. Out of the work of each issues an interest in healing properties of “strong waters” (corrosive salts)

eventually influenced Arabic medicine and being translated into Latin Europe in the twelfth century.

### See Also

► [Qur'an](#)

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### Islamic Law

► [Sharia](#)

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## James, William

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### William James and the James Family

William James was born on January 11, 1842, in New York City and died on August 26, 1910, in Chocorua, New Hampshire. He was a bridge figure between the intellectual and social milieu of the mid-nineteenth-century America of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman and the evolving international Modernist world of Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, and Alfred North Whitehead. He was part of one of America's most remarkable families who in the generations before his birth built resources of great wealth through business and entrepreneurial success. His father, Henry Senior, was an itinerant philosopher and theologian who authored dense and idiosyncratic texts related to the work of Swedish religious figure Emanuel Swedenborg. William was the eldest of five children born to Henry Senior and his mother, Mary Robertson Walsh. His eldest brother, Henry, born in 1843, became one of America's greatest novelists and men of letters. He had two younger brothers, Garth Wilkinson (Wilky) and Roberson (Bob), along with the youngest of the five, his sister Alice, born in 1848. It was Alice who came closest to the literary and analytical gifts of

William and Henry as evidenced in her letters and diaries. She also shared with them physical and mental collapses which in turn mirrored the experience of Henry Senior with what he called in a nineteenth-century term his "vastation" which denotes something closely akin to a depressive breakdown.

James' family traveled widely and frequently during William's younger years due to Henry Senior's search for an ideal place to educate his children and to satisfy his own restlessness. William was thus raised and educated in both the United States and Europe. He never completed an undergraduate degree, but he did manage to receive an M.D. from the Harvard Medical School in 1869 though he never practiced medicine. His medical and previous scientific training opened him to the world of physiology and experimental science. He taught anatomy and physiology at Harvard and went on in 1880 to pursue another career interest in the teaching of philosophy. A key point in this formative period came in 1872 where for 9 months he met in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with Charles Sanders Peirce, Oliver Wendell Homes, and Chauncey Wright in what came to be called the Metaphysical Club. These meetings proved to be a prime source of inspiration and reflection that grew over time into what later came to be known as philosophical pragmatism. Pragmatism (a term James himself coined) became a school of thought that dominated American intellectual life up through the first third of the twentieth century.

## James' Contribution

In 1876 James married Alice Howe Gibbens and proceeded with having a family of his own to go along with a wide-ranging career that spanned the next three decades. In 1877 he met the philosopher Josiah Royce who was to become one of James's great companions as well as a friendly intellectual rival and whose idealist framework differed dramatically from his own empiricism. James also discovered and incorporated insights from the work of the French philosopher Charles Renouvier that emphasized the role of freedom in human choice and action. During this most productive phase of life, James published a set of true classics. Among them are *Principles of Psychology* (1890), *The Will to Believe* (1896), *Pragmatism* (1907), and in 1902 the Gifford Lectures at Edinburgh that became *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. His written works including a voluminous correspondence along with his teaching and public lecturing constitute a major contribution to an understanding of the working of the mind with its functions, its needs, and its potentials. His recorded legacy stands the test of time and remains accessible to the specialist and the nonspecialist alike.

Throughout his work James became and remained a radical empiricist. He upheld and never relinquished his belief in experience as a reliable guide in the search for truth. It is crucial to note in any discussion of James' study of psychology and the psychology of religion his reliance upon an experiential, empirical, and pragmatic approach. Pragmatism viewed means and ends as interdependent. And in pragmatism, knowledge is social, relational, and dependent on the "flow" (an important Jamesian word) of ideas, sensations, and interactions between the interior self and any larger worldly context. Indeed, it was James who originated the term "stream of consciousness." It would be hard to imagine the contemporary clinical world and the dialog between psychology and religion without James' contributions. There the emphases on narrative and process can be directly traced to James and those who follow his often invisible influence. Indeed, pastoral counseling, clinical

pastoral supervision, and pastoral care would be significantly diminished without his concepts of "time line," "pluralism," and "healthy mindedness" as conceptual tools and perspectives to enlighten the search for meaning within the therapeutic alliance.

## The Varieties of Religious Experience

*The Varieties of Religious Experience* deserves an exploration for a number of reasons. First, it is a crucial source for analysis of religious experience for interdisciplinary work among psychology, religious studies, anthropology, philosophy, and clinical supervision. Second, it has had a significant impact among those involved in recovering from addiction, most notably William Wilson, one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Wilson names James and *The Varieties* as a critical source in his understanding the enlightenment and freedom that came to him when he began to lay aside his addictive burden. And third, a number of the terms used in *The Varieties* (e.g., "sick soul," "twice born," and "healthy minded") have not been clearly or consistently identified with him in spite of their having shaped cultural, therapeutic, and academic discourse.

It is the content of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* that fixes its place among the realm of the classics. He explores in these two sets of lectures such topics as "Mysticism," "Saintliness," "Conversion" (two lectures), and the relation of "Philosophy" to religion. James takes on a perspective that places primary emphasis on what happens, what a person goes through, and what *are* her feelings or responses in regard to events, persons, texts, and life crises. He focuses upon direct human experience and not on the perspectives of philosophical speculation or abstract theological dogmatics. Overall, James believes that his empirical and pluralistic approach makes the most common sense.

In *The Varieties* he sees one form of religious experience as that of "healthy mindedness." It emphasizes human capacities for happiness and self-confidence. These qualities are evident for him in the persons of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson and in Protestant liberal theology in general. The experience of the "sick soul," on

the other hand, identifies an inclination to melancholy and to a view of human nature as deeply flawed and in need of assistance. Examples identified with the “sick soul” are John Bunyan and Jonathan Edwards who demonstrate a consistently troubled or “anhedonic” response to life. James also articulates how the “healthy minded” and the “sick soul” represent characters that are either “once born” (optimistic, confident, determined) or in need of becoming “twice born” in order to be renewed, reinvigorated, or restored to a transformed state of wholeness. It must be added that no simple summary can convey the depth and subtlety of James’ analyses and commentary.

Several justifiable criticisms have been leveled at *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The book is marked by a “decontextualized” and “ahistorical” frame of reference. Historical figures make appearances without commentary regarding what constituted the historical or social circumstances which may have contributed to their encounters with religious experience. He shows less or little innate sympathy for the experience of the Roman Catholic figures mentioned in the book thus perhaps displaying an attitude common to the era of Protestant hegemony in America at the time the lectures were written. And reviewers, notably G. Stanley Hall, were critical of his abandonment of experimental, positivist science as a way of testing and verifying his hypotheses about the various categories of religious experience he explores. In short, James is accused of having abandoned the scientific method for something that appears to be a methodology based on more purely descriptive, biographical accounts laced with philosophical language. These are all fair criticisms that unfortunately fail to take into account the carefully nuanced and empirically derived portraits and concepts that make up the work. James’ writing is deceptively simple and yet richly allusive as well as being psychologically precise and astute.

### James’ Legacy

So what category of religious experience best describes William James himself? Was he

“healthy minded” or a “sick soul”? Biographical evidence seems to indicate that he was both though not at the same time. Weighed down with fear and anguish, he progressed through a period of deep doubt and search for an identity and purpose as a young man suffering what appears to be a mix of clinical depression and panic disorder. James may thus at one point at least be identified as a discernible “sick soul.” He became, as he went forward, filled more with confidence and satisfaction with life that was communicated to others including his family, students, and professional colleagues. He transcended and moved beyond the anxiety, self-doubt, and inhibitions of the morbidly self-absorbed adolescent and young adult he had once been. James may thus be viewed as one who was among the “twice born” who incorporated and displayed a disposition marked by “healthy mindedness” as he matured. His curiosity and zest for exploration for all things was virtually never ending. He was, in the words of the great American psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan, committed to being among those “human beings to whom nothing is alien.” James died in 1910 at his beloved country home in Chocorua, New Hampshire, of complications related to a heart condition that had plagued him for many years. His legacy is rich and filled with meaning for all who would take the time to get to know this most American of philosophers.

### See Also

- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Twelve Steps](#)

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## Jerusalem

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## History

Jerusalem is a city holy to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in which it is the third holiest city after Mecca and Medina.

The history of Jerusalem dates back to the fourth millennium BCE. According to the Biblical narrative, it was a small, fortified Jebusite city until made capital by King David in the tenth century BCE. He brought the Ark of the Covenant, holding the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments, to Jerusalem, later placed in the Holy of the Holiest in the temple built by his son, King Solomon. The Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and deported much of the population in 586 BCE. However, decades later King Cyrus allowed the Jews to return, and the Second Temple was completed in 516 BCE, later rebuilt and enlarged by Herod in the first century BCE. Hellenism was introduced by Alexander the Great, who ruled from 332 BCE. While the Jews eventually regained the rule, the Romans took control in 63 BCE. Jesus, born c. 6/5 BCE, towards the end of Herod's reign, was crucified at Golgotha, probably in 30 CE.

The Second Temple was destroyed, presumably on the day of the destruction of the First Temple, ninth of the month Av, in 70 CE. In 131, Emperor Hadrian renamed the destroyed city Aelia Capitolina and built a temple to Jupiter, prohibiting the Jews from entering the city. With the Muslim conquest in the seventh century

CE, Jews were allowed to return. In 715, the Umayyads built the al-Aqsa Mosque at the Temple Mount.

The Crusaders ruled from 1099, barring non-Christians from the city, which was captured by Saladin in 1187. In the early sixteenth century, Jerusalem and the Holy Land were conquered by the Ottoman Empire. Jerusalem remained desolate for centuries, with a population of less than 9,000 in 1800. Only in the mid-1900s did the city recover and grow again. In 1948, Jerusalem was divided between Israel and Jordan, reunited in 1967 when Israel gained disputed control over Eastern Jerusalem, as well as of the Old City.

## The Name of Jerusalem

Legend says Jerusalem has seventy names and is mentioned in the Bible by names such as City of Joy, of Confusion, of Praise, of Justice, of Righteousness, and of Bloodshed (e.g., Isaiah 1:22, 26; Jeremiah 49:25; Ezekiel 22:2). *The Holy* (Heb. I'r haKodesh) is today the name commonly used in Arabic (Al-Quds). The meaning of the name Jerusalem has been variously interpreted, e.g., as I'r Shalem, the city of peace and wholeness; as combining the Hebrew words Jerusha and Shalem, meaning *Legacy of Peace*; and as a combination of the name that Abraham gave the place after the near sacrifice of Isaac, (Adonai) Yireh, *the Lord sees* (Genesis 22: 1–14), with Shalem. The Septuagint and the Vulgate transliterate the name as Hierusalem, thus combining *Hieros*, the holy, with Shalem.

The plenitude of names, such as “Gateway to Heaven” (Genesis 28:17), reflects the extent to which Jerusalem is pregnant with archetypal imagery and projection of wholeness, often in tense contrast to the conflicts it has suffered through history. The Jerusalem Syndrome is a manifestation of the archetypal possession from which some visitors to the city suffer, as they tread ground numinously soaked in myth and religion.

Jerusalem takes its origin in the City of Shalem and bears its name from its mythological founder Shalem, the Canaanite god of creation,

completeness, and the setting sun. However, while peace and wholeness have become the insignia of Heavenly Jerusalem, the darker shadow side of Jerusalem is present already in its archetypal origin, the twin brother of Shalem being Shahar, the Morning Star. Shahar (as in *Shacharit*, the Jewish morning prayers), or in his Christian denomination Lucifer, announces the arrival of light and consciousness, the shadow that brings light, the light of consciousness that attempts to overthrow the rule of the gods but falls from heaven.

### Archetypal Image of Center and Wholeness

In Judeo-Christian tradition, Jerusalem is a central image of peace and wholeness, a symbol of unity, justice, and future redemption (cf. Psalm 122:1–9; Revelation 21). The ancient Jewish prayer, “Next year in Jerusalem,” entails a request for spiritual rather than physical redemption.

Likewise, in Revelation 21, John describes Heavenly Jerusalem; “I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. . . ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man’.” Jerusalem is then described as “having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal . . . the city was pure gold, clear as glass.” Thus, Jerusalem is a prominent symbol of the Self as God image, as an image of the seat of divinity in the soul of man.

In reference to Jerusalem as “the center of the earth,” Jung considers her as a symbol of the Self (1959, *CW* 9i., par. 256). However, as the heavenly bride (Revelation 21:9) and as “the goal of our longing for redemption,” he emphasizes Jerusalem as an archetypal image of the mother (1956, *CW* 5, par. 318; 1959, *CW* 9i, par. 156; 1958, *CW* 11, par. 612).

Likewise, the Shekhinah, God’s feminine aspect, which means dwelling, implies God’s manifestation in the world. The Temple in Jerusalem represents the dwelling of the divine

presence, and with its destruction, says the legend, the Shekhinah was forced into exile. This would indicate not only a split between the masculine and the feminine aspects of the God image, but also that the sense of wholeness and completion is absent from the material dimension of the world. In the individual psyche, this reflects a condition of split between ego and Self (cf. Edinger (1972); Neumann (1970)), an incapacitating separation from one’s soul and inner sources, as expressed in Psalm 137:4–5: “How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.”

Judaism ascribes central events, such as the binding or sacrifice of Isaac (the akedah), to the Temple Mount at the center of Jerusalem. An ancient belief has it that Jerusalem is the navel of the universe, and here Adam, the first man, was supposed to have been born out of the dust, the earth, adamah. Successive religions have claimed (cf. Elon 1996, p. 11) that the creation of the world began at the Foundation Stone of the *Temple Mount*, where the Muslim *Dome of the Rock* now stands. Some Jewish legends tell about stones raining from the sky, and from the stone that God threw into the abyss, the world originated, with Jerusalem at its center. The Kabbalistic Book of Splendor, the Zohar says, “groups of angels and cherubim hover above the Foundation Stone, and. . . from there all the world is blessed” (Vilnay 1973, p. 15).

### Transformation from Human to Divine

In Christianity, the pivotal event taking place in Jerusalem is prominently Jesus’ casting out the money changers and the pigeon sellers from the Temple, and the Passion story, with the crucifixion at its center. Jesus confronts the shadow which has taken its seat in the house of prayer and the corruption which has taken predominance over the spirit. The process of individuation often requires a betrayal of collective loyalties (Edinger 1987, p. 83). The ensuing passion story, with the Crucifixion, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, entails the grand transition of

*Yeshua*, Jesus from Nazareth to *Christ*, the Anointed, and the Messiah. The human ego “is nailed to the mandala-cross representing the Self” (1987, p. 98). As a psychological process, the coniunctio of the crucifixion reflects the ego’s transformation into Self.

## The Night Journey

Muhammad’s night journey on his flying horse *al-Buraq*, which had the face of a woman, the body of a horse, and the tail of a peacock, is described in the 17th Sura (chapter) of the Quran as taking place from the Holy Mosque in Mecca to “the farthest mosque” (*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*). While *al-Aqsa* has been understood metaphorically, it is sometimes considered to be in recognition of Islam’s roots in Judaism that *al-Aqsa* received its earthly location and was built at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. According to legend, Muhammad tied the horse to the Western Wall of the Temple Mount, from where he ascended to the seventh heaven, together with the angel Gabriel. On his way he met the guardians of heaven, the prophets of other religions, Adam, Jesus, St. John, Joseph, Moses, and Abraham, who accompany him on his way to Allah and accept him as their master. As Muhammad ascends to heaven, he leaves his footprint on the Stone, and as he returns, he brings the instruction for the daily prayers.

Muhammad’s ascension and return from heaven takes place on a ladder of the prophets that preceded him, thus serving as an axis between earth and heaven, between human and divine, similar to Jacob’s dream of the ladder, the foot of which was in Beth-El (house of God), while its top, according to Rabbinical folklore, reached the gates of heaven from Jerusalem.

## Self and Shadow

While Jerusalem is a symbol of wholeness, it entails a plenitude of shadows, as hinted in its archetypal origin. The prophet Ezekiel describes the Godforsaken Jerusalem as poor and

neglected, as a shameful and condemned whore (Ezekiel 16).

The shadow aspects of the psychological myths pertaining to Jerusalem are evident in actual locations in this city, so full of places where religious events with great psychological implications have taken place. The agony of Via Dolorosa and the tears at the Western Wall are prominent, and both reflect the close proximity of shadow with Self, of pain, agony, loss, and destruction with wholeness and ascent.

Legend has it that Judas Iscariot struck the deal to betray his Master in the country home of Caiaphas, at *The Hill of Evil Counsel* (cf. Shalit 2008, p. 125 ff.). Likewise, near the Old City lies Gehenna, *The Valley of Hell*, which once was the site of a fire altar called Tophet, inferno. Children were burned here as sacrifice to the Ammonite king-god Molech, as mentioned in 2 Kings 23:10:

And he defiled the Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

Eventually the shrine was abandoned and became a dumping ground for criminals and outcasts, whose corpses were burned in the constantly burning fire, creating the smells and fires of hell. It was before a crowd of priests and citizens in the Valley of Hell that the prophet Jeremiah denounced their pagan practices. He smashed an earthenware jar and cried out, “Thus says the Lord of hosts: So will I break this people and this city as one breaks a potter’s vessel, so it can never be mended” (Jerusalem 19:11).

Jerusalem prominently reflects three aspects of Self and Individuation symbolism: wholeness and unity of opposites, transformation from human to divine, or, psychologically, from ego to Self, and the ladder or axis between ego and Self.

However, as an image of wholeness, or Self in the terms of analytical psychology, it entails, as well, a powerful shadow of hell and evil, of conflict, loss, and mourning. Jerusalem reflects the interdependence between material and spiritual, human and divine, and between shadow and Self.

## See Also

- ▶ Akedah
- ▶ Ascension
- ▶ Crucifixion
- ▶ Jerusalem Syndrome
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Sacrifice of Isaac
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Western Wall

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## Jerusalem Syndrome

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The term Jerusalem Syndrome refers to a group of psychopathological phenomena in which religious delusions lead to or are triggered by a visit

to the city of Jerusalem. Those suffering from Jerusalem Syndrome characteristically believe themselves to be biblical or messianic figures. Common patterns of behavior include splitting away from sightseeing groups or families and touring the city on one's own, a sudden increased interest in issues of cleanliness and ritual purity, shouting biblical verses or singing liturgical songs in public, formal processions to holy sites, and delivering sermons which may be strongly moralistic in nature or altogether incoherent. Violent behavior is rare. However, in one well-publicized case, an Australian tourist set fire to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in 1969.

Written records of foreign tourists expressing symptoms of Jerusalem Syndrome date back to the mid-nineteenth century when rail travel first made visiting Jerusalem accessible to a large number of Europeans. The Jerusalem psychiatrist Haim Herman published his clinical observations in 1937 opining that the phenomenon made distinguishing between the normal and the pathological psyche twice as hard in Jerusalem as in any other city. Since that time, debate in the medical literature has primarily revolved around understanding if visiting Jerusalem itself may actually trigger a psychotic episode in some or if long-standing psychopathology causes the visitor to travel to Jerusalem in the first place.

Most authors agree that the majority of cases today involve individuals with prior histories of psychiatric illness who have set out to visit Jerusalem under the influence of a religious delusion. Nevertheless, one expert describes a discrete form of Jerusalem Syndrome in which no previous mental illness exists and the psychotic symptoms spontaneously resolve to full recovery shortly after removing the person from the city. While those with previous psychiatric histories manifesting symptoms of Jerusalem Syndrome are roughly estimated to be 50 % Christian and 50 % Jewish, the overwhelming majority of those exhibiting the discrete form of the illness with no prior psychopathology are Protestant Christians. The overall rate of foreign tourists hospitalized for psychiatric reasons in Jerusalem does not differ from that of comparably sized cities. Though less well documented, similar

psychiatric phenomena have been reported in other holy cities including Florence (Stendhal Syndrome) and Mecca.

## See Also

► [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Jesuits

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### Saint Ignatius

In 1534 Ignatius of Loyola gathered a small group of university graduates in Paris and gave them the Spiritual Exercises. The Exercises came out of Ignatius' ongoing conversion experiences especially while recuperating from a cannonball wound and on pilgrimage in Montserrat and Manresa, Spain. The Exercises call the retreatant to focus interiorly and accept God's action in one's life; they also help one to focus one's life direction. Ignatius and his "companions in Christ" made vows of chastity and poverty and were filled with a missionary desire to imitate the life of Christ, to preach the Gospels, and to serve the poor. In 1540 the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, was formally approved by Pope Paul III, and Ignatius was elected its first general.

The Jesuit charism is that of "contemplation in action," grounded in disciplined prayer practice and service to those in need. Jesuits are called to "find God in all things," to live generously, and to

serve "for the greater glory of God." This spirituality is not a monastic withdrawal from the world. Quite the contrary, its defining vision is to find God through engagement with the world. Jesuit service has taken many forms, beginning with missionary activity, a large educational focus, and an ongoing social justice commitment.

The foundational documents of the Society of Jesus are threefold: the Spiritual Exercises, the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus, and St. Ignatius' autobiography. Jesuits make the Spiritual Exercises in a 30-day retreat at the beginning of their ministry and upon taking final vows. They renew this experience annually in an 8-day retreat. Essential to ongoing Jesuit spiritual practice is the Examen, which is a twice-daily time of prayer and reflection on God's activity in their lives. Jesuits learn the practice of "discernment of spirits." This involves listening to the movements of one's heart; it is based on the assumption/experience that God speaks through the people and events of one's life, and one tunes into God's presence by listening to the movements of one's heart. The Jesuits are the largest male religious order in the world. What follows is a sampling of five Jesuits, admittedly an arbitrary choice of the author's "favorites," who embody the essence of Jesuit spirituality. This entry concludes with a summary of the essential elements of Jesuit spirituality.

### Gerard Manley Hopkins

Gerard Manley Hopkins is the "Jesuit's greatest poet." He is the only Catholic priest and Jesuit honored in the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. He is known for intensity and originality of language, experiments with "sprung rhythm," and as a religious poet who thoroughly embraced the natural world. His poetry is meant to be heard rather than read.

Hopkins was born in Stratford, England, in 1844, the eldest of eight children, and encouraged for his artistic abilities. He, like his father, wrote poetry. He excelled in classical studies at Oxford. At 21 he converted from Anglicanism to Catholicism and at 23 entered the Jesuits,

neither with the approval of his family. He was ordained a priest 10 years later and died at age 44. Hopkins was profoundly influenced by the Spiritual Exercises. Like Ignatius, he saw all creation as infused with the divine; he coined the term “inscape” to describe the “individual essence and uniqueness of every physical thing” and sought to understand the interconnectedness of all things. He saw God as an “incomprehensible certainty” and lived a difficult life trusting in the mystery of God’s providence. Hopkins struggled to balance the dual vocations of priest and poet. His academic-preaching load was heavy, his health was poor, and he struggled to give himself completely to God. He destroyed most of all his early poetry upon entering the Jesuits, seeing the dual vocations as incompatible. He created a small body of prose and poetry over a 14-year period beginning with creation of the “Wreck of the Deutschland,” and this is only because of the encouragement of his religious superiors. Little of his work was published during his lifetime. Like Ignatius, Hopkins’ life was one of service to God, with a significant cutoff from his family, and including an ongoing struggle with the “fascinating and terrible” dimensions of the spiritual journey. Hopkins was driven to describe the natural world, to reflect on its abundant uniqueness and the divinity reflected through it all.

### **Pierre Teilhard de Chardin**

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin was the “most Jesuit of Jesuits in centuries” and a world class scientist and paleontologist. His vocation was to bridge science and faith, which he found as entirely complementary. God was to be found in all things, animate and inanimate, see *The Divine Milieu* (1960). He embraced Darwin’s theory of evolution and wed it to spiritual/cosmic development; he believed that the universe continues to evolve, culminating in a convergence of all things in Christ. Evolution was spiritually directed, not a random process. That all humans have and are is gift from God is celebrated especially in his *Hymn of the Universe* (1965).

Chardin was born in south-central France in 1881. He was the fourth of 11 children raised in a strongly religious family. From an early age, he began collecting stones and minerals, had an “innate appetite for the earth,” and a “certain love of the invisible.” He entered the Jesuits at age 18 where his interest in science was encouraged by his superiors. He was ordained a priest at age 30. Shortly thereafter as a stretcher bearer during World War I, he saw firsthand the evils of war. Ironically he would come to be criticized by religious authorities for being theologically too optimistic and dealing inadequately with sin.

His life experience as both priest and scientist spoke of a profound integration of faith and science, an intimate intermingling of divine, spiritual, and material. Like Ignatius he experienced several mystical moments. His theology however did not resonate well with the religious authorities, and he was “exiled” to China for 12 years and not allowed to publish anything theological or philosophical. *The Phenomenon of Man* (1959) and *Divine Milieu* (1960), like the rest of his writings, were published posthumously. Chardin died in 1955 at age 74 in New York. If the central Jesuit question is how to experience God in one’s life, Chardin answered, by uniting ourselves with the material, cosmic world, and with each other. An oft-quoted Chardin line captures this sense: “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”

### **Karl Rahner**

Karl Rahner was one of the most influential and prolific theologians of the twentieth century. He was an official papal theologian for Vatican Council II and was pivotal in shaping the Council’s thinking on church and revelation. He was a pastor and theologian who grappled with real-life issues, beginning with the search for God, questions of life meaning, religious inclusivity, women’s ordination, and the everyday dynamics of hope, forgiveness, gratitude, guilt, and failure.



He loved history and sought pastoral answers in the teachings of the church. His theological starting point was human experience, most especially the radical questioning of human existence. Humans are fully themselves in consciously exploring their desires, their “infinite longing” but not finding satisfaction, and ultimately in union with God revealed in Christ. For Rahner, the Spiritual Exercises were “the existential root out of which he did all his thinking.” His theology emerged from his mystical encounter with God, and his pastoral practice was to encourage such encounter for all persons.

Karl Rahner was born in Freiberg, Germany, in 1904. He was the fourth of seven children raised in a middle-class family. At age 18 he entered the Jesuits and was ordained at age 28. His older brother Hugo was also a Jesuit. After only 2 years in the Jesuit novitiate, he published his first article, “Why prayer is so indispensable,” and in so doing launched his life focus on spiritual practice. Rahner lived for 62 years as a Jesuit and died at the age of 80 in 1984.

### John Courtney Murray

John Courtney Murray, like Rahner, was an architect of many of the Second Vatican Council’s most significant ideas. His was a vocation of bridging religion and public life. He held multiple public and civic positions and engaged diverse issues including academic freedom, religious education in public schools, tax aid to public schools, Selective Service classification, and US-Soviet relations. He advocated for religious freedom and argued for substantive church and civic debate on moral issues, trusting in Americans’ abilities to deepen their religious commitments. “For him, contemporary society (church and state) was healthy and moral in direct proportion to the types of questions that it collectively pursued. The broader the types of inquiry, the healthier the society” (Hooper 1993, p. 2). He argued for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue and dialogue with atheists. He struggled with the Catholic Church’s “over-developed sense of protectiveness and authority.” In 1954 his writing

on religious freedom drew the censure of the Vatican; only 9 years later he was invited into a substantive role in the Vatican Council. His most famous book was *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (1960).

Murray was born in 1904 in New York, entered the Jesuits at age 17, and was ordained a priest in 1933. He was a Jesuit for 47 years and died at the age of 63 in 1967. Early Jesuit missionaries like Francis Xavier and Matteo Ricci found that the Christian faith needed to respect, learn from, and approach other faith traditions with humility. John Courtney Murray heard God’s voice in the dialogue between faith traditions, between church and state institutions, within church structures, and between the pulls of history and the future. His legacy was to embrace and not fear diverse voices.

### William Meissner

W.W. Meissner is a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and Jesuit priest practicing in Boston, Massachusetts. He brings together religious training in theology and philosophy with medical and analytic training. John Courtney Murray was his mentor. Meissner’s professional life task has been to build bridges between psychology and theology and between psychoanalysis and faith. He shows the interdependence of psychological and spiritual identity, how “grace builds on nature” while “respecting the ego’s decision-making functions,” and how psychosocial development has psychospiritual equivalents. He challenges Freud’s view of religion as pathological and argues for the reality base and healthy dimension of religious illusion. Meissner has developed an impressive body of work including *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (1984), *Life and Faith* (1987), *Foundations for a Psychology of Grace* (1966), three texts exploring Ignatius and Ignatian Spirituality, and most recently *Time, Self, and Psychoanalysis* (2007). Like Ignatius, Meissner seeks to “find God in all things,” most specifically in the interplay between psychology/psychoanalysis and faith/religion.

## Conclusion

Other Jesuit “giants” might have been chosen in place of the above five. Bernard Lonergan is a Canadian theologian with significant work in the area of theological method. Robert Drinnan was Dean of Boston Law School until he became a Congressman from Massachusetts. William Barry is a psychologist, author, and spiritual director with significant contributions in the area of prayer and spiritual direction. The list goes on.

The abovementioned five Jesuits embody the charism of “contemplative in action.” They are grounded in the experience and vision of the Spiritual Exercises. They have experienced the grace of God’s self-giving often in profound mystical ways. Their response to God’s self-gift is gratitude and service. Each in their own way has sought to “save souls.” Jesuit spirituality is respectful of culture and individual freedom, while keenly aware of human limitation, constraining attachments, and social sinfulness. Jesuit spirituality is optimistic and hopeful, believing faith needs to engage fully with culture and reality. It is necessarily adaptive. It is particularly attentive to the dynamics of human desire, believing that God and human fulfillment are to be found in the depths of the heart’s desires.

## See Also

- ▶ [Grace](#)
- ▶ [Ignatius of Loyola](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Teilhard de Chardin](#)

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## Jesus

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There is no conclusive evidence to disprove the existence of the Jesus of history, although what evidence that does exist regarding his earthly life and ministry is minimal. Scholars date his birth at ca. 4 BCE. According to the Gospels, his home where he grew up was in Nazareth, possibly in lower Galilee (Matt. 2.23; Mark 1.9; Luke 1.26; John 1.45f). Most likely Jesus had siblings and was raised in a Jewish home and in Jewish traditions including attending synagogue and temple worship and becoming versed in the Jewish Scriptures. He probably helped his father as a builder in a nearby city. His public life begins at about age 30 and is marked in the NT Gospels by his baptism by John the Baptist in the River Jordan (Mark 1.9–11; Matt. 3.13–17;

Luke 3.21–22; John 1.29–34). John the Baptist is thought to have been a member of the Essenes, a Jewish priestly millennia list sect invested in ascetic, apocalyptic beliefs, and practices. The Gospels portray Jesus in a stronger yet respectful light in relation to John the Baptist, suggesting a regard for the Essenes, connecting Jesus himself within the apocalyptic tradition of the Essenes, as well as the Maccabees and the *Book of Daniel*. In this way he is presented as one who carries further and brings to fruition the apocalyptic expectations of past generations. He is presented as an itinerant preacher traveling from village to village addressing the uneducated and poor of an agrarian culture prevalent during this time. Scholars liken him to the cynic philosophers who are speaking out against the social norms of its society. He speaks of the “Kingdom of God,” an envisioned new world order of social justice and divine sovereignty. There are various meanings of this worldview presented by the Gospel writers, although the notion of a definitive and timely advent of the Kingdom is common to all of them. Jesus expected this religiopolitical shift to happen in his lifetime (e.g., Mark 8.38; Matt. 10.23, 16.27–28; Luke 9.23–27), as did Paul his (unknown) contemporary (1 Thes. 4.13–18; 1 Cor. 15). Being outspoken and visionary, Jesus attracts followers – including a selection of disciples. The Gospel of John presents Mary Magdalene as an intimate follower of Jesus, while making reference also to the “Beloved Disciple” whom Jesus loved (John 13.23–25). Jesus was arrested and executed as a martyr by Rome in ca. 33 CE. More than the historical figure, most of the early Christian literature including the New Testament presents some quality of the spiritualized Jesus. He appears as one who is transfigured (Mark 9.2–10) and resurrected (Mark 16.1–8) from the dead. Interestingly, his followers as portrayed in the Gospels appear not to expect an empty tomb nor a resurrection. In all four Gospels the women go to the tomb expecting to find his crucified body sealed within it. In the Gospel of John when Mary Magdalene sees that the tomb is empty, she demands that someone has taken Jesus’ body

and put it somewhere else (John 20.13–15; cf. Mark 16.1; Luke 24.5). However, a variety of postmortal epiphany experiences of Jesus are presented. Jesus appears to Mary after his resurrection (John 20.11–18). He appears to the disciples who are gathered together in a closed room (John 20.19–23; cf. 24–29) and again appears to them on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias (John 21.1–14). He appears to Saul on his way to Damascus resulting in Saul’s conversion to Christianity (Acts 9.1–22). He also appears to Peter (Acts 10.1–23) and to Stephen (Acts 7.54–60). The meaning of Jesus’ resurrection has received much attention. For Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–254), Jesus as the Christ occurs as the New Adam being in the pure and unbroken likeness of the divine prior to the Fall (*First Principles* I.2.8). Augustine says how Christ as *Adam secundus* restores the damaged *imago Dei* to its original state. This act of restoration extends even to the dead (*descensus ad inferos*). Freud likens Christ to Mithras who alone sacrifices (the bull) for the atonement of the guilt of the brothers (Freud 1913, p. 190). For Jung, Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self and represents a “totality of a divine or heavenly kind, a glorified man... unspotted by sin” (Jung 1969, p. 37). Paul speaks of being transformed in Christ by the “renewal of the mind” (*anakainōsei tou nous*) (Rom. 12.2; cf. 2 Cor. 4.16), relating a notion of spiritual rebirth which is fully penetrating. It is a reformulation process already begun and ongoing and will be brought to completion upon Christ’s return (Rom. 8.18–25). Through Christ one experiences both suffering/dying and transformation into a spiritual body (*sōma pneumatikon*) (1 Cor. 15.44), a body which will have angelic substance and illumination like the stars (1 Cor. 15.41; cf. Dan. 12; Ezek. 1.28; Matt. 22.30).

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Jewish Care and Counseling

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The matter of Jewish identity is complex and multifaceted. Judaism is typically described as the religious system of the Jews, based on the belief in one G-d who created the Earth and gave the Torah in a revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The Jewish philosopher Rabbi Moses ben Maimon or Maimonides (1135–1204) set forth the 13 principles of faith, compiled from the 613 mitzvot or commandments found within the Torah (the five books of Moses). These encapsulate the essential requirements of Jewish belief in his commentary to the Mishnah (Sanhedrin, 10):

1. Belief in the existence of the G-d the creator.
2. G-d is unity.
3. G-d is incorporeal.
4. G-d is eternal.
5. Prayers are to be directed to G-d alone.
6. The words of the prophets are true.
7. Moses was true and the chief of the prophets.
8. The whole Torah now in our possession is that which was given to Moses.
9. The Torah will not be changed
10. G-d knows all of the deeds and thoughts of man.
11. G-d rewards those that keep his commandments and punish those that transgress them.
12. The Messiah will come.
13. G-d will resurrect the dead.

Jewish identity, however, is not predicated on one's set of beliefs and/or observances. A Jewish person does not necessarily practice Judaism, nor does one's strict observance of all the tenants of Judaism automate one's acceptance as a Jew. In accordance with halakha (Jewish religious law), one's Jewishness is either passed down matrilineally or through a conversion process to Judaism. However, some nonorthodox Jews support the transmission of Jewish identity through patrilineal descent. The matter of what constitutes a valid conversion to Judaism is an issue of contention across Jewish denominations, with the traditional movements denying the lawfulness of conversions taking place within the more liberal sects. There are further controversies with regard to whether one retains their Jewishness should they convert to another religion, or self-identify as atheist, as well as the matter of who should rightfully be considered Jewish by Israeli legislation, and so therefore have the right to settle and gain citizenship in Israel. For summaries of the most common denominations of Judaism, see entries on Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, Reform Judaism, and Reconstructive Judaism.

It is beyond the scope of this entry, which is concerned with the matters of Jewish care and counseling, to address in any depth positionings in the ongoing debates as to who is and is not rightfully considered a Jew, nor is it the intent to define the experience of Jewishness in a homogenous manner, but rather to acknowledge the concept of Jewish identity and culture as rooted in a particular social and historical context which despite the vast differences across Jewish individuals and communities have certain implications on the worldview of Jewish clients in treatment. The Jewish experience of psychotherapy and counseling has been historically ignored perhaps in part due to the fact that theirs is what is considered an invisible minority status (one cannot deduct Jewish identity by appearance alone, without the presence of external artifacts such as the presence of a star of David or a yarmulke) and in part because Jews often view themselves as having a bicultural identity, developed in part by their membership within a particular country and society (Schlosser et al. 2009).

In recent years there has been an upsurge of research and interest in ethnocultural factors in mental health care and the need for psychotherapists and counselors to be aware of Jewish culture, religion, and ethnicity and the impact that it has on the lives of their Jewish clients. This remains challenging as there is not any simple way of encapsulating the essence of the Jewish experience.

## Jewish Issues

Schlosser (2006) asserts that there are basic issues and experiences that all Jewish people will have to negotiate. These include (a) anti-Semitism, (b) the Shoah (i.e., the Holocaust), (c) internalized anti-Semitism, and (d) the invisibility of Judaism. Anti-Semitism, defined as “a hostile attitude toward the Jews that has become institutional and traditional” (Halpern 1987, p. 3), has been prevalent across cultures in various forms for over 4,000 years and persists in contemporary society in blatant (Holocaust denial, Jewish conspiracy theories) and more subtle manners (exaggerations of the Jewish sphere of influence in government, finance, and the media). Anti-Semitic stereotypes impact religious and secular Jews alike, and for some Jewish people, learning about anti-Semitic events may be experienced as traumatic (Friedman et al. 2005). The Shoah (translated literally as “catastrophe” from Hebrew) is a term preferred by many Jews for what is more commonly known as the Holocaust, the attempt at annihilation of the Jewish people by the Nazi regime, which resulted in the murder of over six million Jews. Research on the intergenerational transmission of trauma has led to the conclusion that all Jews feel the impact of this collective suffering and near extermination. One such result of this is the climate of fear experienced by Jews living in the Diaspora and the matter of “Jewish paranoia,” an issue raised by Kaye/Kantrowitz: “Many of us were taught that the world is dangerous because the world is dangerous. A therapist who treats this fear as

a pathology seriously misses the point” (1991, p. 12). Another consequence is the matter of internalized anti-Semitism, which may manifest in feelings of self-hatred or shame regarding one’s Jewish identity, distancing oneself from the Jewish culture and heritage, and hostility towards practicing Jews. As mentioned above, people of Jewish identity are members of “a hidden diversity” (Naumburg 2007). Langman (1995) posits that they have had a minimal focus in multiculturalism for the following reasons: they are seen as an assimilated nonminority, economically privileged, part of the white majority, members of a religion rather than a culture, and due to the lack of awareness of Jewish oppression. The lack of attention to Jewish multicultural issues contributes to the Jewish people feeling alienated and marginalized by the mainstream.

## Jewish Identity in the Consulting Room

It has been suggested that when a therapist and client share a background, empathy and rapport may be more readily established (Alladin 2002). However it is wrong to assume that a Jewish therapist is preferable for Jewish clients. In fact gentile clinicians may offer a unique space for Jewish clients who wish to explore their beliefs and practices, without feelings of guilt or shame related to appearing “a bad Jew,” or “not Jewish enough,” to a Jewish therapist (Naumburg 2007). The biases and beliefs that a Jewish therapist may have around their own identity may similarly provide a difficulty when understanding the experience of the Jewish client (Krieger 2010). Whether or not there is a shared Jewish identity and regardless of how knowledgeable in Judaism one is, it is impossible for the therapist to know how the client experiences lived Judaism and must have a willingness to work with the question into the room. The culturally sensitive clinician should seek understanding of the Jewish client’s level of religious observance and relationship with the Jewish community and with the dominant culture at large. Not every Jewish client will

disclose their Jewish identity, however, and it is essential to follow the client's lead in this respect and with the utmost sensitivity in inquiring about a client's religious and ethnic background. The therapist must negotiate between demonstrating interest and respect for Judaism as an essential component of identity and respecting the wishes of the client whether or not to disclose this information (Schlosser 2006). Ultimately it is for the client to determine their Jewish identity's relevance to their difficulties which led them to seek help.

## Jewish Families

Culturally competent mental health practitioners need an understanding of the central role of the family in Jewish culture and to foster an awareness of the possible value conflicts between its relatively collectivist culture and the biases of traditional therapies which place a strong emphasis on the individual. The importance of family in Judaism is emphasized in both the Torah and the Talmud (rabbinical teachings and commentary on Jewish law), and the subject of marriage and childbearing is regarded as the fulfillment of G-d's will. As is set forth in Genesis 1:27–28, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." Within Orthodox communities, arranged marriages are commonplace. Intermarriage (i.e., the marriage of a Jewish person to someone not Jewish) is forbidden by halakha. The consequence of choosing such a marriage is exclusion from the family of origin and the Jewish community. Instances of intermarriage have risen substantially in recent decades, and as a result the response of parents of children who have chosen intermarriage ranges from acceptance to sitting shiva (carrying out rites of mourning), as though the child had died. Jewish families are typically child centered, and there are laws, which dictate the manner in which children and parents interact with one another; it is the duty of the parents to transmit Jewish values, history, and identity to the child and the duty of the child to honor and respect his parents. Conflicts around

negotiating parental expectations and the emotional repercussions of being pulled towards their own desires are common emergent issues for Jewish clients in psychotherapy. The prospect of differentiation from the family of origin in asserting one's beliefs and lifestyle is a common struggle for adult Jews. For example, the requirement to honor and respect parents may prompt a sense of obligation for some clients to marry and have children before they are ready (Krieger 2010). The matter of defining boundaries and refining connections and obligations between family members across generations may be indicated in therapeutic work with Jewish families (Naumburg 2007).

## Responsibilities of the Clinician in Counseling Jewish Clients

Clinicians working with Jewish clients have a duty to develop understanding of how anti-Semitism has manifested within their society historically as well as the manner in which it persists today. The first port of call is acknowledgement of its existence and to confront one's own beliefs and behaviors around Jewish culture and Jewish people. Sensitivity to one's own assumptions and prejudices is paramount prior to starting the therapeutic process with someone of a minority status, whether or not the clinician shares that aspect of identity. Counseling professionals should make an effort to have a basic understanding of Judaism, its history, and traditions as well as some awareness of the tenants of living a Jewish life. At the same time, the clinician needs to retain awareness that Judaism is more than a religion and that Jewish identity is widely variable and may be experienced differently between individuals within the same religious denomination and even within the same family of origin. For this reason the clinician must be prepared to ask questions of the client's experience of cultural identity. Finally when counseling Jewish clients, clinicians would be well served to keep in mind that many taken-for-granted concepts such as enmeshment and



paranoia are culturally bound and to maintain a flexible approach breaching such areas with caution and sensitivity. It is not just the client who sits with the therapist in the consulting room, but a host of familial and cultural experiences with distinctive support systems and variable communication styles.

## See Also

► [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Jewish Law

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## General

Known in Hebrew as “Halakhah” (lit. “going” or “walking”), Jewish law represents a broad legal tradition regulating the full range of human activity including criminal matters, torts, worship, sexuality, marriage, divorce, diet, Sabbath observance, business ethics, and communal structure. Since the Middle Ages, a number of legal codes have purported to detail it in its entirety; however, no single book or set of books contains the full corpus of Jewish law. Rather, Jewish law is primarily a common law system with individual rabbis serving as judges who apply past precedents to novel situations. As rabbis may differ significantly in their interpretations of authoritative texts, individual practice under the aegis of Jewish law can vary widely from community to community.

## Biblical Law

The roots of Jewish law begin in the legal sections of the Pentateuch, Exodus 19–24, Leviticus 1–26, and Deuteronomy 4–26. These biblical law codes combine apodictic and casuistic laws, suggesting a rich legal tradition in the biblical period containing both a centralized ruling authority and an organic process for law to develop as experience accumulated. Even in its own time however, the laws of the Pentateuch were not sufficient by themselves to govern a society. Entire fields, such as family law, are virtually ignored, and individual dictates are often too vague to be applied in practice; for example, there are several commands to observe the Sabbath but almost no explicit direction regarding how to do so. Consequently, judges

and communal leaders began adapting, expanding, and interpreting biblical law from its inception. No written record of this legal discourse from the early postbiblical period exists today, but a vast oral tradition of legal exegesis was transmitted from generation to generation of communal leaders. These legal decisors – called “rabbis” from the first century onward – were viewed as spiritual descendants of the biblical prophets such that their interpretations and legal rulings held that status of biblical law even when they clearly limited or contradicted an explicit biblical command.

### Rabbinic Tradition

This oral tradition was first written in collections of Legal Midrash (*Midrash Halakhah*) somewhere between the second and fifth centuries. The books of Legal Midrash follow the order of the Pentateuch and purport to interpret each verse with legal ramifications. Some of the exegesis seems faithful to the original intent of the text, and other interpretations represent a clear effort to tie the current practices of the time to biblical verses even when no obvious link exists. This process of Legal Midrash allowed devotees to believe that their spiritual practice was rooted in the Bible even when the biblical text itself was too foreign or too vague to be of practical use without significant adaptation.

In second-century Palestine, Rabbi Judah the Prince compiled a vast legal text called the Mishnah (“Teaching”). It is arranged topically instead of according to the order of the Pentateuch. Unlike later law codes, it rarely presents definitive rulings on controversial issues; rather it summarizes generations of debates among scholars and records dissenting opinions. Often the positions described are not accompanied by the legal reasoning supporting them, but occasionally the rationale or exegetical basis underlying each side of the debate is presented. The Mishnah was quickly canonized and rapidly disseminated among Jews. Its popularity elicited extensive interpretation and expansion. Scholars speculated about how each rabbi arrived at his particular

ruling, brought borderline cases to further define each position, and added glosses to cover new situations. This body of interpretation on the Mishnah came to be called Gemara (“Learning”) and was eventually transmitted together with the Mishnah in a combined form that today we call the Talmud.

The Talmud grew to an incredible size before it was sealed in the fifth century. It weaves its legal discourse together with narrative, hagiography, theology, folk wisdom, and biblical exegesis of a nonlegal nature. It became the focus of Jewish scholarship for centuries and the basis for all future legal rulings. Like the Mishnah before it however, the Talmud often does not offer a definitive ruling on an open question but rather explores the rationales behind each viable opinion. Consequently, rabbis in the post-Talmudic period faced with the need to make a specific legal determination often corresponded by letter with more senior rabbis requesting advice on how to apply a particular Talmudic passage to a practical situation. These letters are known as Teshuvot (“Responsa”) and came to set authoritative legal precedents. Later Teshuvot cite earlier Teshuvot at least as much as they cite Talmudic discussions.

### Medieval Period

In the Middle Ages, several leading rabbis attempted to write legal codes summarizing all the Teshuvot and other opinions on a given topic to date, allowing the reader to quickly find a definitive ruling. Many of these codes were criticized for omitting dissenting opinions and oversimplifying what had become a richly textured system of legal discourse. Nevertheless, these codes quickly found popularity among rabbis and knowledgeable Jews daunted by the breadth of texts on even the most simple topic. The most famous of these codes (the *Mishneh Torah* compiled by Moses Maimonides between 1170 and 1180 and the *Shulkan Arukh* compiled by Joseph Caro in the 1540s) are still studied and cited today by rabbis as authoritative rulings on a wide range of subjects. Despite the

popularity of these comprehensive codes, their rulings were general and required additional nuance prior to application in specific situations. Consequently, the responsa literature expanded throughout the premodern and modern periods and remains today the primary source for specific legal rulings.

Though ritual questions were usually addressed by an individual local rabbi, criminal, family, and civil matters were generally considered before a rabbinic court, called a Beit Din, consisting of three or more rabbis. From the Roman period onward, few Jewish communities were afforded sufficient autonomy by the ruling authority to hear criminal cases. Jewish courts themselves ceded the authority to rule on capital cases. Nevertheless, throughout history, civil matters were commonly decided according to Jewish law by rabbinic courts well into the modern period and remain so in some Jewish communities today. These courts have a range of non-corporeal enforcement mechanisms, most notably the threat of excommunication – a very serious punishment in the premodern period when the excommunicated Jew would have been unable to integrate into the surrounding non-Jewish society. It is a principle of Jewish law that, with rare exception, the secular laws of the ruling authority supersede Jewish law when the two come in conflict.

## Contemporary Perspectives

Varying perspectives on Jewish law form the basis of the divisions between Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, and other types of Jews today. Orthodox Jewish theologians generally argue for strict adherence to Jewish law and believe that if it changes at all, it does so only very slowly. Conservative Jewish thinkers similarly value the observance of Jewish law, but most argue that it has always evolved over time and must continue to do so. Forward development of the law is most necessary when the law itself causes harm or otherwise alienates individuals such as when it excludes women from ritual

practice. Reform Jewish leaders generally distinguish between Jewish law relating to ritual matters and Jewish law relating to ethical behavior. They claim that the level of adherence to Jewish law on ritual matters should be determined by the individual and that Jews today only have an obligation to observe Jewish law with respect to ethical behavior. Of all groups, the Reform movement sees Jewish law as the most fluid and open to change. Individual Jews identifying with any one of these movements may or may not observe Jewish law in the ways suggested by the theologians of the movement.

Westerners are used to a divide between the public and private spheres, with law governing only the public and saying little about private behavior. Consequently, individuals steeped in classic Western tradition often have a difficult time appreciating the vast reach of Jewish law into even the most intimate matters an individual may face. For those who do adhere to Jewish law, discrepancies between legal requirements and personal practice can cause significant anxiety that is often underestimated by outsiders who are not accustomed to a legal system governing private matters.

One's adherence to Jewish law is measured strictly in terms of one's behavior. Consequently, one may be considered a pious practitioner of the tradition in the absence of underlying belief. This prioritization of action over creed explains why many Jews today consider themselves agnostic, atheistic, or otherwise doubtful of traditional theological claims yet still feel deeply committed to particular religious practices. The apparent disconnect between belief and action can appear illogical or sometimes even hypocritical to the outsider who may expect faith to serve as the primary motivation for religious action.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Talmud](#)

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## Jewish Mourning Rituals

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Ritual practices surrounding death and bereavement are strictly observed by many modern Jews, even those who have abandoned traditional behaviors in other aspects of their lives. Prior to death, the custom is for the dying person to recite a brief confessional prayer called the *vidui* in order that he or she leaves this world with no guilt or sin. There are, however, no theological consequences if this prayer is not offered.

### Prior to Burial

Immediately following death, utmost care is taken to preserve the dignity of the corpse. It is covered with a sheet and never left unattended from the moment of death until the moment of burial. Those who accompany the body during this period are expected to recite Psalms and refrain from casual conversation. Jewish tradition considers the body as belonging to God and only “on loan” to human beings while alive. Consequently, following death when the body returns to divine care, it must remain as intact as

possible. For this reason, autopsies and other postmortem procedures are strictly forbidden except when required by civil law or done for the express purpose of saving someone else’s life, as in the case of organ donation. Similarly, cremation is traditionally avoided on the grounds that no one other than God has the right to destroy the body.

Because the body is not embalmed, burial is done as quickly as possible, usually within 24–48 h barring exceptional circumstances. In the time prior to interment, a volunteer group called the *hevra kadisha* (“sacred society”) washes the body thoroughly and immerses the corpse in ritually pure water. They wrap the body in shrouds and sometimes also a prayer shawl. No other clothes are worn to show that all people are equal in death, regardless of wealth or social status.

### Burial and Funeral

So that the body may return to the earth without hindrance, no objects are buried with the corpse. In Israel, no coffin is used. In Western countries where coffins are required by law, a simple pine box is permitted. It is sealed by the *hevra kadisha* when they finish preparing the body. Open caskets at the funeral are not permissible under strict Jewish law.

Prior to the funeral, mourners will rend a garment or tear a black ribbon pinned over the heart as a sign of grief. Interment follows a simple service with prayers and eulogies. Because it is a religious obligation for members of a community to care for those who have died, all those present at the graveside share the responsibility of burying the body by each shoveling earth directly into the grave until the coffin is completely covered. This practice forces mourners to confront the finality of their loss; denial becomes impossible. Jewish graves are traditionally marked with a simple headstone again symbolizing human equality in the face of death.

## After Burial

For the 7 days following burial, immediate family members will observe *shiva* – a custom in which they remain at home, refrain from unnecessary work, and receive visitors. The community has the obligation to ensure that the family is well fed and always has sufficient numbers in the home for a prayer quorum. The continual presence of visitors generally prevents mourners from retreating into isolation or self-destructive behavior. Mourners sit on low stools to signal their discomfort. Mirrors in the home are usually covered as a rejection of vanity at a time of such intense grief. Visitors offer a simple blessing and avoid casual conversation, focusing instead on remembering the deceased and listening to the mourners describe their experience.

In the 30 days following burial, traditional mourners will refrain from sexual activity, shaving, or attending joyous events such as weddings or concerts. At the end of 30 days, these restrictions relax; however, the children of the deceased continue in an extended bereavement period in which a prayer called the *kaddish*, first recited at the graveside, is offered thrice daily during the year following the death. Because the prayer may only be recited as part of a group of ten, this tradition compels mourners to attend synagogue and avoid the social isolation that often accompanies grief. On each anniversary of the death, the mourner lights a memorial candle in the home and recites the *kaddish* prayer in synagogue.

## See Also

- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Jewish Reconstructionism

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Reconstructionism is the fourth major denomination of Judaism and was introduced by Lithuanian-born Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan (1881–1983) in the 1920s in America. It is the only major sect of Judaism to originate inside the United States, and the movement has had little reach beyond American borders. Rabbi Kaplan began his career as an Orthodox rabbi, but his dissatisfaction with Orthodoxy brought him to the Conservative rabbinical seminary where he retained a tenureship for 54 years. In this position, he taught Judaism as an ever-evolving civilization and asserted the need for Jewish people to reexamine the practices and customs of traditional Judaism in light of the changes and advances of the times. Kaplan sought to change the emphasis of Conservative Judaism so that it would appeal to Jews who had become psychologically and spiritually distant from their heritage. It was his belief that Judaism had persisted for thousands of years despite the adversities the Jewish people were subjected to because they held the belief that following tenets of Judaism would translate into otherworldly salvation. Kaplan asserted that modern Jews no longer believe in otherworldly salvation, and so for Judaism to remain relevant within the psyche of the Jewish people, it needed to be redefined “into a religion which can help Jews attain this-worldly salvation” (Kaplan 1962, p. viii).

The essence of G-d for Kaplan was something which man can never understand and therefore not of his concern. Rather his interest was in the psychosocial purpose G-d has in man’s life. With this as his aim he founded the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, setting out to “reconstruct” Judaism as it was lived within twentieth-century American culture. Although it was not Kaplan’s original intention to establish a new denomination of Judaism, its

necessity became apparent to his supporters, and in 1940 the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation was established.

Kaplan controversially rejected many principles of Jewish belief, including the concept of chosenness, a personal messiah, and rabbinic authority. The absence of these traditionally Jewish tenets, some of which have been cited as the location of the focus of anti-Semitism, has particular implications on the self-identity of Reconstructionist Jews. The great conflict between Reconstructionism and Orthodox Judaism is that theology is not at the center of the Reconstructionist movement and *halaka* are apprehended of as “folkways,” rather than binding tenets of Judaism. The Torah is seen by Reconstructionist Jews as the response of the Jewish people to G-d’s presence, rather than a gift from G-d to his chosen people. Likewise, the *mitzvot* (commandments) are believed to be of human invention. Religion for Kaplan is a psychosocial phenomenon based on “neither belief, nor tenet, nor practice, but rather the continuous life of the Jewish people” (Liebman 1970, p. 7).

The matter of gender equality is greatly emphasized within the Reconstructionist movement; female rabbis have been ordained by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College since its conception, and it was Kaplan’s own daughter who underwent the first Bat Mitzvah ceremony (analogous to the traditional Bar Mitzvah signifying a boy’s transition to adulthood) to mark her coming of age. Kaplan’s reworking of the Haggadah “the New Haggadah” and “The Sabbath prayer book” eliminates ideas and beliefs from the classical frameworks that are inconsistent with the beliefs of the Reconstructionist institution and maintain gender neutrality. Unlike the Reform movement, Reconstructionism advocates the performance of traditions and practices of Judaism for the purpose of maintaining unity and connection for the Jewish people and suggests that “folkways” should be undertaken unless there is a good reason not to do so. As such, the traditional Jewish rituals are most central to Reconstructionist thought and routine.

Hebrew is largely used in the liturgy, yarmulkes are worn, and the observance of Sabbath and dietary restrictions are encouraged; however, it is left to the individual congregations to choose democratically.

The Reconstructionist movement has continued to evolve with the times, and in recent years Kaplan’s successors have returned their attention to spiritual and mystical matters of Jewish thought. From a psychological standpoint, there are particular implications of the Reconstructionist rejection of the identity of the Jews as a chosen people. Reconstructionist Jews are more likely to view themselves as having a bicultural identity than members of other denominations of Judaism. American traditions of moral philosophy adapt well within the psyche of Reconstructionists, who perceive many beliefs and worldviews around *halacha* as outdated. The traditional values retain an importance as connections with the Jewish heritage but are married with a democratic approach. Reconstructionist Jewish identity is predicated, not on faith or belief in the supernatural but in psychological attachment to the Jewish people as a matter of feeling. The sect is alluring for Jews who find themselves in the quandary of finding their cultural heritage less meaningful and yet are unable to repudiate Jewish heritage without feelings of loss and spiritual incompleteness.

The most frequently leveled criticism of Reconstructionist Judaism is that as it is without concrete theories about G-d’s essence, it is not a theology and is rather a perspective on the psychological implications of ascribing to one. There continues to be variations across populations, much like other denominations of Judaism, and due to this, it has been stated that there is not a single definition to the Reconstructionist idea of G-d. Mental health practitioners then, working with Reconstructionist Jews, should have at least a basic understanding of Judaism but also be prepared to inquire about the client’s particular sense of identity and where they see themselves within the Jewish Reconstructionist community.



## See Also

- ▶ Conservative Judaism
- ▶ Jewish Care and Counseling
- ▶ Orthodox Judaism
- ▶ Reform Judaism

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## Jewish Sexual Mores

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Classical Jewish tradition contains a wide spectrum of opinions about sexuality and sexual ethics. All rabbinic authorities share the core belief that sexual desire is natural and should be expressed through licit sexual behavior. The majority of traditional voices find nothing shameful about permissible sexual activity. To the

contrary, most rabbis claim that sex can be sacred and holy when accompanied by the proper intention.

The first commandment humans receive in the Bible is “to be fruitful and multiply.” This has been interpreted as a religious obligation to marry and attempt to have children. However, reproduction is not the sole purpose of sex in classical Jewish thought. Sexual pleasure, relief from desire, and the health benefits of sexual activity are often cited in rabbinic literature as reasons to engage in sexual intercourse even in situations when procreation is not possible. Jewish law, in fact, provides a wife with conjugal rights that continue after menopause which entitle her to a certain amount of sexual activity proportional to her husband’s age, health, and professional duties. Though some threads of asceticism exist in the tradition, celibacy is generally considered a rejection of God’s will that humans should function as sexual beings.

Ejaculation outside of intercourse, however, is considered problematic because it involves the unnecessary destruction of sacred material that has the potential to become life. This concern underlies the classical prohibitions against masturbation and the use of contraception. The prohibition against contraception does not outweigh the imperative in Judaism to pursue good health; consequently, contraception is permitted, even in the most restrictive Jewish communities, when it is necessary to ensure the physical health or mental well-being of the individual.

While the Bible includes no direct prohibition against unmarried individuals engaging in consensual sexual intercourse, later rabbinic tradition makes clear that the ideal sexual relationship occurs within the context of marriage. Divorce is considered a tragedy in Jewish tradition but not a sin. While social stigma persists in some insular Jewish communities, classical sources unanimously view the dissolution of marriage as consistent with divine will when one or both parties are suffering. Sex outside of marriage is discouraged in Jewish law. To avoid

sexual temptation, many Orthodox communities observe practices which prohibit unmarried individuals of the opposite sex from remaining alone in a room together or even casually touching each other. Liberal Jewish communities have abandoned these practices and generally are quite tolerant of monogamous consensual sexual relationships prior to marriage. Adulterous and incestuous relationships are punishable by death according to biblical law and have remained strictly forbidden throughout Jewish tradition.

Even within marriage, Jewish law governs sexual behavior. Jewish tradition has preserved the biblical prohibition against sexual intercourse during and immediately after menstruation. Observant couples will abstain from sex for up to 7 days following the cessation of menstrual flow. On the seventh blood-free day, the woman immerses in a ritual bath prior to resuming sexual relations. While this practice has fallen into disuse among many modern Jews, recent creative reinterpretations of the ritual have revived its observance in some liberal communities.

The Bible explicitly prohibits a man from “lying with a man as he would with a woman.” While scholars debate what this meant in its original context, it has been traditionally interpreted as forbidding male homosexual sex. Later rabbis similarly forbade lesbian sex, though this prohibition carries less weight. In modern times, many liberal Jewish authorities have sought to limit or altogether overturn these prohibitions.

## See Also

► [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Jewish Tradition and the Environment

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The essence of the Biblical/Jewish psychological approach to the environment becomes clearest when compared to the psychological view of the environment emerging from ancient Greek religion/mythology. The Greek mythological view portrays Gaia as “mother earth” and vacillates between worshiping the environment and ravaging it. Like woman, the earth is either to be idealized or raped. This entry will demonstrate this vacillation in the ancient records regarding Greek and Roman treatment of the environment.

The Biblical world does not see the earth in this psychological manner. God has created the world, both the heavens and the earth. The earth is not seen as a mother, and it is to be treated respectfully, not worshiped or raped. Athens and Jerusalem thus represent two contrasting psychologies regarding the earth and life upon it which are of vast importance to modern attitudes toward the environment. Let us compare these two different psychologies in more detail.

Greek and Biblical creation stories embody two radically different worldviews regarding the relationship between God (gods), nature, and the human being. Nature precedes the gods in the Olympian *Theogony*: “First of all there came Chaos” (p. 130), while God creates nature in the Biblical account: “When God began to

create heaven and earth. . .” (Genesis 1). This results in two different views of the relationship of the human being and his environment. For example, Zeus capriciously withholds knowledge of fire from man, thereby keeping humankind subservient. Prometheus surreptitiously steals it back to promote human independence (Ovid 1989, lines 76–86). In stark contrast, the rabbinic sages portray the Biblical God in decidedly more compassionate terms, providing the means for Adam to invent fire (Freedman et al. 1939, 11:2).

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of fire to primitive man. Primitive human beings were dominated by nature. Day and night are different worlds. The sunlight of day provides people with light and heat, enabling them to distinguish land from water and friendly animals and people from predatory and dangerous ones, and providing relief from cold. At night, the sun hides, and man is rendered helpless. But fire changes this. It generates light and heat to hold the environment at bay. Fire enables man to separate the light from the dark and civilization from wilderness. It also enables him to forge and sharpen weapons, cooking utensils, and medicinal treatments; make wheels; and cook and sanitize food. It enables man to constructively make his environment more inhabitable. Yet Zeus attempts to withhold this knowledge, while the Biblical God willingly gives it to Adam and Eve after their expulsion from Eden.

How do these stories impact on Graeco-Roman views of the environment? There is no simple answer to this question, although when we examine the evidence, we find a peculiar ambivalence. On the one hand, Earth, *Gaia*, was seen as the mother of gods, humans, and every living thing (*Homeric Hymns*, 30.1). As such, she should be worshiped and not altered in any way that upsets an abstract balance. On the other hand, many of her offspring were monsters, and her fecundity had a dark side.

As evidence for the idealizing pole, the environmental historian J. Donald Hughes (1996) argues in *Pan's Travail: Environmental Problems in Ancient Greece and Rome* that “the Greeks in particular thought that rearranging land and sea was a prideful challenge to Zeus, who had

ratified their limits when he divided the world with his brothers” (p. 51). Hughes offers the following example to support this thesis. When the people of Cnidus tried to dig a canal through the neck of land that connected them to Asia Minor, many injuries occurred to the workmen from flying rock splinters. They received the following explanation from the Oracle of Delphi: “Do not fence off the isthmus, do not dig. Zeus would have made an island had he willed it” (Herodotus 1975, line 174). They stopped work immediately. Along these lines, Hughes adds that during the invasion of Greece by the Persian king Xerxes, it was regarded as evidence of “pride going before a fall” that he had built a bridge of boats across the Hellespont, turning sea into land, and that he caused a canal to be cut through the Athos peninsula (Strabo 1854–1857, 14.2.5).

On the other hand, the Greek attitude toward the earth sometimes oscillates to the opposite extreme. While being aware of how to treat the soil (Hesiod 1991, line 464; White 1970, p. 177; Xenophon 1971, pp. 5–12), and the importance of fallowing the land and also crop rotation where soil-restoring legumes were planted in alternate years with other crops (Theophrastus 1976–1990, 4.7.3, 4.8.1–4.8.3; Theophrastus 1916, 8.11.8), Hughes suggests that “their use in the Mediterranean was limited by the small size of farms and the necessity of planting each species only where soil and exposure would favor it” (Hughes 1996, pp. 139–140; Pliny the Elder 1855–1857, 18.91; Vergil 1931, lines 73–75).

Though scientifically advanced, the Greeks and later the Romans seemed to have been quite indifferent regarding certain ravages to their environment. Hughes points in particular to the problems of deforestation, overgrazing, and erosion. Plato, for example, observed that the heavily forested mountains of Attica had been laid bare by the cutting of timber and by grazing, resulting in an erosion of the rich and deep soil. As a consequence, the springs and streams had dried up (Taylor 1929, 11b–d). Strabo offered a similar analysis, maintaining that the forests near Pisa had been exhausted by shipbuilding and the construction of

buildings in Rome and villas in the surrounding countryside (Strabo 1854–1857, 5.2.5).

A number of themes stand out in the Greek narratives:

1. Earth and sky exist prior to the gods and in fact create them. *Chaos* must be subdued for this process to occur.
2. The Earth Mother is a very ambivalent source. She gives life but also destroys it.
3. Zeus is trying to keep man dependent, sending him woman as a punishment for his gaining fire, which would have enabled him to control nature in a healthy way.
4. Man vacillates between idealizing and worshipping the earth and, conversely, ravaging and raping it.

The Biblical account is very different. God creates human beings, male and female, His ultimate handiwork, in His own image and gives them dominion over all in nature He has created (Genesis 1). The Bible describes the world and all that is in it as created by God in love. Humankind was given dominion over all, and the first people were placed in the Garden of Eden “to till it and tend it” (Genesis 2:15). It is incumbent on humanity not to wantonly destroy. Having dominion does not entitle man to misuse nature. Nature is not presented as something alien to man; it is neither to be worshiped nor raped, but instead tended and cared for lovingly and carefully. The land of Israel was to lie fallow one year out of every seven, and although the purpose was not specifically the replenishment of the soil, replenishment would serve as one benefit (Leviticus 25:2–7). “You shall not destroy” (*LoTashchit*) (Deuteronomy 20:19–20) is stated in the context of destroying trees but is understood in the rabbinic literature as including all sorts of wanton destruction. All that God created has its own purpose and beauty. A well-known Midrash recounts that David once did not understand why God needed to create spiders. Then a spider spun a web over the entrance to a cave where David was hiding so that his pursuers would not think of looking for him there (Midrash Alpha Beta Acheres d’Ben Sira 9).

The medieval *Sefer Hachinuch* (1988, line 529) writes that the essence of this law is to teach people to love what is good and beneficial

and to take care of it. “It is the way of pious people who love peace and rejoice in the good of the Creation that they would not destroy even a mustard seed and they will do all in their power to prevent needless destruction.”

In the same line of thinking, the Talmud (Talmud Bavli 1989–1999, *Shabbat* 105b) says that one who destroys anything in anger is as though guilty of worshipping idols, in the sense that he obeys the destructive urges in his nature rather than connecting with God and the wonders of His creation.

At the direct practical level, there are dozens of Biblical laws that regulate in great detail what we may and may not do to the environment. The Hebrew Scriptures prohibits the crossbreeding of different species of animals (Leviticus 19:19), and it bans the transplanting of branches of differing species of fruit trees (Leviticus 19:19, as per Maimonides, *Book of Commandments*, negative commandment no. 216) and the intermingling of seeds in planting (Deuteronomy 22:9). Having dominion does not entitle man to misuse nature, but rather exercise an attitude of respect and even awe, a notion that carries over into Jewish law which mandates individuals to recite blessings for all manner of natural phenomena (rainbow, lightning, shooting stars, the first blossoms of a tree, etc.).

Likewise, the Hebrew Bible prohibits various forms of activities that would involve cruelty to animals (Shochet 1984). We may not harness together animals of different species (Deuteronomy 22:6–7); we may not pass by an animal which has collapsed under its load, but are duty-bound to help it (Exodus 23:5, Deuteronomy 22:4); we may not slaughter a mother and its young on the same day (Leviticus 22:28) as we may not take the fledglings while the mother bird hovers over them. On three occasions, the Scripture warns against cooking the kid in its mother’s milk (Deuteronomy 14:21; Exodus 23:19, 34:26).

It is clear then that nature is not to be ravaged, but neither is it to be worshiped. There are times when trees must be cut down, in the service of human progress. Yet at the same time, all of God’s creation is entitled to be protected from wanton destruction. This is the rabbinic understanding of

the *Lo' Taschit* ("You shall not destroy") verse in Deuteronomy that literally bans *only* the destruction of *fruit-bearing* trees during war. Other trees may be destroyed and cut down in order to build bulwarks against the city that wars against one (Sifrei to Deut 20:19–20, Finkelstein edition of Sifrei Devaraim, pp. 238–240). Some Talmudic writings even give explicit permission to alter the environment if it is in the service of advancing human welfare. For example, the protection even of fruit-growing trees may be overridden by economic need (Talmud Bavli 1989–1999, *Bava Kamma* 91b–92a). Alteration or even destruction of parts of the environment for protection of health is permissible (Talmud Bavli 1989–1999, *Shabbat* 128b–129a). In short, human needs must always be balanced against environmental concerns.

Yet it is God and not humanity that is the eternal owner of all the earth. The Biblical God does not attempt to withhold the knowledge of fire from man, as has Zeus, instead encouraging man to incrementally improve on the environment as long as he does so responsibly with a respectful stewardship rather than insisting on an absolutist environmentalism or, worse, blind worship of nature. Environmental concerns must always be calibrated against human needs, and in the final analysis human needs will prevail. In the words of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, a great twentieth-century interpreter of Jewish law, there is an unavoidable dynamic tension between the capacity to exercise control over nature and the duty to act toward nature with a sense of fiduciary responsibility.

The following points stand out in these Biblical narratives:

1. God exists prior to the heaven and earth and in fact creates them. The world was at first unformed (*tohu vovohu*) and must be given form and structure rather than subdued.
2. Earth is not seen in sexually differentiated terms. There is no sense of an Earth Mother. The Biblical God creates man to tend and care for the world He has created.
3. The Biblical God is not seen as trying to keep man dependent. He gives man the gift of fire to enable him to help make nature inhabitable.
4. Human beings need not and indeed must not worship the earth or nature. Neither are they free to misuse, rape, or ravage it.

## See Also

- ▶ [Adam and Eve](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Earth Goddess](#)
- ▶ [Earth Mother](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Islam](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Law](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Midrash](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Moon and Moon Goddesses](#)
- ▶ [New Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [New Religions](#)
- ▶ [Orthodox Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Paganism](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Women in Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Yahweh](#)

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## Jihad

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*Jihad* is the Arabic word for the Muslim concept of holy war. Jihad can be a spiritual and physical war against infidels – nonbelievers – or it can be an inner war against temptation and sin.

The physical jihad is communal, pitting an Islamic culture in a crusade of sorts against non-Islamic cultures or against Muslims seen to be in a state of apostasy. In some cases jihad of this sort involves activities that many Muslims would consider un-Islamic – activities such as suicide and the killing of innocents. Jihad of this sort, known by different names, is common to all religions and cultures. The medieval crusades of European Christians were jihadist in effect. Jews, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, as well as animistic peoples, have all waged war in the name of their religions. Jihad of this sort assumes a natural superiority of one religion over all others and can, of course, lead to unspeakable acts and immense destruction and pain.

Inner jihad, known by Muslims as “the greater jihad,” is also common, under other names, to most religions. Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and others all subscribe to inner searching and inner struggles against thoughts and tendencies that interfere with what are considered religious-based moral standards.

Psychologically, the jihad that involves actual warfare and killing is often a projection of a communal feeling of arrogance or, more often, of frustration and depression resulting from injustice. The kind that involves such activities as suicide bombing and the glorification of “martyrdom” or the senseless killing of innocents, whether practiced by splinter groups or nations, is an ultimate expression of such arrogance or such depression and frustration.

Inner jihad, whether practiced by Muslims or others, is psychologically based in the universal human desire for wholeness, for the development of Self in the face of powers within and without that would repress and deny that development.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Sharia](#)



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## Job

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The *Book of Job* is part of the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament of the Christian Scriptures. Two distinct sections of the *Book of Job* are easily identified, given their differing literary style and content. The prologue (Job 1–2) and the epilogue (Job 42:7–17) are written in prose narrative, while the main body of the text (Job 3–42:6) comprises the poetic dialogues. The poetic section includes the dialogues between Job and his friends (Job 3–37) and, at the climax of the book, the divine speeches, with God speaking out of the whirlwind (Job 38–41) and Job’s responses (40:3–5; 42:1–6). While the prose and poetic sections are most probably of diverse authorship and historical origin, the book is best read as a coherent story. The *Book of Job* is a literary drama built around Job, a mythic figure who serves as an archetype for the human in search for religious and existential meaning in the face of undeserved suffering, an experience replicated endlessly throughout time and across all cultures. Job’s story is the story of everyman and everywoman who have tried to make sense of senseless, innocent suffering and who have tried to keep faith and hope alive in unendurable agony when hopelessness and despair seem to prevail.

While the *Book of Job* belongs to the Wisdom tradition, it challenged conventional religious wisdom that held that righteousness leads to

prosperity while wickedness leads to misfortune. By way of retribution, good is rewarded; wrongdoing is punished. The traditional moral belief was that suffering was the result of sinfulness; therefore, if one suffers, one must have done evil and sinned. The story of Job confronts these beliefs that continue to exist into the present time, pervading consciousness and culture. Job’s story is the universal narrative of the innocent who is honest and righteous yet horribly afflicted and who has not greatly sinned nor done evil yet grievously suffer. The opening line of the *Book of Job* is laden with meaning: “There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright; one who feared God and turned away from evil” (Job 1:1). An emphatic, forward-looking declaration is made in this description of Job that whatever is to happen next to Job does not happen because he has done anything wrong to deserve it. Job is not to blame for the agonizing pain and suffering he is about to endure.

Following the dialogue between God and Satan where, following Satan’s challenge, God allows the testing of Job (1:6–12; 2:1–6), a searing succession of tragic events unfolds for Job. He first loses his entire livestock and all the servants who cared for them. Then, in one fell swoop, all his sons and daughters perish. While he is grieving these horrific losses, he is afflicted with a leprous disease that scars him and marks him as an outcast from his community (1:13–19; 2:7). All which Job possesses, he loses. Engulfed by enormous anguish, Job is plunged into the silence of helplessness and despair for 7 days and nights. Head shaven and clothes torn asunder, Job is left wordless, sitting upon an ash heap (2:8–13). While his three friends first come to comfort him, sitting with him in his agony, they then confront Job, blaming him for causing his own misery, calling on him to recognize his sinfulness as the reason for his suffering:

Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?  
 Or where were the upright cut off? As I have seen,  
 those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.  
 By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they are consumed (4:7–8).

For you say, 'My conduct is pure, and I am clean in God's sight'. But, oh, that God would speak, and open his lips to you, and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom! For wisdom is many-sided. Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves (11:4–6).

Is it for your piety that God reproves you, and enters into judgment with you? Is not your wickedness great? There is no end to your iniquities (22:4–5).

Individuals afflicted by tragedy and loss, even if this be by natural cause or calamity, often carry the additional emotional burden that comes with wondering if they might have caused or been responsible for their suffering. Patients who have suffered childhood trauma and abuse often blame themselves for the cruelty and violence they experienced, believing on an affective level that they somehow caused this to happen, permitted it to continue, and did not do enough to make it stop. Therapeutically, the tendency towards self-blame can be understood as a way of defense and self-protection for the patient dealing with abuse and trauma. By blaming themselves, patients need not acknowledge the more awful realization that they were helpless, trapped in a situation that was out of their control. How much less terrifying it is to blame self and claim power, agency, and responsibility over what happened than to confront enormous grief and anger at the betrayal of those responsible for the abuse.

The tragic experiences of Job in the opening narrative also outline what is characteristic of trauma as it can be clinically understood. A traumatic event is extreme and terrifying, sudden and unpredictable, involving exposure to witness or threat of serious injury or death to oneself or to others (DSM-IV 1994). Such unexpected, unfathomable experiences that threaten life and boundaries of self can inundate and overwhelm physical and psycho-emotional resources, evoking responses of great horror, fear and terror, helplessness, and powerlessness. Trauma also upends foundational assumptions affectively formed from early on one's sense of self-worth, security, competency, and mastery; beliefs in the reliability, goodness, and trustworthiness of others; and assumptions that the world is safe, fair and just, orderly, and predictable and that life has inherent

balance, purposefulness, and meaning. Trauma shatters these beliefs and assumptions that had created stability in the present and provided a sense of hopefulness for the future. In the figure of Job is held a template of trauma: religious patients who have experienced trauma resonate with the impact of the tragic events that befell Job; his deep sense of horror, anguish, and helplessness at their unfolding; and the shattering of religious beliefs and God assumptions that had provided order and meaning to life. In the way of Job, patients can sit in and be with the speechlessness of their overwhelming pain and suffering. In the therapeutic space, the analyst is challenged to reverently witness to the unspeakableness of the trauma's impact, sharing in the terror and horror, helplessness, and powerlessness that demand venerable, vulnerable silence, as well as the empathy of presence, rather than facile interpretations and anxious interventions.

The *Book of Job* is replete with God questions, queries about the nature of God, and how divine activity is perceived and experienced. The succession of tragic events that befell Job is set off by God's innocent questions to Satan: "Where have you come from? . . . Have you considered my servant Job?" (1:7–8; 2:2–3) and Satan's challenging repartee: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" (1:9). In the midst of his anguish, Job raises his own questions and challenges to God: "Why have you made me your target? Why have I become a burden to you?" (7:20); "Why do you hide your face from me and count me as your enemy?" (12:24); "Why do the wicked live on, reach old age and grow mighty in power?" (21:7); "Why are times not kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days?" (24:1); "Did I not weep for those whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?" . . . "Does he not see my ways, and number all my steps?" (30:25; 31:4). Midway into the *Book of Job* is a hymn to wisdom where lies a question twice repeated that reflects the profound depth of Job's spiritual quest in the midst of his suffering: "Where shall wisdom be found and where is the place of understanding?" (28:12,20). God responds out of the whirlwind, claiming the divine right to inquire, also

inundating Job with questions: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? . . . I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?” (38:2–3). God’s questions to Job come one after another, besieging and beleaguering, leaving him speechless, with hand over his mouth (40:4–5); yet, in the epilogue, God affirms that Job’s persistent questioning towards a more radical, liberating understanding of the divine ways was a way of right speech about God (42:8).

Experiences of trauma and suffering can precipitate the doubt and challenge of traditional religious beliefs, in one’s questioning one’s understanding of God, the nature of divine power and authority over universal order, human freedom, and will. The *Book of Job* highlights the value of questing and questioning, of going beyond the bounds of what is known and conventional towards an authentic inquiry that dares enter the ineffable realm of mystery encountering the limitless, complex possibilities God, delving into the immeasurable depth of the divine-human relationship. From a space of integrity in the search for truth, one may discover a God one cannot limit, hold, or control: God elusive and enigmatic, paradoxical and contradictory, and God unfettered and radically free. Job’s experience of God who is both oppressor (6:4) and protector (14:13), persecutor (19:6–22) and redeemer (19:25–27), and enemy (13:24) and friend (29:4) manifests divine incongruity. Carl Jung describes this experience as an antinomy, God as a totality of inner opposites, and God who is everything in all its fullness. The prologue foreshadows this incongruity of God and the divine ways, when it describes God as having destroyed Job *hinnam*, “for no reason” (2:3). While God is apprehensible, God cannot be fully known, contained, or fathomed, for God is radically free, totally Other, and ultimately irreducible to the established bounds of belief systems. The cosmic order also reflects the divine nature. Job is turned over to the power of Satan, the Hebrew translation of which is closer to adversary: Job, as with all humans, will inevitably meet chaos, struggle, and adversity, an intrinsic part of life’s free, consequential unfolding.

While some religious patients who grapple with trauma, chronic suffering, and even the adversarial encounters of daily life find consolation in their religious tradition, others may rigidly hold on to beliefs that deny the complexity of human experience, refuse to acknowledge the expanse of divine mystery, and consolidate feelings of self-blame, inadequacy, shame, and guilt. The process of facilitating the creation and holding of an inner space enough for patients to notice their beliefs and observe how they come to believe without harshness of judgment or self-criticism can be painstakingly slow. The therapist does not engage in intellectual debates over the rightness or wrongness of particular beliefs but is challenged to facilitate gentle inquiry into the nature of beliefs, exploring their evolution and development in the faith story of the religious patient. Because religious beliefs provide an affective level of grounding and foundation, the patient’s inquiry into these beliefs that is usually precipitated by experiences of suffering can cause profound restlessness and disorientation, anxiety, and grief. As with the figure of Job who confronted the incongruity of his beliefs and experiences and was transformed in the process of doubt and disquiet, questing and questioning towards a qualitatively new way of understanding self and God, so too are religious patients invited into a space of unbridled curiosity and wonder, of unfettered interest and inquiry, to look beyond conventional answers that no longer engage their existential questions and experiences. Such is the powerfully transformative way of “right speech” that affirms not only the complexity of God but also the complexity of self able to hold, contain, and live in the midst of mystery and unpredictability and in the adversity and incongruity of life.

### See Also

- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Doubt](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)

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## John of the Cross

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## Life

Juan de Yepes (John of the Cross) was born in Fontiveros, Spain, in 1542. His father died soon after his birth and his mother struggled to look after her three sons. His mother moved to Medina del Campo, and John was placed in an orphanage where he stayed till his teens. He then became a nurse and attended a Jesuit college. He entered a Carmelite Monastery at the age of 21 in Toledo in Spain. Wanting a more rigorous spiritual life, John of the Cross was about to leave the order for a more secluded one, when he met Teresa of Avila who encouraged him to join her in Medina where she had founded a reformed group of Carmelite nuns. Together they then founded the reformed group of Discalced Carmelites for the Friars. Opposed to the reform, the friars in Toledo captured him in 1577 and imprisoned him for 9 months in a dark cell and treated him brutally. It was during this time he began to receive divine consolations and began to write some exquisite

mystical poetry. He escaped in August 1578 and worked with Teresa of Avila to found more reformed monasteries of Discalced Carmelites.

## Writings

John was charged with the spiritual direction of Teresa's sisters, and he taught and wrote maxims to guide them and began to write some major works on mysticism and contemplation. His major works included *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, *The Dark Night of the Soul*, and *The Living Flame of Love* (Arraj 1986). His aim in his writings and teachings was to show his subjects the way to achieve divine union. This could only be achieved by a "complete and penetrating detachment from all that is not God Himself" (Arraj 1986, p. 50). This emptying out John described as the "dark night of the soul," first purifying the senses and then through purification of the spirit. *The Ascent of Mt Carmel* begins with an explanation of his poem "On a Dark night" and was "an exposition of a diagram that St John had drawn illustrating how to ascend the mount of perfection" (Arraj 1986, p. 49). This work was not finished. The Ascent-Dark Night is a mixture of poetry and prose, psychological descriptions, and doctrine. The maxims in the writings are meant to be lived rather than intellectually understood. John of the Cross also left the following works:

1. An explanation of the "Spiritual Canticle," (a paraphrase of the Canticle of Canticles)
2. An explanation of the poem beginning "O living Flame of Love"
3. Some instructions and precautions on spiritual matters
4. Some 20 letters, sent mainly to his penitents
5. Poems
6. A collection of Spiritual Maxims (see the Catholic Encyclopedia)

John of the Cross lived a life of extreme austerity yet saw this as the path of submitting to the Divine in order to attain union. Towards the end of his life, after the death of Teresa, he was opposed by some of the members of the order he had founded. Again he was mistreated and

became seriously ill and was moved to the monastery of Ubeda, where he died in 1591, aged 49 years.

## Psychological Implications

It could be assumed that John's journey to contemplation and mysticism and Carl Jung's journey to individuation are similar processes. John's journey is another example of what can be seen as a universal psychic process. Both John and Jung cared for the psyche of other people. Both underwent an experience that was akin to the "dark night." Psychologically the dark night can be described as letting go of one's ego. John spoke of total detachment; Jung sees it as a process of facing and accepting one's incompleteness, a time of holding the tension of the opposites and waiting for wholeness to emerge. Letting go implies working against our own unconscious outmoded attitudes, habits, and assumptions, withdrawing our projections and accepting the totality of who we are. Jung wrote, "The foremost of all illusions is that anything can ever satisfy anybody" (Jung 1969, Vol. 11). The discrimination of the opposites is a result of the *Dark Night of the Soul* and from it comes reunification of the opposing elements. This is similar to the purification of the senses described by John of the Cross. Greek myths also narrate the dark night, and psychologically they illustrate the process of development towards individuation. Examples of these myths are the Night Sea Crossing, The Descent of Inanna to the Underworld, and Persephone. Alchemical symbolism, used by Jung, shows the outcome of the dark night in the image of the *coniunctio* of King and Queen. This can be related to the divine union that takes place spiritually after one has persevered and lived through the dark night. Perceval's (or Parsifal's) journey in the Grail Legend also "personifies the principle of Christian consciousness confronted with the problem of *physis* and of evil... as if the dark aspect of divinity had attacked him, in order to awaken him to a more conscious religious attitude" (Jung and von Franz 1970). The dark night is somewhat like an

initiation before being admitted to relationship with higher consciousness. The ego must be transformed if one is to abide in one's true nature. For John, this transformation takes place through contemplation, a loving gaze at God that leads to a mystical consciousness – where knowledge and love are combined.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)

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## Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology

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Freud's perspectives on religion played an influential role in the development of psychoanalysis. In turn, psychoanalytic thinking has contributed

to contemporary ideas on religion. Jakob Freud had already begun to distance his family from observant Judaism when his son, Sigismund Schlomo (Sigmund Freud), was born in Moravia (current Czechoslovakia) in 1856. Whereas Sigmund claimed to have been denied the benefit of formal Jewish education, his assertion appears to be a pretense, as there is convincing evidence that Freud was exposed both to the ancient Hebrew language and to Jewish religious texts as a child.

Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century was a hotbed of anti-Semitic fervor. Freud recounted his father's humiliating encounter with a young anti-Semitic street tough and suggested that his father's failure to defend himself had left the young Sigmund deeply disillusioned. He turned in fantasy to Hannibal's father – who had urged his own son to right the ancient wrongs done to Carthage by Rome – as a role model of proper masculine virility. The conflation of disappointment in his own Jewish father's perceived weakness and Christian bigotry continued to occupy Freud throughout his adult life.

Following a brief flirtation with religion as a young man, Freud professed a staunch atheism that never again wavered. As a young man, he took great pride in his Germanic heritage and thought of himself primarily as a "German Jew." However, as anti-Semitic sentiments in Vienna grew increasingly overt, he ceased to identify himself as a "German" and viewed himself, as he confessed to his friend the Protestant pastor Oskar Pfister, primarily as a "Godless Jew." His particularly fondness for Jewish humor formed the basis of his *Jokes and the Unconscious* (1905).

## Judaism and Psychoanalysis

The members of Freud's inner circle of Viennese psychoanalysts were exclusively Jewish. This, and the fact that most of his early clientele were members of the Jewish bourgeoisie, prompted his non-Jewish critics to suggest that psychoanalysis was a "Jewish science" without wider

applicability. Freud was concerned by these comments, as they threatened the broader acceptance of psychoanalysis. In response, he deliberately attempted to recruit non-Jewish practitioners to the new movement. He courted the support of the young Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, who had recently published his observations on mental *complexes*, which Freud adopted as the physiological cause of why repressed mental contents would at times intrude into consciousness as parapraxes. But when Jung was appointed to a prominent leadership role within the psychoanalytic movement, Freud's Jewish colleagues expressed their dismay.

The Freud-Jung relationship was strained by a variety of factors, including their religious differences. Jung's rejection of Freud's definition of libido as overly limited eventually led to the complete rupture of their relationship (see Jung and Religion). Jung claimed that Freud viewed the unconscious as predominantly negative and that his ideas had been influenced by his Judaism. He further concluded that Freud's personality type (extraverted, thinking, sensation) had interfered with his capacity to appreciate religious sensibilities, except as a neurosis. Freud countered Jung's criticisms of *libido* in *On Narcissism* (1914) and never again seriously referred to his junior colleague's psychological contributions.

## Freud and the Psychology of Religion

Freud authored three major theses that dealt primarily with religion. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913), he argued that religion represented a phase in the evolution of the psyche. His opinions followed those of the nineteenth-century British anthropologist E.B. Tylor, who argued that man's psychology evolved from a primitive phase of belief in magic to a phase dominated by religious beliefs. Modern man, according to Tylor and Freud, had recently achieved a more sophisticated perspective characterized by scientific thinking. According to Freud, these cultural phases parallel the ontogenetic psychological evolution of the man from the infantile stages of magical thinking, through childhood dependence, and mature self-reliance.



In this highly speculative treatise, Freud argued that proto-*Homo sapiens* lived in small hordes dominated by a single male who tended both to hoard the available women and to mate with them. Young males, distressed by their lot, banded together to kill their father and distributed the females more equitably. However, according to Freud, the guilt related to acts of patricide and incest led to worship of the dead father and to specific taboos that formed the basis of religious behavior.

*Totem and Taboo* was criticized in academic circles for its lack of credible evidence, as well as for Freud's persistent adherence to the previously rejected theories of Lamarck, who had argued that memories of events could be genetically transmitted. Although modern field studies of great apes have confirmed that alpha-males do tend to dominate other males aggressively and to ward off their access to females, this is a far cry from concluding that such behavior has been the source of religious sensibility and practice.

In his *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* (1909), Freud compared religion, with its emphases on guilt and compulsive ritualistic behaviors, to obsessional neurosis. But by far his most damning and influential polemic against religion came in *Future of an Illusion* (1927), in which Freud argued that the image of God as a benevolent paternal figure was evidence of a persistent infantile wish – an illusion motivated by a need to identify a powerful figure that could protect one from the vicissitudes of nature, disease, and death. From Freud's perspective, the most appropriate response to religious beliefs was to expunge them, by identifying their roots in childhood fantasies and fostering confrontation with manifest reality. Although he admitted that patients might not necessarily be happier as a result of this exercise, it was, according to Freud, the obligation of the mature independent psyche to confront reality courageously. Only science, and not religion, could provide objective explanations of the real world, and as such, he concluded that the goals of science and religion were incompatible.

Freud's final critique of religion was completed shortly before his death. In *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), a set of three essays, he extended the ideas in *Totem and Taboo* specifically to the

origins of Judaism. He argued that Moses was not a Jew, but an Egyptian who espoused monotheistic beliefs, and had offered them to a band of Jewish slaves that he subsequently freed from bondage in Egypt. In their wanderings through the desert, the disgruntled Jews eventually murdered Moses, but their guilt subsequently led them to embrace his monotheistic beliefs and to adopt penitential taboos and ritual practices. As in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud offered no evidence for his theory, apart from that deduced from psychoanalytical inquiry. The work was controversial; it was poorly received by most academics and it angered religious Jews, who rejected it as heretical and nonsense.

## Response to Freud

Jewish scholars remain split in their judgment of Freud – some have rejected his ideas as antithetical to those of Judaic culture, while others have attempted to integrate them into the larger fabric of Jewish thought. From a purely religious perspective, Freud's works are undeniably unyielding in their rejection of all modes of theism and incompatible with both observant Judaism and Christianity. In addition, Mordechai Rotenberg contends that Freud's focus on Darwinian struggle and oedipal conflicts, which emphasize the goal of the individual differentiating away from the group, runs counter to the core Jewish value of community. As Judaism is essentially a tribal religion, its continued survival depends on maintaining communal bonds. In this regard, Judaism stands in contradistinction to the goal of personal salvation that characterizes the Lutheran Protestantism. It is possible that Freud living in a Germanic world might have adopted and modified their values as a therapeutic goal.

Although widely criticized by religionists, anthropologists, and sociologists, Freud's psychological musings have been widely embraced by secular humanists. However, some have argued that Freud's conclusions are overly simplistic, as they ignore the importance of societal influences and reduce religious impulses to "nothing but" neurosis. From a phenomenological perspective, as

William James suggests, religion is properly *sui generis*. Furthermore, from a pragmatist's perspective, religion can provide meaning and comfort for many and contribute to a favorable quality of life. In adopting conscious rationality as a cardinal goal, Freud can be grouped with other post-Enlightenment secularists who denied the reality of innate irrational elements of mental experience.

In his monograph *A Godless Jew* (1987), Peter Gay ponders whether Freud's cultural Judaism may have been an element in the founding of psychoanalysis. Freud's Judaism potentially influenced psychoanalysis in many areas. In *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud examines the Old Testament dream interpretations of Joseph and Daniel and entertains the perspectives of Talmudic sages on dreams. Freud's view of the unconscious as the repository of repressed contents parallels the biblical reference to what God chooses to "reveal" versus "conceal." The idea viewing the manifest content as concealing a latent wish is highly suggestive of the style of midrashic exegesis of texts that was applied by the rabbis and later by the mystical Kabbalists. The Jewish exegetical tradition, like Freud, seeks to plumb texts for their deeper meaning. The modes of exegesis, often referred to by the acronym *PaRDeS* (*p'shat, remez, drash, sod*), refer, respectively, to the straightforward in-depth understanding of a revealed text, allegory, interpretive elaboration of the text, and its deepest secret meaning. All of these elements can be identified in Freud's interpretive technique.

Furthermore, many Kabbalistic theosophical interpretations are highly eroticized and include internecine conflicts between symbolic elements of the Godhead, comparable to the family "romance" of oedipal dynamics, in their symbolic efforts to elaborate the dynamics of the Godhead. The inheritors of the Kabbalistic tradition in Eastern Europe, the movement that became Hasidism in the eighteenth century, tended to psychologize these symbolic contents, much as Freud would later do. In this regard, it is noteworthy that Freud's father had been born into a Hasidic family, so that influences from that tradition would undoubtedly have had some influence on Freud's personal and cultural milieu.

The emphasis within mainstream Judaism on ethical humanism and legalisms, with a relative downplaying of both mystical beliefs and the importance of the afterlife, may have fostered Freud's development of a "science" of mind that was predisposed to dismissing the irrational aspects of religion as illusory, as opposed, e.g., to the inherent mystery of the Christian trinity.

It is risky to attempt psychoanalytic explanations for Freud's disdain of religion beyond those openly admitted by him. But his views on religion appear to be rooted, in part, in his ambivalence towards his father, his own Jewish background, and his encounters with Christian anti-Semitism. When, at the end of his life, Freud found himself potentially ensnared by the Nazis in Austria, he managed to escape with his family to England, where he lived briefly until his death from oral cancer in 1939. While he never renounced his atheism, the elderly Freud increasingly expressed solidarity with the Jewish community.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)

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## Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology

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The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) was a member of Freud’s early psychoanalytical movement. However, he broke with Freud in 1912 over a variety of issues, including the importance of religion in psychological life. Jung viewed the religious impulse as a *sui generis* psychological activity, and his conception of the unconscious was fundamentally different than Freud’s (see ► [Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology](#)). Unlike Freud, who viewed most unconscious contents as the result of repression, Jung conceived of two strata of unconscious processes. The personal unconscious corresponded roughly with Freud’s conception. But according to Jung, there was also a deeper transpersonal stratum shared by all human minds that he referred to as the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious was the creative mythopoetic center of the psyche. It included the archetypes comparable to the Platonic “ideas” and like the Kantian *a priori*, served to structure psychological experience.

## Jung’s Concept of the Self

Jung referred to the “self” (hereafter capitalized) as a supraordinate archetype whose role was to regulate all of the others. He held that the psyche was also a self-regulating structure, with conscious and unconscious processes in an ongoing compensating dialectic. According to Jung, although archetypes were never experienced directly, they were knowable indirectly by the “archetypal images” they mediated. According to Jung, the “self” was also the source of the *imago Dei*, or God image, which could take on many different forms depending on one’s personal experience. A major goal of the Jungian individuation process was a progressive conscious experience of the activities of the “archetypes” and in particular the “self,” reflecting Jung’s fundamentally religious view of the aim of a life.

Jung had exhibited interest in God as a boy but was unmoved by what he viewed the impersonal approaches of organized religion. He was also disillusioned with his father, a Protestant minister, who, according to Jung, lacked a strong sense of faith and was prone to limpid theological intellectualization. Unlike his father, Jung’s approach to religion melded pagan, Eastern, and Christian myths, in the service of providing a transformative personal experience.

Jung’s theory of the psychology of religion was influenced by his studies of Eastern religions. In the philosophies of the East, Jung found what he interpreted to be references to the archetype of the “self,” which he modeled on the idea of the atman of the Hindu Upanishads. Jung imagined this “self” as a paradoxical symbol, e.g., as the center and circumference of a circle, as personal and impersonal, and as both limited and unbounded. The multicultural symbolic expressions of the “self” could assume many avatars. He further concluded that the implied wholeness of the “self” was depicted by the mandalas of Tibetan Buddhism, and he perceived a link between religion and psychotherapeutic healing, as he had noted that the spontaneous efforts at drawing mandalas were a routine and early feature of recovery from psychosis.

However, Jung was also a pragmatist and concerned that the Western psyche would not be able to embrace Eastern religious myths that called for the progressive extinction of the “ego.” In order to distinguish his psychology from the Eastern nihilistic philosophies, he introduced the idea of “individuation,” i.e., the process via which a person becomes an enlightened psychological individual through a progressive experience of the “archetypes” and in particular of the “self.” He viewed the life of Jesus as the cardinal example of an “individuation” process.

Jung’s idea of the “self” paralleled the Eastern perspective that located God within man, as opposed to the Western disposition of viewing God as a monarch residing somewhere outside of oneself and approachable only by obedience or imitation. Indeed, Jung was criticized by Western theologians for adopting a solipsistic view of God, and some monotheists argued that Jung’s emphasis on the variations of the God image was essentially merely a new form of pagan polytheism.

### Jung and Mysticism

The Protestant theologian Rudolph Otto was an important influence on Jung’s psychology of religion. Otto examined the psychology of death and resurrection in *Das Heilig* (The Idea of the Holy). Jung’s idea of an experience of the self parallels Otto’s descriptions of a transformative religious experience and is essentially mystical. This includes the strong affect that Otto referred to as “numinous.” During such a transformative experience, according to Jung, the ego senses the “self” as both imminent and “other,” i.e., as outside the realm of description, irrational, and preverbal. Following Otto, Jung also termed this a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, which is invariably characterized by surprise, awe, and fascination. However, both Jung and Otto agreed that the capacity to experience transcendent states was not an equally shared capacity, as certain nonverbal affectual experiences are rooted in prelinguistic activities of the brain that vary among individuals.

Jung viewed the “numinous” experience as the basis of all theophanies and religious revelations. But as Gershom Scholem noted, when “numinous” experiences are reported by those already steeped in a given religious tradition, they generally reflect the images of an underlying orthodoxy, so that Catholics are more likely to be “visited” by the Virgin than by the Prophet Elijah. This observation underscores the importance of societal and cultural influences on religious experience. Jung’s own imaginal confrontations with his unconscious included encounters with Salome, Elijah, Bacchus, and Philemon and appear to reflect his broad knowledge of the syncretistic Hellenistic and Judaic myths that form the basis of Christianity.

Throughout Jung’s explorations of religious myth, and in particular the Christian myth, he stressed the importance of wholeness. He was dissatisfied with the idea of the Christian trinity, because he thought that it excluded the role of the feminine. From his own experience, Jung had come to believe that wholeness was archetypally configured primarily as a “circle” or as quaternities. In his late writings, he noted that the doctrine of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary adopted by the Vatican in the 1950s was actually one of the great theological advances of the Church by raising the level of the feminine principle and acknowledging a quaternity in heaven.

Jung’s emphasis on wholeness helps to explain why he was also opposed to the doctrine of the *privatio boni*, i.e., that evil is merely the absence of God, who according to Augustine is an all good summum bonum. Jung argued that the splitting of good and evil predisposed the Christian psyche to difficulties in metabolizing negative affects, which were instead repressed and embodied by what Jung termed “shadow,” a concept roughly equivalent to the Freudian unconscious.

### Myth and Religion

In his explorations of myth, Jung noted what he interpreted to be the struggle of the ego with a greater “other” within the psyche, i.e.,

a confrontation of the ego and “self.” He repeatedly referred to Jacob’s struggle with the angel as a mythic representation of man’s struggle to individuate. For Jung, faith was a cardinal tenet of psychotherapy, as it called for the ego to be transformed by its own “death” and “resurrection.” Therapeutic progress was fostered by faith and by an awareness of the “self.” This attitude would prompt Jung to suggest to Bill Wilson, the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous, that alcoholism could be cured only by faith in a “higher power,” an idea that subsequently became a cardinal tenet of 12-step programs.

In *Answer to Job*, Jung examined the asymmetric power struggle between the ego and the “self” and their uneasy, evolving relationship. He argued that in going from the image of Jahweh in the Old Testament to Christ in the New Testament that the God image had actually shown an own evolution of consciousness. This idea was criticized by both Jewish and Christian theologians, who argued that Jung had a persistent tendency to anthropomorphize God, thereby confusing the transcendent creator God with his creation, i.e., man.

### Jung and Anti-Semitism

A continued area of controversy is Jung’s stance with respect to Germanic anti-Semitism during the Nazi era. Jung’s psychology included a role for differences between races and cultures, and he has come under substantial criticism in some circles for this view. Although such attitudes were prevalent in Jung’s time, it appears that he may have benefited professionally from the systematic persecution of Jewish psychologists in Europe. Jung’s activities and public statements during the war appeared to confirm suspicions of Freud’s followers that Jung harbored anti-Semitic inclinations. However, Jung’s attitudes were by no means consistent and he supported the careers of many of his Jewish colleagues.

Although it is fair to conclude that Jung’s primary religious affiliation was Christianity

and that he saw it as having had a dominant influence in shaping the Western civilization, he focused primarily on the mythic elements of the religion, especially on the writings of the third CE gnostics. Late in his career, Jung became preoccupied with the psychological importance of alchemy and investigated medieval texts for evidence of how the alchemical opus was an effort at psychological transformation. His last major work was devoted to the idea of the unification of what he termed “the opposites” that structured of the psychological archetypes of what he termed the “collective unconscious.” Towards the end of his life, Jung became aware of the enormous influence that the Jewish Kabbalists had on the alchemical tradition. The Hasidic movement of eighteenth CE Judaism had adopted the complex mythical theosophy of the Kabbalists and psychologized it. Their approaches included the concept of *yichudim*, i.e., the unification of psychological opposites in the service of wholeness. Prior to his death, Jung confessed that much of his life’s work had been prefigured by early Hasidic masters.

Jungian psychology continues to play an important role in religious movements. Although Jung was more favorably disposed to religion than Freud, his psychology of religion was often at odds with traditional theological perspectives. Some have accused the Jungians of being a guised religious cult, claiming that Jung was attempting to transform the Christianity into a new religious movement. However, such views are likely extreme. Furthermore, most within the Judaeo-Christian tradition continue to view religion primarily as transcendent and beyond psychological interpretation.

One of Jung’s important contributions to the psychology of religion was to recognize the primacy of image as the carrier of affect. Jung’s psychology of religion emphasizes the importance of embodying experience via encounters with internal imagery, as opposed to the theological abstraction of the Godhead. He recognized that the psyche naturally tended to concretize abstractions into images in order to experience them directly. Otherwise, according to Jung, one risks reducing religion to either ethereal

abstractions or ritualistic behaviors. In this regard, like Freud, Jung appears to have both rejected and attempted to redeem his father.

As a confessed introvert, Jung appears to place primary importance on personal mystical experience. Although he did address the importance of evil in his writings, he views it as an impersonal archetypal force. Jung does not appear to have placed considerable value on the Judaeo-Christian tenets of ethical humanism and *communitas*.

However, Jung's emphasis on the mythic basis of religion continues to provide one of the few secular approaches to the psychology of religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)

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## Judaism and Psychology

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## The Origins of Academic Psychology

The origins of twentieth-century academic psychology can be traced to E. B. Titchener's school of structuralism or structural psychology, which itself was strongly influenced by the earlier work of Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig. Wundt was the father of the new experimental psychology (cf. Marx and Hillix 1963, p. 62) and established the first formal laboratory for psychology at the University of Leipzig in 1870, thus succeeding in giving psychology formal academic recognition and delineating it from its two parent fields, physiology and philosophy. Titchener subsequently launched structuralism in 1898 as "the psychology."

The method for Wundt and Titchener was introspection, or the study of one's immediate conscious experience. Consciousness was seen as the sum total of a person's experiences at any given time and mind as the accumulation of these experiences across the life span. Titchener listed three problems for psychology that were similar to Wundt (1894, p. 13): (1) to analyze concrete mental experience into its simplest components, (2) to discover how these elements combine, and (3) to bring them into connection with their physiological conditions.

Titchener brought a number of biases into American academic psychology. First, he felt psychology should study experience detached from learning, that is, detached from attributed emotional meaning. Second, he roughly accepted Wundt's parallelism as a solution to the mind-body problem. This position asserted that the mind and body run parallel courses, without saying that one causes the other, but simply that both



are affected by an external cause. At times, Titchener seems to feel uncomfortable with this mind-body dualism, searching for a more monistic conception, but he never really formalizes this position. Third, he seemed to emphasize conscious introspectionism, rather than attempting to access the unconscious as did Freud. Fourth, Titchener's structuralist approach was very anti-functional in its orientation, a point on which he was attacked by American functionalist and behaviorists. Fifth, Titchener insisted that psychology be pure rather than applied, decrying the notion that the function of psychology was to find ways of ministering to sick minds.

### **Greek Underpinnings of American Psychology**

Jews thus encountered in American academic psychology an approach quite foreign to biblical and later Jewish views of the human being. In fact, some of the thinking in academic psychology seemed to reflect an ancient Greek view of life which Judaism had never been able to accept.

For one, the idea that mind and body are separated rather than integrated seemed to fit the Greek compartmentalization of the human being into *psyche* and soma. In Plato's view, "the soul is a helpless prisoner chained hand and foot in the body, compelled to view reality not directly but only through its prison bars, and wallowing in utter ignorance" (Plato 1993, p. 83a). It is the purpose of the human being to behave in a pure and unblemished manner in order to allow the soul to free itself cleanly from the body and to return to its existence in the ideal world. If the soul does not break away cleanly, it must return to this world until it achieves complete purity (Plato 1993, pp. 61d–68a, 1983, p. 11). Plato's emphasis on philosophy as "preparation for death" is dramatically different from Judaism's life emphasis. *Torah* indeed is described as a "medicine for life" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Kiddushin 30b).

Second, the exclusive emphasis on conscious introspection to the exclusion of the emotional, irrational, and unconscious aspects of the human psyche reflects the dialectic in the ancient Greek

world between the Apollonian and Dionysiac aspects of Greek life (Nietzsche 1956). Unfortunately, the psychoanalytic alternative emphasizing the important role of the unconscious also employed Greek master stories such as Oedipus and Narcissus (cf. Freud 1914, 1923, 1924). Third, the anti-functional bias in Titchener reflects an anti-developmental view in Greek mythology and philosophy. Each age of Gods begins anew (Hesiod 1973) with no developmental or historical purpose. Structures become reified as permanent edifices rather than as developmentally purposive. Fourth, the structuralist approach seemed to be too narrow for the Jewish world view to accept, excluding the very issues of free will, morality and wisdom and emphasis on life that Judaism teaches.

Finally, the idea that psychology be pure rather than applied also bespeaks to a certain intellectual prissiness and disdain for the real world. This is quite removed from the Jewish emphasis on action as expressed in the social psychological theory of cognitive dissonance (cf. Festinger 1957) and in certain behavior modification theories in clinical psychology (cf. Ayllon and Azrin 1968; Bandura 1969).

### **A Judaic View of Psychology**

A Judaic view of psychology emanates from *The Torah* which in the fullest sense includes both the Hebrew Bible and the very ancient oral tradition which culminated in the Talmud and Midrash and subsequent rabbinic literature. It has almost nothing in common with the philosophical systems underpinning structuralism and modern academic psychology, largely based on ancient Greek thinking. It has also nothing in common with mythology, which typically centers around fate, caprice, irony, and lack of purpose. A Jewish approach to psychology also differs in emphasis from psychoanalytic thinking which, though founded largely by Jewish figures (Freud, Adler, Rank, Abraham, etc.) and focused on understanding the irrational, relies on ancient Greek master stories as its base. Judaism draws its master stories from the Bible.

1. *The unique and the general.* Genesis relates that God created man in His own image. This emphasizes the value of each individual and tends towards an ipsative psychology rather than to an abstract general idea of mankind. The unique individual must be studied and understood, not an aggregate statistic. A clinical psychology naturally emerges from this viewpoint in which individual differences are valued and respected rather than written off as error variance. The Talmud stresses the value of the individual human being and the irreducibility of each life: "To save one life is to save the world" (*Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 37a).
  2. *Body and soul.* A person's body and soul are holy and are created by God as an expression of love. Body and soul are by nature harmonious and not at all in conflict, and both can work to fulfill a person's purpose of being close to God and serving Him with love. Urbach (1979, p. 214) argues: "In *Genesis* (2:7) it is stated 'and man became a living soul (*nefesh*),' but the term *nefesh* is not to be understood in the sense of *psyche*, *anima*. The whole of a man is a living soul. The creation of man constitutes a single act." God created people in His own image and blessed them with creativity and with dominion over all the world. One of the highest acts of human creativity is to produce new human beings, as God Himself did. Every human life is valuable and unique. The human soul need not achieve total perfection in this world nor is the body a prison or a tomb for this soul, but its mansion. It is enough and wonderful for a person simply to do his best.
  3. *The self in relationship.* A Jew is obligated to devote himself to studying *Torah* so that he can develop as a human being and use his freedom and creativity optimally. Nor can a person carry this out in isolation from others. This development is expressed in a social context. People were designed to live with others: spouse, family, students, friends, and colleagues. People have obligations to fellow human beings and to God which require constant study and attention.
- Thus, Judaism tends naturally to an interest in social psychology. However as Hillel taught, obligations to self and other must be balanced (*Avot* 1:14; Kaplan 1998). Furthermore, both outer behavior and inner feeling matter. Cognitive dissonance theory (cf. Festinger 1957) is very Jewish in this regard, emphasizing that the best way to change inner attitudes is to first change behavior. Thus the rabbinic expression, "the hearts are drawn after the actions."
4. *Perfection and wholeness.* While Greek Platonism emphasizes perfection, the Hebrew Bible emphasizes wholeness. For Plato, the *ideal* is always superior to the *real* and *being* to *becoming*. The Hebrew Bible in contrast emphasizes the real and becoming. While Plato viewed philosophy as "preparation for death," the Hebrew Bible, in contrast, constitutes a "guide for living." Thus too, Pygmalion can seek unity only with a woman that he himself forms according to his own specifications. The Bible sees husband and wife as two individual beings, who support each other in searching for fulfillment.
  5. *Freedom and obligation.* God has given people freedom to make important moral choices. In order to best use this freedom wisely and to make the best choices, a person must develop both his intellect and emotions. The human being also has a high degree of moral responsibility that naturally complements his freedom. Although God provides a blueprint for the individual to live his life, the individual must discover it and choose to accept it. There is little sense of the determinism or fate so endemic to classical Greek thinking nor any notion that the biblical God is subject to the impersonal forces of fate (*moira*) and necessity (*ananke*) which govern the Greek Gods.
  6. *Determinism and repentance.* The *Torah* rejects the idea that human acts are predestined. A person always has a choice to do right or wrong in any situation. There is neither fate nor necessity. A person need not be overwhelmed by feelings of doom, as

were the Greek heroes. A single failure need not be seen as archetypal or irremediable. The Greek prophet predicts that an outcome will occur independent of an individual's actions. The Hebrew prophet, in contrast, typically predicates his prediction on the individual's behavior. The Hebrew prophet hopes that his prophecy will affect the individual's behavior and thus avoid the negative consequences. The individual may repent and thereby alter what happens to him. A person challenged by his own imperfections or handicaps or facing great difficulties can live a loving, happy, and productive life. One need not despair and must always face life with optimism. Hope itself improves both the individual's condition and his outlook. A person can and must improve himself both in spiritual and material matters. Thus, Judaism sees the individual as having great potential for development (cf. Shestov 1966).

7. *Life and death.* Human life is precious and holy. Every moment offers the individual the opportunity to be close to God, to learn, to do good, and to create. The well-known Hebrew toast is "lechayim" – to life! The human being has intrinsic worth as a creation of God, in God's image, and not simply as a function of his achievements. Sometimes, one moment is enough to give new meaning to an entire life. God loves and supports a person in giving him life and capacity and energy to act even when he does evil. Unlike the ancient Greeks and many other civilizations, traditional Jewish thought finds suicide a terrible destruction of human life, perhaps even more abhorrent than murder (cf. Kaplan and Schwartz 1993). While among Greek and Roman philosophers freedom is often equated with suicide (Seneca 1979, 111.15), the Talmud equates freedom with following *Torah* (*Avot* 6:2).
8. *The unconscious in Judaism.* Judaism is not limited to conscious introspection as was structuralism. Rather, the Talmud, Midrash, and later rabbinic thought place great emphasis on understanding the hidden, unconscious motivations of human behavior. Indeed, Judaism stresses many levels of interpretation of biblical text. The reader is referred to the important work of David Bakan (1958) on Freud and the Jewish mystical tradition and the more contemporary work of Mordechai Rottenberg differentiating the following levels of interpretation: *peshat* (rational), *remez* (hint), *derash* (inquiry), and *sod* (mystical). In many biblical stories (e.g., Jonah), God actually intervenes as would a good therapist to help a protagonist to learn why he has behaved in a manner harmful to himself and to his higher purposes and to help him to change for the better. Sometimes, learning is aided by the use of parables so that the person is able to look at himself without fear. This is exemplified in the Prophet Nathan's parable to King David regarding his conduct toward Uriah's wife Bathsheba (II Samuel 12). Behavior can affect emotional states, so that some changes at the level of action can bring about changes in one's inner state of mind.
9. *Theory and practice.* Judaism features a long history of concern both for mental health and personal development. This is displayed both in the wide literature on human behavior and growth and also on the strong pattern of close connection between sages and the general community. It was normative for people to consult closely with sages on every sort of personal or familial problems, large and small. No person should feel isolated or abandoned when facing a problem or a hard decision. He has an advisor to turn to in questions of personal development and in practical problems. The rabbis in Eastern Europe operated in many ways like psychotherapists of today. There is a major difference, however. The traditional rabbis employed biblical master stories and Talmudic wisdom as a basis for intervention rather than ancient Greek myths.
10. *Jews, the enlightenment and psychology.* Although the previous sections may suggest to the reader that Jews in modern psychology uniformly carried values and perspectives of biblical and Judaic thought, the reality is

much more complex. Many Jews in the field of psychology may actually have been less traditionally religious than their Christian counterparts – and often times than their own patients. For example, Shafranske and Malony (1990) report that in a sample of 409 clinical psychologists, only 40 % believed in a personal transcendent God, compared to 90 % of the general public. There are historical reasons for this, arising from the Jewish encounter with the enlightenment which paradoxically offered the individual Jew liberation into a new Europe but at the cost of surrendering something of his covenantal religious and national identity. This same trend existed in American academia in the early and middle parts of the twentieth century. The Jew was seemingly offered emancipation from ethnic and immigrant marginality into the faceless common culture of the secularized enlightenment world of academic psychology (and academia in general) at the expense of a Judaic world view. (This held true despite the quotas on Jews at many major universities, particularly in the northeast United States.) Indeed for many Jews, psychology itself may have become a religion, filled with Greek and Eastern rather than biblical ideas (Wellisch 1954). In recent years, a far more liberated and self-confident Jew has emerged in psychology, joining some Christian counterparts in offering a serious biblical alternative to contemporary psychology (cf. Kaplan and Schwartz 1993, 2006, 2008; Schwartz and Kaplan 2004, 2007; Wellisch 1954; Yerushalmi 1991). This has resulted in a plethora of books and interdisciplinary journals such as *The Journal of Psychology and Judaism*, *The Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, and *The Journal of Psychology and Religion*.

## See Also

- ▶ [Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)

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## Judas Iscariot

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### Introduction

In Christianity, Judas Iscariot is one of the 12 apostles who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. His name, Judas (*Ioudas*), is the Greek form of Judah, the southern territory of Palestine (renamed Judea by the Romans). The inhabitants of Judah were the Judahites (later abbreviated as “Jews”), and thus Judas’ name is equated with the Jews. The name “Iscariot” is subjected to two different interpretations. The first is that it means “Man of Kerioth,” a city in Judah (Joshua 15:25), which would be significant because it would present Judas as an outsider, a man who was different from the 11 Galileans. A second suggestion is that “Iscariot” derives from the Greek “sicarri,” a sect of the Zealots who took up arms (daggers) against the Romans. Whichever interpretation is preferred, Judas’ name is synonymous with betrayal; to call someone a “Judas” is to express contempt for the duplicitous behavior of that person.

## Judas in the Bible

In the Old Testament, Judah was the son of Jacob and Leah. His name in Hebrew, *Jehudah*, means “praise the Lord.” Judah was a patriarch of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. This is significant because Jesus’ call of the 12 apostles symbolizes a reconstitution of the 12 tribes. Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot (Jn 6:71), is chosen by Jesus as one of the 12 apostles and is always listed last (Mt 10:4, Mk 3:19, Lk 6:16, Jn 6:71). He is presented in the gospels as thief (Jn 12:4) and betrayer.

Although best known for his betrayal of Jesus, another story about Judas appears in the Gospel of John. In it, Judas protests the anointing of Jesus at Bethany by Mary as a wasteful act, suggesting that the oil should have been sold and given to the poor. His concern, however, is not for the poor but, as John tells us, “because he was a thief and held the money bag and used to steal the contributions” (Jn 12:7).

Judas’ task as betrayer is brought to light at the Last Supper, when Jesus predicts that someone with whom he shares this meal (and the table fellowship which accompanies it) will betray him (Jn 6:64, 13:11, 26), thereby fulfilling the prophecy of Ps. 41:9. Jesus’ followers want to know the identity of the betrayer (Mt 26:21), and Jesus reveals that it is the one who dips his bread with him into the dish (Mk 14:18). He warns that it is better not to be born than to betray the Son of Man. Symbolically, the dipping is an image of death.

Both Luke and John see Judas’ betrayal as the work of Satan (Lk 22:3, Jn 13:2): in Luke, Satan enters into him; John says he is “a devil.” Judas goes to the chief priests to see what they will give him to hand Jesus over (Mk 14:10), and he betrays Jesus for 30 pieces of silver (Mk 14:10; Mt 27:10), by all accounts a paltry amount. Matthew tells us that this is a fulfillment of the prophet Jeremiah; in fact it is a fulfillment of Zechariah 11:12–13. Arriving in Gethsemane with a large crowd with clubs and swords (Mt 26:47), Judas gave the chief priests a sign – the famous and duplicitous kiss – in order that they might arrest Jesus.



According to the author of Matthew's gospel, Judas regrets what he has done (Mt 27:3) and returns the 30 pieces of silver (Mt 27:4), throwing it into the Temple. Luke, however, tells a different story: Judas used the 30 pieces of silver to buy land (Acts 1:18). Matthew and Luke also give different accounts of Judas' end. For Matthew, the cause of death is suicide by hanging (Mt 27:5), but for Luke it is a fall. He writes, "falling headlong, [Judas] burst open in the middle and his insides spilled out" (Acts 1:19). Henceforth, the field was known as "Akeldama, i.e., Field of Blood" (Acts 1:20). Some scholars have tried to reconcile the two accounts, suggesting such things as a suicide gone wrong.

The question of Judas' fate has long been a subject of theological debate. For some, he is eternally damned, condemned, for example, to the lowest circle of Dante's *Inferno*. Placed headfirst into one of the three mouths of Lucifer (Brutus and Cassius, who also killed their masters, are devoured in the other two mouths), Judas Iscariot is chewed for all eternity as his back is skinned by Lucifer's claws. Not all, however, share Dante's vision of Judas' fate; for some, his eternal damnation is more problematic because it conflicts with God's goodness, and for others, it raises questions about the fairness of his fate given its place in the divine plan as foretold in Old Testament prophecy (Zech. 11:12–13, Ps. 41:0).

Some scholars (e.g., Klassen) dispute the traditional rendering of Judas as betrayer, based on the translation of the Greek word *paradidomi*. The word is used 59 times in the New Testament: when used in connection to Jesus (27 times), it is translated "handed over" (this is related to the word *paradosis* which is used of the tradition which is "handed down" from the apostles); when used in connection with Judas (32 times), however, the word is translated as "betray." If this reading is correct, the centuries-old maligning of Judas is brought into question.

## The Gospel of Judas

The Gospel of Judas, discovered in Egypt in the mid-1970s and recently unveiled by National

Geographic, also presents a very different picture of Judas. In his *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*, which is dated c. CE 180, St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon, condemns this gospel as "a fabricated work." He identifies it as a Gnostic text because it presents secret knowledge (*gnosis*) as the way to salvation. The Gnostics were dualists – they saw the material world as evil and the spiritual realm, the realm of God and the aeons (or divine principles) which emanate from God, as good. The material world is created as a result of the fall of one of these aeons, and some of the divine substance becomes trapped in human beings. Human beings, however, are unaware of this, and so Christ is sent to reveal this secret knowledge to his inner circle and thereby save them. In *Against Heresies*, St. Irenaeus tells us that Judas was the only one among the 12 who "recognized the truth and perfected the mystery of betrayal." In other words, Judas alone possessed this secret knowledge. Indeed scholars tell us that the recently unveiled manuscript of the Gospel of Judas begins with the words "The secret account of the revelation that Jesus spoke in conversation with Judas Iscariot" and has Jesus saying to Judas, "Step away from the others and I shall tell you the mysteries of the kingdom." Unlike the canonical gospels, the Gospel of Judas sees Judas as a hero, the greatest of the apostles. Jesus tells Judas, "You will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me." In other words, Judas' betrayal helps Jesus to get rid of his material body and thereby liberates the divine substance that was trapped within, facilitating a return to the spiritual realm. From a historical perspective, the Gospel of Judas does not reveal much about the historical Judas, but it does give more insight into Gnosticism from a Gnostic perspective.

## Judas and Anti-Semitism

Given the association of Judas' name with the Jews (the Judahites – later abbreviated to Jews – were the inhabitants of Judah, which is Judas' name in Greek) and the gospel identification of Judas with the demonic, the anti-Semitic charge of the Jews as "Christ killers" can be seen



going back to Judas. Medieval artwork often exaggerates the Jewish features of Judas, despite the fact that Jesus and his followers were all Jewish. Some scholars even doubt the historicity of the person of Judas, suggesting that he functions as a literary device to blame the Jews for the death of Jesus.

## Commentary

For Freud, betrayal is oedipal and thus rooted in jealousy. He saw his split with Jung as an oedipal betrayal of the father. In “Two Lies Told by Children” (Freud 1976, pp. 305–309), Freud makes an explicit reference to Judas’ betrayal as oedipal in nature. He tells the story of a 3-year-old girl who was given hush money after seeing her nursemaid having sex with a doctor. The girl played with her newly acquired coins in such a way as to betray the maid to her mother. This, says Freud, she did out of jealousy. Some years later, when she was 7 years old, the girl requested money from her father to purchase paints that she might use to decorate her Easter eggs. Much to her dismay, the father denied her request. Given her earlier association of taking money with erotic relations, Freud argues that the young girl felt this as a deep rejection by her father. Sometime later, the girl needed 50 pfennigs to make a contribution for a funeral wreath of a princess who had died. Her father gave her ten marks with which the little girl contributed to the wreath collection. Having bought the paints she had long desired with another 50 pfennigs, the girl placed the remaining nine marks on her father’s table. Denying that she had purchased the paints, her brother betrayed her and she was severely punished. Consequently, the little girl felt the father’s punishment as a rejection and suffered from psychological problems, especially in relation to money. One day, just before starting school, a neighbor sent her on an errand with some money. Meeting the neighbor on the way home, the little girl threw the change down on the pavement. Pondering her actions, she thought them “inexplicable,” “the thought of Judas occurred to her, who had thrown down 30 pieces of silver which he had been given for betraying the

master.” But in what way could this young girl identify with Judas? He argues that her early traumatic experience of erotic relations, in which she had betrayed her nursemaid for money, had led her to associate taking money from anyone as a symbol of a physical surrender (“an erotic reaction”) and taking money from the father as “a declaration of love.” He concludes that the little girl’s desire for her father is denied because it is unconscious – she cannot admit it to herself in the same way that she cannot admit that she appropriated the money (Freud 1976, p. 309).

For Jung, on the other hand, Judas’ betrayal of Jesus is archetypal, i.e., it is a universal motif which taps into a tremendous force of the collective unconscious (Jung, § 42). As a myth, it is particularly tragic because the hero is destroyed by a friend through treachery (Jung, § 42). Examples abound in Shakespeare (Othello, Lady Macbeth, King Lear, Julius Caesar), in the Bible (Delilah and Samson, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers), and in Greek mythology (Clytemnestra and Agamemnon, Odysseus and Philoctetes, Medea and Jason). For Jung, the betrayal myth will continue to be repeated because it articulates the idea that envy “does not let mankind sleep in peace” (Jung, § 42).

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)

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## Julian of Norwich

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### Background

Julian of Norwich, sometimes referred to as “Dame Julian,” “Julian,” or “Mother Julian,” was an English mystic who lived at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries. The circumstances of her early life are shrouded in mystery, but it is believed that in or about 1,373, she suffered a very serious illness from which she miraculously recovered. It has been conjectured that she may have been married and had children prior to becoming a mystic and anchoress. Visions that she experienced in the course of her illness, many of which involved Jesus’ Passion, radically changed her life and led her to become an anchoress enclosed in a single-room cell attached to the church of St. Julian in Norwich. There were two windows in her cell. One was a small window onto the street, from which Julian could converse and provide spiritual direction (which she did for many individuals including, most famously, Margery Kempe); the other window permitted her to witness masses in the adjoining church. Julian is best known for two accounts of the visions she had while ill and theological conclusions that she eventually drew as she contemplated and integrated the meaning of those visions. The first and much briefer account, written soon after her

illness, is sometimes known as the *Short Version of the Revelations of Divine Love*, sometimes alternately known as *Showings of Divine Love*. The second account, an expansion of the first version, was written about 20 years later.

### Psychological and Theological Perspectives

It is not known whether Julian actually penned the accounts herself or dictated them to a scribe. In any event, her work is extremely significant in and of itself for being what is believed to be the earliest surviving work in the English language reflecting the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of a woman. Beyond that, or perhaps partly because of that, the work is of great significance for the following theological/ psychological orientations:

1. Julian emphasized and developed an idea that had emerged only tangentially in earlier Christian writings (including places in the Hebrew scriptures, St. Paul’s epistles, and in some medieval writing), i.e., the idea of God and Jesus as having the attributes of “Mother” as well as “Father.” Thus, she wrote, “So Jesus Christ, who opposes good to evil, is our true Mother. . . . As truly as God is our Father, so truly is God our Mother, and he revealed that in everything, and especially in these sweet words where he says: I am he; that is to say: I am he, the power and goodness of fatherhood; I am he, the wisdom and lovingness of motherhood; I am he, the light and the grace which is all blessed love. . . .” (Julian 1978, pp. 295–296). Julian continued in this vein in equating a mother’s milk with the blood of Jesus: “The mother can lay her child tenderly to her breast, but our tender Mother Jesus can lead us easily into his blessed breast through his sweet open side, and show us there a part of the godhead and the joys of heaven. . . . This fair lovely word ‘mother’ is so sweet and so kind in itself that it cannot be said of anyone or two anyone except of him and to him who is the true Mother of life and of all things” (Julian 1978, p. 299). In her work, Julian

perhaps more than any other mystic of the Middle Ages incorporated the feminine into the Godhead.

2. Julian's work is notable in its time and context for its theology of sin which is remarkably grace filled and displays a vision of God which is at once bigger than that of most of her contemporaries and more personal. For Julian, God was not a stern, rageful, judgmental Father, but a wise, loving, and compassionate Father and Mother who understands our nature and expects us to sin. Thus, in one of her visions, she heard Jesus say, "Sin is necessary but all will be well, and all will be well, and every kind of thing will be well" (Julian 1978, p. 225). Moreover, she said that in her visions, "I did not see sin, for I believe that it has no kind of substance, no share in being, nor can it be recognized except by the pain caused by it" (Julian 1978, p. 225). Julian wrote that we were not to "be too much aggrieved by the sin that comes. . . against God's will" (Julian 1978, p. 33). Perhaps most surprisingly for a person who lived in the Middle Ages, Julian said that she saw "no kind of wrath in God. . ." (Julian 1978, p. 33).
3. Writing in a historical time and place of much barbarism, upheaval, and premature death owing to many factors including the Black Death, Julian's work is notable and unusual for its lightness and for its sense of optimism and divine love that it conveys. In her work, one experiences an overarching sense of an overflowing grace and goodness and kindness in the Godhead and in Divine Providence. Thus, her *Revelations* contain the constant refrain and insistence that regardless of what may befall us, and as impossible as our life situations may sometimes seem, we will "not be overcome" (Julian 1978, p. 164) and that "all will be well." Julian concludes her *Revelations* with the following words she perceived from God:

What, do you want to know your Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well, love was his meaning. Who reveals it to you? Love. What did he reveal to you? Love. Why does he reveal it to you? For love.

Remain in this, and you will know more of the same. But you will never know different, without end (Julian 1978, p. 342).

Taken as a whole, Julian's *Revelations* reveal a person who appeared to be remarkably devoid of defenses of shame, dualism, splitting, self-hatred, paranoia, and negative introjections that were the hallmarks of many of the other mystics and theologians of her time; a person who furthermore was able to integrate archetypes of the maternal, the paternal, and the lover into her images of God in Jesus Christ.

### See Also

- ▶ Dualism
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Shame and Guilt

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## Jung, Carl Gustav

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Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), the founder of Analytical Psychology, ranks as one of the major contributors to the modern psychological understanding of religion and religious experience. His signature work in this area, presented in 1936 in the annual Terry Lectures at Yale University, is *Psychology and Religion*.

### Childhood

Carl Jung was born into a traditional and unusually religious Swiss family. His father, Johann

Paul Achilles Jung, was a Swiss Reformed pastor with a doctorate in Oriental languages from Göttingen University, and his mother, Emilie née Preiswerk, was the daughter of a prominent Swiss Reformed minister in Basel, Samuel Preiswerk. Jung's early years were deeply infused with religious influences and impressions. Surrounded by church and churchmen in his childhood and growing up in ultraconservative Basel, he assimilated the prevailing religious atmosphere of Swiss Protestantism of the place and times, with its characteristic narrowly provincial views of Catholics, Jews, and other cultural aliens. In time, he would rectify this narrowness.

In the autobiographical work, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung reports a number of childhood experiences involving religion and religious figures. As an intellectually restless adolescent, he questioned his father sharply about the teachings of Christianity, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, but found no satisfaction in his father's answers. Subsequently, he turned to books in his father's library for enlightenment. When his mother gave him a copy of Goethe's *Faust* and passed on to him the family myth that his grandfather Jung – also named Carl Gustav, a professor of medicine and ultimately the *Rektor* of the University of Basel – was an illegitimate descendent of Goethe's, he became fascinated by this classic of German culture for life. In the gymnasium and later while attending medical school at the University of Basel, he read philosophy (Kant, Schopenhauer, C.G. Carus, and Nietzsche were especially important) in his spare time. All of this would feed eventually into his extensive studies of myth, religion, and heterodox traditions such as Gnosticism and alchemy. In his adult years, his erudition in the history of world religions and their symbolisms was formidable.

### Early Contributions

While enrolled as a resident psychiatrist at the Bürgholzli Klinik in Zurich, where he was the chief assistant to Prof. Eugen Bleuler, he began an intense collaborative relationship with the

Viennese founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. He would later call this his first big indiscretion because Freud had no standing whatsoever in psychiatry or university circles at the time. Jung recognized Freud's genius immediately upon meeting him and was initially impressed by the scientific and therapeutic value of his methods for delving into the dark corners of the human mind. The voluminous correspondence between the two men contains a graphic account of the waxing and waning of their relationship and reveals the importance that their differing attitudes toward religion played in their discussions. From the beginning, however, Jung was skeptical about Freud's heavy reliance on the sex drive and on personal psychodynamics to explain the etiology of neurosis and psychosis on the one hand and more importantly about his insistence that repression, sublimation, and wish fulfillment could exhaustively explain the creation and meaning of human culture and religion. Later, in the person and philosophy of William James, whom he met at Clark University in Worcester, MA, in 1909, Jung found a more intellectually compatible resonance. He especially appreciated James's empirical methodology in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

When the relationship with Freud broke up in 1913, Jung had just completed *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido*, translated as *Psychology of the Unconscious* in 1916 and later revised and published as *Symbols of Transformation*. This was his first extensive exploration into the primordial and collective foundations of dreams, fantasies, and imagination. In 1914, having separated from Freud and resigned from the International Psychoanalytic Association, of which he was president, Jung founded his own school of psychoanalysis, Analytical Psychology. In 1921, he presented the results of his new thinking in the volume, *Psychological Types*. In these two early works, he delved deeply into the history of Western thought, including its theological and religious traditions. In addition, his broad study of world religions, mythologies, and other symbol systems is also on full display there. At the same time, he was engaged in a challenging self analysis, which is described in *Memories, Dreams,*

*Reflections* and which he discussed with students in a number of seminars (as recorded, for instance, in *Analytical Psychology: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1925*). Jung was fully cognizant of the religious content of his dreams, fantasies, interpretations, and written creations (such as the quasi-Gnostic *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos*) during this period. Relying heavily on these “inner experiences,” many of which are recorded in *The Red Book* (a privately kept journal that is due to be published for the first time in 2009), he constructed the psychological basis for his approach to religious life and spirituality, which would appear in many writings in the decades to follow. As a modern person who had left, or had “fallen out of,” his inherited religious tradition and was therefore without a myth to live by, Jung felt a strong need to make up for this loss. Without myth, he discovered, the individual’s life lacks meaning. Many of his subsequent essays are addressed to people like himself. In his depth psychology, Jung offered a set of methods and interpretive strategies that could be used to solve this crucial spiritual problem at the core of modernity.

### **Collaboration and Influences**

Increasingly, Jung’s interpretations of religion departed from the typical contemporary psychoanalytic ones. Jung did not intend to be an apologist for religion, as Freud was quick to claim. While appreciative of the value of religious traditions and aware of the power of religious images and experiences to transform individuals’ lives, Jung could also be skeptical and certainly knew of the shadow sides of these institutions and psychic phenomena. Rather than wrapping himself in assertions of faith, his intent was to use his psychological theory as a scientific hypothesis that could perhaps explain the origins and significance of religious thought, imagination, and feeling and the religious behavior of human beings throughout history and across cultures. After World War I, Jung made trips to such far-flung places as the American Southwest, Africa, and India, where he observed the religious

customs and mythologies of the indigenous peoples. These journeys fed into his interest in the varieties of religious ideas, perspectives, and images that grow out of the psychic experience as well as further convinced him of their common features and patterns.

In the 1920s, through his acquaintance with Hermann Graf Keyserling and participation in the latter’s “School of Wisdom” in Darmstadt, Germany, Jung met Richard Wilhelm, the missionary Sinologist and translator into German of a host of texts from the Chinese including, importantly, the *Tao Te Ching* and the I Ching. Through friendships such as these, he developed a special and abiding interest in Eastern thought and religions, and he began as well to find intriguing parallels between Western psychology and Eastern philosophy, which added credibility to his intuition that the collective unconscious is the universal matrix of religious imagery and ideation. In 1928, Wilhelm invited Jung to write a psychological commentary for his translation of the Chinese text, “The Secret of the Golden Flower,” which gave Jung the opportunity to inspect more deeply and precisely the commonalities between the psychological processes he found active in his European and American patients and the more explicitly spiritual productions of the ancient Chinese practitioners of yoga and alchemy. These parallels fascinated him and led him to formulate the view that the unconscious is the source of a spontaneous evolution of religious imagery with a concomitant suggestion of transcendent meaning, which can eventually make its way into consciousness via dreams and imagination. In a series of lectures given in the 1930s and later formulated in more detailed terms as Part II of the work, *Psychology and Alchemy*, Jung attempted to demonstrate how this process can be observed in a modern nonreligious Western person’s dreams and spontaneous fantasies. In these studies, he identified a process of spiritual development that emerges from the unconscious background of the psyche into the light of day through the medium of dreams and active imagination. A hallmark of this development is the experience of the numinous archetypal images of the collective unconscious. (Rudolph Otto’s

book, *Das Heilige* (in English, *The Idea of the Holy*), played an important role in Jung's thinking about psychology and religion. Otto coined the term "numinosum" to describe the nature of religious experience.)

In the 1930s, Jung collaborated with a number of well-known scholars of Eastern Religions, such as Heinrich Zimmer, Wilhelm Hauer, D.T. Suzuki, and W.Y. Evans-Wentz. For Evans-Wentz, who was translating and editing a series of Eastern texts into English, Jung wrote psychological commentaries on *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. His interest in the psychological aspects of world religions was further expanded and greatly nourished by his participation in the Eranos Tagungen held in Ascona, Switzerland, annually beginning in 1933. In this international gathering of scholars, he met and conversed with such luminaries as Martin Buber (on Hasidic Judaism), Henri Corbin (on Islamic mysticism), Mircea Eliade (the founder of the discipline known as History of Religions), Karl Kerényi (on Greek mythology), Gilles Quispel (on ancient Gnosticism), Paul Radin (on Native American mythology), Gershom Scholem (on Jewish mysticism), and Paul Tillich (on Protestant theology). In turn, Jung's ideas had a significant influence on the thinking of the scholars who attended the Eranos conferences.

## Religion and Archetype

Jung's psychological theorizing puts forward the notion that all human beings share a common primordial level of psyche, which he termed the collective unconscious. Out of this common psychic matrix, he argued, are forged all the world's religious images and dogmas. The characteristic patterns of Deity, which take form spontaneously throughout history and across geographical regions, he designated as archetypal images. These fundamental patterns can be found in all peoples and are particularly obvious in their myths and rituals. The religious dogmas and icons of the world's religions give expression to refine and elaborate, in one degree or another, the

archetypes of the collective unconscious. This makes of them suitable containers for the complexity of individual human psyches. As containers, the dogmatic expressions within religions also provide a strong defensive bulwark against the onslaught of original religious experiences of the numinous, which Jung (as a cautious psychiatrist) feared could lie at the root of ominous psychiatric disturbances if they occurred to insufficiently stable personalities. They could also bring about collective states of possession and lead to social upheaval and catastrophe, as he witnessed in nearby Germany during the 1930s and 1940s.

The archetypes underlying and supporting the religious dogmas and images are psychological forces: they behave like drives, but they are not just impulses, they are also represented as images in the psyche and can express themselves as ideas and ideologies. They have both a spiritual and a biological basis. Jung regarded the production of images and ideas with a strongly religious thrust to be a natural human tendency. In his view, the proclivity to imagine and conceive, to worship, and to recognize Divinity belongs to the human psyche's nature, and the psyche's more unconsciously created and driven religious productions are often combined with the more conscious human need for personal meaning. With this perspective, Analytical Psychology is able to take a view of religious experience and behavior in all its manifestations that is appreciative of psychological values, including both defensive and prospective ones.

## Jung and Christian Tradition

After a trip to India in 1938, Jung focused more exclusively on his own background religious tradition, Christianity, interpreting and commenting on its images, doctrines, rituals, and texts in such works as: "Transformation Symbolism in the Mass" (1941/1954), "A Psychological Approach to the Dogma of the Trinity" (1942/1948), *Aion* (1951), and *Answer to Job* (1952). In these writings, Jung used psychological theory to interpret critically the psychological sources,



consequences, and implications of the Christian tradition – its Biblical background, its theological and ethical thinking, and its two millenniums of history. His use of a variety of heterodox and hermetic materials – Gnosticism and alchemy, especially – should be attributed not only to a personal preference for these esoteric movements nor only to his opinion that the practitioners of these were more psychologically minded than the mainstream theologians but importantly also to their value as resources for attaining a critical distance from the orthodox and dogmatic religious tradition. He found in these counter movements a means for purchasing insight into Christianity's one-sidedness and inadequacies due to the repression of differing but complimentary religious tendencies. Jung claimed to respect all religions, their symbolisms and ritual activities, since all equally originated from a common human matrix, the collective unconscious and the archetypal patterns of the psyche. But he also allowed himself to retain a critical perspective on all of them equally from the vantage point of psychology.

During the final decades of his life, Jung carried on a rigorous epistolary dialog with the English Dominican theologian, Fr. Victor White, O.P. (1902–1960). More than any other of Jung's theologically informed and trained students, Fr. White consolidated and expanded on Jung's dialog with the Christian tradition, especially as it is expressed in the Roman Catholic Church. In his two books, *God and the Unconscious* and *Soul and Psyche*, White explored in a highly refined and disciplined fashion the potential for dialog between Analytical Psychology and Roman Catholic theology. The collaboration between these two men broke down because of their insurmountable differences – Jung was a secular Protestant who followed Kant's epistemological reservations about metaphysics, White was a Roman Catholic priest and a committed Thomistic theologian; Jung viewed God as a symbol, White had faith in a revealed God; and Jung understood God as a coincidence of opposites (coincidentia oppositorum, following Nicholas of Cusa among others) and held out for the psychological reality of evil as a potent

force in human affairs as opposed to the way he saw Christianity playing it down in its teaching of evil as "privation of good" (*privatio boni*), White accepted the Catholic teaching of God as the Highest Good (*Summum Bonum*) and considered evil, even if it is real enough in human affairs, to be but without metaphysical foundation. Their differences in methodology and ways of thinking – psychological versus theological – remain highly instructive for anyone wishing to enter into the dialog between depth psychology and traditional theology.

### See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Coincidentia Oppositorum](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Objective Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)
- ▶ [Synchronicity](#)

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy

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The practice of the alchemical arts has its origin in the second or third century BCE in Greece. It spread through the ancient Near and Far East. In the most basic understanding, alchemy has always been about transformation and remains so in the psychological theory of Carl Jung. The

name, alchemy, in fact, derives from the Arabic *al-kimia* meaning the art of transformation.

Transformation in alchemy is effected by the realization of oppositions and the subsequent reconciliation of those opposites. The work involved discerning oppositions and then reconciling what often seem irreconcilable opposites. The goal was to produce a unity and wholeness that was then incorruptible and was able to transcend oppositions. This remained for the alchemist and so remains today for the psychotherapist using an alchemical model in his practice: an ideal never attained, but aspired to. In fact, the attainment of the goal would put an end to the growth as well as the needs for growth of the personality because it is from that tension of opposites that the personality develops.

Perhaps in the popular imagination, alchemy is most commonly thought to be about the converting of base metal into gold, a nonreactive or incorruptible metal. Symbolically, the alchemical processes naturally metamorphose into the transforming of the corruptible into the noncorruptible and of physical matter with its corruptibility into something beyond corruption – that is eternal. A concurrent purpose of the transformation of base metal into gold became creating an elixir of life that could ameliorate the process of corruption of the body in the aging process. It was by the creation of what is termed the philosopher's stone that these processes could be accomplished. In Jungian psychology, this is thought of as the third that emerges from the irreconcilable opposition of the two and is termed the transcendent function that will be discussed below.

Originally, the processes of psychic transformation and physical transformation were amalgamated in the alchemical arts. The moral and religious problems that alchemy implicitly addresses were intertwined with the idea of the physical transformation of the metals.

In the Renaissance, alchemy developed in two directions – one moving closer to science and the other becoming more philosophical. The former focused on the transformation of physical stuff and eventually became the discipline of chemistry. The latter remained more of an art becoming more philosophical and concerning itself with the

imaginal and the transcendent. The problem for these alchemists, in part, became the reconciliation of the experience of physicality with its temporal and limited orient with the soul, spirit, and imagination with their limitless eternity.

In either case, Jung believed the idea of the transforming of metal into gold captured the passion and thereby the imagination of an alchemist. They described in their writings the archetypal process of transformation of the personality into an integrated form in which its integrity was corrupted neither by inner nor outer events. Jung called this process individuation, and although unattainable, it was always an inner quest.

As such, Jung believed the writings of alchemists provided a window into process of the unconscious. He felt it described the psychological phenomenology observed in the unconscious often with a detail he found astonishing. The alchemists either projected their psychological content unto the base metal or, in later times, later used the metals as a vehicle to describe their inner strivings. Because they knew little or nothing about the actual properties of the metal, it provided a blank screen for their projections and descriptions.

Jung held that in understanding the projections the alchemist made unto the metal, the clinician could gain insight into the natural and archetypal processes of the unconscious and thereby bring into consciousness elements and developments within the psyche that would promote the process of individuation. In its complexity, alchemy mirrored the complexity of the human psyche.

Jung also felt that the alchemical writings provided a needed compensation to Christian doctrine. Although the majority of the alchemists whose writings Jung explored were Christian, their writings included chthonic elements that Jung felt were missing from the Christian cannon, but an integral part of psychological reality. Most importantly for Jung, alchemical writings incorporated the bodily experience and the idea of evil not just as a perversion of creation and existence but as an element of it.

For Jung as for the alchemist, the problem of the opposites was of prime importance, and good

and evil as the components of morality are among the most psychologically important opposites. To Jung, the Christian doctrine of original sin did not adequately address the problem of evil, but instead split evil off from good and from god in creation. Evil as sin was only a perversion of this good. Jung believed that in order for the individual psyche to individuate, evil must be considered seriously as an archetypal force as innate and fundamental both to creation and the individual self. Because evil was so split from the idea of god in Christian doctrine, the collective consciousness, conditioned by that Christian doctrine, was forced to identify with the good or be burdened by a guilt that prohibited the realization of the wholeness of the personality.

The dominant worldview was that the patriarchal world with its masculine orientation of consciousness which precluded the acceptance of evil. The alchemist projected elements of the matriarchal feminine unto the metals and so thereby incorporated in their writings that which had been culturally repressed. Inclusion of the matriarchal feminine allowed for the reconciliation of good and evil and made it possible in a psychological way that Christian doctrine did not provide.

Richard Wilhelm, the noted sinologist, propelled Jung into study of alchemy through his interpretation of a Chinese treatise, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Jung's first alchemical writing published in 1929 was the introduction to Wilhelm's translation of this work.

In 1944, Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* (CW 12) was published. It contains a dream series that showed the process of individuation that Jung amplified and interpreted using alchemical symbolism. It also contains an essay explicating the religious elements of alchemy. Other of Jung's alchemical essays are in *Alchemical Studies* (CW 13).

What is generally thought to be Jung's greatest alchemical work and the culmination of his research and thinking about alchemy, *Mysterium Coniunctionis* (CW 14), was written between 1941 and 1954. It is concerned predominantly with the problem of opposites and uses a variety of symbolic alchemical symbols such as Sol and

Luna, Rex and Regina, and Salt and Sulfur to explicate the problem. “Coniunctio” was the alchemical word for the unification of opposites and Jung felt that this unification of opposites was the central problem of alchemy.

The metaphor of the sexual unity of male and female is often used to illuminate the process because it is the most obvious opposition in the human experience. It was Jung’s contention, certainly supported in the alchemical literature, that every human has within his unconscious a contra-sexual part or archetype that he termed as anima in man and animus in woman. The symbol of sexual unity, thus, provides the image of the human being reconciling the opposites within.

Perhaps the most explicit use of the sexual metaphor used by Jung to describe psychic phenomena is in *The Psychology of the Transference* (part of CW 16). It was originally a part of *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, but was published separately in 1946 and analyzes a series of sixteenth-century alchemical woodcuts called the *Rosarium philosophorum*. It is Jung’s major work on transference/countertransference dynamics. Jung understood the images portrayed in the woodcuts to describe the complexities he had experienced in the transference/countertransference field in a way that no other vehicle could.

## Commentary

In understanding Jung’s work in interpreting alchemical writings and their relation to psychological material, it is important to understand that for Jung, projection was not only as in the Freudian sense a mechanism for evacuating discordant repressed material. It was also a mechanism for the realization of the eternal components of the personality that have never been conscious. Jung termed these components archetypal. They represent the innate patterning of psychological process and behavior that constitute the experience of being human. The projections, the alchemist made upon the metals, represented archetypal material that described the process of individuation.

On the one hand, Jung meant individuation as the process of the spiritual components of the personality joining together with the instinctual components into a wholeness. On the other hand, individuation can be thought of as the process of fully living out the fullness one’s potential – being the very being one was meant to be. Obviously both of these processes entail a unity of the personality that reconciles the opposing components that are inevitable results of the expanding consciousness resulting from confronting the unconscious.

The process of individuation has a complexity, subtlety, and a myriad of variations. In alchemical symbolism, Jung found a way to describe it.

The analogy to the alchemist attempting to make gold which is a metal whose components are stable and nonreactive is obvious. The attempt was to find a substance that could contain the warring oppositions that caused the metal’s instability. In his psychological theory, Jung has termed this holding together the tension of these opposites a mediating third the transcendental function. For a third way that holds these opposing tendencies together to emerge, one must work to the extent of one’s ego’s ability on the problem and wait for the solution from the depth of the psyche.

The following is an attempt to describe the individuation process in a linear form that must necessarily be only a surface view of a profound process:

The process begins when the original unity of being begins to break down with the confrontation of what Jung has termed shadow. The shadow is the part of the personality that is repressed because it does not meet with the ideal of what one or society believes one should be. As the individual becomes aware that these shadow qualities lie within and can no longer be blamed on mother, father, or someone else, the original unity is shattered and the work of reconciling ego and shadow begins.

There is also the confrontation of the archetypal pieces that vie for the time-limited space of consciousness – such as feeling the desire to be a mother while at the same time desiring a powerful work position. One desire is

motivated by what Jung would call the mother archetype, the other by the power principle. Both may be aspects of the self that need to be expressed, but the limitation of time may not allow both to be expressed with a full intensity.

Another example of oppositions called forth in the process of individuation would be falling in love with someone and being in a situation where the sacrifice of much that is loved in one's present life would be necessary if the new love is to be realized. The ego can find no solution with the attitude it holds except to split from one love and cling to the other. The answer can only emerge from the confrontation and struggle with the unconscious. It is this sort of psychological struggle the alchemical process describes.

Jung did not believe that the problems of life engendered by these conflicting components were soluble as such, but rather that a new attitude must emerge that could hold them. Alchemically, this was the philosopher's stone that allowed seemingly opposing forces to exist in harmony. Psychologically, this means the ego moves more in accord with the self. In other words, the temporal world of the ego is reconciled with the limitless self-moving which moves consciousness to a viewpoint large enough to encompass the conflicts. The individuated way would be holding the tension of these opposites until a third way (the transcendent function) emerges.

In summary, alchemy provided for Jung insight into the process of individuation. It allows the student of his methods a map of complexity and subtlety to the unfathomable depths of the psyche.

## See Also

- ▶ [Alchemical Mercurius and Carl Gustav Jung](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions

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### Jung's Celebration of Eastern Religious Traditions

C. G. Jung's dialog with Eastern religious traditions, spanning almost 50 years, was profoundly influential on the development of analytical psychology, enabling him not only to discover cross-cultural confirmation for his clinical research but also to extend his own metapsychological concepts (Jung 1973, 1976; Coward 1985, 1996; Bishop 1992; Clarke 1994; Shamdasani 1996). Based on the assumption that Western consciousness is historically conditioned, is geographically confined, and represents only part of mankind, he argued that Eastern psychology forms the indispensable basis for a critique and objective consideration of Western psychology (Jung 1931/1962, 1950/1955, 1973). Jung's primary interest was in *yoga*, a general term for him indicating the spiritual development of the personality within the Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist religious traditions. Rather than distinguishing between the variety of yoga practices and competing soteriological perspectives established by the canonical traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism, Jung was interested in yoga as a natural process of introversion, seeing the inner processes to which yoga gave rise as universal and the indigenous methods employed to achieve them as culturally specific (Jung 1936; Shamdasani 1996). The symbolism of oriental yoga materials provided Jung with invaluable comparative material for the interpretation of the collective unconscious, assisting him in his endeavor to develop a cross-cultural comparative psychology of inner experience (Coward 1985; Clarke 1994; Shamdasani 1996). Thus the intention of his essays and commentaries on Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and Japanese



religious materials (Jung 1931/1962, 1932, 1935/1953, 1936, 1938–1939, 1939a, 1939b, 1939c, 1939d, 1943, 1944a, 1950), as well as his persistent reference to these materials throughout his other mature writings (Jung 1921, 1934–1939, 1951, 1955–1956, 1963, 1973, 1976), was not to invite his readers to uncritically adopt Hindu, Buddhist, or Taoist spiritual practices, but to demonstrate that the contemporary intrusion of Eastern spirituality into Western consciousness (which has a long history) possesses profound psychological significance: the Western discovery or rediscovery of the collective unconscious, the source of religious experience. Moreover, his research on Eastern religious traditions led him to realize that European alchemy, providing a bridge between analytical psychology and Gnosticism, is a Western form of yoga (Jung 1938–1939; Coward 1985; Clarke 1994; Gomez 1995; Shamdasani 1996).

Jung was drawn toward Eastern mystical traditions because of their dominant orientation toward overcoming severe imbalances between opposites (particularly spirit and matter/instinct and good and evil) causing disunity within the psyche and human suffering. This healing tendency of *yoga* traditions to focus their attention on the dynamic interplay between complementary opposites and psychic liberation from them through either their balancing or transcendence, Jung argued, paralleled, even anticipated, his own individuation process of seeking psychic wholeness. Recognizing Chinese and Indian symbols of the *Tao*, *brahman*, *atman*, and many others as uniting pairs of opposites provided him with confirmation that the archetype of the “self” unifies all opposites (Jung 1921, 1931/1962, 1939c, 1955–1956, 1963; Coward 1985, 1996; Clarke 1994). Moreover, Jung was attracted to the emphasis Eastern yoga traditions place on detachment from egocentricity as the condition for the spiritual transformation of consciousness, because it provided support for his affirmation that individuation requires the shifting of the center of the personality away from the ego (and its emotional attachments to the outer world) and toward the self. For Jung, recognizing that the ego stands to the self as the moved to the mover, or as object to subject, leads to an extension and

refinement of consciousness familiar to the East, enabling the analysand to achieve relief from suffering caused by the conflict of opposites and to realize that it is not that something new is seen but that one sees or experiences differently (Jung 1931/1962, 1934–1939, 1939b, 1939c, 1941/1954, 1951, 1963, 1973, 1976; Coward 1985; Clarke 1994). What impressed Jung most about the transformation of consciousness celebrated by the yoga traditions of the East (equated by him with the self-liberation of the mind in contrast to the grace of God in Christianity) was the importance assigned to bringing the divinity within the range of human experience rather than, as in much Western religion, accepting that God is inaccessible to human consciousness (Jung 1939c, 1963; Coward 1985).

### Jung’s Ambivalence Toward Eastern Religious Traditions

Nevertheless, Jung’s enthusiasm for Eastern religious traditions was qualified by what he considered to be their excessively introverted psychological orientation. Observing that the mind of the Far East is related to our Western consciousness as the unconscious is, that is, as the left hand to the right, he understood the relationship between Eastern and Western mentalities and religious traditions to be one of complementary opposites. Whereas Western man is predominantly extraverted, finding meaning in the external world, Eastern man is predominantly introverted, locating the meaning within himself through sinking into meditation. Adopting a position of East/West psychological relativism, he argued that whereas the introverted Eastern spiritual perspective searches for the riches of knowledge within the psyche, the extraverted Christian perspective is driven by the principle of love which encourages worldly activity. Whereas for the Westerner, the essence of that which works is the world of appearance, for the Indian it is the soul because he recognizes that the psyche alone possesses immediate reality. The world for him is a mere show or façade, and his reality comes close to what we in the West would



call a dream. Jung's encounter with what he perceived to be the dreamlike world of India during his visit to the subcontinent in 1938 led him to conclude that whereas the Westerner believes in *doing*, the Indian believes in impassive *being* because God is within all things and especially man (Jung 1921, 1932, 1939a, 1939c, 1939d, 1943, 1947/1954, 1950/1955, 1955–1956, 1963; Coward 1985; Reynolds 1989; Clarke 1994; Gomez 1995).

Jung, however, was equally critical of the psychological perspectives of both the introverted East and the extraverted West. Both standpoints, he argued, while each having their psychological justification, are one sided or extreme in underrating or losing one half of the universe (either the world of consciousness or of the unconscious); thereby, they make the mistake of artificially separating themselves from total reality. Both the Eastern and the Western standpoints need to reorient themselves toward the goal of the individuation process: the conjunction of introversion and extraversion. Since the twentieth century, Western man is excessively extraverted, suffering an unprecedented spiritual crisis because he has no time for self-knowledge and he is in need of compensatory introverted spirituality to provide necessary psychic balance. Here, for Jung, lies the meaning of the West's engagement with the East during the twentieth century; exposure to Eastern traditions provides the catalyst for Western spiritual transformation: the realization that the unconscious is the generator of consciousness. The West must, however, approach Eastern values from within and not from without, building on its own psychic ground with its own methods to produce a Western form of yoga on the basis laid down by Christianity, rather than trying to cover its spiritual nakedness with the gorgeous, but psychologically alien, trappings of the East. Jung argues that an encounter with yoga in the twentieth century serves to remind us that we in the West possess similar forms of introverted spirituality: Gnosticism, medieval Christian mysticism, and alchemy (Jung 1930, 1938–1939, 1939c, 1943, 1944a, 1951, 1954, 1955–1956, 1963; Coward 1985; Clarke 1994; Gomez 1995).

Jung insisted that the mentalities of the East and the West are fundamentally different, because they are the products of different histories deeply rooted in the psyche. Because Eastern religious teachings, symbols, and practices are a foreign body in the Western psyche, adoption of them in the West can only succeed in producing an artificial stultification of Western intelligence and the means not of addressing Western psychological and spiritual problems, but of avoiding them. For this reason, Jung repeatedly warned against the practice of yoga by Europeans, a form of mimetic madness which could, on the one hand, lead to a strengthening of will and further repression of unconscious contents by consciousness and, on the other hand, to psychotic states in which consciousness is overwhelmed by the unconscious. Instead of the practice of yoga, Jung prescribed for the European his own visionary technique of active imagination to facilitate the flow of unconscious contents into consciousness (Jung 1916/1958, 1931/1962, 1932, 1935/1953, 1936, 1938–1939, 1939c, 1943, 1944b, 1951, 1954, 1963; Coward 1985; Clarke 1994; Shamdasani 1996).

### Jung's Objections to Hindu and Buddhist Nondualism

Moreover, Jung objected to the claim of nondualist Hindu and Buddhist traditions that the ego can be *completely* dissolved in, or absorbed by, the transcendental self (*brahman*, *atman*, *purusa*, *nirvana*) in a trance-like state (*samadhi*) attained by yoga practice. He argued that the identification of the self-conscious subject with, or its disappearance within, a universal consciousness celebrated by Eastern canonical traditions must be equated with unconsciousness and that exclusion, selection, and discrimination are the root and essence of consciousness. Jung conceded that the practice of yoga can produce a remarkable extension of consciousness, but it cannot lead to an egoless state, because there must always be something or somebody left over – the infinitesimal ego, the knowing “I” – to experience the realization that there is no distinction between subject and object. If there is no knowing subject, the nondual

position cannot be stated as an object of knowledge (Jung 1939c, 1939e, 1951; Coward 1985; Reynolds 1989; Clarke 1994). In contrast with this nondualist position celebrating the transcendence of opposites (*nirvāṇa*), ultimate perfection, and the final conquest of suffering attained through the realization of *mokṣa* (liberation) or *nirvāṇa* (enlightenment, extinction), for Jung, because the infinite unconscious can never be fully known by the finite ego and the individuation process never completed, suffering caused by the dynamic interplay of opposites can never be fully overcome. Jung insists that complete redemption from suffering in this world is an illusion and complete liberation from the opposites means death (Jung 1916/1958, 1946, 1958, 1963, 1973; Ajaya 1983; Coward 1985; Clarke 1994; Muramoto 2002).

### Jung's Dialog with Taoism

Jung's exposure to Taoist materials was more influential on the development of his concept of the self than his dialog with the Hindu and Buddhist nondualist traditions. Noting that the *Tao* is the middle way between opposites such as man and nature and heaven and earth, he recognized that the goal of Taoist practice of reestablishing a balance between the opposites of *yang* (warmth, light, maleness, heaven) and *yin* (cold, darkness, femaleness, earth) in the *Tao* and the goal of the individuation process, a balancing of compensating psychic opposites in the experience of the self, were parallel processes. Jung found in the Taoist teaching that man, as microcosm, is a reconciler of opposite confirmation, on the one hand, for his view that individuation requires bringing the opposites of spirit and instinct and introversion and extraversion into harmony through letting go of the ego in spontaneous action (*wu-wei* – action through non-action) and, on the other, for his theory of synchronicity, the meaningful acausal connections or correlative parallels between inner psychic and outer physical events. Jung's dialog with Taoism led him to affirm through his theory of synchronicity that intrapsychic life must be interrelated with corresponding experience of the

external world (Jung 1921, 1931/1962, 1950, 1951, 1952, 1963; Aziz 1990; Clarke 1994; Coward 1996; Main 2004).

### See Also

- ▶ Active Imagination
- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Circumambulation
- ▶ Coincidentia Oppositorum
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Consciousness
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Ego
- ▶ Enlightenment
- ▶ God
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ Healing
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Inflation
- ▶ Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism
- ▶ Jungian Self
- ▶ Mandala
- ▶ Numinosum
- ▶ Objective Psyche
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psyche
- ▶ Psychospiritual
- ▶ Reductionism
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Synchronicity
- ▶ Transcendent Function
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and Feminism

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Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology was important in valuing the feminine in counterbalance to what he saw as an excessive shift towards "masculine" logos, rationality, and science in Western society. But, infused with patriarchal assumptions, Jung's work on gender is flawed and lacks awareness of the issues raised by later feminist psychologists such as Crawford and Unger (2000). Jung's work is however an important catalyst. Jung's critique of religion has inspired some women and men to challenge the absence of the divine feminine and women leaders in their religions of birth and others to turn to goddess spirituality to find empowering religious images and roles.

### Women in Switzerland

Carl Jung's attitudes to women were formed in the conservative patriarchal culture of late nineteenth-century Switzerland. It was an era that saw the beginning of first-wave feminism; but

women did not gain the vote in Swiss federal elections until 1971 (CFQF 2009b), and equality in education was not written into the Swiss constitution until 1981 (CFQF 2009a).

### Women's Role

The Swiss women's movement was divided between those seeking equal rights and political representation and "dualists." Dualists predominated and pursued an "equal but different" agenda that saw women's role as primarily to assure the well-being of the family (CFQF 2009c). Jung supported the idea of women's suffrage (Adler 1975, pp. 475–478), but his theories reflected a "dualist" viewpoint that stereotyped women.

The conscious attitude of a woman is in general far more exclusively personal than that of man. Her world is made up of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, husbands and children. . . . the man's world is the nation, the state, business concerns, etc. (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 7, para. 338).

Jung saw *Eros* (feeling, relatedness, and love) and *logos* (reason, spirit, and differentiation) as present in both sexes but women as oriented primarily towards *Eros* (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 9ii, para. 28). He spoke disparagingly of women who tried to make the sexes equal, rather than valuing difference. Attempting to follow a "masculine" profession might injure women's "feminine nature"; for while women could "do anything for the love of a man," only the exceptional could do something important for the "love of a thing" (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 10, para. 243).

### Anima: The Female Within the Male

Douglas points out that Jung's work synthesizes the positivism of his medical studies with romantic philosophy that endowed women with the unconsciousness, irrationality, depth, and emotions forbidden to the "masculine" rational self (Douglas 1997, p. 19). Jung considered the unconscious a source of knowledge and insight, and through

his relationship with a woman, a man could access his inner feminine, the *anima*, which is

... fundamentally unconscious ... an imprint or 'archetype' of all the ancestral experiences of the female, a deposit, as it were, of all the impressions ever made by woman .... (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 17, para. 338).

Jung comments that "Every mother and every beloved is forced to become the carrier and embodiment of this omnipresent and ageless image ... ." (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 9ii, para. 24). Jung's thinking often appears to confuse women's psychology with the male projection of the *anima*.

### Women Analysts and Jungian Psychology

Feminist theologian Mary Daly has commented that few women analysts trained by Jung questioned his ideas on gender, and she criticizes women for promoting "Jung's garbled gospel" as feminist (Daly 1978, p. 280). David Tacey believes that there was even a "secret payoff" for women in identifying with Jung's *Eros* model:

... Jung was inviting them to step outside their limited humanness and to become archetypal. Women were secretly to view themselves as living incarnations of the Goddess .... (Tacey 1997, p. 28).

Jungian psychology had in any event more practical attractions. The profession of analyst had much to offer in an era when it was difficult for educated women to make a career. Whatever Jung's gender biases were, he saw women as excellent potential therapists and was willing to train them.

Many of those who trained were far from Jung's *Eros*-dominated stereotype. Dr. M. Esther Harding was a strong-minded lesbian whose books were important for the development of goddess spirituality. Together with Drs. Eleanor Bertine and Kristine Mann, she founded the powerful New York C. G. Jung Institute. Dr. Jolande Jacobi drew up the original plan for the C. G.

Jung Institute in Zurich. Dr. Marie-Louise von Franz was Jung's valued collaborator on his alchemical works.

A careful reading of women analysts' work reveals a more proactive engagement with Jung's ideas than Daly depicts. Jung was aware of his limitations:

The elementary fact that a person always thinks that another's psychology is identical with his own effectively prevents a correct understanding of feminine psychology (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 10, para. 240).

It was women analysts who developed Jungian thinking on women. Toni Wolff argued that *Eros* is not the leading mode of conscious functioning of all women and that Judaism and Christianity, with their lack of the divine feminine, damage women. Drawing on sources including Bachofen on prehistoric matriarchy, Wolff created a typology that categorized women as mother, *hetaira* (in ancient Greece, an educated female courtesan), medial woman, or Amazon. Earlier generations might be limited to only one of the archetypal roles; but contemporary women should aim to move beyond this "one-sidedness" (Wolff 1941). Jung considered that the *anima* in men was mirrored in women by the *animus*, but his ideas were vague (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 9ii, para. 28). It was Emma Jung who developed the idea that as women matured psychologically, so too would their *animus* figures and that rather than projecting these qualities onto a man, women must reclaim what the *animus* symbolizes – word, power, meaning, and deed (Jung 1957, p. 20).

### Religion and the Feminine

From a feminist perspective, patriarchal religions can be a source of oppression for women. Jung raised radical questions about the God image of Christianity, which he considered deficient psychologically because the Trinity did not include a female aspect (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 11, para. 251). When in 1950 Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Catholic dogma of the



Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven, Jung saw this as an important event that left Protestantism as

... nothing but a *man's religion* ... Protestantism has obviously not given sufficient attention to the signs of the times which point to the equality of women. But this equality requires to be metaphysically anchored in the figure of a 'divine' woman ... The feminine, like the masculine, demands an equally personal representation (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 11, para. 753).

The impact of Jung's psychology can be seen in the work of goddess-oriented women, such as Adler (1986), Crowley (1989), and Starhawk. Indeed, Adler comments that

Much of the theoretical basis for a modern defense of polytheism comes from Jungian psychologists, who have long argued that the gods and goddesses of myth, legend, and fairy tale represent archetypes, real potencies and potentialities deep within the psyche, which, when allowed to flower, permit us to be more fully human (Adler 1986, p. 28).

From a Christian perspective, analyst Ulanov accepts the idea of female identification with *Eros* but views *Eros* as of equal value to logos and criticizes the exclusion of feminine imagery from religious symbolism as psychologically and socially damaging.

## Goddess as Role Model

Other Jungians found in ancient goddesses models for women's psychological growth that go beyond Jung's stereotyped thinking. Esther Harding sees in myths of a virgin Moon Goddess, who is virgin in the sense of being "one-in-herself" yet also goddess of love and mother goddess, an archetypal pattern helpful for modern women.

In the same way the woman who is virgin, one-in-herself, does what she does – not because of any desire to please, not to be liked, or to be approved, even by herself; not because of desire to gain power over another, to catch his interest or love, but because what she does is true (Harding 1971b, p. 125).

Turning to ancient myth, Sylvia Brinton Perera interprets the voluntarily descent of the Sumerian goddess Inanna into the underworld as a heroic quest and an empowering approach for women in overcoming depression. Jean Shinoda Bolen in *Goddesses in Everywoman* and Jennifer and Roger Woolger in *The Goddess Within* find in goddesses such as Artemis, Athena, and Hera powerful female archetypes that can help women negotiate the complexities of contemporary life. A goddess is seen not a supernatural being but

... a complex female character type that we intuitively recognize both in ourselves and in the women around us (Woolger and Woolger 1990, pp. 7–8).

Such psychological reductionism may offend the religious who worship ancient deities but points to how powerful deity symbols can help overcome sexual stereotyping.

## Feminist Critique

Until the mid-1970s, Jung's work was widely seen as valuing the feminine. This changed with second-wave feminism, which sprang from the realization by women that

... male-authored systems of knowledge ... had either omitted or distorted the representation of women (Rowland 2000, p. 73).

Naomi Goldenberg accused Jungian psychology of being itself a form of patriarchal religion, in which Jungians failed to question the "prophet's" premises about archetypes and women. Demaris S. Wehr (1988) evaluates Jungian ideas of "the feminine" as essentialist, conservative, contradictory to feminism (p. 10), and distorted by androcentrism and misogyny (p. 99). She acknowledges, however, Jung's contribution in highlighting the negative effects for women of masculine deity symbols which

... lead people to feel comfortable with or to accept social and political arrangements that correspond to the symbol system (Wehr 1988, p. 22).



Postmodernism and third-wave feminism, in which

... the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to metaphysics (Kristeva 1979/1986, p. 209),

has seen a reinterpretation of Jung's concepts. Estella Lauter, a pioneer of feminist archetypal theory, argues that the *animus* is not reflected in women's artwork and may not be numinous for women, as is the *anima* for men (Lauter 1985, p. 72). James Hillman considers that *anima* cannot be "contained by the notion of contrasexuality" and is relevant to women and men (Hillman 1985, pp. 53–55). Tacey comments that Hillman's work has value in removing,

... the patriarchal assumptions and conservative biases of Jung's psychology, adopting his androgynous understanding of the psyche without his moral imperatives ... (Tacey 1997, p. 31).

Susan Rowland argues that, from a postmodern feminist perspective, Jungian archetypal theory may overcome the influence of patriarchy because, not being culturally derived, the unconscious should "compensate for and combat cultural stereotyping" (Rowland 2000, p. 42).

Contemporary thinking that sexual orientation falls along a continuum rather than being an absolute has drawn upon Jung's ideas that

Either sex is inhabited by the opposite sex up to a point. . . (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 9i, para. 58)

and

As civilization develops, the bisexual primordial being turns into a symbol of the unity of personality, a symbol of the self, where the opposites find peace (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 9i, para. 294).

Analyst Susan McKenzie argues that Jung's psychology can be read as supportive to postmodern queer theory and that contemporary Jungians should

... engage in a revision of Jungian gender theory ... to offer a Jungian contribution to gender thinking in the spirit of the other Jung: the Jung of the symbolic, the mythic, and the subtle body.

Despite its flaws, Jung's work inspired many pioneering women in the field of psychotherapy,

and it continues to be a fruitful resource for new generations of feminist women and men seeking to address some of the fundamental questions of the psychological meaning of religion for individuals and society.

## See Also

- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Anima and Animus
- ▶ Archetypal Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Female God Images
- ▶ Femininity
- ▶ Goddess Spirituality
- ▶ Ulanov, Ann Belford
- ▶ Virgin Mary
- ▶ Von Franz, Marie-Louise

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism

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In response to persistent charges by his theological critics that he was a Gnostic (Buber 1952; Heisig 1979; Segal 1992; Dourley 1994), Jung insisted that he was neither a Gnostic nor a metaphysician, neither a theist nor an atheist, neither a mystic nor a materialist, but rather an *agnostic* empirical scientist and an analytical psychologist (Jung 1951–1961, 1952/1973, 1956–1957, 1963). Yet Jung's enthusiastic engagement with Gnosticism spanned more than four decades, from his early association with G. R. S. Mead and his frequent citation of his translations of Gnostic and Hermetic writings (Goodrick-Clarke and Goodrick-Clarke 2005; Hoeller 1988; Noll 1994) and his 1916 parnormally produced gnostic poem, *Septem Sermones ad Mortuos* attributed to Basilides of Alexandria (Jung 1916–1992), to his systematic treatment of Gnostic materials transmitted by Patristic sources in *Aion* in 1951 and the acquisition by the Bollingen Foundation, through the efforts of Gilles Quispel, of the Jung Codex (containing the *Evangelium Veritatis*, the “Gospel of Truth”) in 1953 (Jung 1953; Rudolph 1987; Wehr 1987).

### Reasons for Jung's Interest in Gnosticism

Jung's interest in Gnosticism arose as early as 1909, through his discovery that they were apparently the first thinkers to concern themselves with the numinous contents of the collective unconscious (Jung 1952–1973). Recognizing Gnosis as a psychological knowledge whose contents derive from the unconscious, Jung argued that the Gnostics anticipated and more or less prefigured the goal of analytical psychology, the

individuation process, albeit expressed in a language suited to the age they lived in, thereby demonstrating that the idea of the unconscious was not unknown to them (1951). This discovery that the Gnostics were, in their own way, engaging with unconscious contents was the first to end what Jung saw as his intellectual isolation, providing confirmation from the history of religions for the veracity of his own psychological findings (Jung 1921, 1951). Such confirmation and support for his work would later be supplemented by his research into European alchemy which provided a bridge from the modern world to ancient Gnosticism (1963). Acknowledging that alchemy was a continuation of Gnosticism, Jung affirmed that psychology could not be divorced from history.

Yet Jung always qualified his enthusiasm for Gnosticism, claiming that the Gnostics had no genuinely psychological conception of archetypal images. Rather, they projected their subjective inner perception into a cosmogonic system and believed in the metaphysical reality of its psychological figures (Jung 1921, 1963). In other words, ancient Gnostics had not achieved individuation in the modern sense; but because they engaged with unconscious contents more intensely than most of Jung's contemporaries, their symbols and experiences provided illuminating comparative material which, through amplification, could deepen Jung's clinical understanding of the unconscious. Jung's preoccupation with the parallels between Gnostic and modern clinical materials should be construed, therefore, not as evidence that he was a Gnostic – although he made no secret of his preference for religious experience over faith or belief (Jung 1906–1950; McGuire and Hull 1977) – but rather as a vehicle for carrying his own modern psychological research into the individuation process forward.

### Jung's Interpretation of Gnostic Materials

Jung provides a summary of his reading of Gnosticism in *Aion*. The Gnostic myth of the ignorant

*demiurge*, who imagined he was the highest divinity, illustrates the perplexity of the ego when it can no longer hide from itself the knowledge that it has been dethroned by a supraordinate authority, the *self*. The *self*, the antithesis of the ego, consisting of the sum of conscious and unconscious processes, corresponds to the innumerable designations for the Gnostic savior figure of the *Anthropos*, including Christ (Jung 1951). Elsewhere, he observes that Gnosticism projected the union of conscious and unconscious in the individuation process in the form of a drama of redemption into the heavens, equating ego-consciousness with the vain *demiurge* who fancied himself the sole creator of the world, and the *self* with the highest, *unknowable God* who emanated the *demiurge* (Jung 1949). For Jung, all Gnostic images or symbols of *aeons*, *archons*, etc., are expressions of the operation of unconscious psychic forces. Exposure to Gnostic mythological accounts of divine emanation in the twentieth century can trigger greater awareness of the complexity of intrapsychic processes, not only because such accounts provide a mirror for Jung's modern clinical materials but also because they confirm that ancient Gnostics anticipated his psychological technique of active imagination (Jung 1944, 1955–1956; Merkur 1993).

Another reason for Jung's interest in Gnosticism can be traced to his identification of the typical Gnostic descent of *pneuma* (spirit) into *hyle* (matter) and its exile from the *pleroma* (fullness, denoting the transcendental field of divine reality) with the psychological process of projection, in which archetypal images of the unconscious are projected onto the outer world and lost there. Just as the Gnostic *pneuma* desires to lose itself in matter, often because it is attracted to its beautiful reflection in it, so the archetypal images of the unconscious desire to embrace the outer world. Projection is thus a process in which numinous unconscious contents are scattered in, and imprisoned by, the material world. Similarly, there is an equally striking correspondence between the Gnostic's account of *pneuma*'s release from matter or nature and its return home to the light of the *Unknown God* or *pleroma*

and the psychic process of integration, in which numinous unconscious contents projected onto matter or nature are withdrawn from it and held in consciousness during the individuation process. As in the Gnostic release of *pneuma* from matter, so in the process of integration, there is disenchantment with the material world equated with psychic separation from it (Jung 1941–1954, 1944; von Franz 1975, 1985).

### Jung's Distance from the Soteriological Perspective of Gnosticism

Nevertheless, Jung's individuation process cannot be identified with the soteriological goal of Gnosticism. Not only does Jung reduce the Gnostic metaphysical perspective to a psychological one (Segal 1992; Brewer 1996; Hanegraaff 1998), he also argues that the Gnostic godhead, the *Unknown God* or *pleroma*, is unconscious, without qualities or opposites, prior to their differentiation by the development of consciousness (Jung 1916–1992, 1951; Segal 1992). Moreover, while the goal of anti-cosmic, dualistic Gnosticism, in Jungian terms, is to abandon ego-consciousness for the unconscious, the goal of analytical psychology is to unite the two. The ego's return to the unconscious, for Jung, is merely instrumental to the latter's integration in consciousness. Whereas the Gnostic seeks to separate the spirit or divine spark from the material world, thus overcoming spiritual ignorance, Jung seeks ultimately to unite them. In Jungian terms the Gnostic goal must be understood at best as psychic dissociation (with its weakening of ego-consciousness) and at worst as outright psychosis (Segal 1992). Indeed, Jung argued that Gnostic anti-cosmic dualism is an expression of the psychopathology of inflation, which systematically avoids confrontation with the shadow. The enlightened Gnostic is incapable of resisting the temptation to identify his ego with the *self*, the inner Christ, or *Anthropos*, and as a result feels superior to the darkness within him. He has succumbed to the danger of becoming a god or higher man (Jung 1941–1954; White 1952; von Franz 1975; Brewer 1996; Segal 1998).

### See Also

- ▶ Active Imagination
- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Consciousness
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Dissociation
- ▶ Dualism
- ▶ Enlightenment
- ▶ Gnosticism
- ▶ God
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Inflation
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion
- ▶ Numinosum
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psyche
- ▶ Reductionism
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and Phenomenology

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C. G. Jung's approach to psychology and to the psychological study of religious experience cannot be understood without an appreciation of his fundamentally phenomenological method.

Husserl's epistemological and scientific call to arms, "To the things themselves," announced the birth of phenomenology, which became one of the great intellectual movements of the twentieth century. In a number of places, the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, C. G. Jung (1875–1961), argues that his method of psychological analysis is phenomenological. However, his references to phenomenology are always passing remarks, and his phenomenology is never systematically developed.

Jung's sense of phenomenology is evident most clearly when he contrasts his method and assumptions with those of his mentor, Sigmund Freud. Like other phenomenologists, Jung was consistently critical of Freud's materialist reductionism, namely, the attempt to explain the complex phenomena of psychological life in terms of the biologically based wishes and conflicts of childhood. Instead, said Jung, psychology should seek to understand its subject matter consistently on its own terms.

Phenomenology's insistence that phenomena be interrogated on their own terms was taken up by Jung especially with regard to religious experience. He argued that the meanings of the images and rituals of religious experience



should be analyzed in terms that do not violate the integrity of religious experience. So too, more generally, should the fundamental, organizing patterns of the human imagination, which are manifest in the myths and stories of the human species. These organizing patterns, or forms, which Jung called the archetypes, were structurally autonomous and thematically irreducible to terms of reference outside of their own orbits of meaning. For example, the Virgin birth or the life of St. Francis needs to be understood psychologically in terms that honor the inner coherence and meaning of the image or the spirituality of an extraordinary Saint. We should not, says Jung, reinterpret those phenomena, as Freudian psychoanalysis does, in terms of childhood wishes and anxieties, as though they were merely unconsciously determined and neurotic productions.

Jung's claim to being a phenomenologist rests on more than an understanding of its general approach. The characteristics of phenomenology's method are evident in Jung's work as well. These defining hallmarks of phenomenology are often taken to be: description, the phenomenological reduction, the search for essences, and intentionality. Each of these will be briefly considered in turn, together with its place in Jung's work.

### Phenomenological Description

Phenomenology is descriptive. Phenomenological psychology is not concerned with theoretical explanation or abstraction, but with phenomena as they concretely are present to us – just as we are, in turn, engaged with the appearing phenomena. This fundamental dialectic (the ground of the hermeneutic circle) means that the description of the meaning of phenomena has an interpretative moment that intuitively reaches through individual occurrences to their phenomenological heart or “structure.” Jung's method was generally a descriptive hermeneutic. It was a way of interpreting psychological meaning that stayed as close as possible to the phenomenon as it occurred. It was what Ricoeur called a hermeneutics of faith, unlike Freud's

hermeneutics of suspicion. Jung studied phenomena primarily by looking for similar or contrasting images across cultures and history. Therefore, the depth that is sought in phenomenological description is a depth that lies within the phenomenon itself as a core, or structure, of meaning manifested in many diverse occurrences of that phenomenon.

### Phenomenological Reduction

The phenomenological reduction is the systematic attempt to “bracket” theoretical and philosophical preconceptions, thereby to return our thinking to a more original ground in lived experience and conduct. Through this bracketing, the phenomenologist tries to approach the phenomena of psychological life in their vital contexts. It is this reduction that ensures phenomenology remains a descriptive enterprise. Jung repeatedly argued that philosophical materialism and rationalism foreclosed the possibility of an indigenous psychology, one in which its assumptions and methods were self-contained *as psychology*. He also repeatedly argued against the temptation to engage in “metaphysical” speculation when discussing religious experience. As a (phenomenological) psychologist, he wanted to open up a conceptual space for describing religious experience on its own terms, i.e., as experience and not ontology. In other words, Jung did not want the study of religious experience to require an answer to the ontological question of whether or not God exists. Jung wanted his refusal to step beyond experience into ontology to be understood as a humble respect for his epistemological limits as a psychologist. However, as will be seen presently, his position was problematic, so that he has been criticized for psychologizing religious experience.

### Search for Essences

The search for essences (eidetic reduction) is accomplished by considering the manifold variations of a phenomenon so that incidental, or perhaps transient, variations can be set aside and the



essential structure can be intuited. The eidetic reduction reminds one of Jung's method of archetypal amplification, which sought to approach the essential core of meaning within the range of archetypal images and themes. The structural core of meaning was the archetype, distinguishable from the endless variation in archetypal images. Interestingly, just as the existential phenomenologists, following Heidegger's analysis of being as temporal, insisted that there are no ahistorical essences, so Jung came to realize that the archetypal cores of meaning can never be conclusively defined and that they require repeated reinterpretation.

### Intentionality

Intentionality is not so much an aspect of method as a reminder that human being is always being-in-the-world. Being-in-the-world is the irreducible human occurrence of world disclosure, an open clearing (to use a Heideggerian expression) within which, or out of which, both the emerging person and world are gathered and constituted. Intentionality is a reminder that existence undercuts the Cartesian separation of subject and object, the place of experience (as mind, or *res cogitans*) from the world in which all experience concretely takes place. Jung's description of psychological types described the various ways in which the world is disclosed and engaged, the important point being that there is no disclosure of the world that is not already gathered in the attitudes (extravert or introvert) and functions (thinking, feeling, intuition, sensation) of consciousness. Significantly, even deepening introversion is described as an attitude in which the world becomes increasingly oppressive and persecutory. Another important recognition of human intentionality is Jung's consistent understanding of the living human body as already psychological and situated in its engagements with the world. The body, for Jung, is not primarily the body of anatomy, but the materiality of the soul. In this formulation Jung linked his understanding of human embodiment to Augustine's anthropology.

### Critical Discussion

Despite these features of Jung's work that are phenomenological, the early phenomenologists were highly critical of him. Spiegelberg's classic study on the history of phenomenological psychology effectively dismisses Jung's significance and contribution. On his part, Jung thought Heidegger was mad and that phenomenologists were on an irrelevant philosophical rampage.

It is clear that Jung's understanding of phenomenology was superficial. From the disciplined phenomenologist's perspective, Jung failed seriously to bracket his philosophical, and specifically Cartesian, assumptions adequately, with the result that his work fails phenomenologically at crucial moments. It is significant, in this regard, that Descartes' name does not appear in the indices to Jung's *Collected Works* or other writings. There is an irony here. Jung was justifiably critical of Freud's lack of philosophical reflection, because he recognized that Freud carried in his thinking philosophical positions that remained unquestioned and problematic.

Yet the same is true when we consider Jung and the absence of Descartes in his indices.

The result is that Cartesian metaphysics, with its radical dualisms – mind and body, subject and world, inner and outer, etc. – tends to remain awkwardly throughout Jung's thinking. For instance, he tends to speak of the archetypes in a neo-Kantian way as categories of perception (or imagination) that structure experience, yet he also refers to archetypal images, the objects to which we relate, as interior to the psyche and as produced by the archetypes. Both archetypal structuring of experience and the objects of experience itself are interior to the psyche. It might have been acceptable if Jung had simply described images of God as archetypal. The problem, for phenomenologists and most religious scholars, is that Jung then claims that we do not perceive, or relate to, God as such, but only to the God-image, which is interior to the psyche. In some of Jung's writings, at least, neo-Kantian doubt becomes a Cartesian solipsism that is tightly shut.

It is not surprising that religious thinkers such as Buber, White, and Hostie had such difficulty

with Jung. The Otherness of God was reduced to the purely logical and formal category of the Kantian *noumenon*, beyond all thinking, imagination, and relationship. However, whereas, for Kant, the phenomenal world of experience was still the open realm of experience and evidence, for Jung the phenomenal world was conceptualized as interior to the psyche. For religious critics, one cannot be a solipsist and have any kind of thoughtful or affectively real relationship with God.

On the other hand, this critical reading of Jung by phenomenologists lacks hermeneutic generosity. As was suggested above, Jung's method is closely aligned with the phenomenological tradition, which his work can enrich in several ways. Jung has much to say about psychological complexes, the archetypal structure and function of our mythic and cultural images, and the patterns of human development and transformation. He thematizes the imaginal structure of human existence, showing that the quiddity of existence is not prior to its imaginal organization and self-disclosure. He then describes with great insight the imaginal patterns of the human world (Husserl's *lebenswelt*), as well as the transhistorical sedimentations that continue to run through contemporary experience and thought. Jung's psychology of religion needs to be understood in these terms. In addition, his theory of psychological types suggests that there may be constitutionally different ways of being a religious person and that at least some of our theological, ritualistic, or experiential differences might be typological.

Finally, both phenomenology and Jung's analytical psychology have evolved over the years. A number of Jungians are phenomenologically sophisticated, and many phenomenologists have a greater appreciation for Jung's work. Jung's philosophical awkwardness is seen through and historically contextualized. To read Jung now, in the twenty-first century, is to reread Jung with a creative and critical engagement that honors his texts while interpreting them anew. In this way, hermeneutic questions and methods are threaded through both phenomenology and Jung's psychology.

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion

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C. G. Jung's writings on religion were primarily focused on the value and function of religious experience in the historical development of human consciousness and particularly in the individuation process. Drawing heavily on Rudolf Otto's (1869–1937) account of numinous experience (derived from the Latin term for deity: *numen*), identifying the qualitatively unique, nonrational, *mysterium tremendum*, and *fascinans* moments of religious experience, Jung celebrated its significance for analytical psychology but, unlike Otto, located its source in the unconscious rather than beyond the psyche. As a phenomenologist of the psyche rather than a historian of religion or theologian, Jung explored

the healing function of numinous experiences which provides the psychological foundation for religious creeds, while bracketing out any examination of metaphysical speculation about the objective reference of such experiences as beyond his professional competence (Otto 1923/1958; Jung 1934–1939, 1938, 1952/1973, 1956–1957, Moreno 1970; Heisig 1979; Stein 1985; Brooke 1991).

### Jung's Definition of Numinous Experience

Jung defined numinous experience, following Otto, as inexpressible, mysterious, terrifying, and pertaining only to the divinity (Jung 1963). Religion, he observed, can be identified with a careful and scrupulous observation of the numinosum, a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. It seizes and controls the human subject, who is always rather its victim than its creator; it is an experience of the subject independent of his will, which causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness (Jung 1938). Identified by Jung with experience of the unconscious, its deeply stirring emotional effect, thrilling power, *mana* (psychic power) equated with holiness, and healing or destructive qualities are unusually persuasive from the psychological point of view (Jung 1928–1930, 1934–1939, 1947/1954, 1952, 1952/1954, 1954a, 1960). Because numinous experiences are independent of conscious volition, transporting the subject into the state of rapture and will-less surrender, they are difficult to handle intellectually; since our affectivity is involved, absolute objectivity is more rarely achieved here than anywhere else. Indeed, they can be overwhelming, an admission that not only challenges our pride but also awakens our deep-rooted fear that consciousness may lose its ascendancy. It is because they may threaten the stability of consciousness that fear of them is justified, demonstrating a holy dread of the numinous. These experiences, identified with experiences of archetypal images understood as *daimonia*, can have a possessive or obsessive effect on consciousness (Jung 1942/1948, 1947/1954, 1952/1954, 1963).

### Numinous Experience and the Individuation Process

However, in spite of these reservations, Jung regarded these fascinating and dreadful moments of numinous experience, triggering the ambivalent conscious responses to them of attraction and repulsion, longing, and horror, as fundamental to an understanding of the individuation process rather than belonging exclusively to the domain of psychopathology. Indeed, towards the end of his life, he declared that the experience of the *self*, intrapsychically encountered as other to the *ego*, carried with it a numinosity of such intensity that it could be likened to the experience of being anchored in God (Jung 1906–1950, 1951–1961, 1955–1966; Papadopoulos 1984; Huskinson 2002; Dourley 2006; Main 2006; Stein 2006).

Nevertheless, Jung's measured appreciation of numinous experience, in contrast to Otto's unqualified submission to it, is evinced by his insistence on the clinical need at all costs to preserve the fragile autonomy of consciousness, threatened with disintegration by the fascinating, yet dangerous, numinous forces of the unconscious. One of the aims of the individuation process is to strengthen, even to extend, consciousness in the face of these numinous psychic forces.

Consciousness needs to maintain its independence from numinous unconscious contents by freeing itself from identification with them, if its conjunction with its opposite, the unconscious, the goal of the individuation process, is to be realized (Jung 1916/1928, 1944). It is this clinical perspective, expressing a "hermeneutics of suspicion" confronting numinous experience (Homans 1985) and a reservation in the face of divine decrees, which, for Jung, separates analytical psychology from Western and Eastern religious traditions. Jung insists that consciousness and the unconscious, equated by him with humanity and divinity, possess equal value and must strive to collaborate with one another in pursuing mutual transformation (Jung 1952/1954, 1963).

Jung's hermeneutics of suspicion is also evinced by his persistent preoccupation with the psychopathology of inflation of the ego by numinous experience and spiritual knowledge,

producing experiences of self-deification and unjustified claims to absolute knowledge (Stein 2006). Overcoming spiritual inflation requires the ego's discrimination between its own boundaries and transpersonal, numinous psychic contents. The ego realizes that however powerful or intense a numinous experience may be, it is not that experience. Distinguishing his own deification experience of 1913 from the individuation process, Jung insisted that anyone identifying himself with a numinous experience is a crank, a fool, or a lunatic (Jung 1925). However much he valued the numinous experience of deification, the task of analysis, for Jung, was to overcome identification with it, to separate oneself from it, and to realize that *I am not the god*. The experience of deification may occur towards the beginning of the analytical process; it certainly cannot be identified with its goal (Jung 1925, 1963; Noll 1994; Stein 2006). Jung's writings on inflation provide some of the most convincing evidence for his deconstructive relationship to religious experience and knowledge.

### Jung's Psychotherapy of Religious Traditions

Again, Jung's critical engagement with both Western and Eastern religious traditions is illustrated by his claim that numinous experiences are typically the product of projections of archetypal unconscious contents onto the outer screen of nature. When coupled with his persistent profession, as a phenomenologist of the psyche rather than a metaphysician, of agnosticism with regard to the objective reference of such experiences outside the *self* or psyche, it is easy to understand why so many of his theological critics, as well as historians of religion, have charged him with psychologism, the act of reducing religious experiences to intrapsychic processes (Buber 1952/1999; Heisig 1979; Coward 1985; Homans 1985; Wulff 1985; Aziz 1990; Brooke 1991; Jones 1993; Clarke 1994; Palmer 1997; Stein 2006). Jung, responding primarily to his theological critics, persistently denied the charge of psychological reductionism on two grounds: first, that the unconscious or the

*self* is unknown, just as God's essential nature is unknown to *experience* rather than to religious belief or doctrine, and second, that the psychological work of individuation is directed towards the integration of projected numinous unconscious psychic contents into consciousness, thus enriching, healing, and intensifying the conscious personality (Jung 1952/1973, 1954b, 1956–1957, 1963). Individuation is a progressive, but never completed process in which divinity is gradually incarnated within consciousness rather than experienced in projection, and consciously related to all other areas of human experience, including instinctual life (Jung 1952/1954, 1963; Dourley 2006; Stein 2006). For Jung, those who have not realized that religious experience is wholly intrapsychic have not plumbed its depths (Dourley 2004).

During the last two decades of his life, Jung became increasingly preoccupied with the treatment of his own Christian tradition as a patient in need of psychological and spiritual healing (Stein 1985), prompting his critics to charge him not only with heresy but also with abandoning his own professed metaphysical agnosticism (White 1959, 1960; Moreno 1970; Heisig 1979; Homans 1985); Aziz 1990; Lammers 1994; Palmer 1997). In spite of his insistence on the common psychic origin and equal value of the deities of all religious traditions (Jung 1938), Jung offered his Christian and post-Christian readers an account of the evolution of the Western god-image challenging Christian salvation history (Jung 1942/1948, 1951, 1952/1954; Lammers 1994; Edinger 1996). Jung argued that Christ, the Western god-image of the *self* for the last two millennia, is incomplete; it lacks the tremendum moment of numinous experience, equated by him with the divine shadow, and therefore fails to express the conjunction of opposites, the goal of the individuation process. Because integration of the divine (archetypal) shadow into consciousness is necessary for individuation, Jung sought to direct his readers' attention to the immensity of God, the conflict between His overwhelming light and dark aspects, arguing that, contrary to the teachings of the Church, we have good reason to fear God, as well as to love Him. Moreover, Jung

linked his observations about the divine shadow with his depth-psychological account of the historical evolution of divine consciousness, of the *individuation of God*, evidence for which he found in Biblical literature. Because God is less conscious than man, He depends on man to integrate His opposites of good and evil, to integrate *His shadow* for Him in order to achieve full consciousness, just as man reciprocally needs the numinous experience of God to transform his consciousness. The individuation and healing of God and man are thus codependent and realized only within human consciousness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Coincidentia Oppositorum](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
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- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)
- ▶ [Objective Psyche](#)
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- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Reductionism](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Transcendent Function](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Jung, Carl Gustav, and the Red Book: Liber Novus

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### Description

The Red Book is an exquisite red leather-bound folio manuscript crafted by the Swiss psychologist and physician Carl Gustav Jung between 1915 and about 1930. It recounts and comments upon the author's imaginative experiences between 1913 and 1916 and is based on manuscripts first drafted by Jung in 1914–1915 and 1917. Despite being nominated as the central work in Jung's oeuvre (Jung 2009, p. 221), it was not published or made otherwise accessible for study until 2009.

While the work has in past years been descriptively called “the Red Book,” Jung did emboss a formal title on the folio's spine: he titled the



work *Liber Novus* (the “New Book”). His manuscript is now increasingly cited as *Liber Novus*, and under this title implicitly includes draft material intended for but never transcribed into the red leather folio proper.

## Composition and Publication

*Liber Novus* contains a literary and artistic recension of what has been called Jung’s “confrontation with the unconscious,” an intense period of imaginative activity accompanied by waking visions that began in 1913 and continued with variable intensity for about 6 years. In his biographical memoir, Jung clearly announced the centrality of these events to his life work. (Jung and Jaffe 1962, p. 170ff). Speaking to Aniela Jaffe in 1957, Jung stated:

The years . . . when I pursued the inner images were the most important time of my life. Everything else is to be derived from this. . . . Everything later was merely the outer classification, the scientific elaboration, and the integration into life. But the numinous beginning, which contained everything, was then (Jung 2009, p. vii).

Nonetheless, throughout his life and for nearly a half century after his death, the details of what happened during this period remained a mystery. Lacking access to Jung’s own primary records, historians, biographers, and critics struggled to contextualize or understand these seminal years of activity and their profound influence upon his later work (Shamdasani 2005).

Jung kept an extensive and detailed record of his imaginative or visionary experiences – an endeavor he initially referred to as “my most difficult experiment” (Jung 2009, p. 200). First, there were six sequentially dated journals, known as the “Black Books” (so named because of their black covers), which he began on the night of 12 November 1913 and continued recording through the early 1920s. The journals are the record of his experiment and might be described as his contemporaneous ledger of a voyage of discovery into an imaginative inner world; in *Liber Novus* he explains, “This inner world is truly infinite, in

no way poorer than the outer one. Man lives in two worlds” (Jung 2009, p. 264).

During the initial months of fantasy activity, Jung conceived of his activity as primarily referent to his personal situation. After the outbreak of world war in August 1914 – an event presaged in visions Jung had recorded during the prior winter – the magnitude and meanings of his experience constellated in a broader context. What he had endured apparently had more than personal import; it was a reflection of a crucial cultural moment and it needed formal record. He began that record by compiling an approximately 1,000-page draft manuscript detailing the initial flood of imaginative material recorded in his “Black Book” journals between November 1913 and April 1914, adding further reflections on its meaning. With this protean draft at hand, he next turned to creating an enduring testament to the experience.

With prodigious artistic craft – employing antique-illuminated calligraphy and stunning imagery – he labored for 16 years translating the manuscript records of his experiences into an elegant folio-sized leather-bound volume. This is the “Red Book,” titled *Liber Novus*, “The New Book.” Despite his extended labors on the transcription and accompanying symbolic artwork, the book was never finished; only approximately two-thirds of the text Jung compiled was transcribed into the Red Book. The remainder survives in his draft manuscripts.

Jung did not record *Liber Novus* as a private, aesthetic pretension. He clearly addressed it to readers in some future time, though from the beginning he was never quite sure when that time might come (Jung 2009, pp. 212f, 223). During his life Jung eventually allowed only a handful of his students and colleagues to examine the work; after his death in 1961, his heirs refused all requests for access to the Red Book and related materials.

Finally, in 2009 – with full cooperation of Jung’s estate and after 13 years of exhaustive editorial work by Dr. Sonu Shamdasani – *the Red Book: Liber Novus* was published in a full-sized facsimile edition, complete with an English

translation, the concluding portions of manuscripts not transcribed into the Red Book volume, a comprehensive introduction, and over 1,500 editorial notes, including excerpts from Jung's Black Book journals and other previously unknown contemporaneous documents. Editions in multiple languages soon followed. In sum, publication of *the Red Book: Liber Novus* signaled a watershed moment in the understanding of the life and work of C. G. Jung. In its light, Jung's legacy is undergoing an intense reconsideration (Stein 2012).

### The Threshold of Vision

A comprehensive understanding of *Liber Novus* requires consideration of the singular visionary activity underlying the text, the hermeneutic method employed in translating these imaginative experiences to literary form, the signal themes emerging from the book as a whole, and the influence of the entire project on Jung's subsequent work. Among these tasks, understanding what Jung experienced in his "waking dreams" or "visions" – the imaginative activity that is foundational to *Liber Novus* – is perhaps the primary and most difficult one.

For several years prior to 1913, Jung's interest had focused on the evidence he saw in myths, dreams, fantasies, and psychotic delusions of an autonomous myth-making function inherently underlying human consciousness. The psyche – the soul – seemingly expressed itself in an arcane language of myth and symbol. To further understand the psyche, Jung recognized a need to investigate this mythopoetic substratum of consciousness. During the same period, he was increasingly disillusioned with theoretical constructs about the origin and nature of unconscious contents – a disenchantment that led to termination of his 6-year misadventure with Freud. As he explained in the draft manuscript of *Liber Novus*, speaking of his situation around this time, "I had to accept that what I had previously called my soul was not at all my soul, but a dead system that I had contrived" (Jung 2009, p. 232 n39).

Around the beginnings of 1913, Jung noted growing internal turmoil. This crested in October of 1913 when he was overcome by the spontaneous and detailed vision of a monstrous flood of blood covering all of Northern Europe up to the Alps. The same vision recurred 2 weeks later and again lasted for about an hour (Jung and Jaffe 1962, p. 175). The eruption of two visual hallucinations portending vast death and destruction caused Jung to fear that he was "menaced with a psychosis" (Jung and Jaffe 1962, p. 200; Jung 2009, p. 198). Over the next weeks, he outwardly surveyed his situation, seeking some therapeutic or palliative insight. Finding none, he determined to search inward. And so, on the evening of 12 November 1913, Jung sat at his desk, opened his journal, and addressed the mystery petitioning him:

My Soul, where are you? Do you hear me? I speak, I call you—are you there? I have returned, I am here again. I have shaken the dust of all the lands from my feet, and I have come to you, I am with you. After long years of long wandering, I have come to you again. . . . (Jung 2009, p. 232).

This journal entry begins the record that became *Liber Novus*. But the course then before him was obscure. He had no theory or concept to explain what he was doing, whom he was addressing, or how he should proceed. He determined to simply let things happen, let the unconscious have a voice. During twenty-five subsequent evenings, he practiced turning off outward consciousness and engaging any awaiting unconscious contents. Slowly, responses began to come, finding voice through him. He explained, "Sometimes it was as if I were hearing it with my ears, sometimes feeling it with my mouth, as if my tongue were formulating words; now and then I heard myself whispering aloud" (Jung and Jaffe 1962, p. 178).

By early December 1913 Jung discovered that his focused imaginative activity could evoke autonomous visionary scenes, personages, and dialogic interactions. The initial vision is recorded in his journal on 12 December 1913 and recounted in *Liber Novus*: "The spirit of the depths opened my eyes and I caught a glimpse of

the inner things, the world of my soul, the many-formed and changing. . .” (Jung 2009, p. 237)

In the introduction to *Liber Novus*, Dr. Shamdasani further explains:

From December 1913 onward, he carried on in the same procedure: deliberately evoking a fantasy in a waking state, and then entering into it as into a drama. These fantasies may be understood as a type of dramatized thinking in pictorial form. . . . In retrospect, he recalled that his scientific question was to see what took place when he switched off consciousness. The example of dreams indicated the existence of background activity, and he wanted to give this a possibility of emerging, just as one does when taking mescaline (Jung 2009, p. 200).

With almost nightly frequency through January 1914 and then more sporadically until the early summer of 1914, Jung volitionally engaged “visual fantasies” or “visions.” He recorded about thirty-five major visionary episodes in his journals during this period; these accounts along with commentary appended the next year comprise the first and second sections (“Liber Primus” and “Liber Secundus”) of *Liber Novus*. The majority of this material was recorded into the red leather folio. A final section, compiled in 1917 and titled “Scrutinies,” adds account of a second period of visionary activity between late 1915 and 1916. This last section exists in draft manuscript and contains Jung’s summary revelation to *Liber Novus*, the “Septem Sermones ad Mortuos” (Seven Sermons to the Dead). Independently titled and privately printed by Jung in 1916, these summary sermons comprise a vast cosmogonic myth and are the only portion of *Liber Novus* disclosed and distributed by Jung during his lifetime (Hoeller 1982).

### **Thematic Content of *Liber Novus***

While many alternative summaries are possible, the following list reflects themes Jung focused upon in his own consideration of the text.

#### **Reclaiming the Soul**

At the outset of his experiment, Jung recognized the need to reclaim and revalorize something

lost and forgotten by his age. In the opening pages of *Liber Novus*, the primordial power of the “spirit of the depths” confronts the arrogant “spirit of this time” – the secular materialism and positivistic science that dominates European culture. The spirit of the depths instructs Jung to turn away from the spirit of the time and to look into the depths, to speak to his soul, “to call upon her as a living and self-existing being” (Jung 2009, p. 232). *Liber Novus* recounts Jung’s struggle to reclaim the soul; and it exposes the method by which he revalorizes the soul’s mythopoetic and symbolic voice.

#### **Experiencing God**

Early in the dialogue, Jung petitions his soul: “I am ignorant of your mystery. Forgive me if I speak as in a dream, like a drunkard – are you God?” (Jung 2009, p. 233). This question resonates throughout *Liber Novus*. In his journey through vision, Jung confronts God not as a theological concept, but as an experience encompassing light and dark qualities and as a fact in intimate relationship with human consciousness.

#### **Renewing the God Image**

In a keynote fantasy, Jung meets Izdubar, an ancient god from the East. The meeting goes tragically wrong – confronted by Jung’s toxic modernity, Izdubar is stricken and sickened unto death. The dying Izdubar asks Jung if his Western lands have gods. Jung replies, no, just words. Having lost contact with the experience of deity, only verbal concepts remained. Jung undertakes the healing and regeneration of the stricken god. A theophanic recognition ensues: “I am the egg that surrounds and nurtures the seed of the God in me” (Jung 2009, p. 284).

#### **Imitating Christ**

His visions inexorably led Jung toward confrontation with the *imitatio Christi*; this becomes a leitmotif throughout *Liber Novus*. Jung surveys what it means to be not just a Christian believer, but a Christ – a full and conscious participant in the act of redemption. Near the

end of *Liber Novus*, Christ appears in a vision and is addressed:

My master and my brother, I believe you have completed your work. . . . What one individual can do for men, you have done and accomplished and fulfilled. The time has come when each must do his own work of redemption. Mankind has grown older and a new month has begun (Jung 2009, p. 356).

### Harrowing Hell

In an astonishing passage, Jung declares: “No one knows what happened during the three days Christ was in Hell. I have experienced it.” Indeed, two evenings after witnessing a rebirth of the God – which he describes as a vision of “eternal light, immeasurable and overpowering” (Jung 2009, p. 286) – Jung descends into Hell; he confronts the ultimate darkness of evil. This horror he must acknowledge as resident within himself and all humankind. He concludes, “Man must recognize his complicity in the act of evil” (Jung 2009, p. 291). The work of redemption demands conscious confrontation with the existential fact of evil.

### Conjoining Opposites

Throughout *Liber Novus* Jung attempts to come to term with what has been rejected, with the opposite, the adversary: the missing half that brings wholeness and heals the wound of one-sided consciousness. He explains, “You begin to have a presentiment of the whole when you embrace your opposite principle, since the whole belongs to both principles, which grow from one root” (Jung 2009, p. 248). In *Liber Novus*, unification of the opposites has not only personal developmental implications but also a profound soteriological function.

### Prophesying a New Age

*Liber Novus* has a distinctly prophetic tenor. While Jung adamantly rejected the mantle of prophet, his “new book” certainly challenges readers with its prophetic voice. On the first folio page of *Liber Novus*, Jung begins by quoting Latin Vulgate verses from Isaiah and the Gospel of John – prophetic words read over two

millennia as prelude and prologue of the Christian age. Even the title – *Liber Novus*, the “New Book” – asks readers to contextualize his text against historically received testaments of prophetic vision. A comment by Jung, recorded in 1923, places the book’s tenor in an even stranger perspective: Jung privately avowed to a close disciple his impression that the guiding figure behind *Liber Novus* “was the same who inspired Buddha, Mani, Christ, Mahomet – all those who may be said to have communed with God” (Jung 2009, p. 213).

Among many possible readings, *Liber Novus* can be read as a prophetic book. And throughout *Liber Novus* one paramount prophetic declaration recurs: the Christian age has reached its terminus; the aeon of Pisces is nearing its end. Humankind stands at the difficult threshold of a new age of consciousness, heralded by a transforming divine image. Jung had seen it (Owens 2011).

### Influence on Jung’s Later Work

C. G. Jung has most frequently been categorized encyclopedically as psychologist and founder of analytical psychology. But *Liber Novus* – described by its editor as “the book that stands at the center of his oeuvre” – is distinctly not a clinical or theoretical work of psychology. The word psychology does not appear in the text even once. If this is the foundation to Jung’s lifework – or, as Jung said, “the numinous beginning, which contained everything” – then his work has to date been inadequately contextualized and too narrowly characterized (Shamdasani 2012b).

Between 1913 and about 1920, Jung’s engagement with imagination and its mythopoetic voice offered direct empirical evidence of an apparently autonomous psychoid realm underlying consciousness. Though it was a rare experience, focused engagement and dialogue with this otherwise inherently unconscious dimension opened measureless perspectives on the nature of consciousness itself. While potentially overwhelming and disorienting, the process of accessing and interacting with this realm – through functions of dream, fantasy, imagination, and vision – had

a transformative and expansive effect on human consciousness. This Jung witnessed with his own life.

Jung's experiment, formally documented in *Liber Novus*, provided him with a unique perspective on mystical and revelatory religious experience and on the general human propensity for mythic and imaginative expression. The primary hermeneutic task of translating into text and symbolic image his own encounter with mythopoetic imagination subsequently informed his recognition and appreciation of other similar enterprises in history. His extensive writings on mythology, Eastern and Western religious traditions, alchemy, Hermeticism, and Gnosticism are all influenced by a hermeneutics of human imagination and vision grounded in his own experiences recorded in *Liber Novus* (Shamdasani 2012a).

The reassessment of Jung's life and work under the revelatory light of *Liber Novus* is a generational task only recently begun. As this effort proceeds and the foundation of C. G. Jung's hermeneutic enterprise is better understood, it is likely that the influence and appreciation of his work will reach far beyond the cloisters of analytical psychology. As Sonu Shamdasani suggested shortly after publication of *Liber Novus*:

If, as Jung claimed, Dante and Blake clothed visionary experience in mythological forms, could we not pose the question: Did Jung in turn attempt to clothe visionary experience in conceptual psychological forms? If so, the power and significance of his work does not reside in his concepts, which are familiar to us, but in the visionary experience which was at the back of them (Shamdasani 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Archetypal Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Phenomenology](#)

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Post-Jungians](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)

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## Jungian Self

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The Self for Jung was the archetype of wholeness and the organizing principle of the psyche. In volume 12, paragraph 44 of his *Collected Works*, he writes: “The self is not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this totality, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness” (1953/1970).

This paradoxical concept is both the essence and the totality of one's personality. The Self

initiates life and it is life's goal. Jung's concept of individuation depends on one becoming one's true, autonomous, and authentic self. The ego is the organ of consciousness. The goal of the second half of life is for the ego to subordinate itself to the supraordinate Self. In his autobiography, Jung writes: "In those years. . . I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only the circumambulation of the self."

The Self is a transcendent or divine quality. Jung referred to the Self as the "Imago Dei," or the image of God within the psyche. Borrowing from theologian Rudolph Otto's book, *The Idea of the Holy*, Jung posited that the self possessed a numinous quality. Numen is divine power or energy. This numinous energy of the self has the power to generate, transform, and integrate psychic life. This is the religious nature of the psyche.

One cannot know an archetype, only its images. There are many images of the Self: the mandala, king, hero, prophet, and savior. Jung considered the Christ and the Buddha as symbols of the Self. In volume 9 part II of his *Collected Works*, entitled "Aion," Jung devotes his most extensive treatment on the "phenomenology of the self."

Robert Hopcke in his work, *A Guided Tour of the Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, writes: "While

the editors of the 'Collected Works,' do not capitalize self, - in English the consention has since developed of referring to the individual ego as the 'self,' with lowercase s, and the archetype as the 'Self,' with a capital S" (Hopcke 1989).

### See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Ka'bah

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It is the one and only pilgrimage site for Muslims located in the city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It is an ancient cubic-shaped building called the House of God (*Baitullah*). The word *Ka'bah* means cubic.

It is not known who built the Ka'bah first, but it is known that it was established before Prophet Abraham and was rebuilt by him and his son Ishmael. After Prophet Abraham, it was rebuilt three times by the Arab tribes. The Ka'bah was visited according to the principles of monotheism from the time of Abraham until the idol-worshippers of Mecca took it over to accommodate idols in and around it. When Prophet Muhammad conquered Mecca after migration to Medina, he removed all idols, and it remained in the hands of Muslims since then. After Prophet Muhammad, its original form and size (11 × 12 × 15 m) was preserved except for some renovations, and it was covered with a black cloth.

According to Islamic faith the Ka'bah is the first place of worship on earth (Qur'an 3:96). And the city of Mecca is called *Umm al-Qura* (mother of cities). The visit to the Ka'bah is called *hajj* (pilgrimage). The pilgrim is called *haji*, which is a highly respected title in the Islamic world that encourages one to live a moral and religious life by keeping away from sinful acts. Muslims who

can afford it financially and physically are enjoined to visit the Ka'bah once in a lifetime on the specified days in each year. Visits to the Ka'bah at other times are called *umrah*. Muslims throughout the world face toward the direction of the Ka'bah for the five-daily prayers. This act of prayer and coming together for pilgrimage every year gives the worshippers a sense of union and brotherhood. The Ka'bah is, in this sense, not the end point, but a starting point to the transcendent. And as the times of five-daily prayers are set according to the daily movement of the sun, there are always Muslims somewhere in the world facing the Ka'bah at anytime of the day. In Sufi psychology, the Ka'bah is metaphorically associated with the heart in that breaking someone's heart is believed to be equal to demolishing the Ka'bah.

Currently, around three million Muslims of different colors, races, and nations visit and circumambulate the Ka'bah each year. Pilgrims wear white garments during *hajj* which represents the fraternity of all races and nations. Pilgrims also place their hands on the black stone (*Hajar al-Aswad*), which is believed to have descended from the heavens, located in the east corner of the Ka'bah at every turn of circumambulation to renew their submission.

### See Also

- ▶ [Circumambulation](#)
- ▶ [Hajj](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

## Kabbalah

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An esoteric rabbinic tradition, Kabbalah (Hebrew, *kblh*, “receiving,” “tradition”) became manifest especially in late twelfth and early thirteenth century CE Provence in southern France. Based on the mystical interpretation of the *Torah*, the disclosing of Kabbalic secrets occurred as a response to the influence of Maimonides (1135 CE–1204 CE) and his philosophical reading of the *Torah*. Early Kabbalah literature includes *Sefer ha-Bahir* (*The Book of Clarity*), patterned after ancient rabbinic Midrash, and also the series of writings from the family and close circle of Rabbi Abraham ben David of Posquieres (ca. 1125 CE–1198 CE). The most important writing is the *Zohar* (Hebrew, “brightness”), a writing coming out of the Kabbalists in Castile, Spain. The *Zohar* consists as a collection of texts written in Aramaic and Hebrew dating from a period between about 1280 CE and 1310 CE. Its central symbol, the Kabbalah tree, consists of the ten *sefirot* or aspects of the divine personality. Nine of these issue from *Keter* (“Crown”), the first *sefirah* on the top of the tree which is one with *Ein Sof*, the endless and infinite reality of God. The sixth *sefirah* *Tiferet* (“splendor”) exists below *Keter* and is understood as being the central “beam” in the divinely constructed universe. Its central location within the tree forms two triads through which cosmic life force courses into the final two *sefirot* of *Yesod* and *Malkhut*. The *sefirot* of *Malkhut* (“kingdom”) receives all the flow from the upper *sefirot* and rules over the lower worlds. She is also called *Shekhinah* (“presence”), the queen and feminine element which in the early Midrash is said to abide with Israel into exile. The Kabbalists eventually merge the *Shekhinah* and the community of Israel, thus giving divine status to the human community – something unique within Jewish tradition. The *Zohar* begins with Genesis 1:1 and the divine name *Elohim*, “God”

which refers to the third *sefirah* of *Binah*, the Divine Mother. Between the two occurrences of the divine name in Genesis 1:1 are 13 words, which are the 13 qualities of compassion (Exod. 34:6–7). The *Zohar* significantly expands previous Kabbalah traditions with its focus on the *mysterium coniunctionis* and the uniting of the male sixth and ninth *sefirot* with the female tenth *sefiri*. Distinct from the philosophical Neoplatonic Kabbalah of the Catalonian circles, the Castilians show intrigue with teurgic, quasi-magical influence in relation to the divine and how such influence creates union and subsequent flow of blessing upon the lower world. As a mystical writing, the *Zohar* represents and occurs as a medium of religious experience inseparably connected with unconscious movements of the writers (and reader). These movements are brought forth into conscious expression through the highly symbolic language and experience of language of the book. The *Zohar* came to be regarded within Judaism as revealed text having authority comparable to the *Bible* and the Talmud. As a religio-spiritual tradition, it is preceded by Merkabah, “chariot vision literature,” and followed by Hasidism with its concern for the omnipresence of God and the notion of unbroken discourse/communion between humanity and God.

### See Also

- ▶ [Hasidism](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Kabbalah and Psychology

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Kabbalah is an esoteric form of Jewish mysticism that emerged in the twelfth century and that focused primarily on esoteric interpretations of the *Torah*. Kabbalists employed various forms of meditation and prayer to induce mystical states of consciousness and initiate a process of psycho-spiritual transformation.

The Kabbalists posited a tripartite division of the soul, not unlike the theories of Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greek philosophy (Tishby 1995, p. 128). In Kabbalah, the parts of the soul were called *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah* (Tishby 1995, p. 127). Some Kabbalists add to this the *guf*, or physical body (Halevi 1986, p. 35). The idea was that although the soul functions as a unity, it holds within it divisions, each with their own function and *sefirotic* attribution. Kabbalistic psychology seeks to understand the manner in which these divisions interact, with the goal of the psychological process being to balance these components such that the individual can receive and live in accordance with divine will, guided by the “highest,” most divine aspects within the human psycho-spiritual constitution.

The *guf*, as mentioned above, is the physical body (Halevi 1986, p. 35). Closely related to the physical body is the *nefesh*, which is considered to be the “lower” part of the soul, with its function being similar to the animal or instinctive consciousness. It is “attached to the body, preserving it and satisfying its needs” (Tishby 1995, p. 120). Thought to be an almost untamed or wild part of the human psyche, it was sometimes even associated with evil, or the *sitra ahra*, or “other side” (Tishby 1995, p. 127). Contemporary psychologists and Kabbalah scholars often compare the *nefesh* with the *id* in Freudian theory and the instinctive unconscious in Jungian theory given its relationship to those functions within human consciousness associated with survival,

such as the autonomic nervous system, reflexes, and reactive patterns (Halevi 1986, p. 112). Comparisons are also drawn between the *nefesh* and the Jungian shadow, since its functions are largely unconscious (Halevi 1986, p. 137).

The *ruach* is generally considered to be the human faculty of self-conscious awareness, or self-consciousness. In Jungian terms, it is associated with the Self, rather than the persona, or personality (Halevi 1986, p. 108). It serves as an intermediary between the *nefesh* and the *neshamah*, as is therefore the “middle” part of this tripartite unity (Tishby 1995, p. 121). It is said that the task of the *ruach* is “to illumine the *nefesh* and to sustain it with light and influence that flow down upon it from the *neshamah*. To match this bridging and intermediary role, it is often described as the throne of the *neshamah*, or the luminary of the *nefesh*” (Tishby 1995, p. 121). It is sometimes also associated with the emotional or intellectual functions and is further subdivided into various components of self-awareness, such as desire, imagination, and intellect (Tishby 1995, p. 121).

The *neshamah* is said to be the highest part of the soul and is even sometimes considered to be the soul itself (Tishby 1995, p. 113). Tishby says, “it is the power of the *neshamah* that enables man to study Torah and observe the commandments. . .the *neshamah* is active in the perception of the divine mystery” (Tishby 1995, p. 120). The *neshamah* could, in Jungian terms, be likened to the spiritual or intuitive consciousness and is an aspect of the psyche that guides humans to seek spiritual wisdom and union with the divine. Given that, it seems logical that “once man [i.e., humanity] has arrived at a perception of the divine mystery through knowledge of the secrets of the Torah he [or she] is able [or] . . .obliged, to activate his [or her] soul into unifying the *sefirot* and . . .carry out those theurgic tasks which constitute the supreme and final good” (Tishby 1995, p. 120).

Some scholars add to this a *yechidah*, the highest and most spiritual aspect of the psyche, associated with the Jungian collective unconscious. In this scheme, the *chiah*, or life-force, is the divine will and serves as a complementary force to the *neshamah*, the intuitive or receptive faculty (Halevi 1986, p. 185).

The manner in which the *sefirot* are unified, from this perspective, is by way of the attributions of the parts of the soul to the *sefirot*. There seems to be some controversy regarding these attributions, as different passages in the *Zohar* and other various Kabbalistic texts offer contradictory interpretations. The most common and agreed-upon system of attribution places the *yechidah* at *Kether*, the *chiah* at *Hokhmah*, the *neshamah* at *Binah*, the *ruach* at *Tiferet*, the *nefesh* at *Yesod*, and the *guph* at *Malkuth*. Other sources suggest that the *neshamah* is at *Binah*, the *ruach* at *Tiferet*, and the *nefesh* at *Malkuth* (Tishby 1995, p. 125). The *sefirot* are seen as emanations of the divine, with *Binah* being a divine feminine mother principle, *Tiferet* being a son (of *Binah* and *Hokhmah*), and *Malkuth* being the daughter, lesser mother, or Kabbalistic bride. If the parts of the soul are then mapped out onto that, one could conclude that the higher soul emanated first but was a hidden light within, a spark of the divine, followed by the divine will and a receptacle or divine form. The *ruach* would then be an intermediary function, as suggested above, and the *nefesh* would be in one sense a receptacle (or perhaps a mirror) for the light of *neshamah* through this mediation or a polar opposite principle, which would give it the connotations of evil it later inherited. The process would be one of the psychodynamics, in which the instincts and the spiritual impulses are reconciled in one's life, as one attempts to attain knowledge of the Godhead within and then live a life that is governed by that "highest" dimension of the Self.

## See Also

► [Kabbalah](#)

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## Kabir

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It is an Arabic and Islamic name for tomb. It is a usual practice to bury the dead since ancient times due to hygienic reasons and out of the fear of the unknown. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam upheld this custom. Though there are differences among religions regarding the nature and the condition of the tomb and how the corpse is positioned, the common goal is to make the corpse invisible. In Islam, the corpse is positioned to face the *Ka'bah* in Mecca toward which Muslims turn for five daily prayers. Muslims often write the words "*Huwa'l-Baki*" on the gravestone in Arabic meaning "only God is eternal" like Christians write "Rest in Peace."

According to Islam, the tomb is a window to the hereafter. Muslims are strongly recommended to visit cemeteries to say supplicatory prayers for the soul of the dead and also remember death, though one may send supplicatory prayers afar. The first chapter of the Qur'an, which is only seven verses, is the favorite supplicatory prayer. One who visits a cemetery is supposed to say words of greeting in Arabic like "*salam alaikum*" (may peace be upon you), believing that the dead hears the greeting person. All these beliefs and rituals allow the feeling of contact with the deceased, and this contributes much to the psychological well-being of the bereaved.

## Islamic Funeral

The Islamic funeral has two parts. In the first part, the dead is brought to the mosque yard for the funeral service, and a prayer called

“*salat al-janaiz*” (funeral prayer) is performed followed by a speech by the Imam (one who leads prayer) about death and the hereafter as well as paying tribute to the dead. Perhaps the most interesting moment of the funeral at the mosque is that the Imam asks the congregation and the kin whether they bear witness that she/he was a good person as well as requests them to forgive the deceased for his/her unjust acts to them. Muslim society attaches great importance to funeral prayer, and all these rituals allow the congregation psychological satisfaction for fulfilling their final duty to the deceased. In the second part, the dead is taken to the graveyard for the burial ceremony. During burial, some chapters from the Qur’an are recited both by the Imam and friends or relatives. Right after the burial ceremony, a ritual called “*talqin*,” which is inculcation of the articles of the Muslim faith to the dead, is performed by the Imam. In this ritual, the Imam speaks up to make the dead ready to answer the questions of the angels of interrogation. According to the Islamic creed, the dead is interrogated by angels in the grave. The sinful fails and the virtuous succeeds. The former is punished while the latter is rewarded. A saying of Prophet Muhammad goes: “The tomb is either a garden of paradise, or a trench of hell” (al-Ajluni 1932, Vol. II: 90).

## Cemetery Visiting

Cemetery visiting is so vivid in the Islamic world that one may witness a huge crowd on religious festivals, on the eve of the fasting or sacrifice festivals in particular. This visit on the eve of the festivals has a psychosocial meaning as well. On the days of religious festivals, younger ones visit parents and elder relatives among others to show respect. By visiting the cemeteries on the eve of the festivals, one includes the deceased ancestors. One who visits the grave of one’s friends or kin feels relieved by offering prayer and thinks that his/her prayers are to free the deceased from spiritual punishment.

Muslims are strongly recommended to keep cemeteries clean and tidy. A story of Prophet

Muhammad sets an example in this regard. Right after a burial ceremony, the Prophet tidied up a stone surrounding the tomb. One companion asked why he had done that, saying that it had not been a damage to the corpse. The Prophet answered saying, “Though it is not a damage for the corpse, it is a damage for the onlookers” (al-Sharani 1954, Vol. I: 142–143).

## See Also

- ▶ [Angels](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Ka’bah](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Qur’an](#)

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## Kali

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In India one of the accepted divine symbols is of a dark woman, nude, with flowing hair, four-armed, with two hands in the act of blessing and two holding a knife and bleeding head, garlanded with a necklace of skulls, dancing with protruding tongue on the prostrate figure of a man. Frightening as she may seem, she calls our attention. Sister Nivedita says:

Whether we know it or not, we belong to her. We are her children, playing round her knees. Life is but a game of hide and seek with her, and if we chance to touch her feet, who can measure the shock of the divine energy that enters into us?

Deep in our hearts is rooted the assurance that the moment will come – her mystic name will fall upon our ears (Sister Nivedita 1950, p. 20).

Kali Ma. How is it that an image so fierce can invoke the energy of the Mother? How is it that an image so fierce can evoke the energy of the mystic? Is her appearance to be taken at face value – is she a warrior goddess from the matriarchal tribal cultures of India? Or should her iconography be viewed more symbolically? Black because as all colors disappear in black, all names and forms disappear in her? Free from illusion in her primordial nakedness, is the severed head she holds indicative of the annihilation of ego-bound evil force? (Mookerjee 1988, p. 62).

How should we interpret her demon-destroying stories in the sacred scriptures of India – the Vedas and Puranas? For example, in the *Devi Mahatmya* she jumps out of the forehead of the Goddess Durga to fight the demons on earth that are out of control (Kumar 1981, pp. 30–31). In the *Mahabharata* Kali rises again when a demon king won't take no for an answer to his marriage proposal and sends his forces to subdue the Goddess in Her beautiful form as Gauri. She becomes so angry that out of her brow springs Kali, gaunt of body and red-eyed, with tiger skin, and garland of skulls, ready to assist with sword, noose, and club. Because the demons can reproduce when a drop of their blood is spilled, Kali must get creative. She throws the demons into her mouth and laps up their blood to destroy them! (Kumar 1981, p. 53).

Are these stories about the archaic female-centered South Asian matriarchal cultures resisting takeover by invading patriarchal male-centered Aryan cultures? After all, in medieval Shakta traditions Kali was considered to be a direct descendant of the early Mother Goddess cult of the matriarchal agricultural peoples that are still present in India today (Payne 1997, p. 69). Or are they illustrating for us that there are times in the history of the planet when only female warrior energy can defeat the demons of war, greed, and oppression? Or shall we return to Kali as symbol and imagine that these stories

about Kali defeating demons are really about Her ability to subdue our own inner demons with splendor? Is working with Ma Kali then really about working with our shadow?

And what does her role as an independent, sexual goddess have to teach us? In the Tantric *Mahavidya* (Wisdom Goddess) tradition, Kali is noted as primary. Her characteristics include her dominant position over her consort (Shiva) and her strong sexual appetite. Free from social and ethical roles – Kali is a breaker of boundaries and social models and dwells outside the confines of normal society (Kinsley 1997, p. 80). Though not many Indian women would take Kali as a role model, when Westerners consider her, what impact does her power, her focused use of anger, and her sexually liberating nature have upon us? What archetypal energy does She release within us? The answer takes us closer to center.

Behind the surface of this powerful death-dealing Goddess we find an all-encompassing loving energy: virgin creator, sustaining mother, and absorber of all. Many of her Hindu devotees in fact approach her as Mother. Is this because in India it is acceptable for a mother to be so fierce? Yes. However, it is also because the Indian perspective is not so dualistic as Western thought. This is why She can be seen in the Hindu tradition as the All: Cosmic Creatrix, World Mother, and Warrior Goddess supreme.

As She also appears as a force of nature, and the energy coiled in the chakra at the base of our spine, Kali's multivalent nature continues to reveal. As Kundalini, Kali is said to be part of the "Great Mother" energy "out of whose womb the universe emerges as a continuous unfolding of the immanent All" (Scott 1983, p. 24). She is responsible for maintaining the harmonious balance of force fields within the earth itself – life fields, thought fields, and surface energy lines (Scott 1983, p. 106). Such primal identification suggests an ancient energy, a goddess sourced deep in the collective human soul.

Western writers in the area of women and religion offer more guidance for understanding this Goddess. They remind us that in order to discover what the story of a deity from another



culture has to teach the reader, it is important to engage Her mythology, Her psychological ramifications, and the reader's own dreams and life experience. Through "myth-mirrors" like the Goddess, the reader can experience a new frame for their life experience and existential longings (Gross 1996, pp. 232–33).

For Western feminists, Dark Goddesses like Kali are said to be the primordial goddess from which everything emerges and to whom all returns – the nurturing Earth Mother who brings forth all life, as well as the destructive power of death. A goddess of death and transformation, of transition and renewal, the Dark Goddess is said to contain all contradictions within Herself. The call of this goddess can be heard in the deep, serious, will-to-live rising from within the body of the planet. Pushing through us for healing and realignment with nature, it is only our willingness to face the Dark within ourselves that will liberate us in the end (Noble 1991, p. 7).

Interaction with Kali energy is also an attempt to recover divine imagery more compatible with the reality of female power, anger, and assertion in western consciousness. Kali's reminder of the Earth Mother's power of rage readied for action, poised against the backdrop of a plundered and wounded planet, is a vision of spiritually energizing female power far removed from the benevolent mercy and accepting patience of most Christian female images! (McDermott 1996, p. 289).

Kali in fact ends up challenging all social norms for women. As demon slayer, Mother Goddess but without children, wife of Shiva but rarely with him (the dominating one in the relationship and the initiating partner in the cosmic dance) – living outdoors and in the cremation grounds – Kali is in the active, powerful role. She excels in all the male domains. By not conforming to the established role of women in Hinduism or in any other culture informed by monotheistic traditions, she reverses and upends the patriarchal order (Gupta 1998, p. 31).

Seen inwardly, the Dark Mother in archetypal western psychological terms is viewed as "a place of magic, transformation and rebirth, that which is secret, hidden, dark; the abyss. . . ." (Starck and

Stern, 5). On the personal level Kali plays a strong, healing psychological role in the lives of women as they come to accept the parts of themselves that have been repressed and feared. On the collective level, Her transformation of western women's painfully fragmented collective consciousness helps undo the domineering monotheistic patriarchal perspective (McDermott 1996, p. 291).

Jungians say that great resolve is needed to enter into this shadow dance – the darkness of one's own chaos. But as we do, the power of the root chakra rises, and it becomes the undulating wave of the supreme Dark Goddess, the Kundalini. Creativity and freedom that women seek do not lie in the patriarchal path of control. Rather, they lie in letting go and descending into the chaos of the maternal matrix. We are invited to participate – to yield to the frenzied beat of the mother's dance (Woodman and Dickson 1997, p. 179).

In Jungian thinking, it is said that the activation of an archetypal energy releases great power. As women access the Dark Goddess archetype – Mother, Warrior, and Cosmic Creatrix – as Her energy rises from body, psyche, and spirit, its effects are felt in all worlds. Our rage, our battle cry for change, our independence, and our open hearts – the Dark Goddess can hold it all. Women and men – hold on for the archetypal rising of the Dark Goddess Kali Ma into our psyches, our spirits, our age! (Woodman and Dickson, p. 223).

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Women in Hinduism](#)

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## Karma

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Karma is a core doctrine to Indian spirituality and has a similar meaning in both Hindu and Buddhist thought. It represents the idea of universal justice, the belief that in the end, good will be rewarded and wrong doing punished. Karma is an impersonal force operating to meet out consequences of actions. It is in contrast to the views of the Western Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) where a personal God judges individual souls at the end of time and assigns rewards or punishments according to one's deeds in life. Karma is automatic and not a judgment of one's conduct but merely a consequence arising out of action. It is often spoken of as the law of return, that whatever you put out toward others in conduct will come back eventually. Unlike the Western monotheism which posits only one life for

each individual, in Eastern traditions the individual has an entire series of lifetimes in which to improve their spiritual and ethical development. The wheel of existence in both Hindu and Buddhist thought is a series of births, lives, and deaths over endless eons. The individual soul or karmic core gets passed along through successive incarnations until spiritual development leads to final unification with the transcendent ground of Being. In Hinduism this is viewed as Brahman, and in Buddhism, this is simply termed enlightenment, or the fully awakened state. Karma has become a popular term in New Age spirituality; all actions can be good or bad karma, depending on their ethical quality.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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## Kierkegaard, Søren

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Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard is often referred to as the father of existentialism, and not the father of depth psychology. His 1849 book *The Sickness unto Death*, however, is an exposition of human consciousness that is comparable to the work of Freud in important respects. Both Kierkegaard and Freud stressed the relative impotence of the ego in relation to nonrational forces in the mind, and both attempted to provide a remedy for this precarious

condition. What makes Kierkegaard's work in depth psychology unique is its explicitly Christian focus. *Sickness* is marked with the subtitle *A Christian Psychological Exposition for Edification and Awakening* and provides a detailed account of the disease of despair, which is understood as Godlessness. Another of Kierkegaard's works, *Fear and Trembling*, takes the Genesis story of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac and provides a beautiful depiction of psychological endurance in the face of absurdity. It, like *Sickness*, operates on the belief that human existence is fundamentally paradoxical. For Kierkegaard, to be human is to be in a permanent state of cognitive dissonance and on the verge of losing one's mind. To be saved, one must accept the dissonance and lose one's mind for the sake of gaining faith in God.

### Despair and Human Existence

Human existence involves an uncomfortable synthesis of the eternal and temporal, and because of this all human beings are in despair, whether they admit it or not. Commonly, people believe that despair comes from fearing death and brooding about the temporality of their existence. But according to the Christian perspective presented in *Sickness unto Death*, despair comes not from consideration of death and temporality but from consideration of one's inability to die. Like a man on his deathbed, whose finite body writhes in pain but who is not yet granted the freedom of death, the Christian lives with the understanding that in the face of despair, death is actually the last refuge. Death is the goal, but it is an unreachable one. A Christian's blessedness, that which sets her apart from all others, is her consciousness of an eternal self. Paradoxically, this consciousness is the sickness unto death.

People make impotent attempts to avoid this fundamental paradox by constructing false personalities that deal with their condition by either rebelling against it or weakly resigning themselves to it. To avoid either of these types

of folly, one must have faith, namely, the faith that with God, all things are possible. Kierkegaard likens this faith to the act of drawing a satisfying breath after a period of stifling anxiety. With God, one can breathe again, and the panic disorder of infinitude is cured.

Kierkegaard was a man beset by anxiety and depression throughout his short life and surely intended *Sickness Unto Death* to be, as much as anything else, a guide for other sufferers. Kierkegaard (who is as usual speaking through a pseudonym in this work) advocates that one must abandon the laborious process of trying to create a false personality. There is a greater control that takes over when one is brave enough to give up the ego's precarious tyranny.

### Despair and Faith

Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* provides another detailed explanation of the process of losing one's mind to find God. The inspiration for this story is the biblical account of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son. The book is especially sympathetic to the anxiety that Abraham must have felt while going up the mountain, following God-given orders that are, on any honest appraisal, ethically abominable. The faith that guides Abraham through the trip is impossible to explain and lends itself only to poems of admiration.

Abraham's faith is, after all, a monstrous contradiction. It is not merely an example of temporary cognitive dissonance to be overcome by intellectual growth but an absolute paradox, inaccessible to thought. One cannot appreciate the story without seriously considering whether Abraham is simply a murderer, one who is killing not only his own future but also that of his people. Abraham maintains the infinitely optimistic and absurd belief that by losing his son and his people, he would get them both back. Such a belief is rationally unwarranted and yet, according to *Fear and Trembling*, is the requirement for faith.

## See Also

- ▶ [Abraham and Isaac](#)
- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Death Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)

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## Kingdom of God

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The concept of the Kingdom of God was first written about in Exodus.1; a hymn celebrating the crossing of the Red Sea and proclaiming in verse 18 “The Lord will reign for ever and ever” (Jewish Encyclopedia). The concept was later developed by the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jeremiah, and expressed the yearning of the long-oppressed Jewish people for the rule of their God over all the nations.

The Kingdom of God was the central concern of Jesus’ ministry. Mark 1:14–15 records the first words of his preaching ministry: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel.” There is a disagreement among scholars as to what Kingdom Jesus was preaching. Some possibilities:

1. The dramatic intervention by God in the affairs of humans as depicted in the Synoptic Gospels (Luke 17 and parallels) and the *Book of Revelations*. This vision would point to a psychology of fear, a preoccupation with the division of the saved from the damned,

a focus on imminently future events over which one has no control. Individuals who subscribe to such a belief system would be unlikely to seek treatment as any problem would be seen through the screen of Biblical apocalyptic prophesy.

2. The return of an earthly king like David. Jesus’ disciples certainly understood the Kingdom in this way (Matthew 20:21). Those who understand the Kingdom of God in this way would work to establish a theocracy here on earth. Their focus would be on establishing right action within such a Kingdom and right action to bring such a Kingdom into existence. Illness and emotional problems would be read as a result of failing to follow prescribed moral codes.
3. The peaceable Kingdom, a place as in Isaiah where peace extends even to the natural world, where war will be no more and all the nations will flow towards the Holy Mountain (Jerusalem).

The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den.

<sup>9</sup>They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11: 6–9).

4. Even though most of Jesus’ preaching was on the Kingdom of God, he does not specifically define what the Kingdom is, thus leaving the exact nature of the Kingdom open to interpretation. For instance, the Kingdom can be interpreted as current or future reality and an inner or outer reality, an individual or group reality or all of these, leading to a tension between/among these opposites. An example of this is Luke 17:21 “The Kingdom is within you,” which can also be read as “The Kingdom is among you.”

The Kingdom of God is mentioned 58 times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and there are 31 references to the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew. Most are passages about proclaiming the arrival of the Kingdom or more frequently worded that the Kingdom has “come near.” There are many references to entering, seeing, and receiving the Kingdom which seem to suggest that entry is an individual decision and dependent on individual behavior, for instance, the parable of the rich man seeking to enter the Kingdom in Matthew 19:24. There are other references to the Kingdom being a secret as in Mark 4:11 and Luke 8:10 and references to “selling all” for the Kingdom (Matthew 13:14–46).

The Gospel of Matthew alone uses the introduction “The Kingdom is like” to begin longer parables such as the workers in the vineyard and the great banquet, though the longer parables in other Gospels are probably references to the Kingdom even if not actually specified as such. Such parables do not equate the Kingdom with one aspect of the story, say the banquet, but with the whole process of inviting and eating and even kicking out the man without a wedding garment (Matthew 22:2–14).

There is a small collection of similes which appear to give insight into Jesus’ conception of the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, putting yeast in flour, and planting seeds, a small common object of no special value which when hidden transforms the whole.

Psychotherapy also utilizes this principle. Psychotherapists align with the inborn aliveness in their patients, aliveness that may be difficult to notice with patients who are especially suppressed or injured. The therapist spots the tiny seed of initiative hidden inside and helps the client make room for it to enlarge and transform the whole personality.

In the parable of the seed growing of itself (Mark 4:26–29), Jesus suggests that the Kingdom of God is a natural process of coming to fulfillment and wholeness navigated through the opposites of day and night, sleep and rising, and man and earth, “first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear.” As members of the natural world, we as humans are imbedded with a natural

growth towards wholeness and fulfillment, born from within. Psychotherapy is a practice that seeks to discover and enhance this process of finding wholeness. Some Biblical scholars may equate this process with the coming to life of the Kingdom of God.

### See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Jesus

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### Klein, Melanie

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Melanie Klein (1882–1960) was born in Vienna, Austria, the youngest of four children, to Moriz Reizes, a medical doctor, and Libussa Deutsch, his young second wife. Moriz was born into an Orthodox Jewish family and was intended by his parents to study for the rabbinate, but he rebelled and attended medical school. Melanie was close to her strong, domineering mother, but emulated her emotionally remote and intellectual father. A brilliant and unorthodox first-generation psychoanalyst, she rose to become one of the foremost theorists and practitioners of her time and is credited with founding the “object relations” school of psychoanalysis. At the same time, her personal life was shadowed by loss and tragedy, and it is perhaps no coincidence that much of her writings focused on themes of depression and manic depression, psychic splitting, the death instinct, envy, and reparation.

Melanie's life was marked by a series of tragic and traumatic losses—the death of her beloved older sister Sidonie from tuberculosis when Melanie was just 4 years old, the death of her father one week after her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and then the death of her older brother Emmanuel of heart failure when she was 20. At age 17, Melanie had met and almost immediately become engaged to Emmanuel's friend Arthur Stevan Klein, an industrial chemist and her second cousin. Still mourning her brother, she married Arthur the day after her 21st birthday in 1903. The couple traveled a great deal for Arthur's work, keeping Melanie from pursuing further education in her chosen field of medicine, and the marriage was not happy. Melanie suffered several bouts of depression, especially during her pregnancies. Her daughter Melitta was born in 1904, followed by Hans in 1907, and Erich in 1914. The couple separated in 1919, and finally divorced in 1924, after a custody battle over Erich (who eventually lived with his father in Berlin). Hans died in 1924 in a mountain climbing accident which Melitta, among others, considered to be a suicide.

Klein never completed medical school. However, after moving with Arthur to Budapest during World War I, she entered analysis in 1910 with Sandor Ferenczi, a rising star in Freud's circle at the time. There she found both close friends and the intellectual stimulation she had craved. She began analyzing children—including her own. She met Freud in 1918 at a meeting between the Austrian and Hungarian analytic societies and became doubly determined to train as an analyst (Grosskurth 1986, p. 71). A year later, Klein made a strong positive impression with her first analytic paper entitled "The Development of a Child" (an account of her analysis of Erich) and was admitted to the Budapest Psychoanalytic Society. After separating from Arthur and moving to Slovakia with her children, she was persuaded by Karl Abraham, another intimate of Freud's, to move to Berlin to pursue analytic training. She entered analysis with him in 1922 and started her own practice with both child and adult patients. Her analysis was abruptly cut short by Abraham's death a little over a year later—another traumatic loss—but

she continued a self-analysis along the same lines for many years. Klein's ideas were not popular among the Vienna analysts; however, she gained support from the British analytic community. In 1925, Ernest Jones, a London analyst and Freud's first official biographer, heard her present a paper on child analysis at a conference in Salzburg in 1925. He invited her to present a series of papers to the British Psychoanalytic Society, an invitation she happily accepted. These lectures were subsequently published as her first book (Klein 1984). Other important British supporters included Joan Riviere, Alix Strachey, and Susan Isaacs, all influential women analysts.

In 1925, she fell in love with a married journalist, Chezkel Zvi Kloetzel, but in 1926 she broke off their affair and moved to London permanently. She became the leading theorist in the British Psychoanalytical Society and is known as the founder of the school of theory known as "object relations." She trained many other important analysts in the generation after Freud, including D.W. Winnicott, Wilfred Bion, and Hanna Segal. John Bowlby, founder of "attachment theory" was also closely influenced by Klein. Klein's daughter Melitta became a medically trained psychoanalyst in her own right and was married in 1924 to another psychoanalyst and friend of Freud's, Dr. Walter Schmideberg. In 1928 the Schmidebergs also moved to London, escaping an atmosphere of increasing anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria. Melanie Klein remained in London as an influential analyst and teacher for the rest of her life. She died in 1960, due to complications after surgery for colon cancer.

A famous conflict erupted between Klein and Freud's daughter Anna after the Freud family emigrated to London in 1938 to escape the Nazis, and especially after the 1939 death of Freud, whom both women revered. It was one of many schisms within Freud's inner circle throughout his career and one that resembled an oedipal struggle (although between two powerful and influential women) over who was the true heir. Before World War II broke out, numerous conflicts and rivalries had already begun to emerge between Vienna and London, including



a harsh critique in 1927 of Anna Freud's work by Klein. Both Melanie and Anna were lay analysts (nonphysicians) who worked with children. However, Anna believed that children were too young to be analyzed, preferring a psychoeducational approach to bolster the ego's adaptation to reality, while Melanie had established a method of analysis even with very young children, asserting that children produced symbolic material in their play that could be analyzed from a very young age (Segal 1979). Both women had strong claims. Anna was, of course, Freud's daughter and close companion, and had become a teacher and then Director of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Training Institute, and Secretary of the International Psychoanalytical Association.

To compound the difficulties, Klein's own daughter Melitta publicly joined the ranks of the opposition (which included Melitta's own analysts, Ella Sharpe and Edward Glover). Melitta openly criticized her mother's techniques (e.g., a paper attacking Klein in 1937), and they remained estranged for the rest of Klein's life. Melitta eventually separated from her husband and emigrated to New York, where she contributed to the classical Freudian orientation of American psychoanalysis in the 1960s and beyond. She did not attend her mother's funeral. As a result of increasingly personal attacks between the two sides in London, culminating in the "Controversial Discussions" in the 1940s, the British Psychoanalytical Society divided permanently into three separate training divisions: Anna Freudians (later called "Contemporary Freudian"), Kleinians, and the Middle Group (later called "Independent")—although to its credit, the British Society, unlike many other psychoanalytic institutes, never divided into completely separate entities. These three branches of British psychoanalysis continue today.

Klein's contributions to psychoanalysis were pathbreaking, and because of their often speculative quality, were also frequently controversial. Although she insisted that she was a true follower of Freud in psychoanalysis, her theory made a major shift in the conceptualization of the

primary motivation of human personality from Freud's focus on the drives of sex/libido and aggression. Her own model of personality emphasized an infant's need to connect with others or "objects" (the converse of the subject, the "I"), which existed as mental representations in both the inner (psychic) world and the outer world (real, but filtered through the child's perceptions). Klein's central proposition was that infants unconsciously internalize their primary caretakers and other early figures into their psyches. These "internal objects" continue to live on, unconsciously and quasi-independently, for the rest of the individual's life, shaping the personality. At first, these fantasized objects may be in the form of parts of the parent, such as the mother's breast, which may be experienced through the child's perceptions as (a) good and nurturing, (b) bad and withholding and therefore to be destroyed by biting or scratching, or (c) even overwhelmingly too good and to be spoiled out of envy.

Derived from her clinical work with both adult and child patients, she also speculated about a much earlier passage through Freud's "anal," "oral," and "genital" developmental stages, assigning an early oedipal stage to about 6 months of age. Klein further distinguished two "positions" in earliest childhood (distinct from chronological stages, because they can oscillate). The most "primitive" is the "paranoid-schizoid position," in which the child's psyche must split off into the unconscious the negative experiences of the parent on whom she/he depends and idealize the "good parent." Thus, the child defends against being utterly at the mercy of the "bad parent." The second, healthier or more mature position is what Klein termed "the depressive position," in which the child is able to hold together experiences of the parent as both "good" and "bad" in an acceptance of the tragic reality that perfection is not possible. The child is aided in achieving the depressive position in part by recognizing his or her own destructiveness, and through guilt for desiring to devour and thus destroy the breast, she/he is able to reach the desire for reparation. Klein thus construes guilt, in contrast to Freud's theory, not as a disabling source of

neurosis based on the oedipal stage (around age 5), but as the stimulus for healing internal psychic splitting in early infancy.

The emphasis in Klein's theory was always on the unconscious internal world of the child (especially the "preoedipal child," i.e., the infant and toddler) and by extension also the adult. Fantasy (or "phantasy" in her terminology) was primary for Klein, and actual environmental contributions to the development of the personality and the genesis of pathology were secondary to the infant's inner perceptions (and distortions) of his or her own desires and anxieties, which were then projected onto the external world. Because of this theoretical bent, Klein was also more open to analyzing patients with psychotic tendencies, unlike Freud who viewed psychoanalysis as appropriate only for neurotic patients.

Projection, the psychic defense by which an individual assigns his or her own internal states onto someone in the outer world, was already identified by Freud. Klein extended this in 1946 in a famous paper entitled "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" (Klein 1975b, pp. 1–25) to include the concept of "projective identification," whereby a person's unconscious joins in unconscious interplay with another person's and invokes feelings and reactions in that other person without conscious stimulation. Projection and projective identification generally erupt from the paranoid-schizoid position, as the role of "good" and "bad" is psychically tossed like a hot potato between himself/herself and others with whom he/she relates. This can result in idealization of the other and denigration of the self or, in its opposite form, viewing the other as a perpetrator and oneself as an innocent victim—with frequent oscillation between two all-or-nothing perspectives. In therapy, this phenomenon is often experienced in the transference-countertransference dynamic between therapist and patient, and by examining his or her responses along multiple registers (thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, fantasies, dreams), the therapist may come to understand the patient's experience more fully than through conscious dialogue alone.

The significance of Klein's work for the psychology of religion is indirect. A self-avowed Freudian, she did not adhere to any religion in her professional adult years, nor did her writings directly address religion. However, Melanie and her family suffered from the rampant anti-Semitism in Austria and Germany leading up to the Holocaust, and Melanie's student and early biographer Hanna Segal reported that Melanie was critical of Jews who denied their heritage (Segal 1979) and believed that parents should pass on their religious traditions to their children. One of the first "Kleinians," Wilfred Bion, extended Klein's theories to develop a model of symbols for consciousness and unconsciousness—"K" for knowing, or rational thought and "-K" for "attacks on knowing" or irrational thought; *alpha* and *beta* for conscious vs. unthinkable thoughts, and of particular interest for psychology and religion, the letter "O" for the ineffable, or ultimate Truth. Winnicott further developed object relations theory as a more fully relational paradigm (both unconscious and conscious). His concept of a psychological "potential space" of both "me and not-me" paradox, play and creativity (initially occurring between a mother and her infant), has been utilized by a several of pastoral theologians and psychologists of religion, including James W. Jones (1993), Brian Grant (2001), and Pamela Cooper-White (2007). From within the field of psychoanalysis, Michael Eigen (1998) has similarly observed an "area of faith" and a "psychoanalytic mysticism" in the writings of Bion and Winnicott, among others. Another analyst, Ana-Maria Rizzuto (1981), drew on the concepts of internal objects and projection to investigate how individuals form God images from early childhood experiences; subsequent studies by pastoral theologians have expanded the clinical utility of understanding children's and adult patients' conceptions of God as indicators of the texture and dynamics of their earliest object relations.

### See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)

- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Koan

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## Introduction

The term “koan” derives from the Chinese *ko* (public) *an* (case), hence, literally, “public case.” A public case implies a standard of judgment. In the case of Zen, the judgment refers to the depth of the student’s intuitive understanding. Each koan takes the form of a story, anecdote, or dialog, typically entailing an incident, situation, or conversation between an historical Zen figure and a student. The use of the koan exercise as a tool for spiritual practice developed in tenth- and eleventh-century China. Koan practice instilled new life into a Zen system that had become codified, calcified, dogmatic, and caught up in sectarian disputes.

Koan study developed through a long history of spontaneous question and answer dialogs, in which the question is typically turned back on the student or is given a seemingly illogical response. As teaching stories were collected, formalized, and compiled into anthologies and structured, formal courses of study developed that were intended to simulate and to engender enlightenment experiences in Zen students.

Koan study and practice has developed differently within the Rinzai and the Soto Zen sects. These different approaches have been described as “instrumental” and “realizational.” According to the Zen scholar Hee-jin Kim, Dogen, the founder of the Soto sect emphasizes a realizational approach, but he does not necessarily abandon the instrumental approach that characterizes the D. T. Suzuki presentation of the Rinzai school emphasis on koans as a pedagogical means to the end of attaining enlightenment.

## Practice

After a preliminary period of practice, in the Rinzai tradition, Zen students are given a koan to focus on during periods of zazen (sitting meditation) as the subject of presentation, scrutiny, and discussion during face-to-face interviews and group talks conducted by the Zen teacher. The Zen koan needs to be taken as a matter of life and death by the student. For example, in his commentary to the Mumonkan (Gateless Barrier), an important twelfth-century koan collection, Mumon, the compiler, conveys the sense of urgency and the intense level of energy applied to this task of concentration by comparing the internalizing of *Mu* (no) to “swallowing a red-hot iron ball” (Aitken 1991, p. 9).

The student’s response to any koan reflects deepening or penetrating levels of awareness of reality as a result of cutting through or short-circuiting logical, linear thought. However, as Taizan Maezumi notes, the koan.

... is much more than a paradoxical riddle designed to prod the mind into intuitive insight. The koan is quite literally a touchstone of reality. It records an instance in which a key issue of practice and realization is presented and examined by experience rather than by discursive or linear logic (Yamada 1979, p. vii).

This experientially based insight is referred to by Zennists as *satori* (enlightenment). Accordingly, the Zen master can only witness the student’s level of mastery through presentation

during private interviews, but does not teach the student anything.

In practice, koan study engenders a spontaneous, intuitive knowledge beyond teachings and scriptures. This spontaneous direct knowing is reflected in the contemporary American Zen Master, John Loori’s comment that “We *do* koans, we don’t talk about them” (1994, p. xvii). Koans are designed to defeat rational, linear cause and effect thinking, and for this reason, they frequently appear irrational and meaningless. D. T. Suzuki comments: “For the koan is not a logical proposition but an expression of a certain mental state resulting from Zen discipline” (1994, p. 83).

Similar to the psychoanalytic dialog, both the Zen master and the psychoanalyst are ever on the alert for dialog that deteriorates into intellectualism or logical philosophical discourse. With different goals in mind, and while not disregarding the intellect, both koan practice and psychoanalysis endeavor to go beyond its limitations and break through to a lived and felt awareness.

Stephan Heine writes that “The Zen koan . . . defines the heart of Zen Buddhism and is the single most distinctive feature in the thought and practice of the Zen sect” (2002, p. 1). Why does Zen ascribe such a central place to the koan? As a religion, Zen holds a salvational function. For Zen, the salvational function is articulated in the notion of *satori*. The koan and the associated dialog function to facilitate the *satori* experience. It is from this salvational standpoint that, as Suzuki notes, “. . . the koan exercise came to be recognized as the necessary step towards realization of *satori* in Zen Buddhism” (1994, p. 31).

## Koan Study and Psychoanalysis

Considering the centrality of the koan in Zen practice along with the increasingly deepening interest in the relation between Buddhism and psychotherapy, it is surprising that there is virtually no discussion of koan study in relation to psychotherapy in the literature on Zen and psychotherapy. At present, no systematic study

of the relationship between koan work and psychoanalysis exists with the exception of a brief reference in Erich Fromm's classic *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (Fromm et al. 1960). Fromm noted that both psychoanalysis and Zen practice function to make the unconscious conscious.

In examining the relationship with the teacher and the descriptive aspects of satori, we can observe a number of significant connections to psychoanalysis. For instance, satori is expressed in freedom, creativity, and in the arts. Koan practice involves relational dynamics that evolve over time and that parallel psychotherapeutic techniques and aims in certain fundamental ways. Some of the noted shifts in relational dynamics include a movement from contrivance to spontaneity, dogmatism to an iconoclastic orientation; from an over-reliance on intellectualization to expanded emotional expressivity; and from a defensive false self expression to the authenticity of true self experiencing. Donald Winnicott describes the expression of the latter as "the spontaneous gesture" (Winnicott 1965, p. 148). He characterizes the spontaneous gesture as reflective of the True Self expression in action. He writes that "Only the True Self can be creative and only the True Self can feel real" (1965, p. 148). While he does not make a specific reference to Zen or to koan study, he makes the observation that connects his psychoanalytic concept of "True and False Self" to religious experience. He writes that "This concept is not in itself new. It appears in various guises in descriptive psychiatry and notably in certain religions and philosophical systems" (Winnicott 1965, p. 140).

This movement from contrivance to spontaneous authenticity is crucial to psychoanalysis. For instance, Wilfred Bion notes that "There can be no genuine outcome that is based on falsity" (1970, p. 28). The implication for treatment centers on the analyst's capacity for authenticity. Bion writes that "the more real the psychoanalyst is, the more he can be at one with the reality of the patient" (Bion 1970, p. 28). The idea with both Zen practice and psychoanalysis conducted from this perspective is that psychotherapy relies less on preconceived thoughts, beliefs, and ideas and

more on intuition of the moment-to-moment experience.

A common feature of both systems is a notable movement in the dialog from observation to experiencing that closes the gap between objective and subjective self. Parallels can also be noted between koan dialogs and Bion's notion of bridging the gap between an activity that is "about psychoanalysis" and "being psychoanalysis." Cooper (2001) provides a detailed discussion of the gap between being and knowing in relation to Zen and psychoanalysis. Lived experienced truth replaces the accumulation of information, intuitive knowing (*prajna*) replaces conceptual understanding, and unitive experiencing replaces dualistic thinking. Truth experiencing is prioritized both in Zen and in Bion's psychoanalysis. A parallel can be drawn here to Bion's notion of intuition. In expressing the truths of Zen, we become more truthful because we are basically expressing the truth of who we authentically are. As this expression becomes increasingly fresh, alive, spontaneous, and authentic, we expand our capacity, as Bion notes, with respect to psychoanalysis, that is, free from memory, desire, and understanding, and we experience and express a wider range of emotions. What is required of the psychoanalyst is an interpretation that is enlivening, not deadening.

The explicit iconoclastic orientation as articulated in the koan literature coupled with the Zen experiential negation of an inherently existing self or essence and the deconstruction of reified versions of self and object experience resituates the psychotherapist who practices Zen in relation to the therapeutic encounter and radically alters the conception of goals and healing in psychoanalysis. Similarly, for a minority of influential psychoanalysts such as Bion, Lacan, and Eigen, truth lies beyond the parameters of any notion of goal, pathology, or healing. For instance, for Bion, the notion of cure operates as a function of desire and interferes with the lived experience of Truth and at-one-ment. For the Zennist, the notion of cure is a function of attachment and intellect and requires deconstruction. Lacan offers a similar vantage point. He observes that

the analyst's ego functioning should not be considered as an orientation point or as a clinical measure of the patient's health, for normality or for objective reality.

As a result, Bion observes that "The pattern of analysis will change. . . . 'Progress' will be measured by the increased number and variety of moods, ideas and attitudes in any given session" (1967/1988, p. 18). Similarly, Suzuki describes a feeling of exaltation ". . . due to the fact that it is a breaking up of the restriction imposed on one as an individual being. . . an infinite expansion of the individual" (1994, p. 29). With this point in mind, the sixteenth-century Korean Zen master, T'ui - yin notes that.

"What is required of Zen devotees is to see into the phrase that liveth and not into one which is dead." (Suzuki 1994, p. 92).

D. T. Suzuki describes koan study as ". . . a unique contribution Zen has made to the history of religious consciousness" (1994, p. 11). He describes the development of koan study as crucial to the revitalization of Zen, which had, over time, become lifeless and calcified. He attributes this calcification to intellectualism and quietist tendencies. It is interesting to note the pervasive and perennial nature of these tendencies in contemporary psychotherapy. Suzuki notes that ". . . there was a tendency which made for the evaporation of Zen experience into conceptualism" (1994, p. 77). Steven Heine notes that during the thirteenth century, Dogen, the founder of the Japanese Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, revitalized koan study, which also had become lifeless. He accomplished this revitalization by criticizing the derailment of dialog in traditional koan study and by offering novel and contradictory interpretations of traditional koans that he intended to use in order to expand dialog.

One question that is relevant to contemporary psychotherapy is "Can koan practice and study enliven psychotherapy?"

## See Also

- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Kohut, Heinz

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Heinz Kohut (1913–1981): Born in Vienna, Heinz Kohut emigrated to Chicago in 1939 where he trained in psychiatry at the University of Chicago. In 1946 he entered the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis where he would remain as a supervisor and training analyst for the rest of his life.

Kohut received wide recognition late in his life for the development of the theory of Self



Psychology in which he replaced Freud's drive theory with a focus on experience of self. According to his theory, narcissism had its own line of development. There could be no self without another; it was in relationship that the self was formed and developed. Hence, Kohut's vision of treatment emphasized understanding the context of the patient's reaction. For this, the analyst relied on a process Kohut called "empathy and vicarious introspection" in order to understand and explain the patient's subjective experience within the treatment.

Kohut comprehensively outlined his theory in his 1968 paper "The Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders: Outline of a Systematic Approach." He said that the self is first sustained by archaic mergers with self-objects. The self then progresses towards more mature self-object experience and is sustained by empathic resonance in adult relationships. In self psychological treatment, the analyst remobilizes his or her unmet self-object needs through the self-object transference. Kohut recognized three lines of self-object transference: mirroring, idealization, and twinship, which engage the analyst's need for, respectively, self-esteem, self coherence, and human likeness.

According to Strozier, Kohut believed that religion's unique function was to hold together, strengthen, and make harmonious man's self.

## See Also

- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)

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## Krishna

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Krishna ("dark one, dark blue") was the eighth avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu, the major Hindu deity who preserves and protects the world and comes to earth as *avatars* (incarnations) to help people. Krishna is multifaceted, a trickster, embodying divine love and joy, overcoming pain and evil, protecting cows, and bringing refined *moksha* – liberation from reincarnation. As a godchild, he was born to Devaki, and as a young (low-caste) cowherd, he played the flute for the cows, the other cowherds, and the young milkmaids. As a deity of humor, he teased the milkmaids, who adored him, even stealing their clothes when they were swimming. One moonlit night Krishna fulfilled the milkmaids' yearning for union with him, dancing with and delighting them, which sounds a bit like ancient Greek Dionysian religion. This became the theme of much love poetry and, more spiritually, represents the divine play and love between *Perusha* (soul) and *Prakriti* (primordial nature).

When Krishna was grown, the wicked king Kansa sent many demons to kill him, including the five-headed demon snake Kaliya. Krishna danced on his heads and defeated it so he would not poison the river Yamuna. Finally, he killed king Kansa. Krishna married Radha, who was



**Krishna, Fig. 1** Krishna Statue at the Sri Mariamman Temple (Singapore), courtesy of AngMoKio This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sri\\_Mariamman\\_Temple\\_Singapore\\_2\\_amk.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sri_Mariamman_Temple_Singapore_2_amk.jpg))

foremost of the milkmaids and avatar of the goddess Lakshmi (wife of Vishnu). Some Indian women see their husbands as Krishna, and the husbands see their wives as Radha; thus, they see the divine Self in each other (*Santan*).

In contrast to the yoga of austerities or meditation, Krishna's *Bhakti* yoga is the worship through devotion to a particular god, such as Krishna, who is immensely popular in India, for he embraces a wide spectrum of psychological feelings, such as love, spiritual wisdom, and perception of Ultimate Reality. Krishna's popularity grew with the rise of the medieval *Bhakti* movement. *Bhakti* practices, such as chanting the names of deities, are a meritorious path to release from reincarnation and union with the Absolute (Ions 1967, p. 48). The chant "Hari Krishna" means "Holy Krishna." (Fig. 1).

In the Bhagavad Gita (*Song of God*), a very popular Hindu text, Krishna teaches Arjuna many lessons. In battle Krishna rode in the chariot of Arjuna and taught the warrior the essence of

*Bhakti* Yoga or the being yoked to the divine through love and devotion. But first Arjuna resists killing his own kinsmen in the opposing army:

Krishna, Krishna, now as I look on these my kinsmen arrayed for battle . . . my body trembles. . . . What do I want with Victory, empire, or their enjoyment? . . . Vice rots the remnant, defiling the women, and from their corruption comes mixing of castes (*Song* I, p. 31–33).

These two good ethical objections Krishna must answer. First, he replies,

Even if you consider this from the standpoint of your own caste-duty, you ought not to hesitate, for, to a warrior, there is nothing nobler than a righteous war. . . it opens a door to heaven (*Song*, II, p. 38).

The deeply embedded caste system of India that gives social order to its advocates seems to democratic thinkers only social barriers that religions should oppose. Indeed later Gandhi (1869–1948, of the *Vaishya*, merchant caste), when prodded by his son, who wanted to marry a *Brahman* (the highest priestly caste) girl, came to reject the caste system and thereafter would only attend weddings of different castes (Fisher 1954, pp. 109–112). But here this ancient text (c. 200 BCE–200 CE) was not ready for democratic ideals.

Krishna here teaches to Arjuna to do his caste duty but remain detached from worldly affairs:

The truly wise mourn neither for the living nor for the dead. . . . No one has the power to change the Changeless. Bodies are said to die, but That which possesses the body is eternal. It cannot limited, or destroyed. Therefore you must fight (*Song* II, p. 36).

Krishna is referring to the Atman, the spark of the Infinite Brahman in each person, which is unborn, undying. "Do not grieve, he teaches, for: "Death is certain for the born. Rebirth is certain for the dead. You should not grieve for what is unavoidable" (*Song* II, p. 38). The fatalism in minimizing the value of earthly life and not being able to oppose things like war or caste seems psychologically harsh and undemocratic, but these were social constructs of the time.

Krishna teaches him: Karma yoga should involve non-attachment. "You have the right to work, but for the work's sake only. You have no

right to the fruits of work.” Without laziness, we should not be happy or sad about the fruits of efforts. “To unite the heart with Brahman and then to act: that is the secret of non-attached work” (*Song II*, pp. 40–41). This may seem to advocate resignation, but it is teaching on renouncing desire in this world and focusing on the everlasting, Infinite Brahman, beyond birth and death. “He knows peace who has forgotten desire. He lives without craving: Free from ego, free from pride” (*Song II*, p. 44). Psychologically, this teaches orienting the ego to the archetypal Self, the divine within that Hindus call Atman. Even those active in social change might need this, to avoid anger and remain tranquil. Martin Luther King, knowing death threats for his civil rights protests, said: “I’ve been to the mountain-top” . . . . “I’m not fearing any man” (Washington 1986, p. 286). His ego was oriented to God while protesting racism.

Krishna speaks in the voice of the high divinity Vishnu, whom he personifies:

I am the birthless, the deathless, Lord of all that breathes. . . . When goodness grows weak, when evil increases, I make myself a body. In every age I come back to deliver the holy, the destroy the sin of the sinner, to establish righteousness (*Song II*, p. 50).

This is the theme of the divine savior come to earth to aid goodness on earth.

The voice of Vishnu speaks of his presence in all the world:

My *Prakriti* [primordial nature] is of eightfold composition: earth, water, fire, air ether, mind, intellect, and ego. You must understand that behind this, and distinct from it, is That which is the principle of consciousness in all beings, and the source of life in all. It sustains the universe. . . . I am the birth of this cosmos; its dissolution also . . . . I am the essence of the waters, the shining of the sun and the moon; OM in all the Vedas, the word that is God (*Song VII*, pp. 70–71).

Earthly suffering comes from the delusion that this world is ultimately real and its desires are important. Psychologically, ego cannot see beyond its desires and thus suffers. But liberation comes from seeing the Ultimate in all things: “Others worship me, knowing Brahman in all things: Some see me one with themselves, or separate: Some bow to the countless gods that are only My

million faces” (*Song IX*, p. 81). This openness to polytheism as the many faces of the one ultimate absorbs other religions into itself – a characteristic mark of Hindu religious toleration:

Even those who worship other deities, and sacrifice to them with faith in their hearts, are really worshipping me, though with a mistaken approach. . . . Those who sacrifice to the various deities will go to those deities. The ancestor-worshippers will go to their ancestors. Those who worship elemental powers and spirits will go to them. So, also, my devotees will come to me (*Song IX*, p. 83).

Even the Hindu teachings that one must climb the ladder of the caste system through many rebirths, Krishna here opposes:

Even those who belong to the lower castes – women, *Vaishyas* (merchants), and *Sudras* (servants) too – can reach the highest spiritual realization, if they will take refuge in me (*Song IX*, p. 85).

This more democratic teaching was adopted by other Indian religions, notably Buddhism. These teachings are very refined, suited to mystics, but taught to all.

Brahman is beginningless, transcendent, eternal . . . . He is within and without . . . undivided, He seems to divide into objects and creatures (*Song XIII*, pp. 102–03).

The theology of the infinite oneness beneath all manifest reality developed in *Vedanta* Hinduism.

Although there are many rules in the many varieties of Hinduism, from the caste system to ritual procedures, purifications, and patriarchal rule, Krishna teaches in the *Gita* a refined message that is highly revered:

To love me is to know me . . . Now I have taught you that wisdom which is the secret of secrets. Ponder it carefully. Than act as you think best (*Song XVIII*, pp. 128–129).

## See Also

- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Brahman](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)

- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Trickster
- ▶ Vishnu

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## Kristeva, Julia

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## Kristeva's Life

Julia Kristeva was born June 24, 1941, in Sliven, Bulgaria. Her writings span topics including the following: art and art history; literary theory and criticism, in particular the study of semiotics; psychoanalysis; the abject; feminism; love; the maternal; melancholy; religion; the stranger; culture; and her somewhat autobiographical novels. She has been identified with structuralism but has made significant contributions to post-structuralist thought.

Being the recipient of a doctoral fellowship brought Kristeva from Bulgaria to Paris in December 1965, and she began her studies in January 1966 in literary criticism. In 1973, she was awarded her Ph.D. at which time she became a professor of linguistics at the University of Paris VII where she continues to write, teach, and practice today. The following year her dissertation *Revolution in Poetic Language* was published,

and she visited China. Her trip to China inspired her book *Des Chinoises (About Chinese Women)* and prefigures her lifelong professional interest in the sacred and the feminine.

From 1976 to 1979, Kristeva studied psychoanalysis with Jacques Lacan. Her son was born during this period. Her interpreters herald this time as the beginning of a change in her writing style, evident with the French publication of *Powers of Horror* in 1980 (Kristeva 1982, p. vii). Her early works are deemed more theoretical – and therefore, less readable – bringing together perspectives from Marxism, psychoanalysis (i.e., Freud and Lacan), Bakhtin, and Barthes. Her later works appear “more relaxed, more readable, more concrete, more plural - some would say, more human - than the more theoretical works of the late 1960s and the 1970s” (Crownfield 1992, pp. xii, xiv). *Powers of Horror* and subsequent texts begin to focus on the maternal and the feminine in culture. She has delineated three periods of feminist thought in her essay “Women’s Time,” but her location as a feminist writer is controversial among many feminists in the United States as a direct result of her interest in motherhood (Kristeva 1995, pp. 201–224).

Kristeva’s writings were and continue to be influenced by her childhood. She grew up in a middle-class family which was ardently Roman Catholic; her parents did not belong to the Communist Party, and this reality limited the schools where Kristeva could study. The “better” schools were reserved for children of the party-faithful, which led to Kristeva’s early education in a French language Catholic school. She did, however, participate in Communist Party children’s groups as well as youth organizations. The tension between religion and psychoanalysis, or Christian faith and psychoanalysis in general and in Kristeva’s own life in particular, is illustrated by a comment she made during an interview in 1992:

My childhood unraveled right in the heart of Sofia. For me, Sofia can be boiled down to the Saint Nedelia cathedral, with its little gardens, its snowy slopes on which I would throw my toboggan, its secret rooms, and its nervous believers. My father, a faithful man whose beautiful voice added

to the Saint Nedelia church choir, would bring me to the cathedral before dawn so that I could take communion without being spotted. *I eventually rebelled, not because I was bothered by the dissidence of the act but because of universal reason, which is, I still find, harder to understand and to embody than faith is* (Interviews, 1996, 137–38, my emphasis).

## Kristeva's Work

The dissonance between universal reason and the lived experience of her childhood is still evident in her writings today as she grapples with the dissonance between faith and reason (psychoanalysis). Though Kristeva maintains a posture of an atheist, she acknowledges that contrary to Freud she does not believe religion is solely an illusion which contributes to neurosis (Kristeva 2007, website excerpt). Yet unlike so many feminist writers, she does maintain a conversation with Freud through the influence of her teacher, Lacan. In fact, she contends that the modern-day therapist has superseded the local priest/minister because religion no longer provides a privileged space for human communication and the language system employed in religious discourse ultimately becomes a source of oppression – particularly for women because it excludes the feminine/maternal.

For those who count themselves among the religious (especially Christian believers), Kristeva suggests that restoring religious discourse to its full positive value provides a source of psychic healing. Her proposal for this includes an expansion of metaphor in the therapeutic relationship to include the feminine or maternal and an understanding of the transference relationship as a loving relationship which has as its foundation maternal love (i.e., since all loving relationships have maternal love as their source according to Kristeva). Based on Kristeva's proposal, I have concluded elsewhere that the role of a pastoral counselor (or any therapist for that matter) is "to be a loving, 'forgiving other' - someone who listens with tact or a delicate perception of another's affect. To listen with a for-giving attitude means that I give a gift of understanding to another. I must deprive

myself of my own understanding and judgment even though I continue to ask questions" (Schweitzer 2010, p. xiv). Thus, one hallmark of the therapeutic task understood from this perspective is to become "an other who does not judge but hears my truth in the availability of love, and for that very reason allows me to be reborn" (Kristeva 1989, p. 205). One may want to conclude (and I do) that there is at least a resemblance between Kristeva's understanding of a transference relationship in the analytic process and the Christian notion of *agapé* as well as an analogy between Christian transformation and the psychoanalytic rebirth that occurs in the context of a therapeutic relationship.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Lacan, Jacques
- ▶ Object Relations Theory
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Kuan Yin

► [Guanyin](#)



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## Labyrinth

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The labyrinth is an archetypal form found in disparate cultures across eras spanning from pre-history to the present day, when it has experienced resurgence in popularity due to interest in its psychospiritual applications. Regardless of how it is styled, a labyrinth is marked by a shape, usually a symmetrical one, containing a unicursal path to or through a center point. This distinguishes it from a maze, which is multicursal and contains dead ends. Following the path of the labyrinth, the traveler is eventually and inevitably brought to the center and then back out again. While travelers may not know where exactly they are on this labyrinthine path, they are never lost, but rather, somewhere along the way they need to travel. As a result, the labyrinth has become common both as a metaphor and as a symbol of the human pilgrimage through life. A great deal of conjecture exists about its history, origins, and purposes, suggesting that the labyrinth has proven fertile ground for the imagination for millennia.

Its universality among prehistoric cultures indicates the so-called classical labyrinth was a primitive form of symbolic communication, perhaps an earliest form of written transmission. It was drawn from a central cross surrounded by

four angles and four seed points that were connected until seven circuits were contained in its circle. Cave etchings of this particular labyrinth appear circa 2000 BCE in Spain (Saward 2002). These symbols appear at approximately the same time in the Indian subcontinent, as well. Later, multitudinous stone arrangements of the similar symbols appeared in Scandinavian soil, often near the coast, leading some to speculate that seafarers would walk them in preparation for their journeys over water.

In mythology, the labyrinth first appears in the Greek lore surrounding the Minotaur of Crete. Unmistakably, the Cretan labyrinth was a built environment, an architectural structure, yet coins from Knossos featured the rounded, two-dimensional form of the classical labyrinth as its signifier. Later, Romans exported labyrinth mosaics throughout the Roman Empire (Kern 2000), from Great Britain to Eastern Europe to North Africa. Some were purported to be sizable enough for people to travel on horseback; others were too intricate to serve anything other than decorative purposes. Roman labyrinths are distinct for their sharp angularity, both in their pathways and their outlines.

The Hopi tribes of North America had a squared version of the labyrinth that they used in addition to the classical labyrinth (Conty 2002); it was unique in having two entrances. The Pima tribes, in their depictions of labyrinths, placed a human figure at the very entrance, in what later became known as “The Man in the Maze” pattern. This man was thought to be

seeking the mythic place of his origin as a place of eternal return. Labyrinths were associated with a variety of burial rituals in Celtic cultures as well as Egyptian society, where they were believed to protect the sanctity of the tomb.

Despite its strong association with pagan rituals, the labyrinth was adopted rather quickly by the early church. In an Algerian church was found a labyrinth dating from the fourth century BCE (Matthews 1970); its center circle contained the slogan "Sancta Ecclesia," translated "Holy Church." The destination of the spiritual journey was no longer reunion with the earth but inclusion in corporate Christendom. Interestingly, there was a profusion of varying forms of labyrinths across different churches during the Middle Ages, some square, some circular, and a few octagonal.

At Glastonbury Tor, thought to be site of the first church built in England, an oval-shaped labyrinth appears to have been carved into the landscape the tower sat atop, so that entrance to it would be gained by walking the steep incline of winding circuits. Such large-scale, three-dimensional labyrinths also appeared in Peru, where they figured as features in the geoglyphs of totemistic animals used in the rituals of indigenous earth-centered religions.

By and large, Christian labyrinths belonged in the interiors of churches rather than their exteriors, although turf and hedge labyrinths were fairly frequently found in English gardens and church grounds. Often, the labyrinth was placed near the entry of the church building. These labyrinths were sometimes called "Chemin de Jerusalem," the Way to Jerusalem, because they allowed European churchgoers to enact a pilgrimage to the Holy Land at a time when both its distance and ongoing Crusades made such travel nigh impossible. Members of the clergy would walk the labyrinth as an Easter ritual representing Christ's descent into hell, bodily resurrection, and ascent into heaven. Many monks traveled the labyrinth on their knees.

Perhaps the best known Christian labyrinth is found on the floor of Chartres Cathedral. Completed sometime in the early thirteenth century, its 11-circuit course led to a 6-petalled rosette in

the center, outlined in more than a hundred lunations. Much speculation has existed around the esoteric numerology and sacred geometry of the various labyrinths that appeared in churches (Lonegren 2007). Whether or not the Chartres labyrinth was devised as a specifically Marinal devotion, it was obviously not cruciform, as was the octagonal Maltese labyrinth so suggestive of more martial Roman forms (Fig. 1).

General consensus holds that the Chartres labyrinth pays homage to the feminine aspect of the divine dimension with its womb-like appearance evocative of not only actual birth and death but also spiritual rebirth. The continuous pathway can be viewed as representative of the original passage through the birth canal. Some have even suggested that the Chartres labyrinth was actually used as a birthing instrument; either way, its feminine form would be unmistakable to worshippers.

Many churches and cathedrals saw their labyrinths removed or hidden in the centuries that followed, quite possibly as part of a larger repression of the feminine principle or a backlash against vestigial goddess worship from older traditions. Evidence exists that some pagans may even have used the labyrinth in their mating rituals. The obvious physicality of a walking the labyrinth might have suggested a sensuous and immediate experience of the Divine that organized religion would attempt to control more closely in the West.

It is precisely such kinesthetic engagement that has recently made the labyrinth so appealing to contemporary travelers whose spiritual yearnings have been unfulfilled by religious dogma and formalized worship. In a contained and sanctified way, it offers travelers a chance to practice walking meditation and full-body prayer. In doing so, it combines active and contemplative approaches to self-realization (Artress 1995).

A labyrinth is clearly an exercise in intentionality. Its traveler is no further along spatially than when the walk was begun and actually backtracks at several different points. The labyrinth thereby challenges some dominant notions of linear progression, time urgency, and outward orientation,

**Labyrinth,**

**Fig. 1** Walking the labyrinth at Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, France (This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Labyrinth\\_at\\_Chartres\\_Cathedral.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Labyrinth_at_Chartres_Cathedral.JPG))



suggesting that meaningful personal journeys might involve internal shifts that are as significant as external ones.

As a visual metaphor for journeying within, the labyrinth has also served as a powerful imagistic representation of the psychotherapeutic process, as well as the spiritual quest. The circuits of a labyrinth are vaguely reminiscent of the whorl of a fingerprint, that powerful symbol of personal identity (Attali 1999). The possibility of truly knowing one's own self emerges as one looks inwards.

The existence of a sacred interiority becomes recognized and transitional/transformational space gets created in depictions of the labyrinth. Today people may trace finger labyrinths as a meditative practice or else contemplate line drawings of the labyrinth which they can either "walk" with their eyes or consider as a unified symbol of wholeness. Entire classical labyrinths can be easily constructed from just a few simple marks drawn in the earth. The labyrinth can in turn serve as a sacred experience, sacred space, or sacred image.

Such versatility allows the labyrinth to help its travelers bridge some of the mind-body divide, paradoxically by allowing them to ground themselves in the numinous. Circumambulating the labyrinth is a right-brained activity that allows for flashes of intuition. The winding way

becomes clear, and in that process, wandering suddenly becomes purposeful. For this reason, ritual use of the labyrinth now often occurs at liminal times (Curry 2000), whenever people find themselves at a threshold in their lives.

### Commentary

The labyrinth has been called the Mandala of the West because of its apparent usefulness as a meditative tool and nonlinear activity. It seems to be a culturally consonant symbol that expands consciousness and contains the potential for both psychospiritual integration and healing. The strong revival of interest in labyrinths in Western societies has given rise to numerous organizations promoting their use, organizations that are religious and secular alike, resulting in an international movement to increase their availability in shared spaces. Literature on the topic has proliferated in recent decades.

Even as research into the past and future uses of the labyrinth continues, however, it runs the risk of remaining speculative on the question of its distant origins and almost global ubiquity. What seems clear is that the growing popularity of the labyrinth is a response to a contemporary

spiritual yearning to feel more grounded and centered. Through its indirection and reversals, the labyrinth appears to provide people an alternative to the frenetic pace of modern life and a greater sense of continuity with the past, possibly by suspending animation to a degree. Its symbolism has remained alluring and evocative through millennia of human history.

## See Also

► [Biblical Psychology](#)

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## Lacan, Jacques

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Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) was a French psychoanalyst associated with the literary and philosophical movements of structuralism and post-structuralism. A notoriously abstruse thinker, Lacan, like many French intellectuals

associated with postmodern thought, has often been accused of being deliberately obscure in his writings. This is particularly true of his major work, the *Écrits*, which is noted for its difficulty.

Lacan is known for his claim of a “return to Freud,” though in actual practice this amounted to a radical reconfiguration of Freudian psychoanalysis as Lacan attempted to effect a synthesis between Freud’s biologically driven psychology and the linguistic theory of structuralists like Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson. Freud’s biologically founded subject is thus replaced, by Lacan, with a linguistically constituted subject, with the Freudian drives and even the body itself transliterated or overwritten by culturally specific signifying activities. In this view, the linguistic register of one’s culture channels and determines the directionality and movements that the biological drives assume. The Freudian unconscious, formerly the a priori wellspring of irrational drives and biological pulsations, is also viewed as a linguistic product, an a posteriori consequence of our entry into the linguistic register. The unconscious possesses rules analogous to the syntactical structures which govern the conscious linguistic subject, hence Lacan’s famous claim that the “unconscious is structured like a language.”

Lacan is perhaps best known for the three orders of the *imaginary*, the *symbolic*, and the *real*. The imaginary order is inaugurated by what Lacan described as the “mirror phase” which occurs roughly at six months of age. In this phase the child identifies with a “specular” and exteriorized image of itself, in an actual mirror or in the mirror of the “other,” which it then introjects in order to stabilize and master its bodily sense. The imaginary order, being based on this fundamental misrecognition of the self in the form of a falsifying image, thus results in a state of alienation.

This alienation is compounded by entry into the symbolic order (or linguistic register) which occurs when the child is forced to accept the “law” of the *Name of the Father* (*le Nom du Père*). With the adoption of language, the subject is inscribed or overwritten by signifiers, thus being



made subject to the regulative strictures and organizational principles embedded within the culture's system of signification. The symbolic order is therefore *Other* to the subject, being imposed and not truly adopted. Lacan's ubiquitous use of the term *Other* most often refers to this otherness of language. The direct consequence of entry into the linguistic register is "symbolic castration," a notion which replaces Freud's oedipal drama and its threat of actual physical castration with the subject's loss of *jouissance*, an untranslated term that refers to a preoedipal enjoyment of the object no longer possible for the linguistic subject. In keeping with this rejection of Freud's biological schema, Lacan replaces the organ of the penis with the symbolic phallus, a term which refers to this preoedipal state of dyadic fusion with the maternal object.

The real is much more difficult to describe, as it is the order of experience which completely resists symbolization. It may be the undifferentiated state of being that precedes linguistic acquisition or it may refer to significantly traumatic experiences which resist articulation.

Lacan's theories have generated considerable interest among philosophers, literary and religious studies scholars, and feminists preoccupied with continental thought generally and the post-modern "decentered" subject specifically. His influence is particularly evident in the psychoanalytic work of Julia Kristeva.

## See Also

- ▶ [Kristeva, Julia](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism](#)

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## Laing, Ronald David

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## Life and Career

Ronald David Laing was born on October 7, 1927, on 26 Ardbeg Street in the Govanhill district of Glasgow and died on August 23, 1989, in St. Tropez, France. Like his father, Ronald Laing was musically gifted and received a Licentiate in music from the Royal Academy of Music at age 16. At 17, he enrolled in Glasgow University, and at 18, specialized in medicine. Because of the Korean War, military service was mandatory, and so in 1949, Laing did basic training. After a brief apprenticeship in neurosurgery at Killlearn in 1950, Laing spent 1951–1952 as an army psychiatrist. In 1953, now a captain, Laing was placed in charge of the Army hospital in Catterick, in Yorkshire. Soon thereafter, he left the Army for the Royal Gartnavel Hospital and Southern General Hospital (Glasgow), where he worked under Dr. Ferguson Rodger. Rodger brought Laing to the attention of Dr. J. D. Sutherland, the Director of the Tavistock Clinic. With the help of Sutherland, and his successor, John Bowlby, Laing came to London in 1956 to train as a psychoanalyst (Burston 1996).

During his psychoanalytic training, Laing completed *The Divided Self*, a classic in existential psychotherapy (Laing 1960). His second book, *Self and Others*, appeared in 1961 (Laing 1961). From 1962 to 1965, he worked as the Director of the Open Way Clinic, founded by E. Graham Howe, one of the few places in Britain where Freudian and Jungian therapists worked together comfortably. In 1964, Laing and Aaron Esterson, another Glaswegian psychiatrist, published *Sanity, Madness and the Family* (Laing and Esterson 1964). Laing also published *Reason & Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy* with South African psychiatrist Dr. David Cooper that same year (Laing and Cooper 1964).



## Critique of Normality

In February of 1967, Laing published *The Politics of Experience* (Laing 1967). Though not his best book, it was the most influential, and one feature of the book that gripped many readers was Laing's sweeping critique of "normality," which Laing described as a state of profound self-estrangement or alienation – alienation being a hot topic at the time. By Laing's reckoning, the galloping self-estrangement that plagues Western civilization fosters a progressive attenuation of the average, adjusted person's critical faculties and their openness to transcendental experience, a state more akin to a deficiency disease than to genuine mental health. What is lost to normal people are not merely instinctual urges, or the memory of specific events or losses, as Freud suggested. The awareness of the tragic, the sublime, and the absurd, of the prevalence and persistence of evil, and of the peace that passes understanding – these innately human sensibilities are severely stunted, if not entirely extinguished in the struggle to adapt to an increasingly one-dimensional world.

In retrospect, it is interesting to note how often Laing disparaged normality with religious tropes and metaphors. In chapter 3, for example, he says (p. 68): "We are all fallen Sons of Prophecy, who have learned to die in the Spirit and be reborn in the Flesh" (Laing 1967). And again, in chapter six:

There is a prophecy in Amos that a time will come when there will be a famine in the land, 'not a famine for bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.' That time has now come to pass. It is the present age (Laing 1967, p. 144).

Without saying so in quite so many words, passages like these implied that the loss of the sacred as a feature of *normal* experience is linked with the problem of individual and collective violence. But according to Laing, the escalating scale and widening scope of violence in our time is *not* the result of innate propensities to violence and indiscipline – a "death instinct," as Freud thought – but of *the violence we do to ourselves* in our efforts to adapt to an increasingly irrational world that is bereft of genuine transcendence.

In other words, Laing implied that there is a strong correlation between the numbing routine, the mindless consumerism and the shabby ethical compromises of daily life in postindustrial society, and the steady proliferation of evil.

That being so, it is important to note that *The Politics of Experience* was published at the height of the Vietnam War, when Christian, Jewish, and Muslim fundamentalism had no appreciable impact on world affairs. For members of Laing's generation, who came of age during the Korean War, religious wars were a distant memory, rather than a growing and undeniable threat to global stability. Much as he lamented the loss of the numinous, Laing was not advocating a return to a repressive, theocratic society or advocating the revival of religious creeds based on the unreflective embrace or vehement defense of particular forms of belief. Had he lived to witness our present global predicament, Laing would probably have characterized the resurgence of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic fundamentalism as a reversion to *pseudo-religious* attitudes and passions, rather than the genuine article.

## Metanoia

In any case, in contrast to mere normality, Laing maintained that true sanity can only be achieved through the dissolution of the socially adjusted ego (or persona) in a process which he termed "metanoia." Ego transcendence, said Laing, can be sought gradually and deliberately through meditation and spiritual practices, or it can occur spontaneously. The mad person, said Laing, is often catapulted into this process unawares and, without skillful guidance, will go astray, exiled indefinitely in the demonic realms that enshroud and obstruct our access to the holy. However, given appropriate care, many psychotics can recover their emotional and intellectual equilibrium without recourse to psychotropic medication or other intrusive or coercive treatments, with the help of a seasoned therapist who is in touch with his or her own psychotic core and is not intimidated or overwhelmed by the severity of the patient's symptoms.





Like Jung before him, Laing borrowed the word “metanoia” from the New Testament to describe the dissolution of normal egoic consciousness. When translated from the original Greek, this word is usually rendered as “repentance.” The problem with this commonplace translation is that it dwells primarily on the subject’s sense of sinfulness and his (or her) earnest desire to shed sinful habits and desires. But in the original Greek, the term “metanoia” connotes an epistemological upheaval, a radical change of perspective, and a total and irreversible change in one’s view of oneself and the world – in short, an epiphany or enlightenment experience more akin to the ancient idea of “gnosis” than to moral reform or reconstruction.

### Laing’s Christian Roots

Though few readers were aware of it, R. D. Laing combined a rare appreciation of Asian wisdom and spiritual practices with a heartfelt immersion in Christian spirituality – a trait that he shared with E. Graham Howe and Alan Watts. Nowhere is this more apparent than in an interview with Yoga scholar Georg Feuerstein, entitled “Sparks of Light,” which appeared in 1983. “Sparks of Light” contains many of his most profound reflections on spirituality, but was not delivered in his usual style. Laing himself acknowledged this, admitting that he was finally expressing himself in a Christian idiom that he had become “. . . less embarrassed about affirming in the course of the last thirty years or so” (Feuerstein 1983).

Why embarrassed? During the Cold War Era, when Laing rose to prominence, people tended to regard anyone who spoke often and earnestly of their faith outside of their immediate circle as being somewhat odd and ill educated. However, this statement also conveys the misleading impression that though his reluctance to speak about it had diminished in the last few decades, his faith had been constant throughout. This is simply not so. Indeed, the cumulative impression one gets is that Laing spent most of his adult life as a reluctant and sometimes deeply anguished agnostic who longed for the consolations of faith, but could not

overcome his doubts and misgivings sufficiently to affirm what he desired to believe – sometimes ambivalently, sometimes wholeheartedly. This is the real source of his “embarrassment.”

What kind of Christian was Laing, when he was not overwhelmed by doubt? As a teenager, Laing was exposed to the Evangelical-cum-fundamentalist variety of Calvinism and to the older “Celtic Christianity” that arrived in Scotland with Brendan the Navigator (c. 484–c. 578) and St. Columba (521–597), both of whom played a significant role in the building of Iona Abbey on the Isle Iona, in the Lower Hebrides. By the age of 14, Laing claimed that he had emphatically Evangelical Christianity in favor of the latter, Celtic variety. This claim is born out of his on again/off again relationship with the Very Reverend George MacLeod (1895–1991), who like Laing, incidentally, was a native of Glasgow who rose to the rank of Captain in the British Army. MacLeod was the founder of The Iona Christian Community, an ecumenical community dedicated to the preservation of Celtic Christianity and the erasure of world hunger and poverty, based on the Isle of Iona in the Lower Hebrides. Though few people are aware of it, Laing spent many weeks there over the course of his career. Indeed, in the early 1980s, Laing even pondered the possibility of situating a foundation to be called St. Oran’s Trust on this fair island.

Laing’s leanings toward Celtic Christianity are also evident in his remark to Feuerstein that we are all one in “the Universal Fire.” Indeed, said Laing, our individual souls are nothing but “sparks” emanating from this universal fire. Classicists contend that the idea that the soul is a “spark” of a Divine Fire probably originates in the Orphic religion, but gets taken up by Plato in the fourth century BCE and subsequently, by the Stoics and neo-Platonists in the Hellenistic-Roman era. While originally a school of pagan philosophy, Neo-Platonism and the emanationist approach to theology later took on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic forms, and as we survey the history of Western spirituality, the imagery of the soul as a Divine spark becomes a common idiom for mystics of all three monotheistic traditions.

Another striking feature of his talk with Feuerstein is that when asked to share the fruits of a lifetime of introspection, Laing responded that he discovered “that hope is justifiable.” The term “hope” does not surface often in Laing’s work, and though he vigorously repudiated the suggestion, many readers – friends and critics alike – found *The Politics of Experience* to be an angry and eloquent expression of overwhelming despair. If so, of course, Laing had clearly recovered some of his optimism in the interim. Meanwhile, the suggestion that hope is justifiable and that this represents a hard-won discovery on his part, says a great deal about him personally.

That being so, it is also instructive to note that Laing tries here – and not for the first time – to link the idea of love to the project of scientific inquiry and that Laing often despaired of getting psychiatrists to see that viewing their patients primarily or exclusively through the lenses of the natural scientific attitude is profoundly dehumanizing. The idea that science is (or ought) to be informed by a loving, reverential attitude toward nature was self-evident to someone like Einstein, but is odd and incongruous to most scientists, so Laing justified this linkage by pointing to the destructive potential of scientific research that lacks this basis. He said:

If you investigate and inquire into the world without love, you don’t find anything worthwhile. If you look at a tree or a frog or anything at all without the eyes of love, then you obtain only loveless, heartless knowledge. When such knowledge is accumulated and applied to practices of scientific technology, it becomes the most destructive form of knowledge ever discovered. Even the worst black magic cannot vie with the destructive capacity of science. Its very method is to destroy what it looks at in order to discover its elements.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Levinas, Emmanuel

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Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) was a Talmudist, ethicist, and continental philosopher whose thought has left a lasting imprint on contemporary philosophy and theology. His sophisticated ethical system that understands the self to be radically responsible for the Other has challenged conventional theories of selfhood, subjectivity, consciousness, ethics, metaphysics, language, and social relations. Furthermore, his ethical philosophy is beginning to find its way into psychological discourse concerning psychotherapy, human development, and definitions of selfhood.

Levinas was born in Kaunas (a.k.a. Kovno), Lithuania, in 1906 to a moderately affluent, Orthodox Jewish family. In his formative years, he was educated in traditional Hebrew school and was also heavily influenced by the work of



Russian novelists such as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. In 1923, Levinas traveled to Strasbourg, France, for formal education in philosophy. Shortly after, he went to Freiburg, Germany, where he studied phenomenological theory and methodology under both Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. These experiences impacted Levinas for the remainder of his intellectual career. Levinas translated Husserl's work into French, making him the first to introduce Husserlian phenomenology into the French academy (later read by Sartre and other prominent thinkers). Husserl and Heidegger remained the primary dialogue partners within Levinas' philosophical works. He viewed their thoughts on consciousness, history, ontology, and metaphysics to be representative of the greater Western philosophical tradition he wished to engage and challenge.

Conversant in both Hebrew Scriptures and Western philosophy, Levinas represents a unique perspective on ethics. His project is sometimes described as *translation*, a communication of ancient Hebrew wisdom through the more dominant and universalizing trends of Greek rationality and the academy. Levinas' project continues to be mined for its far-reaching implications upon religious studies, philosophical systems, and psychological paradigms.

The historical context of Levinas' life further enriched the content of his writings and critique. Levinas' loss of his father, mother, and two brothers at the hands of the SS in Lithuania, along with his own imprisonment for 5 years during World War II, left a profound impression on Levinas' thought and interaction with Western philosophy. He claimed that many trends within Western thought had created an allergy to ethics and a form of ethical immunity for persons in the world. He understood many Western systems of morality to be failures and dangerous appendages to the violence making of the ego and human history as a whole. Levinas argued for movement away from the *love of wisdom* that had sustained Western thought since the ancient Greeks (and can be seen in modern science and psychology) to a *wisdom of love at the service of love* recognized within biblical tradition. Levinas called for

"ethics as first philosophy" rather than ontology, traditional metaphysics, epistemology, doctrine, or sacraments.

Levinas' concern about violence, along with his desire to provide an account of human experience/phenomenology that recognized the inherent ethical call in the face of the Other, provided the basis of his first highly celebrated work, *Totality and Infinity*. In this work, he argues that the ego is not at rest within itself, but rather has a metaphysical desire for something beyond its own sameness (or immanence). Though the ego often defends against otherness by reducing the Other to totalizing depictions (through intentional consciousness), there is a compelling command within the face of the Other that calls for responsibility. Levinas understood the face of the Other to bear a trace of the Divine (or infinity/transcendence). The dialogical philosophies of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig were indelible influences upon Levinas' assertions concerning the irreducibility of the Other and the requirement of justice in human relations. As Levinas' work evolved, this responsibility became even more radical and his language for it more intense. By the time he wrote his second major work, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Levinas had come to emphasize the Other as bearing an alterity as radical as God's alterity. Furthermore, the Other's otherness, in Levinas' thought, wounds the banality and complacency of the ego and denucleates and decenters it. The ego loses its primacy and sovereignty and, instead, is hostage, persecuted, and traumatized by its inexhaustible responsibility for the Other.

For Levinas, one's psyche is ethically constituted and called forth into identity. The Hebrew expression, *hineni*, meaning "here I am," was his most succinct definition of the human psyche and the human self. That is, the self is always an ethical responsiveness, not a self-assertion or noun. To argue these points, Levinas engages in complex analysis about intersubjectivity and time, primordial encounter, interhuman subjectivity, and sensate experience.

Interestingly, Levinas peppers much of his philosophical treatises with rich religious terminology and illustrations (e.g., substitution,

expiation, glory, Divine, transcendence, hineni, idol, and Abraham's departure from his homeland). This has created significant contention in the field of Levinas' studies concerning the theological characteristics of Levinas' thought. Some argue that his philosophy was fundamentally Jewish while others want to preserve a purist depiction of his thought as philosophical. This issue is complexified by Levinas' confessional writings and Talmudic commentaries. Levinas was not entirely clear about the relation of his religious beliefs to his philosophical works. However, he was clear that he considered himself a translator of Hebrew thought (ethical concern for the Other as represented in ancient tradition) into and through Greek thought (dominant Western tradition). Though, he did not like the title "Jewish thinker" or "Jewish philosopher" to describe his work.

In addition to the works listed above, Levinas wrote many other social and religious commentaries and philosophical articles and books. By the end of Levinas' career, he had taught in the prestigious philosophy departments at the University of Poitiers, University of Nanterre, and University of Sorbonne. His impact on the landscape of 20th European continental philosophy has been and continues to be quite significant. Such thinkers as Blanchot, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Lyotard, Marion, Pope John Paul II, and Ricoeur are just a few of the many noteworthy figures within Western thought that came under Levinas' influence.

## Commentary

Levinas did not write directly about psychology in most of his works. Scattered references can be found – mostly of a critical nature – about the naturalistic, mechanistic, and reductive practices of psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Despite this, Levinas' thought has slowly begun to make its way into psychoanalytic dialogues, with comparisons done between Levinas and Winnicott, Lacan, Freud, and Jung. Existential-phenomenological schools utilize Levinas' work to further bolster claims about the irreducibility of the human

person. Conferences and journals are forming that specifically target the interaction between Levinas' ethical philosophy and psychological systems and practices. Often, this interface takes the form of a fundamental challenging of dominant paradigms within modern psychologies. Reductive theoretical systems and practices have come under serious critique utilizing Levinas' methodology. Furthermore, the nature of consciousness, subjectivity, the ego, and the relation between self and the Other are often the topics addressed in these conversations.

Modern psychologies have frequently functioned as an extension of Western philosophical frameworks and out of a long lineage of Greek thought. As such, the Greek emphasis upon generalization, universalization, rationality, and immanence remains the preponderant base of contemporary psychology. Consciousness and rationality have been emphasized alongside of naturalistic and universalizing depictions of selfhood.

Furthermore, the individual ego is often valorized, with individuation and independence as core goals of human flourishing (in Western psychologies). Language of coping, cohesion, adaptation, and integration are among the many descriptors of a higher functioning self within the world. Seldom are theories and practices developed that understand the self as a "moral event" or emergent from ethical interchange and justice. Some theories recognize the need for social interest (e.g., Alfred Adler) or interpersonal engagement (e.g., Harry Stack Sullivan) but are far from making ethics a "first philosophy."

Levinas' critique of Western consciousness and the Western ego as self-reflexive and transfixed with itself is a frequent theme throughout his work. His depiction of an ethically constituted self challenges the fundamental primacy of the ego and construes the ego as vulnerable and exposed to the calling of the Other. Psychological appropriators of Levinas' work often accuse psychoanalysis, cognitive-behavioral theories, and a variety of other paradigms as being caught up in this "egology" wherein the monadic individual and his or her



rationality, affective functioning, and behavioral repertoires constitute the human person. The Western ego, in Levinas' thought, has become an idolatrous entity within which persons became trapped, preoccupied, and tormented. Persons cannot find escape from themselves. Levinas uses the story of Odysseus and his return to his homeland as an example of the prodigal and self-returning version of the ego in Western thought. In contrast, he describes the story of Abraham – who is exiled from his homeland and journeys to a land unknown – as an illustration of a self lived beyond the confines of itself.

Instead of freedom being understood as individuation, living congruently with one's biological needs/drives or self-actualization, Levinas suggested that freedom is born from responsibility for the Other. Ethical interchange and moral attunement are more original than ontological expressions of personhood. Instead of the "I" being sovereign and imperial, it is a response to the imperative found in the needs of the Other. The ego is perpetually called outside of itself and into a selfhood beyond the practices and history of itself (sameness). Levinas utilizes the illustration of God commanding Adam into being at creation, thus showing that the self is first commanded before anything else.

The prophetic quality of Levinas' work and the translation of Jewish ethics into contemporary systems of thought is poignant and a powerful corrective to dominant skews in modern, Western psychologies.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anti-Semitism](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Ethics and Ethical Behavior](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Holocaust](#)

- ▶ [Immanence](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Law](#)
- ▶ [Kristeva, Julia](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [Liberation Theology](#)
- ▶ [Love](#)
- ▶ [Narcissism](#)
- ▶ [Nazism](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
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- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Reductionism](#)
- ▶ [Relational Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Talmud](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)
- ▶ [Wisdom](#)

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## LGBTQI and Queer Studies

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In 1995, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner wrote that the only way to capture queer theory is through “a kind of anti-encyclopedia entry” because “queer theory is not the theory of anything in particular, and has no precise bibliographic shape.” In the nearly 20 years since Berlant and Warner’s article, queer theory has taken shape – nearly having a canon. This rapidly growing discourse of subaltern, deviant, and/or minoritized expressions of sexual desire – what we usual call lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer – and the rapidly shifting political environment increasingly allows scholars to ask and answer such questions in public forums without risking professional reprisal.

However, the canon of queer theory is a significantly different body of literature than lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) studies, which in turn is different from LGBTI religious literature, queer theology, and LGBTI psychology. To create an encyclopedic entry of these disparate bodies of literature is to

first capture the way in which they are intimately entwined with each other. First they are all anchored in the lives of LGBTI and queer identified persons (by self or by others; currently, previously, or in the future) and their plights for meaning-making in a broader culture that is often inhospitable to full flourishing. Second, religious intolerance and homophobia affects LGBTI psychology, identities, and health, while queer studies see queer expressions of sexuality and gender already deeply present in major world religions. Third, LGBTI positive psychology makes the reclamation of religion more possible for LGBTI persons. Fourth, the history of religious influence on sexual practice, sexual morality, and human sexual relationships is writ large in our contemporary culture and understanding of our selves. Take, for example, the strong rhetorical tension of the “culture wars” that pins “the moral majority” against the “homosexual movement.” Finally, the deeply embedded religious assumptions and ideologies of those who have created the history of LGBTI and queer identities (e.g., sexuality) are still a body of work that needs to be written – those assumptions teased out and demonstrated as intrinsically woven into our secular understandings of LGBTI and queer identities.

## Queer Theory

The trinity of texts at the center of the queer theory canon are Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, v.1 (English translation – 1978), Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), and Eve Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). Despite the 1976 French publication of *History of Sexuality*, the start date for queer theory is said to be right around 1990, the term having been coined by film scholar Teresa de Lauretis. Each text undoes an important cornerstone of assumptions of sexually and gender diverse individuals. Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* traces the influences for the possibility of modern discourses around deviant sexuality, arguing centrally that the repression of the Victorian era actually proliferated discourse around sexuality. Sedgwick’s *Epistemology of the Closet* argues in part that the closet functions as a control





mechanism for everyone's sexuality – it is universalizing, rather than minoritizing. Butler's *Gender Trouble* argues that there is nothing natural about gender, rather all gender is simply a repetition of cultural scripts. Together these texts, now sacred as canon in their own right, work to deconstruct the most prevalent assumptions we have of sexual minorities: that our gender expression is somehow unnatural, that our sexual-social experience is fundamentally different, and that our sexualities are in opposition to prim and proper notions of sexual morality. Other key writers in this field include Anzaldúa, Haraway, Fuss, Berlant, and Warner. This emphasis towards the deconstructive is what sets queer theory apart from LGBTI studies.

## LGBTI Studies

It can be casually, but rather unprecisely, stated that in the USA lesbian and gay studies began in the years just after the Stonewall riots. However, in Europe the date is much earlier, with the 1949 publication of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* with its robust chapter on "lesbians" – unquestionably an attempt to explain lesbians from a socially affirmative standpoint. She challenges the stereotype of a lesbian as a woman who wears mannish clothes and has a rough demeanor. Beauvoir writes about lesbian sex with a poetic tone. This kind of positive and affirmative explanation – which still concretely and realistically engages with cultural discrimination and stereotypes – is indicative of LGBTI studies.

Some 30 years later in the USA, key texts of LGBTI studies include Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" drawing a direct connection between patriarchal oppression and the displacement of economic, physical, and emotional energies of women towards men. David Halperin's "Is There a History of Sexuality?," investigating ancient world praxes of sexuality, arguing that ancient understanding of human sexual difference looked much more like natural dispositional variation of appetite than does our modern notions of identity constructive sexuality. Gayle Rubin's "Thinking

Sex" – which is a notable crossover piece into queer theory – and works by historian John D'emilio, anthropologist Esther Newton, and art historian Douglas Crimp all have a central and formative place in the field.

Transgender studies have had its own historical development. Once simply known as gender passing, the term "transgender" has gained significant popularity since the 1990s. It refers to people who live across the boundary of gender away from the gender they were born into. Typically if one has had sex reassignment surgery, the term utilized to describe his/her identity is "transsexual." This term can be traced back to sexology in the late nineteenth century. Transgender rights began in 1975, with towns and cities nationwide beginning to adopt trans protective ordinances. Discrimination of transgendered people is still very common, even by large gay rights organizations. Important writers in trans studies include Gayle Salamon, Susan Stryker, and Julia Serano.

Intersex studies focuses on the history of what was once called hermaphroditism and contemporary biomedical ethical issues. "Intersex" designates "a variety of congenital conditions in which a person has neither the standard male nor female anatomy," endocrinology, or chromosomes. Currently, intersex is considered a medically treatable condition by the general medical profession, and surgeries are often performed on infants. Many of these children grow up to have serious sexual dysfunction and experience significant gender dysphoria. Intersex activists advocated changes within the medical profession based on biomedical ethics. Alice Domurat Dreger's edited *Intersex in the Age of Ethics* is an excellent example of the genre.

## LGBTI Religious Literature and Queer Theology

Queer theology is an attempt to reread or simply read theologies – often Christian – as already having embedded within them or having possibility for containing a queer sensibility. Examples include reading sexual and gender ambiguity

into the trinity (e.g., Gavin D’Costa’s essay “Queer Trinity”), the experience of queer love in the metanarrative of Jesus as God-made-flesh (Patrick Cheng’s *Radical Love*), or the possible intersex identity of the body of Christ (Susannah Cornwell “Intersex and Ontology: A Response to The Church, Women Bishops and Provision”).

LGBTI religious literature explores traditional issues within religious social and community life, or passages with sacred texts, and attempts to find reconciliation for excised persons defined as sexually deviant or rereads texts with greater acumen and/or more favorable social interpretations. This genre can also take the form of personal narrative. Kathy Rudy and Robert Goss have both written elegantly in the latter category. One can also do a very smart cultural reading of rhetorical gestures and ideological frames that have become contemporary politico-religious dialogue, such as Mark Jordan’s *Recruiting Young Love*.

Queer theology and LGBTI religious literature are not particularly dependent on queer theory or LGBTI studies. It is clear that the history of religious thinking has had a strong impact on the well-being of LGBTI people and has influenced the motivations and perspectives for doing research on LGBTI identity and behaviors. This relationship could be rendered much more visible in secular and religious scholarship.

## **LGBTI Psychology: History and Contemporary Models**

Our modern intellectual history regarding homosexuality began in the late nineteenth century with sexology. Researchers such as Richard Von Krafft-Ebing and Dr. James Kiernan studied “perversions” and medically categorized deviants. Prior to sexology, the dominant sexual ideology privileged reproductive behavior as moral with all other types of behavior as immoral, a judgment strongly driven by religion. After the invention of homosexuality as an identity (coined in 1869 and reaching popular clinical usage by 1886) and the significant efforts of sexology to understand the contours of “deviant” sexuality, persons with opposite-sex sexual

desire – heterosexuals – began to be understood as the healthiest of citizens, the ones who are natural and worthy of moral and psychological respect. Sigmund Freud, in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, had a strong influence in this regard.

Up to the 1950s, the struggle over homosexual identity remained mired in questions of psychological and biological health. As positive critiques of sexuality began to be produced, the pathologizing efforts of sexology began to fade. The first major change in this thinking was the Kinsey model (1948), which developed sexuality theory along a 7-point scale – on one end falls the pure heterosexual, on the other the pure homosexual. Most individuals fall somewhere in between.

Stage models have been popular in the contemporary psychology of sexual orientation. Vivienne Cass (1979) is the most well known and uses six stages to explain gay identity development, which begins with confusion, develops through acceptance and pride, and ends in the synthesis of sexual identity into a larger understanding of self. Alan Dowds argues for a 3-stage model of gay male identity development: first shame, then compensation for shame, and finally authenticity.

Others have tried different kinds of frames. Anthony D’Augelli, for example, developed what he calls a “Lifespan Model” which he says is a fluid holistic lifelong process of identity development that involves five recognizable behaviors that are interwoven together and can occur at different and multiple times. Finally, there continues to be sex researchers who approach sexuality on a more complicated grid that mirrors the Kinsey approach. Fritz Klein, for example, used seven variables on grid to measure sexuality, all of which are superimposed on a time scale (past, present, future).

## **HIV/AIDS**

The role that the AIDS crisis and HIV have had on the psychology, community life, and scholarly importance of everything aforementioned cannot

be overestimated. The depth of the trauma of HIV/AIDS beginning in the early 1980s and its contemporary role in LGBTI communities have yet to be fully understood or integrated into our history, theory, and theology. It may be many years and generations before we can articulate the full impact. Important contributions to this discourse include Randy Shilts, Tim Dean, Castiglia and Reed, and the ACT-UP oral history project.

## Conclusion

One of the most exciting aspects of these overlapping fields of study that all anchor themselves in the lives of LGBTI and queer people around the globe and throughout history is that there is still a lot of knowledge to be produced by scholars and clinicians. Those interested in studying and writing about such topics should be strongly encouraged.

## See Also

- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQI Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Transgender and Gender Identity](#)

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## LGBTQI Counseling

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Counseling to address the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, or intersex (LGBTQI) individuals may have a variety of foci. In addition to the exploration of predictable developmental and interpersonal concerns, counseling with LGBTQI clients often addresses additional stressors or conflicts experienced uniquely by sexual minorities and their

families. These stresses may include coming out to family members, friends, or employers; health-related concerns such as conceiving or adopting children; assuring health benefits and legal rights for nonmarital partners; beginning or continuing a gender transition for transgender persons; responding to harassment or physical violence; conflicts with families of origin; workplace discrimination; and spiritual concerns. The stresses experienced by sexual minorities, including internalized homophobia and homonegativity, have been linked to often underdiagnosed symptoms of depression, suicidality, substance abuse, and sexually compulsive behavior.

Some clients seek counseling because they would like to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Clients may experience pressure from parents, spouses, or other family members to conform to more traditional or culturally expected gender roles or sexual behaviors. Other clients seek counseling because they would like to live more openly and comfortably as a gay, lesbian, or bisexual person or to begin or continue a gender transition. Religiously committed sexual minorities may seek or be referred to counseling when their religious beliefs or faith community are not supportive of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These conflicts are particularly common among Evangelical Protestant Christians and Muslims, though these conflicts exist for clients of many faith traditions.

Of particular concern to mental health professionals is the question of whether or not sexual orientation and gender identity can be altered. That is, can a person whose primary emotional and erotic attraction is to members of the same sex (or both sexes) develop an exclusive or enhanced attraction to those of the other sex? Further, can a person who experiences an internal sense of disparity between her or his gender identity and biological sex develop a sense of congruence between identity and anatomy? At present, little evidence suggests that an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity may be significantly altered, though the choices that individuals make about sexual behaviors and adherence to social norms are often malleable. Thus, a gay or lesbian person may elect to

participate in heterosexual sexual activities (just as a heterosexually identified person may participate in sexual activities with those of the same sex), without experiencing a fundamental change in the direction of his or her primary emotional and erotic attraction. So, too, a person who is biologically male may choose to dress and conform to the expected gender role for his cultural group while internally experiencing the self as female. However, consistently acting in a way that is different from one's sexual orientation or gender identity often creates anxiety, stress, and depression for the individuals who attempt to do so. Several professional organizations, including the American Psychological Association and American Counseling Association, hold the position that same-sex sexual behavior and attraction are normal variants of human sexuality, and the change of one's sexual orientation is, therefore, not a supportable goal for therapy. However, some mental health practitioners believe that sexual orientation can be changed and offer services designed to facilitate change of sexual orientation (one form of which is known as "Reparative Therapy").

Many clients come from religious backgrounds which limit sexual expression to heterosexual (usually marital) relationships and expect gay, lesbian, or bisexually identified individuals to commit to exclusively heterosexual activity or to choose celibacy. Additionally, few religious traditions, with the exception of some Native American traditions, have been supportive of gender transitioning among adolescents or adults. Religious LGBTQI adults often feel pressured to reject their sexual orientation or gender identity or to leave their religious community if they would like to be "out." However, a growing number of religious communities and para-church organizations accept and support openly LGBTQI individuals without expecting heterosexual practices, celibacy, or gender conformity.

Many religiously committed sexual minorities have spent considerable time attempting to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. Clients often report intensive use of prayer and scripture reading in an effort to change what they view as sinful behavior. A small number of

Christian clients have pursued exorcism in an attempt to banish a “spirit of homosexuality.” Some clients have adopted an image of God which is condemning and rejecting, believing that God finds their sexual orientation or gender identity intolerable and requires change from them. Others adopt an image of God which is loving, but may wonder why God would allow them to suffer discrimination from others. A smaller number of clients adopt the idea that they are made in God’s image. Religiously committed clients may also make decisions about being “out” within their religious community and daily life. Some individuals are “out” everywhere, while others may be “out” in one setting, but not another. Many religiously committed sexual minorities feel that they must choose between their religious commitment and sexual orientation or gender identity, a choice which often creates a loss of at least one essential element of the person’s identity.

Counseling of LGBTQI clients, like counseling offered to other communities of clients, focuses first on the presenting concern of the client or client family. The clinician acknowledges that the client’s concerns may be related primarily to sexual orientation or gender identity, influenced partially by these factors, or have little to do with these aspects of identity. As an ethical practitioner, the counselor assesses whether or not she or he is competent to offer services to the client, negotiates treatment goals that are both consistent with the client’s values and supportable by research and professional practice standards, and makes referrals to allied professionals, as needed. The counseling may serve an individual client, a couple, or a larger family system. Counselors of many different sexual orientations and gender identities may be helpful to LGBTQI clients, often at different stages in the therapy process.

Counseling often focuses on the treatment of specific symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse; improving interpersonal relationships between partners or family members; choosing supportive relationships; reconciling religious beliefs with dimensions of identity; and grieving losses of beliefs, communities, relationships, behaviors, or imagined

futures (such as a heterosexual marriage, for some clients). Counseling may also focus on social justice and advocacy issues. Those who counsel LGBTQI individuals and families usually rely on established therapeutic modalities, including psychodynamic, cognitive, behavioral, humanistic, family, and systems approaches.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Couples, Marriage, and Family Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Prejudice](#)
- ▶ [Sin](#)
- ▶ [Transgender and Gender Identity](#)

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## Liberation Psychology

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Liberation psychology is an umbrella term for a cross-disciplinary movement in psychology

which originated in Central and South America as a response to grievous social injustice, civil war, and political turmoil. It is most often associated with the work of Jesuit priest and social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942–1989) in El Salvador. Although he is often credited with popularizing the term in social and community psychology, it was “coined” and employed independently by Nancy Caro Hollander in her assessment of the progressive social justice initiatives of psychoanalysts who integrated the psychological insights of Freud with the social and economic analysis of Marx.

Liberation psychology is a broad movement in psychology comprised of multiple schools with different cultural and ideological origins. It is perhaps most often associated with the work of Jesuit priest and social psychologist Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942–1989) in El Salvador, who called for a psychology which relinquished its aspirations for social, political, and “scientific” prestige in order to make “a preferential option for the poor,” those people who are oppressed by unjust social conditions and political regimes. This liberation psychology entailed a fusion of liberation theology, the political analysis of psychology from critical psychology, Paulo Freire’s radical pedagogy, and the methodological tools of social psychology. The social ethics and theological assertions of liberation theology in particular were of great import in the development of Martín-Baró’s thinking, who maintained a close relationship with renown liberation theologian and philosopher Ignacio Ellacuría.

Three tenets of liberation theology crucial to Martín-Baró’s development of liberation psychology were the belief in a God of life and justice who scorned oppression, the importance of orthopraxis over orthodoxy, and the preferential option for the poor. Using these three principles Martín-Baró proposed three essential elements of liberation psychology: a new horizon by which psychology would not concern itself with maintaining a privileged political or social position but with employing itself in the service of the poor and oppressed, a new epistemology that attempts to understand psychological dynamics from the perspective of the dominated

poor Salvadorans instead of the perspective of the dominant elite, and a new praxis by which knowledge and research developed from the perspective of the oppressed then becomes used to empower them by developing critical consciousness regarding their psychosocial-political reality (*concientización*), in order that they may liberate themselves and change that reality. Given these elements, Martín-Baró outlined for liberation psychology three urgent tasks. Firstly, there needs to be a recovery of historical memory, by which one discovers those behaviors of the past which instill a sense of collective identity and help an oppressed community survive and struggle toward liberation. Secondly, there needs to be a de-ideologizing of everyday experience through the subversion of dominant narratives by psychologists participating in the life of the poor, recovering their experience and “returning” it to them, so that they may reflect upon it and form a broader consciousness of their reality. Thirdly, psychologists in El Salvador should shun the importation of ethics, cultures, and values alien to the country’s people and instead use the people’s own values and virtues as represented in the cultural, social, and religious institutions that have aided in their survival during the civil war and struggle toward social justice.

Using this liberation psychology, Martín-Baró developed social psychological research projects that aimed to understand phenomena as varied as the effects of war on mental health (especially that of children), the psychological dynamics of state terrorism and oppression, the ways that psychology can collude with or go against the status quo, the use of religion as an instrument of psychological warfare, and the experiences of the Salvadoran people in the midst of social and political violence. This research was not simply published in academic journals but was likewise used to develop critical consciousness (*concientización*) among the Salvadoran people. Due to the political implications of this perspective for psychology and Salvadoran society, Martín-Baró was murdered in 1989 along with seven others on the campus of the Central American University in San Salvador. His vision,



however, lives on as it has influenced many social and clinical psychologists in Latin America, North America, and Europe.

Parallel to the development of Martín-Baró's thinking, in 1981 the North American psychoanalyst Nancy Caro Hollander became interested in the work of Marie "Mimi" Langer (1910–1987) and other psychoanalysts in the Southern Cone countries (Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil) who also struggled against unjust political regimes, by relating psychoanalysis and Marxism in both theory and clinical practice much in the same way that liberation theology had related theology and Marxism in liberatory reflection and praxis. Hollander worked with Marie Langer and her colleagues clinically and academically and, as a result of their relationship, subsequently began writing a group biography detailing their life and work in the midst of war and oppression. In that biography, it was detailed how Marie Langer and many of her colleagues had originally migrated from Europe to South America due to the growing threat of Nazism to Europe and toward their communist and Marxist political views. Much like their counterparts in North America, in South America Langer and other migrating psychoanalysts initially found it necessary to keep a low profile on their Marxist ideologies for fear of retribution from more conservative colleagues and the local right-wing governments.

As conditions in Latin America continued to deteriorate due to civil wars, revolutions, and economic-political oppression, psychoanalysts began to speak out against injustice and take steps to both make sense of the escalating conflicts psychoanalytically as well as develop treatment relevant to the needs of oppressed and displaced people, hence making a preferential option for the poor people of Latin America. Freud's theories concerning the intrapsychic dynamics of repression, splitting, and projection were related to Marx's theories regarding the repressive and alienating dynamics of economic and structural injustice. The function and role of an overly harsh and persecutory superego likewise became contextualized and related to the imposition of the bourgeoisie morality and

right-wing politics of the governing classes. The work of Melanie Klein in particular became very influential in understanding how human destructiveness was affected by interpersonal, economic, and societal dynamics, such as genocidal ideologies molding everyday poor people into soldiers for the all-good regime against the all-bad civilians or insurgents (in many cases seen as one and the same).

In clinical practice, social justice-oriented psychoanalysts in Latin America would contextualize developmental (oedipal, preoedipal) difficulties and mental illness in the historical economic and political oppression that their patients' experienced in society and through family life, providing interpretations that would encourage them to speak and give voice to their psychosocial trauma. Apart from individual treatment, Langer and others also practiced group psychotherapy as a liberating practice, providing a much more socially relevant service extending mental health services to wider communities in need of support. A variety of pragmatic methodologies were developed in relation to the social ambivalence that surrounded treatment with particular clients (whether it was working with a torturer, a victim of torture, or an insurgent), including encouraging patients to become politically active in order to give voice to their fears and anxieties, a move that was found to be clinically useful in helping the healing process, as well as inviting patients to work toward changing their social reality. Due to such consciousness raising and revolutionary clinical work, Hollander used the phrase liberation psychology to describe the labors of social justice-oriented psychoanalysts like Marie Langer, a use that was reinforced after she found that Martín-Baró had coined the phrase earlier to describe his social psychological work in El Salvador.

## Commentary

A liberation psychology of religion would be concerned with the ways that religion could be a force of prophetic and critical consciousness for social change or a tool of psychosocial

domination upholding the interests of those in power. In the specific case of El Salvador, Martín-Baró was concerned with a model of intervention the United States had developed known as “low-intensity conflict,” which emphasized sociopolitical psychological warfare which sought to “win the hearts and minds” of the people who supported the insurgency against the US-backed regime. It would pursue this goal through the use of propaganda, harassment, sanctions, and even torture to make people feel insecure about their basic beliefs and shift political orientation in favor of US interests in the region. Religion, as a central institution for many Salvadorans, enters the picture as one possible tool of such psychological manipulation.

In a series of studies starting in 1984, Martín-Baró and his colleagues did empirical research on the relationship between different types of religiosity and sociopolitical attitudes, which compared Catholic Christian Base Communities (groups that use the perspective of liberation theology to reflect upon their spiritual and material conditions in order to organize social justice efforts) to converts to Evangelical Pentecostalism and charismatic Catholics. These studies took place during a time in which North American evangelical churches intensified missionary efforts into the area, thanks in part to the support of conservative political groups in the USA. It was found that while the Catholic Christian Base Communities displayed a “horizontal” religiosity which emphasized God among the people working toward a more just society, the church as a prophetic voice in society, and the war in El Salvador as a result of structural injustice which must be responded to by a socially active church, evangelical Pentecostals and charismatic Catholics alike displayed a “vertical” religiosity which emphasized God as mysterious and distant and the church as a house of prayer apart from society, with the war a result of man’s sinfulness and divine will, which will end only by praying to God and asking for mercy. As a result of these respective theologies, “horizontal” religiosity tended to lead people from the Christian Base Communities to become conscious of their social conditions, to

organize and mobilize in the interest of social justice, and to have more progressive views on child-rearing, education, work, and politics, while “vertical” religiosity tended to legitimize the policies and behaviors of the government as inevitable and necessary, to become complacent and conforming to the status quo, and to have more conservative views on child-rearing, etc. Type of religiosity, then, was tied to sociopolitical attitudes which either maintained or brought into question the policies and ideologies of oppressive political regimes.

A more psychoanalytic approach to a liberation psychology of religion would attempt to correlate the effects of the different types of theologies and religiosity on the psyche and the way that particular religiosities organize the psyche are related to the economic and power structures of society. For example, one could take James W. Jones’s study of how religion can be both a source of terror and violence or revelation and transformation and relate that analysis to a social analysis of political power. If what Jones calls fanatical religion fosters deep psychological splits in the self between “good” and “bad,” with all the good projected onto an over-idealized God image and all the bad projected outside into groups designated as “other,” it carries the potential of infantilizing adherents before an awesome and magnanimous parental figure, rendering them submissive and unable of exercising critical thinking in relation to other idealized figures, such as the state, an ethnic group, patriarchy, or a nationalistic identity. The over-idealized social institution may then invoke such sentiments to maintain a particular social order and label those who would upset that social order as enemies who must be silenced or destroyed. Alternatively, Jones also refers to religion’s transformative capacity, its ability to create a space from which new insights and truths may emerge in new permutations of consciousness through a relationship – not of submission but of surrender – to a teacher, a text, an empathic community, or a spiritual practice. This transformative function may liberate the true self and allow space for a critical voice to develop which may be able to de-idealize and critically examine

the structures of power and politics within religion, culture, and society. This process may initially be deconstructive as one breaks down the over-idealization of God-images, the ethnic group, or the state, but may also become constructive as new idealizations and permutations of religious experience may emerge from within a de-idealized void. New conceptions of religion may arise with a prophetic vision of a more just society.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Liberation Theology](#)
- ▶ [Martín-Baró, Ignacio](#)
- ▶ [Poverty](#)
- ▶ [Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religiosity](#)
- ▶ [Religious](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)

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### Liberation Theology

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Liberation theology is a Christian theology that originated in the Latin American Catholic Church in the 1960s, but which can today be found around the world in North America (e.g., Black Liberation Theology), Africa (e.g., African Women's Theology), and Asia (e.g., Minjung Theology). In Latin America it grew out of the efforts of Catholic priests who related theology to Karl Marx's theories of social analysis in order to become more socially conscious of the conditions of political and state oppression and to relate theological reflection about the nature of economic and social oppression to the needs of the Latin American poor for social justice. Considering God to be a God of justice and Jesus as not only the savior of mankind but the liberator of the oppressed, liberation theologians lived among the poor as an act of solidarity, making a preferential option for the poor and protesting the unjust conditions that afflicted them through political activism, community

work, and academics. Liberation theology has also been of interest to social justice-oriented mental healthcare workers, inspiring not only a variety of liberation psychologies (i.e., the work of Ignacio Martín-Baró, Mary Watkins, and Lawrence Alschuler) but also an integration of liberation theology and pastoral care (e.g., the work of Stephen Pattison).

## See Also

► [Liberation Psychology](#)

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## Libido

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*Libido* is a term used in psychoanalytic psychology to denote the fundamental sexual energy of the human organism, either a sexual “instinct” or “drive” which in simple terms compels us to reproduce the species. In Freud’s economic theory of the psyche, libido is proposed as the sexual source of all mental energy, which flows towards objects of our attention, thereby investing them with interest or *cathecting* those objects. In this way, libido establishes a psychic relationship with the object whether in fantasy or reality. The sublimation of libido into creative activity is the source of civilization for Freud, achieved through the complex processes of displacement of sexual energy away from the gratification of our individual desires, towards servicing the wider purposes of the social groups and institutions to which we belong.

Freud also described how libido cathects zones of the body during the early life of the child in phases called the oral, anal, and genital stages of development. These different stages evolve as the child’s awareness and interest are invested in progressively more complex activities focused on different parts of the body, beginning

with the mouth during feeding and then the anus during potty training, before moving onto the genitals, which continue to absorb more and more attention and interest into adulthood.

For Klein, however, her clinical work with children revealed that the development of these phases was not as staged as Freud proposed but that at any time from early life onwards, a mixture of these phases of interest could be observed, with some impulses prevailing over other impulses at different times, in order to defend the infant, child, and later adult against primitive anxieties of a sadistic nature. Hinshelwood writes:

...the sequence of dominance was the effect of the sadism, the fear of retaliation, and the anguished wish to restore damage. [...] She also thought of the genital phase as a particular upsurge of libidinal feelings, and that there may therefore be a precocious surge towards the genital phase as a reassurance against the sadistic impulses of the pre-genital phases (Hinshelwood 1989: 338–339).

In other words, the premature development of genitally focused sexual activity may indicate that deeper impulses of oral and anal aggression are being warded off by the child, out of a fear of retaliation for the harm the expression of these impulses might cause. For Klein, libido pervades all object relationships channelled through various erotogenic zones of the body at various levels of intensity from early life to death. Libido is depicted as something of a rapacious, greedy, and visceral force fundamental to the presence of life and its complex quest to sustain itself.

In the analytic psychology of Jung, however, the term “libido” is deployed to denote a more generic psychic energy or life force that propels the personality towards individuation through the enlargement of the “self.” For Jung, libido has a spiritual dimension which did not exist for Freud or Klein. In this way, Jung proposes that libidinal energy is invested in all forms of intentional activity, from individual developmental “tasks” such as symbolism and the acquisition of language to increasingly complex creative activities, including art, science, and religion, that aid increased psychological and spiritual

integration. Libido is depicted as a benevolent force which invests both subjectivity and the world around us with the intentional activity of life itself.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Instinct](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views](#)

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## Lilith

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Lilith is an ancient Near Eastern Goddess who reaches into ageless archetypal fears of the night, death, and the wild, untamed natural world. She shows herself in Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Canaanite, Persian, Hebrew, Arabic, and Teutonic mythology. She is known as a longhaired night demon, child-killing witch, succubus, wind-spirit, seductress, bloodsucker, Impure Female, End of Day, screech owl, or hag. In Hebrew mythology she was the first wife of Adam and the manifestation of the rejected

and disembodied shadow of the Great Goddess rejected by the monotheistic, patriarchal Hebrews (Koltuv 1986). Lilith lives in the wild and is close to nature – she is depicted as having hairy legs like a beast, sometimes winged with talons for feet, reminding us of the nocturnal wisdom of the bird Goddesses before her (Johnson 1988). She is a balancing force to the all-powerful solar God who is divorced from the earth’s sensual nature. As with all ancient figures in mythology, she has gone through many incarnations. She has been used by the patriarchy to exemplify the punishment dealt out to any woman who is autonomous and awakened to their female sexual power. Jungians call her our unincorporated female *shadow* for she, and figures like her, becomes a basin for humanity to deposit our collective fears of the dark.

Lilith originated in Sumeria as the Great Assyrian Goddess Inanna’s handmaiden. It is said that Lilith collected people from the fields to participate in sexual rites in the holy temple at Erech. These rituals belonged to the Goddess and were central to the culture of the time, initiating participants into the mysteries of Her ways. Inanna was primarily a lunar deity, and her mythologies were reflective of the phases of the moon. The importance of these cycles and their interpretations are central to understanding how people’s consciousness was oriented at this time. The mysteries of life, death, and regeneration hung on the appearance and disappearance of this light in the night skies. In pre-patriarchal myths of Goddess, the moon’s waxing was a symbol of Her ability to give life, balanced by the moon’s waning, symbolizing Her inevitable cycle of death that followed. Death in this context was understood as a necessity, for life is predicated on death. This life-giving and life-taking cycle of the moon is mirrored in the earth’s seasons of summer abundance and winter dormancy. Around the world, like Kali in India, the Goddess was whole, dark and light, a reflection of life in the big picture (Baring and Cashford 1993).

The Babylonian hero Gilgamesh and his solar ways eventually drove Inanna and Lilith apart. Lilith appears as a demon living in the *huppulu* tree that Inanna cared for. Inanna was to make her

bed and throne out of it, but when she visits the tree, it is filled with frightful beings: the demon Lilith, a serpent, and a bird, all images of female power. Gilgamesh cuts down the *huppulu* tree with his sword of masculine rational thought and aggressiveness, forcing Lilith to destroy her home and flee into the “wild, uninhabited places” (Gadon 1989). This myth prepares for the dismantling of powerful, autonomous, self-seeding Goddesses such as Inanna and for the future demonization of Lilith by patriarchal religions (Gadon 1989).

In the Jewish *Zohar*, a Kabbalistic work of the thirteenth century, there is an origin myth of Lilith’s that depicts how God diminished the moon’s importance to being primarily a reflection of the sun’s luminosity. Similarly:

God thereupon said to her, ‘Go and diminish thyself.’ . . . Thereupon she diminished herself to be head of the lower ranks. From that time on she had no light of her own, but derives her light from the sun. At first they were on an equality, but afterwards she diminishes herself . . . she reduces her status and her light, and shells upon shells were created for covering the brain . . . After the primordial light was withdrawn there was created a ‘membrane for the marrow,’ a *k’lifah* husk or shell, and this *k’lifah* expanded and produced another who was Lilith (*Zohar* I 19b, as cited in Koltuv 1986).

This is an obvious psychological repression and symbolic split of the organizational powers of the universe – a formal indoctrination of a dual system where the solar male God and his rationality are posited as psychologically and politically superior to the lunar female Goddess, and her twilight mystery Lilith is born from this split, deriving “her energetic force from opposition and suppression” (Koltuv 1986). However, the text goes on to explain the importance of these images in the process of truly understanding the “radiance that cannot be comprehended” (*Zohar* I 19b, as cited in Koltuv 1986), as if these are protective layers of the rationalist ego that can help patriarchal monotheists along the path of self-realization. The solar patriarchal Jewish consciousness suppressed and demonized shadow goddesses, such as Lilith, in a centuries-long effort to elevate the monotheistic Hebrew

Yahweh to absolute goodness, separate from all earthly processes and darkness.

Creation stories of Lilith as the first wife of Adam tell how God “took filth and impure sediments from the earth, and out of these he formed female. As was to be expected, this creature turned out to be an evil spirit” (Patai as cited by Baring and Cashford 1993). Lilith refuses to lie beneath Adam submissively during sexual intercourse, demanding that they are on equal footing since they are both made from earth. Adam rejects her. But rather than conform, Lilith speaks the unutterable name of god and flies off into the far reaches of the desert “to a cave on the shores of the Red Sea” (Alpha Beta Ben Sira, as cited by Koltuv 1986). Rather than hand over her sovereignty, Lilith chooses dominion for herself, defying patriarchal law and forging her own path in the desolate wilderness. She is the wild spirit of nature within us that cannot be tamed. She refuses to be bound in relationship that will only relegate her to whipping post for Adam and Yahweh’s hatred of her regenerative sexual wisdom. Lilith teaches us that isolation and peripheral living is a necessity in finding out who we are. Lilith teaches us how to find our way through the dark. Psychologically, she brings to consciousness more meaning than the moralistic solar divinities that suppress natural forces. As Jung taught, there is gold in the shadow that we ignore at our peril. Today, we are seeing the return of the repressed in feminism, depth psychology, and ecology – urgently needed expansions of collective consciousness.

Once cast out of the Garden, Lilith becomes the night demon who will give men and women erotic dreams. It is said that one should not sleep alone, for fear of Lilith appearing in the night, arousing our suppressed sexual longings. Lilith is a gateway for our sexual autonomy and represents the uroboric wholeness that is in direct opposition to the concept of monogamy that monotheism instated. She is depicted as a psychological shadow in patriarchal moralistic repression – a semen-stealing witch who uses the spilled seeds of men from their sexual dreams to spawn 100 demon babies each night (Johnson 1988).



Lilith is a powerful indestructible force that not even God can remove. After she flees Adam, she reappears as the snake that tempts Eve with the apple from the tree of Knowledge. In art it is often depicted as a serpent with the head of a woman or a woman with the tail of the serpent (Baring and Cashford 1993). Lilith and Eve are inextricably linked, for they are two sides of the same Great Goddess, and she will not let her sister remain innocent in the Garden. Like Persephone eating the pomegranate seed from the underworld, Eve too must taste the scope of life and assimilate knowledge, like an innocent child that must inevitably grow up psychologically and know complex adult consciousness, including sexuality.

In stark contrast to Eve, the mother of all creation, Lilith is portrayed by patriarchal myths as a child killer to be warded off by charms and amulets (Koltuv 1986). It could be said that collective rejection of Lilith is activated, surfacing in the minds of some women who experience postpartum depression, having fantasies of abandoning or harming their children – for someone must feel the repressed collective fears. Myths of Lilith as baby killer and strangler are a distortion of her energy, but the imagery also informs women that in the search for our individuation, we must release the infantile desire to be loved by everyone, to be adored and accepted. When we identify only with Eve, only with the sweet, docile, wife, and mother, then Lilith will eventually erupt unconsciously within us. We can see this enacted through the modern-day experience of PMS. When women bleed every month, there is an opening to get in touch with our inner Lilith. Many women are repelled by their own bodily and psychological shadows, and, instead of using these experiences as a point of transformation, such women are encouraged by patriarchy to be ashamed of the fluctuations of our bodies. But getting past this, as in psychotherapy or feminist circles, can bring a deeper knowledge of feminine wholeness in the gift of life-giving, too long hidden in shadow. Perhaps, when we are broken down physically just enough to feel our own desires to flee and be in solitude or seek

help – perhaps this is the only time Lilith is allowed to reveal herself.

To speak of Lilith is akin to trying to capture the wind, for often she flees from our voice, our mind goes blank. She has been so long repressed and demonized that she does not want to be pinned down or even understood. Our inner Lilith needs to have a say, a voice, or she will shriek at us or through us, like the screech owl she is named after. Lilith is the part of our nature that needs to be wild, untamed, sexually animated, whole, and natural.

### See Also

- ▶ [Adam and Eve](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Ashtoreth](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Fall, The](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Inanna/Ishtar](#)
- ▶ [Kali](#)
- ▶ [Original Sin](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Women in Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Yahweh](#)

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## Liminality

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## Origin

Liminality is a term used to describe the psychological process of transitioning across boundaries and borders. The term “limen” comes from the Latin for threshold; it is literally the threshold separating one space from another. It is the place in the wall where people move from one room to another. Often a door is placed across the threshold to close up and restrict access between rooms. The concept was first applied to psychology as the technical name for the perceptual threshold, the degree of stimulus intensity that would just be noticed as audible or visible or detectable in any sensory mode. But its contemporary usage comes from the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957). In his study of religion as a cultural artifact, he saw that many, if not all, of the rituals across cultures have the function of moving a person from one status or social circumstance to another. His major work, *Rites of Passage* or *Les Rites de Passage* in the original French (1909/1960), sets out the thesis that at a psychological and cultural level, religion and its rituals give us the means by which we cope with change, whether it be from childhood into adulthood, from single to married, and from lay to clerical, and to mourn the loss of a beloved as they transition from this world to whatever lies beyond. His student Victor Turner (1920–1983) expanded upon van Gennep’s analytic framework and integrated it into role theory and the relationship of social action to drama.

## Psychological Liminality

As a psychological capacity, liminality is the ability to bridge between self and the other. At an interpersonal level, this is called empathy. We come to know the other by entering into their phenomenological space to some degree. We begin to see things from their perspective. At the level of social groups, it can be described as the capacity for moving toward an insider’s perspective. Pike (1954) coined the terms “emic” and “etic” to refer to the insider’s and outsider’s perspectives with respect to language, and this now has been broadly adopted in cross-cultural psychology for the knowledge of any social group. So liminality with respect to social groups is gaining the knowledge that approaches what an insider would have; we bridge the gap between our own groups and those of the other. Both the interpersonal and the group levels of liminality require us to see and appreciate the other and to find bridges that would allow harmonious relationships as opposed to conflict. Liminality, therefore, is a requirement for any effective interpersonal or intercultural communication.

At the intrapsychic level, liminality is the capacity to move within and between the boundaries of one’s psychological structure. Lewin (1936/1966) first used the metaphor of space in his topological psychology, defining life spaces and discussing the relative permeability of the boundaries between areas of the person’s experiential world. At one extreme, one has the rigid compartmentalization characteristic of dissociation and multiple personalities; at the other is the failure of boundaries found in borderline personality disorders and termed “confluence” in Gestalt therapy.

In a spiritual sense, liminality is traveling between the world of spirit and the mundane world. This is the path of the shaman both in historical and current traditions. The shaman mediates between the two realms of being in service of the person seeking healing in the mundane realm. Modern shamanic approaches to healing also use this liminal skill of travelling between the worlds as a means of connecting the spiritual to the psychological.



Joseph Campbell's (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* was much influenced by van Gennep's basic outline of the threefold structure of liminal processes: preliminary, liminaire, and postliminaire. He took the concept and applied it to the transitional phases between the beginning and the end of a journey or transformational process. Liminality is the process of going in between two states and the time spent in that transitional zone when one is neither one nor the other but in the process of becoming. Liminality is the journey of transformation.

Finally, the therapeutic process is itself a literal rite of passage. We can view the relationship of therapist and client as a process of helping the client move from a state of unhappiness to some greater degree of either internal peace or interpersonal harmony and adjustment. The role of patient arises out of the medical role, part of a complementary pair, physician and patient. The various sessions within the relationship, whether in brief therapy or long-term dynamic work, are each small steps in the ritual of healing. Liminality describes any process of transformation from one state of being to another in human society; it is a key psychological concept.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)

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## Lived Theology

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Lived theology is a phrase that describes a process more than an academic discipline. Our lived theology is the enactment of that, which is most significant to us at any given moment and as lived out in our everyday existence, rather than the systemization of creedal propositions of any given faith tradition. Borrowing from the thought of both the philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and the theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965), and others who have furthered their thought, such as Langdon Gilkey (1919–2004), one's lived theology is one's "enactment of significance" in the world.

Theology, or speech about the divine, is traditionally seen as an academic discipline in which authoritative sources are interpreted and subsequently inform various doctrines and practices respective to one's religious tradition. Lived theology is phenomenological in nature, and is aligned with existential, empirical, and phenomenological traditions that view the divine as an experiential phenomenon. The divine is not considered as an *object* of experience, but a *quality* of experience related to living out significance in the world, a living out of what matters most to one in any given situation. In this way, lived theology is not an exclusive property of elite academicians, but an existential of every human being. Hence, if human beings enact significance in every moment of their lives and if we understand *lived* theology as those enactments of significance, we can conclude, therefore, that to be a human being *is* to be a theologian. The human being is *homo theologicus* (DuBose 2000).

To be alive is to enact significance. Theological discernment from this perspective views how one is comporting oneself in one's everydayness as disclosing what Tillich called one's "ultimate concern" (Tillich 1952). These ultimate concerns, or as I call them enactments of

significance, are not cognitively “thought out” propositions described in abstract, traditional religious discourse, but chosen ways of being-in-the-world. Agency inherent in comportment is lived out long before thought about. Such comportments are “prereflective,” as Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) argued (Merleau-Ponty 1964). This perspective privileges a different knowing prior to cognitive reconsideration.

Given these premises, enactments of significance are known only after the fact or only when reflecting on comportment as it is in operation or having just passed. Life is lived rather than objectified, as the French radical phenomenologist, Michel Henry (1922–2002), proposed (Henry 2002a). Moreover, when enactments are translated into conceptualizations, such as when an experience of the numinous is translated as “an encounter with the Holy Spirit,” the product of the translation is merely a “representation” of the experience and not the experience itself. Lived theology is not reflection on “that which is over there,” but a living out of significance rather than a living in relation to a representation of that experience.

Lived theology further presumes that if we are inherently theological, then our very nature as human beings is formed and led by what is of ultimate concern in our lives. Viktor Frankl’s (1905–1997) logotherapy is likened to this perspective in the conviction that meaning lures and constructs human development (1946/1997). We live and intend toward meaningful and fulfilling projects and relationships in life. Our enactments of significance, and, hence, any lived theology, are naturally transcendent seeking but delimited by one’s unalterable finitude, facticity, contingency, and “thrownness,” to use phraseology from Martin Heidegger (Heidegger 1962). The very delimitation of one’s “thrownness” enframes the meaningful possibilities of significance enacted in each moment and is free to change as significance shifts.

## Commentary

A word about therapeutic care for, and as, lived theology is in order. Therapeutic practice based

on this model begins and ends with attunement toward enactments of significance in particular life-world comportments. It then explores constrictions, that is, how one’s enactments of significance are restrained, inhibited, or confined. Finally, it has as the therapeutic goal, a free and authentic living into one’s cleared and lightened possibilities within one’s embraced limitations. All symptoms of the suffering soul are constricted enactments of significance and related to the inextricable interplay of death, transcendence, and radical subjectivity and are always and already lived out in equiprimordial ways. An obvious alignment with Daseinsanalytic phenomenology and practice is clear (Boss 1979; Heidegger 2001).

Often, discussants of this issue quibble about whether one considers oneself religious, spiritual, or theological. I choose to use the word “theology,” rather than “spirituality” or “religion,” because I believe the latter two concepts are less personal and too amorphous to disclose the specificity of one’s very particular enactments of significance in the world. Moreover, one’s comportment in existence discloses what one considers significant with much more veracity than what one verbalizes as significant. If you want to know someone’s theology, look at their enactments of significance *in the world*. At no time are we absent from living out enacted significance, even (and especially) in despair. Paraphrasing once again Tillich’s argument that doubt shows the significance of faith (Tillich 1957), I say that despair is an enacted significance *of lost significance*, which is perhaps the greatest of all therapeutic challenges.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Locus of Control

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The Locus of Control (LOC) of reinforcement construct was originally developed by Rotter (1954, 1966) within the framework of his Social

Learning Theory, along a unidimensional internal-external continuum. An important elaboration by Levenson (1981) divided the external contingencies into separate “powerful others” and “chance” dimensions. Broadly, the LOC construct measures the degree to which people believe that reinforcements (rewards and punishments) from the environment are contingent on their own efforts, actions, and personal decisions (internal LOC) on the one hand versus luck, fate, external circumstance, and powerful others (external LOC) on the other. A more internal LOC is generally positively associated with a range of indices of psychological and physical health. It is argued that many of these positive health effects reflect the adoption of more positive coping strategies in such individuals. Conversely, externality is typically associated with negative coping styles and poorer physical and mental health outcomes.

In some LOC scales (e.g., the religious revision of Rotter’s internal-external scale), the external “powerful others” set of contingencies includes reference to a deity. Thus, the individual believes that, to some degree, the circumstances of their life are controlled by a god, goddess, or other spiritual forces. The belief that an external deity may be controlling some contingencies in a person’s life suggests a type of external (powerful other) LOC and might be expected to be associated with generally poorer health outcomes according to secular LOC theory. Certainly Sigmund Freud and Albert Ellis characterized religious belief in terms of defensive functioning and psychopathology, whereas Carl Jung and Gordon Allport suggested that religion may have important psychological functions and produce positive effects on mental health.

Contemporary scientific literature would suggest that degree of religiosity is positively (albeit mildly) associated with better mental health outcomes, in particular where the type of religiosity is “intrinsic” versus “extrinsic” according to Allport’s (1961) taxonomy. It has also been suggested that a person’s dispositional “spiritual/religious coping style” will influence how they respond to stressors and challenges and, in a sense, specifies the nature of the control

relationship they share with their god. In a self-directing style, a person functions in an active manner, independent of god (essentially a form of internal LOC). When a person adopts a deferring style, they will take a more passive role and wait for god to resolve a situation (thus adopting an external LOC). In a collaborative style, the person engages with their god in a mutual problem-solving process (mixed internal-external LOC). A surrendering style involves an active decision to release personal control over circumstances beyond personal control to god (external LOC). Depending on the situation, a collaborative style is generally associated with more positive mental health outcomes, although it has been argued that even the surrendering style can provide relief, comfort, and security in highly stressful situations. No matter which spiritual/religious coping style is adopted, it is also certainly the case that the use of prayer, ritual, and observance can instill an element of control into one's relationship with god.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Locutions

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Locutions are inner experiences of hearing a divine voice or receiving revelation. The broader category is theophany or epiphany, which means any revelation or manifestation to humans by God or the divine or their agents such as angels. Visions, or apparitions, are epiphanies which are primarily visual, while locutions are the auditory aspect of contact with or from an external transcendent source. The experience can range from very realistic dialog with an angel (including an apparition) to a subtle and sudden feeling of inspiration coming in linguistic form. It is not uncommon for these visitations to be accompanied by other sorts of miracles, such as healing. St. Teresa of Avila is one of the classic examples of a mystic whose experience included locutions. Bernadette Soubirous (1844–1879) was a young French woman who also received locutions attributed to Our Lady of Lourdes. The Virgin Mary in both Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican traditions is a frequent source of apparitions and locutions. The Roman Catholic Church has a fairly detailed procedure devised over many years for checking the bona fides of claims for visions or locutions. Less clear cut examples can be found in the frequent use by mystics of the metaphor of the small “inner voice” that guides their spiritual growth and becomes a central part of their experience of the Divine. An example would be George Fox (1624–1691), the founder of the Society of



Friends, of Quakers, who reported hearing a voice that guided him in resolving spiritual conflicts. These inner voices often are heard during a period of quiet meditation or contemplation so as to still the external senses allow one to open up to the Divine.

### See Also

- ▶ [Hierophany](#)
- ▶ [Miracles](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)

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## Logos

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### Earliest Use of Term

Logos, a noun, derives from the Greek verb *legein*, originally *to count*, later *to give an account*, finally as *lego*, *to say*. It enjoys an array of nuanced translations: *utterance, word, speech, thought, meaning, reason, argument, ratio, measure, standard, or principle*. Yet whatever distinctions exist among thinkers who employ the term, Logos is consistently used to denote something about creative unifying forces or functions in the composition of reality – cosmologic, religious, philosophical, or psychological.

As a concept, Logos is first encountered in the fragments of Heraclitus of Ephesus (ca. 500 BCE), where it identifies the underlying ordering principle or plan of the universe, which is itself

a hidden unity of opposites in tension. The Logos is not the source of creation, but rather the way in which creation operates, the flux in which “diversity comes out of unity and unity out of diversity” [Frag 10]. Although all creation is elemental of the “One,” humanity must “listen” for the Logos in order to comprehend it.

Platonic and Aristotelian use of the term was largely confined to the fact and consequences of human reason. Stoicism, however, took the term beyond the limits of philosophy. Heraclitus’ Logos became equated with a dynamic divine reason. Here, humanity did not merely participate in Logos, but was infused with it: Discourse, meaning-making, and life in accord with natural law – or the order given the cosmos by an all-virtuous God/Logos – were products of a “seed” or “ratio” of divinity within each human being.

### As Divine in Judeo-Christian Tradition

The divine character of Logos underwent subtle but profound change, when Jewish and Greek thought converged in the works of Philo of Alexandria (30 BCE–50 CE), who enlisted the term to place Torah on equal footing with Greek philosophy. Adapting Jewish Wisdom speculation – and often using “word” and “wisdom” interchangeably – Logos became both the intelligible world in the mind of God, after which the created world was modeled, and the agency by which it was actually made. By Hellenizing notions found in Jewish texts, canonical (e.g., Proverbs 8:22) and apocryphal (e.g., Wis. 7:22 and 9:1), Philo made the Logos a virtual hypostasis of God, His “Firstborn Son,” and “Image.”

Philo’s syncretism had arisen in an environment that also sustained popular belief in Apollo (especially surnamed *Loxias*, *fr. legein*) as the “spokesman” of his father Zeus. Thus, it was a short step to dubbing Jesus the Logos and Son of God – which the prologue to the Gospel. According to St. John (1:1–18) did near the beginning of the second century. Where St. Paul had declared Jesus Christ the one “through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (I Corinthians 8:6), the Johannine authors

(adapting a Wisdom hymn) trumpeted that the creative Word of God became flesh and entered the world it had created; no less, it “was God.”

Early Christian writers would employ Logos broadly and idiosyncratically: Justin Martyr followed a Philonic impulse in his *Apologies* (ca. 55 CE) to liken Christianity to stoic and platonic philosophies; Clement of Alexandria (ca. 150–215) even identified the eternal Christ/Logos as the giver of philosophy to the Greeks; and Christian Gnostics had at least three different notions of Logos – all disdaining the occurrence of actual incarnation. Significantly, Origen (ca. 182–254) saw Logos as a kind of effluence of God’s creativity, truth, and wisdom. It could be called God’s “Firstborn Son,” but in fact it was not only uncreated but coeternal (“there was no *when* it was not”). Moreover, Jesus was not really an incarnation of the Son, but rather a sinless human being who followed the Logos so closely as to be indistinguishable from it. This set the stage for the great Trinitarian and creedal debates of the next two centuries. In the end, Logos language was replaced by the term “Son.”

### Logos and Other Traditions

Development of the Logos concept continued into late antiquity: Hermetics declared that the “lightgiving word who comes from [God’s] mind is the son of God” (Copenhaver 1992, p. 2); Plotinus (205–270 CE) deemed Logos to be a divine entity of creation, unity, and order, but denied it rationality, since reasoning-out should be unnecessary to the mind of God in which all is immediate intelligibility; and the Jewish Wisdom tradition grew to identify the whole of Torah with the plan by which God created the world (Midrash Rabbah).

While one cannot argue a hereditary relationship between Logos and eastern religious thought, Logos is sometimes likened to the ultimate principle of Self in Buddhism, and the Way of Taoism. As the second person of the Christian Trinity, Logos has also been compared to the second facet of the Hindu formula *sac-cid-ananda* or Being-Awareness-Bliss.

### Logos and Depth Psychology

Modern depth psychologists have adapted Logos in a range of ways. Freud makes the most limited use, ironically calling Logos the “god” of his argument for rational acceptance of reality against the illusion(s) of religion. Analytical Psychology often equates Logos with the Self, archetype of psychic wholeness and unity of all opposites. The most noteworthy application of the term may be that of Viktor Frankl. Based on his own experience and observation of fellow concentration-camp survivors, his Logotherapy speaks to a meaning-seeking will at the center of human existence. In even the worst objective circumstances, he contends one has freedom as well a “responsibility” to seek transformative subjective meaning. It is exercise of this will that defines an authentic life.

### See Also

- ▶ Analytical Psychology
- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Christ
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Gnosticism
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Taoism

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## Logotherapy

► [Frankl, Viktor](#)

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## Loki

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Loki is the trickster in ancient Norse mythology – Scandinavia's Viking traditions. His legends were preserved by the ninth- and tenth-century *skalds* (bards) (Fig. 1). The early main surviving texts are the Icelandic *Eddas*. Loki is a crafty, seductive, paradoxical, and malicious/heroic trickster among the gods. He can assume different shapes (e.g., fire, horse, or falcon). His literature is a compilation of many free-wheeling themes. We find no tidy well-crafted novel with a clear plot here. Psychologically, Loki's myths express the multifaceted contents of the Norse collective unconscious. Any culture's collective unconscious can easily behave like a rowdy trickster, appearing inwardly or outwardly, shifting shapes, in diverse, baffling, dreamy images, rituals, and narratives. For the Norse, Loki can be a trickster of the big, tough hard-drinking macho warriors, or a distracting, seductive mare who gives birth to an eight-legged horse. He was an archetypal handsome rascal, attentive to the goddesses, who rarely resisted him. He sometimes worked to help the gods but often worked to undermine them and eventually to bring about their downfall in the "Twilight of the Gods." His tradition may have absorbed some elements of the Christian Devil. But whereas Christian faith affirms the dominance of God over the Devil, the Nordic shadowy powers were apparently archetypally stronger than the Christian Devil, so the myths express a cloud of doom about their demise (unless the "Twilight" is a late addition).



**Loki, Fig. 1** From Icelandic manuscript SAM 66. 18th century Norse. Iceland: Arni Magnusson Institute. Public Domain. (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Processed\\_SAM\\_loki.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Processed_SAM_loki.jpg))

Loki was early on imagined as a fire demon. In Norway, when the fire was sparking, people would say that Loki was thrashing his children, suggesting a threat of punishment to children (Tonnelat 1959, p. 266).

Once Loki was trapped by the giant Geirrod who made him promise to deliver the mighty Thor to him without his magical hammer, iron gloves, and belt that made him invincible. Loki deceptively managed to get Thor to agree. But on the way to Geirrod's castle, they met Thor's devoted lover the goddess Grid. She was suspicious and loaned him her instruments of invincibility – gloves, girdle, and magic wand. With these he managed to escape Geirrod's vicious traps and avoid Loki's deception.

The Nordic apples of everlasting youth essential to the gods were guarded by the goddess Idun. Once, when Loki got into a scrape, he had to promise to his captor the giant Thjazi, in eagle form, that he would deliver to him the goddess Idun and her magic apples. So he lured Idun into

the forest under false pretenses, and she was captured by the nasty Thjazi and dragged away. So the gods of Aesir began to grow old, deprived of their magical apples, and they were furious with Loki. They forced him to go and retrieve Idun. So he took the form of a hawk, flew to the kingdom of the giants, and turned dear Idun into a nut and flew back with her in his beak. The angry giant turned himself into an eagle and chased Loki, but thanks to a huge fire built by the gods, his wings were burned and he fell to his death.

Here, the shadow trickster turns from harming the gods to helping them; this echoes Jung's insight that there is a treasure to be found in the shadow and that the inner divine Self regulates conflicts between archetypal instincts.

Loki was at his tricks again when he cut short the tresses of Thor's wife Sif. Angry Thor grabbed Loki and began breaking bones, until Loki begged for mercy. He promised to have the dwarves make Sif's hair of pure gold that would grow like regular hair. Loki hustled over to the forges of the dwarves, sons of Ivaldir. Easy, they said, and offered to make not only Sif's golden tresses but also two gifts for Odin: a magical ship, *Skidbladnir*, that would sail on its own accord and a spear, *Gungnir*, that would never stop until it hit its target. The rascal Loki is forced by the Self figure Thor to call on the craftsmen for help. The dwarves, diminutive but skilled, provided treasured golden hair to fulfill the dreams of every dreamy high-maintenance goddess, effortless energy for every hard-working sailor to move psyche's dramas along, and a satisfying phallic spear for the king of the gods. Loki bet two competitive dwarves that they could not outdo their brothers, but they came up with the magical golden ring *Draupnir*, which would make its owner constantly richer, and Thor's thundering hammer (Tonnelat 1959, p. 267). The golden ring continued its captivating power in English folklore and literature, since what greedy ego can resist the illusion of endless wealth? The thundering hammer will never lose its lightning ability to ram home the nails.

In Asgard, the land of the gods, Thor, the god of thunder and hammer, was once tricked by Loki

when he was challenged to drink a huge horn of beer that turned out to be magically never emptied. Then he was called on to wrestle with an old woman, but for all his strength, he could not move her – rather she forced him to his knees. It turned out that the horn had its tip in the sea, and the old woman was Old Age, who defeats all. The bragging drinkers and the powerful fighters can be overcome by a trickster, who reveals clever skill and fate’s archetypal inevitabilities (Davidson 1969, pp. 66–67).

The construction of a defensive wall around their Midgard was contracted out to a giant Jotunn, who had a giant stallion who could pull a huge load of rocks. But as pay the gods had to promise him the sun, the moon, and the love goddess Freya. But it had to be done by a strict deadline. The gods thought that he could never complete it on time, so they would not have to pay so dearly. But he showed them and moved ahead of schedule. So Loki went into action and turned himself into a mare who flicked her cute tail at the stallion, who then chased her into the woods for a 3-day tryst. This prevented the wall’s completion on time. Then Loki as the mare gave birth to an eight-legged stallion, Sleipnir. Here, the beastly giant helps the psyche build its inevitable defenses, seemingly at no cost. So Loki’s gender-shifting, shape-shifting transformation generates a frisky tryst that creates a magically high-energy beast, the envy of every hard-riding heroic ego. For a male to transform into a female and give birth would shame his manhood in Nordic society (Von Schnurbein 2000), but Loki is a trickster, and they do that, perhaps to mock the norm.

In a comic twist, the god of thunder Thor’s hammer had been stolen and had to be retrieved to protect the gods. Loki found out that the thief Thrym demanded that the gods send him their goddess of love Freya to be his bride. But a clever ruse was hatched. Thor dressed as Freya, leader of the Valkyries, and Loki as his handmaiden. Again, for a man to dress as a woman would threaten his masculinity in Nordic society, so this must have caused considerable laughter (Von Schnurbein 2000, p. 120). Though suspicious of the bride’s huge appetite,

the giants proceeded with the ceremony and placed Thor’s hammer on the “bride’s” lap. When Thor got his hands on the hammer, he killed the giants. Gender-bending disguises are a favorite of many trickster dramatists, such as Dionysus and Aristophanes, and the hammer in the lap of the goddess of love is a surefire way to tickle the audience, as psyche’s trickster knows.

Loki’s amorous adventures were many. God of fire, he seduced the goddess Glut (Glowing), who bore two daughters: Einmyria (Embers) and Eisa (Ashes). Next he charmed Angrboda, a giantess who gave birth to Fenrir the Giant Wolf, Jormungand the evil Earth-encircling Serpent with his tail in his mouth (a life-death *uroboros*), and Hel the Underworld Goddess. Many archetypal tricksters, in world mythology, like Kokopelli in Southwestern Native American tradition, also seduce the girls and cause trouble. Imagine that!

Loki’s most deadly feat involved Balder, whose mother had tried to make him invulnerable by extracting pledges from all the plants, trees, and metals to not harm him. The gods at banquets would hurl weapons at Balder for sport, yet they could not harm him. But Loki discovered a plant that she missed: mistletoe. So Loki made a dart with mistletoe and gave it to Balder’s brother Hoder, who threw the little spear at him and Balder fell down dead, to everyone’s astonishment. The gods grieved and held a great funeral on his ship with his wife and horse set afire, sending them to the land of the dead, ruled by ruthless Hel. So be not proudly inflated, ye gods, for even the greatest strong warrior or god can fall to a tiny trickery, says Loki. Tricks have always been among fighters’ weapons. This scene suggests to some scholars that Balder is a Christ image, and Loki then becomes the Christian Devil, in the theory that Christianity influenced Nordic myth (Von Schnurbein 2000, p. 124).

As the Nordic myths lumber toward their tragic end, a banquet scene displays Loki’s way of ripping off masks of dignity by exposing everyone’s shadow behavior. A dwarf Brokk had angrily sewn up Loki’s lips to stop his nasty talk, but Loki soon tore out the thread. The shadow is repressed, but not for long. His love



of intrigue and betrayal led to his insulting all the gods of Asgard. So he was not invited to Ægir's big feast where only Thor was absent. But he slipped his sneaky way into the crowd by pretending humility and friendship. But Bragi, whose duty it was to welcome guests, refused to welcome Loki, so when Loki raised a cup to the health of each god and goddess, he avoided mention of Bragi, who began to apologize. But Loki turned on him and accused him of cowardice in verbal combat. Loki turned up the heat and reminded every god of his scandalous mistakes. He accused every goddess present of unfaithfulness to their husbands. He savagely boasted of his affairs with most of them. Odin struggled to stop the mounting mockery. Idun, wife of Thor, offered him a cup of mead and urged him to calm down. But Loki would not stop. He lashed out at her, bragging that he had held her in his arms and that she loved it. At that climactic moment, Thor thundered in the hall to raise his deadly hammer over Loki's foolish head. Loki pretended to submit and headed toward the exit. But he let loose with a final threat of doom. Not only would there never be another banquet like this, but this hall would soon be destroyed by fire. Loki's final insult was to announce that the end of the world was about to come. They would all perish in an apocalyptic fire that would be the Twilight of the Gods. Loki the shadow betrayer, cynical trickster, overwhelms the psyche's personas of honor and dignity with his ruthless attacks and unrestrained malice. Sounds like a trickster-loaded political or military battle.

Loki is sometimes pictured tied to a rock with a venomous serpent dripping poison onto him, much like the Greek Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to give humans, boosting their ego-consciousness (Loki).

The great disaster of these gods, like fire shooting up from a volcano in snowy Iceland, was Ragnarök. This horror involved a tidal wave, a ship steered by Loki, and the rising of the great evil serpent from below. Thor attacked the vicious *uroboros* serpent/dragon Jormungand and killed him, but his poisonous venom also killed Thor. Flames rose as the earth sank

beneath the waves (Davidson 1969, p. 122). The apocalypse theme is common in world mythology and religions, symbolizing the end of an era. Nordic myths, long-steeped in and brazen destruction, suffered from this perilous cloud of doomed fate.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Dragon Slaying](#)
- ▶ [Golden Bough, The](#)
- ▶ [Inflation](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [Trickster](#)
- ▶ [Uroboros](#)

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## Love

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Love is a powerful force that connects and energizes people. It has long been a theme of religions



and literatures around the world. More recently, love has been studied by social scientists. This article surveys the major meanings of love, as used in various religions and in modern psychological thought.

## Introduction

Love means several different things. Other languages have two, three, or more words with different meanings, where English has only one, to use in many different situations. The authoritative *Oxford English Dictionary* describes over 30 uses of “love.” Like many writers, Scots poet Robert Burns (1759–1796) used literary devices to heighten the effects of his thoughts, e.g., “O, my luv’s like a red, red rose” – here, a simile to dramatize love’s power of attraction. In contrast, a modern definition strives for neutral objectivity: “Love is the creating and/or sustaining of the connections of mutual support in ever-widening ranges of significance” (Carothers 1968). Shakespeare noted love’s irrational mystery: “I know not why I love this youth, and I have heard you say, Love’s reason’s without reason” (Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, ca. 1609/1974, IV.2.20-22).

Here are some of love’s emphases:

1. A *desire for physical closeness* that connects people, to touch and be touched, whether they be sexual partners, parent and child, other family relations, or close friends.
2. *Compassion* of one person toward another, sometimes one who is in need. Altruistic self-sacrifice and empathic understanding of how another feels are components of such love, often recommended by religions.
3. A *mutual affinity* in a friendship that is not primarily sexual but emotional and value-laden, with shared interests and sensibilities and actions of mutual generosity.
4. A *religious regard* for another, where a human and a spiritual being (a god or a saint) are linked in a relationship of gratitude and devotion by the human and scrutiny and/or caring by the spiritual figure.

## Religion

The world’s five largest religions, arranged here from the oldest to the newest, are surveyed for their uses of love. Judaism, which provided the scriptural foundation of monotheism for Christianity and Islam, is also included.

*Hinduism*, the dominant religion of India and of Indians living elsewhere, is a sprawling, decentralized complex of many parts. Hence, the place of love in Hinduism is more diffuse compared to other religions. The following Sanskrit terms suggest the range of loving experiences. *Kama* is sensual pleasure and erotic love. It is also seen as a fundamental life force, a necessary ingredient in other human desires and strivings. *Karuna* refers to compassionate actions to reduce the sufferings of others. *Bhakti* is devotional love, adoration, and service directed at one’s chosen deity. *Prema* is an intense and altruistic longing for God and is considered Hinduism’s highest form of love.

*Judaism*, the religion of Jewish people worldwide, stresses ethical behavior and devotion to a single God, who formed a covenant relationship with “his people” in which he would protect, chasten, and love them while expecting their grateful adoration and obedience to his laws. This is elaborated in the Hebrew *Bible*, where love is translated from the words *ahab* and *khesed* (and their cognates) as desire, mercy, beloved, steadfast love, loyalty, kindness, devotion, and faithfulness.

The great ritual phrase, the *shema* (Deut. 6:4–5), calls upon the people of Israel to love God with all their heart, soul, and might. Elsewhere, God directs them to love their neighbors and also the stranger in their midst (Lev. 19:18 and 34). The prophet Hosea used the imagery of an unfaithful wife, lovingly sought out and forgiven by her husband, to stand for God’s undying love toward his sometimes unfaithful people.

In *Buddhism*, love has a central place: its founder, Siddhartha Gautama (563–483 BCE), is typically referred to as the “compassionate Buddha.” The earlier branch of Buddhism, called Hinayana or Theravada, focuses on love as *metta* (in Pali, or *maitri* in Sanskrit), a kindness or

benevolence toward all. The later branch, Mahayana, emphasizes *karuna*, compassion, and its ultimate embodiment in a bodhisattva, one who has attained full enlightenment. The bodhisattva most identified with loving compassion is Avalokiteśvara (Sanskrit), or Chenrezi in Tibet, often depicted with a multitude of arms and hands, to reach out and help multitudes.

Since Buddhism, a nontheistic religion, teaches that all reality is illusory, one's sense of self-importance is to be devalued, and one is to act as a vehicle of compassion toward others. The various schools of Buddhist meditation, based on deep psychological and philosophical analysis, may focus on neutralizing the mind of its self-centeredness or filling the mind with compassion toward others.

*Confucianism* has long been the dominant religion of China and of millions of ethnic Chinese overseas. Confucius (551–479 BCE) taught a version of right living, preserved in the *Analects*, which emphasized the good of society more than the individual. Confucian ethics codified the “five relationships,” which stressed “filial piety” (love as respect) between pairs of family members and others. Confucius taught that the “way of Heaven” (*T'ien*), or a moral life, should be lived by *jen* (translated as benevolence, uprightness, or love) and *li* (proper etiquette and rituals – to preserve social harmony). The Confucian emphasis, on reciprocity (mutual expectations of appropriate role behavior in social relations), was opposed by the radical views of Mo Ti, who followed Confucius about a century later. Mo Ti (or Tzu) promoted *ai*, a universal love that ignored all distinctions of rank or family position, which he said caused trouble. Mo Ti had many followers, but his ideas died out after the counter efforts of Mencius, a follower of Confucius. This conflict is an example of how different values, reciprocity and universality, can pull love in opposite directions.

*Christianity*, the world's largest religion, relies on the New Testament of the *Bible*, which used two Greek words for “love,” *agape* (self-sacrificing love) and *filia* (friendship love), while ignoring a third word, *eros* (erotic love), also in common usage then.

Jesus, the central figure of the New Testament and the Christ of Christianity, was a Jew living in a Jewish society in the land of Palestine, then governed politically by Roman rulers and religiously by Jewish high priests. Love was a major theme of Jesus' message. In the “great commandment” (Matt. 22:35–40, Mark 12:28–34, and Luke 10:25–28), Jesus rebutted Jewish leaders trying to entrap him doctrinally, saying that people should love God with all their heart, soul, and mind (or strength) *and* their neighbors as themselves – just as the scriptures had said earlier but in two separate passages (see Judaism, above). When asked a follow-up question, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus told the story of a compassionate Samaritan who helped an injured Jew, even though Samaritans were despised by Jews.

Jesus also preached the radical notion of loving one's enemies (Matt. 5:43–48 and Luke 6:27–28, 32–36). Twentieth-century examples are the effective nonviolent protest campaigns of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

During Jesus' ministry, his ethical message became layered with the additional identification of himself as the Son of God, as he anticipated his death, as a chronic disturber of the Jewish and Roman status quo, to be the necessary means of conveying God's ultimate message of self-sacrificing love: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son. . .” (John 3:16).

After the death of Jesus (ca. 30–33 CE) and his followers' experience of his resurrection, the apostle Paul emerged as the leading missionary to the Gentiles (non-Jews). His letters to the non-Palestinian churches often develop the dual themes of God's salvational love through the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus (now the Christ), plus the need for Christians to love one another. Paul made explicit the universal quality of this love of Christ that recognized no distinctions of gender, ethnicity, or social status (Gal. 3:28 and Rom. 10:12). Paul glorified the ultimate virtue of love in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13. A later apostle also wrote to exalt love, declaring that “God is love” (1 John 4:7–21).

St. Francis of Assisi (ca. 1182–1226 CE) expanded the scope of love to include animals and all of creation.

A tension has always existed between the commandment to love your neighbor *as yourself* and the *selfless* love exemplified by Jesus. A balance is needed between loving oneself too much and not enough: both extremes prevent one from loving God and others, although finding that balance can be difficult.

Modern Christian theology and devotional literature continue to confront this tension regarding “self” and the human tendency for self-serving self-deceptions. Psychology has also studied this tendency. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote, “Goodness, armed with power, is corrupted; and pure love without power is destroyed” (Niebuhr 1937), a theme developed later by Paul Tillich (1954).

In *Islam*, God (Allah) is always referred to in the Koran (*Qur’an*) at the beginning of every chapter (sura) as “the merciful, the compassionate” or as “most gracious, most merciful.” These phrases come from one of four frequently used Arabic word groups that convey various Koranic nuances of love, from the roots of *hbb*, *rdy*, *rhm*, and *wdd*.

Of the Five Pillars of Islam, the injunction to give alms to the poor is the one most directly connected to loving activity, but the Koran is suffused with themes of benevolence, kindness, and mercy – variants of love.

One movement within Islam is Sufism, which promotes an intimate personal connection between the believer and Allah through a mystical development of love.

*Overall*, the message about love from various religions might be summarized in interfaith terms something like these, with “God” representing the various names and conceptions of the Ultimate Reality or Ground of Being:

Love is what God is – the energy that binds Creation and all its creatures.

Love is what God offers *to* humans – a way to be Alive despite imperfections, anxieties, and suffering.

Love is what God expects *from* humans – respect for the Creator and all Creation, with awe at its vastness and complexity.

Love is what God desires *between* humans – to give unselfishly.

Across the spectrum of world religions, the importance of love – coming from God and human love toward God, self, and others – has been reinforced by many believers through specific methods: reading devotional literature and selected passages of scripture, reciting certain prayers and chants, and repeating certain ritual practices that emphasize love. Psychologically, a critical distinction exists between the effort to produce a desired *feeling* of love, by inculcating the ideal that one *should* feel loving, and the more achievable goal of practicing certain positive, loving-type *behaviors*, which in turn may make it more possible over time to experience loving feelings, along with some acceptance and closeness, toward persons and groups that formerly were avoided, disdained, and considered unlovable. Thus, a prejudice against others (“Do *NOT* love them”) can be neutralized through specific actions, which can enhance the development of loving feelings. This sequence, from deliberate actions leading to predictable (and desirable) feelings, while oversimplified here, is also a basic principle of psychology.

## Psychology

Psychology has studied love from five different perspectives: (1) as an individual emotion, especially in romantic love; (2) as individual behavior; (3) as a relationship between two (or more) people; (4) developmentally over time; and (5) socially as influenced by various social and cultural group norms. Psychotherapists also deal with the absence and failures of love in crumbling marriages, child neglect and abuse, adolescent problems, addictions, depression, and other anxious and lonely states.

1. Love as *a feeling of an individual* is a wonderful, tumultuous experience. In romantic love, a person who has “fallen” in love experiences a heightened sense of well-being: one feels special in the eyes of the beloved, understood as never before, with an improved sense of one’s sexual identity as a man or woman. One may be preoccupied by frequent thoughts

of the beloved or inspired to act in unusual ways on behalf of the beloved. Sexual desire – or at least the desire to touch, be physically close, and kiss – is a major part of romantic love, along with an idealization of the beloved. This is in contrast to a depersonalized lust for a sexual “object.”

The emotion of love contains strong elements of wish, hope, longing, and fantasy. What is often sought is a sense of being made whole, through closeness with another. This goal is also a theme of religious devotion: that divine love will make a flawed human whole, worthy of being loved by another being (human or spiritual) and capable of giving love to others.

Romantic love began in the twelfth century CE songs of European troubadours celebrating the courtly love of knights of chivalry, who labored dramatically to impress and woo their chosen, often married noblewomen. While this love never applied to the rest of the population, it did idealize the quest for a pure love (later portrayed by Dante and Petrarch), and it promoted tenderness and a better view of women (Hunt 1959).

2. Loving *behaviors by an individual* are many: touching and hugging, complimenting, offering help, paying attention to what the beloved is saying and feeling, sacrificing one’s time and money for the sake of the beloved, being on time and especially presentable, being patient with the other’s imperfections, and being willing to apologize for one’s own – to name a few. A lover’s complaints typically are about the partner’s behavior.

Psychology usually sees outward behavior as an indicator of a person’s inner motivation: we often convert our feelings into action. One is held responsible for how one behaves, but not for what one is feeling. Behavior, since it is normally under one’s control, can also be used to change one’s feelings – the opposite of emotions shaping behavior, as in psychodynamic theory (see an integration of psychodynamic and behavioral approaches at Weinberg 1981). Thus, a person can learn consciously to behave, and eventually feel more lovingly.

3. Love is *a relationship between two people* (or between a human and a divine being), and how the two respond to each other can be studied to see their patterns of interaction. Is there mutual respect between the two or domination by one? Is one person’s criticism usually followed by the other’s withdrawal or defensive outburst? Repeated arguments about money, in-laws, friends, or work often conceal an underlying concern: “Do you really love *me*?” In parent–child relations, does the parent feel (and act) mostly with tenderness, or frustration, or detachment? What kind of attachment behavior does the child show toward a parent: secure, avoidant, anxious/ambivalent, or disorganized (Cassidy and Shaver 1999)?

Love is also the commitment to a close relationship, i.e., dedicated to preserving and enhancing the relationship, for the sake of the well-being of both people, for as long as possible. This commitment is also for the sake of the relationship itself, sometimes despite the negative feelings of one or both of the parties involved – perhaps for the sake of other dependents. The commitment to loving another as much as oneself (see above, Love in Christianity) can be sorely tested when a chronic ailment of one person makes the relationship one-sided and the healthy one becomes a caregiver. Typically, long-term caregivers eventually develop “compassion fatigue” (the love wears thin) and become less caring and less healthy themselves. A rebalancing effort is then needed, whereby the caregiver deliberately shifts some attention and caring to himself/herself at least temporarily. Caring (loving) needs to be distributed to both self and the other, so that neither one gets all the attention and neither one suffers total neglect. Love in a committed relationship ideally is a dynamic arrangement with each person giving and receiving love in fluctuating amounts.

4. Love can be understood as *a process of development over time*. Erikson’s eight stages of human development (Erikson 1963) express this idea: adolescence is the stage for developing an identity (finding oneself), during

a period of experimentation after the childhood self has been discarded. But if identity is not adequately developed before entering the next stage, sharing intimacy with a partner in young adulthood, then the lover will not have enough of a developed self to share, and the relationship will suffer. On the other hand, while “puppy love” of earlier childhood may be mocked, developmentally it is age appropriate; it is the extent of love that youngsters are capable of, as they imitate adult behaviors and attitudes.

5. All of the above aspects of love take place within *systems of social expectations*. National, racial, religious, social class, and other cultural norms are always present, exerting limits on the permissible range and appropriate forms of expression of love. The family everywhere is a major human institution, upholding these wider norms and also containing its own private rules, rewards, and understandings of love. When a modernized culture emphasizes individualism, romantic love can happen freely, but where collective stability of the larger family or social system is emphasized, as in traditional cultures, such love is seen as a threat and arranged marriages are more typical.

Culture may also affect parent–child love when it favors one gender over the other. Birth order customs may require that the oldest and youngest child receive different kinds or amounts of love than other siblings (Toman 1976). A child’s inborn characteristics of temperament (Chess and Thomas 1984), intelligence, or sexual orientation may affect the ability of parents to love a child who is “different.” These psychosocial and situational factors contribute to making love a highly complex phenomenon.

Among psychological *theories* about love are these: *Freud* developed theories about basic drives (especially sex), unconscious wishes and fears, and delayed adult reactions to childhood emotional experiences, all with implications for human love. Freud turned the Golden Rule on its head: you will do to others (in the present) as you have been done unto (in your past). *Maslow* posited an ascending hierarchy of human needs, with

love midway (Maslow 1987). *Harlow* showed, by depriving young monkeys of their mothers, that the normal development of an infant requires what might be called primate love – a stable caregiver that can offer regular, warm physical contact; otherwise, adult mating and parenting abilities will be devastated (Blum 2002). *Sternberg* sees three dimensions to adult love: intimacy (sharing oneself), commitment (to the relationship), and passion (physical and emotional) (Sternberg and Weis 2006). In addition, *Rogers* believed that effective psychotherapy requires that a therapist demonstrate “unconditional positive regard,” a professional kind of loving (Rogers 1961).

The opposite of love may be hatred (another kind of powerful interpersonal connection), but sometimes it is the absence of love. A loveless childhood may lead to a loveless adulthood, where a person is unable to care about the feelings of anyone else – in the extreme, an unloving, antisocial personality, previously known as psychopathic or sociopathic. By comparison, the narcissistic personality has mostly given up on ever finding, yet secretly longs for, the love of another person.

Love can be austere: a self-help group uses the concept of “tough love” to help parents cope with the emotional manipulations of wayward offspring. In such situations, religion can remind one of the images of steadfast love, while psychology can recommend empathy, to feel in oneself the other’s distress and alienation, plus the objective compassion of therapy.

The philosophy of existentialism has contributed Buber’s “I-Thou” relationship as a model for responsible loving (Buber 1923/2000) and Sartre’s comment that there was no such thing as love, only loving acts.

In summary, love, while subject to various interpretations by different psychologies (and also religions), is a prominent, complex, and sometimes problematical feature of close personal relationships. Growth in love relationships usually requires persistence in communications of all sorts to nurture the relationship, honesty about one’s shortcomings, willingness to make sacrifices for the sake of the relationship, and

acceptance of a measure of uncertainty in our still-limited understanding of how, why, and when love fails or succeeds.

*In conclusion*, while scientific research will continue to study love's intricacies, and psychological understandings will continue to enhance our ways of improving interpersonal relationships, religion (and popular culture) will continue to put forward the belief that love is both necessary and mysterious – a positive force in human relations that we all can be thankful for.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Luther, Martin

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## The Rise of a Reformer

Martin Luther (1483–1546) was born on March 10, 1483, in the small Saxon town of Eisleben. His father, Hans Luther, a peasant turned copper miner, was shrewd, hardworking, and prosperous. In 1501, Luther commenced studies in philosophy at the University of Erfurt, where Ockham's nominalistic philosophy (or the *via moderna*) contended with the prevailing Thomistic worldview. In 1505, at his father's urging, he embarked on the study of law. One day, shortly after, he was stranded in a field during an immense thunderstorm and was so shaken by the experience that he vowed to St. Anne that he would enter a monastery if she spared his life. The storm abated, and to his father's considerable disappointment, he kept his promise, entering an Augustinian monastery in Erfurt. He was ordained in 1507, and the following year, he followed his mentor, Dr. Johannes von Staupitz, to Wittenberg to found an Augustinian university, which was outspokenly critical of medieval scholasticism and Aristotelian philosophy. For the following 10 years, Luther studied, lectured, and prayed dutifully. But his anger toward Roman – and increasingly Papal authority – grew steadily, influenced in part by *In Praise of Folly* (1511) by Erasmus of Rotterdam, a leading Hebraist and humanist, who criticized the practice of selling "indulgences." On the eve of All





Saints Day in October, 1517, Luther published 95 theses of his own criticizing the sale of indulgences. (The story about Luther nailing his theses to the door of the Cathedral is apocryphal. There were no eyewitnesses!) As his fame and notoriety grew, so did his theological daring. In the space of a few years, he went from criticizing a lucrative and hypocritical (but highly specific) practice of the Church to challenging the basic legitimacy of the Pope's authority, eventually labeling him the "anti-Christ."

## Luther and Erasmus

While he leaned on him initially, Luther broke with Erasmus and the humanists in 1525. Erasmus resembled Aristotle and St. Thomas in having some faith in our innate sociability, in our ability to govern ourselves, and in the efficacy of good works, carried out in the proper spirit, to enoble and edify the human spirit (Green 1964). Some humanists and their fellow travelers, the Unitarians, even allowed for the possibility that Jews, Muslims, and Hindus, if they conducted their lives in a Christian spirit, could commend themselves to God and be welcomed into Heaven in the hereafter.

Heresy! thundered Luther. Salvation is always an unmerited gift of God. There is nothing we can do in this world to really merit salvation. Luther argued that works without faith are of no avail, and indeed are idolatry, and that only those who embrace Jesus Christ as their personal savior will enter the kingdom of heaven. By some accounts, at the end of his life, Luther hated Erasmus even more than he hated the Pope! Another contentious issue was that Erasmus and his circle interpreted scripture allegorically, for the most part, and made ample allowance for the existence of more than one valid interpretation of a text. Though not enamored of Aristotle, whose authority was generally invoked to stifle rather than to promote free inquiry, at least in those days, Erasmus and the humanists also acknowledged the wisdom of many pagan poets and philosophers, arguing that they are perfectly compatible with

a Christian way of life. In short, they were averse to a rigid or doctrinaire attitude toward religious faith. Not so Luther. Though he put a selective emphasis on certain Biblical texts, and deliberately ignored others, Luther maintained that the Bible is the literal and infallible word of God. He also claimed to know precisely what the Bible meant in any given instance, even if the text itself was deeply obscure to other learned commentators who were more deeply versed in Hebrew and Greek – like Erasmus.

Apart from their doctrinal differences, Erasmus was repulsed by the violence of Luther's feelings and exhortations and the copious bloodshed that accompanied the Reformation. Erasmus deplored violence and spotted Luther's tendencies in that direction early on. Reflecting on their disparate agendas, Erasmus said: "I layed a hen's egg; Luther hatched a bird of quite a different breed" (Green 1964, p. 164). Despite these differences, Luther and Erasmus shared the belief that the Bible should be accessible to all. In fact, Luther stressed that *all* men should read the Bible and pray in their own tongue, rather than in Latin. This doctrinal shift not only undermined the Roman monopoly on the reading and interpretation of scripture but placed a considerable premium on literacy, creating an urgent demand for public education – an idea unheard of in feudal times. Fortunately for Luther, it also coincided with the invention of the Gutenberg's printing press, and Gutenberg himself became a staunch ally, printing hundreds of Luther's pamphlets to spread opposition to Rome and its cunning machinations to enslave men's souls. But while it hastened the dissolution of the feudal order (and the creation of public schools), Luther sought to keep certain features of the feudal hierarchy intact. Luther's religious revolution undermined the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Rome but enjoined strict obedience to secular authority – even for unfortunate peasants who were thrust to the brink of destitution and beyond (Green 1964). Indeed, a pamphlet entitled *Against the Thievish and Murderous Hordes of Peasants* (1525) explicitly encouraged German princes to suppress peasant revolts with ruthless violence – which they did, of course.

## Marxist and Freudian Readings

Luther's behavior in the peasant wars (1524–1526) invited a Marxist interpretation, and in 1936, Herbert Marcuse published a brief study on Luther in a series called *Studies in Authority*, published by Felix Alcan (Paris) and reprinted in *Studies in Critical Philosophy* (Marcuse 1973). Marcuse construed Luther's authoritarian tendencies and his growing contempt for the peasantry as an early expression of a nascent bourgeoisie starting to flex its muscles, because it was linked, in his mind, to Roman law, which Luther studied before entering the monastery. (Roman law was used by the burghers of Luther's era to undermine or circumvent the legal constraints on commerce imposed by the Church.) In *Young Man Luther*, the best known biography of Luther by a psychoanalyst (Erikson 1958), Erik Erikson chided Marxists for being one sided and reductionistic in their emphasis on economic motives and inattentive to the powerful "psychic reality" behind Luther's teaching. But even he conceded the element of truth in these approaches.

In 1941, Horkheimer and Adorno drew clear links between Luther's anti-Semitic statements and the then-current Nazi propaganda in a report on their "*Research Project on Anti-Semitism*" (Horkheimer and Adorno 1941). Initially, in more charitable moods, Luther had explained the Jewish refusal to convert to Christianity as rooted in a sensible mistrust for the Papacy and the pagan elements (including "Mariolatry") that Catholicism had introduced into Christian teaching. For a few years, Luther even deluded himself into thinking that once he had purged the Christian faith of these sordid accretions, the Jews would convert *en masse*. However, after many abortive efforts to convert local Jewry, in 1543, at age 60, Luther exhorted his contemporaries:

First, to set fire to their synagogues or schools.  
Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed.

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings, in which such adultery, lies, cursing and blasphemy are taught, be taken from them.

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb.

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for Jews.

Sixth, I advise that... all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them.

Seventh... Let whomsoever can, throw brimstone and pitch upon them, so much the better... and if this be not enough, let them be driven like mad dogs from the land (cited in Burston 2007: 115).

This inflammatory speech was not an isolated incident. Luther's last sermon was another attack upon Jews, and the Kristallnacht pogrom which swept Germany in 1938 was deliberately timed to coincide with Luther's birthday. Luther's utterances were often read in Protestant Churches during the Nazi era to incite violence and hatred toward Jews (Burston 2007).

Erik Erikson's biography *Young Man Luther* minimized Luther's anti-Semitic outbursts and his destructive attitude toward peasants, dwelling instead on Luther's audacity, originality, resilience, sincerity, and wit. While more sympathetic than many treatments of Luther's life, Erikson did strain credulity at times. He credited Luther's confessor, von Staupitz, with rare therapeutic abilities that supposedly saved the sanity of this prodigiously gifted but deeply disturbed young man and helped him find his "voice" and to trust his own, inner authority, though von Staupitz remained completely loyal to the Church. Odder still, Erikson interpreted a disputed passage in Luther's *Table Talk* to mean that the decisive moment in his religious development – Luther's epiphany – took place while he was evacuating his bowels. Erikson reasoned that for someone who suffers from chronic constipation, having a splendid bowel movement could easily engender a "religious" experience, an idea echoed by Norman O. Brown 2 years later, in *Life Against Death* (Brown 1960). If Erikson was right, Luther was the first (and perhaps *only*) specimen of *homo religiosus* to have his crucial revelation during the act of defecation. W. H. Auden welcomed Erikson's interpretation. According to Auden (1960):

There must be many people to whom religious, intellectual or artistic insights have come in the same place, for excretion is both the primal creative act - every child is the mother of its own feces - and the primal act of revolt and repudiation of the past - what was once good food has become bad dirt and must be gotten rid of. From then on, Luther's fate became his own (Auden 1960, p. 17).

Well, perhaps. But if many people have religious experiences while defecating, very few actually report them. So the question becomes: why did Luther, of all people, have this experience? Or more to the point: did he, really? We may never know, but in retrospect, Luther's epiphany probably did *not* occur in the way or in the place that Erikson imagined it. Luther's account is worded more ambiguously than Erikson allowed and could be construed as saying that the blessed event occurred in meditation cells *adjacent to the monastery's privy* (Green 1964; Marius 1999). But whatever you believe on this point, the fact remains that Luther was an intriguing character. He attacked the selling of indulgences and cult of saintly relics with a clarity and indignation worthy of Voltaire. But he was also deeply superstitious, a believer in witchcraft, who claimed to literally "see" demons and evil spirits lurking about the Prussian landscape. As a good medieval cleric must, Luther dutifully reviled "the flesh," echoing centuries of Christian tradition. But he was bitterly opposed to priestly celibacy, spoke frankly of conjugal pleasures, and, in later years, ate and drank with deliberate abandon to "mock the devil" - or, as Erikson said, to chase away bouts of anxiety and depression. A man of great vigor and industry, who survived three epidemics of bubonic plague and lived to the age of 63, Luther was also a legendary neuroathenic, who was prone to bouts of constipation and dizziness and other diffuse bodily ailments. But for all his faults and frailties, Luther was still

what Hegel termed a "world-historical individual," whose writings, utterances, and deeds transformed the world irrevocably, for good and for ill. His illustrious contemporaries included Copernicus, Erasmus, Thomas More, Rabelais, and Machiavelli - the last of the medievals or first of the moderns, depending on how you juggle your historical schemata. Looking backwards, it is hard to think of a generation who had more impact on modernity than they. And with the possible exception of Copernicus, Luther was the most influential of them all.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)

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## Magic

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Magic involves the practice of what is perceived to be the direct manipulation of material and spirit realms by human initiative. This action is meant to bring about definitive, tangible results. The Greco-Roman Egypt source entitled the Greek Magical Papyri (second century BCE–fifth century CE) provides an array of kinds and forms of magic used during this time. The spells, for instance, bring favor, produce a trance, drive out demons, question a corpse, induce insomnia, catch a thief, cause evil sleep, break enchantment, and induce childbearing. They occur as charms, oracles, dreams, saucer divination, magical handbooks, magical rings, astrological calendars, horoscopes, lamp inquiry, and magico-medical formulae. Many of the spells require complex procedures. To control one's shadow, the subject must make an offering of wheaten meal, ripe mulberries, and un-softened sesame. After making the offering, she must go into the desert on the sixth hour of the day and lay prostrate toward the rising sun, hands outstretched, saying a formula which begins: "Cause now my shadow to serve me . . ." (Betz 1986, PGM III: 612–632). The shadow will come before the face of the subject

on the seventh hour and is to be addressed with the command: "Follow me everywhere." A charm for sending a dream requires picking three reeds before sunrise and incanting a formula after sunset while facing, respectively, east, south, west, and north (Betz 1986, PGM IV: 3172–3208). The range and extent of forms and purposes of magic relate the human desire to address the complexity of day-to-day life situations. They are meant as wish-fulfillment response to human limitation and anxiety. Coursing through the material there occurs the influence of ancient Egyptian temple religion, worship of the sun, and notions of the regenerative potencies in nature seen in the ritual practices of mummification. At the same time, these magical formulae are representative of a cultural syncretism which includes Babylonian, Greek, Jewish, and Christian religions and as such evidence the extent to which magic was used within the ancient world. By 13 BCE, however, the influence of magic becomes stemmed by Augustus' burning of 2,000 magical scrolls (Seutonius, *Augustus* 2.31). The early church reaction against magic as pagan practice contributes further to the suppression of magical handbooks and magicians. St. Augustine (d. 430 CE) makes it a point to say how the raising of Samuel from the dead by the witch of Endor (1 Sam. 28.8–25) occurred through the work of demons (*Ad Simplicianum* II, III). The Medieval text *De Magis*, which is part of a larger treatise entitled

*Etymologies* by St. Isidore of Seville (d. 638 CE), denounces magic as having originated with *angelorum malorum* (“evil angels”). He says that “hidden knowledge” resulting in the taking of oracles and the raising of the dead (*dicuntur oracula et necromantia*) was first employed by Zoroaster, King of Persia, and even more by the Assyrians beginning with King Ninus (9.1-3). Subsequent church figures including Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims (d. 881) and Bishop Burchard of Worms (d. 1025) rely on Isidore to denigrate magic even further in their own writings. However, by the tenth and eleventh centuries, astrological handbooks reappear within the domain of the church. Demons are perceived to exist under the rule of the church and the raising of the symbol of the cross. Earth magic, which includes the supernatural marking of shrines, wells and springs, *sculptilia*, and *simulacra*, also emerges. The European Enlightenment and its focus upon reason and religious dissociation results in the eventual demise of magic, however, while contemporary intrigue seems to be occurring through attention given to books and films such as Harry Potter.

## See Also

- ▶ [Astrology](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Zoroastrianism](#)

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## Maimonides, Moses

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## General

Born in Cordova, Spain, Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) achieved fame as a rabbinic authority, legal codifier, philosopher, physician, and astronomer. Religious persecution sent him into exile throughout Spain and northern Africa before he eventually settled in Cairo serving as the physician to the vizier al-Fadil in 1185.

## Philosophical Views

Strongly influenced by Aristotelian philosophy popular in the surrounding Muslim culture, Maimonides is regarded as the supreme rationalist of Jewish tradition. He asserted the doctrine of the incorporeality of God and devoted much of his major philosophical work, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, to reinterpreting biblical passages which suggest an anthropomorphic deity. Maimonides wrote the *Guide* in an effort to resolve the apparent contradictions between Aristotelian philosophy and traditional Judaism which were challenging the faith of well-educated Jews at the time. He argued that biblical texts have a spiritual meaning beyond their literal one – a meaning which points to the ultimate authority of reason. He attempted to prove the existence of God using exclusively Aristotelian terms without relying on the bible. Maimonides maintained that Jewish laws – even those of a seemingly ritual nature – are products of divine wisdom and, thus, wholly rational. In the *Guide* and in his work *The Book of Commandments*, Maimonides dedicates himself to explicating the rational principles underpinning particular Jewish laws.

As in Aristotelian thought, Maimonides believed that moral behavior, while important,

was simply a means to attaining intellectual virtue, the highest ideal. He argued that the mind's ability to reason represents the divine image reflected in human beings, and thus, individuals have a moral imperative to develop their intellectual faculties. Maimonides asserted that morality consists of following the mean which is attained as the well-cultivated mind controls a person's desires. In an exception to this appeal for moderation, Maimonides encouraged his readers to avoid even slight traces of anger or pride, and his later writings display an increasingly ascetic inclination.

In the *Guide*, Maimonides shows special interest in the interpretation of dreams and prophetic visions which he views as wholly natural events. Maimonides diverges from earlier Jewish tradition which generally regarded dreams as manifestations of divine communication. In a process similar to what Freud calls the "dreamwork," Maimonides interprets dream material by retracing how the dream was created in the mind of the individual, focusing on the latent context instead of the dream content itself. He argues that dreams mark the nexus point between the rational and imaginative faculties, two aspects of the mind that the Hebrew prophets and some later rabbinic figures were successfully able to synthesize.

In the *Guide*, Maimonides put forward the argument that ascribing any individual attribute to God denies God's unity and omnipotence. Consequently, one may only speak of what God is not (i.e., God is not nonexistent.), but one commits heresy when attempting to define what God is. Similarly, Maimonides held the Neoplatonic doctrine that evil does not exist independently but simply reflects an absence of good. While arguing that the world as a whole is good, Maimonides attributed the suffering that individuals experience to divine justice and man's misuse of free will. He rejected the claims of previous Jewish philosophers that God intentionally causes suffering to a righteous person in order to reward that person in the afterlife. Maimonides' own view of the afterlife drew heavily from the Hellenistic model of the immortality of the soul, downplaying rabbinic notions of physical resurrection.

## Legal Writing

Maimonides did not write exclusively for the philosophical elite. He is most famous among Jews today for his legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*. This 14-volume work endeavors to distill the whole of rabbinic literature, rich with arguments, tangents, loose associations, and dialog, into a systematic and comprehensive catalog of conclusive legal rulings in clear Hebrew accessible to the lay reader. The topics covered include family law, torts, criminal law, and ritual practice. The code also contains within it a complete system of metaphysics, refutations of Christianity and Islam, and a discussion of eschatology. This project was controversial from its inception, drawing criticism that Maimonides was interpreting previous legal debates idiosyncratically and denying his reader access to dissenting arguments. Nevertheless, the code gained immediate popularity throughout the Jewish world, strongly influencing the language, structure, and content of Jewish legal writings into the modern era.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Male God Images

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God images are psychological constructs of thoughts and feelings, coalesced into a complex



relational gestalt. God images were once critiqued by psychologists of religion as projections, personifications to be rejected. Now they are recognized by contemporary psychologists of religion for their ability to provide psychological strength and resilience. They provide structure and improve functioning on the individual and the social level by helping us internalize a moral code and a shared world view.

Male God images hold sway over the mainstream religious imagination, affecting conscious and unconscious cultural mores and theological traditions. Male God images are particularly effective in structuring and strengthening the individual and his/her society. Replicating the Western traditional father's role of provider, role model, and disciplinarian on the cosmic stage, male God images provide a sense of belonging, safety, and a clear moral compass. However, these benefits are not without risk: these God images may also cause us to suffer perpetual childhood, gender imbalance, and guilt/shame complexes.

In the triad of Western monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, gendered and sexualized language is used to express the divine nature. Although Islam eschews divine images, the male referent is used. In the Judaism and Christianity, as in the Bible, masculine language for God is overwhelmingly predominant. God is consistently depicted in a paternal role, as external to but actively involved in his creation. God is a divine king, lord over all the universe, husband to his chosen nation of Israel, and father to us all. The father-child relationship functions particularly effectively as a metaphor for the relationship between God and humans. The term father conveys authority as well as kinship.

The dominant God image of recent history is of a male, divine king, who rules over all, meting out justice, demanding obedience, caring for those on his good side, and smiting those who fail to please. This historical trend dates back several thousand years to early urban civilizations. Although earlier tribal societies favored more animistic (nature/animal Gods) or feminine (Earth Mother) God images, when humans coalesced into larger societies, the male God image

was strengthened as a way of stabilizing the social structure and enforcing a shared code of ethics (Edinger 1996). Cultures who serve a "divine king" will achieve a greater civilization than if these roles are disparate or conflicting.

Although male God images may strengthen us culturally, they can weaken us individually. Sigmund Freud critiqued the male God image of mainstream monotheism as a projection of our earthly fathers onto the heavens. Freud declared, "God is in every case modeled after the father, and that our personal relation to God is dependent upon our relation to our physical father, fluctuating and changing with him, and that God at bottom is nothing but an exalted father" (1918/1950, p. 244).

Freud dismissed God as a glorified father figure and rejected religion as a psychological crutch based in illusory wish fulfillment (1928/1975). He believed that we would remain psychologically crippled until we rejected our parentified God images. Freud compared our projection of the divine father to the story of Oedipus, with God as a psychological creation to assuage our guilt for having usurped our earthly fathers and as a means to maintain a sense of perpetual childhood, buffered and cradled by God. With God the Father as the ultimate authority figure, it is easy to shrug off free will and personal responsibility and bow to God's greater will.

Since Freud, psychoanalytic object relational theory has elaborated and amended the Freudian critique with studies demonstrating the validity of the parental projection theory. However, these studies have correlated God images with early images of both father and mother and often the preferred or opposite-sex parent (e.g., Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1975; Rizzuto 1979; Vergote and Tamayo 1981). Further, these studies have corrected Freud by showing the positive effects of the God relationship, demonstrating that it provides psychological strength and resilience.

Carl Jung offered a different perspective on the God-as-father hypothesis. Rather than a larger than life father figure, Jung believed that the God image is an archetype, or symbolic representation, of the self. He wrote, "[O]ne can

never distinguish empirically between a symbol of the self and a God-image, the two ideas, however much we try to differentiate them, always appear blended together” (Jung 1958, p. 156).

If the God image is also a self-image, its examination reveals much about the psyche and its complexes. The God image may reflect our personal world view on a cosmic level, or it may be an idealized image that compensates for our inherent deficiencies.

The male God image appears to be a conglomerate of parental and self-images, a synthesis of our relational experiences and expectations that is coalesced into a singular divine person. The God image provides an anchor in our relation to the divine, yet it is also flexible, changing alongside our own faith development. In theories of faith and spiritual development, the personification of the divine occurs in the middle developmental stages and later gives way to a more universal, inclusive God image (Fowler 1981; Genia 1995; Meissner 1984). With developmental maturity, the God image has greater tolerance for diversity and ambiguity. It is possible that a parallel developmental trajectory also exists in our collective cultural God image development, and gendered, personified God images may gradually give way to more transcendent and inclusive God images (Edinger 1996; Peterson 2005).

## Commentary

God images can deepen our connection to ultimate reality, but they can also limit or distort our ability to encounter it. A God image based on one’s father unavoidably has both positive and negative psychic consequences. Even within a single God image, qualities of God-as-parent have equal and opposite ramifications. For example, a God who provides safety can also be perceived as restrictive; a God who provides for our needs usually requires much in return; a God who gives loving approval can also be a source of rejection.

Similarly, a God image based on our self-image can limit our openness to experiencing the divine.

The masculine emphasis in prevalent God images is symptomatic of psychological misalignment. Jung argued that a healthy God image needed to reflect the balance of male and female, which he called *anima* and *animus*. A gender imbalance results in psychological one-sidedness, limiting freedom of experience and expression. This problematic imbalance occurs on individual and cultural levels and has resulted in fierce polemic debate.

Feminist theologians have argued bitterly against male-only language for God. They believe that God’s maleness deifies the masculine, which appears as divine sanction for patriarchy and the devaluation of women. Male God images, therefore, perpetuate injustices against women in societies across the world.

Mary Daly quipped, “If God is male, then the male is God” (1973, p. 19). The dominance of male God images has been used to elevate men in society under the belief that male authority is God given and sanctioned.

In verbalizing our experience of God, both male and female traits are needed. However evident this may be from a psychological perspective, it remains a source of theological debate in religious circles. Biblical precedent (e.g., 1 Corinthians 11:7) is used to argue for solely masculine names/titles for the divine, even to assert that women do not bear the image of God to the extent that men do. Theologians debate over whether the masculine language is culturally dependent or self-revelatory. In view of the furor involving gendered language for the divine, it is helpful to step back and acknowledge the radical difference between human sexuality and divine reality. God by nature encompasses and exceeds all our efforts to express “him.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)

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## Mandala

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The Sanskrit word *mandala* means “circle” – circular images drawn, built, painted, danced, or lived, expressing many qualities of nature and

culture. Many mandalas are unnoticed images of peace, power, oneness, and transcendence. Circular fountains in cities, for example, simultaneously send out a circle of energy and bring to the “center” the community around it. Mandalas are a sacred visual art about the silent center within, the endless circumference without, an art with psychological, biological, and spiritual significance. Some are evident in nature and others products of art and religion. Cultures embroider the form with many unique variations. The focus is often on the center of the circle, which is commonly a geometric symbol of the eternal source. Mandalas with symmetry imply a tension or balance and harmony of spiritual forces. The mandala is an orienting map of the soul, the world, and the cosmos, a microcosm and macrocosm (Fig. 1).

## Natural Mandalas

We live amid nature's own wondrous mandalas – flowers, age rings of a tree trunk, or the cycling of the Earth and celestial lights. Sit quietly and watch a shadow move along and feel yourself sitting on the vast Earth's globe rotating around its axis, through its seasons. Enjoy a campfire circle in the darkness, friends linking souls, and fire thrusting and sparking upward. Feel the cycles of your breathing. Think of the plant cycles, such as trees, that absorb the carbon dioxide we breathe out and produce oxygen for us to breathe in. Sit by a stream and recall the cycle of water rising in mist to the sky, drifting in the wind as clouds, then falling in life-giving rain, flowing over waterfalls to the ocean. Wonder at the complex variety of circular seashells – delicate sand dollars or spiraling conches. Study snowflakes, their tiny, delicate crystalline, symmetrical structure, each completely unique in design. Look at a satellite photo of a vast hurricane swirling in a powerful circle.

As you grow up and grow older, think of the birthdays, births, and deaths of your life as part of Earth's life cycles. These simple yet cosmic wonders are doorways to a higher consciousness and infinite power beyond mundane consciousness. Intuitively, we can see in them reminders of our



**Mandala, Fig. 1** Double sand spiral by Jim Denevan at Ocean Beach, San Francisco, March 6, 2005 (jimdenevan.com. Photo courtesy of the author. Public Domain)

place in the grander scheme of nature. This opens up their sacredness, the geometry of life, and the endless beyond within it. The cosmic cycles of reincarnation are a basic assumption of Asian religions, so historical time and life experiences are believed to be cyclical, not linear.

The ancients personified the sky's magnificent powers with the circles of starry astrological symbols, such as Taurus the Bull, as divinities in daily cycles, and closer stars as gods and goddesses, such as Venus and Jupiter, in planetary processions. The beauty they emanate has long seemed to be a channel to the divine.

Animals also live with cycles. A circular bird nest is the safe haven home for the oval eggs of a new year's generation of the winged nation. The old image of the serpent, which sheds its skin as it grows, in a circle eating its tail, or wrapped around an egg, evokes the cycle of life eating life and birthing it again (*uroboros*). The complex eyeball is a circle that draws the visual and

soulful world into our brains and connects us with the world. Watch the seasonal cyclical migration of birds such as graceful geese, honking in their formations as they fly thousands of miles north and south each year. Remember the hidden fish and whales that also migrate long distances with the seasons to reproduce underwater, replenishing the Earth.

The plant nation also springs forth with many circles, from the sunflower's whirled center to the unfolding delicate beauty of a royal English rose or royal Chinese peony. Flowers, the perfumed sex organs of the plant world, symbolize at weddings the beauty of erotic love and family fertility and at funerals the beauty of human and eternal life. The Christmas tree is a mandala, a miniature cosmos on an axis mundi with lights like tiny suns, globes like planets, and soul symbols such as children's toys all around. The lotus is an image of the divine in Asia. Hindu gods and Buddhas sit on lotus thrones.

The mineral world has its mandalas, also, from common rounded stones washed smooth by running water to precious diamonds, shaped in a circle to reflect the divine treasure of light. Gold wedding rings symbolize the loving union of marriage. The stone seen as the center or belly button of the world, *omphalos* in Delphi, or the central Kaaba stone in Mecca for Islam are world-orienting mandalas. Stone circles, notably England's Stonehenge, over 5,000 years old, apparently a cosmic calendar, mark for the ages the cycles of nature, such as the solstices. Egyptian, Mayan, and many other pyramids are model holy mountains, often four-sided, orienting to earthly directions and pointing above to the eternal divine powers. The Egyptian pyramids are positioned to imitate the belt of the Osiris [or Orion, in Greek] constellation of stars, toward which the spirit of the deceased Pharaoh was to ascend Earth artists are still making mandalas (Fig. 1).

## Mandala Psychology

Carl Jung, after undergoing a confusing period of encounters with unconscious material, began in 1916 to draw mandala images spontaneously, at first not knowing what they meant. As he came to

understand it, he saw the mandala as a picture of the complete soul, conscious and unconscious, with the center as the pointer to an authority far larger than the ego, which he later called the “Self,” or psychological experience of the divine within.

Jung collected numerous mandalas drawn by his patients (Jung 1979, Vol. 9, Pt. 1, para. 627–712). They pictured images sometimes seen in dreams: squares, circles, spirals, flowers, crystalline reflections, geometric multiplications, eyeballs, animals, light rays, serpents, fish, or a glowing egg. Jung saw circular UFOs as mandala symbols in machine form, bringing cosmic energies down to Earth. He found that mandalas reduced confusion and panic and introduced order, balance, and wholeness. Mandalas, he saw, urge one to become more truly what one is, overcoming fear and chaos and balancing opposites, guided by the healing energy of the central image. In his translation of *The Golden Flower*, Richard Wilhelm introduced Jung to Chinese mandalas. Jung envisioned a shadow negative force in each archetypal image, so in our time, a shadow of the mandala would be the swastika, which Hitler took from a Hindu tradition and transformed its meaning into one of hatred and death.

Here is an example of the dynamic energy that a mandala can have. A college girl, scornful of religion, sullen, and sad, had a dream of an energetic three-inch sphere, which she found in a field, which suddenly came alive, pulsating with lightning bolts, driven by dangerous electricity. The threatening ball swooped around her as the sky became menacing. She ran and ran, until the ball faced her as she gave up and repeatedly cried out “I do believe in God!” The sky calmed, the now lifeless ball dropped to the ground, and flowers grew all around. She woke up in a sweat and soon became a Religion major (Federico 2008). This sphere emerged from her unconscious soul with a fright that transformed her consciousness into a search for spiritual peace.

## Indigenous Peoples

Of all the indigenous peoples’ mandalas, we can note a few. Many dance in a circle around a fire,

and some prefer to live in circular tipis. The Mexican God’s Eye of cross-shaped sticks is woven with brightly colored threads, making a diamond shape. The great Aztec Sunstone has at its center the symbol of the present age *Ollin*, surrounding with calendar and cosmic images, two cosmic fire serpents, and pictures of a coming cataclysm. The Australian Aboriginal Tjuringa stone shows the map of the journeys of the Ancestors of the Dreamtime. They build large mandala circles made of natural colors and feathers in the desert, covering two or three acres.

Celtic mandalas are full of endless knots – ropes and vines twined in and out of each other in manifold knots, like a maze or pilgrimage through life, not to be untied, but to be followed in its endlessness. Some have women entwined as in a dance, or men whose beards are entwined with their limbs, as if swimming in a wild lake of seaweed. Others have the tidy order of linear lines and crosses or triangles. Beastly creatures chase each other in a circle, paws entwined. One anthropomorphic mandala celebrated in carved circles on United Kingdom churches, in dances, and in processions, is the Green Man, whose beard is entwined with wings, leaves, and branches. Leaves may grow out of his mouth (Holitzka 1996).

In Native American mandalas, the four directions often appear, pointing to the horizon, the powers and colors of the cardinal directions, and the cosmic forces they embody. Feathers and wings carry the powers of the winged beings of the sky. In the Lakota Sioux shaman Black Elk’s great vision, he saw a cloud tipi in the center of a camp with grandfathers in it who gave him powers, and four ceremonial horses dancing at each of four directions (Neihardt). Some Native Americans make circular dream catchers or outdoor stone circles in places of power. Navahos make sand mandalas for healing ceremonies, seeking to balance spiritual forces to overcome sickness. Some call mandalas “medicine wheels.” The dazzling sun may send its rays in a mandala circle mixed with images of serpents, humans, lizards, and shimmering zigzag lines.

Rock drawings, or petroglyphs, may be mandalas marking a vision, a spirit, an ancestor



spirit, or a deity, such as a rain god. Animals are prominent, such as the wolf, bear, eagle, or buffalo. The peace pipe, bows and arrows, jagged “thunder arrows” of lightning, or a thunder bird illuminate some mandalas. The Great Mother and her growing plants, or male figures, may stand arms upraised or dancing. A ritual such as the Plains peoples’ sun dance has the cottonwood tree in the center, warriors dancing around it in a circle, tipi lodges around them, mountains, and clouds, all pointing upward to the Great Spirit.

Flowers may grace a mandala, or the spiral of a tornado with jagged lightning powers swirling toward the center. Horses may stand in lines facing the central sun, with a surrounding image of a Great Spirit. A basket or plate often has woven images of human figures, spirals, suns, abstract geometric designs, or sacred foods. A Pueblo kachina dancer with elaborate mask and imagery such as wings may dominate a mandala. These images convey the powers of the universe that appear in nature, for in many forms, the ancestor spirits and the Great Spirit live in all the world (Holitzka 2000).

## Judaism

The Jewish Star of David is a mandala, with two inverted triangles intersecting. Jerusalem and its ancient temple mount is the geographic center of historical Israel, so this holy land is the central focus of the faith. Jewish traditional dances frequently move in a circle. The family dining table is also a central focus of Judaism. Torah scrolls are cylindrical mandalas of sacred texts. The menorah candelabrum is a half circle of nine candles, an ancient symbol of Judaism. The tree inspired Jewish Kabbalist mystics to organize their metaphysical vision of the universe as a tree, a circle on an axis. The top is the Ein Sof, the infinite creative spirit, and the various revealed aspects of God (Sepiroth) take their place as branches, until the bottom is reached as the Shekinah, the presence of God for humans.

## Christianity

The labyrinth is an archaic symbol adopted by Christians, a maze, perhaps meant to trap evil spirits. At the Cretan palace of Knossos, there are reports of a labyrinth as a dancing ground, and the myth of the Minotaur at the center. Pliny reports others in Italy and Lemnia, and, like Pliny, Herotodus records a huge labyrinthine building in Egypt (Herotodus 1966, p. 161; Eichholz 1962, Book 36, p. xix; Ramsay 1875, pp. 664–665). Some ancient versions seem to induce confusion and being lost or trapped. Some were later altered to focus on finding the center and then a Way out. They were made with stones and bushes, and one notable one remains in the floor just inside the entrance of Chartres Cathedral in France. The one in Reims Cathedral is more square (Paroisse) with four larger corners, and the Virgin Mary at the center. The one at Amiens Cathedral is square. The winding passages portray the sufferings on this Earth, and the center depicts the divine peace. The journey is a descent into oneself to find inner divinity. A twenty-first-century revival of labyrinth meditative walking began at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco (Artress 1995).

The cross is also a mandala, focusing on the center of meaning in the faith, the incarnation, and sacrifice of Christ, which stripped his humanity bare, returned his spirit to the center of being, and left the Holy Spirit on Earth. The Latin cross has one long side. The Celtic cross has a long side with a small circle around the center of the cross inscribed with designs. Eastern Orthodox crosses may have the four sides of equal length, or an angled short piece on the longer side. The circular stained glass rose window is a large mandala in churches with pictures and colors illuminated by sunlight, developed by Gothic cathedral designers. Cathedral ground plans are cross-mandalas with high ceilings or domes.

## Islam

Muslims worldwide face Mecca when they bow in prayer, forming a vast human mandala. At the Hajj



pilgrimage journey to Mecca, itself a mandala journey, there is the central ritual circumambulation of Kaaba stone in the Great Mosque. The new moon and nearby star are a Muslim symbol, appearing on the flag of Turkey. The huge dome in many mosques symbolizes the arch of heaven, and the typical four minaret towers at the mosque periphery form a symmetrical square. Muslim art forbids human images, so many designs, as on Turkish tiles, include symmetrical plants and calligraphy. Classic carpet designs often have mandala designs. The mystical Whirling Dervishes dance in a circular spinning form.

## Taoism

Chinese Taoism emphasizes the ancient Yin-Yang circle, in which black and white halves flow into each other and each contains a circle of the opposite within itself, showing the inadequacies of rigid dualisms, flowing paradoxically in tension and harmony in the Way of deepest eternal mysteries. The *Tao te Ching* says: “The Tao is an empty vessel; it is used, but never filled. . .hidden deep but ever present” (Lao-Tzu 1972, poem 4).

## Tibetan Buddhism

Today’s most complex mandalas are the colorful Tibetan Buddhist sand mandalas. They are elaborate, detailed circular designs made with colored sand by monks, with well-developed metaphysical interpretations. A mandala in Tibetan Buddhism is a map of the spiritual cosmos, an axis mundi, a cosmic center whose purpose is, like smoke going up the smoke hole of a circular tent, to commune with the transcendent realms. This results in a sacred spiritual transformation for those who make it. Tibetans believe that the mandala was invented by the Buddha, who is said to have designed the first Kalachakra (“time-wheel”) mandala after reaching enlightenment. A *yantra* is a purely geometric mandala, with no deity pictured, typically with several overlapping triangles.

Another type of Tibetan mandala is the “world wheel,” held by the god of death Yama, portraying the various forms of suffering in the world, from the central rooster (lust), snake (envy), and pig (unconsciousness) to death holding all the Earth’s suffering, surrounded by garden-like, peaceful trees, ducks, clouds, and birds.

A master monk supervises the highly liturgical mandala construction for a novice initiate. A deity is commonly pictured at the geometric center and is the central theme of a mandala. The making of a mandala is a ritual of restoring the ideal principles of things to Earth. The adepts involved both bring the cosmic energies down into the mandala and reawaken the immaculate principles within themselves. Giuseppe Tucci describes the ritual of making and contemplating a mandala as an “epiphany”:

...[one] comes to be identified with the center of the *mandala*, the point from which all goes forth and to which all returns and from where the archetypal essence stream forth in luminous rays which pervade the whole world. . . (1973, p. 105).

The mandala is intended to balance, like spokes around the center of a wheel, the confused mixture of earthly passions and consciousness, good and evil. In some mandalas, a god and goddess may embrace in Tantric fashion, making love to release the inherent Buddha nature. Other mandalas reflect the Kundalini tradition of locating various archetypal cosmic powers on the line of the spine, rising from the most coarse to the most refined, each Chakra spot symbolized by a mandala. The most important dynamic of the making and contemplation of a mandala is to visualize a divine principle or Buddha, bring it down from the transcendent realm, realize that it is already in one’s own heart, and awaken it.

## Kalachakra Mandala

The Tantric Kalachakra mandala has roots in Indian tradition. The “wheel of time” was the favorite of the 14th Dalai Lama. Making it is to promote spiritual peace in individuals and on Earth. It portrays a square divine palace within a circle of colorful symbols, full of deities.

Journeying toward the center, the god Kalachakra is visualized embracing his female partner Vishvamata in his arms. He is the sun; she is the moon. Together, they unite compassion with absolute wisdom. In the center is the Tibetan blue *vajra*, symbol of the diamond scepter or thunderbolt. This the participants must melt into, in order to be purified and be reborn beyond this world into the pure essence of the emptiness of the absolute (Crossman). When the mandala ceremony is complete, the sand is swept into a container that is returned to the Earth or waters, an expression of the impermanence of all things, even sacred mandalas.

## Industrialism

The industrial era also has its unconscious mandalas, such as the early oversimplified model of the atom as a miniature solar system with a nucleus surrounded by cycling electrons, symbolizing the foundation of material/electronic existence. The culminating space age mandalas are the images of Earth seen from the moon and about 150 billion galaxies seen from satellite telescopes in deep outer space. Thus, for many, space travel consciousness has morphed from a proud image of technological space conquest to a more awesome vision of the delicacy of our home in the vastness of space, needing ecological harmony, more than the spirit of conquest of nature. So far, the astronaut most changed by his cosmic vision was Edgar Mitchell, aboard Apollo 14, the second trip to the moon, experienced a mystical transformation of his “dyed-in-the-wool atheism.” Looking at the magnificent view of Earth and outer space, he:

experienced a grand epiphany accompanied by exhilaration .... nothing short of an overwhelming sense of universal connectedness. I actually felt what has been described as an ecstasy of unity .... the molecules of my body and the molecules of the spacecraft itself were manufactured long ago in the furnace of the ancient stars that burned in the heavens about me .... There was an intelligent process at work. I perceived the universe as in some way conscious (Mitchell 1996, pp. 3–4).

While in a minority among space scientists and engineers, Mitchell’s psychological and spiritual transformation was profound. On his return, he founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences (<http://noetic.org/>).

## See Also

- ▶ [Circumambulation](#)
- ▶ [Green Man](#)
- ▶ [Hajj](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Labyrinth](#)

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## Mandala and Faces

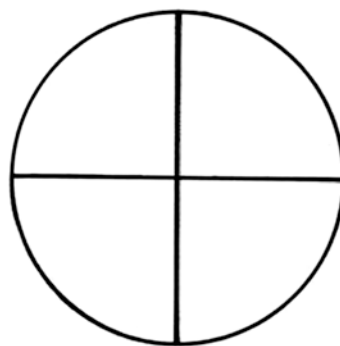
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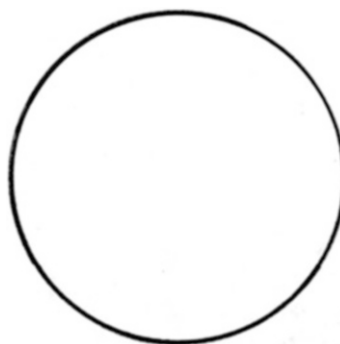
This entry discusses how mandalas resonate to the experience of seeing the face. This author has noticed that the face and the mandala share the same underlying geometry, implying another level of the power of the mandala in the human psyche.

Mandalas are geometrically based forms which evoke a sense of the sacred, personally and universally. Mandala is a Sanskrit word for circle or a disk-shaped object. This circle has special qualities, combining the ideas of circumference and center at the same time. Just as the definition is integrative, the form of the mandala integrates opposites in its geometry. The eternal aspect of the circle, which has no beginning and no end, is combined with quadrated forms, most commonly a cross within a circle (Fig. 1). In Buddhist art, they are most often painted meditation devices.

A circle on a page creates an inner and an outer space; in art therapy this quality is used for reflection on the self, as well as the centering and



**Mandala and Faces, Fig. 1** Basic geometry of a mandala



**Mandala and Faces, Fig. 2** Basic circle of the mandala

containing aspects of the form. A recent replication study reaffirmed that coloring in mandalas did reduce anxiety, more than coloring a plaid design or coloring on a blank paper (van der Vennet and Serice 2012) (Fig. 2).

### The Face

The importance of the human face has long been observed. Karen Machover (1971), a pioneer in “draw a person” projective tests, made a number of points about the significance of the face. Faces are the most individually identifiable part of our physical being and the most constantly visible. She stated that subjects, when asked to draw a person, no matter their age, often offer a face or head as the completed drawing. Body parts, such as torsos, legs, or arms, are never drawn on their own to represent a person (Machover 1971, p. 40).



**Mandala and Faces, Fig. 3** Copy of an early scribble

Seeing and being seen is a face-to-face encounter. Before we can crawl or walk, we are held. Much of our time in early life is spent gazing into our mother's face. Winnicott (1971) was acutely attuned to the importance of the face; he made the point that when the infant sees the mother's face, what he sees is himself (p. 112). Winnicott also recognized that there is mutual response between mother and baby, with the face the crux of the communication. Beebe (2005), citing Bower (2001), states "Research using brain imaging suggests that faces enjoy special status in the brain. . . neural activity in the temporal lobes . . . surges twice as much when adults watch faces vs. other objects." She also makes the point that "Facial communication operates. . . largely out of awareness" (pp. 90–91). Eigen discusses the human face, talking about it as the most significant "organizing principle in the field of meaning" (Eigen 1993, p. 56).

In early developmental art, the mandala form and the face are interconnected. Mandala forms emerge very early on, in the scribbling stage which occurs from 18 months to 4 years old on average. These forms are one of the graphic precursors to the first drawn faces, and these earliest faces have a mandalic structure. Children start to draw around 18 months old. Before a child can draw a recognizable face, his or her drawings go through several stages: random marks like squiggles and scribbles (Fig. 3). Children practice combining shapes and squiggles; Rhoda Kellogg (1970) calls these combines. One of the earliest combines has a mandaloid form (Fig. 4).



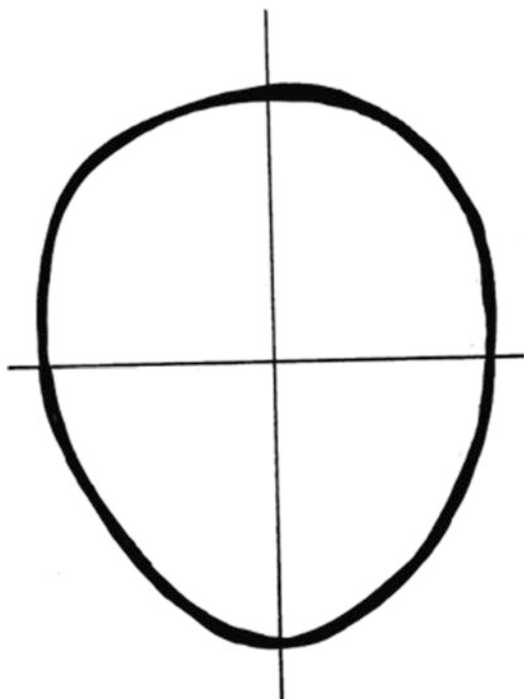
**Mandala and Faces, Fig. 4** Copy of typical mandaloid scribble (2 years old)



**Mandala and Faces, Fig. 5** Copy of a typical 3-year-old drawing of a human

The earliest images of humans usually have a mandala formation, with a huge head with markings at the approximate place of the cross in a mandala (Fig. 5).

Another aspect of the mandala's power may be connected to the geometry of the face, for the face has a mandalic structure. In learning to draw, artists are trained to see the underlying geometry in physical form. To draw a face with accurate proportions, you learn that the space from the top of the head to the eyes is approximately the same distance as the eyes to the chin (Edwards 1989,



**Mandala and Faces, Fig. 6** The basic geometry of the face as learned in drawing

pp.141–142). As far as a mandalic structure is concerned, the horizontal axis is the eye line and the vertical axis being the line created by the nose. This is similar to the basic structure of the mandala (Fig. 6).

### Psychological Aspects of the Mandala

The levels of psychological resonance of the mandala may be thought of in this way: the circle of the mandala creates a symbolic holding environment like the circle of mother's arms. The face has a loose circular form, and in the face are the eyes, concentric mandalic forms. Finally, the core facial architecture is similar to that of a mandala, the circle with a quadrated form. Thus, the mandala may evoke the face, our earliest mirror, the early holding environment of our mother's arms, as well as the experience throughout our lives of looking into faces, our most human aspect.

### See Also

- ▶ [Astrology and Mandalas](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)

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### Mantra

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Many adherents of eastern religions, especially Buddhism and Hinduism, use brief verbal phrases or verses as objects for meditation. Such *mantras* are numerous, but best known are the *Avalokiteshvara mantra* of the Tibetan Buddhists, “*Om mani padme hum,*” and the *Gayatri Mantra* which is widespread among the Hindus:

Om Bhur Bhuva Svaha  
Tat Savitur Varenyam  
Bhargo Devasya  
Deheemani  
Dhi Yo Yonah Prachodayat

Any personally meaningful sacred word or phrase can be used as a *mantra* or as a focus for centering prayer. Well known among Christians is the “Jesus Prayer” described in *The Way of a Pilgrim*, a famous Hesychast text: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.” In Judaism, the simple word “*Shalom*” can be used repetitively as a *mantra*, or the *Shema Israel* can be said, affirming the unity and love of God. The comparable verse in Islam is called *Dhikr*.

Recent psychosomatic research (e.g., following Benson 1976) has shown *mantra* meditation to be very beneficial in eliciting the “Relaxation Response,” thus attenuating anxiety and improving physical (especially cardiac) health and pain reduction.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Gayatri](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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## Māori Religion

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### An Intimate Relationship with the Natural World

In the Māori indigenous religious tradition of the islands of *Aotearoa*, commonly known as New

Zealand, one of the more common cosmology narratives situated the beginning of the earth and sky in the darkness, *Pō*, that dwelt between the primal parents, *Rangi* (Sky Father) and *Papa* (Earth Mother). Briefly, in one version retold by Elsdon Best (1924), the two parents clung tightly to one another as their progeny were brought forth in the darkness betwixt their bodies. The all-male progeny, tiring of the cold and dank conditions, and seeing a glimmer of light, decided to separate their parents. *Tāne*, one of the seventy sons, persuaded several of his brothers to assist him in parting their parents. Using four poles held by four of the brothers who later become identified with the directional winds, the progeny struggled to separate the parents who clung even tighter. As a result, the sons were forced to sever the primal parents’ arms in order to part them. For the Māori, the red ochre of the earth and the red glow in the sky came from the blood of the primal parents (Best 1924).

A more recent and briefer version in the text, *Māori Art and Culture*, described how each of the major progeny, *Tūmatauenga*, god of war, *Tangaroa* of the oceans, *Rangomātane* of raw foods and cultivated crops, and *Tawhīrangimātea* of the howling wind, all attempted to free themselves. However, it was *Tāne Mahuta* who successfully pushed and parted his parents (Awekotuku 1996, p. 26). This cosmology expresses a strong relationship with the natural world. Psychologically it implies a primordial struggle to emerge from the archaic darkness or unconsciousness or traditions. The sons who tire of the cold and dank depths see a light and struggle to separate from their parents, or be born into the light of consciousness, even severing their parents’ arms, or their control. Thus, they gain names and become the first differentiated gods – war oceans, food, and wind. These most important powers are close to nature. War is a primeval aggressive instinct, ocean essential territory to master for island cultures, food of course basic to survival, and wind to master for sailing.

### Atua: Gods

While many cosmogony stories did exist, many of them did not provide a detailed list of all the



various gods known as *ātua* in Māori. The term *ātua* described gods in general and could be used to designate the different classes of Māori gods, ancestral, family, or malicious spirits. Best (1924) identified four classes of *ātua*. The highest class of gods had no physicality to them. Whether the Māori did have a Supreme Being called *Io* prior to Western contact remains questionable, but, according to Best (1924), *Io* would be considered the highest of the Māori gods. Best (1924) described *Io* as the first class.

The second class could be identified as departmental, tutelary beings who also had no physicality to them. It was in this class that Best (1924) placed the gods of *Tāne*, *Tū*, *Rongo*, and *Tangaroa* their more common and abbreviated names. *Tāne* was considered the most important of the departmental gods within the Māori religious tradition because of his actions in freeing the primal parents. Among many of the attributes assigned to *Tāne*, a major one was that he was the originator of the forest and trees. The second of these gods *Tū* was the main war god whose name often was lengthened to provide further descriptive aspects of his actions and realm. *Rongo*, the third of these tutelary beings, was the god of cultivation, cultivated foods, and peace. The fourth one, *Tangaroa*, was associated with the ocean, including fish and other denizens. Yet, while these gods were similar in function and name with those of other Polynesian groups, the Māori had no major constructed sites or temples dedicated to the various *ātua*. Instead, the religious rituals were held in places that pertained to the activity of the particular god. For example, the battlefield would be the site of religious rituals and incantations dedicated to *Tū* (Best 1924; Moore 1995) (Fig. 1).

While the higher levels of gods had no physicality, the gods in the lower levels could have had visible forms or were associated with natural phenomenon. Rainbows, water, volcanoes, and lightning – all were manifestations of gods, but not the gods themselves. According to Best (1924), these lower-level gods were more active in human lives. As such, a particular relationship developed between humans and gods. “The feeling of the Māori is very marked



**Māori Religion, Fig. 1** Maori warrior (Photo by Andrew Turner, 2006, Rotorua, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. Public Domain. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Young\\_Maori\\_man\\_dancing.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Young_Maori_man_dancing.jpg))

in his mental attitude toward the stars and planets, which he greets in song and speech as old, old friends (Best 1924, p. 121). These lower-level gods often were appealed to for signs of good fortune, for protection, and for warnings of impending dangers (Best 1924).

## Tapu

The fourth level included ancestral spirits. Perhaps one of the more well known of these lower-level gods is Maui. Maui's exploits included discovering the secret of fire, snaring the sun to slow its movement across the sky, and fishing the islands from the waters. This god Maui brings civilizing skills, like Prometheus in ancient Greece. Yet, these gods in the lower

levels could be the source not only of good fortune and health but also of disease and death. Illness, misfortune, and death were attributed to two main causes, either an evil demon or spirit or the violation of some *tapu* that resulted in an offense against a god (Best 1924, p. 131). According to Ngahua Te Awekotuku, “*Tapu* has many meanings, references and interpretations. It may be a descriptive or prescriptive condition, making an object, person or environment restricted and inaccessible to human contact, prohibited and out of bounds” (Awekotuku 1996, p. 26). Jean Smith noted that *tapu* and the rules that governed it fell into various fields of practical concern, such as birth and death, status relations, and the preservation of property (Smith 1974, p. 6). Birth and death were examples of the passage between the ultrahuman and human worlds; hence, they were *tapu*. Awekotuku (1996) included these areas as *tapu* and added the body parts and ornaments of a chiefly person, incidental remains of their hair, and nail clippings (p. 27). Furthermore, “pollution of a man’s *tapu* was an insult to his gods” (Smith 1974, p. 27). Persons themselves were *tapu* in the Māori tradition either by birth or by accomplishment. If by birth, then they were *tapu* because of their spiritual *mana*, sometimes translated as power, that resulted from their descent from the gods themselves. In the Māori tradition, the more direct one’s descent from the gods, the greater one’s *mana*, *tapu*, and rank (Smith 1974, p. 27). Albert Moore (1995) noted that *mana* was hereditary, coming from the ancestors and “manifested in the prestige of chiefs and orators,” and that the *iwi*, tribe, depended on it (p. 167). Moore (1995) added that *mana* could be both beneficent and dangerous; hence, *tapu*, sacred restrictions, was necessary to sustain and protect *mana*. However, when a *tapu* had been broken or a contamination of some form occurred, *tapu* removal was required (Smith 1974).

### Memory Carvings

While some of these religious practices and beliefs, such as the four major tutelary gods,

*tapu*, and *mana*, are similar to those of other Polynesian groups, what is distinctive about the Māori religion is the use of elaborate carvings to decorate the major gathering and assembly house, *whare whakairo*, located on the village *marae* or courtyard. Prior to European or Western contact, the houses were those of the chief of the *iwi*, the tribe, to which the people would gather at the *marae*, courtyard for social, political, and military concerns (Moore 1995). Adorning both the interior and exterior of the *whare whakairo* were elaborate carvings that often depicted some of the gods, ancestors, and their relationship with human beings in a stylized manner. A. T. Hakiwai noted that the: “Māori world is a world of unity and coherence. People, the universe, stars, mountains, rivers, rocks and fish are all connected through genealogy, demonstrating the intimate relationship between Māori and the world around us” (Hakiwai 1996, p. 52). These carvings not only expressed this belief but also utilized the unique woods of the islands, *Aotearoa*, and included the red ochre coloring that harkens back to the separation of *Rangi* and *Papa*. Hence, the stories continue to live in the carvings and memories of the Māori people.

Another distinctive feature of the Māori religious tradition can be traced, perhaps, to the cosmogony story of the forceful separation of the primal parents. More warlike than any of the other Polynesian peoples, the Māori peoples were known for the *haka*, a chant. The motions, words, and tonal quality were meant to instill fear in the enemy and strength to the individual warriors who performed the *haka*. While some *haka* did greet guests, the more powerful forms of the chant prepared the individual for war. Psychologically, this strong aggressiveness seems to keep alive the fight to separate from the embrace of the parents (Fig. 2).

### Sacred Land

Yet, when Europeans arrived in *Aotearoa*, the Māori struggled to maintain their religious and cultural identity. One major reason for this struggle was colonization and land development that



**Māori Religion, Fig. 2** Maori ancestor TahuhuNgatiAwa. (House ridgepole of NgatiAwa tribe, Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. c. 1840. Public Domain. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TahuhuNgatiAwa.jpg>)

separated the Māori from the land. In the Māori religion, the close connection between the people and the gods extended to the land as well. Some of the genealogical stories, particularly those of the *ariki* or chiefly line, linked directly to *Io*, the uncreated being (Cadigan 2001, p. 125). Furthermore, according to Tui Cadigan, “Through links to *Io* all things have *tapu*” (2001, p. 125). Thus, land as well as people was sacred. As a result, kinship was not only with the people both as a tribe and family but also with the gods and the land. According to Cadigan (2001), *whanaugatanga*, kinship, was about right relationship “*ki te Atua*, (sic) (to the Supreme Being); *ki nga tangata*, (to people) and *ki te whenua*, (to the land). The word *whenua* means land and placenta” (Cadigan 2001, p. 125). As the European colonizers, called *Pakeha*, claimed

more and more land ownership in the mid- to late 1800s, the Māori were displaced from their native land. For the Māori, Cadigan (2001) noted, selling the land was akin to selling one’s mother. Furthermore, “a landless Māori is literally a non person, there is no ‘place’ they belong” (Cadigan 2001, p. 126). Psychologically and spiritually, the Māori connect deeply with the land as their foundation of personal identity and as their source of life.

The sacredness of the land extended to the mountains of Ruapehu, Tongariro, and Ngauruhoe on the North Island in what is today Tongariro National Park. Mel White (2009) noted that the Māori “look on all three volcanoes with awe and wonder and consider them *tapu*” (p. 82). This area at first was listed by the United Nations as World Heritage Site for its natural beauty. Later, in 1993, the national park was also granted the designation as a cultural site, the first natural site to receive such distinction, because a delegation that included Māori elders was able to persuade the UN committee to make that decision (White 2009). Even though the religion of the Māori no longer exists as it once did, the sacredness and importance of ancestors, family, and land remain an integral part of the identity and spirituality of the indigenous people of Aotearoa, the Māori.

## See Also

- ▶ Animism
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Hawaiian Religion
- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Participation Mystique
- ▶ Pele
- ▶ Re-Enchantment
- ▶ Soul in the World

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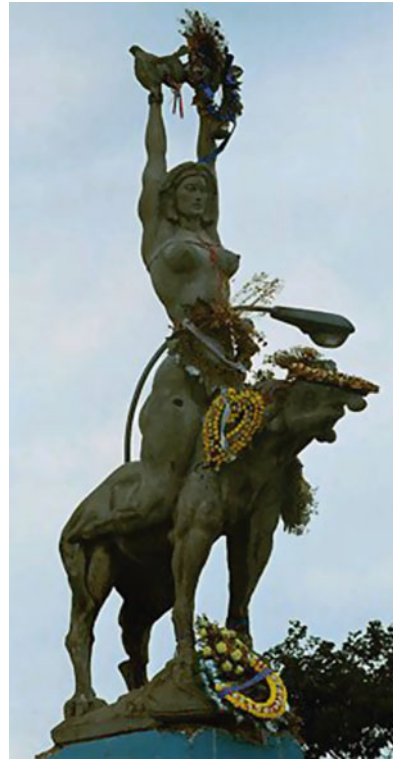
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## María Lionza

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*La Reina Santa Maria de La Onza* (The Queen Saint Mary of the Boar), María Lionza, is a goddess whose worship is very popular in Venezuela and nearby countries. Venezuela was colonized by Spain in 1522, when war and measles greatly weakened the Indigenous population. Slaves were imported from Africa, and relations among all the races over time bred a large class of *mestizos*, or mixed-bloods. Venezuela won independence from Spain in 1830, exported cocoa and coffee, then a major oil boom began after WWI. But society suffers from corruption, crime, and drug traffic (The truth; World Drug Report). Its state oil-producing company, PDVSA, has a US subsidiary named Citco. With a population of 29 million, Venezuela is ruled by descendants of the Spanish Conquistadors. The patriarchal tradition of South America's Catholic Church tends to support the conservative men of the upper class, and political conflict long centered around the socialist President Hugo Chávez (1954–2013). The poverty rate is about 60 %. The government is promoting social programs focusing on health, education,



**María Lionza, Fig. 1** Statue of María Lionza on the Francisco Fajardo Highway in Caracas. (Original as: Estatua de María Lionza en la autopista Francisco Fajardo). (This figure is licensed under the GNU Free Documentation License [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:EstatuaMaria\\_lionza.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:EstatuaMaria_lionza.jpg))

and poverty. The population now is about 68 % Mestizo, 20 % White, 10 % African (Heckel, Lieuwen, Martz & McCoy), and 2 % Indigenous Indians (International). This is the social background for María Lionza's religion (Fig. 1).

There are two major symbolic mythic narratives about María Lionza's origin. The first is common among the elite classes. It describes María as the daughter of a Spanish *hacienda* owner who was "crazy," would run away naked, and be found talking to animals. Many among the Catholic elite scorn her "cult" as "black magic" where they sacrifice animals. This narrative places María as an offshoot of the upper class who rejected their social norms and expresses fear of her "cult" as crude and dangerous.

The second narrative of María Lionza's origin includes various accounts of her as a beautiful



green- or blue-eyed daughter of an Indian chief of the sixteenth-century Yacurá region, struggling for survival against the Spanish Conquistadors (Varner 2009). Since Indigenous and African people typically have brown eyes, the image of María's blue or green eyes suggests that, if the daughter of an Indian chief, she was *mestizo*, probably meaning the chief seduced a white girl, which might anger the Spanish. In this version, she was sacrificed to or was grabbed by a deadly Anaconda snake in a lake. Snakes are highly symbolic of life/death/transformation/mystery. Aquatic Anacondas are some of the largest snakes in the world and crush their victims. María Lionza was resurrected as a goddess of nature, going through death and resurrection as many divinities on earth do, showing their eternal nature as power over death. Or she exploded from inside the snake, showing her great power, and became the El Sorte mountain, where she is now worshiped as a nature spirit, who speaks through mediums and priestesses. Why the appeal? One author says:

Humans go for various reasons: to worship the spirits, in search of *amor, salud y dinero* (love, health, and money), to be cleansed, to talk with the spirits and ask them for advice, and in search of a general sense of well-being (Placido 2001).

This version expresses strong Indigenous closeness to nature. Another myth tells of her as a native girl attempting to intercede with the conquering Spanish armies to save her people but was killed for her efforts. This expresses Indigenous feelings of resentment and betrayal. After death she came back to life as a boar (*onza*) – resurrection again – or as a woman riding a boar or tapir, as is portrayed in the daring statue in the middle of Caracas' highway, where she holds up a female pelvis, and people add wreaths.

María Lionza's devotees see their practice as an overlapping supplement to, not a replacement for Catholicism, which has baptized about 90 % of the population. María Lionza tells her devotees that they must be baptized Catholics and practice a positive morality (Varner 2009, p. 37). In messages sent through mediums, an anthropologist reports that:

She uses a very learned language and says "Let us not make money into a god. It is possible to buy a cross, but not salvation. Do not make promiscuity a god." . . . their practices are about beauty and purity, about order and morality, about becoming clean and behaving properly. It is of this pureness and morality that the spirits speak. . . . Spirits tell married couples to stay together, young girls not to have sex before they get married, young boys not to fool around . . . . Requests or attempts to act against the teaching of the Catholic Church and of mainstream morality are judged very negatively by both mediums and believers (Placido 2001).

Her believers commonly go to church then go pray at María Lionza's altars with her statue. It is a syncretic blend of Catholic beliefs, such as her name María and candles, and African traditions, such as drumming and healing, and Indigenous practices, such as cigars and spirit possession. María Lionza is a living, energetic syncretic goddess with a large following and a powerful psychological gift to give her people. It is not a quiet, reserved religion, but is a dramatic synthetic image emerged from the collective unconscious of Venezuelan history and society.

Most of María Lionza's devotees are people of the large poor class, although all kinds of people come to her ceremonies. On October 12, many celebrate "Columbus Day," renamed *Día de la Raza* (Day of the [meeting of the] Races). But the masses of poor, who live in sprawling, crowded, violent *ranchos* (shantytowns) like "Little Hell," celebrate "The Day of Indigenous Resistance." This is part of the reason for the popularity of María Lionza. She attracts large numbers of devotees, many who feel helpless, victimized, and oppressed. These feelings can lead to passive despair or angry violence. But many find strength in María Lionza's psychological and spiritual healing. Her celebrations can be a wild, anarchic, exotic carnival of wonders.

They come to María Lionza with great collective wounds, inner and outer. For example, in one widely publicized case, Linda Loaiza López, at age 18, in 2001, on her way to register for college in Caracas, was kidnapped and kept by an upper-class man for 3 months as a sex slave, repeatedly raped and tortured. Finally, the police rescued her. Her ears were destroyed, eyes and teeth

damaged, and more. Hospital photos were widely published in Venezuela, arousing outrage. The trial was delayed for 3 years, judges refusing to take the highly charged case. Finally, her torturer, whose father was a high-level politician, was acquitted on the unproven assertion that she was a prostitute (Nichols 2006, pp. 74–75). Linda spent over 580 days in the hospital. An appeal trial in an international court began in 2005, after which her attacker was convicted and spent 6 years in jail. Linda pursued a Master's Degree in International Law and "regained her smile" (Guerrero 2011; Ross 2005). The case was widely seen as a symbol of cruel oppression of women, even among elite women. This is an example of why, as Nichols says: "the native cult of the indigenous goddess María Lionza, which offers an accepted avenue for women's public voice, has continued to grow" (Nichols 2006, p. 76). As a goddess, she offers to women who identify with her a feminine healing path to the divine. She is like a wild sister of Mexico's Our Lady of Guadalupe but both Virgin and passionate Fertility Goddess.

Although the elite class in Venezuela sees María Lionza's religion as a threatening "cult," neutral religion scholars describe religions through the phenomenological method of "bracketing" judgment about the truth or value of a religion. There are no reports of negative "cultish" behavior, in the sense of deception or captivity. But while María Lionza is said to stress a positive morality, as a noninstitutional religion, there is little control over who practices it. Consequently, there is a wide range of believers, as with any religion. Some stress proper morality and not rebellion. Others emphasize Indigenous values. At the other extreme, some "holy thugs" believe in her with a Robin Hood kind of morality (Getzels 2010). Some scholars do not condemn them (Nichols 2006). María Lionza's religion is now legal and practiced on the *Cerro* (Mountain) *de María Lionza* National Monument.

In Caracas a magnificent statue of María riding the boar, bare-breasted (symbolizing nurturing and daring) and holding up a human pelvic bone (symbolizing female birth-giving), was erected in 1951, rising 23 ft on the median of

the Francisco Fajardo main thoroughfare. It is the inverse of the traditional public statue of a macho military hero riding a horse, phallic sword aloft. It is a bold symbol of the power of the archetypal feminine strength of a new religion that gives her devotees emotional strength and self-esteem amidst social harshness (Nichols 2006, p. 79). The pelvic bone that María holds up high in public uplifts feminine strength. The writer Yolanda Pantin urges María's devotees to "Believe, believe in something/that is not corruption" (Pantin 2005, p. 15), and "Hail the queen/Who remains in the waters/I pronounce this prayer/Before your statue" (Nichols 2006, p. 99).

To those who call themselves *marialionceros* (those who practice the María Lionza's religion), she is the central divinity in a trinity including the Indian Chief Guaicaipuro and the black slave el Negro Felipe, both victims of colonial wars. They are leaders of a number of changing "courts" that lead rituals, such as the Indians, the Medicals, the Juans, the Teachers, the Africans, the Saints, the Criminals, and the Revolutionaries (Nichols 2006, p. 78).

María of the Boar represents the divine protection of women, nature, and oppressed peoples who feel helpless. They go to her ceremonies and pray to her for strength. Nichols says: "It is evident that María Lionza represents a protective figure for society's underdogs, women, the native peoples, persons of African descent, the poor, and the disenfranchised" (Nichols 2006, p. 80). Songs, poetry, and TV films celebrating her and her priestesses (*santera*) have been popular (Nichols 2006, p. 94).

María Lionza's religion gives women the opportunity to be priestesses. Mediums (*material*) of the spirit world arise spontaneously, and the priestesses (*bancos*) translate and interpret for the mediums. By becoming María's *bancos*: "the marginality of women from political power is overcome," says Gustavo Martin, and "through a holy path, woman is elevated to power and all the masculine spirits that appear in the cult are subordinate to her" (Nichols 2006, p. 95). The ritual dance and trance possessions "are true acts of catharsis through which individuals let loose their repressions" (Nichols 2006, p. 96). Women



especially shed their passivity and anxiety and regain strength (*fuera*) to endure or overcome suffering. The pained ego-consciousness of these believers is drawn closer to their archetypal Self, where the wounded ego is strengthened. Nichols says:

The figure of María Lionza not only legitimizes the position of women as powerful beings to be respected, but also opens up the possibilities for women's representation beyond the traditionally assumed archetypal trinity of Virgin, Whore, and Nun (Nichols 2006, p. 98).

Mediums say things such as: "I am Yara, from the sky/heaven of the Venezuelan aboriginal Indians. But María, this beautiful Hebrew name, forms part of my true identity." She blends fierce indigenous natural power and Christian spirituality. "María Lionza insists that her followers practice mainstream morality, benevolence and kindness, not anger" (Nichols 2006, p. 97). As a Goddess, María Lionza offers spiritual power, such as the "gift" of being a medium, as a "Queen" she offers worldly power, and as a "Mother," reproductive power and protection (Nichols 2006, pp. 97–98).

Thousands of pilgrims gather at El Sorte mountain on "The Day of Indigenous Resistance" to participate in the indwelling spirit of María Lionza. The air is full of smoke from fires and cigars, the sound of many devotees pounding loud drums, and gunpowder exploding in the open fires – the collective unconscious fires up! The excitement begins with the dramatic rituals of the many "courts," priestesses, priests mediums, and the *Velaciones* (theatrical healing rituals). Cigar smoke is blown around to guide helpful spirits and keep away evil spirits. Perfume and rum are in the air. Some go into trances, trembling with glazed eyes and boldly slice their tongues with razors, so that blood flows down their chests, while the onlookers shout "*fuera!*" Women bring babies to them to be kissed with the mark of blood. At night fires flame high, devotees jump through the flames and walk over the red-hot coals (Cahana). The sounds of one shouted word echo: "*fuera,*" (strength), a plea to María Lionza for *strength* to overcome the oppression they feel.

Numerous rituals of healing are organized by priestesses and priests, where those seeking healing of all kinds lie down, are surrounded with lines of chalk powder, wine, fruit, and candles. Mediums speak the words of deceased ancestors and spirits to advise and comfort the crowd. The next day many sit meditatively, recovering in the cool waters of the Yaracuy River, reflecting on the intense rituals where they have felt María Lionza's *fuera!*

## See Also

- ▶ African Diaspora Religions
- ▶ Altered States of Consciousness
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Female God Images
- ▶ Goddess Spirituality
- ▶ Healing
- ▶ Hierophany
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion
- ▶ New Polytheism
- ▶ Pilgrimage
- ▶ Power
- ▶ Re-Enchantment
- ▶ Sacred Mountains
- ▶ Santería
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Soul in the World
- ▶ Spiritism

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## Martín-Baró, Ignacio

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Ignacio Martín-Baró (1942–1989) was a Jesuit priest, philosopher, and social psychologist who is most recognized for using the theological-ethical-political insights of liberation theology to develop a social justice-oriented liberation psychology.

Drawing on insights from liberation theology, Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, critical/political psychology, and social psychology, Martín-Baró conducted research projects with a "preferential option for the poor" and oppressed people of El Salvador, with the intention of raising awareness and empowering them in the midst of social, political, and war-related trauma. Due to his political positions and socially progressive psychological research, he was murdered by the Salvadoran army along with five other Jesuits and two employees at the Central American University in El Salvador.

Ignacio "Nacho" Martín-Baró was born on November 7, 1942, in the municipality of Valladolid, Spain. He became a novice of the Society of Jesus in 1959 and was transferred first to Villagarcía and then to Santa Tecla in El Salvador for his second year. From 1961 to 1965 he was sent to study at the Catholic University of Quito (Ecuador) and later to the Javeriana University in Bogotá, earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy and a licentiate in philosophy and literature. He returned to El Salvador in 1966 to teach at the *Externado* San José and in 1967 also began teaching philosophy and theology at the *Universidad Centroamericana "José Simeón Cañas"* (UCA or Central American University) in San Salvador, the capital. This was short lived, as Martín-Baró left that very year for Frankfurt and then Leuven to study theology. He returned once again to El Salvador in 1970 to finish his last year of theology, due to encouragement from his close friend, the liberation theologian Ignacio Ellacuría. Due to a prior interest he developed in Bogotá, whereby he consumed a variety of writings from psychology, Martín-Baró began studies in the field at UCA. He earned a licentiate in psychology in 1975, during which time he was also teaching the subject in the National Nursing Academy of Santa Ana. Desiring to expand his knowledge of psychology, he earned a master's degree in social sciences and a doctorate in social and organizational psychology from Chicago University from 1977 through 1979. Although he was in the United States during this time, both his master's and doctoral theses showed a deep concern with the growing

social and political turmoil of El Salvador, as he wrote about group conflict and the living conditions of the lower classes in the Central American country. Although deeply involved in his studies, he was attentive to the latest news from El Salvador.

After completing his studies in the United States, he returned to El Salvador to become a lecturer and head of the psychology department at the UCA. From 1981 through 1989 he acquired numerous administrative and academic positions within the university as well as became member of the editorial board of numerous social science journals, such as *Estudios Centroamericanos* (Central American Studies) and the *Journal of Salvadoran Psychology*. Apart from these endeavors as a scholar, Martín-Baró in his capacity as a priest first served in the district of Zacamil, which lacked a clergyman in the early 1980s, and afterwards performed sacramental duties in the parish of Jayaque, a poor rural municipality some 30 km from San Salvador. It was in this role that he appeared closest to the Salvadoran people, involving himself through pastoral and community care and helping construct necessary structures to improve their living conditions (such as a new bridge, or providing wood and materials to fix their homes, etc.).

As a result of his studies in liberation theology and social psychology, of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, political/critical psychology, as well as his experiences as a Jesuit in El Salvador before and during the Salvadoran Civil War (1980–1992), Martín-Baró developed a system of psychological thought he termed "liberation psychology." In developing liberation psychology, he critiqued the general state of Latin American psychology for its "slavery" and "scientific mimicry" – the uncritical importation of North American psychologies for the purposes of gaining prestige and power, as ideologies alien to the experiences of the Latin American people, with its attending positivism, individualism, hedonism, and ahistoricism. He argued that such imported constructs tended to problematize the experiences of the common and poor people of El Salvador while

ignoring structural injustice and thus serving the interests of the ruling classes. In the stead of imported psychology, he proposed a liberation psychology based on three guiding principles of liberation theology: a Christian God of life who scorns injustice, the primacy of orthopraxis over orthodoxy, and the preferential option for the poor. Based on these ethical and philosophical commitments, Martín-Baró argued that psychology should ally itself with the oppressed people of El Salvador and develop research projects that would help articulate and give voice to their experiences, fostering the development of a critical consciousness (*concientización*) of their personal, social, and political conditions. This liberatory aim would be accomplished by psychology working not for but with the Salvadoran people and their cultural and religious values, recovering their historical memory as people and as communities surviving in limit situations, and by subverting the dominant narratives of the powerful and allowing people to experience their reality in more critical and liberatory ways, giving them the tools necessary for psychological and collective liberation. One particularly important application of this theoretical lens was in the development of the University Institute for Public Opinion in 1986, which Martín-Baró (as the only doctorate level psychologist in the country at the time) used to study popular opinions about the war, the US government's involvement, and the Salvadoran government itself. He in turn reflected these opinions back to the common people in order to inspire discourse, reflection, and critical consciousness.

Because of this liberation psychology, its political ramifications, and the research projects undertaken through this lens, Martín-Baró's life became threatened by the dominant conservative political forces of El Salvador. In order to protect his colleagues and allies at the UCA and himself, he made numerous trips outside the country, especially to the United States, to have intellectual exchanges with colleagues in social psychology and increase the visibility of the work being done in El Salvador. Such academic rapport led to his group and some North American colleagues

extending his public opinion research more broadly to Central America, through the establishment of the Central American Program of Public Opinion in 1988.

Tragically, on the evening of November 16, 1989, Ignacio Martín-Baró was killed along with five other priests and two employees on the UCA campus by US-trained Salvadoran troops. It is reported that he spoke out against injustice to the very end. His last words, spoken over the gunfire directed at his close friend Ignacio Ellacuría, were “Esto es una injusticia!” meaning “This is an injustice!”

## Commentary

George Atwood and Robert Stolorow in their classic text *Faces in a Cloud* argued that all psychological theories are the product (at least in part) of the intricate and idiosyncratic cultural, historical, and subjective experiences of the theorist. Their intersubjective systems approach would contextualize all psychological theories, then, within the respective lives of their theorists. Such an approach to the study of psychological theory would be undertaken not as an attempt to invalidate the theory but to comprehend the theorist’s intent and vision.

Atwood and Stolorow studied various metapsychologies which claimed different universal forces motivated human behavior (Freud’s drives, Jung’s archetypes, Reich’s bioorganic energy, and Rank’s notion of the will) but in the end revealed the deep texture of the metapsychologist’s subjectivity. This subjectivity with its particular personal-social-historical location, it appeared, was in many ways forgotten (was unconscious) in the construction of theory.

In Martín-Baró’s construction of liberation psychology, one does not find decontextualized meta-constructs which claim universal validity and influence on human behavior (something he himself criticized of much North American psychology), but rather a set of assertions and theories developed out of his experiences as a Jesuit priest working with the Salvadoran people in the years before and during the Salvadoran Civil

War. In his writings and work, he himself contextualized his theories as the product of political, historical, and personal circumstances, developing research that unapologetically made a preferential option for the poor and displaced people of El Salvador. He made repeated conscious efforts to construct a psychology that validated the experiences of the Salvadoran people, allowing them to give voice to socially and psychologically repressed emotions and opinions. Liberatory psychological theories were to be crafted not as abstract universal principles developed in order to safeguard a subjectivity that craves recognition and social status but by immersing one’s subjectivity as a researcher in solidarity in the subjectivity of the oppressed. In Martín-Baró’s case the oppressed were not abstract political entities but the particular people suffering under oppressive regimes in El Salvador and Latin America.

Encounters with the Salvadoran people in a religious and rural context and with liberation theology and with liberation theologians such as Ignacio Ellacuría were of crucial import to Martín-Baró’s development both as a Jesuit priest and as a social psychologist. Although he was born and raised in Spain, liberation theology’s God of the oppressed with its preferential option for the poor can be seen as having fomented in him an identification with the people of El Salvador. Alternatively, it could be argued that his empathy and experiences with the Salvadoran people in a condition of sociopolitical oppression made him more attracted to the discourse of liberation theology. From the perspective of relational psychoanalytic research on God-images, the former case could be understood as the image of a God of justice and the oppressed affecting the transference-counter-transference relationship between Martín-Baró and his parishioners in El Salvador, while the latter suggestion could be understood as that same transference relationship affecting his image of God. Intersubjectively speaking, both dynamics could have been present, his experiences among the poor affecting his theology and his theology affecting his experiences among the poor. Martín-Baró’s patterns of relating himself with his environment,

his experiences, and his theology can be seen as deeply affecting his liberation psychology in an especially self-conscious way.

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Communal and Personal Identity
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Ignatius of Loyola
- ▶ Jesuits
- ▶ Liberation Psychology
- ▶ Liberation Theology
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Psychology

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## Mary

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Mary, maiden of Nazareth, Mother of God, preeminent follower of Jesus, has seized the

personal and communal religious imagination of believers. Down the ages and across cultures, Mary has been heralded in painting, poetry, prayer, and pageantry. Most often the intuitive psychology of personal and communal sentiments predates the theological articulation or liturgical celebration of Mary as virgin, mother, and companion.

Whether masterpiece or indigenous work, Mary's person is inextricably bound to her assent to her role in the Incarnation-Redemption and by appropriation to her foremost place within the Church, and within the pilgriming people of God. She is the attentive, inclined young woman whispering a thunderous *Fiat mihi* (Luke 1.38). She is the rounded, redolent Madonna gazing, swaddling, and nurturing her Son (Luke 2.7). She is the restrained, resplendent Hodigitria icon beckoning and presenting her regaled Emmanuel Child (Matthew 1.11). She is the wise woman crone surrounded by prophets and populace, penitents and patrons pictured in catacomb Orans etchings, sketched Coptic depictions, or embellished Renaissance family commissioned works.

The people of the early waves of evangelization were steeped in the mythology and archetypes of the goddess trilogy of maiden, mother, and crone. Agricultural peoples felt the power of the fecund, nourishing and sometimes punishing Great Mother, while others were comfortable with images of the mother-son, queen consort-ruler representations. Vestal rituals and festivals abounded. Paul preached amid Diana's temples. From a psychological developmental lens, the maiden becomes mother then evolving to the wise and companioning crone. Within faithful and orthodox tradition and theology, Mary was never deemed a goddess, yet there were epochs of popular excess, political contrivances, misguided homage, and stark purgings.

## Mary: Maternal Theotokos

British pediatrician and psychoanalyst, D. W. Winnicott, wrote of the intensity and perduring influence of the mother's early "primary maternal



occupation" [with her child]. His works convey the ongoing function of the mother's presence, her ordinary ministrations, and her facilitation of the integration of her child's psyche, soma, and mental development (Winnicott 1992: Chap. XXIV). Both psychological constructs are applicable to the centrality of Mary's motherhood as theologically defined in the patristic church. Her singular relationship to her Son, who was both the Logos and *Verbum* of God, and her evolving presence within the soma of the church were hailed at the Council of Ephesus in CE 431. Mariology followed Christology and Mary was decidedly declared Mother of God, Theotokos, and God-bearer. This proclamation affirmed that Christ was one divine Person, with both a divine and human nature. The emphasis of the council was to refute the several variations of heresy concerning the Person and nature(s) of Jesus. Mary was deemed mother of the fully human incarnate, second creation, and nature of the one Person. The response of the people further enunciated Mary as Mother of God.

The psychological literature is replete with references to the essentiality of the mother. The love relationship between the mother and son was seminal in Freudian thinking. For child analyst, Margaret Mahler, the mother's capacity of attentive empathy made her "a beacon of orientation [for the child] in the world of reality" (Bacal and Newman 1990). The pastor and psychoanalyst Harry Guntrip, writer of the mother-infant dyad, asserted that "the deepest thing in human nature is 'togetherness.' After passing through separation at birth to 'aloneness' . . . there still persists that oneness of the child with the mother . . . It remains as the secret foundation of the stillness, security and peace of the Brughes Madonna . . ." (1992, p. 269).

Scarce are the Scriptural accounts of Mary's lived and shared experiences. Yet, what is recorded of her is analogous to the motherhood constellation posited by Daniel Stern, infant researcher and psychoanalyst. For the new mother, there is the life growth concern for the physical and psychological well-being of her child. There is the oscillating questioning

of her capacity for "primary relatedness" and her efforts to secure the ties of attachment, security, cohesion, and affection. The synoptic Gospel accounts of the Incarnation, the infancy, and early hidden life of Jesus suggest that Mary's relational self was analogous to that of other mothers. She exhibited the normal tensions between her hopes and expectations and her fears and premonitions keeping all these things in her heart.

Stern continues in his delineation of this motherhood constellation affirming that the mother herself demands a "supportive matrix" and that she undergoes an "identity reorganization" as she evolves over time. The pericopes of Jesus' ministry and the subsequent Pentecost event reveal Mary's evolving communal self and the consequent demands for her psychological reorganization from virgin, mother, and preeminent companion to the followers of Jesus.

The mother-child dyad is a continuous flowing of mutual-reciprocal influencing, and while the externals of the early and deep maternal musings and preoccupations may dissipate, they are subject to reactivation over the mother's lifespan. Within the child, these early and intense emotional and neurological working models of the mother's presence, containment, and soothing can be elicited again as the "evoked companion" (Stern 1995, pp. 171–185). Through the centuries, such had been the reactivation of Mary's natural protection and the pilgrim peoples' eliciting of her evoked presence.

### Mary: Strong Maiden

Were we to visualize the maternity of Mary as a triphytic with its two covering panels, the first panel would depict Mary as a daughter of Abraham and virgin of Nazareth. This historical Mary and her choice of virginity is indeed a paradox, personally, religiously, and culturally. Mary lived in a multicultural milieu, a multi-governed political regime, and a marginalized position of poverty, gender, and religion. From another perspective, she was deeply knowledgeable and rooted in the Messianic prophecies and their



reference to the virgin (Genesis 3.15 and Isaiah 7.14). Living near trade routes, hearing many languages, and coping with competing cultural values, Mary could not be naive or complacent about her volitional virginity. This virginity grounded her personal sense of self as a singular “at-oneness” yet positioned her communal self with respect to her people and her God. Upon her visit to Elizabeth, her kinswoman (Luke 1. 46–58), Mary proclaims her integral fullness and magnifies and rejoices in her God. She aligns herself intergenerationally and affectively to our father Abraham and his descendants. She resonates with a fundamental option for the poor and oppressed. She acknowledges that her grace-filled person will be called blessed through the generations.

Reflecting on the poet William Wordsworth’s words, she was indeed “. . . our tainted nature’s solitary boast” (Wordsworth 1977). Her call to this virginity went beyond physical intactness and integrity to that of psychological attentiveness and attunement. It was a transformative source of personal cohesion and spiritual unity culminating in both virginal sufficiency and maternal abundance. Her stance of introspection and interiority moved outward in Mary’s embrace of the virgin-mother paradox and encircled ever-widening communities.

### **Mary: Companion in Our Pilgrimage**

The second panel covering the maternity triptych would elaborate Mary’s position within the ever-widening communities of the followers of Jesus. The wise woman, crone, holds the traditions and companions the pilgrim people. Psychologically and developmentally, she is a grounded, seasoned, and tested woman abounding in lived and shared experiences, relieved of individual family responsibilities and available for those generative and integrative functions in the larger community. From the Pentecost event emerge two Marian considerations. She was among the disciples who “were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary, the mother

of Jesus” (Acts 1. 14). She is both locus and encounter for the new community of Jesus’ followers, and again, she receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit. She is commissioned to minister among the diverse peoples “from every nation . . . [who] at the sound [of the rush of violent wind] gathered and were bewildered, because each one heard them [the disciples] speaking in the native language of each” (Acts 2. 5). The Pentecost paradigm is the nodal psychological and life cycle event that thrusts Mary into her relational and communal vocation of companion to the journeying people of God.

Jaroslav Pelikan, eminent historian and scholar in the humanities, in his exhaustive and artistic volume on Mary’s place in culture, proposes that the Maryam of the Qur’an and the Miriam of Zion may function “as a bridge builder to other traditions, other cultures and other religions” (1996, p. 67). In the Christmas greeting (2007), “A Common Word,” addressed to the Christian communities, leading Muslim teachers opened their letter quoting from the Chapter of Mary. The metaphor of Mary, as the bridge builder, and its psychological implications are not lost in considering her most documented apparitions. While assent is not incumbent, these apparitions show a predilection for the poor and unlearned, the young, and the indigenous peoples as seen at Lourdes, Fatima, and Tepeyac (Guadalupe).

The merciful and powerful queen, advocate, and refuge theme runs deep in the religious psyche. Personal and communal blessings, victories, rescues, and restorations have been attributed to Mary’s presence and patronage. While miracles and apparitions do not require belief among Roman Catholics, the Church has declared two dogmas for ecclesial assent concerning Mary, namely, the Immaculate Conception (1854) and the Assumption into heaven (1950). The first defines Mary as free from any or all sin from the first moment of her conception and throughout her life. This singly graced position distinguished her and was prescient and orienting for her role in the Incarnation. The second definition, that of the Assumption, follows the long tradition in both the Eastern and Western

churches of Mary's dormition, of her incorruptible body and soul being taken up into the glory of her Son and the fittingness of her hailed position relative to her Son's glory. Neither declarations supported Carl G. Jung's attempts to feminize the Triune Godhead as depicted in the quaternity image of the feminine and the goddess within the Trinity. Both declarations bring to prominence the integrative wholeness of body and spirit, but they have limited accessibility and intensity for the religious imagination of other communities.

Righting this tendency to imbalance in Marian devotion and theology, the Second Vatican Council (1966) in the decree *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, situates the statements on Mary within the schema dealing with the total community of the Church, with her living as a "pilgrim of faith" (no. 58) and being "one with all human beings" (no. 53). In Chapter VIII of the document, the council fathers renew the concept of Mary as model of the Church, citing her obedience, faith, hope, burning charity, and perfect union with Christ (nos. 61 and 63). Such virtues together with her solidarity with the poor, her strength in faith and response to grace, and her call to ongoing justice ministry speak to a wider ecumenical fellowship and are vital to dialog with the present culture. Such virtues appeal to the broader human community, address the ruptures of the human condition and culture, and resonate with acts of global concern, conscience, and care.

Our psychological and religious sensibilities about Mary's companioning function strain between the beautiful enthroned woman ushering Dante in the final steps to *Paradiso* to the graphic and palpable image of Mary the single, unwed mother whose son will be executed, an image offered in Pax Christi reflections. Theologian Elizabeth Johnson gives us a creative and thoughtful biblical paradigm in which Mary is partner and companion, comrade and co-disciple (2003, p. 313). The historical virgin of Nazareth, the theological maternal Theotokos, and the psychologically evoked companion crone ever enfold in our personal and communal imagination.

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Pilgrimage
- ▶ Virgin Mary

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## Mary Magdalene

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The figure of Mary Magdalene depicted in the New Testament of the Christian tradition was the first witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Specific New Testament references to Mary Magdalene include the Gospel of Luke 8:2–3 in which Mary Magdalene is described as one who ministered to Jesus. This passage also describes

an exorcism of demons, which, according to current biblical scholarship, may not refer definitely to Magdalene.

Over the centuries of Christian history and reflection, many scholars have accepted the identification of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany and with a woman sinner who anointed Jesus' feet. Yet, Eastern Orthodox Christians and the Catholic Encyclopedia of 1910 distinguish these women as three different persons. Although Mary Magdalene has often been claimed to have been a prostitute, there is no specific biblical reference in the New Testament. This misappropriation most likely arises from the town she originated from. Migdal, originally called Magdala, was a fishing town known for women who consorted freely with men.

In the gospels of Matthew 27:55–56, Mark 15:41, and Luke 23:55, Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, came to Jesus' tomb at dawn on the first day of the week to anoint his body with oils and spices. The tomb was empty. Magdalene ran to tell Simon Peter and another disciple (John 20:1–2). Then she returned to the tomb and, alone, she waited there.

The brief historical evidence we find about Magdalene paired with poetic imagination and combined with certain concepts of psychodynamic and analytical psychology usher us toward meaning at the most definable character of essences. Interweaving psychology with scripture, we see in the narrative of Magdalene a transformed disposition of mind, body, and soul animated by spirit in relationship to Jesus Christ. Further, Magdalene's relationship with Jesus allows us to discern deeper knowledge and insight about the value of symbol and metaphor.

Etymologically, the Hebrew form of the name *Mary*, or *mirjam*, derives from the Egyptian *mr'* (to be loved) and from *rà a*, to see, the seer (Ricci 1994, p. 129). Her receptivity to "waiting" at the tomb is analogous to the depth psychological notion of "seeing" and "seeking." Her witness to the Risen Christ represents a transformation of consciousness, profound change inclusive of the notion of recollected memory at the level of the archetypal and numinous.

The root of the word memory in its most reduced form is *mr*. Closely associated to this root is the Egyptian *mr'*. Imaginatively splitting the *m* and the *r*, and locating the earliest graphic sign for the letter *M* in the image of water, *ma* also becomes the imitative root for the sound a child makes when it desires the source of its nourishment. The reduplicated form of *mr* is "*murmur*" which can be associated with the sound that water makes (Ricci 1994, p. 129). The two roots combined become a metaphor for the source of nurture, a moist, soothing, maternal, watery reality (Dunne 1988, pp. 116–120).

The letter *R* originally meant "*head*" and is close to the Proto-Indo-European roots *ar-*, *or-*, and *er-*. *Ar-*, which means "*to fit together*," gives us the Latin *ordiri*, the root of "*primordial*." *Primordial* refers to the original order of things, at-oneness, *harmony*. *Primordial* also refers to that which fuels inspiration, what developmental psychologist D. W. Winnicott tells us is the goal of developmental maturity: creativity and *art*.

The basic meaning of *er-* means "*to set in motion*." Also from *er-* comes the Latin *oriri* which means "*to be born*," or "*origin*." If we put the *m* and the *r* together again, we arrive at an image of maternal headwaters giving birth to us, setting us in motion. Psychologically speaking, the transformed Magdalene is analogous to how a mature ego provides a center from which we can generatively unfold, an interior previously unknown or unconscious. This core opens to us in numinous experience, receives us and renews us.

At a deep unconscious level, our "forgotten" or repressed memory strives for *this* source, or perhaps something beyond this foundation. Archetypal spirit – original unity or wholeness – is represented in the first figure a child knows: its mother or primary caregiver. Developmental child psychologist, D. W. Winnicott, reminds us that ideally our biological mother mirrors the archetypal feminine and imparts to the infant the deep inheritance of the self. Yet, due to early developmental trauma, sometimes what we long for can only be experienced as an absence.

Even if we cannot "remember" the source of our being because of developmental injury, there

is yet a bridging possibility that will restore to us what was lost or dissociated. St. Augustine of Hippo claims that what we yearn for is the soul we have been dissociated from at birth. We remain in this state until God belongs to the soul in totality: “O truth, everywhere” (Chadwick 1991, *Book Ten* 26, p. 37).

Reestablishing the psychological traces of murmurings in the treasure house of the imagination – what Augustine identified as *memoria*, the infinite halls of the unconscious – we make our way inward into these spacious caverns, seeking to make conscious what is at “the bottom of the trough.” In the process of depth psychoanalysis and various religious practices, we regress and feel as if we are once again “inside of the mother’s body,” or held by spirit, that feeling of oneness we still had as infants. We can locate a new vantage point from which the ego forms a relationship with the archetypal self of the psyche. Mary Magdalene reconnected to this archetypal self, which crosses the divide between soul and spirit. She ventured into the depths of memory, mourning, and “*mr.*” Whereas the etymological root of *ma-* resonates with the notion of the archaic maternal, *mr’*, in contrast, leads us to the *ground* level, to Magdalene and the empty tomb. Here we find psyche and soul rising to greet the source of spirit.

We can only speculate upon the specifics of Magdalene’s life. In scriptural accounts, there is evidence that something had caused a breakage in her inner world triggering fragmentation for which she sought healing. Whether or not she had been possessed by demons, she had become dispossessed of an authentic self. She needed help to mourn and to remember, to recollect that part of herself that had fallen away. Jesus offered this relationship. Jesus took root in her psychic soils and led her into the well of her own rich archetypal femininity. In learning to yield to the antinomies within her psyche, fertile soil was prepared for spirit.

Mary Magdalene willingly waited at the tomb. As in the Old Irish extension of the root *memor*, or *miraim*, which translates as “I remain,” Mary remained, even though the disciples and other women departed. Remaining provides the

necessary period of preparation and formation for the depth of interior feelings in relation to spirit to evolve.

At the intersection of mourning and remembering, a phenomenon emerges where there is a necessary breakthrough to something else, a new sphere of experience (Haughton 1981, pp. 18–47). Winnicott speaks of this breakthrough phenomenon as “*indwelling*,” meaning that psyche comes to dwell in the body-soma, which leads to an “integrated unit self.” Receptivity does not preclude suffering. Suffering and brokenness at times of psychological crisis, emptiness, or loss translates as living through the death of the ego in its old form, the space of dead-nothing. Magdalene entered “the gap,” the dark interval.

### The Empty Tomb

In John’s account of the Easter story (1991, John 20, pp. 1–18), Mary Magdalene arises the day after the Sabbath and comes to the tomb “while it was still dark” to anoint Christ’s body before his burial. After the disciples depart, Mary stands vigil. Jesus’ crucifixion has caused such a profound reaction that the event of his death is experienced as a *void*.

In Winnicott’s terms, one who feels “dead, empty, nothing” has not arrived at the stage of security that he calls the “I am” state of being. Unclaimed and repudiated parts of the self still accompany the individual preventing wholeness because these parts are yet unintegrated bits of being. The ego suffers tremendous anxiety and threat upon nearing integration of these bits, fearing what feels like certain death. To prevent what the ego perceives as its own potential annihilation, it sometimes defends itself by *breaking down or falling into* the gap of madness.

Beneath the defenses of the person is a “something else” which potentially integrates the dissociated aspects of the infantile or child self which have become split-off. These defenses prevent us from experiencing certain intrapsychic dynamics that lead to mature development and

the depressive position. The depressive position pertains to overcoming the earlier developmental stage called the paranoid-schizoid position, which is equivalent to a less mature psychological constitution. The depressive position also relates to the capacity to mourn.

In "The Manic Defense" (1935, pp. 134–35), Winnicott speaks of the manic defenses as the way human beings typically defend against the depressive position. These defenses are related to omnipotent fantasies, "flight to external reality, suspension of inner objects, and denial of sensations." As means of control, these forms of resistance offer us reassurance through external reality. Rather than experience emptiness, we fill ourselves up; instead of being still, we move; we seek to know and to understand instead of entering the unknown. Above all, we deny death as the ultimate fact of life.

These defenses are resilient because they prevent the innocent pre-egoic self from the beginning of life from being overcome by intense affect that an infant cannot yet tolerate such as severe dissociation. These defenses are still active beneath the surface of the adult psyche. The goal of healing is to get to the experience of emptiness and nothingness and to discover the true self which is creatively alive and real in contrast to the false self of defenses and repression. Only by entering into the original anxiety and experiencing the primal agony can we recollect the missing bits of being and become alive again. Healing entails building belief in good internal objects, lessening the manic defenses, which, in turn, shrinks depressive and persecutory anxieties. We are enabled to link imagination (in contrast to fantasy) to our physical experiences whereby we can create freely from an unlimited imagination, which is preliminary to the evolution of symbolic consciousness. We move beyond shame to healthy guilt.

### **The Stone Had Been Removed**

At the empty tomb, Magdalene faces dread, emptiness, and nonexistence. Fearing that

Jesus' body might have been stolen, she turns to external sources. The two disciples she turns to metaphorically represent the false-self reality. The disciple who outruns Peter represents the manic defenses. He runs ahead, but he does not *go in*; he does not enter interiorly. Simon Peter follows the other disciple and goes into the tomb. Yet, both return to their homes. Magdalene waits.

### **Woman Why Are You Weeping?**

Mary's tears at the empty tomb express grief, loss, and suffering over Jesus' absence. Tears are also a way of seeking, desiring, and restoring. Bending over to look inside, she confronts the darkness. As we enter the empty tomb of our own subjective interior, the ego fears the depths of the unconscious and the death of the false self. Without projections, we feel an acute emptiness.

### **When She Has Said This, She Turned Around**

This phrase represents a first "turning." The first turning still belongs to the transitional arena in which our imagination is churning with new images and feelings. When we continually long for something, it builds its image into us by depositing "a seed" in our psyche. The seed germinates and grows when it finds itself in a nurturing and moist soil (maternal love, Eros, desire, agape love). When the inspired image is secured internally, eventually something new is born of the two, a living third thing which exists midway between our idealized images and the essence of the thing-in-itself (von Baader 1850–1860, p. 8, p. 96).

In contrast, if an infant is surrounded by an environment in which it does not *see itself being seen* by the mother-mirror, but instead perceives an expressionless canvas, then the looking-glass mother becomes an external thing to be looked at but not to be looked into. A seed does not sprout and take root.

## Woman Why Are You Weeping? Whom Are You Looking for?

At this point in the scriptural narrative, Mary Magdalene sees Jesus but she does not recognize him. Jesus asks, “woman why are you weeping, *whom are you looking for?*” In the therapeutic arena, we are often mourning the self we have never known. We struggle to gather up the disparate pieces of self that are dissociated and scattered.

When Jesus asks Mary “*whom are you looking for,*” however, this phrase underscores the distinction that for Magdalene to *remember* and to recollect the unity of her self is distinct from *mourning*. To remember has to do with spirit beyond the psyche, yet bridged by the psyche.

Magdalene first *mourns the dead Christ and seeks “the living among the dead” in order to anoint him*. Only when Magdalene *waits* by the empty tomb of death and descent and faces its depths is she able “to anoint” the dead Christ. Encountering this space of emptiness, where our own images do not reign, allows something more profound to occur within our psyche. “Anointing” the dead Christ has to do with receiving new life, new possibility in this imageless space. The images emerge from the union of psyche and soul, not solely from our egos, and are now in-fleshed.

## Tell Me Where You Have Laid Him and I Will Take Him Away

When she first sees Jesus, Magdalene thinks he is the gardener. Winnicott (1958, p. 133) speaks of how some persons do not recognize that the people who inhabit them psychologically are a part of themselves.

### Mary!

When Mary sees Jesus, he *calls her by name*. As Mary is named by Jesus, he endows Mary with an identity specifically her own. As a distinct and separate being, she is able to *respond* and to name

Jesus in return. Analogous to a child that separates from the mother at the appropriate stage of its development, Mary can now witness Jesus from her own subjective nature as a separate person. Similarly, a therapist, as a significant other, “names” a patient through reliable person-to-person presence, receiving the spontaneous gesture and allowing for the omnipotent infant self to come forward to achieve the developmental culmination of the early stages of life. A container is provided for spirit to enter and to engage with psyche reminiscent of the image of the well-known attribute of Magdalene – the alabastron – a symbol in ancient and modern times of the eternal feminine.

## She Turned and Said to Him, “Rabbouni”

The scriptural narrative does not indicate that Mary has ever turned away from Jesus in the first place. The *pivotal point* is that when the angels first ask Mary why she is weeping, she cannot recognize Jesus as the Risen Christ but only through her own projections, as a gardener. Then, in contrast to a bodily act, when we turn the second time, we come to know that we are separate but related to the *divine* source who meets us in the dark night of the imageless space. There is no one other than God who is capable of being such a reliable and eternal mother-mirror. If we are fully given to this source, we are transformed into the same image. In psychological terms, this moment of self-reflection would be an instant when perception gives way to apperception, when “object” turns into a “subject.”

The text of a prayer by St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) grasped this complex transformation when he said of Mary Magdalene that “Christ was *hiding* himself from you when you were *seeing* him and *revealed himself* to you when you were *not seeing* him; until he whom you were seeking, *asked you whom you were seeking and why you were weeping*” he could not be anointed. Only when the Risen Christ is present to her *actually*, flesh resurrected in spirit, and *anoints her* does she recognize him.



We can look into the psyche and think we “see him,” but he is hidden from us, for whatever reasons of human defense structures. When Christ does reveal himself, we may *not* “see him” because we are caught in our own projections. The second turning, then, is a profound transfigurative moment for Mary as well as the Risen Christ. We see all essences in their restored, eternal form. It is the eternal essence of the Risen Christ who Mary greets as “Rabbouni.”

### **Master!**

Magdalene returns to the starting point – *memor* – something folding back upon itself. Making conscious the depths of *memoria* gives us witness to the true source that Magdalene perceives when she exclaims, “Master.”

### **Do Not Hold on to Me**

Jesus is both human and divine, never merely an *image* of God, nor merely a psychic internalization. Yet, his image received and internalized in Mary is a portal to the mysteries of the trinity and a presence that will never leave her. “*From now on you do know him and have seen him*” (John 14: 7). This phrase translated in the *New English Bible* as “do not cling to me” urges Magdalene not to cling to old projections, nor to dismiss the efficacy of what she has witnessed thus far.

### **I Am Ascending to My Father and Your Father, to My God and Your God**

Jesus includes Mary Magdalene in his final transformation, indicating the potential for others to become whole selves. The phrase “my father and your father, my God and your God” infers a specific kind of dependency that is beyond psychological categories and belongs more to the arena of faith.

What Magdalene experiences is definitively more than the restoration of the lost object in

the psyche, more than the integration of psychic contents. In the first turning, she mourns the loss of the idealized object in relationship to the historical person of Jesus. She encounters *a new psychological reality*. In the second turning, she encounters *the spiritual reality* of the Risen Christ in which spirit has bridged psyche and psyche, spirit, making it possible for her to participate in *actual* presence, resurrected presence.

As this love comes back into the world, we find a mother restored. His death becomes our death, his resurrection, our resurrection. Our participation leads us into the maternal headwaters to the mother before the mother, the object behind the object, who becomes a subjective interior reality, as well as a lived, embodied reality. Mary Magdalene returns to her community. True to the derivatives of her name, she becomes “*rà a,*” a seeker and seer of internals and externals, a woman of multiple realities, one who participates in two worlds, an inner and an outer world which leads her to exclaim:

### **“I Have Seen the Lord”**

The glory of Christ is not visible in itself. Glory is a reality that can be expressed only as recognized by another, at a juncture where the opposites of otherness are met and suffered. The impact of this notion is that Christ dies and rises in a way that is visible to others, which others can attain.

Mary Magdalene not only witnesses Christ’s second birth, *she rises with him*. As Jesus sheds his burial cloths, Magdalene sheds the skins of her former self. Jesus gives her everything that is *already* hers. She dies unto him whose body disappears, but rises. In his return, she is born with a physical meaning of her own. Spirit conjoins with flesh, and flesh returns to life and incarnates. Her resurrection is different from his and her response has its own characteristics. Mary, too, has risen.

The redemption of matter might be configured in the psychological arena as two persons in relationship who comprise opposite but

complimentary terms. A third constituent arises from the psychic vessel that the two persons create together. The opposites undergo a process of transformation and restoration. As the life-giving essence is restored, a fourth element arises which is spirit in matter. This becomes the basis for our wholeness and grounds us in space, time, and history (Von Baader 1851–1860, 2, p. 243).

In returning, our relationship to material reality changes. We participate in our own freedom and also in a redemptive historical process. As nature is redeemed, so is the creative feminine element, the god-bearer. Mary Magdalene offers an exquisite feminine ground to illustrate the embodiment of a psychological principle: that beyond our internal projections and introjections, beyond history, but in history – *when we mourn, when we remember* – we anoint, *but first we must wait to be anointed*.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Masochism

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German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing coined the word masochism in 1869 after his reflection on the life of novelist Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (Nacht 1995). A paraphilia, masochism's primary context, is sexual relationships, describing the experience of an individual receiving erotic satisfaction from real or imagined personal suffering, in being humiliated, and in the relinquishment of power. Masochism is often identified with sadism in sadomasochistic relationships (Loewenstein 1957).

As self-inflicted suffering, however, masochism can have a moral character as satisfaction is gained by becoming a victim. In religious masochism, the body is hurt for the sake of the soul (Ghent 1999; Glücklich 2001). In many western as well as eastern religions, experiencing personal pain becomes sacred as the producer of altered states of consciousness, a pathway to detachment, or an agent of purification.

Psychological understandings of masochism are diverse, ranging from the suppression of inner guilt caused by outward aggressive drives (Freudian) (Freud 1957); activity of the shadow and the archetypal need to worship (Jung); the persecution of internal objects (object relations theory) (Berliner 1995); frustration with a primary, non-nurturing self-object (self-psychology) (Menaker and Barbre 1995); a disembodied self (Gestalt theory); or a significant cognitive distortion (cognitive therapy).

Increasingly and especially in the context of religious experience, the portrayal of masochism in pathological terms is questioned.

## See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Altered States of Consciousness](#)

- ▶ Dissociation
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund, and Religion
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ Homo Religiosus
- ▶ Job
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion
- ▶ Object Relations Theory
- ▶ Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Religion and Mental and Physical Health
- ▶ Repression
- ▶ Selfobject
- ▶ Self Psychology
- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Shame and Guilt
- ▶ Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach

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## Matriarchy

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The term is defined in three ways. One refers to gynococracy or a family, group, or nation governed by a dominant woman and more specifically a mother who is the head and ruler of her family and descendants. A second meaning refers to matrilineal organization or a social system in which descent and inheritance are passed on through the female lineage. A third meaning, matrifocality, refers to the centrality (though not domination) of women, especially mothers.

Gynocentric organization can be found in many nonhuman populations which are centered around alpha females. Examples include ants, bees, pygmy chimpanzees, elephants, killer whales, spotted hyenas, desert mole rats, and termites. Another notion linked to the hypotheses of matriarchy is parthenogenesis or asexual reproduction in females which continues to exist in most lower plants as well as in some invertebrates and vertebrates. Parthenogenetic reproduction has been connected to the origin myths circulating among primitive cultures which recognized the role of female primacy in the creation of human societies. The idea of the female primeval creative force could be found in many of the earliest human writings and art forms such as those of Ancient Egypt.

The notion of matriarchy in humans emerged within the field of anthropology in the context of nineteenth century theory of cultural evolution. The latter posited that the human species “advanced” from primitive matriarchal social organization to patriarchal systems at the same time as it progressed from a polytheism that included the worship of multiple great goddess figures to a monotheism centered on a single male divinity. Anthropologists have also hypothesized that patriarchal impositions developed as people

realized the link between paternity and pregnancy; however, clear evidence for this theory has been lacking. Nonetheless, in some fields such as comparative religion and archeology, the hypothesis of pre-ancient matriarchal systems has continued to be explored and used as basis for various ethnographic theories which have attempted to resurrect the female elements from a misogynistic and sexist cultural history and reestablish gender balance. In spite of the disparity of views regarding the actual gender relations in pre-ancient societies, scholars generally agree that Neolithic societies were more egalitarian than those of later periods.

Currently, most anthropologists concur that there is no evidence for the existence of matriarchal societies in the primary sense of the term but that matrilineal/matrifocal groups have existed in various places for many centuries. The following are current examples of social structures which have maintained an ancient tradition of passing on of inheritance, name, or group membership through the female line and of giving women central roles in family and community affairs (though religious and political affairs are still reserved for the male domain): various communities in South India (e.g., in Kerala, Tulu Nadu, Mangalore, Udupi, Tamil Nadu) and Northeastern India (in Meghalaya); the Malikun on Minicoy Island; the Minang communities in West Sumatra, Indonesia; the Mosuo people of Southwestern China; the Tuareg communities of Western Sahara; the people of the Huron, Cherokee, and Iroquois Confederacy; and the Navajo, Hopi, and Gitksan groups in North America. Furthermore, in Orthodox Judaism, while the laws of inheritance follow the father, the laws of descent are matrilineal.

Theories of matriarchy have received most attention in the field of archeology. The notion of an archaic matriarchy that was subsequently overturned by patriarchal rule was primarily introduced by Johann Jakob Bachofen in his 1861 publication, *Mother Right: An Investigation of the Religious and Juridical Character of Matriarchy in the Ancient World*. A systematic

study of myth traditions led Bachofen to propose that the prehistoric civilizations were marked by three stages: in the first hetaeric stage, males had unrestricted access to all females; in the second stage, females overturned this unfavorable arrangement and established monogamous relationships and mother right, or matriarchal groups, along with an extremist variant, the Amazons; and in the third stage, matriarchy was permanently ousted by patriarchy with its male-dominated institutions which marked the beginning of women's disenfranchisement.

Although the exact characteristics of these hypothesized archaic matriarchal systems cannot be established with certainty, some general features have been proposed: (1) the female family name is retained; (2) children follow the female line; (3) movable and immovable property remains in the hands of the woman and is inherited by daughters, while sons only receive a dowry; (4) the difference between legitimate and illegitimate birth disappears; and (5) the woman becomes the wooer. The least disputed features are those that pertain to matrilineality. Examples include records concerning the prehistoric Lycian people whose families appeared to be organized according to the matrilineal principle, as evidenced in the Herodotus accounts of the Lycians who did not name their children after their fathers like the Hellenes but after their mothers, and the testimony of Nicolaus of Damascus who asserted that only the daughters possessed the right of inheritance, a tradition traced to the Lycian common law.

Other characteristics are not clear. There are inconsistencies in the delineations of matriarchal features regarding sexual relations. For instance, some scholars like Bachofen argue that it was through matriarchal rule that monogamous relationships were instated not through patriarchy. Others say that matriarchy was characterized by promiscuity, that women were having sex indiscriminately, and that through patriarchy, men established monogamous marriage relationships so as to ensure that their progeny was indeed theirs. In support of this latter thesis, scholars

have turned to the patriarchal rhetoric of various Greek myths which contain traces of possible preexisting or contemporary forms of matriarchy. For example, female rule was equated with animal bestiality and promiscuity which patriarchal rule “corrected” by establishing the institution of marriage (one woman for each man) so that men knew who their children were. Greek myths also reveal that underneath various marital conflicts was the male effort to suppress the woman’s attempts to overthrow the established male-dominant order and the setup of a bestial, promiscuous, and female-dominated arrangement (matriarchy implied). A prominent example is that of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra. Clytemnestra’s reprehensible repudiation of marriage and revenge on her husband for sacrificing their daughter, Iphigenia, were explicitly portrayed as disastrous to cosmic order for the implied reason that her acts were negating the male order and overturning patriarchal institutions and values.

Bachofen’s theory has inspired numerous studies as well as controversies regarding the characteristics of such Neolithic matriarchal communities as well as the historical process that led to their development. Many scholars have subsequently argued that the ancient struggle between matriarchal and patriarchal rule is implicit in the rhetoric of numerous Greek myths. However, most of the arguments for the existence of matriarchal societies are based on speculation.

## Commentary

The question of the existence of matriarchy poses difficulties for feminists because it is asked within a historical framework that is phallogocentric, or based on the accounts and interpretations of ancient texts and artifacts have been written by males. Recent trends in feminist thought (also named “third-wave feminism”) have abandoned matriarchal theories and critiqued the notions of any one gender, race, or social group holding power over another. In fact, the very term “matriarchy,” or rule by a female/mother, implies a notion of power that is more congruent with

the misogynist hierarchies of patriarchy than with any form of female social influence that may have characterized the pre-ancient world. Thus, the language itself used in the discussions of matriarchy is questionable because it emerged within a discourse tainted by oppressive systems of power that were based on exclusion, domination, and violence.

In psychoanalysis also, the question of whether matriarchy ever existed is problematic since from the psychic perspective historical reality is never objective, but it is always an amalgam of actual or imagined events and unconscious fantasies which shape our collective unconscious. The latter is expressed in the myths as well as the interpretive narratives we call “history.” The archaeological examination of ancient myths, art, and artifacts clearly assumes the existence of a “matriarchal consciousness” (which may or may not have had a material component) which early civilizations vehemently attempted to exclude and destroy by means of adopting its opposite: the patriarchal male-centered consciousness. From the psychoanalytic perspective, the very rancor of the misogyny in some early cultures, the extreme forms of patriarchy adopted in certain groups, as well as the eventual universality of the patriarchal system point to a violent repression of the generative powers of female sexuality in the ancient world.

Freud recognized the dynamics of the repression of incest love for one’s mother which characterizes identity development, but his phallogocentric interpretations have offered a limited understanding of the patterns of patriarchal oppression of females. A more recent psychoanalytic scholar, Julia Kristeva, explains that the roots of the cultural abjection and fervent efforts to dominate women stem from aspects of the individual’s early psychic processes of separation from the mother. In early infancy, the newborn exists in a state of undifferentiated physical and psychic fusion with the mother. This maternal space in which the baby is immersed is characterized by fluid physical and psychic boundaries as well as undifferentiated emotions and sexual drives. It precedes language; it is capable of generating the energy which helps

fuel the subject's meaning making, or signifying process, which at this point consists of echolalia, glossolalia, rhythms, and intonations of an infant who does not yet know how to use language to refer to objects. In this early psychic space, the infant experiences a wealth of drives (feelings, instincts, etc.) that could be extremely disorienting and destructive were it not for the infant's tactile relation with its mother's body which provides orientation for the infant's drives. At the same time, as the maternal realm provides emotional exhilaration and jouissance for the infant, it can also become suffocating and stifling as the infant becomes increasingly aware of its separateness from the mother as well as its continued dependence on her. The infant must gradually reject and expel the mother's realm from which it must emerge and separate in order to develop as an autonomous subject. The violence of the expulsion attempts reflects the infant's arduous struggle to resist the powerful pull of fusion with the mother's body and return to the uterine realm of plentitude. Thus, the maternal space represents at once abundance and sufficiency as well as the threat of suffocation and death of the emerging subject. From this perspective, the ancient lure as well as inconceivability of matriarchy and the extreme imposition of patriarchy would seem to have its roots in the psychic rejection of the ever-seductive maternal realm and the idealization of the paternal image in the hope of permanently erasing the threat of undifferentiated/psychotic fusion with the mother. In modern Western consciousness, this dynamic seems to have become even more entrenched and solidified during modernity when philosophical rationalism and scientific reasoning led to the conceptualizations of human identity as a rational and carefully bounded entity that could be studied scientifically.

### See Also

- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)

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### May, Rollo

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Rollo May is considered the grandfather of the Existential School of counseling and psychotherapy, which builds upon the classic psychoanalytic movement – a movement he both appreciated and critiqued. He was born in 1909 in Ohio and died in 1994 in northern California. May studied at Oberlin College and served as a high school teacher in Greece for a few years before attending Union Theological Seminary. After graduating from Union, he practiced for 2 years as an ordained minister at the First Congregational Church in Verona, New Jersey, after which he dedicated himself to doctoral studies at Columbia University where he earned his Ph.D. in clinical psychology.

Rollo May was a good friend of the Christian theologian and mystic Paul Tillich, whom May met in 1933 while he was a student at Union. Tillich was also a strong intellectual mentor for May. Later in his life May wrote a memoir of their friendship that was published shortly after Tillich's death.

The foundations of his approach to an existential school of psychotherapy were deeply



influenced by his understanding of the interrelationship of three seminal European intellectuals – Sigmund Freud, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Nietzsche. May's approach moved away from the medical model of the psychoanalytic school to a more deeply philosophical and theological model. The essential key to understanding the human condition, for May, is the concept of anxiety, which was the topic of his doctoral dissertation.

In an existential approach, with basic anxiety as a given, the person seeking help is encouraged toward her or his unique expression of creativity in life as a way of responding to the challenge of anxiety. He wrote "If you do not express your own original ideas, if you do not listen to your own being, you will have betrayed yourself" (May 1975, p. 12). For May, the focus on creativity kept therapy grounded in the categories of being and becoming, as he consistently argued for an existential and ontological basis for deep healing.

In the last years of his life, May was concerned about the development of a wide plethora of schools of psychotherapy, which he found unhelpful both to the culture at large and to the healing arts. He felt strongly that the discipline of psychotherapy should maintain its grounding in the fundamental purpose of "making the unconscious conscious." He also felt a deep concern for youth growing up in contemporary Western culture, lamenting on their behalf the loss of a sense of deep mystery and, with that, a subsequent loss of hope.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Nietzsche, Friedrich: Religion and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Tillich, Paul](#)

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## Meaning of Human Existence

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The question of the meaning of human existence holds the longest running place on the best seller list of vital questions among human beings, and the plethora of answers to this question have been complementary, redundant, and contradictory and expressed in philosophical arguments, theological apologetics, literary narratives, and a myriad of expressive arts. The meaning of human existence, though, is found by exploring situations in which, as Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) was apt to say, one is experiencing oneself as alive in meaningful and fulfilling ways. The experience of being alive in meaningful and fulfilling ways, however, is still described in nearly as many diverse ways as there are those asking the question, which is as it should be.

Descriptions of meaningful and fulfilling kinds of existence are plentiful in the history of philosophy and religion. These descriptions include notions of Platonic attainment of the ideal good to Aristotelian practices of the virtuous life, from Epicurean achievement of pleasurable absence from pain and suffering to Stoic self-control, indifference, and freedom from obsession and compulsion or the Cynic's self-sufficiency and release from external attractions and controls. For the pragmatist, the

meaningful life is one lived with utility and practicality, while the utilitarian finds meaning in life by submitting to the higher spiritual goal of all actions being done with the intention of achieving the greatest good for the greatest number of people. The existentialist seeks freedom and the transcendent experience of creating one's meaning in life, while the humanist seeks the actualization of one's potential, even to the transhumanist's desire for overcoming all limitation, even death. Logical positivistic meaning is found in objective, empirical verification. The Abrahamic religions find meaning in pleasing and loving the divine, while the Eastern religious traditions include Confucian emphasis on social education and proper relationships, Taoist alignment with the flow of nature, Shinto movement toward collaboration with nature spirits in the path toward immanent immortality, Buddhist awakening from suffering, Hindu liberation from cycles of repetition through alignment of one's soul with the supreme soul, Bahai's spiritual unity of all humankind, to Zoroastrian rewards in blissful life for right actions, and avoidance of the hellish life for destructive living.

The history of discovering meaning in existence is not without the challenge of absurdity, meaninglessness, and despair. More formally expressed in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and resurrected more explicitly in postmodernity, nihilism in various forms attempts to deconstruct any conception of transcendent meaning, and most importantly, any meaning deemed static, secure, or eternal. Whether it is a Nietzschean devaluation of all values (Nietzsche 1967), or Heidegger's destruction of metaphysics (Heidegger 1962), or the reduction of value to merely exchange value, or the relativism of linguistic meaning, one is left often with the lived experience of meaninglessness and despair. Yet, the very diversity of meaningful experiences articulated and expressed in history need not nullify the experience of meaning making as central to human well-being. On the contrary, the diversity of searches and

experiences for meaning validates its significance. Sounding somewhat circular, the meaningfulness of the search and expression of meaning in human existence gains its reliability and validity from its inescapable and unavoidable presence across all qualifications of diversity in history, culture, and life span.

Meaning making in psychology finds its most formal handling in depth psychologies of various sorts, including psychoanalysis, Jungian analytic psychology, and a range of existential-phenomenological perspectives. Kegan (1982) has described the process of developmental psychology as a series of meaning-making stages. The most familiar of the approaches to meaning making is Viktor Frankl's (1905–1997) perspective on meaning in human existence called, logotherapy, as formulated by Frankl under the extreme duress of enduring and surviving a concentration camp (1946/1959). Other explorations of meaning making in psychology would include personal construct theory (Kelly 1963) and positive psychology (Seligman 2004) – the latter finding significance in discerning what is satisfying to others.

## Commentary

The aforementioned compressed history offers vital themes or questions for further reflection. Is meaning created or found? Is meaning cognitively constructed or existentially lived out? Is meaning found in the absence of suffering, or does meaning arise from the edifying encounters with suffering, conflict, and pain? Is meaning a product of one's neurophysiology? Is it evoked by intimate relationships or the desire for them? Is it found in cultural discourse, symbols, or artifacts? Commentary on a few vital points of consideration may provide answers to these questions.

The experience and hope for freedom is central to most any description of a meaningful and fulfilling life, even though different types of freedom are meaningful to different persons: freedom

from suffering and political oppression; from oppressive values; from a cycle of rebirth; from one's bodily existence; from disintegration, alienation, and dualism; from violence; from hegemony of ideas and practices; from illusion; or from limits of any sort. But our desires for freedom from situations are accompanied by desires of freedom toward other possibilities: toward a freedom to act, to connect, to decide, to eternal life, to purity, to intimacy, to justice, to synchronicity with nature, to a peaceful existence, to overcome evil, to authenticity, to productivity, to actualize one's potential, to truth, to satisfaction, and to union with the divine.

Our desire for freedom in its kaleidoscopic manifestations reinforces the conviction that transcendence is at the heart of meaning making. The experience of transcendence is the *sine qua non* phenomenon that weds psychology and religion and is the existential life force operative in the formation of *homo religiosus*. Transcendence as freedom, if experienced in the here-and-now mode of existence, is an immanent experience of actualizing possibilities within one's ways of being in the world. Even for those who seek freedom beyond the world, this otherworldliness is existentially experienced at any given moment in this world's modes of existence and finds pathways and expressions of transcendence in our everydayness.

The cultural expressions of meaning and transcendence in and through cultural artifacts suggest meaning is embedded in the world's webs of significance. In this way, meaning is discovered in an already and always preestablished context in which we find ourselves. Webs of meaning differ given particular multicultural contexts, including economic contexts. For instance, in a capitalist economic system, profit bestows meaning, as does promotion, and other such experiences of ascendancy, in what could be considered a "commodified" experience of existence. In other contexts, the giving of gifts without expectations of remuneration or return or payback is shaped by what is considered a "gifting" kind of meaningful and

fulfilling existence. Conflicts about what is meaningful among individuals are inevitable within and among cultures.

Relational patterns also construct space in which meaning occurs, such as in egalitarian and inclusive communal encounters that offer transcendence from hierarchical oppression and ostracization. For others, though, freedom from sharing, belonging, and difference has led to more exclusive and hierarchical patterns of relating, that although oppressive for most individuals, is nonetheless meaningful to those in power. Transcendence in this latter situation may be skewed in that freedom is a freedom to control others. But inviting other possibilities of communal liberation freed from commodification and paternalization as prime bestowers of significance ultimately requires starting from an understanding of the significance of control and destruction for those who exact these patterns of being. Inevitably, conflicts of competing contingencies occur between competing enactments of significance, though resolution of conflict is facilitated more readily when mutual, empathic understanding is risked regarding how the other comes to find his or her respective life patterns meaningful is granted a hearing.

Another point to consider and clarify is that meaning making is more than cognitive formulations of propositions created by the neocortex. Hence, meaning making in existential psychology is often confused with schema formation in the cognitive sciences. Clarifying this distinction is vital. Neuropsychological insights offer us brain mapping of those undergoing experiences of significance, which makes us aware of how embodied meaning making is, but this process extends beyond the activity of the frontal lobe to other emotional and narrative centers of brain functioning. Helpful as this information may be, it would be a mistake to conclude that the brain "causes" meaning. Critiques of unilinear causality and biological determinism take us beyond the scope of this entry but suffice it to note that even within neurophysiology, we know that dendritic branching rewires itself in relation to significant experiences in our lives,

particularly traumatic ones. Significant experiences are experiences in which we have attributed or found meaning in one way or another that can “cause” dendritic rewiring as much as be “caused” by it. It would be more appropriate to speak of our bodying forth in meaningful, transcendent possibilities as co-constructed and pre-reflective. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), the French existential-phenomenologist, brought our attention to how meanings are pre-reflective and lived out long before being conceptualized, which corroborates the neuropsychological findings mentioned above (Merleau-Ponty 1964).

The plurality of transcendent possibilities in meaningful and fulfilling modes of existence still leaves us with the specter of nihilism. If everything is meaningful, then can anything be meaningful? The counterquestion is just as fair and perhaps more accurate in its presumptions about existence: If everything is meaningful, how could anything be truly meaningless? It is a mistake to assume meaning making can be avoided or escaped in existence. Even the apparent absence of meaning is always juxtaposed against an already and always posited presence of meaning. Despair would not be painful were it not for alternative enactments of significance in other desired lifeworld compartments that are absent, lost, or inaccessible for the one in despair. Even in “the pit,” despair discloses its own embedded hope for transcendence. In fact, we enact significance every moment of our lives.

## See Also

- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Doubt](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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## Mecca

- ▶ [Hajj](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)

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## Meditation

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Meditation is a practice wherein active thinking is suspended and mind activity is focused and stilled. There are three meditation subtypes – concentration, contemplation, and mindfulness. Concentration involves focusing the mind on one object, contemplation involves the summoning of an image or thought and then holding or examining it in the mind, and mindfulness is paying complete attention to the here and now including thoughts and feelings without engaging with them. In actuality, these practices are often intermingled. Some religious groups, however, emphasize one or the other, e.g., concentration in Zen meditation, mindfulness in Vipassana or insight meditation, and contemplation in Christian and Tantric meditation.

### Meditation Techniques

Meditation is generally concerned with calming and controlling the mind. There are various techniques for achieving this:

1. Mantra – focusing the mind on a thought, word (s), or sound.
2. Breath – focusing the mind on the breath as it enters and leaves the body (Anapanasati).
3. Image – a spiritual image is focused on in the mind's eye.
4. Guided – a theme or structured map is followed.
5. Mindfulness – observing thoughts and feelings that arise (Vipassana).

### Meditation Postures

The most common meditation posture is sitting cross-legged on a cushion with the hands forming

a mudra in the lap or on the knees. However, there are various forms of sitting postures, including sitting in a chair. Sitting without moving allows the mind to concentrate fully. Other forms of meditation postures are standing, bowing, or walking. Meditation can be continued throughout daily activities through the practice of mantra repetition or mindfulness – present awareness.

### Spiritual or Religious Meditation

There are differences between the emphasis, approach, and techniques used by various religious traditions. Sometimes the meditation practices are utilized by mystics only or otherwise hidden, while some religions consider meditation to be a central practice for all adherents. Goals of meditation practices also vary, and they include contact with the divine, spiritual insight, self-refinement, self-knowledge, purification of consciousness, and/or enlightenment. The practice itself is done within each unique religious framework and has that religion's particular emphasis as well as flavor or imprint.

### Buddhism

The Buddha attained nirvana or enlightenment by meditating. He then devised the Noble Eightfold Path out of suffering of which correct meditation (concentration or dhyana in Sanskrit) is the eighth practice on this path and mindfulness the seventh. Buddhists strive to purify the heart and mind of greed, hatred, ignorance, fear, envy, jealousy, and other attributes of mind that produce suffering as well as to achieve enlightenment by realizing their own true or Buddha nature.

Although the goals are similar, the practice methods within the major Buddhist traditions differ in emphasis and sometimes overlap. There are three main groupings within the Buddhist meditation tradition:

Zen – emphasis on concentration through the practice of zazen or sitting meditation. The word *Zen* is a Japanese term which comes from the Chinese *ch'an* which is a transliteration of the Sanskrit term *dhyana* or meditative absorption.

Vipassana or insight (Theravada) – the practice of mindfulness and analysis of phenomena to facilitate inquiry into the true nature of things.

Tantric or Tibetan – in addition to concentration and Vipassana, the distinctive practices of this branch often include visualization and contemplation of mandalas, deities, etc.

All three of these traditions include metta or loving kindness practices although in different forms, i.e., chanting in Zen, and visualization in Vipassana and Tibetan.

### Christianity

Meditation has not been a central spiritual activity for ordinary people within Christianity where the emphasis is more on prayer, although some of the prayers chanted over and over again silently with the aid of rosary beads are like mantras which concentrate the mind. Religious and mystics have and do practice both concentrative and contemplative forms of meditation. The presence of God is the object of Christian contemplation. There is also the objective of becoming more holy or Christlike. In the Eastern Orthodox tradition, there is a practice known as repetition of the “Jesus Prayer.” “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.” This is similar to a mantra used in the concentrative practices. St. John of the Cross taught silent, imageless meditations not unlike Zen meditation. Similar to Sufism, the basis of Christian meditation is to open one’s heart to both human and divine love. In current times, there has been cross-fertilization from East to West, and many Christian meditation practices now incorporate Eastern techniques while maintaining the unique Christian perspective.

### Hinduism

Most Eastern meditation practices have their roots in ancient India. A classical meditation technique of ancient India is pranava or the repetition of the sacred sound of *om*. Yoga and Vedanta are the two prominent philosophies of the Indian tradition. With both, the goal of meditation is to lose the subject/object distinction and realize the truth of ultimate reality. Meditation is the only way to achieve this goal of Samadhi

or blissful superconsciousness. Patanjali (second–third century CE) is clear in his Yoga Sutras [1.2] that the purpose of Yoga is stilling the mind or “restricting the whirls of consciousness” – “*Yogas citta vritti nirodha.*” With Vedanta, meditation is seen as purifying the mind through intense mental worship, and the goal is union of the individual consciousness with the all-pervading consciousness. This worship entails symbols and images, repetition of a sacred word (japa), meditation on the qualities of the divine, and meditation on oneness with the divine. In Tantric Yoga, yantras (geometric designs representing universal forms) are internalized through intense concentration and visualization.

### Islam

Sufism, considered the mystical form of Islam, incorporates meditation practice. In Sufism, meditation and contemplation are considered essential for purification of the heart. Remembrance of God is the primary focus. There are many forms of meditation/contemplation including breath control, visualization, chanting the names of God, recollecting verses of the Koran, and the use of a *zikr* or phrase concentrating on God chanted either silently or out loud. There is also a mindfulness practice wherein one contemplates the self: analyzing weaknesses and negative qualities with the intention of purging them. Freeing oneself from the illusion of separation from nature and the universe by the suspension of rational thinking in meditation is also a focus.

### Judaism

Jewish meditations come from the tradition of Jewish understanding and include Jewish symbols, words, images, and visualization practices. Regardless of the approach, the focus and aim of Jewish meditation is the union of the self with the divine. While some form of Jewish meditation is believed to have existed in ancient times, over time, meditative techniques became largely confined to esoteric Kabbalah practices. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the Hasidic movement attempted to bring meditation into the lives of



ordinary Jews. They taught prayer as mantra and contemplative forms of meditation aimed at refining character traits and awareness of the divine. This practice consisted mainly of focusing on the letters of the divine name in various combinations: the Tree of Life symbol, a candle flame, or chants. Jewish meditation is today making a comeback based on recorded practices from historical Jewish texts including Kabbalah and meditation practices created by Jewish meditation teachers or borrowed from Eastern traditions.

### **Taoism**

Taoists believe that mind and body are intimately connected to one another. Therefore, in Taoism, meditation is both for improving and for maintaining the health of the body and attaining enlightenment. The focus is on stilling the mind and attaining present awareness by keeping the mind and breath together. This helps to simplify life and increase awareness of path. There are many “inner alchemical” practices as well as physical practices such as Tai Chi, for balancing the Yin and Yang energies and the five elements.

### **Secular Meditation**

Within secular society, meditation is sometimes used for self-improvement purposes. This type of meditation is without spiritual goals and is utilized more to obtain good feelings, to improve concentration and performance in some activity, to help solve emotional or mental problems, or to relieve physical and mental stress.

Meditation is said to have physiologic benefits. It helps slow down the impulse to rush into the next moment, and since much stress is caused by anticipation, it reduces stress and promotes a relaxed state which improves focus and promotes inner calm. Many studies have reported that brain rhythms, heartbeat, blood pressure, skin resistance, etc., are changed by meditation with resultant health benefits. There are ongoing studies on the beneficial effects of meditation and mindfulness to the mind and body.

### **Meditation and Psychotherapy**

The goals of both psychotherapy and spiritual meditation are to decrease suffering and increase happiness. They differ in that many types of psychotherapy aim to strengthen the ego and the self with the goal of improving the client’s personal and social functionality while meditation aims to free the individual from identification with the ego for the purpose of increasing awareness of the self as part of a whole and attaining spiritual realization. They are similar in that with both disciplines, the focus is on exploring consciousness both within the self and between the self and the other. With both, the habits of mind are observed with the intention of letting go of illusion, unhappiness, suffering, and self-alienation. Meditation is a letting-go practice and helps clients to see where they are holding onto opinions and views, let go, and gain a wider perspective.

Knowledgeable therapists often teach their clients meditation techniques for use outside of the office since the meditation process is an individual internal experience. One of the benefits of meditation for both therapists and clients is the improvement of concentration and mindfulness or the ability to be fully present in the here and now of the psychotherapy session. Mindfulness of both the self and each other is an important aid to the therapeutic process for both the client and therapist.

Self-refinement and personality transformation through meditation are goals in many religious traditions, but Buddhism and Yoga both especially emphasize psychology. In both Buddhist and Yoga psychology, freeing oneself from the grip of attachments is central to personal growth and development. Both traditions hold that past thoughts form impressions or samskaras (skrt) which form habitual patterns of thinking and behavior. Through concentrating the mind in meditation, the unconscious can be penetrated and the samskaras loosened, observed, and eventually dissipated. The Sufis through a similar process tap into unconscious forces and become aware of and transcend the egoistic nafs.

The use of meditation techniques within the therapy or advocacy of meditation for clients should be carefully considered. Many teachers do not advocate meditation for those who are emotionally or psychologically unstable as both the detachment process and the surfacing of intense emotions can be overwhelming for unstable patients. There is also a phenomenon known as “meditation sickness” wherein headaches, chest pain, or stomach aches may occur when the beginner practices excessively. This is believed to result from chi or kundalini energy rising too fast.

On the other hand, meditation is said to help patients with objectivity which can increase emotional stability. This skill in observing emotions rather than acting upon them helps to counter-impulsive behavior. Self-detachment rests and rejuvenates the mind. Mindfulness practices are sometimes used in psychotherapy to increase the patient’s awareness of their inner state. Dialectical behavior therapy, for example, teaches unstable clients mindfulness skills in order to increase their capacity for staying in the moment, sitting still with afflictive emotions and balancing the mind. The taking apart of self-concepts in mindfulness meditation allows clients to increase self-knowledge and correct misidentifications with negative aspects of their personalities. One can train oneself to identify and then relinquish painful mental habits. Meditation is also believed to increase compassion towards others, thus, improving relationships.

Currently in the West, there is an increasing interest in the integration of meditation, specifically Buddhist meditation practices, and psychotherapy.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

- ▶ [Mantra](#)
- ▶ [Om](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Meister Eckhart

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### Life

Johannes Eckhart (also called Eckhart von Hochheim, also spelled Ekehart) was born around 1260 in Thuringia in what is now Germany. He entered the Dominican priory around 1275. He studied in the University of Paris, receiving his master's degree in 1302 and the title of Meister meaning Master. In his lifetime, he became famous as an administrator, scholar, preacher, and spiritual director. In 1323, the Archbishop of Cologne inaugurated proceeding against him for heresy. After publicly declaring that he had no intent to preach heresy, Eckhart appealed to Pope John XXII but died some time before he was to appear before the Pope in April of 1328. In 1329, the Pope issues a bull condemning 28 of Eckhart's propositions (Smith 1987, pp. 6–8).

### Thought

Meister Eckhart was most concerned with the *union* of the soul to God. Of the birth of the Word in the soul, he writes, "What does it avail me if this birth take place unceasingly and yet does not take place within myself?" (Eckhart 1980, pp. 293–312).

Eckhart is concerned with knowing God, but for him, knowledge is in the form of union with God. You know about something by joining with it, the way Adam knew Eve. Knowing God cannot be achieved in the outer world but only by turning inward and experiencing God in the "*Foundation of the Soul*." Eckhart conceived the Foundation of the Soul as a place of pure emptiness and receptivity, unformed, unconditioned. Being that humans are made in the image of God, God also has a *Foundation*, a place Eckhart calls "the desert," "the abyss," where God is also purely empty. It is at the Foundation of the Godhead that the Foundation of the Soul finds union with God.

To achieve this place of union, individuals must practice *detachment*. We must detach not only from material possessions, relationships, and our sense of who we are as individuals but even our means of experiencing reality: memory, reason, images, sensations, and perception. We are to become empty, sounding boards for God (Smith 1987, p. 64). Eckhart writes: "Avoid the restlessness of external deeds! Flee and hide yourself before the storm of inner thoughts, for they create a lack of peace! If God therefore is to speak the Word within the soul, the soul must be in peace and at rest" (Fox 1980, p. 298).

When one has completely emptied oneself, then one can receive God (the Word) completely without reservation or thought and "*Breakthrough into the Godhead*." Breaking through means that God completely lives in the person so that the life of God becomes the person's life. "The eye with which I see God is the same with which God sees me. My eye and God's eye, and one sight, and one knowledge, and one love" (Fox 1980, pp. 83–86, Sermon IV). When we are united with God, we can see the world not as creatures, but as God does (Kelley 1977; Smith 1987, p. 65).

There is one more step. Eckhart understands that God does not reside only in God's Foundation but that God flows out into the world. God animates the world by breathing out into it and then withdraws His breath into the silence and emptiness of His solitude. In doing so, God enacts a never-ending eternal process of life and death (Smith 1987, p. 70). As we are

united with God, we also flow out into the world and return back to union with God.

## Relationship to Psychotherapy

Although Eckhart's concern is union with God, not the healing of souls, aspects of his thought can inform the practice of psychotherapy, especially if psychotherapy does not limit itself to symptom relief, but is concerned with the development of the inner world of the patient.

One place where the thought of Eckhart and modern psychotherapy meets is in the commitment to radical interiority. Eckhart's insistence on and detachment from all is not dissimilar to the sort of discipline required of those in psychoanalysis. The analysand is asked to examine the inner meaning of outward events; sometimes to such an extent that the events of one's "real life" became nothing more than a screen for one's projected inner contents. This is certainly a process of detachment from the "reality" of everyday life. All internal contents are examined for their unconscious symbolic value in a detached manner, and interpretations are offered. Eckhart would eschew interpretations and insist on a complete house cleaning, sweeping away all labels and preconceived concepts. Eckhart doesn't even want to label God as "good" for fear that the word would be too confining (Fox 1980, pp. 177–180, Sermon XII).

Meister Eckhart taught a radical presence to God by cultivating a mind completely clean of preexisting categories. In this, his thought is very similar to that of the Easter mystics. The concept of radical emptiness may be of help in the work of psychotherapy. To the extent that therapists are able to become aware of the contents and categories of their minds and detach from them, maintaining an evenly hovering attention, to that extent, they are able to be wholly present to their patients. As Eckhart warned about images, counselors must detach themselves from all images of who they are and of what therapy is and allow each session to come alive in the spontaneity of the moment.

Eckhart's concept of image is also helpful in considering the self-image of the patient or

counselor. Patients are people who have become attached to a few very rigid ideas of who they are and what is possible for them: "I am not good enough." "I am no one unless I am loved." They block out much of life returning to their core images (Shainberg 1983, p. 11f). Clearly, such individuals can be helped by learning to let go of their grip on such limited life scripts. Much can be gained by honoring Eckhart's in-depth understanding of detachment from images especially in detaching from self-images in the service of freeing up inner space for the client. The images must be dissolved not to be replaced with other supposedly superior images, but to permanently free up the inner world of the client, enabling them to live spontaneous, less scripted lives.

While the therapist may detach in approaching the patient and in helping the patient let go of inner clutter, for Eckhart, detachment creates a space for God which he defines as the Word entering human life. To experience the Word, Eckhart counsels not knowing or as his seventeenth sermon is titled: "Letting the Intellect Go and Experiencing Pure Ignorance" (Fox 1980, p. 238). Is this not also a useful model for a therapist? Can we likewise practice entering each session without "desire, memory or understanding" as Bion has counseled to await the birth of the one word that needs to be said in that session? The one word that will define and heal and connect the moment. Is that not the point of the session to sit and wait for the one right word to emerge spontaneously, in the session, out of the communion of the unconscious?

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Melancholia

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### Notes on the Term

The term “melancholia” comes from Greek and literally means “black bile.” The condition of melancholia in ancient times, according to the medical theory of the four humors, was thought to be caused by an excess of black bile in the human body. Since ancient times, there has been a great deal of writing on melancholia, including works by such thinkers as the Hippocratics, Rufus of Ephesus, Galen, and Avicenna, to cite only a few of the most prominent names (cf. Jackson 1986). While Robert Burton’s (1979) *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, published in 1621, is generally regarded as the most extensive and detailed treatment of the term, Sigmund Freud’s (1963) “Mourning and Melancholia,” published in 1917, is perhaps the work most well known on the issue of melancholia, likely because of Freud’s enormous influence on western culture in general and because of his impact on the practice of psychiatry in America in the twentieth century in particular. In this essay, Freud gave a psychological or mental, as opposed to a biological, explanation for melancholia in that he argued that mourning and melancholia are two kinds of reactions to losing an object, where mourning represents the normal grieving process and melancholia

a pathological response – and he gives psychodynamic explanations for both processes. In melancholia, Freud suggests that one is prevented from mourning because the object is “still in the neighborhood” but is still nevertheless lost, and Pauline Boss (1999), a contemporary therapist, refers to melancholia as “complicated grieving” but notes that complicated grieving can be completely normal in complicated situations involving ambiguous loss.

The term “melancholy” today is often associated with sadness (a feeling or mood) and depression (a clinical disorder or symptom). In clinical circles, the term melancholia has fallen out of favor, much like the terms manic-depression and sociopath. In *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR*, for example, there is no melancholia diagnosis, but there is a subsection titled “Melancholic Features Specifier” that is used to help clarify diagnoses of mood disorders, such as bipolar I and II disorders. However, melancholia as a term is making a comeback. William Styron (1990) writes in his memoir that

“Depression,” most people know, used to be termed “melancholia,” a word which appears in English as early as the year 1303 and crops up more than once in Chaucer, who in his usage seemed to be aware of its pathological nuances. “Melancholia” would appear to be a far more apt and evocative word for the blacker forms of the disorder, but it was usurped by a noun with a bland tonality and lacking any magisterial presence, used indifferently to describe an economic decline or a rut in the ground, a true wimp of a word for such a major illness (pp. 36–37).

Donald Capps and I (Capps & Carlin 2007; cf. Capps 2005) have endorsed Styron’s view in our own writings in the fields of pastoral psychology and psychology of religion. In psychiatric literature, Taylor and Fink (2006) have also endorsed Styron’s view, as they quoted this very passage for one of their chapter epigrams, and they argue that melancholia has a more precise meaning than depression in terms of clinical diagnosis (p. 15). In any case, time will tell what the status of melancholia will be in *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-V* and beyond.

## Melancholia and Religion

Historically, melancholia has also had religious significance. Jackson (1986) notes that “Whether the gods, a god, or the God, the supernatural being (or beings) visited the distressing state on the sufferer as punishment for his sin or because of his lack of repentance for his sin” (p. 325). Jackson also notes variations on these themes, that sometimes, for example, it was and is still sometimes believed that God can use mental illness as a means for growth or that the Devil, too, may be allowed to test God’s faithful from time to time, as in the *Book of Job*. Such explanations for melancholia will likely sound offensive to the contemporary reader because these explanations appear to be blaming the victim and/or rationalizing, trivializing, or romanticizing suffering.

In any case, mental and emotional disorders in general continue to have religious significance today. While psychological insights into religion have not fared well among theologians (cf. Scharfenberg 1988), Paul Tillich is certainly an exception, and his theological thinking does not blame the victim, nor does it rationalize, trivialize, or romanticize suffering. Tillich’s project was to correlate the teachings of the church with modern day experience, and so he redefined many traditional theological concepts, like sin. He argued for understanding sin as estrangement from God, others, and self. And he also argued that everything in existence is in estrangement. Existence, in other words, is estrangement. The upshot here is that, for Tillich, it would be correct to say that mental illness is a manifestation of estrangement or sin, but it would not be correct to say that it is the result of a particular sin. Tillich wrote regularly for the journal *Pastoral Psychology* in its early years, and he (2000) also wrote at length about the religious significance of anxiety and despair. In terms of the religious significance of melancholia today, particularly for men, Donald Capps, whose work I will discuss briefly below, has written prolifically (see, e.g., Capps 1997, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007a, b), and the topics of mourning and/or melancholia have been written about a great deal by both psychologists of religion and pastoral theologians (see, e.g.,

Carlin 2010a, b; Cole 2008; Hamman 2005; Homans 1989; Parsons et al. 2008).

Jackson (1986) also notes Burton’s introduction of the term “religious melancholy” in his *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Burton defined religious melancholy as a kind of desperation and “sickness of the soul without any hope or expectation of amendment” (quoted in Jackson 1986, p. 331; cf. Rubin 1994). Significantly, then, Capps (2001) has argued for the image of the pastor as an agent of hope (on depression, cf. pp. 101ff.). Depression and melancholia are obviously significant to pastoral care professionals, though mental illness in general receives very little attention in seminary education (Capps 2005, p. 1), even while there are excellent books available (Ciarrocchi 1993; Collins and Culbertson 2003).

## Donald Capps on Male and Female Melancholia

Capps defines male melancholia as a form of religiousness that emerges in men’s early childhood through their relationship to their mothers. This male melancholic religion “may or may not manifest itself in religious observances, commitment to spiritual disciplines, or religious participation in social causes or in acts of personal sacrifice” (Capps 2002, p. xvi). In fact, it is more often the case that men are *not* religious in these conventional ways but are often religious in experiential (in contrast to institutional) ways (cf. Capps 2007a, p. 256). As strange as it might sound, men are often religious in ways that, on the surface, do not resemble religion. But by understanding the origins of male melancholia, one can then see how men are religious in unconventional ways.

When boys emotionally separate from their mothers (normally between ages 3 and 5), they acquire an ambivalent attitude toward their mothers because even though, or precisely because, she is still around, things are not the same. “Why has mother abandoned me?” the boy asks himself. And he also wonders, “Can this loss be reversed – and if so, what can I do to reverse it?” “[T]he very ambiguity of this



situation,” Capps writes, “and the anxieties that such ambiguity promotes are of key importance to the emotional separation that occurs between a small boy and his mother, and this separation is reflected in the form and style of men’s religious proclivities” (2004, p. 108). Since all boys separate from their mothers, all men suffer from melancholia, and all men, therefore, are religious in this sense.

Capps suggests that male religiousness takes three forms, which are all directly related to the boy’s separation from his mother. The first of men’s religious proclivities is the religion of honor. By being a “good boy,” men attempt to “win” their mothers back, perhaps by doing well in school, by earning a lot of money, or by achieving remarkable social standing. The second main proclivity is the religion of hope, and here men attempt to find a replacement for their mothers by finding someone like her or something to replace her. Here men might take interest in literal quests, such as traveling, or the quests can be of a more symbolic nature. The third religious proclivity, which Capps (2002) added in his *Men and Their Religion: Honor, Hope, and Humor*, is the religion of humor, “which stands overagainst the first two ways of being religious in the sense that it humors them” (Capps 2004, p. 108). This way of being religious asks, “Can one really win mother back, and can one really find a replacement?” It may also ask, “And why would one *want* to win mother back?” The religions of honor and hope may have their successes, but they have their defeats and disappointments as well, and one way that a man might cope with the latter is to develop a humorous attitude toward the first two ways of being religious. Here, Capps argues men make light of the commitments and efforts that they engender, and by doing so they save themselves from bitterness and despair. The religion of humor accepts the reality of the loss yet refuses to be defeated by this loss. If male melancholia has no cure, Capps suggests that humor is a pretty good antibiotic. Put in theological terms, if the religion of honor correlates with what Christian theology calls “works,” and the religion of hope fits with a mystical searching, often marked by tentativeness and doubt, the religion of humor,

for Capps, paves the way for the religious notion of grace. The other forms of religion involve doing, whether by working or searching, but the religion of humor is simply being, mocking and relativizing doing. Honor and hope are retained but in a relativized form.

But what about women? Where do they fit into Capps’s theory? In *Men and Their Religion*, a sequel to *Men, Religion, and Melancholia*, Capps (2002) notes psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva’s view on the etiology of female melancholia. In *Black Sun*, Capps notes that Kristeva argues that female melancholia “is traceable to the two to three-year-old girl’s need to begin adopting the dominant . . . language of her culture, which is male-oriented, and thus to leave the security of her mother’s language world” (p. 5). Capps notes that Kristeva cites studies that link signs of depression with language acquisition. If this theory is correct, Capps suggests, then “it would follow that boys adapt more naturally to the symbolic language of patriarchal culture and are therefore less subject to lasting melancholia as a consequence of language acquisition” (2002, p. 5). Capps believes this argument has considerable merit. And it may also explain why more women than men suffer from depression.

In his work on the psychology of men, Capps has been greatly influenced by his mentor James Dittes. On the differences between boys and girls, men and women, Dittes (1996) writes:

Girls have the advantage that their primary caregiver (and life-giver) can be their primary role model. They know they are to grow up female, and to learn how to do that – how to behave and feel and think of themselves as female – they have both model and encouragement at hand in the person they are already closest to and dependent on (p. 24).

“For a boy,” Dittes writes, “it is not that easy. He knows he is to grow up male, and he also recognizes early on that to achieve this he must not honor and strengthen but disrupt the bonds between himself and his primary caregiver, his life-giver” (1996, p. 24). And so, “being male costs a connectedness with life” (Dittes 1996, p. 25). If Kristeva is correct, being female also costs a connectedness with life, but this cost is different than the one men pay, and it is one in

fact that they would share with their mothers, perhaps even strengthening their bond. For more discussion on melancholia and gender, see Schiesari (1992), and for more of a discussion on mourning and melancholia in light of Kristeva's work, see Diane Jonte-Pace (2008).

## See Also

- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Psychology of Religion

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## Merton, Thomas

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For Catholics and other Christians, Thomas Merton (1915–1968) has been a role model both

for the contemplative life and for openness to the interfaith dialogue, in particular the sharing and learning from Eastern religions. A best-selling author, Merton first became famous for his autobiography *Seven Story Mountain*, in which he documented his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. Death touched him early: he lost his mother at age 6 and his father at 15. Both his parents had been artists and Protestants. Tom traveled extensively in Europe and was deeply moved by religious art. After he was orphaned, he was raised by his grandfather and attended private school in England, followed by a flamboyant and disastrous year at Cambridge. He returned to the USA and attended Columbia where, under the mentoring of Mark Van Doren, he began serious writing. While at Columbia, he also turned to Catholicism, and in 1938 he was baptized a Catholic. Three years later, he joined the contemplative Cistercian (Trappist) Abbey in Gethsemani, Kentucky. He chose the strictest order to do penance for his sins.

### Contemplation and Activism

In his 27 years of religious life, Merton struggled with the contrast of strict monastic rule and the role he played in "the world" as he became increasingly popular, writing poetry, fiction, journals, and spiritual prose. Among his fellow monks and priests, Merton (who was known there as Fr. Louis) was both fun loving and deeply serious in this spiritual quest. He became novice master and was much beloved for his wisdom and his wit.

Thomas Merton was highly intelligent, a voracious reader, and deeply interested in all forms of contemplative experience. He corresponded with some of the great spiritual leaders of the East, including Buddhists, Hindus, and Moslems. He was spiritually nourished by this correspondence and by his own exploration of the inner life. In 1960 he was granted special permission to spend his days (part-time) as a hermit where, in addition to praying, he joyfully continued to study, write, and communicate via letters in a vast and burgeoning interfaith

dialogue. The Dalai Lama, for example, treasured Thomas Merton for his intelligence, creativity, wisdom, humor, openness, commitment, and religious zeal.

In the 1960s when the Church was changing due to Vatican II and the USA was changing due to the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war protests, Merton became an activist by the "power of his pen." *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* is an example of this social activism. He wrote passionately about the Christian's responsibility for humanity, including responsibility to speak up against injustice, prejudice, and war. Thomas Merton, the man, knew both pleasure and pain in his life; he shied away from neither. As a monk and writer, his genius lay in his capacity to express both intense pleasure and intense suffering, all with a sense for the whole.

### Turning Eastward

Merton found in Eastern contemplation the same emphasis he valued from Western monasticism: silence, solitude, simplicity, emptiness, treasuring the sacred in the ordinary, surrender, meditation, and prayer. In 1968 he was invited to give two talks at interfaith events in Bangkok and India. In preparing for that journey, he read extensively in Tibetan Buddhism and Zen, Islam and Sufism, and Vedanta. He wrote a journal during his travels in the East which was published as *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*. In it he reflected on every aspect of his thought and varied experiences. He wrote, for example, about the abiding value of the interreligious dialogue:

... we can see the special value of dialogue and exchange among those in the various religions who seek to penetrate the ultimate ground of their beliefs by transformation of religious consciousness. We can see the point of sharing in those disciplines which claim to prepare the way for "mystical" self-transcendence. . . . Without asserting that there is complete unity of all religions at the "top," the transcendent or mystical level. . . it is certainly true to say that even where there are irreconcilable differences in doctrine and in formulated belief, there may still be great similarities and analogues in the realm of religious experience. . . . [H]oly men like St. Francis and

Ramakrishna (to mention only two) have attained to a level of spiritual fulfillment which is at once universally recognizable and relevant to anyone interested in the religious dimension of existence. Cultural and doctrinal differences must remain, but they do not invalidate a very real quality of existential likeness (Merton 1975, p. 311f).

Merton was on the cutting edge of East–West dialogue, and he opened the door for believing Christians to follow his footsteps in the dialogic encounter with Eastern thought. In October 1968, just after completing one of his planned talks, he went to his room to shower and rest. He accidentally touched a fan in the bathroom that had faulty wiring and was immediately electrocuted. His death was a blow to all who knew him.

But his death itself gave a final exclamation to his closing offering at the first spiritual summit conference in Calcutta. He so eloquently expressed this prayer which remains as his final wisdom for all spiritual aspirants:

Oh God, we are one with You. You have made us one with You. You have taught us that if we are open to one another, You dwell in us. Help us to preserve this openness and to fight for it with all our hearts. Help us to realize that there can be no understanding where there is mutual rejection. Oh God, in accepting one another wholeheartedly, fully, completely, we accept You, and we thank You, and we adore You, and we love You with our whole being. Our spirit is rooted in Your Spirit. Fill us then with love, and let us be bound together with love as we go our diverse ways, until in this one spirit which makes You present in the world, and which makes You witness to the ultimate reality that is love. Love has overcome. Love is victorious. Amen (Merton 1975, p. 318f).

## See Also

- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)

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## Method

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Religion's method is based on faith, while psychology is a science. Therefore, both religion and psychology have a different yet complimentary way of dealing with and understanding existential questions such as the meaning and purpose of life (Greenberg et al. 2004). For psychology, the scientific method, the research process, and critical thinking are all going to be important. The scientific method is a cyclical process with the scientific cycle of theory building consisting of two complimentary forms of reasoning: induction and deduction. Therefore, either factual findings can contribute to theory development (induction) or theory can serve as a basis for hypotheses that may or may not be verified by factual findings (deduction). Programmatic research is a systematic step-by-step approach to theory development (Randolph-Seng 2006). In order to make a contribution to the understanding of human thought and behavior, contemporary psychologists must have a program of research in place (Klahr and Simon 2001). For religion or the religious believer, science-like critical thinking processes are important, but ultimate understanding of self and others must come through a trust and belief in those things that cannot be tested through traditional scientific methods. Evidence for the meaning and purpose of life comes through the fruits (outcomes) of those beliefs (see Matt. 7 King James Version). Religion's method is also a cyclical process with faith and action serving as two complimentary forms of belief. Therefore, the outcome of action based on faith grows into knowledge for the believer. In order for the religious believer to come to a sense of religious knowledge, faith in those things that are not seen or scientifically testable must come first (see Heb. 11 King James Version).

## See Also

► [Faith](#)

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## Midrash

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Midrash refers to a genre of classical Jewish biblical interpretation which flourished from the third century to the thirteenth century. The term derives from the Hebrew verb “to pound” – suggesting that midrash *pounds out* meaning from the biblical text. The literary form refrains from determining one interpretation as normative, allowing for multiple and mutually exclusive interpretations of the biblical text to coexist.

Rarely does midrash attempt to comment on an entire biblical passage; rather it almost always focuses on a particular word, phrase, or individual verse. Following an extremely close reading of the biblical text, the interpreter will point out a textual oddity such as an unusual word choice, a variant spelling, or an unexpected syntax. Holding the premises that the bible’s author is divine and that the text was composed with ultimate economy, an individual midrash endeavors to show how the apparent error was actually intended by God to teach an additional lesson. The remainder of the midrash will expound that

point, often making liberal use of wordplays, puns, and convergences of sounds. Similar to psychoanalysis, the midrashic process seeks to find latent meaning implied in the manifest material of the biblical text. Few Jews composed works of philosophy or systematic theology prior to the medieval period; midrash serves as the primary window into how the rabbis of the ancient world viewed God, morality, and the world around them.

Midrash can loosely be divided into two categories: narrative (*aggadic*) and legal (*halakhic*). Biblical style is typically laconic. The text provides only flashes of dialog and almost never directly reveals a character’s thoughts or emotions. Narrative midrash attempts to fill these gaps in the text, playfully imagining missing dialog, background stories, and motivations for behavior. One common method is to shift the reader’s point of view, retelling the story from the perspective of a peripheral or altogether invented character. This undermines the reader’s confidence in objective inquiry and directs his or her attention towards the relational field. Like many psychological interventions, the midrashic process provides individuals with license to explore, question, and refashion narratives that may initially appear immutable.

Legal midrash purports to deduce practical rules for worship, daily life, and moral behavior from a biblical text which appeared sometimes too vague and sometimes simply outdated to its rabbinic interpreters. For example, the Bible commands that Israelites refrain from work on the Sabbath, but it provides no definition of work. The Sabbath laws observed today by religious Jews develop directly from midrashic efforts to elucidate specific practices relying on subtle clues within the generally silent biblical text.

Midrashic interpretation is traditionally viewed as divine in origin; consequently, rules derived through legal midrash are considered by rabbinic authorities as if they were stated explicitly in the Bible. Midrash served as a tool to connect sometimes radical innovations in religious practice to the biblical text itself, thus maintaining a direct link between devotee and scripture despite significant transformations in



normative behavior over time. As Jewish tradition evolved through its encounters with other cultures and new technologies, midrash became the primary means by which rabbis validated these developments as consistent with divine will.

## See Also

- ▶ [Jewish Law](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)

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## Migration and Religion

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### Introduction

The relationship between and psychological consequences of migration and religion are topics of historically long standing. The age of globalization and patterns of forced migration have brought new attention to this topic. The text is organized into the following sections: cultural function and worldview; voluntary and forced migration; host culture analysis and operant refugee paradigm; and mental health, religion, and trauma.

### Cultural Function and Worldview

To understand the psychological implications of the interaction between migration and religion,

the function of religion in cultural context needs to be studied. The pioneering work of Arthur Kleinman in cultural psychiatry (1980) introduced a now internationally used model of the dimensions of culture for analysis of how healthcare systems, types of interaction in healthcare contexts, and patients' cultural understandings of illness and health are constructed. In this model, the symbolic dimension, which includes religious elements and rituals, is pivotal for understanding the deepest levels of how concepts of illness and of health are understood in a given cultural context. As illness and health are culturally influenced constructions, the religious or spiritual way in which these are approached informs the psychosocial and psychoexistential functioning of individuals and groups within the culture. Cultural psychologists Marsella and Yamada (2000) note that culture is a living entity that provides both internal and external artifacts. Included in the external category are societal institutions including religious and healthcare organizations. Included in the internal category are beliefs, rituals, and symbols, including those of a religious or existential nature. A change in one category necessitates attention to the need for change in the other as the internal and external categories are interdependent. The religious or spiritual systems operant in a monocultural or stable multicultural situation provide a means for creating a functioning worldview in which psychosocial and psychocultural understandings and behaviors are contained. Approaching the concept of worldview as a psychological construct, Koltko-Rivera (2004) defines it as a set of assumptions about physical and social reality that may have powerful effects on cognition and behavior. An individual's worldview needs to be studied in relation to personality traits, motivation, affect, cognition, behavior, and culture.

Religious and spiritual beliefs, rituals, and symbols can and very often do function as resources in such mono- or stable multicultural contexts. In cultural contexts where political stability, safety, and religious toleration exist, migration of different minority groups representing different religious traditions can



have a positive outcome for both minority and majority groups. Perhaps the most salutogenic and health-enabling acculturation process, in such cases, would mean that the migrant minority group members find ways to incorporate aspects of the majority culture's external and internal artifacts while maintaining and developing central resources for their psychosocial health and spiritual resilience originating from their original culture (DeMarinis 2003). Thus, a syncretism of cultural resources would emerge over time, experience, and exposure. Majority culture members would also be a part of the acculturation process, learning from and respecting the resources of the minority groups.

### Voluntary and Forced Migration

International migration implies a shift from one cultural context to another. Depending on the differences between the old and new cultural contexts, the role of religion or spirituality can have very different consequences for psychosocial adjustment and development. Migration takes place in both voluntary and forced situations. The term "refugee" denotes an individual who is forced to flee in search of safety, in contrast to someone who chooses of their own volition to relocate. Bascom (2001) provides a helpful overview of the geographical and geopolitical dimensions of refugee (forced) migration patterns.

Migration of any kind can cause a dramatic change in the way in which and means by which a person or a group's religious or spiritual expression may function. The more dramatic and traumatic the situation of migration, the more one may expect situations of dysfunction. As Silove (2005) points out, it is important to pay attention to how changes in existential meaning are being handled, especially in situations of forced migration. Values and belief systems, the inner artifacts of culture, can become dysfunctional, leading in extreme cases to alienation and loss. Thus, addressing these areas in response to trauma may assist with the move from trauma to survival.

It therefore becomes necessary through both social and psychological interventions to include room for religious and spiritual expression in cultural reconstruction and adaptation processes. Elements of humanistic and existential material need to be included in counseling and psychotherapy.

### Host Culture Analysis and Operant Refugee Paradigm

Another important psychosocial aspect regarding migration and religion is the fit between the host culture and the cultures of the migrating groups, with special attention to refugees. This aspect of research has been understudied but is now receiving much-needed attention. One of the central results of a research study on Polish children's attitudes to refugees (DeMarinis et al. 2001) points to the need for an analysis of functioning religious culture when investigating attitudes of the host culture population. Analysis of this dimension is important when conducting research or designing intervention programs in countries that have a defined religious tradition such as Poland but also as in countries that represent a more secular orientation such as Sweden. Concepts and policies such as religious freedom and tolerance may appear as simple and straightforward on the surface but may be impeded by underlying and underexplored worldview conceptions that often contain suspicious attitudes to certain religious traditions or religious expressions.

Host culture analysis in relation to refugee groups needs to be understood in relation to the operative refugee paradigm. Clearly, a paradigm shift has occurred in international responses to refugees. After September 11, 2001, the *security paradigm* has taken form, where refugees are not infrequently viewed with deep suspicion and in the extreme as being terrorists (Frelick 2007). A sign of this paradigm shift is reflected in the decline of asylum applications in the Western industrialized countries. Refugees are often viewed as moral blackmailers, exploiting the

goodwill of the host nations (Ingleby 2005), or as a result of terrorist threats, a major devaluing of refugees among receiving countries has taken place (Frelick 2007).

A comparison of European and North American attitudes to immigration (Livi-bacci 1994) noted that the factors explaining the different immigration policies in North America and Europe are not economic or demographic but stem rather from history, social structure, the functioning of the labor market, and social mobility. European countries tend to perceive themselves as totally formed and not requiring further cultural contribution. Homogeneity in culture, language, and religion is valued. Finally, in Europe, restrictive policies are in perfect harmony with public opinion.

A study of refugee problems in Europe (Veiter 1988) points out the large influx of refugees coming from places with other cultural and religious attributes. Accordingly, the Islamic immigrants often declare themselves as political refugees and hope to be acknowledged as such by the receiving state. The fear of the governments and populations of the receiving countries is that it will not be possible to assimilate refugees who do not belong to the Christian culture of Europe (Veiter 1988).

## Mental Health, Religion, and Trauma

Research on mental health and religion has become timelier because of a resurgence of interest in religious belief and practice in many parts of the world and because of the increased movement of the world's population (Boehnlein 2006). Mental health providers in developed countries increasingly are treating immigrants and refugees whose backgrounds are much different from their own, so it is important for them to understand cultural belief systems, including religious thought and practice that relate to mental health and illness (Bhugra 2004; Ingleby 2005).

During and after traumatic events, individuals frequently report great cognitive dissonance between what they observe and experience in

reality and what they previously believed were stable, secure, and predictable relationships, not only with other individuals but also with the supernatural or the metaphysical (Boehnlein 1987). Incorporating religious and spiritual perspectives in the clinical assessment of patients takes into account the effects of philosophical viewpoints, cultural values, and social attitudes on disease (Fabrega 1977). Religious teachings recognize the transcendental meaning of suffering and the fact that suffering, such as agony, despair, pain, and conflict, belongs to the totality of life (Kirmayer 2008; Rhi 2001).

In PTSD recovery, spiritual awakening can play a role in relieving survivor guilt (Khouzam and Kissmeyer 1997). Traumatic memory and unresolved issues may be helped in psychotherapy through an understanding of and addressing of the rituals of importance to the patient. Working with re-ritualization in the new cultural context, through connection to the patient's religious or meaning making system, may help to create a new perspective and a means of containing painful memory as well as providing a new memory resource (DeMarinis 1996).

Exposure to inexplicable evil, cruelty, and extreme violation can shake and sometimes shatter the foundations of the survivor's existential worldview. The survivor and the community face crises of trust, faith, and meaning (Silove 2005). A very useful conceptual framework for understanding the existential meaning-system in mental health initiatives among refugees in post-conflict societies is the *survival and adaptational model* by Silove (2005). On the level of existential meaning-system, the challenges are to the undermining of cultural and belief systems values. The adaptive responses are existential doubts and the adoption of new/hybrid identities, while the extreme responses are alienation and loss of faith. The social interventions can be made on religious, political, and cultural reconstruction levels. The psychological interventions may include elements of humanistic and existential therapy (Silove 2005).

Several recent studies in different contexts point to the importance of religious coping

strategies and resources in the management of traumatic stress after forced migration: Gozdziaik (2002), Hagan and Ebaugh (2003), Myers (2000), and Shoeb et al. (2007). These and other studies are providing a base for understanding the potential of certain kinds of religious engagement and involvement for identifying resources for coping and moving beyond surviving. However, there is the need for caution in examining these results as so many factors are involved at many different levels. Keeping such cautions in mind, three initial observations can be made. First, that religion and spirituality can be beneficial to people in dealing with the aftermath of trauma. Second, that traumatic experience can lead to a deepening of religion or spirituality. Third, that positive religious coping, religious openness, readiness to face existential questions, religious participation, and intrinsic religiousness are factors that may be associated with posttraumatic growth.

## See Also

- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Syncretism](#)

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## Mikveh

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The mikveh, a word denoting “the collection or gathering of water,” is a ritual bath used for purification purposes by women, after their menstrual cycle is completed or after childbirth, making a woman ready to resume intimate relations with her husband, and by men, to achieve ritual purity. Women also immerse themselves before the day of their wedding. Immersion in the mikveh is part of the conversion experience, too, symbolizing the change from the old identity to the new Jewish identity. Immersion in the mikveh marks an intermediate step towards a new state. The entire body, including the hair on one’s head, must be totally immersed in the waters of the mikveh.

The mikveh is a deep pool filled with a mixture of pure springwater or rainwater, called living water and tap water. Tap water alone cannot be used because it is pumped. Mikveh water must flow into the pool by natural means, such as gravity, although tap water can be mixed with what is called “living water.” The emphasis on the use of “living water” symbolizes water from the earth, like amniotic fluid from mother earth.

The narrow deep pool of water symbolizes the amniotic fluid; the pool itself is like the womb, a return to the mother. A person totally immersed in the mikveh is like a fetus inside the mother’s body.

New cooking implements are also immersed in the mikveh to ready them for kosher use.

## See Also

- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Primordial Waters](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Mindfulness

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### Historical and Religious Origins of the Term “Mindfulness”

The Buddhist practice of mindfulness is described in detail in the Satipatthana Sutra (also known as “The Foundations of Mindfulness” translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.010.than.html>) and also comprises the seventh aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path to end all suffering as explained by Siddhartha Gautama Buddha. Each aspect of the Eightfold Path is an interdependent principle of Dharma practice, and Right Mindfulness involves cultivating insight into how our minds work, using both the conceptual mind and the direct perceptions of our bodily senses. The aim is to refine our awareness of how different aspects of the mind and body inform each other, through observation and acceptance of their fluctuating nature. This enables practitioners to notice the arising and dissolution of changing states of awareness and cultivate an acceptance of the impermanence of bodies, emotions, thoughts, and environmental phenomena. This develops equanimity which is a mind free of attachment or aversion to what occurs. Ultimately it prepares the practitioner for the realization of the peace of Nirvana. Rahula writes, “Right Mindfulness is to be diligently aware, mindful and attentive with regard to (1) the activities of the body, (2) the sensations or feelings, (3) the activities of the mind and (4) ideas, thoughts, conceptions and things” (1959, p. 48).

## Contemporary Psychological Definitions

Mindfulness has now been adopted as a contemporary practice beyond the Buddhist community, used to tackle stress and modify distortions in thinking. It involves paying full attention to the present moment through the direct perceptions of our bodily senses, emotions, and thoughts, without judgment. It is understood as the antithesis of time-referenced action, where our feelings, thoughts, and behavior are rooted in an evaluative assessment of the efficacy of past actions and the anticipation of future consequences, which may be more or less consciously available to us. When practicing mindfulness we observe the present moment in all its fullness to access an awareness unencumbered by the distortions of memory or desire. Mindfulness is thereby the opposite of “mindlessness,” or a mind susceptible to unconscious feelings and reactive thoughts, leading to automatic, habitual, or impulsive actions.

## Mindfulness-Based Health Interventions

Contemporary health practitioners of various kinds understand the latter to be the root of much stress and psychological distress. Mindfulness techniques are being taught by a range of health education professionals to help cultivate the self-management of health problems which may be compounded by the tendency of the mind to react impulsively rather than observe and reflect, from acute stress to chronic pain, substance abuse, and severe, recurring mood disorders.

In more complex cases of recurring major depression, mindfulness techniques have been used as an adjunct to other forms of psychological intervention, primarily in conjunction with cognitive therapy to produce the hybrid “Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy” or MBCT. Recent research has demonstrated that MBCT is especially effective at preventing relapse in patients suffering with a history of three or more episodes of major depression, the most recent of which has not been precipitated by significant life

events (Ma and Teasdale 2004). MBCT helps these patients “. . . learn to be aware of negative thinking patterns reactivated during dysphoria and disengage from those ruminative depressive cycles” (Ma and Teasdale 2004, p. 31). It facilitates this by enabling the patient to experience changes in affect and thinking with acceptance, rather than the controlling, clinging mind of aversion or attachment. This cultivates a decentered approach to fluctuations in emotions and thoughts through an awareness of their impermanence, or ultimately changing nature. It can thereby avert the downward spiral of rumination on previous experiences of feeling “stuck” with negative emotions such as sadness or anger, which has in the past precipitated a depressive mood and developed into a major depression. In short, the adoption of MBCT techniques enables the patient to choose to observe their ever-changing emotions and thoughts rather than become them.

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction is a more generic form of healthcare intervention aimed at facilitating the self-management of chronic pain and stress, pioneered by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1990). He describes the practice he teaches his clients at the stress clinic as follows:

. . .the essence of mindfulness is paying attention on purpose. [. . .] being awake, owning your moments. As long as you are awake you can be mindful.[. . .] bringing your attention into the present moment [. . .] it [. . .] does not mean ‘thinking about.’ It means directly perceiving what you are attending to. [. . .] direct seeing, direct hearing, direct feeling (1990, p. 438).

Through the increased awareness of the here and now, we tune into our thoughts, feelings and sensations and those of other people too, so that “we can respond more appropriately to change and to potentially stressful situations, because we are aware of the whole and our relationship to it” (Kabat-Zinn 1990, p. 438). We can make more informed choices about how to act, because we have more information about what is going on inside us and around us, through the cultivation of focused attention on what is there, rather than what we want to be there, or fear may be there. In this way MBSR sidesteps the stress created by the limitations of our time-referenced mind,

which is prone to get stuck in the past or worry about the future, neither of which exists right now.

In summary, mindfulness is an ancient Buddhist contemplative practice that can lead the Dharma practitioner to the fulfillment and peace of Nirvana, as well as having a range of tangible health benefits for the non-Dharma practitioner. In both it requires the sustained cultivation of nonjudgmental attention to the present moment, in all its fullness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Nirvana](#)

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### Miracles

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In philosophy and theology, miracles are wondrous events generally conceived as violations of the immutable laws of nature by divine or supernatural forces such as god/s or other spiritual beings. Depending on one's philosophical or theological position, they are

argued to either be impossible events without any verifiable evidence due to the contradiction inherent in the notion of violating immutable natural laws or possible events enacted by a deity who has the capacity to momentarily suspend, abrogate, or transform the laws of nature. A psychological approach influenced by this debate over immutable natural laws and the supernatural would be tempted to problematize either party as neurotic and lacking good reality testing, depending again on the philosophical orientation of the psychologist – one who does not believe in miracles might see those who do as irrational and mentally ill and vice versa. A different psychological approach would be interested not in the particular truth claims of philosophical inquiry but on the way miracles and miraculous experiences express the deep structure of a person's subjectivity and their relations to personal, communal, and religious experience.

### See Also

- ▶ [Myth](#)

### Miraj

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*Miraj* is an Arabic word meaning “ladder, to elevate, or to ascend.” In Islamic literature it is used for the night journey of Prophet Muhammad when he was miraculously taken to the presence of Allah (God) in Heaven. According to the Islamic faith, it is one of the major miracles of the Prophet. It happened on the night of the 26th of *Rajab*, the seventh month of the Islamic calendar, in the year 621 CE, which is one year before the Prophet's migration to Medina. How the miraculous journey occurred is a matter of differing opinions among Muslim theologians. Some



maintain that it occurred only spiritually, while others assert that it happened both bodily and spiritually.

## Stages of Miraj

Miraj happened in two stages. In the first, the Prophet was taken from *Masjid al-Haram*, the mosque which surrounds the *Ka'bah*, in Mecca to *Masjid al-Aqsa*, the mosque just south of the Dome of the Rock, in Jerusalem. This stage, which is mentioned in the Qur'an, is named *al-isra*, the night journey (Qur'an 17: 1). In the second stage, the Prophet miraculously ascends from *Masjid al-Aqsa* to God in Heaven. This stage, called Miraj, is not mentioned in the Qur'an, but it is narrated in detail in various sayings of the Prophet (al-Bukhari, *al-Salat*, 1; al-Muslim, *al-Iman*, 259).

According to the sayings of the Prophet, the Archangel Gabriel took the Prophet to Heaven riding on a mount called *Burak*. He was elevated through seven levels of Heaven where he met seven former prophets; Adam, Jesus, Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham, one at each level respectively. His ascension was accompanied by the Archangel Gabriel until the lotus tree called *sidra al-munteha* in the Seventh Heaven. Then he continued his journey riding on another mount called *Rafraf* and was not accompanied by the Archangel Gabriel until he arrived to God's presence. There, he was given the good news that his people, except those who attribute partners to God, would eventually be allowed into Paradise. It was here where God enjoined five daily prayers. On his descending from Heaven, he rode *Rafraf* until the lotus tree where he took *Burak* again until Jerusalem before returning to Mecca.

While in God's presence, the Prophet was also given the following 12 commandments: (1) Do not worship any God, but Allah; (2) treat parents well; (3) lend help to kin, the stranded one, and the poor; (4) do not be mean and do not waste; (5) do not kill your child due to the fear of poverty; (6) do not approach adultery; (7) do not kill;

(8) do not usurp orphan's belongings; (9) keep your promise; (10) do not deal in fraud; (11) do not follow an idea which you know nothing about; and (12) do not be arrogant.

## Reactions of Muslims and Idol Worshippers

The following day, the Prophet told the Meccans about his journey to Heaven. The idol worshippers tested him by asking questions about a caravan traveling from Jerusalem. His answers were satisfactory, but the idol worshippers did not believe in him even though they cross-checked all with the members of the arriving caravan. Some idol worshippers went to Abu Bakr, who was one of the first Muslims, saying that Muhammad had gone crazy claiming that he had ascended to Heaven. Abu Bakr surprised them saying that he would believe anything Muhammad had said. After this event Abu Bakr was given the title of "The Trustworthy." In general, Muslims believe that Miraj is a test of their faith.

Miraj has a symbolic meaning for Muslims. They are supposed to experience the journey of the Prophet in their five daily prayers, feeling themselves in the presence of God as the Prophet did at Miraj. In order of importance of sacred occasions, it is after the Night of Power (*Lailatu'l Qadir*) when the Qur'an is believed to have been revealed.

## See Also

- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jerusalem](#)
- ▶ [Qur'an](#)

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## Mirroring

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The intrigue with the *mirror* leads down a corridor of a long, variegated history to involve the profound subject of identity. Who are we to self? Who are we to the world? What is reality? What is distortion? How much can we alter our perceptions?

The earliest hominid gazed at his image in the still water following a rainstorm. The question of identity and the soul concerned the ancient Egyptians, Chinese, and Aztecs. Present-day astronomers turn their big mirrors out toward space and ask, “Who are we; what is our place in the universe?”

### Uses of the Word “Mirror”

The noun mirror is an object which reflects back to the onlooker a more or less distorted image, most commonly reversing right and left or presenting the onlooker with a “mirror image.” The verb “to mirror” is to offer a verbal feedback, an aspect of the subject *mirrored* by an onlooker.

### Superstitions and the Mirror

Many people from Europe to Madagascar, and sects of Mohammedans and Jews, cover mirrors in the house after a death because they believe the soul of a living person in the form of his reflection may be carried off by the ghost of the deceased which hovers around the house until the burial (Goldberg 1985, p. 3).

Seven years of bad luck to one who breaks a mirror is related to the belief that the image is the soul. Since the mirror supposedly captures the soul, if it breaks, the soul breaks too. British anthropologist Sir James Frazer found that the Greeks believed water spirits could drag a

person’s reflection underwater, leaving him soulless to perish. This superstition explains the myth of Narcissus who perished from the frustration of inordinate love for his mirror image (Goldberg 1985, p. 6). Universal mystery of the mirror involves divination, the art which seeks to foretell the future and discover hidden knowledge (Goldberg 1985, p. 7).

### Philosophy and History

Plato argued that it was often impossible to see the idea, just as the true nature of the sun...cannot be viewed directly...can only be seen imperfectly reflected in a mirror. And by extension, the material world known through our senses was regarded as a reflection of the “other world,” of ideals which we cannot see, feel, or hear unless possessed of universal wisdom. Socrates and Plato asserted that our illusory reality is only the reflection of a greater, abstract goodness that lies in a hypothetical upper world beyond the *mirror-like* dome of the sky. Even though Plato considered this world a mirror illusion, this Platonic concept prevailed for over 1500 years in Europe, in religion, art, and morality (Goldberg 1985, pp. 114, 115).

Socrates urged his followers to study themselves in mirrors in order to make sure their faces did not reflect dishonorable thoughts or deeds, apparently assuming that they could “monitor their inner reality by their outer appearance” (Pendergrast 2003, p. 12).

Seneca, who lived during the time of the Roman Empire (CE 40), thought mirrors were invented so man might gain knowledge of himself and thereby wisdom. With the mirror’s help, the handsome man may avoid infamy; the young man be reminded that youth is a time of learning; and “the old man, set aside actions dishonorable to his gray hair, to think some thoughts about death. This is why nature has given us the opportunity of seeing ourselves” (Goldberg 1985, pp. 112–113).

The *Book of Wisdom* of the second century BCE echoes an aspect of the Platonic mirror.

In CE 54, Paul, at the church in Corinth, addressed his Epistle, “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in art: then I shall understand fully, even as I have fully understood” (Goldberg 1985, p. 115). In the authorized translation: “For now we see through a glass, darkly” (I Corinthians 13:12).

From these beginnings, the mirror analogy took on significance in Christian thought. From “spotless mirror” in the *Book of Wisdom* was drawn the attribute of the purity of the Virgin Mary.

The metaphor of the mirror lent itself to the Christian belief that all existence is understood as a relation between paragon and image, between a reality and its innumerable reflections. Contempt for the world of matter and belief in the liberation of the soul through asceticism and mystic revelation made this congenial to many believers (Goldberg 1985, p. 116).

Through the writings of Augustine and others, basic theological mirror analogies were formulated: the mirror of the soul and the mirror of the mind. The mirror of the soul was the image of the ideal or archetypal idea. This led to mirrors known as compendiums of knowledge and idealized virtues. The mirror of the mind was ambivalent; it reflected the shadow world of the senses and led to mirrors that warned of the transience and illusiveness of this world. But concerned itself with religious truth. The Holy Scripture was called a mirror from which could be drawn models of holy living either as biography or as religious rule (Goldberg 1985, pp. 118–119).

In Kabbalistic doctrine the goal is to meditate on the Hebrew letters in order to pass beyond the control of the natural mind, first by means of script and language and then by means of imagination to reach the stage where you can’t speak. Through the power of sheer imagination, one’s inmost being is something outside of self which takes on “the form of a polished mirror” (Scholem 1995, pp. 154–155).

Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Yahweh of the Hebrew Bible, and Jesus of the Greek New Testament each provide mirrors in which we see ourselves reflected in their faith and in their

skepticism, with the ultimate hope for transcendence. Jesus Christ may be seen as “a concave mirror” in which we see the distortions we have become (or a “theological labyrinth”), while Yahweh, the Hebrew God, is a “mad moralist” (Bloom 2005, p. 9).

Like Hamlet, Jesus is a mirror in which we see ourselves. “Endless questing for the historical Jesus has failed, in that fewer than a handful of searchers come up with more than reflections of their own faith or their own skepticism.” “. . . Jesus is to the Greek New Testament what Yahweh is to the Hebrew Bible, or Hamlet to Shakespeare’s play: the vital protagonist, the principle of apotheosis, the hope for transcendence” (Bloom 2005, pp. 12–13).

History has altered our perceptions and with it perceptions of soul, self, mirror, and mirroring. At first images reflected in water did not appear to belong to us but rather to the deities.

During the nineteenth century, the concept of the double, an alternate version of self, was perceived to turn against self. The Russian symbolist Andrei Bely produced a body of literature in which the reflected image plays a role often portending a tragic end. Gogol in *The Nose* and Dostoyevskii in *The Double*, through the use of the mirror, describe the worlds of their characters.

In 1924, Otto Rank, a renowned Austrian psychoanalyst, published a psychological treatise *The Double* which theorized that the double or soul and man’s need to immortalize himself led to the development of civilization and its spiritual values. Rank shared the preoccupation of the Russian symbolist writers in his observation that the double represented the problems of man’s relationship to himself. Both novelists and psychologists were affected by the impact of nineteenth-century science which seemed to destroy the soul. The mirror became a symbol of man’s rejection of materialistic reason in his search to repossess his lost soul (Goldberg 1985, p. 242).

When our conception of the universe changed to a more objective view of reality, we were freed of earlier misapprehensions about self, and in turn, our conception of the mirror was altered.

Looking outward, the modern mirror contributes to the broadening of scientific and technological horizons. Looking inward, the mirror remains a powerful tool of introspection, a metaphor to help distinguish outward appearance and inner truth.

## Poetry

Poet Margaret Atwood writes a powerful poem in which she equates the absence of a mirror to living without the self.

To live in prison is to live without mirrors. To live without mirrors is to live without the self. She is living selflessly, she finds a hole in the stone wall and on the other side of the wall, a voice. The voice comes through darkness and has no face. This voice becomes her mirror (Atwood 1978).

I interpret Atwood's words as an expression of our human desperation for "mirroring."

Another contemporary poet, *former* laureate Billy Collins writes about the mirror as an informer in a poem entitled "In the Moment":

As I closed the book on the face  
Of Thomas Traher and returned to the house  
Where I lit a flame under a pot  
Full of floating brown eggs,  
And while they cooked in their bubbles,  
I stared into a small oval mirror near the sink  
To see if that crazy glass  
Had anything special to tell me today.

Theoretically the glass "mirrors" back something we know or informs of what is there, but it may surprise us with *something* we haven't seen before.

In the twentieth century, psychologists became intrigued with the significance of mirroring as a vital process to self-*development*. Today "mirroring neurons" have been anatomically defined and observed in action on a functional magnetic radiological imaging of the living brain.

The study of how mirroring and the activities of mirroring cells affects us has been extended from the major role *they* play during the years of child development to their everyday role in influencing our actions in subtle ways often outside our awareness.

## Mirroring and Development

Does the mirror corrupt or enhance a sense of self for a young child? Psychologist Fritz Wittels\* found as a boy that the mirror helped identify his ego to himself (Goldberg 1985, p. 249; \*year of Wittels' writing is not provided).

Child psychiatrist Robert Coles recognized the role of the mirror in developing a positive self-image. He studied American children of well-to-do parents. These children were exposed to many mirrors in their homes, which were used for inspection of their appearance to "insure neatness and cleanliness" and "as a means of nurturing self-esteem." These children became leaders in society. By contrast, in his study of underprivileged children, Coles found this emphasis lacking (Goldberg 1985, p. 250).

## Psychology

In the 1970s, psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut described the concept of mirror transference in two seminal books, *The Analysis of the Self* and *Restoration of the Self*.

In Kohut's words, "The genetic matrix of the primary defect-stunted development of the grandiose-exhibitionistic aspects of the self-was insufficient mirroring from the side of the mother. . ." (Kohut 1977, pp. 7-8).

Margaret Mahler studied the interaction and interrelationship between mother and infant and categorized a variety of mothering styles based on the mother's ability to recognize and mirror the affect, cognition, and behavior of her young child.

The goal for the mother to respond with sufficient accuracy determines the development of a healthy sense of self for the infant. If her mirroring doesn't relate or approximate the inner feeling state of the infant/child, he develops an inadequate or distorted sense of self.

Mahler cites the example of Charles who could not be alone or in the company of another person for extended periods of time; he had lost his "symbiotic mother" "at a time in his development when this loss was equivalent to

losing part of the self.” He tried to learn how to have emotions. . .to maintain a sense of identity by mirroring others (Mahler 1968, pp. 30–31).

A decade later, child psychiatrist Daniel Stern based much of his study on significant developmental processes of mirroring, attunement, and empathy between infant and caretaker. To a great degree, these processes determine our identity, a sense of who we are and how we interact with others.

Stern elaborates on the development of several forms of the self which are essential for functioning. The self as *agent* grants us ability to perform in the inanimate and social worlds. If this sense is lacking, paralysis may result. The sense of physical cohesion prevents fragmentation with depersonalization, out-of-body experiences, and derealization. Memory aids a sense of continuity and prevents temporal dissociation which is seen in fugue states and amnesias. An affective sense prevents anhedonia and enables a person to connect to the culture, to socialize, and avoid cosmic loneliness.

Kohut, Mahler, and Stern all focus on the preverbal self and damage to the sense of self and psychopathology which result from failure of good enough mirroring whether the problem exists in the emotional/affective, cognitive, or behavioral realm.

Used in the clinical theories of Mahler et al. (1975), Kohut (1977), and Lacan (1977), reflecting back an infant’s inner feeling state remains a key to the infant’s development in learning about his or her own affectivity and sense of self. “Mirroring” then implies that the mother is helping to create something within the infant that was only dimly or partially there until her reflection acted to solidify its existence. Based on these studies, mirroring lies at the basis of healthy development and constitutes the foundation of the authentic self.

## Mirror Neurons

In the 1990s, mirror neurons were discovered by an Italian team who happened to be snacking on ice cream cones in front of macaque monkeys.

These monkeys imitated the scientists by beginning to eat too.

Mirror neurons are housed in several areas of the brain. One of these, the insula, is responsible for social emotions like guilt, shame, pride, embarrassment, disgust, and lust.

We humans are “hardwired” for imitation. Mirror neurons begin working at birth. Watching his mother stick out her tongue, an infant a few days old will imitate her behavior by protruding his own.

Through the operation of mirror neurons, we learn many behaviors. Our survival depends on understanding actions, intentions, and emotions of others which in turn depends on the existence of mirror neurons.

The function of mirror neurons extends beyond *actions* to involve *intentions* and *emotions* which contribute to make us social animals.

According to researcher Rizzolatti, mirror neurons have been found to mediate a broad range of human experiences that were previously thought too subjective to be characterized experimentally. Emotions such as empathy, theory of mind (the ability to perceive another person’s intent), and even the reaction to a loved one’s pain have been characterized at the neuroanatomical level and appear to involve mirror neurons (Blakeslee 2006).

Whether a person performs the action, observes the action done by someone else, or hears a sentence describing the action activates the same mirror regions in the brain which has led researchers to “speculate that syntactic understanding involves mirror regions that are normally associated with action recognition.”

Neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni, who studies mirroring cells in human brains, links empathy with strength of mirror neuron response, and suggests that the mirror system opens the gate to understand other cultures (Blakeslee 2006, p. 4; Hotz 2007).

A kind of mirroring or mimicry, “a synchronized and usually unconscious give and take of words and gestures,” has been found to foster the subtle art of persuasion. Researchers find that when a person’s posture and movements are

mirrored with a 1–2-second delay, namely, to create an imperfect mirror, they are more receptive to the suggestion to try a new soft drink. Subtle mimicry, perceived as flattery, has the opposite effect of social mimicry which is likely to be perceived as mockery (Carey 2008).

### **Biology, Anatomy, and Pathology**

Humans possess multiple mirror systems located in diverse areas of the brain responsible for language, emotions, and perceptions. Researchers seem to agree there are multiple mirror systems and neurons that have connections to thousands of other cells which create intricate constellations of relationships.

Faulty mirroring most likely lies at the root of psychopathology of many diagnoses, perhaps excluding only those which fall primarily in the biochemical realm.

Normal function helps determine what goes wrong in pathological conditions such as autism, a disorder manifested in failure to respond to social cues.

This mirror of neurons may be broken with greater disruption of mirror networks implicated in worse symptoms of autism, that is, more severe impairment of language, behavioral, and social skills.

Unresolved as to etiology and now attributed to the realm of the biological is the malady known as Body Dysmorphic Disorder which manifests as faulty, inaccurate thoughts and perceptions about appearance. Variations on distorted body image include anorexics who look into a mirror and see too much body fat and male bodybuilders who suffer from “bigorexia,” a condition in which their mirror image looks too weak.

Many schizophrenics react oddly to mirrors, sometimes staring at them for hours. Curiously, there are no blind schizophrenics, and in the single known case where a long-term schizophrenic went blind, she went into remission within a few days (Pendergrast 2003, p. 360).

### **Astronomy**

The use of mirrors extends beyond psychology and religion to astronomy. Astronomers attempt to build the biggest telescope with huge mirrors to learn about the universe and the dark energy that seems to be splitting the universe apart. Patrick McCarthy of the Carnegie Observatories told the group, “The most important tool we take to the observatory is an open mind.”

The open mind is a kind of two-way mirror: we present (an aspect of) self to the world and the world reflects back. Our chore, with an openness or questioning of self, to what resides within (our thoughts, dreams, fantasies) with what the environment mirrors back to us about the aspects of self we present to the world is an ongoing dynamic process. Perceptions, like waves of the ocean, can reinforce or interfere or negate our self-concept.

Although the formation of the self depends on the mirroring process, and since the sense of self varies from culture to culture, characteristics of mirroring also vary. For example, the sense of self in India is intricately woven into the fabric of the family. By contrast, the American culture to a large degree focuses on the individual. The process of mirroring is a learning tool. We learn by imitating others, parental figures, and mentors both consciously or unconsciously.

And as one would expect, mirroring is culturally conditioned. An involuntary sense of empathy responds differently depending on whether we’re looking at someone who shares our culture (Hotz 2007).

### **Cultural and Future Implications**

Mirroring affects us to the core of our being, yet the major significance is only beginning to be recognized. To a large extent, murderers and lovers are made, not born (unfortunately, not always mutually exclusive). From the above observations, an understanding and acting upon mirroring may be important in the process of establishing world peace. The history and role of the mirror and mirroring over the centuries



reflects the human evolution from placing our fate in the deities to claiming our role of self-identity down to the unique submolecular composition of each of us and embodies the potential of humans to evolve. Dire world conditions result from the human capacity both to destroy and to rebuild, create, and problem-solve. Based on research in writing this entry, I am hopeful that we have the biological capacity (some of which lies in our mirroring neurons) to achieve increasing harmony in the future.

### See Also

- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)
- ▶ [Rank, Otto](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)

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### Modern Mythology

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Inevitably people ask about the existence of myths today. In some cases the response is obvious. Scientists, for example, use “thought experiments,” made-up narratives, to explain otherwise inexplicable mysteries of the reality they alone can see or understand. Einstein’s famous relativity-based twin paradox is an example:

There were two twins. One went on a round trip into outer space. When he got home he was younger than his brother, because

His heart, brain, and bloodflow “clocks” had slowed down during the trip. This is because time has a material or “length” aspect.

The space twin was surprised on his return to discover how much older his brother was (Capra 1975, p. 170).

This narrative is a modern “myth,” because although it did not actually happen, it serves as a metaphorical description of a reality which is otherwise difficult to explain, much as Genesis I “explains” creation to Abrahamic peoples or the Persephone myth “explains” the seasons and perhaps a psychological aspect of the relationship between mothers and daughters in the context of sexuality to the Greeks.

Another such modern myth, one that pervades the modern consciousness, is the Freudian trio of ego, superego, and id in something called the psyche. These “characters,” which do not exist in any physical sense, nevertheless, have been “believed in” as if they were real and are commonly used, for instance, to explain relationships between parents and their offspring or the existence of other realities such as neurosis and psychosis.

Religions have traditionally been the breeding grounds of myths. But when religions refuse to allow their belief systems to grow and develop – that is, when they are “fundamentalist” – they tend to stop the myth breeding process. More progressive religious groups do attempt to allow the emergence of new mythologies, recognizing that to deny the progression of human knowledge, new revelations of truth, is to deny new prophecy. Modern prophets and mythmakers of an ecological mythology, for instance, create narratives explaining or reacting to a new sense of an interrelated universe in which human consciousness is a functional aspect of creation itself. We are created, says religious philosopher Thomas Berry, to “make creation conscious of itself.” Chemist James Lovelock and biologist Lynn Margulis tell the story of the universe named Gaia after the ancient Greek Earth goddess and creatrix. Earth is depicted as a living, even conscious-like entity balancing her own needs in the face of a traditional and unecological patriarchal society’s tendency to believe it owns and controls creation.

New myths can be contained in the symbolic language of traditional organized religions to the extent that these religions free themselves from exclusivity and the mental blindness of fundamentalism. For many progressive religionists, for instance, a new myth of God has emerged in which God is neither male nor female, but a concept unknowable, much like the Vedantic Brahman. Thomas Berry can speak with reverence of the “cosmic Christ.” In certain religious contexts, “modern” myths have existed for a long time, usually in the form of psychological

constructs. The thirteenth-century Sufi philosopher Muid ad-Din ibn al-Arabi could speak of the creation of God in the inner self (Armstrong 1993, pp. 236–239). In the same way, the great scholar of Indian art and religion Heinrich Zimmer said, “We cannot borrow God. We must effect his new incarnation from within ourselves” (Campbell 1968/1970, Vol. 4, p. 626). The fourteenth-century German mystic Meister Eckhart said, “God gives birth to the Son as you, as me, as each one of us. . . as many gods in God.” A later version of a similar concept is philosopher-anthropologist Gregory Bateson’s mythic suggestion that the individual mind is immanent but not only in the body. “It is immanent also in the pathways and messages outside the body; and there is a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a subsystem. This larger Mind is comparable to God. . . but it is still immanent in the total interconnected social system and planetary ecology” (p. 461).

A more specifically psychological version of the new mythology grows out of Carl Jung’s concept of “archetypes” and a “collective unconscious.” Archetypes are psychological tendencies common to the human species, tendencies which take specific form in images, characters, and situations in the cultural dreams that are myths. A well-known expression of Jung’s idea is contained in the heroic monomyth devised by various scholars, culminating in the work of Joseph Campbell (1949/1972) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* and in the works of feminist scholars such as Maureen Murdock’s (1990) *The Heroine’s Journey*. In the monomyth the life of the world hero, a compilation of hero figures from all over the world, is a quest for wholeness or Self, a quest made up of several familiar steps such as the miraculous conception, the search for a something, and the descent into the underworld. These steps are mythic representations of the individual’s potential psychic life story. It might be said that for the great modern psychological mythmakers, anyone searching for wholeness leaves the ordinary world for a journey into the unconscious in search of a lost Self.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Brahman](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Monomyth

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Mythologist Joseph Campbell has demonstrated that when we consider heroes and their myths comparatively, we discover a universal hero myth that speaks to us all and addresses our common need to move forward psychologically as individuals and as a species. “The Hero,” writes Campbell, “is the man or woman who has

been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms” (1949/1972, pp. 19–20). The hero does not stand for the status quo; he or she breaks new ground. The striving hero is our cultural and collective psyche out on the edges of knowledge and existence.

Taking a word coined by James Joyce, Campbell calls the archetypal hero the “monomyth.” The hero of the monomyth, our representative of Self, the totality of our individual and collective unconscious and conscious psyches, passes in his “adventures” through a series of transformative thresholds, which are representative of the psychic and, to an extent, the physical life. The middle of the hero’s life, mirroring the passage of our conscious search in the conscious life and the progress of the inner psychic journey into the unconscious, a journey undertaken consciously in the process of psychotherapy, is made up of three essential elements: the *Departure* from home (the status quo), the *Adventure* in the unknown world, and the *Return* with some new understanding. These three elements are framed by an appropriately heroic beginning and ending.

The beginning is often a miraculous conception and birth. The Tewa hero, Waterpot Boy, is conceived when a piece of clay enters his mother. The Aztec man-god Quetzalcoatl is conceived when a god breathes on his mother. A Ceramese heroine, Hainuwele, is born of the combination of coconut sap and a drop of blood. Often the hero, the divine child, is born of a virgin. Almost always he or she comes at a time of great need – the darkest night of the cultural year, a time of general suffering, and a period representing the darkness and, more often than not, the suffering that exists in our unconscious or subconscious individual and collective selves.

The hero birth is the hope for a new beginning, a ubiquitous hope. He or she is our second chance. The hidden place – the stable, the grove of trees, the cave – where the hero is born and the painful times in which he emerges remind us that even the gods require the elements associated with the mother earth (flesh, pain) to enter the world as one of us. The birth also stands for the loneliness and the pain of the beginnings

of the psychic journey towards wholeness, or self-discovery.

Not surprisingly, the newborn hero is almost immediately threatened by the first of the “guardians at the gate” of the status quo, the preconceptions and habits that say “no” to the journey. These guardians are the kings, jealous fathers, or demons who cannot tolerate the presence of a force for new understanding. Thus, Herod sends soldiers to kill any child who might be what the magi have called a new king in the Jesus birth myth. And when other magi announce the birth of Zoroaster to King Duransarum, he attempts to stab the child himself. Sigurd and Moses are hidden away for their own protection.

As a child, the hero must somehow prove himself/herself. Signs of the divine essence must shine through. Krishna, the avatar of the god Vishnu, kills a demoness while still in the cradle. The boy Arthur removes the sword from the rock. Theseus retrieves his father’s shoes and sword. The Irish hero Cuchulainn, still a mere boy, kills the giant watchdog of Culann. Jesus amazes the Elders in the Temple. As the young wife of the Pandava brothers in the Indian epic the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi reveals her inner divinity when, through Krishna’s power, the evil Kauravas fail to strip her of her miraculous sari. So it is that as we begin the journey outlined by depth psychology, we must confront the obvious barriers to the journey – our own monsters of the status quo.

Once adulthood is achieved, the hero frequently undergoes a preparatory period of isolation before receiving a call to action, which the hero sometimes initially refuses. Moses, the shepherd alone in the fields, is called from the burning bush, and his reluctance must be overcome by Yahweh himself. The Ojibwa Hiawatha prototype Wunzh is called during his lonely vision quest, but before he can begin his adult journey, he must wrestle with the corn god, with divinity itself. Jesus must be tempted in the wilderness, and the Buddha must be tempted by the fiend Mara.

All of these events are preparation for the beginning of the hero journey, and our psychic

journey. Like Odysseus, who is reluctant to accept the call of the Greeks to leave his wife, child, and possessions to fight in Troy, or like Tolkien’s Bilbo and Frodo, who would rather not leave the comforts of Hobbit ways, the hero must leave home precisely because he must break new ground in the overall human journey. The old ways must be constantly reviewed and new understandings developed. The Knights of the Round Table must give up the comforts of Camelot for adventure, and Gilgamesh must leave home to seek eternal life.

The adventure of the hero is marked by several universal themes. The first of these is the search. Sometimes the questing hero looks for something lost as we do if we journey into our unconscious world. Odysseus’ son Telemachus, Theseus, and Waterpot Boy all search for the Father. Gilgamesh, Jason, the Knights of the Round Table, and Moses seek objects or places – often lost ones – of potential importance to their cultures such as the plant of immortality, the Golden Fleece, the Holy Grail, the Land Where the Sun Rises, and the Promised Land. More overtly “religious” or philosophical heroes such as the Buddha or Jesus look to less tangible goals: Enlightenment or Nirvana, the Kingdom of God.

The quest always involves difficult trials. There are frightening and dangerous guardians at each threshold the hero must cross – giants, dragons, sorcerers, and evil kings. And there are tests. Herakles must perform the 12 labors, the Grail heroes must prove themselves through various deeds and, like heroes of many cultures, are tested by a femme fatale. This enchantress, a particularly popular nemesis of the patriarchal hero – Adam’s Eve, Aeneas’s Dido, Samson’s Delilah – is the archetypal image of the dangerous alternative to the true goal.

Many heroes must die and descend to the place of death itself, sometimes as scapegoats for the mistakes of others. Jesus and Osiris die, as does the Ceramese Hainuwele. In death, the hero is planted in mother earth, and during that period, which we recognize as the ultimate “dark night of the soul,” a period of dark gestation, he confronts the most terrifying terrors and demons of the underworld and our own depths.

But the hero returns, usually in the spring. He or she is resurrected, as in the cases of Hainuwele and Jesus. Many returning heroes become material or spiritual food for their people: Osiris emerges from the earth as the god of grain, Hainuwele's buried limbs become vegetables, numerous Native American corn heroes and heroines become the staple food for their people; for the Christian the resurrected Jesus is the "bread of life." These are all images of the boon or great gift that the hero or harrowers of the unconscious bring upon returning from the depths of the quest.

As an epilog to the Departure, the Adventure, and the Return, the hero can make a second return, this time to achieve union with the cosmic source of his or her being. Jesus and the Virgin Mary ascend to God, and a legend has it that Abraham did too. The Buddha, King Arthur, and Moses all undergo a kind of apotheosis, a union with the ultimate mystery. Like myths of creation and deities, those of heroes all seem to lead inevitably to that very strangest and most mystical expression of the human imagination, the concept of union which, depending upon era and tradition, has been called by many names, of which Nirvana, Enlightenment, the God within, individuation, self-identity, wholeness, and Self are a few.

## See Also

- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Dark Night of the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Quest](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Monotheism

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Monotheism is necessarily understood in opposition to polytheism. Do we believe in one god or several gods (or one god more powerful than other gods)? The struggle between monotheism and polytheism can be seen as a metaphorical representation of an essential struggle in the human psyche.

We almost always associate monotheism with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The assumption in these religious traditions is that there is one deity, conceived of as a personality with mind, a deity who acts through history and ultimately rules and controls the universe. Because of the dominance of the three "monotheistic religions," there has been a general assumption in the western world that monotheism is an important part of a general path toward enlightenment. Polytheism is a belief system postulating many gods representing the many facets of creation and is often dismissed by the western mind as a "primitive" phenomenon.

Freud, in his *Moses and Monotheism*, suggested that monotheism originated not in Judaism but in Egypt, in the religion fostered by the pharaoh Amenhotep IV (renamed Akhenaten after the Aten, the sun god he worshipped as the one god or at least the most important god). And it can certainly be argued that Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism and the concept of *Brahman* in branches of Hinduism can be understood in terms of the monotheistic paradigm. In short, some humans have long searched for a sense of a unified cosmic power, even as other humans – in ancient cultures such as those of the

Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece, and animist cultures such as those of Africa and Native America – have been content to see nature and the cosmos reflected in a variety of divine beings.

Psychologically speaking, the belief in monotheism is the result of an archetypal or cultural search for a father – a source of being. This is certainly so of patriarchal cultures, which is to say, most of the world’s cultures.

Mircea Eliade sees the monotheistic god as a sky god, as opposed to an earth god or goddess. In terms of psychic imagery and conception, the sky god is generally visualized as a male who creates *ex nihilo* – from nothing – that is, not from preexisting material but from his mind. And to one degree or another, we are said by the monotheists to have been created in God’s image, that is, with something of God’s creative mind, making it possible for us to continue the creative process. In short, monotheism is a metaphor for who we are, for what Carl Jung and others have articulated in the concept of Self or potential wholeness. Monotheism and the concept of Self imply a rational progress toward self-knowledge. But as world history demonstrates, it can also support tendencies toward exclusivism, intolerance, and lack of imagination – in short, lack of creativity. A father god who, through perceived sacred scripture and religious law, prescribes our actions might be seen as limiting our potential for psychological and emotional growth. It is for this reason that religious and psychological scholars such as David Miller and James Hillman have argued for a “new polytheism” that emphasizes more feminine and earth-based qualities such as feelings and emotions and intuition rather than obedience and unbridled rationalism. In this sense, polytheism stands as a metaphor for a life of many possibilities and perceptions, for tolerance, for freedom from what is seen as a limiting monotheism.

### See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Eliade, Mircea
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund

- ▶ God
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Polytheism
- ▶ Self

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## Moon and Moon Goddesses

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The Greek astronomer Claudius Ptolemaeus (100–178 CE) writes in his *Tetrabiblos* (“Four Books”) how the moon (*selēnē*) gives its effluence (*aporroia*) abundantly upon the earth: “the rivers increase and diminish their streams with her light, the seas turn their own tides with her rising and setting, and plants and animals in whole or in part wax and wane with her” (Ptolemy 1940, I.2). For Ptolemaeus, the power (*dunameōs*) of the moon consists of humidifying (*tō hugrainein*) and having also the sun’s heat, its action (*diatithēsīn*) for the most part being one of softening and putrefying bodies (1940, I.4). According to Ptolemaeus, the moon is by nature associated with Venus and the person of the mother (*Aphroditēs tō metrikō*), the sun with Saturn and the person of the father (1940, III.4). In Christian Patristics, the moon appears as a symbol of the church which puts to flight all wintry clouds (Methodius of Philippi, *Symposion*,



VIII: 12). In this way, she is likened to her spouse who is Christ the Sun who at dawn releases all “evil odors and vapors that infect (*inficientes*) the mind” (von Franz 2000, *Aurora Consurgens* 4.7–12). She is sister and bride, mother and spouse of the sun, often seen by alchemists as the lover in the Song of Songs. As the vessel and universal receptacle of the sun, she receives and disseminates the powers of heaven. The moon is often a symbol for certain aspects of the unconscious in a man. In females, the moon refers to aspects of consciousness and the sun to the unconscious. Jung says this comes from the contrasexual archetype in the unconscious – animus in a woman, anima in a man (Jung 1963, p. 135). The ancient notion that the moon promotes all plant life led alchemists to regard the moon itself as a plant, having parallels with the “Tree of Eternity” in Hinduism (Easwaran 1987, *Katha Upanishad* II.3.1), for example, and the divine feminine *Malkhut*, the tenth *sefirot* associated with earth and moon on the Cabalistic tree. Compare mystical reading of the tree of Zacchaeus in Luke 19.1–10 by the Christian Flemish mystic John of Ruysbroeck (1214–1381 CE) in his *The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*. The moon occurs in a variety of ways as a goddess symbol. In ancient Greek myth, the moon goddess Hecate is the daughter of Gaia and Uranus, Earth and Sky. She is the deity loved most of all by Zeus (Hesiod 2006, p. 411f.), and she has special powers given by Zeus to use as she wills. Originally worshipped as a mother goddess in Asia Minor, Hecate eventually is presented as the goddess of sorcery in Ptolemaic Alexandrian culture. Other Greek moon goddesses include Selen, Phoebe, Artemis, Luna, and Rhea. In Zoroastrianism, the moon goddess Mah possesses, according to Avestan hymns, wealth, knowledge, and discernment. She is the “queen of the night.” In Hinduism, the moon goddess Anumati (“divine favor”) represents spirituality, intellect, children, and prosperity. A variety of masculine moon deities occur in history, including Sin (Arabic myth), Jarih (Canaanite myth), and Thoth (Egyptian myth). Compare the Hindu god Chandra, which although male, has masculine-feminine, androgynous qualities.

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Mormon Identity and Social Context

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Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) history is an enduring source of modern Mormon identity. Mormon children still sing songs about the Mormon pioneer trek to Utah; belief in modern revelation as experienced by

Joseph Smith, the church's founder, encourages modern Mormons to believe that they, too, can have inspiration and revelation from God regarding their personal lives; Lilburn Boggs, the governor of Missouri who had the Mormons violently expelled from that state in 1838, is still spoken of as one of the primary villains of Mormonism in Latter-day Saint (LDS) world conferences as recently as 2008 (Packer 2008). The church's past is honored and celebrated as it shapes contemporary Mormons' view of their place in the world.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized formally in 1830 in upstate New York by Joseph Smith, Jr., after a series of claimed revelations from God, including a visit from God and Jesus Christ, angelic visitations, and the discovery and translation of an ancient book written on gold plates which Joseph titled the Book of Mormon. As the church sought converts through missionary activity, its rapid early growth was equaled by an increase in tensions with its surrounding culture. Mormons first gathered in Kirtland, Ohio, but were eventually driven to build a new community in Nauvoo, Illinois. Joseph Smith's belief in "continuing revelation" led to the addition of many new doctrines to the church over the course of his lifetime that would become cultural identifiers for the rest of its history, such as a belief in a modern-day prophet, new books of scripture, a belief in a corporeal God who is a glorified man, and secret rituals in temples. Joseph Smith and other church leaders also began secretly practicing "plural marriage," or polygamy, as a new doctrine of the church.

However, the political strength of Joseph Smith and his followers, their peculiar beliefs, as well as accusations of sexual impropriety tied to the practice of polygamy increased tensions with their frontier neighbors and led local law enforcement to arrest and imprison Smith in 1844. A mob stormed the jail and killed Smith and his brother Hyrum. Eventually the remaining Mormons were driven from their homes, their temple was burned, and Brigham Young led the majority of Mormons across the plains to Utah. The Mormons who remained behind in Illinois and Missouri eventually, in 1872, formed their

own denomination apart from the Utah church called the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (now Community of Christ) which did not practice polygamy.

The Utah church, which had the freedom to openly declare their practice of polygamy in 1852, built up cities and colonies in and around Utah, fed by a growing influx of converts from missionary work overseas. However, the United States government, opposed to the practice of polygamy and threatened by the growing numbers of Mormons in the area, began to pass laws banning polygamy. As a result, many LDS church leaders were imprisoned during the 1870s and 1880s, and finally, in 1890, the then-current leader of the LDS church, Wilford Woodruff, officially discontinued the practice of polygamy throughout the church. There were Mormons who opposed this action and wished to continue practicing polygamy, and these broke off to form several new sects which continue to practice polygamy to this day, the most significant being the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS).

Utah was then admitted as a state in 1896. In 1903, Reed Smoot, a Mormon apostle, was elected by Utahns to the United States Senate, but his affiliation with the church caused enough controversy that a special hearing in the Senate was held to determine his eligibility to be a senator. Mormon temple rites and Smoot's loyalty to the country were examined by a committee that voted to oust Smoot from the Senate. However, this decision was overturned by a Senate vote, and Smoot was allowed to serve as senator, which he did until 1933. The Mormons, who were until then seen as a devious, troublesome, and polygamous sect in the Mountains, now began reintegrating themselves into American culture.

In the early 1960s and 1970s, the church's Priesthood Correlation Department was established and began systematizing Mormon doctrine. This body has exerted significant influence, eliminating doctrines that it considered spurious. The twentieth century marked significant growth in the LDS church, as the church not only aggressively sought converts within the United States but also sent missionaries out to other

countries as well, growing to one million members in 1947 to over 14 million as of 2012. By the end of the twenty-first century, there were more Latter-day Saints outside the United States than within it. In the twenty-first century, the LDS church has continued to gain public attention in several ways: prominent Latter-day Saints, Mitt Romney and Jon Huntsman, Jr., ran for president; the LDS church has invested significant time and effort into social issues such as Proposition 8 in California, which banned gay marriage in that state; and Mormons can be found in music, television, and film.

### Social Issues and Identity

Mormons tend to be social conservatives and, in the USA, show an overwhelming commitment to the Republican Party in politics. Their social conservatism is evident in the operation of the church, with virtually all men – but only men – being ordained to the priesthood. Women serve in leadership roles in the Relief Society (the women’s auxiliary) and in the Primary (the children’s organization), and in those organizations, the budget is controlled by men. Still, it is important not to cast all Mormons in the same mold, as there is diversity among them. This is illustrated in Mormon involvement in “preservation of marriage” campaigns such as occurred during California’s Proposition 8 ballot in 2008. The LDS Church considered the Prop 8 ballot initiative morally objectionable and joined the efforts of other religious groups to deny marriage status to homosexual couples. Despite the fact that Mormon involvement in the state initiative extended well beyond California, some Mormons spoke against their church’s efforts.

Mormon culture or social life also can be characterized by an expectation of conformity to conservative norms. The expectation to conform may be explicit, cast under the umbrella of obedience to God or to God’s prophet, but it also can be subtle. For example, one’s mode of dress or a man’s facial hair can act as social markers in the faith, connoting adherence to the church. The consequences of deviating from those norms

hinge on both the severity of the deviation and the attitudes of the congregation’s leadership.

Mormon identity is characterized by the expression, taken loosely from the Gospel of John, that Mormons must be “*in* the world but not *of* the world.” Since the Smoot Hearings, Mormons have sought to maintain their own unique culture and identity in the face of social opposition and tension while simultaneously integrating themselves into society. Polls continue to suggest that others view Mormons as different, despite the faith’s efforts to distance its historical connection to polygamy, their presence in top positions in American corporations and education and media, and their disproportionate representation in the US Congress.

In the late twentieth century, Christian apologists and former Mormons began using the Internet to sway public opinion. The LDS church responded by increasing its official online presence and with public relations campaigns such as the “I’m a Mormon” campaign in 2010. Leaders of the church encouraged young Mormons to use new technological tools such as social media and blogs to communicate about their lives and their faith. The result is a rich variety of material online regarding Mormonism, from ex-Mormon discussion boards to “Mormon Mommy Blogs,” characterized by largely married Mormon mothers blogging about their lives, families, children, and faith.

### See Also

- ▶ [Mormon Mental Health](#)
- ▶ [Mormonism](#)

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## Mormon Mental Health

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In order to understand members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), it is helpful to be familiar with what might be called a Mormon theory of development, which marks important developmental milestones (Nielsen et al. 2006). This begins with belief in a premortal existence in which all people lived in

spirit form before being born on earth. Mortality is a necessary step, a proving ground, in which people gain a physical body and learn self-control and obedience to God's laws, as well as to human laws. As part of mortal life, individuals go through rites (e.g., baptism) that have important symbolic and cultural value, and which believers tend to consider to be essential. After death, obedient individuals go to spirit paradise while they await the judgment, while disobedient individuals go to spirit prison. Individuals who are not baptized in mortality wait in spirit prison for someone to be baptized vicariously for them, because baptism is a physical act that cannot be done in spirit form alone. All people are resurrected and are judged by God, after which they will go to one of the three kingdoms according to their righteousness, based on an interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:40–42 (Nielsen et al. 2006).

This developmental “Plan of Salvation,” or “Plan of Happiness,” has psychological implications. Mormons are likely to consider existence as extending before and after mortality and to place high importance on doing good and resisting temptation. Service is thought to bring joy. Sin causes emotional distress, but emotional or psychological problems stem from many different causes and do not necessarily indicate that the person has sinned or has brought upon him- or herself the problem (Nielsen et al. 2006).

Complementing this view of development is Richards and Bergin's (1997) Mormon theory of personality, which describes six facets important to Latter-day Saints. These capture basic tensions in the Mormon psyche.

1. Eternal Identity versus the Mortal Overlay: Individuals are souls with an eternal identity, not merely beings that are conscious during mortality.
2. Free Agency versus Inefficacy: Individuals are able to act and make choices and, by doing this righteously, gain greater spiritual abilities.
3. Inspired Integrity versus Deception: Individuals can be sensitive to “the Spirit of Truth” and accept responsibility for weaknesses, rather than to hide them from oneself.

4. Faithful Intimacy versus Infidelity: Sexual relationships are intended only for marriage.
5. Benevolent Power versus Authoritarianism: Social relationships, whether in families, work, or elsewhere, should allow freedom of choice, rather than coercion.
6. Health and Human Welfare Values versus Relativism and Uncertainty: All people existed in spirit form before birth and have inherent worth and a divine purpose.

Although most Mormons would not be aware of these tensions explicitly, Richards and Bergin suggest that they undergird LDS thinking about people.

### **Empirical Research on Mental Health**

Mental health among Mormons has received some attention by researchers, but few studies have considered the mental health of individuals by religion. One exception to this examined the mental health of 55 devout Mormons longitudinally (Bartz et al. 2010). Their MMPI scores, measured at three points in time across the 17-year period of the study, were within normal ranges, and they showed no variation associated with intrinsic religiousness. The applicability of these results to other Mormons is not clear, as it was not a representative sample, but the study is notable for being one of few longitudinal studies of religion and mental health.

Sometimes researchers use Utah as a proxy for Mormons, given that the majority of the state is at least nominally LDS. From this perspective, it may be instructive that Utah leads the nation in antidepressant use. Regional variation in mental health patterns help to make such trends more difficult to interpret than may at first be evident, as the intermountain west shows higher rates in general of depression and suicide. It may be, however, that among disaffected Mormons, living as a lapsed church member in a highly religious area adds to stress and presents increased risks for mental health problems. It might also be that perfectionism, discussed momentarily, contributes to antidepressant use in the state.

### **Clinical Observations**

The basic beliefs of Mormonism hold potential importance for psychologists working with clients who are LDS. The beliefs are found in abundance at <http://LDS.org>, but it is worth pointing out that they include salvation through Jesus Christ; repentance for the remission of sins; a belief in revelation from God; that God has a plan for humanity, known as the plan of salvation or plan of happiness; the importance of sacred ordinances and life transitions, such as baptism; lifestyle practices; and beliefs about social and moral issues. Therapists engaged in counseling with Mormon clients may find it useful to draw on these beliefs, where relevant. Normal diagnostic methods may be used with LDS clients.

Mormons continue to feel they are “outsiders” in many social conversations, due to their history, and question about whether or not they are Christian. This appears to contribute to Mormons’ suspiciousness of psychologists who do not share their faith. Many Mormons will prefer to see therapists who share their religious beliefs, such as those affiliated with The Association of Mormon Counselors and Psychotherapists or through LDS Social Services, which is part of the church’s social welfare organization.

### **Implications for Counseling and Psychotherapy**

Several useful publications exist for therapists who have LDS clients. They share a common constellation of issues that have been seen in their clinical experience. Perhaps the most common of these is that of perfectionism and shame, which can come via interpretations of scriptural injunctions to “be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Associated with perfectionism is denial of anger and conflict, which can be an issue in Mormonism even though LDS doctrine does not support the notion that perfection is attainable in mortality.



Sexual guilt and inhibition can be a problem due to strict LDS standards of refraining from sex outside of marriage. If Mormons do engage in sex outside of marriage, including premarital sex, strong guilt typically follows, and the individual is subject to being “disfellowshipped” (a probationary status) or “excommunicated” from the church. Ulrich et al. (2000) offer constructive guidelines for therapists to address this type of situation. Divorce also presents difficulties, given the church’s belief that family relationships can continue in the afterlife. The church’s emphasis on marriage can leave unmarried adults also feeling that they are lesser individuals.

Belief in personal revelation is an important factor in understanding Mormons, who are encouraged to seek a spiritual confirmation in important life decisions. Sometimes this brings comfort and a sense of clarity to personal decision-making, but abuses of authority can arise in the form of LDS churchgoers being domineering or presuming authority over family members or others for whom they perceive they have divine “stewardship.” In such cases, referring them to Doctrine and Covenants 121:37–46 may help limit such abuses.

Gender role conflict and sexism also are issues among Mormons. These highlight the church’s rather conservative approach to gender roles and to many social issues, which may clash with the norms people experience in their world outside Mormonism. In some cases LDS women feel a second-class status due to the lay priesthood nature of the church.

LDS social life provides close families and a sense of community, but this sometimes results in isolation for people who no longer believe or who have deviated from church morality standards. Mormons who leave the fold report problems with family and feel a marginal status. In some cases, individuals remain involved in the church but are closeted disbelievers, participating in church in order to avoid family disharmony or divorce. Barlow and Bergin (1998) suggest that when individuals do leave Mormonism, there may be increased suicide risk because the person’s social support system has changed significantly.

## See Also

- ▶ [Mormon Identity and Social Context](#)
- ▶ [Mormonism](#)

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## Mormonism

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Mormonism is a colloquial term for several Christian denominations which constitute



restorationist theology. The two leading groups are the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) and the Community of Christ, formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS). There are several smaller offshoots, including a fundamentalist LDS church, recently in the news from a controversy involving polygamy and marriage of underage girls. All of the Mormon groups claim descent from the teachings of Joseph Smith Jr. (1805–1844), who was the first Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of this dispensation, and accept the *Book of Mormon* and other scriptures noted below.

Restoration theology holds that there have been several “dispensations” of the true religious doctrine and priestly authority to perform sacraments, and within a century or so after the dispensation originated by Jesus Christ, there was a “Great Apostasy” where doctrine was corrupted and the authority of the priesthood was withdrawn by God because of the falling away from the correct path. The next dispensation began with the first vision of Joseph Smith in 1820 and continued through subsequent angelic visits, including the ones leading to finding a set of golden plates containing writing which adherents hold he translated and published as the *Book of Mormon*. Besides that book, two other books, the *Doctrine and Covenants* and the *Pearl of Great Price* are also viewed as canonical scripture, along with the *Bible* (the Protestant version without the Apocrypha). Smith and others founded the LDS church in 1830. Mormons generally claim to have the exclusive truth and authority to conduct the sacraments that result in spiritual growth and ultimately lead to salvation.

Mormon theology rejects many of the doctrines of orthodox Christianity. It does not accept the various creeds propounded by the Ecumenical Church Councils and rejects the validity of Apostolic Succession claimed by both the Roman Catholic, the various Orthodox churches, and the liturgical Protestant churches (Anglican, Lutheran) which uphold the importance of bishops and priestly authority. The basic statement of beliefs is contained in the

Articles of Faith, which is now found in the *Pearl of Great Price*.

LDS theology has a particularly American flavor, in that it offers the opportunity of continual evolution and growth. This is best expressed in a couplet articulated by Lorenzo Snow (nineteenth century/1994), who became the fifth president of the LDS Church, “As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become” (p. 1). This holds out the possibility of apotheosis as the ultimate goal of spiritual development. When this doctrine is coupled with the doctrine of marriage for time and eternity, rather than till death do us part, then the family can become an eternal unit. The idea that spiritual evolution can lead to become a divinity in one’s own right and create worlds is radically different from mainstream Christian belief.

These teachings, though available in public sources, are part of the esoteric part of LDS practice involving temples. These are buildings for special rites that are open only to devote members of the church who received clearance from their religious leaders. The ceremonies conducted in the temples are secret, though documents purporting to be accurate redactions are available on the Internet. The temple endowments and marriage ceremony are held out as the most important parts of religious development, while the ordinary weekly activities of church members are designed to prepare people for those rites and support their continued involvement in church teachings and practices. The endowments and sealing of marriages are done not only for living members of the church but by proxy for dead ancestors and others, along with proxy baptisms. There have been recent complaints from Jewish groups and others about proxy baptisms.

The public LDS church is organized into local units, known as “wards,” led by a bishop and regional units or “stakes” (these are equivalents to parishes and dioceses in other denominations). In areas where there are fewer members, these are known as missions. There is no professional clergy. Priestly authority is only held by males and is lay, in the sense that all priestly duties are in addition to civil jobs. There are two orders of

priesthood, the Aaronic and Melchizedek. Boys age 12 are ordained into the Aaronic priesthood first as deacons, then passing into the quorum of teachers, then priests. Most males are ordained into the Melchizedek priesthood when they are called to go on a 2-year mission for the church at age 19, though sometimes those who do not go on missions are ordained into that level of priesthood in adulthood. The ranks of the Melchizedek priesthood start with the quorum of Elders, then the quorum of 70s, and the highest order is the quorum of High Priests. Each ward is led by a bishop and two counselors, the stakes by a president and two counselors. The church as a whole is led by the First Presidency, the Quorum of 12 Apostles, their assistants, and other “General Authorities.” The president of the church is deemed the current prophet, seer, and revelator and is believed to guide the church’s activities by divine revelation. The church promulgates changes in policy and conducts major teachings at two semiannual conferences, usually in April and October.

Members are kept very active in multiple meetings at their local level. Each Sunday, men have weekly meetings of their priesthood quorums, families attend Sunday school and sacrament meeting. During the week, there are meetings of the women’s auxiliary, the Relief Society, and youth meetings, primary for preadolescent children, and the Mutual Improvement Associations (MIA) for adolescents and early adults. Various other activities are available, embodying the idea that the church should provide opportunities covering all of life’s domains.

Jackson’s (2008) book is clearly written by an outsider and from an evangelical Christian point of view, but is relatively accurate and nonjudgmental in tone. Mauss’s (1994) account is more of an insider’s one, though his voice is clearly scholarly and reflective on the religion of his cultural background. The McMurrin books (1959, 1965) are from the standpoint of a professional philosopher within the Mormon tradition and are excellent sources for understanding the ideological context of the Mormon religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Smith, Joseph](#)

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## Moses

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## Moses’ Life Story

Moses’ life fills four entire books of the Torah. His birth is described in Exodus 2 sometime during the fourteenth century BCE and his death 120 years later in Deuteronomy 34. Exodus begins with a genealogy of the descendants of Joseph living in Egypt: “And the children of Israel were fruitful . . . and waxed exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.” (Ex 1: 7). Then, in words

which have haunted the history of the Jewish people, something changes: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt who knew not Joseph” (Ex 1:8).

Pharaoh becomes wary of the increase in the number of Israelites living in Egypt and decrees that all newborn male Israelite children be drowned. Moses is born under this death sentence. His mother hides him for 3 months. When no longer able to do so, she sets him afloat in a reed basket on the Nile. There Pharaoh’s daughter discovers him, saying “He is one of the Hebrew children” (Exodus 2:6). She hires a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby (not knowing the woman is his mother) and brings him into her palace after his weaning. Thus his early life is permeated with a confused Hebrew/Egyptian identity.

As Moses grows up, he is presented as a compassionate person willing to take risks when he encounters wrong, yet judicious at the same time. He sees an Egyptian killing a Hebrew. Making certain nobody is watching, Moses slays the attacker and hides his corpse in the sand (Ex 2: 11–12). However the killing became public knowledge, and Moses is forced to flee northeast to Midian as a stranger and a fugitive. He is nevertheless unable to stand by when he sees the daughters of Jethro mistreated by male shepherds, and helps them “water their flock” (Ex 2: 17–19). Their father is grateful and has his daughters invite him for a meal. Moses marries Zipporah, one of the daughters, and is content, becoming the father of a son named Gershom, because he has been “a stranger in a strange land” (Ex 2:22).

Years later, while tending Jethro’s sheep in the desert, Moses encounters the burning bush on Mount Sinai. There God speaks to him directly, asking him to redeem Israel as God’s agent (Ex3: 7–8). Although he cares about the suffering of his people, Moses challenges God, questioning his suitability for that mission. Moses protests that he stutters badly and that “he is not a man of words” (Ex 4:10). God responds angrily that he will teach Moses what to say and that his brother Aaron who speaks well will be Moses’ spokesman (Ex 4: 12–16).

Moses returns to Egypt, and after being assured by God that it will be safe, the people wanting his death now deceased. On the way, Moses is attacked by God Himself and Zipporah seems to understand some element of commitment on Moses’ part is still absent. She circumcises their son, thus putting an end to the attack (Ex 4: 20–25).

Moses comes to the Children of Israel, telling them God will redeem them (Ex 4:27). However, the opposite seems to occur. Moses and Aaron come before Pharaoh, asking him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh roughly rejects their request and now orders that the Hebrews be forced to gather their own raw materials in their labor and to work harder (Ex 5: 7–19). Moses complains to God that his interference had only made life worse for the Hebrews (Ex 5: 22–23). God reassures Moses he will cause Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt (Ex 6:1). In response to Pharaoh’s refusal, God inflicts the ten plagues on Egypt, culminating in poetic justice, with the slaying of the Egyptian first born (Ex 7:1–13:16).

At this point Pharaoh reluctantly lets the Israelites go but soon has second thoughts, sending the Egyptian to bring them back into slavery in Egypt. God splits the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to pass through on dry land (Ex 14:15–22). However, when the Egyptian army pursues them through this break in the Sea, God causes the waters to come together again, drowning the entire Egyptian host (Ex 14: 26–31).

Moses is now summoned by God to Mount Sinai where he remains for 40 days and nights, a period in which he receives the Ten Commandments directly from God (Ex 24–32). When the Israelites below see that Moses has delayed coming down the mountain, they build a golden calf and begin to worship it (Ex 32:1–6). God sees this and announces to Moses His intention to destroy the “stiff-necked” Israelites and start again with Moses (Ex 32: 7–10). Moses pleads for the people of Israel, invoking the founding fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who received God’s covenant and His promise that “He would multiply their seed as the stars of the heaven” (Ex 32: 13). God listens to Moses and spares the Israelites (Ex 32: 14).

Moses then descends from the mountain to deliver the commandments to the people, but upon his arrival he sees with his own eyes what God had told him – the Israelites are worshipping a golden calf which they had built. Moses furiously breaks the tablets and orders the people to choose who are with God (Ex 32:15–25). Moses own tribe, the Levites, join Moses and kill 3,000 people, including family and friends, who do not side with God (Ex 32: 26–27). Moses then successfully pleads with God to spare the Israelites who have sided with Moses and God (Ex 32: 31–33). This entire episode reveals some ambivalence on Moses' part. First he pleads with God to save the people of Israel; then Moses himself orders the death of all those who do not stand with God; finally, he pleads again with God to save the remnant.

God later commands Moses to inscribe two additional tablets, to replace the ones Moses had previously smashed. Moses goes up to the mountain again, for another period of 40 days and nights, and when he returns, he finally gives the commandments to the Israelites (Ex 34). Following this, according to the last chapters of Exodus, the Tabernacle was constructed, the priestly law ordained, the plan of encampment arranged both for the Levites and the non-priestly tribes, and the Tabernacle consecrated. Mosaic Law is laid out in the Book of Deuteronomy.

Numbers 13 finds Moses and the Israelites in the desert south of Canaan. He sends 12 spies into Canaan. After 40 days, they return, bringing back evidence that the land's resources are spectacular. However, only Joshua and Caleb are willing to try to conquer it. The other ten, conditioned by their years of slavery in Egypt, are too timid and compare the Israelites to "grasshoppers up against men of great stature." The people began weeping and want to return to Egypt. God again becomes angry, again threatening to destroy them and make a great nation from Moses and his offspring. Again Moses rejects this offer, successfully pleading for Israel, simultaneously telling the Israelites that they would wander the wilderness for 40 years until the naysayers had died out. Early the next morning, the Israelites said they had sinned and now want to take

possession of Canaan. Against Moses' command, they invade Canaan but are repulsed by the Amalekites and Canaanites (Num 13–14).

Near the end of his life, Moses is warned by God that he will not be permitted to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River, because of his trespass at the waters of Meribah (Deut. 32:51). Instead Moses will die on its eastern shores (Num. 20:12). Moses appoints Joshua, who will ultimately be allowed to enter Canaan, to succeed him as the leader of the Israelites. Moses then dies at the age of 120.

The historicity of the Exodus story, debated by historians, appears in an inscription in the Stele of Merneptah, a stone tablet, in the twenty-third century BCE (Pritchard 1955, p. 378).

## Moses Versus Oedipus

The development of a psychological understanding of Moses is greatly facilitated by comparing his life with that of the Greek Oedipus (whose story lies at the center of Freud's articulation of the Oedipus complex) with regard to four life events: birth, exile, an identity crisis, and reversal of fortune.

### Birth

For both Moses and Oedipus, birth brought danger of death but from different sources. Moses' life is threatened by Pharaoh's decree to throw all males born among the Israelites into the Nile. Moses' mother and sister conspired to save the boy's life, and he is raised in the house of Pharaoh himself. Oedipus' life is threatened by his own father, Laius who perceives his son's life as a threat to his own and therefore orders Oedipus to be killed at birth. Whereas Oedipus is sent out from his natural home in order to be killed, Moses is sent away by his natural family to be saved.

### Exile

Both children, Moses and Oedipus, end up in the house of a king. But the differences are more telling: King Polybus is a good man, who takes in the baby Oedipus, whereas Pharaoh is the

“villain of the piece.” In fact, were it not for Pharaoh’s decree, Moses would never have had to be sent away from his parents’ home. In the Oedipus narrative, it is Laius himself who is responsible for his son’s exile. Significantly, Moses’ biological parents are aware of his whereabouts, while Oedipus’ parents presume him dead.

### **Identity, Authority, and Fate Versus Free Will**

In the next life stage, each character has an identity crisis. Oedipus, while in exile in Corinth, actively goes to seek an oracle, who warns him that he is destined to kill his father and marry his mother. However, the oracle withholds the critical information that Oedipus’s biological parents were not the King and Queen of Corinth. To avoid this fate, Oedipus runs back to Thebes, bringing about what he is trying desperately to avoid: he kills his biological father and marries his mother, bringing about the destruction of his family.

Moses, by contrast, seems guided by his conscience and circumstances and does not consciously attempt to seek clues about his destiny. From the account of Moses going among his Hebrew “brethren,” one can see his latent identification: he kills an Egyptian attacking a Hebrew. Moses subsequently chances upon the burning bush and encounters the Hebrew God, who informs him of his mission to save the Children of Israel from Pharaoh. Despite Moses’ misgivings as to his own abilities, he does ultimately agree to God’s call and leads the Children of Israel out of slavery.

### **Reversal of Fortune: Hope Versus Tragedy**

Oedipus seems to have succeeded in his confrontation with the riddling Sphinx. He correctly answers “man” to the Sphinx’s no-win question “What walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon and three legs in the evening?” But by this answer, Oedipus implicitly accepts a curvilinear/decremental view of aging which violates a sense of intergenerational boundaries, converting success into failure. He is given in reward the widowed Queen of Thebes to marry, not realizing it is own mother. Oedipus

cannot escape the tragic fate destined for him and his entire family.

Moses, in contrast, thinks he has failed when following Moses’ intercession on behalf of the Israelites; Pharaoh increases the severity of his forced labor decree against them. Yet God provides the hope to transform seeming failure into success. The Children of Israel in the end succeed in liberating themselves from their slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh’s threat to kill the Hebrew first-born is ultimately visited upon Pharaoh himself and on Egypt.

## **A Call for a Biblical Psychology**

Oedipus is caught up in the fatalistic Greek worldview. Moses, by contrast, is helped by the biblical God to overcome difficult roadblocks. Freud’s emphasis on the Oedipus complex has unfortunately trapped man, allowing only “success in turning one’s hysterical misery into common unhappiness” (Freud and Breuer 2004, p. 306), rather than the possibility of a hopeful transformation heralded by Erich Wellisch’s (1954) clarion call for a Biblical Psychology.

### **See Also**

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Biblical Psychology
- ▶ Jewish Care and Counseling
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Monotheism
- ▶ Oedipus Complex

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## Mosque

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The word *mosque* literally means the place of prostration. There are several references to this term in the verses of the Qur'an. The Qur'an describes the mosque as a place where God's Name is always remembered, "*In houses which God has allowed to be exalted and that His name shall be remembered therein*" (Qur'an, 24:36).

The mosque is a place of man's expression of total servanthood to God. The most highly acknowledged and respected mosque in Islam is in fact the *Ka'bah*. It is considered to be the pivot (*Qiblah*) of the world and the center of the universe toward which all Muslims turn at the time of prayer. Every mosque is in a sense an extension of the *Ka'bah*.

Technically speaking, for Muslims, the entire earth is a mosque as the *hadith* of the Prophet indicates: "*Verily, God placed the earth for me as a place of prostration and purified it*" (Nasr 1987, p. 37). A Muslim can, therefore, spread his prayer mat and pray whenever the prayer time comes and wherever he is, granted that the place is a ritually clean space.

## Psychology

The main objective of prayer in Islamic tradition, like other traditions, is to liberate man from the yoke and limitations of his carnal soul and bring him as close to submission to God as humanly possible. For majority of Muslims this is attained through daily prayer and other rituals which are often performed in a mosque.

When one enters the mosque with the intention to pray, he also takes his soul that is agitated by the problems and distractions of the daily life and seeks to attain peace and serenity. Even the most exoteric Muslim, when he goes to a mosque, he turns inward and tries to cure the ailments of his psyche and soul and integrate them into one healthy center of his being. All elements of a mosque, from the niche (*mihrab*) that directs the worshippers toward Mecca (*Qiblah*) and where the prayer leader (*imam*) stands to the nostalgic voice of the *mu'adhdhin* who calls people for prayer, to the minarets that extend toward heaven, all in all help the worshipper to integrate his body and soul and reach his center where God within us resides.

Islam is primarily an urban religion. While a Muslim does not have to pray in a mosque, however, the necessities of urban life and the grace and blessing of communal prayer (*Jama'ah*) resulted in the construction of



mosques in all cities and even villages throughout the Islamic world as the most important institution in Islamic civilization.

In 622 the Prophet of Islam was forced to leave Mecca, the city he loved, and migrate to Yathrib, a city about 300 miles south of Mecca known after that as the City of the Prophet (*Madinah al-Nabi*). This event, known as *hijrah* (migration), marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. It was in Medina that he built the first official mosque that became known as the Mosque of the Prophet (*Masjid al-Nabi*) (Eaton 1985, p. 115). It was in this mosque that many rituals of Islam were introduced, the rules of etiquette in the mosque were established, and many functions of the mosque were introduced to the community.

### Rules and Etiquette of Attending Mosque

Attending a mosque requires observing certain rule of conduct and etiquette. First of all, when one enters the sacred space of the mosque, one must remove shoes as a sign of respect. Women cover their hair and in the Sunni world men wear a special hat called *kufi*, which is rarely seen in the Shi'ite world.

In addition, one must be in the state of ritual purity and ablution and always wear one's best outfit and even perfume, as the Qur'an instructs Muslims: "O Children of Adam! Take your adornment at every place of worship and eat and drink, but be not prodigal. Lo! He loves not the prodigals" (Qur'an, 7:31). The Prophet of Islam always wore his best attire and perfume when he went to the mosque for prayer. In addition, one should always carry oneself with dignity and behave in a respectful manner for one step into the house of God as the mosque is often called. One must always observe silence and not raise one's voice, especially when the Qur'an is chanted.

The Qur'an describes the construction of a mosque as an act of worship and a sign of one's faith: "The mosques of Allah are only to be maintained by those who believe in Allah and

the Last Day and establish prayer and give zakah and do not fear except Allah, for it is expected that those will be of the [rightly] guided" (Qur'an, 9:18).

Every mosque is headed by a clergy who acts as a prayer leader (*imam*) and guides people in matters of daily religious life. The most important function of a mosque is, therefore, as place of worship. Every mosque has also always been an educational institution, a community center, and a center to voice popular grievance and political protest and other communal activities. In addition, a mosque is also a center for psychological family counseling and therapeutic services where worshippers bring their problems to the clergy who acts as a confidant of the community in matters ranging from marriage to business to family and marital relationship and the like. This is the reason the construction and maintenance of a mosque has been so important in all Muslim societies since the time of the Prophet.

Mosque architecture varies from region to region in consideration with culture, nature, and availability of materials in each region. The mosque that was built by the Prophet in Medina is the prototype of all other mosques. In the course of time, two major styles appeared, the Arabic style with corridor surrounding an open space open to the heavens and the Persian style of closed dome pointing above. Mosques built later in Spain, Anatolia, and India all followed these patterns but modified them to suite local condition and, taste, architectural details.

The inside of a mosque is composed of a prayer niche (*mihrab*) that faces the east toward the Mecca and usually is identified with a sign designating the direction of Mecca (*Qiblah*). It is where the prayer leader (the *imam*) stands and leads the prayer. Next to the prayer niche is a pulpit (*minbar*) where the preacher sits and delivers a sermon. Both of these structures can be very simple or very elaborate and artistic but their presence is essential to every mosque. The most important external feature of the mosque is one or two minarets where five times a day the call for prayer (*adhan*) invites the worshippers to pray. The entrance to a mosque often opens into

a courtyard separated from the outside world often by thick walls as though embracing the worshippers and providing refuge and protecting them from the noise and distraction of the outside world.

Yet, a mosque is not just a building like any other building. It is not just a prayer center where Muslims gather five times a day and pray. It is a *sacred space* where God's presence is felt at every moment and His Name and Word reverberate. The architectural and artistic expression of the Islamic doctrine may vary in different parts of the Islamic world, but all these variations indeed represent a single reality (*Tawhid*) expressed in multiplicity of forms, colors, and variety of designs (Nasr 2002, pp. 229–230).

Belief in Divine Unity (*Tawhid*) is at the center of the doctrine of Islam. As part of the category of sacred Islamic art, a mosque contains all the elements of Islamic doctrine of *Tawhid*. Like everything Islamic, the Qur'an is the source of inspiration of the architect of the mosque. It is also the Qur'an that defines the soul of the mosque, its structural principles, its form and appearance, color of its tiles, open courtyard, and other characteristics, and transforms an ordinary space into a sacred space. However, the important question is: how does a Muslim architect remain loyal to and observant of the requirements of *Tawhid* while at the same time convey its message in the realm of multiplicity?

Like any other category of sacred art, a mosque has its own sacred language that reminds the viewer of the message of Islam. This message is conveyed sometimes through the presence of Qur'anic calligraphy, sometimes through geometric forms and patterns, sometimes through colored tiles or colored glass windows, and sometimes by empty space (void). Variations in style are the result of the regional, cultural, and geographical factors and the availability of materials. The function and message, however, always remain the same, constantly suggesting God's Unity and His presence.

In the architecture of a mosque, several sciences come together to create the sacred form, from engineering to chemistry, to geometry,

and from design of patterns to calligraphy and mathematics. The principle of *Tawhid* is represented through harmonious presence of geometric forms, which by constant repetition depict remembrance of God. Thus, frequent repetition of geometric forms, flowers, blossoms, and trees gives expression to cosmic order, and like cosmic order beauty, grace, sanctity, harmony, and order are present in the architecture of a mosque. In short, the combination of these forms and colors creates a silent symphony that mesmerizes the soul of the viewers (Nasr 1987, pp. 44–50). They also demonstrate the importance of beauty and harmony in Islamic civilization and Muslim architect's creativity to construct a structure worthy of reflecting the Word of God.

Since Islam is an aniconic tradition, God cannot be represented in form but His presence is suggested in a variety of ways by the artists and the architect. The use of Qur'anic calligraphy and colorful geometric ceramic tiles or floral designs on the walls and dome of the mosque esthetically enhances the beauty of the building, but more importantly and from a psychological and spiritual point of view constantly reminds the worshippers of the presence of God.

The use of colors in the construction of the mosque fulfills several functions – the most visible function of course, is the beauty and variety of colors. There is however a more profound spiritual and metaphysical meaning for the presence of colors in a mosque building. From Islamic point of view, the entire universe is the scene of interplay of divine attributes. God is One, and “there is nothing like Him,” as the Qur'an says (Qur'an, 42:11). Since God cannot be contained in form, time, or space, His presence in the world of multiplicity is represented by His attributes, and each color in a sense represents one of God's attributes. For example, black represents divine power but also mysteries while blue represents divine mercy, green suggests God generosity, and white which contains all other colors in itself, indeed, represents God's Unity and its manifestation in multiplicity. The color gold next to blue depicts divine mercy that wills to manifest itself and so on. Next to one

another they exhibit God's Infinitude (Ardalan and Bakhtiar 2000, pp. 48–49; Lings 2005, Chap. 2).

The floor of the mosque, like its space, is sanctified by virtue of the fact that Prophet honored and blessed the ground by placing his forehead on it in prostration when he performed daily prayer (*salat*). By doing so he “bestowed a special significance upon the floor of his house, through it upon the first mosque, and through the Medina mosque upon the whole of Islamic architecture”. That is the reason the mosque floor is always carpeted and complements its space. Thus, along with worshippers, every component of a traditional mosque ultimately participates in worshipping God and professing testimony to Divine Unity (*Tawhid*).

## See Also

- ▶ [Ecology and Islam](#)
- ▶ [Muhammad](#)
- ▶ [Qur'an](#)

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## Mother

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The mother is the biological and/or social female parent. From a psychological perspective, the mother is the female caregiver who may or may not be biologically related to the infant but who assumes the parental role. The mother-infant dyad represents the primary form of human attachment based on physical dependence as well as affection, both of which are vital for survival. The word “mother” is also used in reference to the source or origin of things. In ancient religions, the earth was referred to in feminine terms as “Mother Earth” and represented the divine figure that was the source of all life. In addition, ancient myths included various female divinities that possessed maternal qualities or fulfilled mother roles for other gods or for humans. With the rise of monotheistic religions, however, the divine maternal images were eradicated, but in Western Christianity, the icon of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, gradually rose to cult status.

The primary cultural scripts for mothers and motherhood have been shaped heavily by religious discourses or myths, and today, these scripts continue to be reflected in the cultural norms for maternal roles. Although through secularization religion has lost its centrality in society, on the linguistic level, the impact of the religious heritage continues to be felt.

In Western history, until recently, the Judeo-Christian worldview provided the dominant categories for the meaning and role of mothers. However, through the developments in the fields of anthropology and archeology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there has been a renewed interest in studying the ancient cultural myths and religions which in turn have given impetus to a variety of theoretical developments in religious, feminist, and psychoanalytic studies.

The foundation of Freudian theory, the Oedipus complex, is based on an ancient Greek myth.

## Religious Myths and Legendary Mothers

Ancient myths highlight several legendary mother figures that represent powerful creative forces of fertility as well as social influence. Given the precariousness of life in the ancient world, it may be easy to see why the act of procreation and the bringing forth of life through birthing had such a miraculous and divine significance. In Egypt, Isis, also named “the kingmaker,” was the goddess who generated her son, the living king, from the dead body of her brother/husband Osiris. The image of her son’s throne as her own lap on which he sat as an infant and suckled was representative of her function as the pharaoh’s source of power and influence. Isis was a wifely figure whose nature was centered on maternal devotion, but she was also the powerful patron of nature and magic. In Greece, Gaia was the primeval goddess representing the earth, the Mother Goddess, who birthed Uranus, the sky, through parthenogenesis and later lay with her son to give birth to a series of other gods including Oceanus, the World-Ocean, as well as the Titan gods. Also in Greece, Demeter was the goddess of fertility as well as a symbol of the mother who fights to protect the bond with her daughter (Persephone who was raped and abducted by Hades) and revolts against the male usurping power of Hades and Zeus. In the Hindu traditions, Parvati was the supreme Divine Mother who was beautiful and gentle but also fearsome. In the ancient Buddhist myths, Queen Maya was said to have become pregnant during a vision in which the divine Buddha reincarnated as a white elephant touched her and she later given birth to Prince Siddhartha, the Buddha to be. Scholars have pointed out the similarities between Maya and the Virgin Mary who also becomes pregnant without having intercourse. The mythical models of motherhood in the ancient religions were quite diverse and influential.

In the Abrahamic traditions, the pagan goddess cults were eradicated though scholars have pointed out that, while the male monotheistic cult took over, the language used to talk about the divine figure retained some inexplicit but clearly maternal elements such as the images of God nursing, gathering, or holding his people. The female biblical figures that do stand out are several women who were important in the development of the Israelite and Islamic nations. Eve, the first woman created by God and mother of all living, has been a disputed figure in theological debates on prescriptions for women’s societal roles because of her depictions in later Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources as a temptress and an archetype of sin. Feminist theologians have attempted to reconceptualize her as a prototype of motherhood pointing out that her name meant “mother of all living” and that, although her role is not described in much detail, she did play a significant role in naming her sons. In the Bible, the most prominent mothers are the matriarchs Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, the wives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, respectively, as well as the mothers of the budding Israelite nation. Other biblical female figures such as Deborah are metaphorical representations whose “mothering” provides a model for large-scale leadership in the community which greatly differs from the male style of leadership.

Perhaps the most influential mother figure within the Western religious tradition has been Mary, the young virgin who became the mother of Jesus and who remained present at significant points in her son’s life according to the biblical text. From the fifth century onward, Mary became the subject of much veneration in the Catholic tradition which has devoted an entire branch to Mariology, or the study of Mary’s role and significance within the Christian faith. Catholic theology maintains the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, or the idea that Mary was born without original sin and remained sinless throughout her life. Mary is believed to have conceived Jesus through an act of the Holy Spirit and not through sexual intercourse; this is

the doctrine of the “virgin birth.” Catholics also maintain that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life and was taken up into heaven upon her death. Orthodox theologies reject the Immaculate Conception but affirm the “virgin birth” and celebrate Mary’s “Dormition” (or “falling asleep”) and her being taken up into heaven. The Protestant views affirm that Mary was “blessed among women” and a virgin when she conceived Jesus, but they do not believe in the veneration of Mary or in her role as mediator between humans and God, pointing out that Mary’s role diminished after the birth of Christ. Nonetheless, within traditional Christian discourse, Mary became the antithesis of Eve. The latter was the temptress who was responsible for bringing sin into the world, while the former was a symbol of meekness, holiness, and the way to salvation.

Many scholars have argued that the conceptualization of Eve and Mary within the Western religious tradition has had a strong impact on societal views of women and especially mothers. Feminist critics have pointed out that neither of the two has provided redemptive models for women since they have both been set up to represent two extreme opposites: the one who was deemed responsible for bringing sin into the world versus the asexual, self-abnegating saint. The former represents a condemned view of womanhood, while the other a romantic idealization of motherhood. Most revolutionary feminist thinkers have abandoned the traditional religious motifs of Western Christianity and turned instead to religious themes found in various ancient goddess cults or to their emergence within New Age religions. Revisionist feminist theologians, however, in addition to redeeming these prominent biblical female figures, also attempt to resurrect the feminine and motherly aspects of God which have been traditionally eclipsed by patriarchal categories within the biblical language of God. According to this view, the language of God is inadequate inasmuch as it does not include equivalent images of God as male and female. For example, it is peculiar that in traditional theology, the speech about God as the origin and caregiver of all things omits, as if by default, the maternal

aspect of these images and attributes them to a paternal relationship, as the opening of the Nicene Creed indicates: “God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. . . .” Since religious myths and traditions have a profound impact on cultural conceptions of motherhood and thus on women’s identities as mothers, revisionist feminist theologians want to offer renewed and redemptive perspectives for women and mothers.

## The Psychological Perspective

Much of psychoanalytic theory has dealt with the child’s relationship with the mother. Freud posited that at the heart of psychosexual development was the Oedipus complex, or the child’s desire for an incestual relationship with his/her mother. The dynamics of psychic development emerge out of this basic but prohibited desire which the child learns to defend against through various patterns of repression, displacement, sublimation, and other neuroses. Both boys and girls are primordially in love with the maternal parent, but Freud believed that for girls, this changes when they realize that the mother lacks a penis, at which time they begin to develop sexual desires for their fathers.

In Melanie Klein’s work, the focus shifted to the pre-Oedipal relationship between the infant and the mother, through which the child develops and internalizes a basic psychic structure of object relations. For example, the infant’s sometimes satisfying and sometimes frustrating experiences with the mother’s body become internalized as split-off “part objects” (“good breast” vs. “bad breast”). Through adequate mothering, the infant can gradually begin to integrate these separate experiences into whole internal representations and learns that the mother who is generally loving and responsive is the same one who is sometimes frustrating and disappointing.

British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott also focused on the primacy of the maternal role in psychic development, coining terms such as “holding environment,” “good-enough mother,” “primary maternal preoccupation,” “subjective

omnipotence,” and others to describe how the mother’s behavior and state of mind function to help the newborn transition from a terrifying world of disconnected experiences to a progressive internalization of objective reality and development of a cohesive “true self.” Winnicott’s concept of the “good-enough mother,” who is neither stiflingly perfect nor abusive and neglectful but who provides an optimal level of frustration, has also served as a model for an effective psychotherapist.

Some psychodynamic frameworks, such as attachment theory, relational psychoanalysis, and intersubjectivity, have begun to recognize that not only mothers but fathers, grandparents, or other caregivers, insofar as they are intensively involved in providing care, can become primary relational or attachment figures. However, psychoanalytic approaches that have continued to draw from Freudian theories maintain their emphases on the mother’s primordial role in the identity formation of infants.

## See Also

- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Matriarchy](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)

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## Mountain, The

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Mountain symbolism occurs throughout history: the peoples of one of the earliest known civilizations, the Sumerians, built mountain-like ziggurats in the desert, which they believed to be the dwelling places of the gods; in contemporary times, we climb, conquer, and marvel at the beauty of natural mountains. Mountains symbolize constancy, eternity, firmness, and stillness. They have been used to represent the state of full consciousness: in Nepal, the sacred mountain Everest (“Mother Goddess of the world”) is thought of as the “navel of the water.” The image of the mountain as a “center” is one of the most important and widespread throughout history. Many ancient cultures considered the mountain the “Center of the World.” It often serves as a cosmic axis linking heaven and earth and providing “order” to the universe. Mountains evoke a special sense of awe and power and no single image or meaning can capture or express every facet of its symbolic significance.

Being close to the heavens, the mountain is often the place of revelation, as it was in the epiphany of Moses and the transfiguration of Christ. Jesus retired to the mountains when confronted with a problem that needed reflection. Buddha gave his first significant teaching on the summit of Vulture Peak in India.

Native Americans made frequent pilgrimages to mountains, which they saw as abodes of the Great Spirit. The elders sent tribal members, who were found guilty of wrongdoing, in the mountains to do penance and to benefit from the healing influence of these surroundings. Many believe that the archetypal container is inherent in the image of the mountain because it is ordered and organized by the laws of nature; it reflects the internal experience of a “parental” container. It is important to note, however, that



this image does not imply “paradise” but a “self-regulating” system that provides “continuity of being.” Traversing mountains require human effort and they mark a place in mythological stories where heroes, after the arduous effort of climbing, gain steadfastness and self-knowledge. Mountain climbing gives the ego something to conquer and to move against, potentially imparting a sense of being capable and self-sufficient.

Mountain imagery also represents the unconscious, the earth, our mother, and “mother nature.” We live with these constructs in a “participation mystique.” It is here that the archetypes live and also where the instincts reside. C.A. Meier states, “The wilderness mountain is really the original biotope of the Sou” (Meier 1985, p. 13).

Consequently, mountains can be seen as both a desire and an unconscious attempt to reconnect with the archetypal core of the personality, which also offers recovery of the lost capacity for experience and meaning. In sum, the mountain image gives us a sense of relatedness and ontological security by connecting us to the universe.

## See Also

► [Great Mother](#)

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## Mu Koan or Joshu's Dog

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### Introduction

A monk once asked Joshu, ‘Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?’ Joshu said, ‘Mu!’ (Shibayama 1974, p. 19).

The “Mu Koan” or “Joshu’s Dog” introduces the thirteenth-century koan collection, *Mumonkan* (Gateless Gate or Gateless Barrier), which was compiled by the Chinese monk Mumon (1183–1260). This terse koan expresses the irresolvable paradox between dualism and nondualism, which is a common theme throughout the various koan collections. As a basis of practice, it serves to cut through all dualities, the most significant of which is that between being and nonbeing.

Mumon attributes no significance to the order of the koans in *Mumonkan*; however, scholars underline the importance of the koan by its placement as first in the collection. The American Zen master Philip Kapleau observes that “Even to this day no koan is assigned to novices more often” (1966, p. 63).

### Transcending Dualism and Nondualism

For the Zennist, being and nonbeing are inclusive and intertwined. This seemingly irrational paradox flies in the face of the Western positivism that influenced Freud and early psychoanalytic thought. From this perspective, “gate” or “barrier” refers to the discriminating mind which interferes with spiritual freedom. Viewed dualistically as elements, “Buddha nature or not” and “Mu” reflect polarized

extremes of affirmation and negation. However, when understood as a whole, the koan serves as an expression of inclusive nondualism. That is, as a whole, the text of the koan initiates an investigation that induces intuited self-realization. This tactic places total responsibility for spiritual development on the student.

Practice supported by Joshu's Mu dovetails with the psychoanalytic process of developing autonomy, mature relatedness, and accepting personal responsibility for one's actions. For example, through the psychoanalytic process, the patient will become aware of the irrational hold of infantile wishes, the tendency to blame others for one's failures and to establish developmentally more adaptive and constructive forms of human relatedness.

In response to the student's question, Joshu simply says "Mu." Joshu would sometimes say "U" (yes) or remain silent. Joshu's response (Mu, U, or silence) exemplifies the Zen challenge of all reifications and deconstructs all assertions and negations. In this regard, Joshu's response is both informative and performative and engenders what Michael Sells (1994) views as a "meaning event," which he describes as the moment when expression and meaning are fused. Similarly, the meaning event is the moment that occurs during psychotherapy when the therapist's comments and the patient's responses are no longer exclusively hypothetical, speculative, informative, and based solely on discovered "evidence," and words, but are spontaneously emerging expressions of in-the-moment emotional truth, deeply felt, lived experiences that can be transformative for both individuals.

D. T. Suzuki emphasizes this unity and he notes that "Enlightenment was to be found in life itself, in its fuller and freer expressions, and not in its cessation" (1948, p. 85). The notion of "fuller and freer expression" that Suzuki articulates finds a parallel in Wilfred Bion's work. He notes that as a result of the therapeutic encounter, the patient will display a fuller and wider range of emotional experience and he writes that "'Progress' will be measured by the increased number and variety of moods,

ideas and attitudes seen in any given session" (Bion 1967/1988, p. 18).

### Alternative Intuitive Model

As a "spontaneously arising alternative intuitive model" (Cooper 2010), the Mu koan can contribute to enriching our understanding, use, and further development of psychoanalytic theory and technique. For example, viewed holistically, the Mu koan can serve as a prototype for integrating and synthesizing seemingly contradictory theoretical models and for organizing and articulating the resulting technical implications. For instance, contemporary intersubjectivity theorists have offered cogent and convincing critiques of the tendency in the literature on self-psychology and object relations toward reification and personification of the metapsychological concepts of "self" and "object" (Stolorow and Atwood 1992). As a result, the intersubjectivists completely dismiss basic concepts that are central to object relations theory such as projective identification. From the Zen perspective, as noted above, all reifications are ultimately false, and in this respect, the intersubjectivists rightfully question the misuse of these important concepts. However, a total dismissal of these concepts reflects an underlying nihilism, which is also subject to reification. Relatively speaking, as Zennists point out, reification is an active process that functions to defend against existential anxiety. This deeply rooted emotional response to our ultimate insubstantiality cannot be worked out simply through new theoretical constructs. The illusion of solidity and separateness holds very real consequences that require intuitive and experiential responses. We can think of Joshu's Mu and the monks' "Buddha nature" as symbolic of this human tendency toward reification and we can also think of intersubjectivity theory and object relations theory as highly rarified and well-thought-out theoretical manifestations of these basic human tendencies. However, when considered holistically as differing aspects of one reality, they point to varying aspects of human experience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Popular Religions](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Koan](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Muhammad

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Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim was born in Mecca in 570 CE and died in Medina in 632 CE. He is the prophet of Islam and the last messenger of God. Muhammad is revered and beloved by Muslims whose worldwide population numbers more than 1.6 billion.

Muhammad is a descendant of the Prophet Abraham through Ishmael’s offspring. Muhammad endured psychological and physical hardship such as orphanhood, exile, humiliation, persecution, and denial of close kin especially when he received revelation. Being an orphan in his early life, Muhammad was sent to Halima bint ‘Abdullah (a woman from the tribe of Bani Sa‘ad) who nursed him as a child (Ibn Hisham 1978). Muhammad was raised by his paternal grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muttalib, until the age of eight. After the death of his grandfather, he was brought up by his paternal uncle, Abu Talib.

Muhammad was a shepherd (in his childhood), a trustful merchant (in adulthood), and a wise leader. The quality of leadership is emphasized in one of the prophet’s sayings (Hadith), “everyone is a shepherd, and every shepherd is responsible for [the well being of] his subject” (*Kullukum rā‘in wa Kullu rā‘in mas’ūlun ‘an ra‘iyyatih*) (al-Bukhārī 1966a, [Kitāb al-Imāra, 20, no. 4496]).

Muhammad was married by age 25 to Khadija bint Khuwaylid, the first person to accept Islam. She gave birth to two sons (Qasim and ‘Adbullah) both of which died at age of two and four daughters (Zainab, Ruqayya, Umm Kulthum, and Fatima). The prophet had a third son, Ibrahim, who also died in infancy, from Maryiah, an Egyptian Coptic woman.

The Prophet Muhammad experienced solitude, meditation, and contemplation in the cave on the mount (Ghār of Hirā’) in Mecca. In this cave and during the month of Ramadan (in the year 610 CE), Muhammad, at age 40, started receiving revelations in the form of the verses or signs (*āyāt. sing. āyah*) and chapters (*sura*) of the Qur’an (word of God, upon which Islam as a monotheistic faith has been established) through the archangel Gabriel (Jibril). The first night in which the Qur’an was revealed is known as the Night of Power (*laylat al-Qadr*). For 20 years, revelations took place intermittently through the archangel Gabriel.

As a human being Muhammad experienced psychological anxiety and fear when he encountered the archangel Gabriel for the first time. While holding Muhammad, the archangel Gabriel revealed to him the first verses of the

Qur'an after asking him many times to read or recite these verses. After the departure of Gabriel, Muhammad, troubled and trembling, went back home asking his wife, Khadija, to cover and wrap him, which she did (Ibn Hisham 1978). Khadija comforted and supported Muhammad in such critical and emotional experiences.

In the year of 622, Muhammad and his followers were forced to migrate from Mecca to Yathrib, later known as Medina, the second holiest site in Islam. The year of migration designated the beginning of the Hijri or Islamic (lunar) calendar. In Medina, Muhammad mediated and made peace between fighting tribes, mainly the Aus and Khazraj, who became known as the "Helpers" (Anṣār). He also established the first Muslim community (*Ummah*) that functioned as a unified and well-organized state (el-Aswad 2012).

Before the Hijra, the prophet experienced what is known as the Nocturnal Journey (*al-Isrā' wa al-mi'rāj* [Qur'an: 17]) on the night of the 27th of the Arabic month of Rajab. The Prophet Muhammad mounted *al-burāq* (a steed or mythical horselike creature) and miraculously traveled from Al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, the sacred mosque in Mecca, to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the farthest mosque in Jerusalem where he led all prophets in collective prayer. Then, accompanied by the archangel Gabriel, he ascended to the highest point of the seventh heaven, passing through all the heavens, and turned back to Jerusalem and then to his place in Mecca (el-Aswad 2012). Only the prophet was allowed to reach this highest point known as *sidrat al-muntaha*, close to the Gardens of the Abode (*jannat al-ma'wa*). During this heavenly journey, God assigned the five daily prayers to all Muslims. Some Muslim commentators interpret the prophet's ascension to heaven (*mi'rāj*) literally, while others view it as a vision (Ibn Hisham 1978, pp. 3–9; Ibn Kathir 1937, pp. 2–24). The prophet's miraculous travel, suspending the natural laws of time and space, from Mecca to Jerusalem and back, spatially horizontal in nature, linked two sacred places, while his ascension to the heaven, spatially vertical, mediated between natural and spiritual or celestial worlds. By passing with his soul and body

through the divine and lucid levels of heaven, the prophet was assured that heaven and earth are an undivided geography (el-Aswad 2012). Noteworthy is the fact that the prophet died and was buried in Medina.

In Medina, the prophet received a revelation to change the *Qibla* (direction toward which Muslim pray) from the farthest mosque (Al-Aqsa) in Jerusalem to the Ka'ba in Mecca. Muhammad found he had to protect the Muslim community from the aggression of the old enemy, mostly from the Quraish, in Mecca. He defeated the mighty army of the pagan tribes of Mecca in various battles such as those of Badr (in 624 CE) and "the Trench" or al-Khandaq (in 627 CE), for example.

In many cases psychological experience and divine knowledge are intertwined. From the psychological point of view, Jung long argued that the experiences of religion or God are archetypal realities, inherited as psychic structures (which have the possibility of producing images) by all human beings. The experience of God occurs in the psyche but is usually projected outward (Smyers 2002, p. 485). For Jung (2002, pp. 78–79), however, there are two kinds of unconscious: a personal unconscious causing "little" dreams or nightly fragments of subjective impressions and fantasies and a collective unconscious, causing "big" or archetypal dreams concerned with symbolic images or general ideas (containing the accumulation of the experiences of all humanity) whose significance lies in their intrinsic meaning and not in any personal experience or association. Jung (2002, p. 9) states, "the human psyche is unique and subjective or personal only in part, and for the rest is collective and objective."

It is worthy to note that the Prophet Muhammad differentiates between two categories of dreams indicating psychological, social, and spiritual realities. The first category is the dream vision (*ru'yā*) that enjoys higher-order meaning and differs from both regular dream (*ḥulm*) and waking vision (*ru'ya*). The prophet considered dream visions to be sharper, stronger, more veracious, and higher in dignity than other kinds of dreams. He said that a good dream vision is one of

forty-six parts of prophecy (al-Bukhari 1966b, *Kitab al-Ta'bir*, Chap. 2, No. 6983). Muhammad also said that nothing would be left after his death except good dream visions or glad tidings, *mubashshirat* (al-Bukhari 1966b, *Kitab al-Ta'bir*, Chap. 5, No. 6990). This implies that dream visions are a small but legitimate source of divine knowledge. A regular dream may be good or demonic and devilish, based on persons' states of mind. This classification implicates theories concerning which components of the person such as the soul and/or self among other elements and forces, within and without the person, are involved in the dreaming. Though the soul (*rūh*), viewed as being able to move independently and communicate with other beings, spirits and angels, plays a significant role in religious experience (especially dream visions), the self (*nafs*) or psyche inseparable from the body is the core agency in regular dreams that serve as symbolic ways for expressing individuals' emotions and ideas, as well as satisfying their needs (el-Aswad 2012).

The Prophet Muhammad had several dream visions related to various circumstances. In some of these dream visions, he received divine support, immediately before the battle of Badr, rendering his enemy insignificant. "Remember in thy dream Allah showed them to thee as few: if He had shown them to thee as many, ye would surely have been discouraged, and ye would surely have disputed in (your) decision; but Allah saved (you): for He knoweth well the (secrets) of (all) hearts" (Qur'an 8: 43). There is also a dream vision through which the Prophet Muhammad was confirmed entering Mecca victoriously (Qur'an 48:27).

Muhammad has been a most influential person in both religious and mundane domains. His behavior was exemplary showing respect not only to his people or Muslims but also to non-Muslims. Peace (*salām*) was the core value of Muhammad's teaching and behavior while also advocating tolerance, forgiveness, and dialogue. This was reflected in the treaty of al-Hudaibiyya (628 CE) drafted between Muhammad and representatives of the tribe of Quraish of Mecca when he and his followers intended to perform

their pilgrimage. According to the treaty there would be no fighting for 10 years between both sides (Mecca and Medina). Those leaving Mecca to Medina would be allowed to return to Mecca, and those leaving Medina to Mecca would be granted protection. Muslims would be allowed to stay 3 days in Mecca in the following year (which they did), not the year of the treaty. However, the covenant was broken by the Quraish and Muhammad led a mighty army against them in 630 CE; however, there was no bloodshed or actual fight as the Quraish people surrendered. Muhammad forgave the people of Mecca and granted them peace.

Through the revelation and practices of the Prophet Muhammad, the pillars of Islam (*arkān al-islām*) have been established. These pillars include the two testimonies (*ash-shahādāt*) of the oneness of Allah ["there is no god but Allah"] and "Mohammad is His messenger," praying (*ṣalāt*) five times daily, almsgiving (*zakāt*), fasting (*ṣiyām*) during the month of Ramadan, and participating in the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) for those who can afford it.

Muhammad was highly gifted in the art of persuasion, politics and diplomacy, as well as in grasping people's religious, social, and psychological needs. As a statesman he sent suave letters to the rulers of Abyssinia, Bahrain, Byzantium, Egypt, and Persia, among others, inviting them peacefully to Islam. Muhammad offered material, social, and spiritual rewards to his followers and companions. He was keen to advise people to think of and manage their self or psyche (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), mind (*'aql*), and soul (*rūh*), which all indicate intellectual and spiritual qualities (el-Aswad 2002). Self-control or the struggle against one's self was viewed by Muhammad as the greater struggle (*al-jihād al-akbar*) for attaining righteousness and perfection. The struggle against the enemy, necessitating positive qualities of physical strength, bravery, and courage, was considered by Muhammad as the lesser struggle (*al-jihād al-aṣghbar*).

For Muhammad, the self (*nafs*) encompasses two aspects indicating that good exists side by side with evil. This is to say that man has been given the ability to distinguish between right and

wrong as represented in having, respectively, a righteous self (*nafs mutma'inna*) and an evil or domineering self (*nafs ammāra*). Both contrary aspects have opposite effects on peoples' daily lives (el-Aswad 2012).

Muhammad was an effective agent in the social transformation of Arabia from the state of ignorance (*jāhiliyya*), idolatry, and polytheism (*shirk*), prevalent in the pre-Islamic era, to that of enlightenment and monotheism (*tawhīd*). For 23 years Muhammad had been guiding and teaching people the principles and values of Islam focusing on love, peace, patience, humility, justice, truthfulness, compassion, integrity, and spirituality. Muslims have been taught by Muhammad to greet each other saying, "may peace be upon you" (*as-salām 'alaikum*). Muhammad emphasized intimate family relationships, advising Muslims to deal with their wives, children, relatives, and other people with kind and merciful manners. It is not a surprise then to know that "Muhammad" is the most popular name among Muslim males, Arab and non-Arab.

## See Also

- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Patience in Sunni Muslim Worldviews
- ▶ Prophets
- ▶ Qur'an

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## Muir, John, and Spirituality

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Everything turns into religion, all the world seems a church and the mountains altars (Muir 1911/1997, p. 336).

John Muir was overwhelmed by the beauty and splendor of the natural world. Such grandeur, Muir reasoned, could only have been created by God and it reflected God's bounty. Like a perfectly tranquil pond, with nary a ripple touching its surface as the sun approaches the horizon in the evening, just before the still of night descends when every rock, every tree, every line of hills is piercingly reflected, so the creating God of the universe is reflected. Or, as John Muir paused and noted, "How wonderful the power of . . . beauty! Gazing awe-stricken, I might have left everything for it. . . . Beauty beyond thought everywhere, beneath, above, made and being made forever" (Muir 1911/1997, p. 160).

The Scottish-born naturalist and founder of the Sierra Club, John Muir (1838–1914), was not only America's most ardent defender of wilderness, he was the first American naturalist to expound the idea that wilderness had value in itself. Until John Muir wrote about America's mountains, valleys, deserts, forests, and canyons, wilderness was commonly understood as something to be conquered, tamed, used, and exploited for commercial gain. It took Muir to commend the idea that nature has meaning, beauty, and worth in itself and, even more, that God is revealed through the natural world. He consistently pointed to the majesty of God and the



sublime glories of creation. Muir did not worship trees, mountains, brooks, and meadows; instead, like them, he clapped his hands in adoration of God, whom he believed had called them into being (Rowthorn 2012, p. 1).

According to Larry Gates, “No American ever experienced wilderness as religious ecstasy more than Muir. He called the Sierras the Range of Light and—as Light in the sky—they evoked in him immense religious longings. Before the magnificence of nature, he found himself dumb with admiration, prostrate before the power of the God who created it all” (Gates 2000, p. 1).

### Conversion to Nature

John Muir was to draw many times on the image of his first sight of the Sierra Nevada in 1868. It was a view that shaped his thinking and sustained him for his lifetime. Arriving in San Francisco via steamer from New York, Muir took a three-month-walk eastwards. When he finally reached the San Joaquin Valley with the view of the Sierra Nevada mountains 100 miles away, he wrote:

The air was perfectly delicious, sweet enough for the breath of angels; every draught of it gave a separate and distinct piece of pleasure. I do not believe that Adam and Eve ever tasted better in their balmiest nook . . . . [It is] robed with the greenest grass and richest light I ever beheld, and colored and shaded with millions of flowers of every hue, chiefly of purple and golden yellow; and hundreds of crystal rills joined songs with the larks, filling all the Valley with music like a sea, making it an Eden from end to end (Muir 1868).

Here he had what was, by his own reckoning, an authentic conversion to the wilderness: Our flesh-and-bone tabernacle seems transparent as glass to the beauty about us, as if truly an inseparable part of it, thrilling with the air and trees, streams and rocks, in the waves of the sun—a part of all nature, neither old nor young, sick nor well, but immortal. Just now I can hardly conceive of any bodily condition dependent on food or breath any more than the ground or the sky. How glorious a conversion, so complete and wholesome it is. In this newness of life we seem to have been always (Muir 1901, p. 20).

Throughout his writings Muir makes repeated references to cathedrals, churches, and tabernacles, and he had no doubt that natural cathedrals

of the wilderness revealed God more surely than even the most sublime human-made European Gothic marvels. He often capitalized the words “nature,” “beauty,” “love,” “soul,” and “universe,” just as he capitalized the word, “God.” For him the perfect synonym for God was beauty. Whether as seen carving the lines of the mountains with glaciers, or in the star-filled night, or in crashing waterfalls, all was beauty (Rowthorn 2012, pp. 33–34). He said everything in nature, “From form to form, beauty to beauty, ever changing, never resting, all are speeding on with love’s enthusiasm, singing with the stars the eternal song of creation” (Muir 1911/1997, p. 226). His companions were what he called “plant people” and sometimes “plant saints,” “flower people,” and “animal people.” He felt a relationship between himself and the birds and animals, even lizards and insects. He observed the order and integrity of their lives and how they cared for their young. Muir also saw the world as constantly being created, its forces moving in cycles, ever rising and falling:

This grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere, the dew is never dried at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal sun sunset, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth turns (Wolfe 1938, p. 438).

As Gates said, “To Muir, religious feelings were as natural as breathing. Nature herself seemed constantly engaged in worship. Even trees bowing in the wind were celebrants of a primordial religion” (Gates 2000, p. 2). What John Muir had glimpsed in a flash of insight upon first encountering the huge sweep of the San Joaquin Valley was what he took to be the full, overpowering impact of God. The beauty before him was so magnificent, the experience so total, so beyond human creating, he could only attribute it to God. He had a visceral insight that it was God who was the creator; the primal maker of everything living, of every mountain, glacier, sea and vista, and leaf and butterfly; and the architect of creation. As he wrote in a letter to a friend in 1872:

... fresh truth [is] gathered and absorbed from pines and waters and deep singing winds. . . . Rocks and waters are words of God and so are men. We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love. God does not appear, and flow out, only from narrow chinks and round bored wells here and there in favored races and places, but He flows in grand undivided currents, shoreless and boundless over creeks and forms and all kinds of civilizations and peoples and beasts, saturating all (Muir 1892).

## Early Influences

From his earliest days as a boy in Scotland, John Muir was drawn to “wildness,” as he called the natural world. Curious and imaginative by temperament, John could not resist the urge to run away to the seashore, marsh, and fields where his soul was nurtured, just as his identity as a naturalist was set on course. Escaping his father’s heavy-handedness was not easy, for the elder Muir believed that all that really mattered was that he learns his lessons well, especially his Biblical lessons (Rowthorn 2012, p. 13).

Wildness was ever sounding in our ears, and Nature saw to it that besides school lessons and church lessons some of her own lessons should be learned, perhaps with a view to the time when we should be called to wander in wildness to our heart’s content. Oh, the blessed enchantment of those Saturday runaways in the prime of the spring! How our young wondering eyes reveled in the sunny, breezy glory of the hills and the sky, every particle of us thrilling and tingling with the bees and glad birds and glad streams! These were my first excursions — the beginnings of lifelong wanderings (Muir 1913/1997, p. 28).

## A Harsh Father

Daniel Muir, John’s father, was a complex, unrelenting, and difficult man, driven by deep religious convictions and always seeking what he considered a better path of being faithful. From his Scottish Presbyterian roots, he sought a simpler expression of the faith more in keeping with early Christian communities. “He belonged to almost every protestant denomination in turn,

going from one to another, not in search of a better creed, but ever in search of a warmer and more active zeal” (Muir 1885). When he learned that the fledgling Disciples of Christ had established centers in Wisconsin, he decided to emigrate. In February of 1849, Daniel Muir set off for the six-week journey with John, age eleven; Sarah, age thirteen; and nine-year-old David. They left behind Ann and the four other Muir children until suitable farmland could be obtained and a homestead built. For the next eight years, Daniel and his sons chopped away the oak and hickory forest, pulled out roots and rocks, built a simple house, and planted winter wheat and corn for the draft animals and vegetables for themselves. In the winter the work was bone chilling and in the summer they baked under the blistering sun. As John Muir wrote in the memoir of his childhood, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth*:

I was put to the plough at the age of twelve, when my head reached but little above the handles, and for many years I had to do the greater part of the ploughing. It was hard work for so small a boy. . . . And as I was the eldest boy, the greater part of all the other hard work of the farm quite naturally fell on me. I had to split rails for long lines of zigzag fences. . . . I used to cut and split a hundred a day from our short, knotty oak timber, swinging the axe and heavy mallet, often with sore hands, from early morning to night (Muir 1913/1997, p. 106).

The Muir children worked 12–14 h a day on the farm, they were not allowed to attend school, and the only book permitted in the Muir house was the Bible. By the time he was eleven, John Muir had memorized three quarters of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament, which may have helped make him such an empathetic, powerful, and spiritual writer. Years later, he reflected that psychologically, he was able to concentrate his attention due to fear of punishment. “It was all done by whipping—thrashing in general” (Muir 1913/1997, p. 20). But this did not make him an angry man. Instead, he opened his perceptions and his heart to see God glowing in every raindrop.

From our twenty-first-century perspective, we wonder what the psychological effects of his

father's harshness were on John and his siblings, and since Muir wrote very little about it, we can only speculate. We know that all the children left home as soon as they could and that ultimately, Daniel Muir's wife, Ann, also left, but they did not divorce. After the family departed, the elder Muir abandoned farming and became an itinerant preacher and was finally taken in by his daughter, Joanna, in Kansas City, Missouri. Muir had not seen his parents for twenty years, and suddenly in the summer of 1885, he got a premonition that his father was dying and that he wanted to see him. He traveled to Portage and gathered his siblings and then on to Kansas City where on October 6, Daniel Muir died surrounded by seven of his eight children. John was in tears. Joanna recounted that before Daniel slipped into dementia, he confessed his severe treatment of his children, regretting especially the "cruel things" he had said to John (Worster 2008, p. 300).

If John Muir was affected by his harsh childhood and his father's relentlessness, he was not crushed. He probably buried the hurts of his childhood. Perhaps the compelling beauty and majesty of the natural world compensated for his early experiences. Muir was hardy and resilient, and he was overwhelmingly positive.

### Always a Christian

While John Muir's understanding of God was primarily as creator and sustainer of the universe, he never lost sight of his Christian roots, as illustrated by two letters from the Wisconsin Historical Society. The first, written in 1861, is addressed to E. W. and Frances Pelton following the death of their 20-month-old daughter and only child, Fannie:

What can I say, what can I do? Well, well do I know how little letters of consolation can do—your little blessing is away, but Mr. and Mrs. Pelton, you know that Jesus loves this little dear, and all is well, and you will go to her in just a little while though she cannot come to you. Blessed, blessed will you be if washed in Jesus's blood you be found sinless as she. Love Jesus the more. He knows the strength of this love. Think how many dangers and

aches your little dear has been spared by leaving a little earlier than yourselves, and she is safe, all safe and blessed (Muir 1861).

Muir's Christian grounding remained constant, for in the last year of his life he wrote the following to Emily Pelton Wilson:

...How many things have changed since you wrote last. The happy childrens' voices that used to sing with the merry birds as they got posies on our lovely hill are not heard now—now wrinkled [we are,] now borne about by every wind... "We all do fade as a leaf." [Isa. 66:6, citation added] As the leaf on the ripples of a lake, generation follows generation... how good it is to obey and love God who gave His Son to redeem us and fit us to live forever (Muir 1914).

### Finding a Sense of Well-Being and Spirituality in Nature

John Muir took the advice he gave to others, "Try the mountain passes. They will kill care, save you from deadly apathy, set you free, and call forth every faculty into vigorous, enthusiastic action" (Muir 1884, p. 328) and:

It is a blessed thing to go free in the light of this beautiful world, to see God playing upon everything, as a man would play on an instrument, His fingers upon the lightning and torrent, on every wave of sea and sky, and every living thing, making all together sing and shine in sweet accord, the one love-harmony of the Universe (Badè 1924).

### See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Green Man](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)

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## Mummification

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Mummification is part of ancient Egyptian religious belief concerning the afterlife. It entails

preserving the body of one who has died for his/her journey into the next world. Initially provided for Egyptian Pharaohs, mummification is founded on religious fertility rites and notions of vegetative processes of regeneration. It is understood in relation to the natural ebb and flow of the Nile River agrarian life cycles. Extant ancient Egyptian instructions held in the Cairo Museum tell of the special care given to the procedures of dissection and embalment which constitute mummification (Arabic *mūmiyā*) and the process of desiccation. Every part of the body receives a ritual anointing with special oils and plant derivatives. The spine is soaked with oil. The head is twice anointed. The fingernails are gilded, the fingers are wrapped with linen bandages, each of which is attributed to a single god. The entire body is contained in linen wrappings, excluding the inner organs. These are removed (with exception of the heart) due to the rapidity of decay and held in funerary vases called canopic jars. The jars are a sign of physical immortality and set (with other possessions of the deceased) alongside the mummy in the tomb. In later times, the organs were wrapped in linen cloth and set back into the body. The mummification ritual evidences what is perceived to be the deification of the corpse and connects with the myth of the god Osiris who dies and is brought back to life by the queen goddess Isis. Resurrected, Osiris becomes the god of “the things in heaven and in the lower world” (Plutarch 1936 *Isis and Osiris* 61E). The soul (Ba) of the deceased journeys in order to enter into eternal life – the field of reeds. It must pass through seven gates to obtain lasting union with the sun-god Ra. The names of demons, shades, gods, and monsters encountered on the journey, along with magical formulae to disarm them, are provided to the deceased in such funerary “handbooks” as the *Coffin Texts* (ca. 2000 BCE), the *Pyramid Texts* (ca. 2600 BCE–ca. 2300 BCE), and *Book of the Dead* (sixteenth century BCE). The funerary text is placed between the wrapped hands of the mummy for the journey of the soul which occurs in the “light of day,” so that the journeyer has consciousness while passing through the land of the dark (unconscious) world. Egyptians placed wheat

grains and flower bulbs inside the wrappings of mummies, watering the seeds, and watching for growth as a sign of resurrection. The mummification practice is perceived this way to involve an inseparable connection between matter and spirit. Resurrection occurs through and from the old body, which itself contains the mystery of the new life. In one Coffin Text, the deceased declares: “I live, I die.... I live in wheat, I grow in wheat which the gods sow, hidden in Geb [the earth].” In Egyptian myth, Osiris himself is referred to as wheat and barley. The first century CE alchemical text entitled “Isis to Horus” says how “nature delights (*pereptai*) in nature, and nature overcomes (*nika*) nature” (7). *Mumia* is thought to have contained medicinal value in European pharmacy, and the German-Swiss physician and alchemist Paracelsus (d. 1541) refers to it as having elixir potency (Jung 1963, p. 391). The preparation of the body with cloth wrappings and plant derivatives referenced in the New Testament gospels (e.g., Mark 15.42–47) may be representative of ancient Egyptian mummification practices (cf. John 12.24). Origen of Alexandria speaks of the old body as *seminarium*, seed-plot from which springs new life (Jerome’s *Epistle to Pammachius* IV, 38).

## See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)

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## Music and Religion

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Since the dawn of time, music has been man’s medium of communication with its divinity/divinities. Views of the origin of both religion and music swing between two poles: the belief in a reality that is essential and independent of an observer and a view that neither music nor religion exists on its own, challenging their independent existence. Both views address the question, did music and religion exist prior to our having discovered them or did they exist all along, whether we knew them or not? In modern psychology, Jung answered this by positing that the world comes into its being when man discovers it.

In monotheism, Music and religion are means of accessing the invisible, unseen, and untouchable, what is beyond what man can comprehend. They both refer to the Almighty God, the Divine, the One which is called in religion and psychology the numinous, holy, and tremendous. Their common ground is archetypal and relates to the experience of loss through rituals of death and rebirth. The relationship between religion and music can be coined as the “spirit” of the “sound.” Both provide a means of transcending human existence. In polytheism, syncretic religions, and animism, there is no need to reach out the invisible in a way the spirit is present and embodied. Immanence represents the other side of the dichotomy transcendence (monotheism) – immanence (polytheism).

The archetypal ground of music and religion:

- Reflects an ordering principle that brings in music, harmony out of chaos, and dissonance and rituals and pilgrimages in religion. This principle moves from fragmentation toward a human need for wholeness. There is an expression of this universal human need in Chinese literature, the *I Ching or Book of Change* (See Chap. 16: Religion and Music).
- Refers to memory: music and religion are intimately entwined with memory. Western



mythology encapsulates this through the figures of the muses, daughters of Mnemosyne, goddess of memory. The oral tradition is still very much alive in the non-Western and Native American worlds, depends on memory, and stimulates it through repetition that is rhythmic and that is built into the body. In the Western world, this tradition is represented primarily by Homer. The oral tradition experiences time, essential in music as well as in religion, as circular, while the written tradition perceives it as linear.

- Embraces a dichotomy, identified at a collective level with the dualities of the Western/Eastern, and the Apollonian/Dionysian as well as in the individual level as an inner struggle such as experienced by Mozart, in which Salzburg came to symbolize sacred music, and Vienna secular. Tension and release, dissonance and consonance, and silence and chant are the kinds of opposites that express the energy carried by music and religion that eventually may find transformation through these channels.
- Holds the experience of mystery, whose Greek root means “to close, to have a mouth and the eyes closed,” probably coming from the onomatopoeia *mu*, symbol of inarticulate sound. There is an intimate relationship between music and faith across all civilizations.
- Appeals to irrational, emotional, and instinctive processes. Because of their archetypal nature, no scientific approach can capture them in their entirety. Indeed, a large part of our understanding of both comes from a place before words. The body, with its taboos and shadows, is the main channel through which music and religion express themselves, by means of voice and dance. In ancient Greece, the secret of the Eleusinian Mysteries could be more readily revealed by dancing than by speaking.

In ancient times, the oral tradition was predominant in both music (poetry) and religion (chant and dance). The figure of the shaman seems to be the oldest to embody the convergence of music and religion. The English word shaman (cf. Eliade, Frazer, Levi Straus) comes from the

Tungusic language of Siberia – *saman* – broadly meaning “mastery over fire,” “magical flight,” and “communion with spirit.” With his ritual of dance, chant, and musical instrument (drums and rattle), the shaman was and still is a healer. Among the 17,000-year-old cave painting at Les Trois Frères in France, we see a shaman playing a resonating musical bow.

With the development of consciousness, music and religion which were combined in the figure of the shaman began to differentiate, *mythos* and *Eros* giving way to *logos*. According to tradition, Orpheus, grandson of Mnemosyne, came out of the shamanic mists, stepping into the fifth century, a period of great changes in the Greek world. Built on the older form of the shaman, the figure of Orpheus stands as the medial term between the Apollonian and the Dionysian modes of thought, holding the tension, prefiguring the dualities of Christianity.

With the emergence of patriarchy, as music and religion became separated and differentiated, oppositions arose: spirit/matter (e.g., Hildegard von Bingen), male/female (e.g., castrato), lyric/melody (e.g., *Querelle des Bouffons*, in France), and so on. Figures, which had combined the agencies of music, religion, and healing, in the past, began to specialize. For example, in the Celtic tradition, the roles of the shaman were split into the druid, who accessed the spiritual and healing realm, and the bard, artist, poet, musician. Under Christianity, a polarization between external/internal, physical/spiritual, emotion/thought, and text/context increased in music as well as in religion, separating one from the other.

In all cultures, a tension between text and music exists in the most primitive as well as most sophisticated forms. On the one hand, chant, a codification or an amplification of words from a litany, represented by the monosyllabic song of the Greek tragedies to the psalmodies of the Buddhist monks. On the other, the enjoyment of singing, independent of text (*melisma*, “*bel canto*,” and ornamentation), can be found in a Gregorian Alleluia, in Islamic and Spanish chant, and in the Messiah of Handel.



## Judaism

For over 3,000 years, Jewish people have come together to worship by way of songs. “Man is like a ram’s horn. The only sound he makes is that which is blown through him,” said a Chassidic master. The horn of ram is the oldest Jewish musical instrument, the shofar, with an extremely profound symbolic, religious, and spiritual significance. Judaism developed an ancient and annotated system (called *trope*) for chanting the Bible, with particular scales and melodies for each book and musical modes (called *musah ha-tefillah*) for every category of prayer and for different holidays, passed on to observant Jews through oral tradition. The rich garden of mystical tradition known as the Kabbalah states, “Come, I will show you a new way to the Lord, not with words but with song” (Chassidic masters).

## Christianity

The Christian tradition, while recognizing the great psychological value of music, has seldom used it for esoteric or initiatory purpose. Like other religions, it experiences the opposition between words and music. Early in Christian history, Saint Augustine declared that “To sing is to pray twice” and sung prayers have always been central. Christian forms of chant wear many faces from Gregorian chant to the African drums and rhythms of the monks in Senegal, from stately Lutheran hymns to gospel music. Among these practices, Gregorian chant is unique in providing an unbroken link not only to the prayers of early Christians but also to the Jewish tradition of chanting texts more than 3,000 years ago. The Bible is full of musical references, particularly in the Psalms, in the Songs of the Songs, and in the Lamentation of Jeremiah. The oldest instrument in the Bible is an organ originally made of pipes. In the New Testament, Paul instructs the Ephesians “to sing and psalmodize to the Lord with your heart and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord.” The Christian monastic tradition represents the combined heritage of religious

life and music (Gregorian chants), including the practice of medicine (culture of medicinal herbs). Bach, recognized as one of the greatest composers in Western history, was also a devout Christian and understood the profound meaning of the texts he set to music. The text of the Cantata BWV 20 is amazingly closed to the number 16 of the I Ching: “O Eternity, you word of thunder. . .”

## Islam

The Prophet Muhammad is said to have recited the Qur’an, whose root means “to [recite].” Therefore, Imams are not selected for their musical abilities. Although Islamic tradition in general frowns upon instrumental music and music in general as a sensual distraction from a devout life, there exists a rich tradition of chanting Qur’an and intoning prayers. The Sama is a practice of mystical listening. While Orthodox Muslims have an uncanny relationship to music, most Sufis, a mystical branch of Islam, embrace it (e.g., dervishes).

## African

While chants have been orally passed down from generation to generation since the dawn of history, individuals are also free to improvise and express their own unique style and personality. Drumming uplifts the spirit of African chant on a tide of rhythm more sophisticated than almost anywhere else in the world. And where there are drums playing, bodies start to move. Chanting is always done in groups, rarely, if ever, alone.

## Hinduism

All forms of yoga make use of chant. The word *yoga* means “yoke” or union with God and the purpose of these practices and Sanskrit chanting is to become one with God, the Atman, our own inner self. Of all the religious traditions, there is

none in which chant and dance play a more central role than Hindu/Vedic culture.

## Buddhism

The word “Buddha” comes from Sanskrit word meaning literally “to wake up.” This is the true message of Buddhism. In Buddhism, the chant is a tool for awakening consciousness. Originating in India, Buddhism shares with Hinduism use of Sanskrit and the practice of chanting mantram. Many Buddhist monks practice visualizations and sacred hand gestures, called “mudras,” while chanting. Tibetan monks produce unique deep-throated vocal tones with such powerful harmonics that each voice is able to sound three separate notes at the same time. The overtones that emanate from their voices are extraordinary phenomenon of sound, generating a high level of scientific interest and research. There are many faces and many voices of Buddhist chant. It invokes the clarity, emptiness, and compassion of the Buddha’s teaching. Buddhist chant is slow, meditative, and dispassionate, a far cry from the ecstatic devotional chant practices of Hinduism or the sensual rhythms of Africans.

In psychoanalysis, the relation between music and religion remains relatively untrodden territory. The analytical approach, influenced by its fathers, swings between suppression and repression. Freud was very sensitive to music and could not bear the amount of affect triggered by anything musical, from a singing voice to a performed piece of music. Yiddish and Czech, languages of religious songs and feelings, dominated his early childhood in Freiberg. Music drew him irresistibly closer to his mother and grandmother, symbol of incestual love, object of repression. While son of a protestant minister, Jung was not a musician, as he explicitly said and wrote. Jung emphasized the visual image.

## See Also

- ▶ [Crucifixion](#)
- ▶ [Dalai Lama](#)

- ▶ [Eleusinian Mysteries](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [Mantra](#)
- ▶ [Psalms](#)
- ▶ [Rank, Otto](#)
- ▶ [Rumi, Celaladin](#)

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## Music Thanatology

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### Definition

Thanatology, from the Greek word “*thanatos*,” meaning death, refers to the study of the death and dying process from various interdisciplinary perspectives including physiology, psychology, and spirituality. Music thanatology is a contemplative practice within the field of thanatology, where prescriptive music, usually via the medium of harp and voice, is delivered live in

clinical settings as a form of palliative medicine for patients who are dying.

While there is little doubt that many forms of live and prerecorded music delivered to an audience can be experienced as profoundly healing, prescriptive music differs in that it is intentionally delivered solely for the dying patient. The practitioner of music thanatology uses her instrument in a way that attunes to the dying person’s unique and individual needs from moment to moment, as opposed to a performing musician who delivers a preset program which is informed and shaped in advance by the energies of desire.

### Origins

Although the field of music thanatology in its contemporary form originates from the visionary opus of harpist, musicologist, and clinician Therese Schroeder-Sheker (Founder and Director of the Chalice of Repose Project™ and Dean of the Chalice of Repose School of Music Thanatology, which has offered a highly specialized and rigorous graduate program in the field for decades), its ancestral roots stretch back to the monastic medicine practiced in the eleventh-century Benedictine monastery of Cluny in Burgundy, France. At Cluny, rituals of prayer and what became known as “infirmarium music” were used in bedside vigils to attend to the physical, emotional, and spiritual sufferings of the dying. The relief of pain in both body and soul was considered essential for the experience of a peaceful and blessed death. The seeds of this holistic philosophy continue to bear fruit today, in the many different branches of modern palliative care. While the field of music thanatology does not seek to replicate the Benedictine approach to serving the dying, it deeply embraces the cultivation of a vital inner life through a contemplative spiritual practice, as an essential companion to doing clinical work.

### Comparison with Music Therapy

Music thanatology shares much in common with music therapy in that both disciplines work

intimately and powerfully with the healing potential of sound. However, music therapy differs in one important respect in that usually the therapeutic process assumes the presence of, and then harnesses, an innate capacity in the patient to be an active participant in the session. The music therapist, in collaboration with the patient, chooses the specific musical interventions which tend to elicit the physiological and emotional responses that are desired. Even during altered states involving deep relaxation or cathartic release, the patient usually has access to an observing ego and can process the experience with the therapist afterwards so that the material can be integrated into consciousness. A music thanatologist, on the other hand, is usually invited to work with a patient in the active phase of dying. The patient may be agitated and in pain, or comatose, or pulled in and out of various altered states of consciousness, or otherwise unable to communicate. As the patient moves more deeply into the territory of a liminal world between life and death, she is in a sacred state of extraordinary vulnerability which needs to be supported as the natural “unbinding” processes in the body and the psyche take hold. Where there is resistance and struggle, carefully chosen prescriptive music will help the patient’s connections with this world to be softened and loosened gently so that the energies moving her towards death and beyond may do so unimpeded.

In order to support a patient’s physical and spiritual transition, or “transitus” (from the Latin *transire*, to cross over), into the territory of death and beyond, a practitioner of music thanatology allows herself to be guided both internally and externally by experiences of attunement and entrainment which mysteriously arise in the vibrational field between the practitioner and patient. The word “entrain” means “to pull or draw along after itself.” Entrainment is a universal phenomenon appearing in nature, where two oscillating bodies begin to vibrate together, in harmony, due to their mutual influence upon each other. Engaging in a process of nonverbal attunement similar to what occurs between mother and infant, the practitioner gradually synchronizes the music to the patient’s

physiology. For example, as the practitioner adjusts the meter and phrasing to mirror the breathing patterns, she observes the patient, whose body is literally absorbing and responding to the music, will often begin to “vibrate” at a frequency of greater relaxation and peace. The breathing slows and eases. This musical flexibility which also includes an adept use of the power of silence and rest tends to draw one into the more fluid, non-ordinary soul space of *kairos* time, as opposed to the linear, precisely metered *chronos* time which can bind one to ordinary reality.

## Conclusion

The practitioner of music thanatology (whether male or female) functions as a spiritual midwife and a comforting maternal presence. Perhaps she (along with the harp, which has a mythology of its own) also carries a bit of an angelic or shamanic projection as well. There is little doubt that the beauty in the music itself, expressed through the exquisitely refined craft of a skilled, trained instrumentalist and mediated by the humble, compassionate presence of a fellow human being who is called to serve, has the potential to create and hold a space for an experience of the transcendent. Although the delivery of prescriptive music is not designed to cure, it does heal by supporting the patient to release her engagement with life in this linear time-space dimension so that ultimately her consciousness and spirit as we know it can become gathered back into the Greater Mystery.

## See Also

- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Music and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Thanatos](#)

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## Mystery Religions

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Mystery religions flourished in the Hellenistic world. They centered around deities including Mithras (Persia), Atargatis (Syria), Dionysos, Demeter, and Core (Greece), Meter, (Anatolia), and Isis (Egypt). Most of the deities associated with these cults have their beginning as agricultural fertility gods and the notion of the great divine Mother who begets and receives life force. The word “mystery” comes from the Greek *muein*, “to initiate.” Membership in the mysteries occurred on an individual and voluntary basis. Ritual practices, worship, and “inner” teachings were privy only to cult members – this contributing to the prestige of the cult. Subsequently, little is known about worship and the mysteries. Apuleius (Lucius Apuleius Platonicus ca. 123/125 CE–ca. 180 CE), in his *Metamorphoses*, provides a glimpse into the nature of the Isis cult in second century CE. He explains how he was directed in a night dream by Isis “the mother of the universe” to become an initiate (1989, XI. 5) and how he undergoes purification rituals, observes 10 days of celibacy and fasting from meat and wine, and receives secret instructions (1989, XI. 23). At the culmination of the rite, he emerges from the inner sanctuary reborn in “the likeness of the sun” (1989, XI. 24). He writes how he came to the “boundary of death and . . . traveled through all the elements. . . and in the middle of the night came face to face with the gods below and the gods above” (XI. 23). Plato also refers to ecstatic experience and the

mysteries in the *Phaedrus*, where he says one who is taken up with True Beauty (*kallos tou alēthous*) cannot help but be euphoric – something the common world sees as madness (*parakinōn*) not knowing it to be inspiration (*enthousiazōn*) (249D). Plato says that the soul forms wings (*pterōtai*) and that it “throbs and palpitates. . . it is feverish and uncomfortable and itches when they [wings] begin to grow” (251C). The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE), a stoic philosopher, writes how the mysteries place one between dream visions and miraculous healings, suggesting some kind of psyche-soma, liminal experience. In this state of disorientation, the initiate may undergo an altered state of consciousness. Dramatic rituals involving strong contrast between light and dark and movement through interior and exterior spaces become part of a rebirth experience. Initiates of the Anatolian Mysteries of Kybele and Attis enter into the sacred wedding chamber to experience the Great Mother. Fanatical members of this cult flagellate themselves to the point of bleeding, sprinkling their blood across the sanctuary altar. Members of the Mithras cult worship in subterranean caves before a graphic depiction of Mithras slaying the bull. The Mother Goddess Cult of Meter includes self-castrating priests (*galloi*) and from the second century CE on drenched initiates in the blood of a slaughtered bull. The notion of ascending also occurs as a quality of the mysteries. Apuleius speaks of traveling through “all the elements” (*omnia elementa*) (1989, XI. 23), and Plato speaks of the chariot of the soul rising into the region above the heavens (*hyperouranion topon*) which have a colorless, formless, and intangible essence (1914, *Phaedrus* 247C). The Mithras Liturgy found in the ancient source called the Great Magical Papyri of Paris tells of the ascent through seven levels which include the lower powers of the air, Aion, and his powers, Helios, and Mithras (751–834). The mysteries can be understood then as cults which make conscious the symbols and movements of the unconscious and processes these in the formation of rituals as part of religious experience. Not being self-sufficient, the mysteries diminish with the demise of the ancient

world upon which they depend. Following the imperial decrees of 391/392 CE against all pagan cults, they suddenly and permanently disappear.

### See Also

- ▶ [Eleusinian Mysteries](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Mysticism and Psychoanalysis

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### Introduction

In the last 30 years, two broad attempts have been made to challenge the classical Freudian psychoanalytic narrative on mysticism in which spiritual experiences and practices have been viewed as regressive and/or psychopathological, personified by Jeffrey Masson (1976, 1980), noted Sanskritist turned psychoanalyst. The first attempt centered on South Asian studies, particularly, but not exclusively, on major Hindu spiritual figures, similar to Masson. Methodologically, it uses applied psychoanalysis

involving textual analyses and ethnographic interviews. Those who have contributed most directly to this new psychoanalytic perspective are the Indian psychoanalyst, Sudhir Kakar, psychoanalytically oriented professors of religion, Jeffrey Kripal and William Parsons, and the anthropologist, Gananath Obeyesekere. The second movement involves psychoanalysts (Nina Coltart, Paul Cooper, Michael Eigen, Alan Roland, and Jeffrey Rubin, among others), who are involved in one or another spiritual practice, overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, Buddhist, and who work psychoanalytically with some patients seriously involved in their own spiritual disciplines. This movement is thus more clinically and experientially oriented than the applied psychoanalysis of the first group.

In the first group, almost all are in agreement that there needs to be a seismic shift from what they view as a highly pejorative and reductionistic Freudian psychoanalytic rendering of religious experiences and practices. Kakar (1978, 1991) is the first Freudian psychoanalyst to openly challenge the psychoanalytic establishment to accord the mystic a similar respect to that given the artist in the West. They all agree that religious experiences are valid in and of themselves, but all assert that these experiences can at least be partially, if not fully, explained by psychoanalytic considerations. It is to this inherent tension between the spiritual experience being considered *sui generis* and their psychoanalytic explanations of it that shall be addressed in this section of the chapter. With the exception of Obeyesekere and to some extent Kripal, they rely on more current Freudian psychoanalytic theorists than classical Freudian theory. Thus, Wilfred Bion, Heinz Kohut, Jacques Lacan, Anna Maria Rizzuto, and D. W. Winnicott are cited for a new psychoanalytic rendering of mysticism.

### Sudhir Kakar

This chapter shall address what is problematic in this new Freudian psychoanalytic discourse on mysticism before advancing the other perspective. It shall critique Sudhir Kakar as he has



greatly influenced the others through writing extensively on the subject of psychoanalysis and mysticism, beginning with his analysis of Swami Vivekananda in *The Inner World* (1978), then on Gandhi in *Intimate Relations* (1989), and finally on Ramakrishna in *The Analyst and the Mystic* (1991). Kakar is to be applauded for his courage in the Freudian psychoanalytic world for advocating for a radical reconsideration of the mystic. His description of the lives of Vivekananda, Gandhi, and Ramakrishna is very well done in his gifted style of writing. But what happens when he actually applies his psychoanalytic understanding to these three spiritual figures? His analyses are as fully reductionistic as those of Jeffrey Masson. This chapter shall cite just one of what could be many examples.

After disavowing the pathographic approach (1978, p. 164), Kakar cites the following:

With the advent of adolescence... he (Vivekananda) found he could not always cope with the claims of archaic grandiosity and the anxiety and guilt associated with its breakthrough. Increasingly, he experienced periods of hypomanic excitement; once... when he was fifteen... Narendra "spied a large bee-hive in the cleft of a giant cliff and suddenly his mind was filled with awe and reverence for the Divine Providence. He lost outer consciousness and lay thus in the cart for a long time" (1978, pp. 178–179).

Thus, Kakar equates Vivekananda's spiritual experience with archaic grandiosity and hypomanic excitement.

This stems in good part from the second problem in his work, his theoretical understanding of mysticism from a psychoanalytic standpoint. In *The Inner World*, Kakar states "real knowledge is only attainable through direct primary-process thinking and perception..." (1978, p. 107).

In the Hindu ideal, reality is not primarily mediated through the conscious and preconscious perceptions, unconscious defenses, and logical rational thought processes that make up the ego; it emanates from the deeper and phylogenetically older structural layer of personality – the id, the mental representation of the organism's instinctual drives. Reality, according to Hindu belief, can be apprehended or known only through those archaic, unconscious, preverbal processes of sensing and feeling (Kakar 1978, p. 20).

To what extent primary-process thinking and the id constitute spiritual knowing is highly questionable to say the least. The primary process, perhaps Freud's most original discovery, constitutes certain mechanisms (condensation, displacement, symbol formation, dramatization, and such), symbolic processes essential in dreams, symptoms, and in certain ways in artistic creativity. In Freud's view, they give disguised expression to the instinctual wishes; in later contributions (Deri 1984; Noy 1969; Roland 1972), they also give excellent metaphorical expression to various facets of the self. In *The Inner World*, it is Kakar's inaccurate use of Freudian psychoanalytic concepts such as the primary process and the id as a Procrustean Bed to encompass psychological processes involved in spiritual realization that results in his reverting to traditional psychoanalytic reductionism in his analyses of mystics.

His theoretical understanding of mysticism shifts from the use of the primary process and the id in *The Inner World* to current psychoanalytic relational theories in *The Analyst and the Mystic*. Kakar in this latter work fully accepts the reductionistic psychoanalytic premise that spiritual experiences and motivation are essentially a regression to the preverbal, symbiotic experiences of the mother-child relationship.

The vicissitudes of separation have been, of course, at the heart of psychoanalytic theorizing on mysticism. The yearning to be reunited with a perfect, omnipotent being, the longing for the blissful soothing and nursing associated with the mother of earliest infancy... has been consensually deemed the core of mystical motivation (Kakar 1991, p. 29).

Only Kakar puts a more positive spin on this regression than do the classical Freudian analysts, inasmuch as he sees the mystic as able to effect a deeper regression than that which occurs in psychoanalysis to repair what Kakar deems as the essential depressive core of life, and in Winnicottian terms, the mystic is involved in a creative experiencing through this regression to infancy. Again, it is highly questionable whether spiritual aspirations, practices, and experiences essentially involve regression.

## Psychoanalytic Therapy with Indian and American Mystics

From those psychoanalysts and psychoanalytic therapists who have worked with patients deeply involved in spiritual disciplines and who are themselves practicing meditation, a newer narrative has emerged on psychoanalysis and mysticism or perhaps more accurately on psychoanalysis and mystics. In general, the spiritual self of the mystic and psychopathology/normality is seen on two separate continua. Thus, a mystic, even an advanced one, can range from being mentally healthy to having various kinds of psychopathology. Conversely, mentally healthy and mature persons can range from not being in the least interested in a spiritual quest to being very involved. The same is true of persons who are emotionally disturbed.

Correspondingly, the spiritual self of the mystic cannot be reduced to any psychoanalytic theory with the possible exception of Wilfred Bion's concept of "O." Both Kakar (1991) and Parsons (1999) cite Lacan's theory of the real, but according to a recognized Lacanian authority, Paola Mieli, they misunderstand the meaning of the real (Personal communication).

Similarly, attempts to link spiritual experiences with various developmental stages are seen by this group as being highly reductionistic: whether it is Freud's primary narcissism of infantile merger with the mother or a Winnicottian creative experiencing of a transitional space between mother and child or Rizzuto's god images from different developmental stages or Kurtz's (1992) concept of later childhood merger with the extended family. These views simply do not take sufficiently into account the existential nature of spiritual experiences. Nor can these experiences be categorized by regression of one sort or another, or to one or another stage of development, or to one or another kind of inner representation of either the mother or father. If anything, clinical experience indicates that spiritual practices and experiences are a strong counterpoint to regression and childhood merger experiences with the mother.

If psychopathology does not enter into spiritual experiences, where does psychoanalysis fruitfully enter the picture with mystics? First and foremost, it is in their relationships with others, often love relationships affected by earlier difficult family relationships, but also friends and work relationships, any or all of which can sometimes be truly problematic, and also to their everyday sense of self. Psychoanalytic therapy with those patients who are mystics is often of considerable help in their functioning much better in their relationships while simultaneously freeing them to be more involved on a spiritual path.

How then does unconscious motivation and psychopathology enter into a mystic's spiritual practices? Two women in psychoanalysis with highly distressful love relationships were first drawn to Vipassana meditation, which helped them attain an inner calm. On the other hand, an advanced mystic like Shakuntala (Roland 1988) began having spontaneous, intense spiritual experiences by age fourteen while on a family pilgrimage to a shrine of a goddess. Other persons with a spiritual inclination may be drawn to spiritual disciplines out of defensive needs to resolve some kind of psychopathology (Coltart 1996), while still others may become openly psychotic if they have a psychotic core. One patient was attracted to an ashram and guru known for both its spiritual powers and its sexual licentiousness. While progressing there on her spiritual path, she unconsciously repeated the childhood sexual abuse she had once experienced. The decision to embark on a spiritual quest may sometimes result from some of the hard knocks of life, but not always. Even then, the person must be strongly inwardly inclined in this direction for it is still a rare pursuit.

A psychoanalytic discourse on mystics can fruitfully comment on that which has only been minimally discussed, the guru or teacher-disciple relationship. Besides the important teachings that are conveyed by a suitable teacher, there can also be multiple transferences from both the disciple and the teacher, depending on the individual personality. Rubin (1996) has commented on this at length.

To what extent can spiritual practices alleviate emotional problems? While most agree they can be helpful, it is generally considered that they cannot resolve deep-seated psychopathology. Coltart (1996) noted that some people who seek out spiritual practices to resolve their emotional problems would do much better being in psychotherapy. On the other hand, these psychoanalysts have noted that patients involved in spiritual disciplines can usually tolerate a greater degree of anxiety in facing inner conflicts and/or deficits in the psychoanalytic process.

### See Also

- ▶ [Bion, Wilfred Ruprecht, and “O”](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)

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## Mysticism and Psychotherapy

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The goal of psychotherapy is either to relieve distressing symptoms such as anxiety, depression, and phobias or to enable a person to better manage his or her life. These two goals usually overlap and this fact is a key to understanding the general principle by which psychotherapy works. Whatever the issue that brings a person to therapy, the therapist sees the desired improvements as the natural expression of a needed form of personal growth. The work to create this growth uses a person's perceptual and cognitive powers to bring about a change that takes place mostly in the emotional system.

A major difference between emotional and cognitive processing is the degree of automatism versus choice in each. Most people can call upon their ability to understand something by an act of will, that is, by the wish to have the given understanding. This is rarely true of the emotional system, which tends to be evoked involuntarily by perceptions arising either from within a person or from the person's environment. It is the lack of conscious control over emotional responses that troubles people with emotional problems because the wish to be free of a symptom has little or no effect on it. One of the main characteristics of an emotionally healthy person is that his or her emotional responses tend to be adaptive, and therefore welcome, with respect to what provokes them. This is why spontaneity is often taken as a sign of emotional health, where it is assumed that the spontaneous response is appropriate. In this framework, the general goal of psychotherapy is to create a fitting spontaneous response to certain parts of the subject's life. This involves taking measures to realize the potential within the subject to become what is needed to be free of the distressing symptom or presenting complaint. It is this relationship of potential to actual that begins a natural relationship between mysticism and psychotherapy.

The general goal of mysticism is to achieve ever-increasing levels of awareness of the cosmos. This involves training exercises in attitudes and orientations toward the self and the world that promote the emergence of another level of awareness. This other level is best understood as experiential rather than cognitive or emotional or even intuitive, although it is important to note that the experiential level of understanding includes all of these three. Achieving this experiential level of understanding enters a domain where words, emotions, and even intuition can no longer be used to communicate what is apprehended. Here the way cosmic reality is apprehended is neither by words nor by emotions but by a direct experience of the continuity of the psyche with the cosmos.

This mode of knowing and being presupposes a kind of human potential and here the connecting link to psychotherapy again surfaces. Within

psychotherapy, the desired growth, or realization of potential, is located in the emotional system and to a lesser degree in the cognitive system. Within mysticism, the desired growth refers to the entire person. In this sense, the goal of mysticism is a generalization of the goal of psychotherapy. The idea that mysticism subsumes psychotherapy is not new and has long been a familiar to mystics of all traditions. Before the nineteenth century, mystics did not frame this idea in terms of psychology, as now understood, but in more homespun terms such as growing up, carrying one's cross, and coming into one's own. When psychotherapy emerged, adepts in mysticism were quick to see that their tradition was a generalization of the psychological one.

Psychotherapy has a variety of tools, all accessing the emotional and cognitive powers, to use to stimulate needed growth. Mysticism also has tools to achieve its ends but here the two part ways in a paradoxical manner that also brings them back together. Since the object of mysticism is accessed outside feeling and rational knowing, the training for this goal involves weaning a person away from his or her familiar reliance on feeling, thinking, and choosing. A redirection of attention takes place, usually involving long and diligent training before first fruits appear. One of the major tools in all mystical traditions is the koan.

A koan is a riddle presented as if solvable by using cognitive or emotional intelligence. For example, "what is the sound of one handclapping?" or "what did you look like before your parents were born?" The koan is meant to be vexing because its purpose is to bring the subject to see that rational processing cannot be of service in certain parts of life. This is a first step, usually under the direction of a spiritual director, toward disengaging attention from its ordinary use. The long-term goal of the exercises is to get attention off of any one thing, a state usually termed "letting go and letting be." The major reason for this goal is that the more a person holds on to any one state, the more the person interferes with the inflow and creation of more of the psyche. This is another connection with psychotherapy.

One of the major obstacles to successful psychotherapy is the subject's unwillingness to release former ways of living and adapting. As a rule, new and better ways cannot be evolved except by also clearing behaviors that stand in the way. Thus, the idea of letting go and letting be enters psychotherapy at the level of emotional and, to some degree, cognitive processing. Within psychotherapy, one lets go of behaviors that either do not work well enough or that do harm in favor of growing new behaviors that make for a better adaptation. The goals of mysticism include a sound adaptation but this is more of a starting point for what mysticism aims at and here the idea that mysticism subsumes psychotherapy enters in a natural way.

The goal of mysticism is to directly experience the cosmos, an event whose higher levels are outside the domain of words, thoughts, feelings, and images. The onset of mystical experience takes place with the emergence of new perceptual powers in the psyche. The first experiences along these lines involve the intuition of being in which a person begins to experience the "isness" of things. It is very important for the subject to train in moving attention away from emotional, cognitive, and other familiar modes of knowing and adapting for this to take place. The intuition of being is usually the very first of a sequence of experiences that build to mystical experience. The mystical experience proper is more an event of growth than of a new kind of perception, but it is the case that the growth precedes and enables the perception. This kind of perception is an experience outside of and different from all the subjects' prior modes of knowing and apprehending, a thing suggested by the need for some prerequisite growth of the psyche to first take place. This is parallel to many therapeutic events.

Within psychotherapy, a person first realizes a needed potential to live and adapt in a new way before the person becomes able to see what it means. This actualization process is what extinguishes the distressing symptoms and the more willing the subject is to release the prior way of adapting, the quicker this takes place. In the mystical experience, the more the subject has learned

to release prior attachments of *all* kinds, the more quickly the growth needed for the next level of mystical experience takes place. Here again, the idea that mystical experience is a generalization of the therapeutic experience presents itself.

The goal of psychotherapy is to increase the "isness" of the subject in the affective or emotional domain and to some degree in the cognitive domain also. This has traditionally been regarded as the event of turning potential into actual, where the "isness" of the potential is already in place and the therapeutic process results in the "isness" of its actual form. The outcome, in practical terms, is that the subject feels and functions better as a result of the leap from potential to actual in target areas. In mystical terms, the subject's ontology has increased and the subject is literally more than he or she was before the realization of potential took place. Put differently, the subject's powers to adapt increase.

The ontological increases in mystical experience include the issue of here and now adaptation because the entire psyche increases as a result. That is, the mystical experience is enabled by the growth of new psychic capacity whose object is to engage the cosmos itself. However, the psyche is itself an expression of the cosmos and therefore any increase in the psyche affects the person's relationship to all parts of life, simply because all events take place in the cosmos. What this means in practical terms is that the subject's emotional life is not only enriched for adaptation in the usual sense, but more, the emotional system begins to respond to the new life in the psyche that has the capacity to directly experience the cosmos in ways that are outside the reach of the emotional, rational, and intuitive domains. The emotions of awe and trust take on new meanings as the mystical experience develops, just as these same emotions take on fresh meaning as a person grows new here-and-now adaptive powers within psychotherapy.

In sum, the goals of mysticism may be regarded as a generalization of those of psychotherapy, or those of psychotherapy may be regarded as a specialization of those of mysticism. One major difference between the two is that mysticism results in the emergence of



another way of becoming and knowing not achievable by the emotional and cognitive systems alone. One major parallel between the two is that both require the releasing of former ways of living and being; this release being a completely general one in mysticism and a more particular one in psychotherapy. Both mysticism and psychotherapy address the realization of potential, and both regard potential as unlimited, but what potential refers to is man's relation to all things in the first and man's relation to matters of love and work in the second. This too fits the idea that mysticism is a generalization of psychotherapy.

### See Also

- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Mindfulness](#)

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## Myth

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The study of myth is an ancient topic that has expanded greatly in the last 200 years. The foci of studies are commonly the following: *literary*,

clarifying texts, translating, and categorizing [Greek myths, Irish myths]; *religious*, labeling other culture's religions as false [pagan, heathen, primitive] while typically preserving the truth-value of one's own religion; *psychological*, exploring the psychological themes expressed in myths [Freudian, Jungian]; *sociological/anthropological/political*, bringing out the ideological symbols of social structures such as class, nation, patriotism, and similar themes in myths [Marxist, capitalist]; or *philosophical*, efforts to determine the truth or reality of mythic accounts, historical or imaginative [Plato, deconstructionists]. Some theories of myth focus on stories accepted as myth; others point to mythic themes in unexpected places. Some combine various methods. The emergence of depth psychology gave a new prominence and new important methodology for interpreting myth and religions.

Many theories of interpreting myths see "*mythos* as inferior to *logos*." But the theory that myth is simply an archaic literary genre or social ideology replaced by modern rational thought has been radically questioned by the development of depth psychology. Its opening to the unconscious soul and intuitive blend with reasoning now lets us see "*mythos* dancing poetically with *logos*." In the psychology of religion, the most fruitful approach to myth depends less on rational, conscious, historical, factual *logos* to establish truth but rather moves in the realm of poetic, metaphoric symbolic language – *mythos*, a different kind of truth that still interacts significantly with *logos*, open to unconscious dynamics. Myth is not a literary museum of a consciousness outdated by rational science, but a living symbolic language of a continuing consciousness important to understand. Oedipus, the cowboy, the king, the prophet, and the astronaut, whether or not they have a historical background, have far broader horizons than any factual basis, guiding the soul through collective unconscious paths of tragic, comic, transforming, saving, and heroic journeys. The mythic narratives of historical figures may be far more significant than the bare factual bones of the biographies, offering guidance for the soul.



Myths still need to be distinguished from factual knowledge, as in propaganda or ideology. Myths cannot provide a reliable basis for deductions about historical facts, such as facts about Santa Claus. Yet, myth is indispensable, for it symbolizes the soul's desires, positive and negative. Myths are living, powerful stories, although sometimes unacknowledged and unconscious, articulating essential meanings (Bailey). Awareness of them can prevent disaster and soothe the soul. The modern turning point came with Freud.

### Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the Viennese physician turned psychotherapist, made the major leap out of *logos* rationalism and materialism in psychology by showing the reality and symbolic meaningfulness of the unconscious mind for medical treatment by taking seriously its languages, such as dreams, errors, and symptoms. He saw the unconscious mind as largely composed of repressed desires. Freud used some myths in his exploration of the unconscious, notably Oedipus, Narcissus, Moses, Eros, and Thanatos. He elevated the Oedipus complex to be the foundation of most all neurosis, myth, art, religion, and therapy. This gave a new, powerful methodology for interpreting myths as expressions of the unconscious mind.

Freud's elevation of the Oedipus myth was part of the end of the Victorian era but finally was too narrow. He universalized his love for his mother and jealousy of his father into the Oedipus complex, which he found to be basic to his patients' neuroses. This was part of Freud's strong emphasis on the centrality of sexuality as the main dynamic of the psyche. He was widely reviled for this during the closing years of the Victorian era in Europe, which stifled sexuality [in public, anyway], but his work actually contributed to the spreading collapse of strict Victorian sexual customs, along with the development of contraceptives and women's education by the 1920s. Openness to sexuality can lead to openness to the unconscious and its mythic expressions.

Freud's residual nineteenth-century materialism prevented him from allowing non-pathological truths to be seen as true in the mythic expressions of the unconscious mind. Rather, he let conscious reason be the final arbiter of truth, which conflicted with his readings of mythic material. In his 1927 *Future of an Illusion*, he argued that religion is a universal neurosis founded on ignorance and weakness. It is an illusion of wish fulfillment, he envisioned, a consolation for fate, and an effort to exorcize the terrors of nature with faith. God is an infantile neurosis, a dreaded yet trusted mythic figure carried over from infancy that maintains the believers' helplessness. A secular ethics is workable and science has no illusions, since conscious knowledge can purge itself of unconscious errors, Freud fervently believed. Uncovering the powerful unconscious mind, Freud kept it in the realm of the pathological, so neither myth nor religion could be allowed to carry much truth-value. "Religion would thus be the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children, it arose out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to the father" (1927/1961, pp. 70–71).

The follower of Freud who made the most out of certain types of myths was Bruno Bettelheim (1903–1990), who wrote *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* in 1975. He defined myths as stories that are pessimistic and superhuman (such as Oedipus), fables as moralistic and cautionary (such as the Ant and the Grasshopper), and fairy tales as optimistic, taking place in the ordinary world, for children and guides to growing up (such as the Three Little Pigs). His Freudian analysis was tinged with the existential principle that fairy tales help children find hopeful meanings and moral education as they grow up. At their best, fairy tales take children's predicaments seriously and provide confidence that they can be overcome. They relieve unconscious pressures and strengthen the child's growing ego. Such problems include narcissistic disappointments, Oedipal dilemmas, sibling rivalries, gaining independence from parents, and increasing a sense of self-worth and a sense of moral

obligations. Fairy tales help release repressed dark feelings and help overcome fears that they present, such as abandonment. They simplify but do not suppress evil. Bettelheim believes that fairy tales should not be prettified, for that makes them too shallow to solve the real problems that monsters and fearful plots present.

Fairy tales offer valuable heroes for children to identify with in combating fears and strengthening their blossoming egos. Fairy tales should not be misinterpreted as neurotic symptoms, Bettelheim stresses, but be seen as positive guides to growth because they help the child feel understood and offer hope for overcoming anxieties. Nor should they be taken as guides to behavior in the external world; they are symbolic expressions of deep unconscious childhood processes. Religious themes in fairy tales are common, such as references to Islam in *The Thousand and One Nights* (Bettelheim 1975) and the references to God and the Virgin Mary in original Grimm's tales, which are often edited out in modern versions. Unlike moralistic biblical tales, fairy tales allow more expression of dark feelings – monsters, beasts, and big bad wolves – and more psychological solutions than divine interference.

## Carl Jung

Carl Jung (1875–1961) was the Swiss psychologist who provided the strongest theory of myth for understanding religion positively. His major theoretical foundation is the archetype: innumerable unconscious, collective, psychological patterns or instincts, positive and negative. An archetype is an invisible [inaccessible in itself] pattern that appears in numerous images. They appear worldwide in myths and dreams, shaped by local cultures.

Unlike Freud, Jung does not see the unconscious as primarily repressed desires but as far more complex archetypal patterns. Myth functions to reveal the unconscious to consciousness and to guide the conscious ego's relation to it by showing its typical patterns. Myth is neither

indispensable nor sufficient for the psyche. The unconscious must cooperate with the conscious ego's guidance also. Unlike many Eastern religions, the ego is not meant to dissolve into the unconscious. While uncovering valuable mythic guides, psychotherapy can provide more functions, such as seeing the symbolism of dreams, symptoms, or myths and integrating these meanings into life.

Jung focuses on the archetypal images of the ego/hero (such as Odysseus), the shadow (such as the Devil), the anima/animus contrasexual lover images in each person (such as Tristan and Iseult), the child (such as Cinderella), the trickster (such as Hermes), the wise old man or woman (such as Merlin), the dual mother (wicked stepmother), and the Self (such as God). The Self is the central guiding, healing archetype for Jung, perhaps the center of the mandala image, that regulates and balances the dynamics of the numerous archetypal patterns that emerge in the psyche. The challenge of psychotherapeutic healing is to identify one's influencing archetypes, become aware of their dynamics and influences on feeling and behavior, help the ego and Self control shadows, and strengthen the positive aspects.

An important part of Jung's archetypal theory is that each archetype has a shadow. Even the Self, paradigm of divinity, has a shadow in doubts, demon figures, and limits to divine power in the world. Jung pioneered the elaboration of the introvert/extravert pattern in his theory of psychological types, and this pattern was widely adopted. The extreme introvert is shy, quiet, socially inept, inward, intuitive, and isolated. The extreme extravert is socially adept, outspoken, concerned with what others think of him/her, often a performer anxious for approval, or a conformist. One-sided people may see the other side as a shadow figure to be fought in outward life. However, the ideal is to balance the two in one's life, so the advantages of each side of the continuum are available to consciousness.

Jung and Freud became close collaborators between 1907 and 1913. Freud hoped that the younger Jung would become his successor, but

Jung developed key disagreements with Freud. His theory of archetypes saw myths as more important collective symbols of many archetypes, as opposed to Freud's central Oedipal theory. He also rejected Freud's emphasis on sexuality as the major psychological dynamic and came to regard religion far more positively as psychological events than Freud, who dismissed it as illusory. Nor did Jung accept Freud's causal-reductive method by which he reduced unconscious images to his theoretical framework, mainly the Oedipal drama. Rather, Jung saw a purposeful dynamic in each archetypal pattern [especially the Self], a teleology of sorts that could point the ego in healing directions, even a transcendent quest for the divine.

The divine Jung sees not just in narrow biblical terms but also as a global phenomenon that appears in endless symbols in dreams, literature, art, and myth. He stresses that he speaks as a psychologist describing a psychological phenomenon, not a metaphysical one, which he said he leaves to the theologians. This wide variety of images of the divine is an important theme for Jung's impact on culture, because it throws open the door to seeing the divine symbolized in many ways – from non-anthropomorphic stones, waterfalls, and cosmic phenomena to anthropomorphic prophets and gurus. This supports the field of comparative and phenomenological studies of religions worldwide as well as the growing feminist quest to positively reevaluate the goddesses.

Jung's view of the collective archetypal unconscious explains the arising of mythic themes around the world without recourse to the theory of diffusion from an original source. Although some myths can be traced along a trail of diffusion [such as Cinderella coming from China to Europe], other themes such as virgin births in the Americas can be explained as archetypal images emerging completely independent of parallel themes on other continents [such as the Aztec virgin birth story].

Jung's view of religion is rooted in his Swiss Protestant emphasis not on formal and textual doctrines, but on personal experiences of the

divine. He was frustrated with the lack of this authentic religious experience and came to see psychotherapy as a way out of superficial, even infantile dogmatism, into a genuine experience and deep understanding of divinity in its many expressions. The psyche, Jung stresses, has a natural religious function, an ability to experience the sacred or numinous. Myth can be seen as symbolic expressions of archetypal powers, real as such, and thus authentic, so changing religion need rely less on historical facts than on informed archetypal experiences. The hero, the savior, the father, mother, guru, etc. are active collectively and "within" – not merely historical figures of the past or of metaphysical constructs. This does not make Jungian "analytical" or "archetypal" therapy a religion, but it is more open to the reality of spiritual experiences. Against Freud, Jung argued that it is not the presence of religious images in the psyche, but their absence and lack of conscious respect for them that lead to neurosis.

As Jung's thought developed, he came to see divinity as a union of opposites, a totality of good and evil, masculine and feminine, and spirit and body, that he had discovered in his clinical and comparative cultural research, pictured in images of the Self. In his important lectures on "Psychology and Religion" in 1937 (1953–1979, Vol. 11), Jung clarified that we cannot know metaphysical entities such as God in themselves. We can only know the psychic images of them that we experience. "Withdrawing projections" from enemies, lovers, or priests also helps uncover deeper truths about one's experience of divinity. The goal of therapy is not perfection or salvation, but completeness, finding the most refined way of integrating unions of opposites, often symbolized by mandalas. This is all essential in a time when industrial society has challenged and weakened the traditional authority of conventional religions.

After 1938, Jung also studied Eastern religions and traveled to India. One theme that emerged from this period was Jung's view that Christ is an inadequate image of divinity because he is one-sidedly good, masculine, and spiritual. A more adequate image would include evil, the

feminine, and the body (1953–1979, Vol. 9, Pt. 2). For him evil is real, and not just Augustine's *privatio boni*, or lack of goodness. Jung saw this also in his *Answer to Job* (1953–1979, Vol. 11, pp. 553–758). Christ's incarnation did not solve the problem of one-sidedness, and Jung explores figures such as Sophia then proposes that Mary complete God's image by becoming the fourth member of the incomplete Trinity, to add femininity and body to God's masculinity and spirituality (1953–1979, Vol. 11, pp. 122–127).

Death is a major concern to the soul. In view of his near-death experience in 1944, Jung concluded that a healthy psyche should decide whether one is related to something infinite or not. We can never know for sure, but such belief can provide essential comfort and peace. Clues from the unconscious, such as dreams, can help. Jung 1961, Chapter X "Visions," and Chapter XI "On Life after Death". Mere mortals may err by falling into one of two camps: by reifying parochial beliefs [such as patriarchy or our version of God] into metaphysical universals or "archetypes," or, at another extreme, rationalistic scientism's omniscient claim to be the only valid method of knowledge.

In the late twentieth century, the major overlapping schools of Jungian psychotherapy emerged: the Classical, the Archetypal, and the Developmental (Samuels).

Jung's fertile thought on religion and myth has continued and is being expanded by numerous successors such as Aniela Jaffé (Jung's biography), Marie-Louise von Franz (folktales), Edward Edinger (the ego-Self axis), Victor White (Jung and religion), Sylvia Brinton Perera (the scapegoat, gods and goddesses), Edward Whitmont (symbolic quest), (Jean Bolen (Greek goddesses), John Dourley, Ann Ulanov (Jung and Christianity), James Hillman (many radical revisions), David L. Miller (polytheism), Thomas Moore (soul and re-enchantment), Clarissa Pinkola Estés, (*Women Who Run With the Wolves*), and Joseph Campbell (*Hero with a Thousand Faces*). Jung's archetypal theory has made its way into numerous approaches to myth and religion, whether acknowledged or not.

## See Also

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)

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## Myths and Dreams

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### The Common Well

Dreams and myths have striking parallels. They are different, of course, in that dreams are personal and raw products of the unconscious. Myths, on the other hand, may have dream backgrounds, but are the product of sometimes elaborate artistic narrative shaping by consciousness. They develop variants and historical associations with collectives, such as religious texts, rituals, literature, or national legends with political purposes, such as the national hero or goddess. But dreams and myths are both rooted in unconscious depths, the well of the soul, and thus have parallels. Carl Jung made the strongest connection between them. Jungian analyst Marie von Franz saw fairy tales as in-between – less influenced by cultural elaboration than myths, thus closer to their unconscious source: “Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective and unconscious psychic processes” (von Franz 1970, p. 40). Many later Jungians, such as Andrew Samuels and Jean Shinola Bolen, have emphasized that mythic images are not just a list of images to be checked off from a mental distance but are pervasive themes in everyday life. James Hillman

emphasizes that soul is also in the world, anthropomorphized and personified, and mythic images can help us descend into these depths. It is blindness to identify completely with images in dreams, fairy tales, or myths but, conversely, over-intellectualizing not to feel them at all. Keeping the dreaminess in myths helps prevent over-systematizing and rationalizing them.

The modern connection between myth and dream was articulated by Sigmund Freud, who saw myths as dreamlike events. He saw them as distorted wish fulfillments of whole nations rooted in the unconscious. Otto Rank and Karl Abraham said the same. These Freudians saw an infantile element in myths. Abraham said: “The myth is therefore a fragment preserved from the infantile psychic life of the race, and dreams are the myths of the individual” (Abraham 1913, p. 36, 72). It is useful to contrast the personal and the mythic amplifications of a dream, but not by labeling them “subjective” and “objective.” These labels place the process in the scientific metaphysics that overall strives to deny the meaningfulness of dreams.

Carl Jung also saw the myth-dream connection rooted in the unconscious: “myths are dreamlike structures” (Jung 1953–1979, Vol. 5, para. 28). But Jung rejected the Freudian emphasis on wish fulfillment and the infantile nature of myths. He saw myths as the most mature product of early humanity and a continuing important expression of civilization’s collective unconscious (Jung 1953–1979, Vol. 5, para. 28–29). Jungian analysts methodically use myths to amplify clients’ dreams, bringing out unsuspected unconscious meanings. Myths echo individual dreams, both emerging from the collective unconscious. Joseph Campbell put it in a nutshell: “Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream” (1949, p. 19).

### A Prom Night Dream

An example of this correlation, which Jung would call a “big” dream, is a college student’s dream reported to me that echoes the mythic text of an ancient goddess.



In 1980, this girl wrote that she dreamed that when she was getting ready for her high school prom dance, she grew curious about her home's basement. She crept down the stairs and came to a door at first hard to open, but she pushed again and it flew open into a dark room. She fell inside and caught her shawl on a nail. Curious, she left behind the shawl and entered another dark room. She saw another door that was also stuck at first but soon opened easily. She tripped and lost a shoe, which she left behind. She saw a third door, which was already open. She walked through it and removed her second shoe. Everything was dark and dirty. She found a fourth door, at first locked, but when she pushed again, it also opened. Suddenly a gold necklace she was wearing fell down from her neck and she left it, planning to pick it up on her way back. She looked around and found a fifth door, dirty and slimy. She decided to wipe off the door-knob with her dress, and then she took off the now dirty dress. She then spied a sixth door in the dark room that was slightly ajar. She passed through it but caught her panties on a nail, and they ripped and fell off. She was naked and slowly lifted her head; she was horrified.

She saw heaps of dead and decaying animals, covered with mud and dust. An old decrepit man was sitting atop of a pile. But it could have been a male/female figure. The door slammed shut, and she was trapped, frightened, and naked in this dark, smelly, hellish place. She was stuck there for what seemed forever, though it was actually a few months. She ate the dust and mud just as the old woman/man did.

Back home upstairs, everyone became sick. Her father wondered what had happened to her and recalled her interest in the basement, so he went down the same stairs and followed her trail of dropped clothing through the six doors. As he entered the last door, he too was horrified, for his daughter had become just as decrepit as the old woman/man, in this hellish place. Her father fought with the androgynous beast as he tried to reach her, and he finally won. He put his arms around her and took her back through the six doors. She collected her clothes and dressed. They slowly mounted the stairs, and as they reached the top, she suddenly became radiant and everything became well.

## The Ishtar Myth

Struck by the parallels, I showed this dreamer the text of "Descent of Ishtar to the Nether World" in James Pritchard's classic *The Ancient Near East* (Pritchard 1958, Vol. 1, pp. 80–85). She said that she had never heard this story. Indeed it was an

obscure scholarly text at the time. She agreed with my suggestion that her dream, which on the surface had nothing to do with her personal experiences, was obviously connected with the ancient religious myth. She gave me permission to publish it. Over 20 years later, I found her online and asked her if she recalled the dream. She did not but told me that she had become a successful business woman, married, and a mother, but was not interested in exploring much further personal information.

I described the correlation to a noted Jungian analyst, Sylvia Brinton Perera, author of *Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women*, which analyzes in detail the Inanna-Ishtar myth. She replied that the dream-myth parallel frequently appears for Jungian analysts. In analysis, she added, of course much more personal information would also be explored. Also in therapy, the ego-consciousness may well need to stand back and make discriminations and judgments about both dreams and myths. Both may have shadowy beasts or seductive lovers, for example, projected onto real-world figures that need to be reinterpreted or disconnected.

Pritchard's text has subsequently been amplified in later scholarship by others, notably Samuel Kramer and Diane Wolkstein. This literature reveals fascinating connections with the dream. The Akkadian goddess Ishtar is closely related to the Sumerian Inanna, both early cultures that emerged into Babylonia, now Iraq. Pritchard's text, translated from ancient clay tablets, can be summarized:

Ishtar, queen of life, set her mind to go down to the dark underworld abode of Irkalla, the realm of her sister Ereshkigal, queen of the dead. Hers is the dreadful dark realm from which no one returns, "Where dust is their fare and clay their food . . . (And where) over door and bolt is spread dust" (lines 8–11). When Ishtar reached the front gate of the Land of no Return, she imperiously demanded that the gatekeeper open the gate, threatening to smash the gate and raise the dead. The humble gatekeeper ran off to his queen announcing Ishtar's arrival. Ereshkigal angrily, cruelly replied, "What drove her heart to me? . . . Should I bemoan the maidens who were



wrenched from the laps of their lovers? Or should I bemoan the tender little one who was sent off before his time? Go, gatekeeper, open the gate for her, Treat her in accordance with the ancient rules” (lines 31–38).

The gatekeeper welcomed her to enter, but at each of seven gates, he stripped away one of her royal garments: her great crown, her earrings, her necklaces, her breast ornaments, her birthstone belt, her wrist and ankle ornaments, and finally her dress. At each gate she ritually asked: “Why, O gatekeeper, didst thou take the great crown on my head?” To which the gatekeeper replied: “Enter, my lady, thus are the rules of the Mistress of the Nether World” (lines 42–66).

The goddesses of life finally stood before the goddess of death and angrily flew at her. But Ereshkigal responded by giving orders to release the forces of death against her: “Go, Namtar, lock [her] up [in] my [palace]! Release against her, [against] Ishtar, the sixty mis[eries]” (lines 64–69). When this happened, the energies of reproduction in the world above ceased: “The bull springs not upon the cow, [the ass impregnates not the jenny], In the street [the man impregnates not] the maiden” (lines 71–81). Then the advisor to the great god Ea goes to him and bemoans the lack of the life-force on earth, repeating ritually the above impregnation chorus. Ea responded by sending a eunuch to journey to the underworld, who somehow manipulated Ereshkigal into sprinkling the water of life on Ishtar. The queen then returns above, passing through the same seven gates, and at each one her discarded royal clothes and ornaments are ritually returned to her by the gatekeeper for her to wear.

The text ends with obscure hints. Ereshkigal apparently says: “If she does not give thee the ransom price, bring her back” (line 51), and . . . “On the day when Tammuz (lover of Ishtar) comes up to me, When with him the lapis flute (and) the carnelian ring up to me, When with him the wailing men and the wailing women come up to me, May the reed rise and smell the incense” (lines 61–66) (Pritchard 1958, pp. 80–85).

While the Sumerian and Babylonian versions are very similar, there are important differences between them. In one version, Inanna is hanged

on a hook on the wall, like a piece of meat (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983, p. 60). But these differences have little effect on the thematic similarities with the contemporary dream, which sounds more like the Babylonian Ishtar’s myth.

The more recent work of Kramer and Wolkstein, collecting and assembling tablet fragments, has added new versions and details to the myth. Inanna’s text comes from the older Sumerian culture, dating as far back as about 4000 BCE. The Sumerians apparently invented cuneiform writing and built the first ziggurats. The majority of the fragments of Inanna’s ancient Sumerian tale were first unearthed in the ruins of the city of Nippur, Sumer’s spiritual and cultural center, by a University of Pennsylvania archaeological dig in 1889 and 1890. The Babylonians began invading Mesopotamia with their Semitic language about 2000 BCE and absorbed much of the earlier Sumerian and Akkadian language and mythology. So the latter Babylonian Ishtar’s story is not surprisingly similar to the earlier Sumerian Inanna’s. For example, on Inanna’s way back to the earthly realm, the Anunna, the judges of the underworld, seized her. They said: “No one ascends from the underworld so unmarked. If Inanna wishes to return from the underworld, she must provide someone in her place.” They sent merciless demons above that passed by those on earth who humbled themselves, but they took Dumuzi, Inanna’s husband, who had too proudly usurped the throne. He escaped the demons for a while by turning into a serpent or a gazelle but ended up in the underworld of the dead (Wolkstein and Kramer 1983, pp. 52–73).

The layers of symbolism are many, as Perera shows, but the themes, some in remarkable detail, paralleled in the modern girl’s dream are evident: A woman descends to a dark, unconscious underworld, where “over door and bolt is spread dust.” She passes through six or seven doors, and at each door an item of clothing or jewelry is removed, until she stands, naked as she was born, before a scene of death and a powerful ruling figure. She is held captive among the dead, “Where dust is their fare and clay their food.”

While she is captive in the land of the dead, life is interrupted above. She is finally rescued by a person from above who wrestles with the master of the dead and succeeds in leading her out of that hell. As they return through each doorway, she regains her clothing, images of her identity. The myth has far more collective and religious themes – the queens of life and death, love and grief, the royal clothing and ornaments, the rescuer sent by a god, the obscure ending hinting at the need for a ransom for her return, and a general resurrection.

The dream is more personal and modern, centered on a teenaged girl, on the eve of her ritual prom dance, signifying passage into adulthood, encountering the dark mysteries of the collective unconscious, nakedness, and fertility, where passionate love helps overcome horrifying death, and comforting family – her rescue by her personal father. Freud would stress the Oedipal father-daughter erotic overtones, and Jung the archetypal collective life-death struggle, androgyny, and initiation. The myth is more collective, ritualized, and religious, with feminine images of life and death and their struggle. The seven gates image may be rooted in the seven stars visible to the unaided eye, seen as gates of a cosmic journey through the ancient cosmological image of seven heavenly spheres below the dislike earth. The theme of a ransom echoes later in the theology of Jesus as an atoning sacrifice demanded by a god, and the resurrection expresses the general return from the dead in Western traditions of dying and rising gods. These parallel images arise in both this contemporary personal dream and the 4,000-year-old ritualized, religious myth, indicating the ancient dream-myth connection and the modern mind's astonishing well of

archaic images, bursting up with sparkling, age-old, deep, mysteriously meaningful images, as fearful as death, as beautiful as love.

### See Also

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)

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## Narcissism

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Narcissism played a key role in the development of psychoanalysis and has been pivotal to contemporary revisionings of psychoanalytic theory and technique. Freud discussed narcissism in a number of texts including *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1910–1975), *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914–1975a), *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1915–1975b), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923–1960), yet his writings are inconsistent and have been subject to different interpretations. There are disputes on the exact relationship between primary narcissism and autoeroticism; on whether the state of primary narcissism is free of object relations or contains primitive object relations; and on whether primary narcissism is experienced as a prenatal state, by the infant at the breast, or both.

In his first systematic discussion of narcissism, Freud (1905–1975a) distinguishes between primary narcissism and secondary or pathological narcissism. Defining primary narcissism as “the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation” (1915, pp. 73–74), Freud states it is a normal developmental state during which the infant takes its own ego as a libidinal object, thereby experiencing the self as perfect and omnipotent. During this stage the

infant does not differentiate between self and object but with the emerging experience of, and attachment to, the primary caretaker, usually the mother, libido is transformed and redirected from the pleasurable and self-sufficient narcissistic stage to the need-satisfying object. Freud called this outward directed libido “object libido” and claimed that there was an inverse relationship between object libido and inwardly invested “ego libido.”

The departure from primary narcissism leaves the individual with a desire to recover narcissistic perfection. One way this is recovered is through the cathexis of an ideal ego – an idealized projected image of the self formed from the internalized demands and restrictions of authoritative figures (a concept which later develops into the superego) – which replaces the actual ego as the object of primary narcissism. Other attempts at recovery include a narcissistic object choice in which the object resembles the subject’s idealized self-image as opposed to the anaclitic object choice in which the object resembles the primary caretaker.

Like object libido, narcissistic libido can suffer from fixation and become pathological. Freud observed that in a variety of traumatic situations – including organic diseases such as schizophrenia – object libido is withdrawn from objects and reinvested in the ego. This renewal of libidinal investment in the ego is “secondary or pathological narcissism,” a regressive state experienced as a grandiosity and omnipotence of the self.

The concept of secondary narcissism has been utilized to interpret a range of religious phenomena including animism, magic, psychologized spirituality, and mysticism. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913–1950), Freud discusses narcissism in relation to omnipotence, claiming that primitives who believed that external events occurred because of the magical power of their own thought processes were suffering from pathological narcissism. More influentially, in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930–1975), Freud explained the “oceanic feeling” of unity experienced in mysticism as the preservation of and return to the stage of primary narcissism in which boundaries between self and other are undifferentiated. This established the classic reductive psychoanalytic view of mysticism as narcissistic, regressive, and pathological as illustrated by early studies such as Morel’s *Essai Sur l’Introversion Mystique* (1918) and Theodore Schroeder’s *Prenatal Psychisms and Mystical Pantheism* (1922) and the more recent work of Jeffrey Masson (1974, 1980).

The use of narcissism to explain certain types of religion is also found in the work of the Norwegian brothers Harald and Kristian Schjelderup (1932). On the basis of both contemporary and historical evidence, they identify three main types of religious experience: father religion, mother religion, and self-religion, each of which corresponds to a different stage of childhood development. Self-religion, such as Zen Buddhism and yoga, is marked by a quest for and fantasies of self-deification which is a result of narcissistic withdrawal of libido from external objects and a regression to infantile self-grandiosity.

The Schjelderup’s analysis anticipates psychoanalytic readings of contemporary forms of self-spirituality, such as the New Age and the human potential movement, which have also been interpreted as narcissistic. M. D. Faber (1996) argues that New Age thinking is a regression to primary narcissism in which the adult is returned to an infantile state of omnipotence, magical wish fulfillment, and merger with the mother. While Christopher Lasch’s influential *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) explains the

rise of the new psychospiritual therapies and their quest for self-realization as being both a product and perpetuation of a narcissistic personality structure, that because of recent sociocultural changes has become the predominant psychopathology of contemporary life. To counter this narcissism, Lasch suggests a return to and renewal of Christian commitment and ethics. However, this assumes Christianity is immune from narcissism, an assumption undermined by Paul Pruyser’s (1978) targeting of the narcissistic strands within evangelical Christianity. He claims the evagelical practices of witnessing and testifying are often beset by “reflective narcissism” the need to have one’s own self-love mirrored back in the affirmation and admiration of others. However, unlike self-spirituality, Pruyser argues that Christianity contains abundant resources to counter such narcissistic trends. For example, the story of Paradise in the book of Genesis rejects the desire to become omnipotent and omniscient like God – which Pruyser interprets as a mythic expression of primary narcissism – as the root of original sin.

Interpretations of religious phenomena, therefore, that utilize Freud’s understanding of narcissism are unremittingly negative, focusing on its regressive, defensive, and grandiose nature. However, Heinz Kohut’s (1971, 1977) highly influential psychoanalytic revisioning of narcissism has opened up a much more positive dialog between narcissism and religion. Kohut believed that the pejorative classical Freudian evaluation of narcissism which cast it in an inverse relationship to object love reflected an intrusion of Western altruistic cultural values into psychoanalysis. While accepting Freud’s stage of primary narcissism, Kohut claimed that narcissism followed its own developmental line in which the two primary archaic configurations of narcissism – the grandiose self and the idealized parent imago – had the potential to transform, respectively, into a cohesive sense of self with healthy self-esteem and a set of mature goals, values, and ideals. Crucial to this transformation was the ability of the primary caretakers to act as self-objects. Kohut coined the term self-object to describe how an infant’s

earliest experience of the other is not as a separate object but as part of oneself. Parents are the earliest self-objects, and they perform crucial psychological functions which the child's own psychic structure will later transmute into internal structures. However, if caretakers fail to respond empathetically to the child's experience, or if the child is subject to premature or traumatic separation, the integration of archaic narcissism is disturbed and the repressed strands emerge unresolved in later life, in a clinical condition designated as the narcissistic personality disorder. This is characterized by states of emptiness and despair, feelings of unreality, excessive self-consciousness, oscillation between experiences of inferiority and grandiosity, an intense desire to merge with an idealized other, uncontrollable rage, and an absence of empathy.

Unlike Freud, however, Kohut believed that narcissistic disturbances could be rectified through the establishment of empathetic communication in the analytic relationship which enabled the working through of traumatic failures of early self-objects and a more conscious negotiation of legitimate narcissistic needs. Kohut claimed that a mature ego had the capacity to tame and employ narcissistic cathexes for its highest developmental aims, namely, creativity, empathy, contemplation of one's own impermanence, a sense of humor, and wisdom.

Moreover, Kohut saw mysticism as engaging the developmental line of narcissism and affecting a transformation of the narcissistic elements of one's personality into the higher religio-ethical goal of what he termed, "cosmic narcissism." This is the transformation of narcissism into a type of mature, state-like mysticism in which the subject participates in a supraindividual and timeless existence. Although rooted in the mother-child symbiosis, this differs from the transient oceanic feeling of unitive mysticism which Kohut reads as the preservation of the early mother-child unity. Neither transient nor unitive, cosmic narcissism is an ethical and existential developmental achievement of an autonomous ego. Kohut hoped that the transformation of narcissism into cosmic narcissism would signal

the emergence of a new unchurched tradition of mystical rationality which would replace traditional religions and rejuvenate the West (Parsons, 1999).

Following Kohut, Peter Homans (1979) has claimed that unchurched psychologized religiosity, such as that of Carl Jung, displays an authentic engagement with narcissism. Homans argues that due to secularization traditional religion lost its ability to organize personal and social life, and this has resulted in the emergence of a diffused and heightened form of self-consciousness in which legitimate narcissistic needs are now satisfied primarily in the context of personal and psychological experience. Hence, while psychologized spirituality, with its themes of unity, wholeness, self-actualization, and individuation, is indeed reflective of the contemporary emergence of narcissistic disorders, it is also an authentic attempt to maturely heal and transform them.

The German theologian Hans-Günter Heimbrock (1977) has applied Kohut's revisioning of narcissism to Christianity, claiming that the biblical image of God has advanced along the very lines laid down by Kohut's analysis of transformed narcissism. Heimbrock reads the omnipotent and moralistic God of the Hebrew Bible as an example of archaic narcissism and self-grandiosity. However, through Jesus' crucifixion and suffering, the New Testament God renounces self-grandiosity and frees the individual from the need to shore up the weak self through an omnipotent self-ideal. The suffering of God enables a person to empathize with the suffering of others and to accept one's own finitude both of which represent a mature and creative transformation of narcissism.

Other writers have drawn on Kohut's concept of the self-object to interpret and legitimate religious phenomena. Robert Fuller (1989) claims that New Age healers act as mature self-object for clients, and analyst Sudhir Kakar (1991) has argued that the Indian guru is the primary cultural self-object experience for adults in Hindu tradition and society. Such work demonstrates that narcissism in both classical

and contemporary psychoanalytic theoretical formations continues to play an important role in the psychological interpretation of and dialog with religion.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Narrative Therapy

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## Introduction and Assumptions

Narrative therapy is more of an approach than a defined theory (O'Connor et al. 1997). This approach works from the premise that each person's life is a series of stories on many levels similar to a novel with many chapters. Stories are used to make meaning of a situation and to make sense of one's life. Some of these stories and chapters are given to the person by family, context, culture, religion, gender, etc. One of the key aspects of narrative is to re-author one's own story so that one is not living a story that does not fit with one's identity. In narrative therapy, a person and/or family seeks therapy when there is a problem that cannot be fixed. In fact, there is a story around a problem that oppresses the family. This story about the problem also fits into the larger stories about oneself.



In terms of its philosophical underpinnings, narrative therapy is a postmodern approach (White and Epston 1990; White 2007). Stories are socially constructed and are not objective truth. They are interpretations of experience and narrative is a hermeneutical project. This hermeneutical understanding challenges the notion of objective truth and diagnosis based on norms. In this postmodern view, the categories of the DSM IV are viewed as social constructions and not as objective truth.

The most prominent writer in narrative therapy is Michael White, an Australian therapist who with David Epston wrote *Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends* in 1990. Other names associated with narrative are Thomm (1989), Freedman and Combs (1996), and Andersen and Goolishian (1988). In the field of theology and spirituality, Charles Gerkin (1982) and Thomas St. James O'Connor (1998, 1999; Bloos and O'Connor 2002) have also made contributions using a narrative perspective in theology and spirituality. Since the early 1990s, Michael White's work has grown in popularity in the field of family therapy.

### Michael White and Key Ideas

In examining the work of Michael White, a number of points stand out. White uses the philosophy of Michel Foucault and the anthropology of Jerome Bruner and Gregory Bateson in developing his view of narrative therapy (White and Epston 1990; White 2007). Drawing on Foucault, White believes that knowledge is power and within society there are dominant narratives that privilege certain groups and oppress others. The notion of the dominant narrative is a key idea. In therapy, there is a problem that has developed an oppressive narrative and dominates the thinking of the individual and family. In the midst of this narrative, there is an alternative narrative that has moments when the family and/or individual has overcome the problem. These are called unique outcomes. However, the power of the dominant narrative of the problem is so strong that it often robs the person of memory

of the alternative narrative. The work of narrative therapy is to facilitate the client in uncovering these unique outcomes and developing them into an alternative narrative.

Another key idea is separating the problem from the person. White believes that the person is not the problem; the problem is the problem. Narrative therapy externalizes the problem and takes it out of the person and moves it into the external world. This is done through the use of language. Narrative therapy uses active verbs and not being verbs. Instead of saying the client is depressed, the narrative therapist might say that "depression pushes against John or oppresses John at times or jumps all over Mary or kidnaps Mary." This externalization of the problem, i.e., putting the problem on the outside, separates the person from the problem and moves it from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal. This separation of the problem from the person using active verbs is known as an externalizing conversation. The narrative therapist also seeks to map the influence of the problem on the individual and family. When did depression start pushing against John?

Another key idea is widening the audience for change. White (2007) also describes this as developing witnesses. Narrative therapy seeks to include other people in helping the person re-story the problem. These witnesses often include a team observing the session with the client behind a one-way mirror. This group is called the reflecting team. Reflecting teams offer reflections to the clients on the problem as well as commenting on family members and friends or anyone significantly involved in the story of the problem. This audience is meant to be supportive and to work with the client in reducing the problem. The audience for change or witnesses emphasizes team work which is very important to help make the change. Narrative therapy seeks to develop a team of people (audience or witness) who work together against the problem and not against the client. The client is a main person on the team.

Another aspect of narrative therapy that stands out is the facilitation of personal agency. Some of the research clearly indicates that narrative therapy is very helpful in reducing the presenting problem. Personal agency is facilitated by the

therapist working with the client(s) in developing an understanding of the problem and its effects on the persons involved, drawing on key metaphors of the problem that can be developed into an externalizing conversation and searching for unique outcomes to the problem that are developed into an alternative narrative. Crucial to facilitating personal agency is the involvement of the client. The therapist does not work out of an expert position with special knowledge but rather views the client as the expert on the experience of the problem with a belief that the client already has resources to help with the problem. Here, the therapist works from a position of not knowing and curiosity and follows the maps of the client.

Narrative therapy as constructed by White and Epston (1990) also uses letters and certificates. These are sent or given to clients. The letters most often underline the client's strengths and pose some wonderings about possible directions and are sent by the therapist after a session or sessions. Similar to solution-focused therapy, narrative therapy emphasizes the strengths of the client especially in dealing with challenging problems. It uses scaling questions that put the problem or its effects on a scale of 1–10. The scale is meant to gauge the progress of clients in dealing with their problems. Certificates are used to celebrate the growth of clients. For example, a child who has progressed in terms of management of angry outbursts could be given a certificate celebrating that he/she is now a "temper buster."

## Research on Narrative

The research on narrative therapy is at the beginning. Published research involves qualitative and case studies. O'Connor et al. (1997) found that in a qualitative study of eight clients, narrative therapy significantly reduced the presenting problem. Smith et al. (1992) and Sells et al. (1994) using qualitative research found reflecting teams used in narrative therapy for the most part to be effective. Coulehan, Freilander, and Heatherington (1998) used grounded theory in interviewing

eight clients of Carlos Sluzki who is a narrative therapist about how they changed their views of the problem construction. Results were mixed. Four clients thought that they could see the problem in a more helpful way and four did not. O'Connor et al. (2004) examined therapists' experiences of using narrative therapy utilizing an ethnographic research design. This research indicated that therapists found narrative therapy helpful in reducing the presenting problem and also reported some limitations of narrative therapy. There have been a few qualitative studies of children and narrative therapy (Focht and Beardslee 1996; Lerner 1996; Weston et al. 1998). All of these qualitative studies found narrative therapy helpful to children. In the area of teaching, Morrison et al. (1997) found in a qualitative study that students reported positive learning in narrative therapy.

Case studies on narrative include Kogan and Gale (1997) who did a study of a videotape of Michael White with a client. They examined how White managed talk in the session and used the metaphor of "de-centering." Kahle and Robbins describe a case study of a family where success over the problem is externalized. Michael White has provided numerous case studies outlining the effectiveness of narrative therapy with a wide range of clients.

Little has been written on spirituality and narrative therapy. However, narrative therapy has many commonalities with Judeo-Christian spiritualities. O'Connor (1999) notes the similarities and differences between Dante's *Purgatorio* and narrative therapy. O'Connor argues that Dante's notion of the cure of souls that takes place through climbing mount Purgatory has many similarities in narrative therapy. In particular, the externalizing conversation, the separation of the problem from the person, and the development of personal agency based on strengths are similar to sin as object and the work of grace. Bloos and O'Connor (2002) also examine the use of the labyrinth as a spiritual experience that has similarities to the experience of narrative therapy.

Charles Gerkin (1982) describes a narrative hermeneutical theory of practical theology.

Gerkin's understanding of narrative has many similarities to White's notions as well as difference. For Gerkin, theology is described in many narratives. Working from a Christian standpoint, Gerkin believes that the Christian narrative of creation, sin, and redemption is what gives Christians a sense of identity and is the lens through which one interprets and makes meaning of experience. Gerkin believes in this meta-narrative and argues that identity is rooted in the meta-narratives. Certainly, there are many narratives in one's life. Like White, Gerkin believes that there are a multitude of chapters in our stories. Gerkin's narrative hermeneutical theory of practical theology can be divided into four elements (O'Connor 1998): (1) rooted in the Christian heritage, (2) uses a multidisciplinary approach, (3) based in practical theology and the practices of ministry, (4) and uses the hermeneutical and narrative theory of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

## See Also

► [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Native American Messianism

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The envisioning of a radical change in world order through the leadership of a divinely-informed prophet or actual messiah is a response to similar spiritual and psychosocial

stressors wherever it is found – across cultures, and from primal to postindustrialized societies. The empirical needs that occasion a collective readiness to receive divine intervention usually relate to the intensity of exploitation a society perceives itself to have suffered from a hegemonic alien culture. And the anticipation of a messianic figure is most usually phenomenal of a general movement to revitalize the oppressed society, which may seek to restore its integrity and sense of autonomy by the following: comprehensively rejecting the alien culture while reviving or recalibrating traditional institutions, practices, and values; or incorporating elements of the oppressive alien culture into a new foundational vision.

The literature, ethnographic and anthropological, points to revitalization impulses in the way of apocalyptic expectations at work in many quarters of the Americas well before encounters with white culture. And of prophet-led movements among indigenous Americans, it has been suggested that nascent messianic impulses in the visionary programs of communities already in crisis may have been ripe for taking a decisive shape and energy from first contact with Christian Europeans, while owing nothing to Christian theology.

Because of the rapid growth and domination of Christian European culture in the Americas after the late fifteenth century, there has, indeed, been debate about the likelihood of messianism in some Northern Native American enclaves being unique and organic. However, cases of messianic movements in Central and South America that clearly predate native first contact with Christianity (e.g., Tupinamba migrations of Brazil searching for the “Land of Immortality and Perpetual Rest”) support arguments in favor of Northern American instances independent of European influences. Of religious and psychological importance is that even where elements of Christianity are identified in an otherwise nativistic movement, selective recourse to the person of a messiah by primal Americans (to someone who straddles the gap between time and eternity, who corrects severe psychosocial imbalance in the subjective field of history) supports the

universality of a human capacity to envision engagement with transcendent reality and its association to a concept of absolute justice.

Messiahs and messianic solutions to oppression can be seen as a natural outgrowth of the prophetic and shamanic domains of tribal structure. Even where the prophet who launched a given movement is not ascribed personal divinity, there seems to be a template for the process by which he arrived at his charismatic influence and the strategy that promised to liberate his people: He received a vision of high detail about why misfortune had befallen his people and what they must do to restore social equilibrium. Often the prophet or shaman was beset by a near-death illness (likely, a somatization of the collective plight) before this presentment, and emerged physically and spiritually revitalized himself. He began to evangelize, and followers experienced an ecstatic charge from him similar to his own from the supernatural sponsor of his vision. The message of salvation was similar from visionary to visionary, frequently demanding the end of inter- and intra-tribal strife, exogamy, any sort of dishonesty, and the drinking of alcohol, (which had quickly become a scourge to indigenous Americans). It alternately encouraged coexistence with enemies, ensured their surrender, or guaranteed apocalyptic destruction of them; sometimes it promised a welcome return of the dead.

More usual in South America was the prophet’s announcement that he was a divine hero or god (often the creator or law giver, as with the Latin American prophets called *pagé*), who had returned to bestow eternal life on the faithful. Generally, South American movements sought an earthly paradise and the patently supernatural benefit of eternal youth, like the Tupis’ ongoing pursuits of the alternatively called “Land without Evil.” And while a more religio-political movement, like that of the early nineteenth-century Incan Tupac Amuru, looked forward to a cosmic cataclysm from which a new world order could spring, native millenarianism of Paraguay and Brazil outside the context of messianism could be merely terrifying: In contemporary literature about the Brazilian

Nāndeva-Guanari, where this kind of mythology conflated with Christian teachings about the Day of Judgment, a fear of returning dead bent on vengeance has been associated with collective depression and suicidality into the twentieth century.

In both Americas, movements that sought to reinstate, reinforce, or perpetuate native culture tended to arise during earlier stages of European impingement and were marked by revolutionary aggression. Those that could tolerate syncretism of European tradition and indigenous beliefs developed later, and/or where social cohesion had become profoundly eroded.

The former type of movement is exemplified by the holy wars of the Pueblo Indians at Taos Mexico in 1680 under the leadership of the messianic Popé, which exterminated hundreds of Spanish settlers, and of the Delaware Indians under a nameless prophet from Michigan, whose 1762 movement aimed to do away with every European influence on tribal culture in the Great Lakes area – and doomed its success by restricting its weapons to bows and arrows against colonial fire power.

An exemplar of syncretistic movements is that of Handsome Lake, a Seneca, whose visions occurred after the American Revolution, a time of deep internal discord, economic collapse, and moral indifference for the Iroquois confederacy as a whole. Although he made no claim to divinity, his visions began after an illness from which he was thought to have died and returned. They instructed him in a new religion of the “Good Message” that borrowed from Quakerism to renovate native religion, retaining what had well-served social and spiritual stability, eliminating contaminants like alcohol, abortion, and witchcraft. It emphasized marriage, adoption of orphans, and care for the aged. It also crafted a social model for the disenfranchised trader-hunter-warrior who would otherwise have been emasculated by cultivation of the land, which was now a necessity.

Still, syncretism could signal intractable defiance to white culture, as with the “Dreamers” cult of Northwestern America, ca. 1870. Its founder Catholic-educated Smohalla was believed to

have died and been resurrected. In his trances or “dreams,” the Great Spirit censured his people for apostasy from native ways. Smohalla instituted religion with Roman Catholic trappings, but doctrine that held whites to be inferior creations and Indians alone to have rights to the land – cultivation of which, as ordered by the whites, was violation of Mother Earth from whose bosom the Indian dead would one day rise. The “Dreamers” cult would be the basis of two armed insurrections near the end of the century.

By far, the best-known Native American messianic movements are the Ghost Dances of 1870 and 1890. They arose in a family of movements that employed lengthy, repetitive, communal dance to effect the prophetic vision – which varied with different tribes’ adoption, but held close to the original script everywhere on the restoration of lands and game to the Indians and, most importantly, on the return to life of their dead. During a period of rapid depopulation, Wodziwob the Paviotso prophet of the 1870 Ghost Dance foresaw the return of the ancestors via train with concomitant destruction of the whites – in which, however, the tools of their culture would be left behind for Indian use. Though variations anticipated rapprochement with whites, when neither had occurred, and social and political traumata continued, the movement died out.

In 1890, the prophet Wovoka claimed to be the messiah awaited by the Mormons (some of whom had joined the original Ghost cult). This time, the movement spread widely with magical details, such as belief in an immunity to the white man’s bullets, that would have disastrous consequences for 350 Sioux prisoners at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. It was not long before the movement died again. The Kiowa of the Southwest would revive the Ghost Dance in 1894 and sustain its practice until 1916; but resurrection failing to occur, the focus of the dance became the trance state achieved by participants and the opportunity thence to communicate immediately with ancestors.

Ascending gradually (even before the advent of the Ghost Dance) as a psycho-spiritual tool in the Native American struggle to resist

assimilation was the ritual ingestion of the vision-producing *peyote*. While the Peyote Cult may not always be classed with messianism, as a medium of personal emancipation in the collective setting of what has become the Native American Church, the drug by all reports is salvational. As dancing was used in the cults of the latter nineteenth century and early twentieth for crossing the barrier to the divine realm, so peyote has been used to this day. Parallels to both practices are found universally, as in the dances of the South-African Bushmen or the use of soma by the ancient Hindus.

The Native American response to the encroachment of Europeans, whose policies in the encounter amounted to ethnic and political castration, can easily be said to model Freud's theory for the etiology of religion. With or without messianic leadership, the renewal movements of the fifteenth to twentieth centuries were driven in classical psychoanalytic terms by anxiety over murder of the primal father as described by Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (and developed further in *Moses and Monotheism*). Under the coercive advances of white settlers, memory traces of a primal conflict had been aroused, and the tribal psyche returned to the repressed trauma of the original sons' dispatch of a father who stood between them and the object of their Oedipal desire, i.e., the mother – indeed, barely disguised here as Mother Earth. Where a charismatic leader arose we would observe the tribe's correlative longing for the return of that father whom it had vanquished. And where a redeemer figure was said to have had a near-death experience or could claim to have died and returned, we would note both an atonement for the ancient murder and full emulation of the father through which the new leader would unconsciously be received as his replacement.

The significance of this kind of person to society, however, should not be dismissed as a mere artifact of psychosocial regression. As the Oedipal drama leads to development of the individual's super-ego, its recapitulation at the social level under the influence of a great leader is the origin of a culture's super-ego

(*Civilization and Its Discontents*). So we may liken the movement of Handsome Lake (or even Smohalla) to the ethical monotheism developed by the Jews under Moses.

Nevertheless, confining messianism to the Oedipal context is relegating it to social order-keeping – making the revival of movements that clearly failed to eliminate exogenous stressors amount to little more than corporate repetition compulsion. To typify these movements as compulsions to repeat is to miss the ways in which they succeeded in counterbalancing the psychosocial problems of forced acculturation. For instance, through the filter of Self Psychology, we recognize in almost all instances attempts to revitalize an *idealized values system*. And movements carried by a charismatic leader demonstrate the collective compensatory activation of an *idealized parent imago*, which, along with an agenda to foster family cohesiveness, is the basis of a society prepared to adjust to any environmental changes.

Implicit in the foregoing is the fact that what compels a people to accept an individual as messiah or charismatic leader rests on the extent to which the person addresses the deepest unconscious needs and wishes of the believers, Oedipal or otherwise. Additionally, it can be said that the degree of a leader's charisma relates to the level of the group's sense of desperation. One precondition for desperation would be the deep cleft indigenous people came to feel between themselves and nature. Erich Fromm who sees the messianic age as a human achievement (not the product of divine intervention) locates the existential problem it is meant to end in the individual's sense of estrangement from himself or herself and nature. It is essentially a problem of *splitting* – here, meaning the dichotomy between one's animal and transcendent natures – and is resolved when one (with one's society) can command reason, love, truth, and justice well enough to attain harmony. The actualization of Fromm's messianic age can be said to have been consistently pushed farther from the grasp of indigenous peoples, each time reason, love, truth, and justice were transgressed from the outside.



What we may conjecture to be the intrapsychic result of such transgressions is social regression to a pre-Oedipal stage. Borrowing from Object-Relations, where relationships are severely disrupted, there is risk of regression to the *schizoid position*, a psychic space of womblike safety but indifference to relationships – between internal and external objects, or self and nature. To defend against what the conscious mind would experience as intolerable loss, the individual or social group could instead withdraw to the *paranoid or depressive position*. Messianism animated by paranoia, with fantasies of persecution projected onto neutral as well as persecutory external realities, would resemble some of the millenarian Tupi quests for paradise, or the early dance movements that promoted emancipation through violence; while regressions to the depressive position (and its remorse) would be characteristic of movements that associated liberation with renovation of social morality, or later dance movements distinguished by some tolerance of acculturation. The choice would depend on a kind of tribal personality style.

Later Ghost Dances invite further Object-Relational review. In the language of D. W. Winnicott, the dance was manifest *potential space*, or that hypothetical realm between internal and external realities in which the psyche both creates and finds play, art, or religion. The shift from a hopeless expectation for the return of the dead to trance-encounters with them connotes the ghost-dancers' creative enlistment of their deceased as revivals of *transitional objects* to reconnect the community with a sense of, at least, its cultural environment's reliability.

From the Analytical Psychology perspective, a messianic movement as a symptom of cultural crisis would be teleological, pointing to, in fact representing, its own solution. A leader who experienced a rebirth or became divine would be symbolic of the *Self*, archetype of wholeness, which for the individual or the collective is "an image of the goal of life, spontaneously produced by the unconscious, irrespective of the wishes and fears of the conscious mind" (Jung 1989, p. 459). Rituals like the Ghost Dance and peyote use would be media through which members of the

community participated in the kind of encounter with objective (i.e., transcendent) reality to which their messiah laid claim through near-death experiences and visions. And whatever the cause of disturbance in the tribal psyche, any socio-spiritual programs stipulating endogamy, marital fidelity, and eradication of practices (such as alcohol consumption) that effected schizoid retreats or the ego's collapse into the unconscious, would be expressions of the integrative drives that gave rise to the messianic movement. Messianic moral prescriptions, then, would betoken progressive rather than regressive tendencies. By this interpretation, retreats to pre-Oedipal positions or abandonment of a movement suggests either psychic unreadiness for a major emergence of deep psychic contents or merely a phase of the regressive struggle that normally accompanies such emergence.

### See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)
- ▶ [Transitional Object](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Native North American Religion

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Native North Americans are indigenous peoples. Their diversity is marked. Members of different culture groups speak unique languages belonging to several language families. Their religions also vary, largely because indigenous religions are place based. Such religions help their practitioners live successfully in the environments to which they are native. As the environments and languages through which the religions are expressed and maintained vary, so do the religions themselves. Still, all Native North American religions share an emphasis upon practice rather than belief. More specifically, the religions emphasize respectful, generous actions toward the other inhabitants of indigenous peoples' social and spatial environments. These inhabitants include both human and nonhuman persons. Passed down orally from their ancestors, there is a strong element of "tradition" in religions of Native North Americans. At the same time, the religions are highly adaptable and have continually helped Native Americans meet the challenges of changing social and geographic environments. Thus, "traditional" Native American religions should not be viewed as static or outdated. Most of these religions remain vital and relevant. Yet, some traditional religions were weakened by European colonialism and the sometimes forceful introduction of Christianity to North America. Some scholars therefore suggest that colonialism ultimately caused "trauma" to Native American cultures – trauma that continues to be felt by many today, who still face challenges to their traditional identities and views of the world. Both the practicing psychologist and the scholar of religion and psychology should consider this notion of cultural trauma, when dealing with Native American peoples and

cultures. At the same time, psychologists and scholars should remember that the religions – whether traditional or not – are important means through which Native Americans may deal with such trauma.

In the United States, many individuals self-identifying as Native American (American Indian or Alaskan Natives) belong to one of more than 560 federally recognized “tribes” or nations (Office of the Federal Register 2010a, b). In Canada, there are over 630 federally recognized “First Nations Bands,” in addition to several recognized *Inuit* and *Métis* groups (Assembly of First Nations 2012). Further, in both countries, there are individuals who identify as Native American, but who are not enrolled with recognized culture groups or who belong to groups that do not have federal recognition. Again, then, cultural Native American diversity is immense.

Many Native Americans now practice various forms of Christianity and other religions with origins outside of North America. Other Native Americans practice ancestral and foreign religions at the same time or even in combination. The latter forms of practice have resulted in what scholars often call “new religious movements.” In this age of constant cultural contact, some Native Americans have also combined, consciously and otherwise, elements of different indigenous religions, resulting in manifestations of Pan-American Indian or “Pan-Am” religions. Hence, not only is there diversity between the ancestral religions that are unique to each Native American people; there is also religious diversity between the types of nonindigenous and “hybrid” religions practiced across North America (Deloria 1999; Gill 2003; Lokensgard 2010b).

Native North Americans who continue to practice contemporary versions of their ancestral religions inhabit living landscapes. Not only do they consider most aspects of these landscapes to be alive; they also consider many aspects of their landscapes to be potential persons or social actors. These nonhuman persons possess the capability of helping humans live successfully in the places to which they are native. In these densely inhabited worlds, human and nonhuman

persons are interconnected and constantly in contact. To win help from nonhuman persons, humans must therefore act generously and respectfully. They do so most explicitly in formal ceremonies. However, the need to embrace a religious ethic of reciprocity, and to treat others properly, governs all social protocols, inside and outside of ceremonial settings. Thus, indigenous religious views shape Native American lives at all times, helping traditionalists maintain positive relations with potentially helpful, nonhuman persons, as well as their collective creator (Harvey 2005; Lokensgard 2010b).

Examples of how the views manifest in the practices of a particular Native North American people are found with the Blackfeet or *Niitsitapiiksi* (“Real People”). The Blackfeet consist of four closely related and confederated culture groups, residing in the present-day American state of Montana and Canadian province of Canada. The ancestral Blackfoot religious traditions remain strong among these peoples, despite the presence of various Christianities and Pan-Am religions.

Of course, Blackfoot traditionalists engage in various day-to-day rituals that express the ethic of reciprocity. They also engage in a series of seasonal ceremonies, during which they more formally honor the other persons of their environment, and their creator, in order to give thanks for help received or demonstrate worthiness for help needed from others. During the fall and spring ceremonies, Blackfoot traditionalists open “medicine bundles” (*amopistaanistsi*, in Blackfoot), which contain materials embodying certain nonhuman inhabitants of their world. Such materials may be skins, rocks, earth paints, herbs, and many other things, each of which is the physical home to a corresponding spirit; a crow skin embodies a bird spirit, and rock embodies a rock spirit, and so on. When the medicine bundles are opened, each spirit is treated with great respect, prayed to, and even offered gifts. These gifts are accepted by ceremonial leaders, on behalf of the spirits, and then redistributed to human attendees at the ceremony. Thus, mutually beneficial relations are not only renewed between humans and

nonhumans; they are also renewed between all of the human attendees and even between humans and the Blackfoot creator figure (*Ihtsipaitapiyo'pa* or “The Source of our Life”), who witnesses the entire ceremony (Lokensgard 2010a).

Historically and today, some Native Americans have incorporated elements of Christianity into their ancestral traditions (and/or vice versa). This has resulted in the “new religious movements.” The most prominent example of these movements is the Native American Church [NAC]. NAC members regard the spineless cactus, peyote, as a sacrament, and ingest it during ceremonies. The use of peyote for religious purposes probably arrived in the USA, from Mexico, in the mid-nineteenth century. It then spread north to Canada. Therefore, outside of Mesoamerica, it is a fairly *new* phenomenon. Today, peyote is classified as an illicit, hallucinogenic “drug” by the US government, but a legal exemption is made for the use of peyote in NAC ceremonies (Controlled Substances Act of 1970). In Canada, there are no restrictions regarding the use of peyote. Nevertheless, many North Americans, indigenous and nonindigenous alike, view peyote as a drug. Therefore, members of the NAC face some controversy in both countries.

The extent to which NAC members incorporate elements of Christianity into their beliefs and practices varies. This is because the individual churches are largely autonomous and because the church meetings are shaped by the “road men” who lead them. In all cases, however, NAC members use peyote simply to facilitate prayer and contemplation upon their creator, God, Jesus, or whomever is of the greatest spiritual significance in their world. They do this during all-night ceremonies. Many of their prayers are intended to benefit the sponsor of the ceremony, who may be seeking spiritual help or giving thanks for help received. NAC members never use peyote (which is nonaddictive) recreationally. Indeed, abstinence from alcohol and other drugs is one of the central tenets of all Native American Churches (Stewart 1998).

The incorporation of elements normally unique to one religion into another has also resulted in the Pan-Am religions. These religions are not specific to a particular culture group. Instead, they are practiced across cultural boundaries. The NAC is thus both a new religious movement and a Pan-Am religion as well. There are also those Pan-Am religions, however, that simply result from the combination of elements from different Native American religions. For instance, each summer, various Plains Indian peoples, such as the *Lakotas*, practice a form of the “Sun Dance” that involves “piercing.” In these Sun Dances, participants pierce themselves through the chest or back, tie those piercings to a central pole in a ceremonial space, and dance until the piercings break free. The precise logic behind this act varies across culture groups, but, generally, practitioners do this as a sacrificial sign of thanks for help needed or received from their creator and to express gratitude for the earth’s renewal each spring. This type of Sun Dance is now found among culture groups whose members did not historically pierce during the annual ceremony (as was the case with the Blackfeet) or who did not practice a Sun Dance at all (Lokensgard 2010a; Wissler 1918). Thus, the “piercing” Sun Dance has become a Pan-Am religious phenomenon.

While the traditional and other religions of Native North Americans are vital and meaningful to their practitioners, Native North America is plagued with problems that have resulted from its indigenous peoples being forced by the momentum of Euro-American colonialism to change almost all the ways in which their societies functioned. Native American scholars, psychologists, and counselors have suggested that the idea of “historical trauma or intergenerational trauma” helps explain the presence of alcoholism, drug abuse, and other social ills that exist in Native American communities (Duran et al. 1998, p. 61). They have suggested that this trauma is maintained through “acculturative stress” (Duran et al. 1998, p. 65). It may seem easy to dismiss these notions as being based upon some dubious conception of genetically based

psychological memory, but careful thought shows otherwise. Just as ancestral religions were passed down and adapted carefully and persistently by generations of Native North Americans, so might the negative effects of colonialism have been passed down. In other words, the “trauma” of colonialism might have been unconsciously “taught.”

Psychologists should understand, then, that the difficulties some Native North Americans have in dealing with loss of identity and cultural pride can be difficult to overcome. On the other hand, both psychologists and scholars of religion and psychology should remember that because traditional religions have been adapted to help Native Americans live successfully in social and geographic environments that are, in many ways, different from those of their ancestors, they remain an important means through which individuals can recover identity and cultural pride. Psychologists and scholars should remember too that the various forms of Christianity, new religious movements, and Pan-Am religions can also help contemporary Native Americans deal with the effects of historical trauma. After all, the NAC, which fits into all three of the categories mentioned, deals explicitly with such effects through its emphasis upon abstinence from alcohol and other drugs and through other teachings as well. Thus, *all* of the religions commonly practiced by Native North Americans, whether they are ancestral, hybridized, or simply “new,” can help Native Americans live successful lives in the present.

## See Also

- ▶ [Blackfoot Nation](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [María Lionza](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Spiritism](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Yoruban Religion in Cuba](#)

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## Nazism

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## The Menace of Modernity

After the Reformation, the development that shaped European civilization the most was the



Age of Enlightenment, which began around 1720 and culminated shortly after the American Revolution in 1776. The Enlightenment rejected supernaturalism, the divinity of Jesus, and the authority of the Church. Nevertheless, they said there is a natural or built-in *telos* to historical development, called “Progress” – a slow but inexorable process that, through the dissemination of science and literacy, would eventually envelope the whole planet. Among the moral and material benefits, “Progress” would presumably confer is a much greater degree of human equality.

Though it is hard to credit nowadays, many religious people were utterly opposed to the Enlightenment’s promotion of reason and human equality. Medieval Christians believed that all believers are equally important in the eyes of God and that on the Day of Judgment, God will judge each personal impartially, ignoring their worldly status and accomplishments. In the meantime, they said, as far as *this* world goes, it is sinful to question the feudal hierarchy. Individuals can “progress” in their moral or spiritual growth and in their relationship with God. But that is an individual, not a societal affair. Medieval minds dismissed the idea of collective human emancipation, fostered by the growth of literacy and the dissemination of reason, because since the Fall, humankind is enmeshed in a world of suffering and woe, and attempts to improve our earthly condition through “works,” or our own worldly efforts – including science and technology – are sinful and distract us from our true spiritual vocation.

Nevertheless, in the eighteenth century, Deists and free thinkers began to make human equality a political norm or ideal, which meant translating the old belief in equality before God on Judgment Day into a political reality in *this* world. The growing demand for equality took several forms. The first was equality before the law, creating one system of justice, one law for the rich and the poor, commoners and the aristocracy, and increasingly, for Catholics and Protestants as well. In time, this emphasis on equality was extended to *all* religious creeds, including Jews. A second form the call for equality took was in

terms of equality of access or opportunity, which required that the state provide free public education so that members of all social classes would have the chance to improve and to prosper. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Western European (and British and American) Jews benefited enormously from access to public education, and this is a feature of modernity that anti-Semites rejected. From the 1860s onwards, anti-Semites all across Europe, Britain, and the United States argued that Jews *still* belong at the bottom of the social ladder, as in medieval days, and that their current prosperity was a symptom of a widespread social disorder. Indeed, if they will not return to their “natural” place in the social order, Jews should be intimidated, harassed and if need be, slaughtered *en masse*.

### Nazism, Mysticism, and the Occult

Given this background, the Nazi Party was not some weird aberration that sprang up overnight. The Treaty of Versailles made conditions for the spread of anti-Semitism in German-speaking countries more favorable, but in the end, Nazism was a continuation of the older anti-Semitism, albeit with a fierce anti-Christian component that was well hidden from the rank and file. It also had an occult dimension. Much as they feared and detested them, the Nazis emulated the Masons in several respects and borrowed some racist ideas from the Theosophical Society of Madame Helena Blavatsky, a Russian medium, who introduced the Swastika, an ancient Asian symbol, into Western occultist circles. They also had contact with George Ivanovich Gurdjieff B., another Russian mystic, and studied anthroposophy, Sufism, Kundalini yoga, Zen Buddhism, and so on. Most of these eclectic explorations in mysticism, meditation, and the occult were carried on in the SS, under Himmler’s oversight.

Having said that many occult and spiritual practices the Nazi elite embraced were associated with movements and teachers who were not particularly racist, and whose overall objectives focused on individual development, rather than world domination or genocide. So to insure that



these occult techniques were practiced in the proper spirit, the Nazis borrowed even more heavily from ultranationalist German or Austrian occultists and neo-pagans. One was the Austrian writer Guido von List (1848–1919). List founded “Armanist” Brotherhood of Wotan worshippers who were obsessed with racial purity. In 1911, List codified a set of racial and marriage laws that bear an uncanny resemblance to the Nuremberg racial laws that he claimed would be enacted in 1932. (He wasn’t far off!)

Another important influence was Lanz von Liebenfels, a former Cistercian monk who founded the *Ordo Novi Templi*, or The New Templar Order, in 1907. Lanz was the editor of *Ostara*, a journal read by future Nazi stalwarts like Alfred Rosenberg, Heinrich Himmler, Julius Streicher, and Rudolf Hess long before Hitler became leader of the Nazi Party. As Morris Berman points out: “Castration, sterilization and extermination of ‘inferior’ races are all present in *Ostara*. Subsidies for ‘blond marriages’ made available by Hitler in Norway and Holland during the war are advocated, as well as a ban on interracial ones” (Berman 1989, p. 265).

Another important influence on the Nazis was Rudolf von Sebottendorf. Sebottendorf studied Islamic mysticism in Turkey and Egypt and by his own admission, was strongly influenced by List and Lanz. In 1917, as Germany slouched towards defeat, Sebottendorf founded the Thule Society – a violently anti-Semitic, ultranationalist group whose newspaper, *the Munich Observer*, attracted the aristocratic Dietrich Eckart and the lesser known Anton Drexler, a railroad mechanic who founded the ultra-right wing German Workers’ Party. Drexler persuaded Sebottendorf and Eckart that it was time to turn the Thule Society into a mass movement. And when Adolf Hitler wrested control of the German Workers Party from Drexler and renamed it the National Socialist Workers’ Party, *the Munich Observer* became the official organ of the Nazi organization.

And what about Hitler himself? What did he study? As far as we know, Hitler never belonged to any secret society, but was personally coached by his mentor Dietrich Eckart. Just what Eckart taught Hitler is not known, though it is the subject

of some lively scholarly conjecture. In any case, the real inspiration for Hitler’s occult leanings may have been more chemical than personal in nature. While serving as a soldier, Hitler was hit by British mustard gas on October 15, 1918, and became blind. As he was recovering in a hospital in Pasewalk, north of Berlin, his vision was gradually restored, until November, when he learned that Germany had been declared a Republic, which caused him to relapse completely. While lying on his cot in despair, Hitler experienced as a call “from the other world” naming him the savior of the German people. After that, he started back on the road to recovery and, as they say, found “his voice.” Thus a failed artist and a brain-injured veteran was transformed into a charismatic political speaker, who transfixed the entire German people, putting them into a collective trance. The Nazi elite were as transfixed as the general population by Hitler’s hate-filled rants. The main difference between the elite and the rank and file was that the elite were never taken in by Hitler’s public professions of support for Christianity. They knew that Hitler aimed to replace Christianity with an improvised pastiche of Wotanist and occultist beliefs and rituals in the fullness of time.

### Hitler: The Aryan Messiah

Critics and supporters of the Enlightenment have noted that the modern myth of progress is a kind of secularized Messianism, in which the era of universal brotherhood, peace, and prosperity is brought on, not by a divine messenger or intercessor but by the growth of reason, science, and technology. Viewed through the lenses of a secular, scientific mind-set, the Nazi elite’s involvement with the occult represents no more than a foolish reversion to magic and superstition – a puzzling anomaly, given that they were enthusiastic promoters of science and technology. But the tendency to oppose magic and superstition to scientific method is a product of a modern mind-set, and the Nazis were at war with modernity. Indeed, their hatred of Jews and of modernity was inseparably linked.

They blamed Jews for the twin evils of modernity – capitalism and communism – and depicted them as incorrigibly materialistic, opposed to every noble, spiritual tendency in the “Aryan” psyche, which is inherently hierarchical in outlook.

So when all was said and done, Nazism embraced modern science and technology, but rejected modernity’s characteristic emphasis on human equality and the modern separation of the sacred and the secular in the political arena. In its place, they created a neo-feudal system based on hereditary rank and privilege and sought to fuse the sacred and the secular in their political ideology. But instead of reviving the Church, they sought to destroy it and to replace Christianity with a cult of the Fuehrer. As Morris Berman points out, the cult of the Fuehrer was much more than a political movement. It was a state religion. Berman writes:

At the Nazi rally in Nuremberg in September of 1937, a huge photo of Hitler was displayed with the inscription beneath it: ‘IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD...’ William Teeling, who visited Germany in the late thirties, was told by the Mayor of Hamburg: We need no priests or parsons. We communicate directly with God through Adolph Hitler. Dorothy Thompson, writing in the December 1934 issue of Harper’s Magazine (Good Bye To Germany) told the following story: ‘At Garmisch I met an American from Chicago. He had been at the Oberammergau to see the Passion Play. “These people are all crazy,” he said. “This is not a revolution, it is a revival. They think Hitler is God. Believe it or not, A German woman sitting next to me at the Passion Play and when they hoisted Jesus on the Cross, she said: ‘There he is. That is our Fuehrer, our Hitler.’” And when they paid out the thirty pieces of silver to Judas, she said: “That is Roehm, who betrayed the Leader”’ (pp. 277-278)

Berman gives more examples, but there is no need to belabor the issue. Nazi propaganda *deliberately* displaced Jesus with Hitler at every opportunity, because the German populace wanted a *savior*. Hitler and his followers discerned this (largely unconscious) desire and used techniques culled from black magic and modern advertising techniques to create a demonic new race-based religion of state.

Why then, beginning in 1935, did Hitler suppress all secret societies – even the Thule Society – and other racist ones that were

precursors to his movement? Hitler aimed to create a complete police state – one which would harness people’s yearning for a savior and for a sense of belonging to something bigger, something powerful and spiritual. In Hitler’s utopia, no one would belong to any organization that harbored secrets from the state, or nourished competing loyalties or differences of opinion with Hitler – on any subject pertaining to spirituality. For a brief period of time, Hitler was a kind of emperor and demonic pope rolled into one – the final authority on all matters temporal and spiritual. His authority was beyond question and brooked no challenges. The brief but astonishing career of Adolf Hitler and the lingering appeal of Nazism to this day are potent reminders of the limits of progress. As we enter our present “post-modern” historical era, science and technology develop apace, but genuine equality, brotherhood, and peace are as elusive as ever.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anti-Semitism](#)
- ▶ [Theosophy](#)

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## Near-Death Experiences

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A Professor of Pediatric Physical Therapy had totally repressed the memory of her near-death experience (NDE) as a child, until at

a conference, she laid on a table during a practice session for a cranial-sacral technique. Suddenly she began to smell ether. She asked her standing partner whether she smelled ether, which she did not. Then this memory rushed into her consciousness, and she ran out of the room weeping.

When she was about 8 years old, she had an emergency appendectomy. The doctor used ether as the anesthesia commonly used at the time, which has since been discontinued because of dosage uncertainties. During the surgery, this little girl floated up above her body and drifted toward a stairway she saw, up the steps until she saw an older man whom she vaguely recognized. He held up his hand and told her it was not her time, and she had to go back. So, “as a dutiful little Catholic girl,” she said, she went back to the surgery. She watched what the doctors and staff were doing, and then returned to her body, and woke up. She decided not to tell anyone what had happened, afraid that it would frighten her mother. Years later, when as an adult she recalled her experience, she contacted her childhood physician and asked him about her experience. He said “We almost lost you” (Personal communication).

Near-death experiences such as this are events when a person dies and returns to life. Medical professionals have documented many such cases, but many scientific researchers refuse to accept this evidence, since it challenges the limits of their materialistic worldview in which, if the physical body loses its life force, it cannot be restarted, because that would imply that an immortal soul returned to the body. Of the numerous cases reported, I will outline a few and give you resources to find more. Then we will look at the debates about NDEs, which can be categorized into four major methodological types: Biological, Psychological, Philosophical, and Mystical.

First, what is death? There are two answers. One is the typical medical answer: that state from which one does not return to life. Thus, if anyone does return, by definition he/she did not die, no matter how long their heart, lungs, and brain may have been dysfunctional. Logically, this is the *deductive* definition, since death is being defined as a one-way trip. So any claim to a return from death is by definition impossible. What shall we

call the situation when there are no such classic life signs, but the person returns to life? We call it a near-death experience. The second definition of an NDE is the *inductive* definition, accepting lack of life signs as death, so the physician can sign a death certificate. But if the patient does come back to life, the definition accepts this as new data, a real near-death experience along with the brief death, rather than denying that death ever occurred. The big difference is that NDE survivors typically report remarkable visions and changes in personality, notably a loss of the natural fear of death.

The current beginning of NDE studies began with Raymond Moody, who developed a classic typology of typical NDE experiences in 1975. Few experience them all, but many experience several. They are as follows: (a) *ineffability*, or being hard to express; (b) *hearing the news* of their death announced; (c) *feelings of peace and quiet*, not intolerable pain; (d) *noises* such as buzzing or beautiful music; (e) *tunnel*, a passageway that seems to pull them through to another reality (Fig. 1); (f) *out-of-body experience* – OBE – floating above the dead body, hearing conversations, and moving at will; (g) *meeting others* or feeling the presence of ones who have died before them; (h) *being of light*, most importantly, an awesome, dazzling light, a consciousness of caring, loving, and forgiving; (i) *life review*, a rapid survey of one’s life; (j) *border*, a line which, if crossed, means you will not return to life; (k) *coming back* is difficult, since the beauty and love of the other side convinces many that they do not want to return; (l) *telling others* is difficult, since others are very skeptical and often cause withdrawal; (m) *effects on life*, NDE survivors find no instant salvation, but a broader philosophical and spiritual view of life’s meaning; (n) *no fear of death* is very common; (o) *corroboration* means that NDE survivors can often report external events while they were dead, such as medical procedures. These are most important for research and verification (Moody 1975). One patient said that while dead he floated down the hall where he heard a relative said “kick the bucket.” When the NDE survivor reported these exact words, the



**Near-Death Experiences, Fig. 1** Paradise: Ascent of the blessed by Hieronymus Bosch (after 1490), Nederlands. Palazzo Ducale, Venice. This is a file from the Wikimedia Commons [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ascent\\_of\\_the\\_Blessed.jpg#globalusage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Ascent_of_the_Blessed.jpg#globalusage)

one who said it was embarrassed. This was good external verification, not just the patient's word (Shokey 1992).

One of the most remarkable cases is that of Mellen-Thomas Benedict, who died of brain cancer in 1982, as confirmed to him by his hospice aide. He was dead for about 1½ h, rose up out of his body, and saw the Great Light, and he asked God if he could see more of the universe, so he was ushered around the vast depths of existence. He returned, healed of his cancer, full of insights and faith (Benedict). Other accounts include the NDEs of Betty Eadie, an Irish-Native American who died in childbirth and initially refused to return to this earth, since the other side was so beautiful to her. She had to be persuaded that her

life's purpose was to be a good mother, so she returned (Eadie 1992). Dannion Brinkley, who had been a violent, rough character, was electrocuted by lightning, died, and returned to life twice, and now says "Go die with someone," meaning go comfort the terminally ill (Brinkley 1994).

Research into NDEs was undertaken by many who confirmed that about eight million Americans have had NDEs and that children have NDEs (Morse 1989). The psychologist Kenneth Ring confirmed Moody's typology with scientific methods, with more details, and helped found the International Association for Near-Death Studies. He confirmed that NDE survivors have increased concern for the welfare of others. Later he wrote about NDEs of blind people who reported seeing things while dead (Ring 1984, 1998). Ring sees NDEs as the Light sending a powerful message of hope to our planet. Some have had negative, even "hellish" NDEs, a few researchers report (Atwater 2007). Others have focused more on the direction of what medical professionals can do with this understanding, for example, a most helpful thing you can do if a person tells you they had an NDE is to respect their feelings and do not dismiss them (IANDS).

NDEs have caused some controversy, and research has taken different directions, according to different methodologies (Bailey and Yates 1996).

1. The *Biological* method has been used by the scientists who have a largely materialistic worldview, seeing no afterlife or eternal soul to return to the body after it dies. They usually use the deductive definition of death, so they typically say that if someone returned after being pronounced dead, they were not really dead. They fault most NDE reports as anecdotal and inadequately controlled scientifically, so they are dismissed. They offer theories such as cerebral anoxia or hallucinogenic brain chemistry, such as endorphins (Blackmore). But some physicians, such as Michael Sabom, had patients die and return in surgery. He became convinced that brain neurology is part of, but not enough to explain NDEs, and he became convinced that the soul does leave the body after death (Sabom 1982).

External verification does provide important evidence for any case, as this method emphasizes.

2. The *Psychological* method used various techniques. Kenneth Ring used statistical methods to establish the basic stages, types, the core experience, and aftereffects (Ring 1984). Some psychiatrists argue that hallucinations could produce NDE visions (Siegel 1980). Some Freudians saw NDEs as a denial of death and a hallucinatory wish fulfillment, defending the ego from its impending destruction (Greyson 1983b).

Carl Jung had an NDE while hospitalized, in which he floated up above India, where he saw a meteor-like stone with a cave in it and a meditating Yogi (Jung 1961). Susan Blackmore, a cognitive psychologist, sees the mind as creating models of reality, and the most stable one wins. The NDE comes along and the mind creates another cognitive model to account for the feelings of dying (Blackmore 1993).

3. What is the *Philosophical* method of analyzing NDEs? Empiricists generally reject the reality of NDEs and tend to reduce them to “nothing but” hidden memories, hallucinations, fantasies, or nonsense. Susan Blackmore says that “Feelings of bliss, love and peace are engendered by specific chemicals acting in specific parts of the brain” (Blackmore 1993). Pediatrician Melvin Morse, the first to confirm that children have NDEs, sees the brain’s right temporal lobe as a necessary mediating factor in NDEs, but does not reduce them to “nothing but” brain activity (Morse 1989). Psychologist Ronald Siegel says that if NDEs cannot be shared by other observers, and subjected to objective validation in the external world, they must be purely subjective hallucinations (Siegel 1980). But a Russian scientist, Dr. George Rodonaia, died and observed a baby crying in a nearby hospital room. No one could figure out why, but he could see in his OBE that the child had a broken bone. Later the X-ray revealed exactly the fracture that he indicated (Schokey 1992). Kenneth Ring reported on a woman named Vicky, who was blinded

soon after her premature birth. She later reported two NDEs when she saw her own body, people in the tunnel and in a life review, then flowers, birds, and Jesus radiating light (Ring 1998).

An alternative to empiricism is the philosophy of *a priori* inherited mental forms born with us that organize experience. So repeated cases of similar phenomena, such as the NDE’s Light, may have some reality. Michael Grosso says that Jung’s collective unconscious, full of inborn archetypal images and meanings, could appear in NDEs. Since we can find cases of NDE-like reports across history and globally, this led Grosso to propose an archetype of Death and Enlightenment (Grosso 1992). Today’s phenomenological method is used by Jenny Yates, who shows the archetypal parallels of the Light in the NDE (Yates 1996).

4. *Religious* methods for studying NDEs vary. Some are skeptical or hostile. The Catholic theologian Hans Küng argues deductively that people having NDEs did not actually die, so NDEs are not proof of eternal life (1984). A Protestant review concluded that NDEs do not fit orthodox Christian theology and likely have a natural explanation. At best, they offer a distorted glimpse of the afterlife and trivialize the problem of evil (Clapp 1988). Maurice Rawlings, a cardiologist and conservative Christian, reports that 20 % of the patients he has resuscitated have had NDEs. But he believes half of their experiences to be hellish, which confirms his evangelical theology of judgment and hell (Rawlings 1978).

Other Christians find NDEs to be like biblical resurrections (Wilkerson 1997). A 1981 study concluded that NDEs are authentic experiences of transcendence and can enrich Christian tradition (Hill 1981). Carol Zaleski studied medieval parallels to NDEs, but she sees them as too “modest and anecdotal” (Zaleski 1987). Some Christian theologians object to NDEs because they are too universal and spiritual (Adams 1979). Others accept them for the very same reasons (Flynn). Jews, Mormons, and Hindus can be found who



approve of NDEs (Neumann 1990; Gibson 1992; Sharma 1979). Tibetan Buddhists have shamans who enter trances with no breathing for many hours and have afterlife visions (Delog). Bruce Greyson's research shows that NDE survivors can have miraculous cures and gain psychic powers (Greyson 1983b). Kenneth Ring sees NDEs as "Amazing Grace." Judith Cressey shows a number of parallels between NDEs and classical mystics, such as St. Theresa (Cressey 1994). William James said:

Our normal waking consciousness is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different . . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. (James 1902, p. 305). In 2012s a neurosurgeon wrote "Proof of Heaven" (Alexander 2012), and a physician wrote "Erasing Death" (Parnia 2013).

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Dreams and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Grief Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)

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## Neurology and Psychology of Religion

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Recent developments within neuroscience have had a significant influence on a number of disciplines, including psychological and psychoanalytic approaches to religion, providing new evidentiary frameworks of explanation. While there is as yet no final answer to this question, many neurobiologists concur that while human experience is a product of mind and thus generated by brain activity, it would be misleading to “reduce” mind as strictly coterminous with brain function. A growing number of neurobiologists acknowledge the importance of “affect” – emotions and feelings – along with cognitively based symbolic meaning-making activity as integral to understanding the complexity of human experience (Damasio 1994, 2003; Panksepp 1998; Solms and Turnbull 2002; d’Aquili and Newberg 1993, 1998). While the psychology of religion must take seriously neurobiological accounts of mental states that are experienced and described as “mystical,” “unitive,” “ecstatic,” or “transcendent,” it is also important not to lose focus on the psychological significance of these phenomena.

It is important to recognize that the higher, more complex cognitive functions of mind (associated with conscious thought, logic, and rationality) are not independent of the ancient, primitive emotional base or core structure of emotions which could not exist without them (Damasio 1994, 2003; Panksepp 1998).

William James (1902/2004) anticipates Freud in highlighting the importance of the unconscious processes and powerful subjective feelings that underlie and organize religious experiences. James disagreed with a “medical materialist” approach that exclusively identifies subjective emotional experience with brain function. The growing influence of neuroscience on the study of religion is directing attention to dissociation

and altered mental states as central to explanations of the origins of religion. Michael Winkelman (2004) describes shamanic ritual as organized through neural mechanisms derived from psychobiological dynamics associated with alternate states of consciousness that involve the activation of the “paleomammalian” part of the brain that exists prior to the later development of higher cortical function in humans. When religious practitioners such as shamans enter an altered state of consciousness, their vivid emotional and visionary experiences are part of an upward movement or influence of subcortical emotional circuits on the higher reaches of the brain which for the duration of the experience are stronger than the “top-down controls” of the higher cerebral functions (Panksepp 1998). Brian Hayden (2003) theorizes that in altered states of intense emotional arousal, such as those associated with religious or spiritual ecstasy, neural mechanisms may relax neocortical controls over older brain functions, resulting in auditory and visual experiences that are otherwise “blocked” from the awareness of ordinary consciousness. This is similar to Freud’s argument that unconscious emotional impulses gain access to the upper reaches of the mind in dream states, when the ego’s censoring function is relaxed in sleep.

Cognitive archaeologist David Lewis-Williams’s (2002, 2005) studies of cave paintings from the Upper Paleolithic and Neolithic periods (40,000–12,000 BP) utilize some of the insights of neuroscience in support of his claim that the shamanic beliefs and practices of early hunter-gatherer societies constitute the origins or “ur-religion” of humanity. For Lewis-Williams, belief in supernatural beings is an innate property of the human mind. Given that *Homo sapiens sapiens* populations of thirty to forty thousand years ago were anatomically the same as contemporary humans, with the same brains and nervous system and cognitive abilities, Lewis-Williams concludes that the widespread, cross-cultural existence of shamanism was not the result of “diffusionism.” Rather, the common features associated with shamanic ritual practice in a variety of historical and cultural contexts is based on a universal neurological inheritance

that organizes and supports the human capacity for altered states of consciousness that facilitate the auditory and visual hallucinations of spirit worlds.

Winkelman (2004) agrees, going so far as to state that shamanism lies at the foundations of the evolution of human cognition and spiritual experience. Lewis-Williams's analysis of parietal rock art theorizes that ancient human beings were motivated to enter deep caves where they would enact rituals that facilitated production of visions of the spirit world that they painted on the cave walls. The mind within the cave cannot for Lewis-Williams (2002) be separated from those symbolic caves that were already present within the minds of the individuals who created the paintings. In making these animal images and patterns, the shaman and his followers imposed the contents of their minds on the material world. The cave paintings represent the already neurologically and culturally constituted images of other worlds and realities whose power ancient humans could experience and even regulate for the good of the community. Rituals conducted in the darkness and isolation of the sensorily restricted atmosphere of the caves facilitated the dissociative mental states necessary for visionary experiences, where the rock walls transformed into permeable boundaries between the world of humans and otherworldly spiritual powers. Shamans became socially recognized "experts," ritual practitioners who could "travel" between the planes of a tiered cosmos, facilitating the passage of the spirits of the dead from this world to the next. Their communities believed in their ability to harness the powerful forces of the spirit world for healing the sick, controlling animals, and changing the weather (Lewis-Williams 2002).

Shamans became powerful religious and political leaders with high social status. People could easily believe in the shaman's visions of other worlds in part because of their own shared neurological capacities for altered mental states, such as experienced in dreams and other milder forms of dissociation. Lewis-Williams argues that the universal functioning of the human brain

underwrites and supports the vast culturally diverse expressions of religious experiences of spirits, deities, and transcendent worlds. Part of his argument relies on empirical data derived from modern laboratory studies of human beings in various states of sensory deprivation, including hypnagogic and hypnopompic experiences and their associated entoptic images. The repetition of the markings, swirling patterns, and images found in ancient cave sites bear remarkable similarity to those generated in altered states of consciousness induced in controlled settings (Hewitt 2012). Because of the similarity of these images, and because the brains of contemporary humans are closely similar to those of *Homo sapiens* of the Upper Paleolithic, Lewis-Williams interprets neuroscience as establishing the existence of a universal functioning of the human brain (2002) that explains the origins and widespread persistence of human religious experiences, beliefs, and practices. A number of scholars agree with Lewis-Williams that the wholly interior psychological and emotional experiences of early human beings, along with their efforts to make a shared social and cultural sense and meaning of the contents of their minds, constitute the birth of religion.

Some authors describe intense emotional experiences of transcendent or spirit worlds in terms of Absolute Unitary Being (d'Aquili and Newberg 1993) whose features include the temporary erasure of self-other distinctions, blissful feelings, experience of God, the Void or Nirvana, or Ultimate Other, where an individual may feel taken over or controlled in ways that may vary from ecstasy to terror. This may be compared to Freud's description of an "oceanic feeling," the origins of which he attributes to the early pre-Oedipal phase of primary narcissism. Freud's conceptualization of the dynamic operations of the Unconscious fit well with contemporary neuro- and psychobiological accounts of how subcortical influences put pressure on the higher cortical functioning in certain circumstances. A number of neuroscientists confirm Freud's assertion of the existence of the unconscious regions of mind (Solms 1997;

Solms and Turnbull 2002; Westen 1999). An important feature of the Freudian Unconscious that is relevant to contemporary neuroscience asserts that memory traces of the most primitive human experiences remain preserved within the mind along with conscious awareness. “What has once come to life clings tenaciously to existence. One feels inclined to doubt sometimes whether the dragons of primaeval days are really extinct” (Freud 1937).

Like contemporary neuroscientists, Freud conceived of mental life qualitatively in terms of a representational process derived from bodily based, sensory perceptions (Solms and Neresian 1999), believing that psychoanalysis would one day find its point of contact with neurobiology (Freud 1913).

Contemporary neuroscientists are expanding the cognitive focus of their discipline beyond attention, memory, perception, and language to include emotion. This is promising for the emergence of a broadened interdisciplinary *neuropsychanalytic* psychology of religious experience that attempts to make sense of universally shared, neurologically based unconscious, affective processes that underlie, organize, and give rise to the diverse range of historically and culturally specific religious experiences, beliefs, and actions. A neurobiological theory of brain/mind that is open to dialogical interaction with disciplines such as psychoanalytic psychology allows for theorizing ways in which neurobiological systems that support – but are not dedicated to – religious experiences, beliefs, and actions are universal features of a common human neural structure which are responsible for the origins of what has come to be known as religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Cognitive Science of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Dreams and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Evolution and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [María Lionza](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)

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## New Age Movement

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The New Age burst into public consciousness in a buzz of media attention around crystals, reincarnation, and channeling in the 1980s, but it has its immediate roots in the 1960s and 1970s counterculture. Tracing this history, Wouter Hanegraaff (1998) and Steven Sutcliffe (2003) have delineated two understandings of the New Age: the New Age in the Strict Sense and the New Age in the General Sense. The Strict Sense New Age refers to an apocalyptic/millennial movement that emerged in the 1940s and 1950s when a number of Anglo-American groups announced they were receiving messages from intelligent beings from other planets who were coming to bring a New Age to the Earth. These groups believed there would be an apocalyptic catastrophe followed by a new era of spiritual evolution, peace, and prosperity with only those attuned to “new age” consciousness surviving. Predominantly populated by white, middle-aged, and elderly adherents and characterized by a culture of austerity and morality that emphasized community and service, these groups reflected a strong British influence.

In response to the absence of an actual apocalypse, the Strict Sense New Age underwent a radical shift, internalizing the apocalyptic narrative and relocating the New Age to the inner psychospiritual landscape. Hence, from the 1970s onwards, the New Age was revisioned as the replacement of an old, rationalistic, negative mind-set with a radically new state of human consciousness – famously characterized as the “Age of Aquarius.” Now promoting a constructive and participatory attitude, these Utopian communities and discourses were assimilated into the wider counterculture identified by sociologist Colin Campbell (1972) as the “cultic milieu.” This refers to a plethora of diverse new religious movements ranging from those stable

entities with definite organizational structures, doctrines, and rules of conduct to much more fluid, inclusive, and undemanding groups. Attracting individuals who are dissatisfied with mainstream options, cultic groups are often in flux and members may participate in more than one group. According to Hanegraaff, it was when the cultural milieu became conscious of itself in the late 1970s as constituting a more or less unified movement that the New Age Movement in the general and popular sense was born.

The General Sense New Age has a dominant American influence, from New Thought to the more recent human potential movement, and has significantly assimilated Asian religions. Adherents tend to be middle class, mostly Caucasian, and value emotional expressiveness, body awareness, and the belief that world transformation is dependent upon individual transformation. Classic texts include David Spangler’s *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age* (1976), Marilyn Ferguson’s *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (1979), Shirley MacLaine’s *Out on a Limb* (1986), and James Redfield’s *The Celestine Prophecy* (1995).

Having no founder, no set canon, binding creed, or definite organization structure, the General New Age is broader and more diverse than what is normally understood as a religious tradition, yet one can still identify a number of shared themes/beliefs, practices, and general characteristics. Hanegraaff names one of the defining marks of the New Age as “the psychologization of religion and the sacralization of psychology,” in which personal growth and religious salvation merge to such an extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the psychological and spiritual. He delineates two major lineages for this occurrence: American metaphysical movements and Carl Gustav Jung. The American lineage is divided into two separate but related streams. The first, the metaphysical movements, includes Mesmerism, Mind-Cure, the New Thought movement, and positive thinking/self-help popular psychology. The second, functionalist psychology embraces William James, Carl Rogers, and humanistic psychology.

The second major source is Jung who Hanegraaff sees as the link between traditional esotericism, Naturphilosophie, Romanticism, and the New Age. Jung both psychologized esotericism by presenting an esoteric worldview in psychological term and providing a scientific alternative to occultism and sacralized psychology by filling it with the contents (e.g., archetypes, the transcendent function, and individuation) of esoteric speculation rather than empirical realities. The result was a theory which allowed people to talk simultaneously about God and the psyche, thus anticipating and producing the major themes of the New Age.

Fundamental to these themes is a “metaphysics of mind,” a philosophical idealism in which the distinction between mind and matter and subjective and objective reality is undermined. With mind or consciousness as the ultimate reality, the psychological takes on an unprecedented importance; the psyche is celebrated as the locus of the sacred and reality is seen as created by the mind. This leads to a sacralization of the Self, not the conventional individual ego, but rather an inner divinity, a Higher Self which is the source of all value and meaning. Unlike Asian monistic mysticism which aims at the dissolution of individual consciousness in the universal, impersonal consciousness of the Self, the New Age champions the infinite evolution of a unique individual soul/Self. A core mythology of the New Age is the journey of the Self through many incarnations towards increasing levels of spiritual knowledge with the world being embraced as a school for spiritual growth and life situations framed as being pre-chosen by the Self according to the lessons it needs to learn.

The basic ontology in the New Age is a Neoplatonic model of a hierarchical cosmos with a myriad number of spiritual beings existing on ascending planes of existence, each corresponding to progressively higher levels of spiritual development and culminating in an impersonal monistic Absolute. Pantheism, the concept that the Absolute is identical with the natural universe, and Panentheism, the belief that the Absolute contains but is not reducible to the natural world, are also popular models.

Most importantly, the New Age rejects dualistic and materialist ontologies in favor of holistic and interdependent models.

In terms of practices, Hanegraaff has helpfully grouped an incredibly broad range of activities, from aromatherapy to astral projection to channeling to various forms of “energy work,” into four major streams: channeling, healing and personal growth, New Age science, and New Age Neopaganism. Particularly significant to psychology is healing and personal growth. Hanegraaff has divided the wide array of alternative therapies falling under the broad rubric of healing and personal growth into two main currents: the holistic health movement and the human potential movement. Mention should also be made of “prosperity consciousness,” those American healing systems that claim that the full attainment of health and spiritual well-being includes material prosperity and utilize positive thinking and affirmation techniques to this end. Many of these systems and texts fall under the rubric of “popular psychology,” with a classic example being Norman Vince Peale’s bestseller, *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952/1990).

Fundamental to the holistic health movement is the belief that each human being is a unique, holistic, interdependent relationship of body, mind, and spirit and that healing is achieved through an alignment with the underlying power of the universe. It stresses the central role the mind plays in healing, believing that psychological conditions can both cause and cure physical illness. Hence, the individual is challenged to discover and take responsibility for the deeper meaning of his/her illness and use it as an instrument for inner growth. Varieties of holistic healing include acupuncture, biofeedback, kinesiology, homeopathy, iridology, reflexology, massage, and bodywork.

Utilizing a range of therapies such as Holotropic breathing, encounter groups, gestalt therapy, Neo-Reichian bodywork, bioenergetics, and shamanic consciousness, the basic goal of the human potential movement is to help people connect with and integrate suppressed and alienated parts of the self in order to develop their full human potential. It is strongly associated with



Abraham Maslow's humanistic psychology with its self-actualization needs and promotion of B-values such as wholeness, aliveness, and uniqueness. With the increasingly assimilation of Asian mysticism, the movement has shifted more and more into the spiritual sphere, reflected in the establishment, in 1969, by Abraham Maslow and Anthony Sutich, of the "fourth force" of psychology, transpersonal psychology, in order to scientifically investigate altered states of consciousness, such as unitive consciousness, peak experiences, mystical experiences, self-transcendence, and cosmic awareness. Seeing Western psychology as only addressing the lower levels of the psyche and being inadequate for dealing with the higher or transpersonal levels which have traditionally been the province of spiritual traditions, particularly Asian ones, transpersonal psychology aims for a more integrated approach to the human being through a synthesis of Western psychology and Asian spirituality.

It should be noted, however, that although transpersonal psychology is commonly associated with the New Age and while they share many overlapping themes, transpersonalists have distanced themselves from the New Age. This is because transpersonal psychology is primarily an academic discipline (recognized by the British Psychological Society but not yet the American Psychological Association) rather than a spiritual movement, and many transpersonal psychologists have critiqued what they perceive as a superficiality and lack of rigor within the New Age movement.

Some general characteristics, mirroring the themes outlined above, have also been identified across the New Age. First, the General Sense New Age tends to be highly *individualistic* where each person is seen as the highest authority for themselves and as the final arbiter of truth and *experiential* with personal experience valued above tradition or dogma. Second, New Age practice tends, at least on the surface, to embrace a *democratic* position that rejects, or is highly suspicious of, various forms of authority, with most New Age practice claiming to be available for all individuals. Third, the New Age tends towards the *relativistic*, where contrasting

claims about ultimate reality are seen as "different," rather than "better or worse" or "true and false." This relativism legitimates the incredible diversity and *syncretic/eclectic* nature of the New Age, whereby elements from different traditions may be simultaneously embraced and/or combined into new and innovative forms of spiritual activity. Finally, this eclecticism exists hand in hand with *perennialism*, where all spiritual traditions are seen as being paths to and manifestation of a common sacred Absolute.

The New Age has come under increasing scholarly attention with a growing number of sociological, anthropological, and historical academic studies produced. In a groundbreaking sociological study, Paul Heelas (1996) describes the New Age as Self-Spirituality: a spiritualized form of humanism that sacralizes the modern values of freedom, authenticity, equality, and the uniqueness and goodness of the individual. From a history of religions perspective, Hanegraaff's (1998) seminal study of the New Age identifies it as "secularized esotericism," the transformation of traditional esotericism as it adapted to a modern, scientific, and disenchanted world. He identifies four mirrors of secular thought through which traditional esotericism was refracted: scientific materialism and positivism, the comparative study of religion, evolution, and modern psychology. In a later analysis, he draws attention to the impact of the capitalist market economy on spirituality during the 1980s and 1990s which has created a "spiritual supermarket," where religious consumers pick and choose those spiritual products which suit their own needs.

There have also been a number of attempts at psychological profiles of New Ager. These are helpfully summarized by Daren Kemp (2004) in his meticulously researched overview of different etic and emic approaches to the New Age. The most prominent psychological claim is that New Age thinking is regressive and narcissistic. Christopher Lasch (1987) states that the New Age attempts to restore the symbiotic state of primary narcissism by denying the reality of the differentiated material world. Similarly, M. D. Faber (1996) argues that New Age thinking



is a regression to primary narcissism in which the adult is returned to an infantile state of omnipotence, magical wish fulfillment, and merger with the pre-Oedipal mother. Leading transpersonal theorist Ken Wilber has described the type of argument employed by Lasch and Faber as examples of the “pre/trans fallacy,” in which prepersonal (narcissistic) and transpersonal (genuinely transcendent) experience is conflated. However, Wilber (1991) himself estimates that four-fifths of the New Age is prepersonal and only one-fifth is transpersonal.

In conclusion, due to its associations with commercialism and predominantly negative media attention, the term “New Age” itself has fallen out of favor. This is reflected in both the academic and commercial worlds: “alternative spirituality” is becoming the preferred term in scholarship, and it is more common in bookstores to see sections marked as “Spirituality” or “Mind-Body-Spirit” than “New Age.” At the same time, practices and themes associated with the New Age are gaining in their mainstream acceptance and integration into existing social and religious structures (e.g., the growing attention to “holistic” practices in mainstream medicine or the increasing use of Asian meditation in various forms of Christian practice). From this perspective, there is little evidence that the practices and concerns of the General Sense New Age are diminishing; indeed, if anything, the movements and practices that fall under the rubric of the New Age are growing and seem sure to shape future religious landscapes.

## See Also

- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## New Polytheism

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*The New Polytheism*, (1975) by David Miller, grew out of the God is Dead movement of the

1960s and 1970s. Professor of Religion at Syracuse University, Miller proposed that, although the monotheistic religions are losing their theological impact, Westerners still think monotheistically, but only on the surface. What does it mean to think monotheistically? It means to think that, like the dogma of one God, there is an intellectual game afoot that there is only one single truth, one valid method of knowing, one dominant culture, and others are wrong. Thus, some religions claim exclusive dogmatic truth, and others are “heathen.” Scientism today adopts the monotheistic tactic and claims that science is the only valid method of knowing the truth (Stenmark 2001, p. vii). Monotheistic fundamentalism makes self-righteous aggressive intrusions into public policy. This exclusivism has brought with it many battles, such as the long-standing monotheistic efforts to eradicate the world’s many ancient religions. But polytheism has continued to operate in the dark recesses of the collective unconscious, as unrecognized archetypal forces driving wars (called Ares in Greece, Mars in Rome), monarchies (Zeus), sexual passions (Aphrodite in Greece, Venus in Rome), even technological inventiveness (Hephaestus and Daedalus in Greece). This awareness has been behind some of the postmodern critiques that conscious logic and ego are not the arbiters of truth as they claim to be. The underworld of polytheism is always moving and shaking from below and is now becoming conscious again.

Rumbling up from the collective unconscious is a new view of polytheism, far from that of the Classics professors who saw the old gods and goddesses as museum pieces. Christian monotheism absorbed and reshaped both Jewish monotheism and Greek reasoning. But now the archetypal powers below the ego’s monotheistic surface are making themselves known as mythic images behind conscious thought.

The twentieth-century psychologist most open to the reality of religion, Carl Jung showed in his archetypal psychology that we can again look at myths as expressions of poetic, *imaginal thought* once denied by rationalistic thinkers. Jung showed that myths are not just the opposite of logic, but their reappearance expresses the very soulful

yearning that rationalism ignores or denigrates, leaving people alienated, shallow, and unable to grapple with life’s deeper meanings. But the myths and divinities whose images Jung interpreted symbolically reveal the soul’s deep shadows, lovers, children, warriors, gods and goddesses, and oh, how they have a subtle way of grabbing your attention. So religion is conveyed in many ways by myths that tell soul’s truths, and the thesis of the *The New Polytheism* is that these gods and goddesses are not irrational “fictions” but symbols of living psychic forces, images of deep ontological beings. They have not gone away, although they were suppressed by monotheistic religions. They have always been working in the dark underworld, the basement of our collective souls. The problem has been that monotheistic rationalism has made it difficult to interpret the ancient mythic images as truths of the soul.

Twentieth-century psychoanalysis opened the door to a reawakened hermeneutic, the interpretation of dreams as sisters of myths, both inhabitants of the polytheistic genre. When dreams and myths are reawakened in dream-oriented psychoanalysis, especially with Jungian influences, then we can see how poetic talk about Aphrodite or Mars, for example, is an expression of lyrical or patriotic thinking of the collective soul about love and war. Aphrodite images the magnetic attraction of passionately falling in love, and Mars symbolizes the angry and fearful power behind the hugely expensive military-industrial complex. Polytheistic gods and goddesses are not just fluffy poetic images pointing to real secular powers in a materialistic world. They are images of dynamic *realities* in a far broader worldview that includes soul’s powers.

These powers are not just “internal,” “subjective” feelings, as the industrial worldview imagined, in order to strip the world of soul so it can be called “objective” and exploited and destroyed for secular power and profit without regret. This is a dying mythic worldview, whose industries and politics in the twenty-first century became openly reactionary, defending its dirty energy and dirty tactics, denying its role in creating the destructive side effects of profit-driven industrialism: threatening global warming and

sickening pollution. The new polytheism is a refreshing, soulful, psychologically astute voice of reawakening consciousness of the wider range of reality, in which “thinking” has many voices, including and psychologically interpreted mythic images. The monotheistic voice echoing from the past, that there is only one way of speaking “truth,” is fading, as the polytheistic voices become louder, in religion, psychology, and politics.

Miller points to many ways that polytheistic voices are appearing today. He uses the classical Greek gods and goddesses, not just because we have so many of their texts but because they are major roots of the Western tradition:

The Gods and Goddesses are not cute allegories and analogies, figures of speech . . . Rather, they are the empowering worlds of our existence; the deepest structures of reality (Miller 1975, p. 80).

The new polytheism brings many benefits. It can enable a lot more tolerance. In the study of world religions, that is already underway, tolerance of other people’s religions has support, rather than monotheistic intolerance. “There is no orthodoxy in polytheistic theology” (Miller 1975, p. 73). In the struggle for the acceptance of diversity, polytheism supports various lifestyles without a single monotheistic “normal” psychology. Polytheistic theology supports a theopoesis in psychology, not a single-minded rationalism of industrialism’s ego psychology. Polytheistic theology will be a political theology, but in the way of Athena, who uses persuasion (*Peitho*), meaning not rhetorical distortion, but acceptance. A polytheistic theology will be of the spirit, but in the multiple-meaning style of Psyche. It will be analytic, but not in the path of ego’s single-minded logic, but in Apollo’s way of saying “know thyself” (Miller 1975, pp. 72–76).

Since Miller wrote in 1975, the monotheistic religions, especially in their most fervent conservative forms, are being embarrassed and weakened by curtains being pulled back on sexual abuses rooted by Aphrodite’s passions or financial shenanigans of the “prosperity gospel,” cheered on by Hermes the trickster and Pluto, god of wealth. The bloated US military-industrial

complex and angry terrorists abroad are driven by Mars’ angry, psychologically defensive warrior spirit and supported by the conservative wings of monotheistic religions, who ignore their religions’ teachings about peace and compassion.

Polytheism is expanding because Jung showed that divinity can be symbolized in many ways:

The Self can appear in all shapes, from the highest to the lowest, inasmuch as these transcend the scope of the ego personality. . . elephant, horse, bull, bear. . . flower, tree. . . mountain and lake (Jung 1959, p. 356).

Jung’s archetypal Self is monotheistic on the surface, as the regulating archetypal center of the psyche. He saw Christ as a major monotheistic version of the psychological Self. But he also stressed that it can be symbolized in endless ways – gods, goddesses, animals, plants, planets, anything that the collective unconscious throws up that is revered, even unconsciously: wondrous night skies, beautiful waterfalls, or cinematic “stars.” This particularly helped open the door much wider to feminist and ecological explorations. But to see anew the sacred dimension in our souls and in the world is *not* to ignore suffering and death. Nor can we minimize the new *ethical* distinctions to be made about our relations to each other and to the world. We must still distinguish between crude and refined psychological energies. But these will be made with wider horizons. We are already seeing these ethical shifts in the feminist and the ecology movements.

A leading trend in archetypal psychology today is the feminist study of goddesses that is producing a large number of books. After Miller’s *New Polytheism* was published, women have been influenced, not only by higher education and contraceptives but also by the spontaneous explosion of the polytheistic psyche into feminism’s search for ancient archetypal goddess guides. Jungian analyst Christine Downing (1984) wrote *The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine*. Jungian analyst Jean Bolen (1984) wrote *Goddesses in Every Woman*. Jungian analyst Sylvia Perera (1981) wrote *Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women*, about the Babylonian Ishtar/Inanna. Merlin Stone (1976) uncovered ignored

archaeological evidence of ancient goddesses in *When God Was a Woman*. Clarissa Pinkola Estes (1992) wrote the fiercely poetic *Women Who Run With the Wolves*. Starhawk (1976) wrote *Truth or Dare*, using Inanna as a goddess inspiration for women's power. New Buddhist women leaders are described in Ellison Findly's (2000) *Women's Buddhism, Buddhism's Women*. Miranda Shaw (1994) wrote a bold book *Passionate Enlightenment* about Tantric sexuality and women.

On the men's side, Jungian analysts Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette (1990) wrote *King, Warrior, Magician, and Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. They argued that the domineering, abusive, patriarchal masculine view attached to monotheism is a boyish, immature defensive masculinity, and polytheistic images of mature masculinity can redirect men toward a mature, refined manhood.

The new polytheism has also opened the door to ecological spirituality and psychology. Mother Earth (Gaia in Greece) has been raised to higher levels of consciousness and named in the reawakening of a spiritual and psychological view of nature's sacred side. Monica Sjo and Barbara Mor (1987) wrote *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth*. Some authors in monotheistic traditions have called for a renewed sense of nature as filled with sacredness, such as Christians Thomas Berry (1988) in *Dream of the Earth*, and Matthew Fox (1991) in *Creation Spirituality*. Muslims such as Ibrahim Abdul-Matin (2010) wrote *Green Deen*, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr wrote in McDonald's (2003) *Seeing God Everywhere*. Jewish Arthur Waskow (2000) wrote *Torah of the Earth*, and Ellen Bernstein (2005) wrote *The Splendor of Creation*. Eco-psychology is described in Theodore Roszak's (1992) *Voice of the Earth* and in Ralph Metzner's (1999) *Green Psychology*. World religion scholars such as Mary Evelyn Tucker (2011) have written many books on eco-spirituality, such as her book and film with Brian Swimme *Journey of the Universe*. Buddhist ecological thought is reflected in Allan Badiner's (1990) *Dharma Gaia*. Indigenous peoples

around the world have called for renewal of their sense of the sacredness of the world, as in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) (1978) *Basic Call to Consciousness*. All these and others are singing the song of Mother Earth, in which life participates – one of polytheism's oldest voices. Numerous books have been written about a blossoming new consciousness of human-animal relations, such as Penelope Smith's (2004) *Animal Talk*. New consciousness of human-plant relations has also blossomed into many books, such as Clive Hicks' (1990) *Green Man: The Archetype of Our Oneness with the Earth*. Once the basement door of polytheism is opened, out fly the many new ways of naming sacred soul, sacred earth, and sacred cosmos.

## See Also

- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Fox, Matthew](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Green Man](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James](#)
- ▶ [Inanna/Ishtar](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Myths and Dreams](#)

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## New Religions

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## The Phenomenon

Right now, there may be more than 10,000 living religions in the world, each promoting a separate

belief system and having its own organizational structure. What makes a religious group unique are its own distinct beliefs, practices, authority structure, and leadership. Quite often the group's history starts with a new claim to authority on the part of a new leader.

As used here, the term new religions, or new religious movements (NRMs), refers to groups founded after the year 1750. In recent years, such movements have been examined under the rubrics of religious experimentation, marginal religions, or oppositionist religions.

Quite interestingly, most of the religions that have ever been in existence were founded after 1750. The modern age, while being marked by secularization, is also marked by the appearance (and disappearance) of thousands of new religious movements. This may actually be directly related to secularization and the decline in the authority and political power of major historical religions. Democracy and the idea of freedom in religion and political expression create a free market for religious entrepreneurs. While declaring oneself to be in possession of a new religious truth was, in most parts of the world, quite risky or fatal 300 years ago, it carries little risk in the modern world.

In looking at any new religion, we should focus on the most important thing in forming its unique identity, and that is its beliefs. A belief system makes a movement distinct, and these beliefs change little over time, as opposed to other aspects of a group's history, which are likely to change, such as organizational structure. Many aspects of a group's history may be in dispute. Such facts as membership numbers are changing and often impossible to determine. Members of new religious movements, which are historically and developmentally young, show high levels of involvement and commitment, unlike many in the "old," historical religions, and this attracts much attention. Some groups have received much media attention around scandals and crimes. This is because many of these groups deliberately and explicitly challenge existing traditions.

Looking at a particular religious group, our diagnostic and predictive efforts are severely



hampered by the complexity of interactions between beliefs, individual members, leadership, and the surrounding environment. A new group's claim to originality and uniqueness in its beliefs may lead to what the world around it perceives as deviance, leading to friction and arousing resistance. What we have learned over the years is that predicting the future fate or development of a religious movement is impossible. Groups that today seem marginal may rise to prominence, while groups which are at the moment well known decline into obscurity. The history of new religious movements is replete with such cases. Developments in religion today are not just international but global, and belief systems cross borders easily. A little known group in South America or Africa may gain followers in Europe or the United States.

### Research on NRMs

Some NRMs have attracted the attention of researchers in psychology. Such was the case of the group described by Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter in *When Prophecy Fails* (1956). The group was founded by a woman named Marian Keech in the study, claimed to have received messages from a space being named Sananda, a source that was both extraterrestrial (i.e., outer space) and divine (Jesus in Christian tradition) about the coming end of the world. On a specified date, which she announced to the world, all of humanity would perish, save the group membership, who would be taken away in a spaceship. This date was announced (December 1953), and group members expected the end of the world and their own salvation by a spaceship sent by Sananda. After the prophecy failed, some of the group members maintained their faith. The group did not survive this crisis, but its disintegration was not immediate. Actually, the disconfirmation caused some committed members to proclaim their faith even more vigorously by proselytizing.

Mrs. Martin claimed that the world was saved by their full faith. She also made additional predictions about various disasters, which also failed to materialize. These events took place in

Chicago in late 1953, but the leader continued her activities into the 1980s.

There are cases where prophecy failures have not led to a visible crisis or collapse, possibly because the prophecies are only subject to disconfirmation in terms of timing. Thus, a prediction about the coming end of the world in 1984 may be reinterpreted as true in principle and only temporarily delayed by other events. A belief system may be flexible enough to accommodate such failures. Some groups have survived disconfirmation through some effort, but in other cases a direct disconfirmation of claims leads to crisis and sometimes decline or disintegration.

New religions in Western societies, often subject to external opposition, are mostly unstable groups with unstable members, which need extraordinary luck and leadership to survive and prosper. NRMs suffer from high rates of defection, and many religious movements have been started through schisms in existing groups.

We should pay attention to the special situation of NRMs as belief minorities in modern society, which dictates certain behaviors to the groups and their members. This means that NRMs are sometimes not completely truthful about their doctrines or practices, out of concern for possible majority reactions. At other times, deception in fund-raising, practiced by some groups, may be justified in religious terms. New religious movements (NRMs) are groups in which membership, in most cases, is achieved, rather than ascribed, through voluntary conversion and recruitment.

Numerous examples of millennial movements, which followed on the heels of social dislocations, catastrophes, plagues, famines, and massacres, are known. In preindustrial societies, NRMs in recent times have been known as "crisis cults," including so-called cargo cults and ghost dances. Cargo cults and ghost dances represent desperate efforts to cope with terrible realities. The Sabbatian movement in the seventeenth century is another example. It was a messianic upheaval unprecedented in Jewish history, which engulfed the whole Jewish world at the time. A crisis may sometimes lead to a complete surrender, and religious movements may express



resignation and hopelessness. Some religious movements are attempts to respond to crisis by revitalizing collective faiths. An example of a successful revitalization movement is the case of the Seneca tribe in North America, suffering every possible disaster since 1650, and a total disintegration at the end of the eighteenth century, which was reborn in the nineteenth century thanks to a religious vision.

When religious renewal movements appear in modern societies and attract individuals who are sometimes quite well-off, their growth has been interpreted as a response to what has been called ethical and psychic deprivations. In modern society, joining an NRM has been interpreted as a response to crisis situations and individual alienation, relieved in the religious group setting with its promise of salvation.

Among historical cases of crisis religions in modern society, we should mention those in the United States in the nineteenth century, with a wealth of private and collective salvation movements, the rise of Spiritualism, and the founding of so many new religions (e.g., Christian Science, Mormonism, Seventh-Day Adventists, Theosophy), and the United States in the 1960s, another Great Awakening of salvation movements.

When dealing with NRMs, we have to explain not only recruitment and growth but also disaffection and failure, which are quite common. New religious movements in modern societies receive much attention, which is out of all proportion to their success in recruiting members or their overall growth. Many religious groups fail to grow because of their opposition to society around them, which leads to their encapsulation. They are able to survive, but not grow. Another problem NRMs face is that the number of seekers, motivated or open to identity change in any society, is limited, for social and psychological reasons. There are cases where joining an NRM will lead to improved individual functioning and the group environment is clearly therapeutic. There are also opposite cases of deterioration and pathology in individuals and groups where there is clear evidence of destructive and self-destructive behavior.

NRMs are often highly vulnerable, always struggling, and seeking legitimacy while internally preoccupied with issues of authority, leadership, and identity. New religions face both internal and external tensions as they struggle to achieve survival and stability in an environment that is often or always indifferent and nonsupportive and sometimes hostile. This struggle, often marked by desperation as outside pressures mount, colors the psychological development of both the group in its members in most new religions. What defines the dynamics of many NRMs is the actual presence of the founder or founders and the founding generation of members. Most groups are relatively small and so relationships and activities are more intense and personal. Because many members in NRMs are converts and the group relatively young, we can observe high levels of ego involvement, which do not characterize most members of historically established religions. While in “old” religions personal involvement takes the form of an identity label and often little else, in NRMs belonging is central and salient in terms of identity and action, and members typically devote much of their energy, time, and money to the group.

### **Charisma in NRMs**

In terms of their organizational character, NRMs are based on charisma rather than any routinization or evolved hierarchy. In many new religions, leadership is personal and charismatic. Charisma is something that we may find hard to predict but easy to recognize. It is needed to attract new recruits to a small group and keep them and maintain the leader’s authority. In most cases, founders of NRMs have sufficient charisma to attract relatively the numbers of followers necessary to keep the group alive. An effective leader, in this case and in others, creates a mutually empowering relationship with his followers, at least for a while.

The charismatic and direct nature of leadership, in the absence of articulated structures involving multiple levels of hierarchy, will lead to internal tensions. The idea that leaders are

chosen through the power of revelation or religious creativity legitimizes schisms. Being a successful leader facing both internal tensions and a hostile environment is a challenge rarely met. It requires creativity in the midst of competition and resistance, but some leaders, and some groups, have shown remarkable resilience.

One of the more interesting cases of leadership in a new religious movement in the face of adversity and opposition involves the tragic early history of the Church Of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), informally known as Mormons, and sometimes as LDS, "Latter-Day Saints," or "Saints." This Christian-polytheistic millenarian group was founded by Joseph Smith, Jr. (1805–1844), in 1830 in northern New York State. At age 14 Joseph Smith declared he had spoken with God. Later he had other visions, during some of which, he claimed, an ancient book, written on four tablets, was given to him. This text has become known as *The Book of Mormon* and has given its name to the Church.

Smith announced to the world that he was "seer, translator, prophet, apostle of Jesus Christ, and elder of the church." According to some reports, Smith was crowned as a king in 1844. In 1835 12 apostles were appointed and sent to gain converts in the United States. In 1835 Joseph Smith also prophesied the Second Coming. In 1837 the first Mormon missionaries arrived in Britain and met some success, as well as some prejudice.

In its early years, the movement encountered much violence because of its unconventional beliefs and its advocacy of polygamy, which was first renounced in 1890 and then rescinded in 1904. Opposition forced the group to move first to Ohio, then to Missouri, and then to Illinois, where the city of Nauvoo was founded in 1840. In 1844 Joseph Smith and his brother were killed by a mob there. Again the members embarked on a long voyage away from the Eastern United States, led by Brigham Young (1801–1877), and settled in Salt Lake City. In 1850 Brigham Young became the first governor of the territory of Utah, which became a state in 1895.

Over the past few decades, much attention has been given to tragic cases of violence in NRMs, including the murders and terrorist attacks by Aum Shinrikyo in Japan and mass killings in the Peoples Temple, the Branch Davidians, the Solar Temple, and Heaven's Gate. The victims often included dependents of group members and not just members. Deviant and destructive groups such as Aum Shinrikyo and the Order of the Solar Temple must be viewed against a background of severe personal and social pathology related to histories of vulnerability and deprivation among members. When it comes to evaluating the leaders in these cases, using the psychological (hypothetical) systems of individual personality and individual psychopathology in which we analyze our observations, one prominent issue is that of the limitations psychopathology puts on performance. Pathology must limit the ability to carry out complicated acts of destruction, or self-destruction, must be limited. Still, we see cases of religious leaders where presumed insanity still leaves much room for successful leadership and organizational talent, as well as fairly sophisticated acts of violence, which involve planning and preparation.

## Summary

The impact of NRMs is much narrower than often perceived. They are small and marginal and touch the lives of fewer than 1 % of all religious believers. Most are so unstable as to be ephemeral. A look at the history of twentieth century, NRMs is quite sobering in this respect. Movements that once seemed on the verge of becoming global powers are now remembered only by historians. Moral Rearmament (the "Oxford Group Movement"), the best-known NRM of the 1930s in Britain and the United States, is today totally forgotten. The Jesus Movement of the early 1970s in the United States, with its hundreds of communes in major US cities, has similarly disappeared. It seems that high utopian excitement cannot be

maintained for long and that adolescence is more of a factor than is often realized. When enthusiastic members get older, commitment wanes in favor of more conventional pursuits. Nevertheless, like the phenomenon of conversion, NRMs deserve, and get, attention, just because of their rarity and intensity.

## See Also

- ▶ [Conversion](#)
- ▶ [Prophets](#)

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## New Testament

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The New Testament consists of 27 writings representative of various cultural and sociopolitical backgrounds. As canonical texts they represent only a portion of early Christian scriptures and were frequently used in preaching, teaching, and worship. The Pauline letters constitute the earliest material, written in the middle of the first century CE. These include 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philemon, and Romans. Scholars are more divided on the authorship of Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians,

which are attributed to Paul, although probably written near the end of the first century. The remaining writings attributed to Paul and known traditionally as the Pastoral Epistles were probably written early in the second century. These include 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. The Pauline corpus as a whole evidences the processing of some significant and deeply felt religious experience by Paul. This processing (something Jung might refer to as the reforming of an a priori archetype, *Aion* pars 73) includes the translating and representing of what is understood to be the meaning of that experience by Paul, as well as the way(s) that experiences both forms and is shaped by later Christian communities. Paul offers little detail with regard to his conversion (see Gal. 1.13–17, Rom. 1.1) suggesting the ineffable nature of the encounter. Several decades later the author of Luke-Acts presents a dramatic account of the event, giving nuances and psyche-soma movements to detail the encounter (Acts 9.1–22). These include Paul's being acted upon by what is perceived to be a divine presence, heightened auditory and ocular sensory awareness and disorientation, and a definitive shift of consciousness as one being "set apart (*aphōrizmenos*) for the gospel of God" (1 Cor. 1.1). The experience orients Paul toward a new understanding with regard to the meaning and significance of the life, death, and postmortal accounts of Jesus, whom Paul understands to be *Iēsous Christos*, the "Anointed One" (1 Cor. 3.11). Religious experience occurs as a foundation for other writings within the NT canon. The author of Mark (ca. 70 CE) presents Jesus baptized in the Jordan River as the heavens split, a voice is heard, and a dove descends (Mark 1.4–13). Immediately Jesus is driven into a wilderness encounter with Satan amidst wild animals and angels (1.12–13). The author of Matthew (ca. 90 CE) roots the birth of the "Messiah" in a series of dreams (Matt. 1.18–2.23) which occur within a cosmic orientation and the coming of Magi from the East to worship the child. The author of Luke mixes angelic visitations and the pregnancies of Elizabeth and Mary in an elaborate birth narrative

(Luke 1.5–2.20), while the school of John speaks of the “Word becomes flesh” (*logos sarx egeneto*, John 1.14) and tells of what appears to be a numinous encounter involving touch, hearing, and sight (1 John 1.1–4). This notion of incarnation – interrelating and intermixing earth and heaven – occurs as real, reorienting, and efficacious event for the writers of the gospel narratives who tell in declarative story form (*euaggelion*) the Jesus event. For all these writers the relationship between the human and the divine must be negotiated. This includes the *Book of Revelation*, which as *apokalupsis* (“revealing”) literature having to do with divine intervening and judgment (“a new heaven and a new earth”) gives especial focus to divinity definitively encountering the material realm. For none of the writings, apart from Paul, are scholars certain about historical authorship; rather, observations about religious, cultural, and sociopolitical biases and interests of authorship can be made. The Hellenistic orientation of the Gospel of Luke points toward a Gentile author writing for a Gentile audience. The heightened, visual, and urgent language in the *Book of Revelation* points toward an author connected with a community threatened by and/or suffering some kind of religious persecution. Later writings in the NT tend to emphasize the practice (*praxis*) of Christian faith. First Timothy 2.8–15, for example, has as its focus codes of Christian behavior (see also Eph. 5.22–33, Col. 3.18 ff., 1 Pet. 3.1–7), and the pseudonymous second-century Letter of James is actually an extended parenthesis on moral behavior and how it is a Christian community should live. Other examples include the ritual instituting of Christian baptism (1 Pet. 1.3, 23; 2.2; 3.2), the development of church government (1 John and 2 John), and the Luke–Acts narrative presentation of the emerging church establishing itself in the Greco-Roman world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)

## Nietzsche, Friedrich: Religion and Psychology

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### Nietzsche’s Psychology of Religion

Friedrich Nietzsche deals with the subject of religion in a number of his works, including *The Antichrist* (1988b), *Beyond Good and Evil* (1987), *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1989), and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1988a). His most straightforward and penetrating analysis of the psychology of religion, however, may be found in his critique of asceticism in the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Nietzsche begins his inquiry into the nature of asceticism by asking the question “What is the meaning of ascetic ideals?” (Nietzsche 1989, p. 97).

According to Nietzsche, there are three “slogans of the ascetic ideal,” regardless of the social group or movement in human history adopting it as a practice (Nietzsche 1989, p. 108). These are “poverty, humility,” and “chastity” (Nietzsche 1989, p. 108). The ascetic practices are basically those practices that are generally associated with monks, or members of religious orders, who withdraw into a life of contemplation away from society and adopt customs that are usually contrary to the more instinctual aspects of human nature. Such practices might include celibacy, dietary restrictions, vows of silence, and vows of poverty. This orientation towards everyday life is considered, by those who embrace these ascetic ideals, to be the “most favorable conditions of supreme spirituality” (Nietzsche 1989, p. 112).

Contemplation (which, for Nietzsche, is both religious and philosophical) refers to the practice of focusing all of one’s attention inward, rather than engaging the senses outward. The inner, spiritual realm is prioritized over the external, physical, or material realm that can be apprehended

through the senses. Nietzsche describes contemplation as the “peculiar, withdrawn attitude of the philosopher, world-denying, hostile to life, suspicious of the senses” and “freed from sensuality” (Nietzsche 1989, p. 115). Contemplation is thus understood as a withdrawal from both the human instinctual nature and from the world itself. Nietzsche is critical of anything that urges one to withdraw from participating in life, rather than affirming it. In this sense, asceticism is the highest form of controlling the human instincts – an exaggerated extension of the societal conditioning one undergoes as an individual.

The practice of asceticism begins with the evolution of what Nietzsche refers to as the “priestly caste.” Nietzsche breaks early people into two categories: the “nobles” and the “slaves.” These are metaphors. The “nobles” are creators – creators of values, of their own lives, of practices, and the like. The “slaves” are the “herd” – the followers, or those who seek meaning from seemingly “external” sources (this is in some sense an equivalent of having an “external” locus of control, as it is termed in contemporary psychology). The “herd” is driven by their instinct to survive, which Nietzsche suggests forms the basis for forms of religious ethics that emphasize kindness, compassion, humility, and obedience. The “nobles” are powerful, autonomous people who tend to lead the rest of society – not out of a desire to do so, but because they tend to be innovators that stand out from the current cultural trends.

At some point the “noble” class becomes divided. There arises a set of “nobles” who are not quite as strong or as powerful as the other “nobles,” but still set themselves apart from the “herd.” This group emerges as a reaction to something (to the stronger “nobles,” specifically), rather than a unique and active pure expression of the life force, or “will to power” (the distinction here is active, rather than reactive). The key word for this group is *ressentiment*, or resentment – they resent those who are more autonomous than themselves and create distinctions to make themselves seem somehow “better” than others. They define themselves in opposition to those who they

perceive as stronger. They create values in a similar manner to the “nobles” but seek to control the weaker members of society – the “herd” – by imposing these created values, the ascetic ideals, upon them. They become the priests and philosophers of a culture, holders of such notions as truth and knowledge, and the dictators of social appropriateness. Asceticism becomes the primary orientation of these “priests.” Through self-reflection and contemplation, a behavioral pattern emerges that Nietzsche suggests creates an illusion of consciousness or an inner subjective existence. This is the spiritual reality that was mentioned earlier in this entry – the realm of the ascetic priest and of the philosopher. Nietzsche states that those who claim special access to this realm are the ones who make meaning of human existence for those who cannot make meaning themselves.

Nietzsche’s alternative to asceticism is unclear, due to the fact that those who affirm life and create their own values are unique and sovereign individuals that do not conform to any common patterns of behavior. These individuals are said to welcome hardship, to be concerned with power over themselves (rather than others), and to embrace life in the face of all of its chaos and suffering.

In summary, a critique of asceticism is at the core of Friedrich Nietzsche’s psychology of religion. Ascetic practices are used to control the instincts in a manner that is determined by societal values and behavioral codes. The holders of the doctrines that embody these predetermined values are the priests, philosophers, scientists, and others who claim to know the objective truth about reality. The masses, or the herd, fear for their survival in the face of a meaningless existence and adopt the doctrines of the “priests” rather than create their own. Nietzsche criticizes this behavioral pattern as life-negating or life-diminishing. The uncontrolled instinct for survival diminishes the life force. Paradoxically, the willingness to live and therefore to die in each moment as a celebration of the process of the life power is, for Nietzsche, life-affirming and is the formula for the practices of the “noble,” sovereign individual.

## Nietzsche as Depth Psychologist

Although Friedrich Nietzsche declared himself a psychologist in *Ecce Homo*, few scholars have attempted to outline the details of his psychological theory. A recent publication entitled *Nietzsche and Depth Psychology* offers three ways to approach such a project: suggestions for understanding Nietzsche as a psychologist, investigations into the impact Nietzsche's philosophy had on prominent psychologists (particularly from the psychoanalytic tradition), and psychobiographical analyses of Nietzsche's life and thought (Golomb et al. 1999).

One possible approach to understanding the aim of Nietzschean psychology is offered by Jacob Golomb, who argues that one of the "most significant components of Nietzsche's philosophy" is to carry out the "existential project . . . of enticing readers to reactivate for themselves their creative powers and use them in authentic patterns of life" (Golomb 1998, p. 1). Golomb further suggests that Nietzsche's psychotherapeutic method was to create a suspicion of metaphysics that allows people to recognize metaphysical constructs as existentially and psychologically destructive sources of comfort or consolation – a realization which would, in turn, redeem humanity from salvation itself (Golomb 1998, p. 5). Individuals could then stop hiding behind dogmas and ideologies such as the "ascetic ideals" mentioned above and, instead, act out their creative potential and express their particularity, thereby successfully "reactivating" the elements of their power that were previously repressed by other psychological and societal forces (Golomb 1998, p. 2). Members of the psychoanalytic school such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Otto Rank employed these (and other) aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy into their own analyses of unconscious drives, repression, and the possibility of creative sublimation.

## Nietzsche and Freud

Three similarities between the psychologies of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud that

have been identified are their discussion of "drives," the need for the discharge of these "drives," and the defense mechanism of repression.

Nietzsche and Freud both identified "drives" as a fundamental force underlying human behavior (Lehrer 1998a, p. 184). Nietzsche's references to "drives" tend to be less specific than Freud's, who limited his discussion of "drives" to the sex and death instincts, *eros* and *thanatos*. In more general terms, Freud defined "drives" as "quotas of affect or sums of excitation," whereas Nietzsche defined them as "a quantum of . . . pent-up force or energy" (Lehrer 1998a, p. 187). Both Freud and Nietzsche also write of catharsis, or the need to discharge these built-up "drives" or forces, which may be discharged in dreams or by way of creative sublimation. If they are not discharged, they turn against the self and lead to the formation of "bad conscience," a characteristic of the "herd" in Nietzsche's philosophy (Lehrer 1998a, p. 187). Both thinkers also explored the societal implications of this process, such as those discussed in the first section of this entry.

Both Nietzsche and Freud also offered analyses of what may be termed repression, particularly as it relates to self-deception, or selectively forgetting that which does not conform to our preferred self-image (Lehrer 1998a, p. 189). Nietzsche labels this internal mechanism the "doorkeeper," whereas Freud refers to it as the "guardian" or "watchman" (Lehrer 1998a, p. 190). This repression, combined with the development of a "bad conscience," leads to what Nietzsche calls resentment, or *ressentiment*, a key feature of the "priestly caste" (Lehrer 1998a, p. 191).

## Nietzsche and Jung

Carl Gustav Jung remarked, in his *Seminar on Nietzsche's Zarathustra*, that Nietzsche was the greatest psychologist that ever lived (Jarrett 1998, p. 321). Despite that comment, Jung did not endeavor to outline the specific implications of Nietzsche's psychological theory, as one



might expect. One psychological aspect of Nietzsche's work that Jung did explore was Nietzsche's experience with archetypes, such as that of the "wise old man" which Jung suggests was the archetype at work in the figure of Zarathustra (Jarrett 1998, p. 21). Graham Parkes proposes that one striking similarity between Nietzsche and Jung was their shared experience of a "personification of the unconscious" (Parkes 1998, p. 205). Parkes further suggests that Jung noticed too many similarities between Nietzsche and himself and was therefore acting out of fear when he failed to further explore the more psychological components of Nietzsche's work (Parkes 1998, p. 225).

### Nietzsche and Adler

Alfred Adler apparently had less exposure to Nietzsche's writings in his early life than other psychoanalysts, such as Freud, Jung, and Rank, but declared, at a meeting of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, that "among all great philosophers . . . Nietzsche is closest to our way of thinking" (Lehrer 1998b, p. 230).

According to Ronald Lehrer, Nietzsche and Adler both suggested something along the lines of perspectivism (sometimes called perspectivalism), particularly with respect to "useful fictions," including the selection of memories that support an individual's self-image and life plan (Lehrer 1998b, p. 237).

Adler also made use of Nietzsche's term, "will to power" (Lehrer 1998b, p. 238). According to Ronald Lehrer, Adler first referred to the "will to power" in the context of possible responses to feelings of inferiority but later revised his ideas to include a conception of "overcoming," which he related to the idea that humans are "active, creative beings capable of modifying their environment" (Lehrer 1998b, p. 239). Adler also noted that attempts to exert power over others may be attempts to compensate for feelings of inadequacy that arise when one feels a lack of "productive and constructive forms of mastery" (Lehrer 1998b, p. 239). A healthier, more productive response to those who challenge us may be

found in Adler's notion of the "counterfoil," which occurs when one interprets the "enemy" (to use Nietzsche's language) as a welcomed opportunity for growth or increase of power (Lehrer 1998b, p. 239). Those who express these qualities are comparable to the "nobles," or "masters" in Nietzsche's philosophy.

### Nietzsche and Rank

There are significant references to Friedrich Nietzsche in Otto Rank's personal diaries, indicating the deep influence Nietzsche had on Rank's thinking. Rank considered Nietzsche to be the "first psychologist" because of his affirmation of the will in human life (Barbre 1998, p. 247).

Claude Barbre suggests that the philosophical foundation for Otto Rank's "will therapy" is Nietzsche's conception of the "will to power" and its relationship to human creativity and self-overcoming. Rank, like Nietzsche, likened artistic creativity to human striving for "self-expression, growth and change" (Barbre 1998, p. 249). Claude Barbre states that for both Rank and Nietzsche, will "implies self-realization of the individual in the fullest sense for it implies the courageous living out of the individual's potentialities in his or her own particular existence" (Barbre 1998, p. 254). In other words, Rank suggests that the "will to power" is most clearly expressed when an individual affirms his or her difference or particularity during the process of individuation, an idea which leads to Rank's further distinction between the "negative will" and the "creative will."

The "negative will," according to Otto Rank, seems to arise out of the sense of guilt that a child experiences when expressing an urge towards individuality and through an experience of separateness from the mother (Barbre 1998, p. 256). The "creative will," on the other hand, is a free and spontaneous action that is unique and individual and not predictable by any laws of causality (Barbre 1998, p. 257). Rank's conception of the "negative will" can be understood

in terms of Nietzsche's "herd" or "slave morality," whereas the "creative will" can be understood in terms of "master morality," the "noble," or the "artist-philosopher." Both Nietzsche and Rank see the dialectic of negative and creative will, impulse and inhibition, and action and reaction both in an individual and between individual members of society as the underlying forces in human history (Barbre 1998, p. 255).

## See Also

- ▶ Adler, Alfred
- ▶ Apollonian and Dionysian
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Rank, Otto
- ▶ Repression

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## Night Journey

▶ [Miraj](#)

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## Nirvana

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*Nirvana* (Sanskrit) or *nibbana* (Pali) literally means "extinction" or "blow out." Negatively articulated, it is detachment from the cycle of death and rebirth (*samsara*) and the cessation of suffering (*dukkha*). Positively articulated, it may be rendered as a transcendent, blissful mode of existence. To this extent, it is associated with both liberation and enlightenment and is the goal of Buddhism.

Siddhartha Gautama is said to have experienced two kinds of nirvana. The first nirvana was experienced at the moment of his awakening (*bodhi*) when he was meditating under the Bodhi Tree and actually became a Buddha. Subsequently, no longer bound by ignorance or the desires of this world, he carried on his earthly ministry for the next 45 years in this enlightened state of nirvana. His teaching (*dharma*) was that one could experience awakening or nirvana by practicing the Eightfold Path, a synergism of moral conduct, mental discipline, and wisdom. The second nirvana was that which Siddhartha Gautama (now the Buddha) experienced at death. This *parinirvana* is the doing away with the personality and all links to the phenomenal world. It is the ultimate state or final nirvana.

Having an ineffable character, it cannot be adequately conveyed with words.

Since Buddhism includes a variety of systems, it is not surprising that nirvana takes on various inflections. In Theravada Buddhism, which focuses on individual liberation, it is the arhat (literally, “worthy one”) who usually experiences nirvana for himself. Non-monks rarely experience nirvana but are inspired by the idea that they may someday, perhaps after many reincarnations, become an arhat. Theravada also projects the idea of two nirvanas (see above). The first is nirvana with residue. It is experienced in this life and results from the overcoming (or extinguishing) of desire, hatred, and delusion. Here, although enlightened, one is still experiencing the limitations of the personality: form, sensation, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. The second is nirvana without residue, which is a complete break from the world of death and rebirth, i.e., samsara.

In Mahayana Buddhism we see the development of the bodhisattva ideal rather than the more limited, internal perspective of the arhat. The bodhisattva, motivated by compassion, forgoes nirvana until others experience it first. Everyone is a candidate for nirvana, not predominantly selected monks, since everyone possesses Buddha-nature. In various groups of Mahayana Buddhism, the nirvana/samsara dichotomy is deemphasized. These concepts are perceived more as a matter of spiritual perspective than a polarization of opposites. Hence, nirvana and samsara are both identified with emptiness (*sunyata*). They are best described as interdependent rather than self-existent. Thus, the strict boundary separating nirvana and samsara is removed. This is seen in Zen where nirvana is not only revealed in meditation but through such common activities as eating, drinking, and washing dishes. On the contrary, one Mahayana tradition denies the possibility of experiencing nirvana in this corrupt world altogether. Here, individuals, assisted by Buddhas or bodhisattvas are reborn in a Pure Land, which provides the ideal setting for attaining nirvana.

Although nirvana is generally thought of as a Buddhist concept, its later Hindu understanding

(especially that of Vedanta) is associated with the realization that the soul (*atman*) is one with Brahman – ultimate or absolute reality. Typically Hinduism uses the term *moksa* rather than nirvana. In Jainism, nirvana may be attained by the most accomplished yogis at death. This is an eternal state in which suffering is absent. It is preceded by the continual reduction of life’s activity and many reincarnations.

## Commentary

Jung often stressed the differences between the psychologies of East and West and warned against problems resulting from Western people participating in Eastern practices. Nevertheless, he immersed himself in the study of Asian perspectives and found its rich symbolism provided many helpful parallels, such as nirvana. From a Jungian perspective nirvana symbolizes the mature unification process of individuation. It is the reconciliation of opposites through transcendence, which is indicative of self-realization. Here the symbols of the unconscious are appropriated by consciousness and the ego. Although the ego previously held the central place of the psyche, it now gives way to the Self – that archetype of wholeness which reconciles consciousness with unconsciousness. Just as nirvana in Buddhism is not annihilation, but reconciliation, so too is the process of individuation and the discovery of the Self.

Freud, less immersed in Asian psychology than his former student, indirectly engages this concept by borrowing Barbara Low’s term “nirvana principle.” For Freud, the nirvana principle is ultimately affiliated with the death instinct, which he juxtaposes with the libidinal life instincts. As an unconscious propensity away from the activity of life, the nirvana principle shows itself in such activities as rest, sleep, and even suicide. This retreat from the exasperating striving for life is a natural response and ultimate goal for a return to inactivity, ultimately transforming life back to its previous inorganic state. With the nirvana principle, Eros confronts Thanatos, destruction engages construction.

Both Eros and Thanatos are helpful aspects of life as they provide a necessary balance for activity. Trouble often ensues if they become imbalanced.

## See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Arhat](#)
- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Bodhi Tree](#)
- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Eros](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Samsara and Nirvana](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Sunyata](#)
- ▶ [Thanatos](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Nonduality

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While “duality” as an ontological construct refers to a philosophical system in which existence is believed to consist of two equally real and essential substances (such as mind and matter) and/or categories (such as “being” and “nonbeing,” “good” and “bad,” “subject” and “object”), philosophies of “nonduality” emphasize the fundamental nature of reality as being a single, undifferentiated essence or consciousness. Although the term “nonduality” comes from the Sanskrit word *advaita*, meaning, “not two,” forms of nondual philosophies have found articulation in a number of spiritual traditions around the world, including Christian and Jewish mysticism, Sufism, Taoism, Madhyamika Buddhism, and various branches of Hinduism. Certain Western theologians and philosophers (among them Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, and G. W. F. Hegel, to name a few) have also embraced forms of nondualism as being representative of ultimate reality.

It is, of course, important to point out that while a belief system may be identified as “nondual,” the various systems are not necessarily identical to one another. Despite sharing a similar ontological basis, nondual philosophies can be quite different in their particular perspectives and practices. For example, the extent to which each tradition rejects the reality or importance of the material world varies. Some nondual systems deny the ultimate reality of the phenomenal world to such an extent that all “knowledge” attained through the physical and mental senses is seen as being more or less empty of absolute

value (e.g., Advaita Vedanta Hinduism). Others, while ultimately nondual, place greater value on the material realm, considering it to be the means by which one can come to understand the ultimately singular nature of reality (e.g., many of the Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana Schools of Buddhism).

For the purposes of this entry, the term “nonduality” will be used as a way of describing spiritual systems based on the underlying presumption that the phenomenal world of forms is an illusion – albeit perhaps a *necessary* illusion – and that through making shifts in consciousness, one can escape the delusion of separation and distinction created by the dualizing mind (perhaps most importantly and most challengingly, that of having a separate “I”-self) and achieve what Evelyn Underhill (1911/2002) described as, “that perfect unity of consciousness, that utter concentration on an experience of love, which excludes all conceptual and analytic acts” (p. 371).

### From Wholeness to Separation

In his book *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*, author David Loy (1988) provides an interesting deconstruction of what has been suggested are the three stages that the mind passes through in its transition from an initial nondual, undifferentiated state of consciousness to that of a dualistic, ego-identified awareness (i.e., one in which the “I-self” becomes disidentified from all other aspects of existence).

To begin, one’s attention is drawn toward a stimulus. In this nondual state of awareness, there is a split second of “being with” the object or sensation in its “bare existence,” during which time it is unnamed and undistinguished. The object of attention just is what it is, without judgment or distinction. This nondualistic way of knowing is “unassociated with name,” “undifferentiated,” and “non-relational.” It is “immediate apprehension” and “direct sense experience” (Loy 1988). This initial, often unconscious, state of awareness is followed by a second, in which what was initially perceived as

a “pure concept” is now identified and made determinate by giving it a linguistic label. The original, undifferentiated stimulus becomes identified as, say, “cat.” The third and final stage in this process is what Loy describes as “an occasion for entrancement.” While in the first stage, I experience the initial, nondual sensation of a stimulus, and in the second I identify the stimulus and give it the linguistic label of “cat,” in this third stage, an emotional and/or intellectual response based on memory of past experiences attaches itself to the object of attention. For example, I see “my cat” and I imagine him sitting in my lap, purring, and I desire to pick him up. Or, I remember finding a dead chipmunk in my closet the night before and I am angry and shoo him away.

Falsely believing the conceptualizations created by language, memory, and emotion to be reflective of ultimate reality itself, pure consciousness moves deeper and deeper into a self-created illusion, until the world we experience becomes no more than a projection, a habitual fiction of our minds. With the world split up into a multiplicity of forms, linguistic labels, and emotional conceptualizations, life becomes a never-ending struggle between that which is considered to be “good” and therefore desirable and that which is “bad” and to be avoided. The aim of many of the nondual traditions is, therefore, to help the individual return to the initial, *spontaneous* stage of pure awareness that occurs just before the conceptualization process begins. By returning to a nondual state of awareness – one in which no distinctions exist between things (including the self) – the individual will cease to desire one thing over the other and, in doing so, will cease to suffer.

### Nondual Psychologies

What have emerged out of the nondual philosophies’ goal of complete liberation from suffering through achieving a state of “pure perception” (Loy 1988) are psychological approaches to dealing with the human condition. This is especially evident when compared with the more

mechanistic and behaviorally oriented perspectives of traditional Western psychologies, which originally emerged out of a scientific worldview based on the assumption that all human functioning is the result of material causes. Given this ontological presumption that all things can be reduced to the material, some early pioneers in Western psychology (e.g., behaviorists John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner) denied consciousness as a thing in and of itself, believing all psychological states to be products of behavior. Others (e.g., Sigmund Freud) acknowledged the existence of consciousness but attributed mental states to be ultimately rooted in physical and/or external influences such as social environment, biochemical or evolutionary processes, and personal history. In cases such as these, with biological and/or social elements seen as constituting the “first cause” of human suffering, the human psyche becomes entrapped in a kind of psychological determinism based on the assumption that the individual is unable to escape his or her history and/or biology unless some secondary factors are introduced. In contrast, however, within the context of several of the nondual traditions (e.g., Advaita Vedanta Hinduism, Madhyamika Buddhism), cause and effect are considered ultimately illusory. Rather than being a product of his or her environment, biology, or past history, nondual psychologies maintain that suffering originates within the consciousness of the individual and that the answer to suffering lies in making shifts in one’s consciousness to return to a pure, undifferentiated state. Once the individual’s thinking changes, the outer world in which he or she exists will shift to an equal degree (Loy 1988).

And, yet, even this notion of “change” may be considered illusory within the nondual context. While some psychotherapeutic systems seek to first identify deficiencies or distortions in the psyche and then alter the mental behavior seen as responsible for these dysfunctions, nondual thinkers assert that attempts to “fix” ourselves only trap us deeper into our suffering, for to “fix” something implies a distinction between a desired state and an undesired state. But because from the nondual point of view all things

are considered to be ultimately singular and undifferentiated, no one need “become” anything (Ajaya 1983; Prendergast et al. 2003).

As is said in the *Katha Upanishad*, “What is within us is also without. What is without is also within. He who sees difference between what is within and what is without remains trapped in the drama of struggling unceasingly to find that which is already within” (as cited in Ajaya 1983, p. 66).

“Trying to transcend our human shortcomings and imperfections, our ‘sins and defilements,’ does not liberate them,” notes John Welwood (2003) in his essay *Double Vision: Duality and Nonduality in Human Experience*. Rather, he claims, “Only entering into them and suffering them consciously allows us to exhaust their momentum, move through them, and be done with them” (p. 159).

With this in mind, within the nondual framework, “problems” or “dysfunctions” are not considered negative events that must be resolved or avoided, but rather are seen as tools to lead one toward greater awareness of the true nature of the self. Instead of trying to alter one’s mental state, these systems suggest that one just “be with” phenomenal experience without judgment or attachment to outcome (Prendergast et al. 2003).

What may perhaps be the most distinctive and most challenging feature of nondual psychologies is what Underhill (1911/2002) calls the “last and drastic purgation” (p. 396), that is, the individual’s attempt to “disidentify” with the illusion of having a separate ego or I-self. The goal of both nondual psychologies and the more materially/behaviorally based Western psychologies is to help the individual to “know” him- or herself, and yet each does so from a very different frame of reference. While certain branches of Western psychology (e.g., various psychoanalytic schools) focus on helping the individual become *more* identified with the ego (thereby establishing a stronger and more distinctive sense of self) as part of the development of the personality, many nondual traditions (e.g., Advaita Vedanta Hinduism, Madhyamika Buddhism, as well as many of the theist mystical traditions) assert that this reinforcement of the



ego's separateness from the rest of existence reinforces duality and leads to further isolation, anxiety, and, ultimately, suffering. In order for suffering to cease, absolutely and completely, only a total dissolution of ego-hood and return to a state of undifferentiated awareness will suffice. Nondual practices therefore seek to dissolve the individual's sense of having a separate "I-hood" so that the individual can come to identify with his or her more true nature as pure consciousness (Ajaya 1983).

Says the Hindu sage, in Prendergast (2003), "[The ego] robs you of peace and joy... By identifying yourself with it, you have fallen into the snare of the world – the miseries of birth, decay, and death" (p. 83).

For obvious reasons, the separation between the individual ego self and the unified, nondual self is the hardest division of all to reconcile, for it requires that the individual surrender all that he or she identifies with as "I." Through the various meditative and/or ascetic practices, a more comprehensive center of consciousness develops within the psyche of the individual. Subject-object, I-thou distinctions begin to dissolve, until the practitioner experiences a state of consciousness in which all conceptual distinctions disappear. This is the Buddhist awakening experience of *nirvana* or *satori* or Hinduism's liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth through *moksha*. It has been equated with the *illumination* experience described by Christian mystics, as well as the experience of *ein sof* of Jewish mysticism and *fanaa* of Sufism, to name a few. Descriptions of this ineffable state of "no-self" vary from tradition to tradition but are most consistently described as a state of being in which all multiplicity and distinction dissolve and the finite and differentiated I-self enters into divine union with the infinite Oneness of all existence. It is said that one who has achieved this state of consciousness still exists in and interacts with the phenomenal world, but now does not attach him-/herself to the superimpositions created by the multiplicity of forms (Loy 1988).

Says John Prendergast, "When we awaken from the sense of personal identity, we also awaken from all our role identities, even as

these roles continue. We are like the actor who snaps out of his trance while onstage and suddenly realizes that he had lost himself in his role. . . . Freed of the role identity, we are more authentic, transparent, available, and creative in the moment" (Prendergast 2003, pp. 6–7).

While many of the beliefs and practices of nondual psychologies may seem irrational or even insane by non-nondual standards, nondual psychologies have, over the years, had a profound influence on the more human-centered Western psychotherapeutic practices, particularly within the field of transpersonal psychology. More recently, an emerging discipline of psychotherapeutic practice called "nondual therapy" has begun to emerge, one that seeks to integrate the philosophies and practices of nondual psychologies within the consciousness of a Western clientele (Prendergast et al. 2003).

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## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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## Numinosum

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Numinosum is the term Jung appropriated from Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, produced during the First World War. It is a philosophical work showing the influence of Schleiermacher, Marett, Husserl, and Neo-Kantianism but the central experience depicted in it, referred to as the *numinous*, particularly attracted Jung's attention. Otto adopted the term from a word coined from the Latin *numen* defined in the Oxford Dictionary as a presiding deity or spirit. The Latin dictionary further defines *numen* as "nod" or "will" both of which are important in Jung's usage of the term numinous. For instance, he often refers to a numinous experience as a "hint" that there are greater powers in the psyche than ego is conscious of. He was also influenced by Schopenhauer's use of the term "will" which derived from the numinous depths of the psyche. "Hence it is that we can often give no account of the origin of our deepest thoughts. They are the birth of our mysterious inner life" (Schopenhauer 1883, p. 328).

Otto was a theologian who traveled widely in the West (Europe and the United States), the Middle East (Palestine and Egypt), and the East (India, China, and Japan). As the subtitle of the book shows, Otto pointed to the need to keep the rational and nonrational in some kind of relationship when dealing with religious matters. Furthermore, he depicted the *numinous* as both attractive and repellent in giving rise to feelings of supreme fascination and tremendous mystery,

of nameless dread and fear, and of submergence and personal nothingness before the awe-inspiring directly experienced object, the numinous raw material for the feeling of religious humility. Otto quotes from the philosopher William James as follows: "The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more solemn silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that *He* was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two" (Otto 1923, p. 22).

Otto's influence on Jung is to be found in frequent references to the numinous in the latter's work from the mid-1930s on though Jung adapted this to fit with his empirical psychological approach to religious issues. For instance, he states it would be a regrettable mistake to assume from archetypal God images that they prove the existence of God. Instead, they are "...the most we can assert about God psychologically." But "...since experience of this archetype has the quality of numinosity, often in very high degree, it comes into the category of religious experiences" (Jung 1958a, p. 59). Both writers draw on the *Book of Job* from the *Old Testament*, but here again Jung's focus is on the "psychic nature and effects" of "the extraordinary numinosity" of the God images (Jung 1958b, p. 363).

## The Numinous Mystery of "I"-ness

The central place of the numinous in Otto's theological reflections and Jung's psychology has inspired a recent book, *The Idea of the Numinous*, from which the following extracts are taken.

The psychoanalyst, James Grotstein's *Foreword* shows the close connection between Jung and Bion's later work in their approach to numinosity. This is in sharp contrast to Freud as Grotstein makes clear in the following statement: "The concept of the numinous offers a dimension to our unconscious lives that is utterly missing in Freud" (Grotstein 2006, p. xiv). As David Tacey says: "Jung does not challenge us with sexuality, but with something equally primary and perhaps more terrifying; the reality of the *numinous*"

(Tacey 2006, p. 219). Similarly, Grotstein points to the psychoanalytic realization of the primacy of affects rather than the primacy of the instinctual drives arising from the postmodern trend towards subjectivity and intersubjectivity where they “begin to approximate the numinous because they are, originally, infinite in nature – and numinosity does seem to constitute an expression of affect, all be it, an affect of a very particular and ineffably distinctive nature” (Grotstein 2006, p. xii). Furthermore “Jung’s allusions to the numinous are many, and most often concern the emotional, affective experience of the unconscious. . .” (Huskinson 2006, p. 202).

References from other contributors to the book underline Grotstein’s statement as follows: “Jung. . . personally engaged the ‘God within’ in a wholly psychological manner, and while he related to the *imago Dei* with the same passion and feeling for its mystery and awesome emotional power as did Otto, he related to it psychologically” (Stein 2006, p. 43). “For Jung, God seemed to be both divine and, in a terrible way, anything but divine. . . ‘on the one hand a bloody struggle, on the other supreme ecstasy’” (Bishop 2006, p. 120). “. . . archetypal representations referring to Apollo and Dionysus. . . show how they seem to be pointing at underlying psychic structures which are involved in the experience of that emotionally charged and consciousness-transforming *mysterium tremendum* which Otto named ‘numinous’” (Giaccardi 2006, p. 138). “What Jung calls ‘the numinous’ and Derrida the “sublime” . . . engages the passions of . . . the struggle between the logos god and eros goddess. . . wrestling for the soul of modernity” (Rowland 2006, p. 116). “The numinous affects what is uncontrolled in people and so can let loose dangerous psychic reactions in the public” (Main 2006, p. 159).

### Numinosity and the Alchemy of Individuating

Jung’s writings often demonstrate his psychological approach to analysis centered on the numinous as follows: “. . . the main interest of

my work is not concerned with the treatment of neuroses but rather with the approach to the numinous” (Jung 1973, Vol. 1, p. 377). The following writers acknowledge this as in Murray Stein statement: “The individuation process. . . typically includes experiences of a numinous nature” (Stein 2006, p. 34). John Dourley says: “Jung’s equation of therapy with the experience of the numinous and with religious conversion has little or nothing to do with religion as commonly understood” (Dourley 2006, p. 172). “The psychological reality of Christ is the numinous experience of the self becoming incarnate in consciousness” (Dourley 2006, p. 181). And Lucy Huskinson writes: “The numinous object cannot be forced or summoned into consciousness; it is not subject to the ego’s control. Rather, the numinous object is discovered in its autonomous manifestation where it calls the ego into response” (Huskinson 2006, p. 200). As Edward Edinger says about Job in his inspiring “little” book *Encounter with the Self*:

If he were to decide that his misfortunes were all his own fault he would preclude the possibility of a manifestation of the *numinosum*. The ego-vessel would be broken, would lose its integrity, and could have no divine manifestation poured into it. By holding fast to its own experience as an authentic center (*sic*) of being, the Job-ego brings about the visible manifestation of the ‘other,’ the transpersonal center (Edinger 1986, p. 43).

Jung says archetypes possess a certain numinosity so that “(i)t is a psychological rule that when an archetype. . . becomes identified with the conscious mind of the individual. . . (i)t produces an inflation of the subject” (Jung 1958c, p. 315). “I think that Genesis is right in so far as every step towards greater consciousness is a kind of Promethean guilt: through knowledge, the gods are as it were robbed of their fire, that is, something that was the property of the unconscious powers is torn out of its natural context and subordinated to the whims of the conscious mind” (Jung 1953, p. 156). The knowledge meant here is that of greater consciousness which leads to an enlargement or inflation of the ego. This is an inevitable part of the individuating process but not without its

dangers as the ego that remains identified with “unconscious powers” may become grandiose. It is this grandiosity that can be punctured and bring the person crashing down to earth.

## The Concept of Dread

At the time of the Enlightenment, the contents of the Bible, in particular the myth of the fall of Adam and Eve, came under fresh scrutiny depicting as it does the numinous conflict between good and evil. “Our angst-ridden age was heralded by Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Dread*, which postulates that dread is a *prelude* to sin not its *sequel* and may precede a shift from a state of ignorance to attainment of new awareness” (Casement 1998, p. 70) (Original italics). Adam is forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but he cannot understand this for the distinction between the two would only follow as a result of his eating the fruit. “Thus Adam is in a state of ignorance when the voice of prohibition awakens in him a new set of possibilities, including the possibility of disobedience” (Casement 1998, p. 70). Thus, dread is a prelude to sin which precedes the attainment of new awareness; therefore, it follows logically on that dread is prospective.

This prospective component of numinous dread is akin to Jung’s thinking on the prospective or purposive nature of unconscious psychic contents. Huskinson contrasts Otto’s nonpurposive interpretation of Job’s numinous encounter with God with the purposive orientation of the “Jungian psyche,” stating the latter is grounded in the *holy* as “that which instills meaning and content in the *tremendum* . . . (as the wrath of God) . . . Without such mediation, we are unable to make sense of, and thus utilize, the creative energies unleashed in the numinous experience” (Huskinson 2006, p. 208).

Bishop, in his turn, points to Goethe’s “. . . the Numinous, in the sense of the Monstrous” which links to “analogous experiences in the case of C. G. Jung” and back to the Goethe quotation in Otto’s work: “When our own eyes have glimpsed a monstrous act” (Bishop 2006, p. 118). It is this

monstrous core of the numinous that “shows” (from the Latin *monstrare* to show) ego consciousness the way towards what Jung terms individuation and the fateful transformations that are encountered by any individual journeying along that path. It is in this way that the Jungian psyche relates to the numinous.

## See Also

- ▶ Apollo
- ▶ Bion, Wilfred Ruprecht, and “O”
- ▶ Dionysos
- ▶ Job
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Kierkegaard, Søren

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# O

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## Oates, Wayne

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Wayne E. Oates (1917–1999) was born in Greenville, South Carolina, and worked in a textile mill as a child. Abandoned by his father, he struggled in his relationships with siblings (Wayne E. Oates Institute). He served as a page on the Senate floor at the age of 14. This experience inspired him to attend college. A Southern Baptist, he graduated from Mars Hill College and received a Master's Degree from Wake Forest University and then did graduate work at Union Theological Seminary, Southern Seminary, and the University of Louisville School of Medicine. He was the first of his family to pursue higher education. He wrote his dissertation on Freud and religion at Southern Seminary and graduated with a Ph.D. in Psychology and Religion in 1947. He married his wife Pauline and had two boys (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary).

Oates was professor of psychology and religion and pastoral care at Southern Seminary from 1947 to 1974. He joined the University of Louisville Medical School faculty in 1974 where he was professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences until his retirement (Martin 1999). The author of 57 books, Oates (1971) coined the term “workaholism” with his book *Confessions*

*of a Workaholic*. Oates' corpus spans from the end of the great depression through the economic downturn of the 1980s, so that it represents various cultural periods and addresses concerns related to each epoch in practical language. Much information about his influence on the pastoral care movement available elsewhere (ACPE History Corner).

Oates' work is devoted to the establishment of a fruitful dialogue between the Christian faith and the insights of psychiatry. For Oates, the Christian faith was the distinctive lens through which human flourishing and wholeness could be witnessed, but the insights of psychiatry, existentialist psychoanalysis, and phenomenological psychology were all complementary frameworks that could help understand the human condition and foster wholeness – especially acknowledgment of the person as created in the image of God, redeemed by Christ, and called to vocation. The Bible is the primary conversation partner throughout his corpus; references to the Biblical stories take prominent place in his exposition and also often serve as brief illustrations of his points.

Oates was concerned that we witness the image of God in psychiatric patients and help them to engage in their own religious journeys – connecting them to religious communities – without fostering their delusions. In this sense Oates is an heir of the founder of the modern pastoral care and counseling movement, Anton Boisen, who was a patient himself at Worcester State Hospital and later a resident chaplain of the institution.



In his book *The Bible and Pastoral Care* (1953), Oates invites pastors to use the Bible in pastoral care in ways that honor the spirit of Scripture and avoid legalism. The minister is not simply called to be nondirective but offers hope to persons. The Bible is a crucial help in this act of encouragement. He describes how ministers need to learn flexibility about how the Bible is interpreted and encourages a cultural-historical consciousness in attempting to understand difficult passages that seem to refer to homosexuality.

In his book *Religion Factors in Mental Illness* (1955), a book he dedicated to Anton Boisen, Oates argued that the sane and the mentally ill are on a continuum – with healthy persons simply having more flexibility in their choices as to how they wish to relate to others – and that the patient and the psychiatrist each share the universal tendency towards sin. From this viewpoint, he attempted to describe how religious ideas could be meaningful for psychiatric patients and articulate schema to evaluate the health and even prophetic dimension of various religious concepts used by mental patients. “Both the psychiatrist and the minister need the sense of awe that comes from the mystery which is in each of their tasks” (Oates 1955, p. 99). He used Freud to describe how religion helps a person to separate from his or her own family by establishing a separate identity. The establishment of an identity apart from family is a recurrent theme in his work. He maintained that it was important to connect persons with mental problems to religious fellowships that could support them and invited us to consider the meaning that religious ideas may have for the patient instead of focusing on the ideas themselves. Religion often served as “limit” for patients, a kind of last straw onto which they grasped, but it also had the power to activate their destiny.

*Christ and Selfhood* (1961), written during a sabbatical at Union Seminary and dedicated to Wake Forest professor Olin Binkley, is a theological anthropology that deals with all the major doctrines of the faith in succession under the theme of self-realization in Jesus

Christ. He is concerned that pastoral theologians often abdicate theological interests. With this in mind, he maintains that decisive encounter with Jesus Christ helps a person become a self by accessing one’s history, discovering one’s vocation, and imagining hope for one’s future (p. 156). Therefore, he establishes the theme of a life-changing encounter with Christ as providing the distinctive basis for selfhood and then brings psychoanalytic and Gestalt psychology alongside this theme in order to show how it elaborates the theological point he has made. His theological conversation partners include Athanasius, Tillich, Barth, and Richard Niebuhr. Psychoanalytic psychology elucidates humankind’s bondage to sin so that disease is also a theological problem: “The conflict between God and man is the root of man’s unreal, counterfeit, and fictitious selfhood” (p. 47). Oates maintains that we too often ignore the human aspects of Jesus’ identity formation such as his possible questions about his father’s identity and his likely education by Mary in the themes of the Magnificat.

Written as he was recovering from spinal surgery – Oates suffered from lifelong back trouble – *Pastoral Care in Social Conflict: Extremism, Race, Sex, Divorce* (1966) maintains that pastoral care had become too individualistic and had ignored the “social context” of problems that persons face (p. 11). In this text, Oates’ own background as a poor Southern white plays an important role. He invites readers to consider the different approaches taken to social problems by itinerant “one-cause” ministers and resident pastors responsible for the life of the community (p. 10). He defines the social problems of the day as “dilemmas” that contain incontrovertible ambiguity, and he suggests ways that pastors can maintain neutrality and continue dialogue about issues rather than allowing conversations to devolve into competitions (p. 15). He argues that theological schools should prevent social conflict by integrating before the law forces them to integrate. At the same time, he risks arrogating blackness into a white narrative at times: “the ignorant and the dispossessed white



shared the same fate as the Negro” (p. 61). He uses Freud’s “Civilized Sexuality and Modern Nervousness” to argue that we should find ways of integrating sexuality with the rest of our lives and he argues for the equality of women. Likewise, he argues that churches should take a preventative approach to divorce to providing more early and steady pastoral counseling to couples.

In his *New Dimensions of Pastoral Care* (1970), Oates defines ministry as “fortification” putting “heart into” people and “confrontation,” namely, “bring[ing] persons face-to-face with themselves. . .and with issues of justice. . .” (p. 3). In this book he addresses a recurrent theme of idolatry – a primary human difficulty is that we cannot be “as God” – and argues this is a problem faced by clergy and parishioners alike (p. 24). He addresses excellence and self-supervision in pastoral care, including exploring the care of the minister’s family, and indicates that Christian communities should mobilize to provide care. He addresses “race relations” and describes how the theological curriculum must transform as black students are integrated into seminaries (p. 73). Nevertheless, when he describes the “black ghetto,” he describes their language as “nonverbal” and “preliterate” (p. 80). Oates shows hesitance about pastoral activism lest the pastor loses a sense of neutrality.

*Psychology and Religion* (1973) is a textbook that brings biblical anthropology together with phenomenological psychology to critique distorted misconceptions of religion. Oates chooses this psychological modality because it examines consciousness and unconsciousness together, looks at value systems and how to change them, and provides theologically applicable system of concepts used by ministers/lay alike. He argues that psychological systems can become idolatrous but that the striving towards wholeness is a religious quest: “The redemption of man [sic] from sin and the emergence of a free self in man, respectively, are inseparably tied up with a struggle of the soul in the process of time and becoming” (p. 84). He deals with such diverse subjects as magic, the expansion of consciousness,

charisma, and delusions, and treats them all as aspects of the human search for God.

In his book *The Presence of God in Pastoral Counseling* (1986), Oates maintained that worship is at the heart of the counseling event so that attending to God’s presence is at the heart of the counseling encounter. Based in the love of God and love of neighbor, counseling is a practice that unmasks idolatries and helps persons live into their identities as persons renewed by Jesus Christ. Oates maintains that spiritual direction is the new course that pastoral counseling should take. While this sounds dramatic, the spiritual often takes place almost unrecognizably in the midst of mundane life. Therefore, the counselor must pray that he or she can discern God’s image in the client in the midst of the counselor’s frustration. Since “we remind clients of whatever they perceive God to be,” a kind of religious transference, pastoral counselors should explicitly invite Christ as the “Third Presence” in the counseling encounter (pp. 121–122).

In *Behind the Masks: Personality Disorders in Religious Behavior* (1987), Oates explores the religious needs of persons with personality disorders and explores how pastoral counselors can respond to these needs with pastoral wisdom. For Oates, these persons, borrowing from an early title by Hervey Cleckley, wear sanity as a “mask, not as the outward expression of an inward possession” (p. 12). He explores how the culture plays an important role in creating personality disorders by reinforcing their negative patterns.

Wayne E. Oates was one of the most important bridge figures between theology and psychiatry in the twentieth century. As a Southern Baptist, his conversionist theology provided an important basis across his work and also offered him a flexible option for correlating theology and psychology. His own need to separate from his poor background and family life and yet find ways of honoring that heritage was a recurrent theme in his work. Oates also became intensely concerned with the risk of idolatry in all human ventures and sought to accent God’s living presence in pastoral care and counseling.

## See Also

- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Boisen, Anton](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling and Personality Disorders](#)
- ▶ [Religious Identity](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Object Relations Theory

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The concept of “object relations” in psychoanalytic writings means relations with significant others and their internal representations, starting with infancy and the mother (“object” in psychoanalytic writings always refers to another person). Primitive, early, object relations are the starting point for personality development. Whereas, for Freud, the drive-based quest for sensuous gratification conditions the structure of the personality, object relations theorists argued that the individual seeks relationships before seeking gratification. The pattern taken by the individual’s relationship with others, internalized during early childhood, structures the adult personality as well as adult spirituality.

What is known as psychoanalytic object relations theory represents the psychoanalytic study of the nature and origins of interpersonal relations and, more significantly, of the nature and origins of internal, unconscious, structures deriving from interpersonal contacts and experiences. Present interpersonal relationships are regarded as the reactivation of past internalized relations with others. Psychoanalytic object relations theory focuses upon the internalization of interpersonal relations, their contribution to normal and pathological personality development, and the mutual influences of internal fantasies and the reality of interpersonal relations.

Individual personality is formed through object relations patterns which are set up in early childhood, become stable in later childhood and adolescence, and then are fixed during adult life. The functioning of the adult personality depends on the maturity of one’s object relations. Object relations theorists propose that the ego, which is the center of the personality, seeks objects, and this is the basic drive animating the



human personality. The role played by the mother's constant presence during the first stages of life makes it the factor around which personality is organized. The mode by which one manages one's dependence on and differentiation from the mother is the structuring force of the individual mind. Psychoses and neuroses are accounted for by the complications of parental care rather than by eruptions of repressed desire.

Motivations experienced by the individual's body alone are thus deemphasized, and, correspondingly, the formative significance of relating to others is played up. Sexuality is demoted to a secondary role. It may complicate the relationship with the object, but it does not by itself constitute that relationship. Body sensations carry messages, but are not equivalent to the contents of these messages. Communication is channeled through the surface of the body, the sensitivity of which intensifies with the child's age. At all stages, bodily sensation is a means rather than an end of communication.

While classical psychoanalytic theory viewed the personality as an information-processing system, in touch (or out of touch) with reality, in object relations theory the emphasis is on internalized and projected ideas, leading to a total distortion of reality. Compared to classical approaches, object relations theory is even more pessimistic. It views personality as less reality oriented and its structure as determined earlier in life. While in Freud's version the "critical period" in personality development is the Oedipal stage, years 3–6 of life, here it is during the first year that object relations patterns are determined.

The common core of classical psychoanalytic theory and object relations theory can be summarized in the two concepts of a search (for an object or for instinctual gratification) and an experienced distance from the object. Both approaches agree that it all starts with the young child and its understanding of sex, birth, and family relations, with the inevitable results in the form of confused and confusing ideas that stay with us for life. Object relations theory claims that the process

all starts very early, which means that the cognitive confusion is greater and deeper.

Donald W. Winnicott asserted that at the original point from which all humans start, there is already a relationship. The baby is an aggregate of sensations and body parts without an organizing principle, which may only be provided by the parent "who is holding the child" physically and whose presence functions as an external perimeter that contains the various stimuli and so orders them into a meaningful whole. Thus, relationship precedes individuality. There is no such thing as a baby, because there is always, attached to it, someone caring for the baby. The lack of individual separateness in the initial stages of life goes beyond the fact of physical dependence. It involves the absence of inner cohesion.

At this point the child creates what Winnicott calls the transitional object. This object appears when the reassuring internal representation of the mother is projected onto a tangible item, such as a blanket or a soft toy, which the child invests with special meaning and identity. The transitional object helps the child bridge the frustration of parental unavailability. That object is simultaneously internal and external: it carries a subjective meaning, but, being tangible, it is also objectively perceived. In later life the soft toy or blanket is substituted by games, artistic creativity, and intellectual discussion. Such activities provide individuals with spaces where they can externalize their internal images. Winnicott's concept of transitional states and transitional objects has been applied to religious ritual and belief, assuming that religion tries to elaborate an experiential space between the self and reality.

Regarding religious beliefs, most object relations theorists follow Sigmund Freud in viewing any religious belief system as based on projections. While Freud emphasized the projection of the father, the so-called Oedipal object, object relations theory suggests that what is projected is the maternal image, formed earlier in the child's development. The objective existence of the caring figure, without whom the infant

would not survive, is the source of fantasies about caring spirits, who promise eternal love and boundless happiness. As the developing child internalizes hope and trust, she comes to live within an inner psychic universe of unseen, but providential presences. When he is subsequently introduced to supernaturalist beliefs through cultural experience (God, angels), he takes to it naturally.

Cultural fantasies expressed in so-called mystical experiences reflect an attempt to recreate the mother-child symbiotic encounter. The early experience of creating a substitute for the mother, known as the transitional object, is the model for cultural rituals and beliefs. This experience is one case of transitional states, where a real stimulus near the person starts a fantasy process in which object relations are projected on it. This “substance of illusion,” as Winnicott described it, is the starting point for the creation of art and religion. The behavior in an individual of turning to “spiritual search” is most likely to be caused by a loss of a significant other or a significant relationship. This search makes possible an imaginary contact with the lost object. Loss or absence in the child’s relations with parental figures may lead to the appearance of religious experiences.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Winnicott, Donald Woods

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## Objective Psyche

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In 1633, Galileo Galilei was forced to his knees by the Catholic Church and, with his hands on the Bible, demanded to retract his comments that the Earth was not the center of the universe. Drawing on his years of scientific inquiry, he found that it was the *Earth* which rotated around the sun and not the other way around. His was a heliocentric view of the universe, not a geocentric approach. Perhaps using science to refute religious dogma was not the best approach in the 1600s, but Galileo’s search for truth knew no limits. Those near him during the inquisition heard him whisper under his breath the words, *eppure si muove* (and yet it moves), as he completed his testimony to the Papal See.

*Eppure si muove* speaks to the issue of relative and fixed space and movement. The Church needed to see the Earth as center of the universe to justify its position of moral and spiritual supremacy. However, his utterance that “the Earth moves” urges us to reconsider the relationship between relative and objective meaning. This theme remains crucial to our understanding not only of the world but also the human psyche and in many ways has influenced the practice of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis.

Jung’s discovery of the objective psyche closely parallels Galileo’s findings, in that the ego, like the Earth, was not to be viewed as the center of the personality. For Jung, the objective psyche allows us to determine the distinction between a relative and subjectively derived meaning from what is objective and invariant. While in relation to the ego, the matrix for this objective psyche exists independently of the conscious mind, and its contents are not acquired through personal experience. Like a compass pointing due north or a bird’s innate capacity for building intricate nests and traveling thousands of miles during its migratory journeys, there is an internal wisdom and directionality within the psyche – a psychic “due north.”



Like his mentor Freud, Jung sought to understand the workings of a personal unconscious. Our personal history clearly shapes our experience of the world. Freud's theory of the unconscious evolved into a topological model, comprised of a number of invariants, such as the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. While these can be viewed as inherent, universal components within the psyche, existing much like our biological inheritance, Freud tended to stress the personal aspects of each. On the contrary, Jung's discoveries identified the existence of nonpersonally derived, archetypal substrata inherent within the psyche, which continued to shape and effect the personality even without the conscious awareness of the individual.

Analogous to the workings of the biological unfolding of human life, we see that individual form is directly influenced by our genetic, personally acquired inheritance – blue eyes, brown hair, etc. However, prior to the emergence of these individual features, they exist *in potential* until a series of prefigured, morphogenetically determined processes unfold.

Developmental biologists have discovered that fetuses develop in highly characteristic ways, according to a seemingly predetermined schedule. At about 8 weeks the heartbeat can be heard. At different stages other features appear, as if by magic, in virtually the same sequence as all other babies since the beginning of humanity.

This unfolding of specificity in human form occurs against the backdrop of a set of universal, objective processes encoded within the body. The human psyche also follows a deeply etched riverbed traversed by humanity since the beginning of time. What are these silent codes that guide the development of our physical, psychological, and spiritual life? The plethora of books available on infant and child development informs us about these “predictable,” highly patterned processes.

While the emotions and perceptions of the ego and personal unconscious are influenced by experience and subjective reactions, the matrix from which the objective psyche gathers its impressions and information exists independent of individual experience.

With the eye of a scientist and the heart of a mystic, Jung sought to understand these other

influences that shape human experience. Familiar with the Freudian ethos, he realized that drive theory did explain the commonality of experience found throughout our collective history. Freud looked to drives, especially sexuality, as the primary mover of human experience. Jung understood the limitations of these ideas. Through many years of studying different cultures and religions, he posited the existence of a set of universals within the human psyche. This point was especially evident in one of Jung's last recorded interviews, *Face to Face* (BBC Interview with John Freeman, October 22, 1959). Jung was asked if he believed in God. He smiled and said that he did not *believe* in a God, but *knew* there was a God. Belief, he explained, relied on faith, while knowing is arrived at through direct experience. He explained that every culture throughout history has some form of a God as a central component of their world. The constancy and universality of this *image* of a God suggests that a God or “God concept” exists as a living entity and an objective fact within the psyche.

The extensive body of Jung's writing details those universal portals which every individual must traverse and a methodology for distilling an objective, ontological truth from the Scylla and Charybdis of bias and personal opinion. Like Galileo and the biologists who came after him, Jung demonstrated the effects of these objective aspects of life on individual development. He suggests that the objective psyche functions much like a magnet, constantly oriented towards true north. Consciousness, on the other hand, functions all too often as a faulty compass creating due north wherever one chooses to point it. Truth, meaning, and spirit become relative terms, shaped by the individual's needs. One can take an objective fact, for instance, entrance into midlife, and create one's own meaning of it. For instance one can say, “I don't feel any different” and “I can do almost all of the things I did in my forties.” Or, “I feel so much older and more worn out,” and on and on. Clearly each of us will experience midlife in our own way. The point here is that no matter how we subject this stage of life to the Procrustean Bed of personal



opinion, there remains an objective fact – namely, that one is at the midpoint of life.

Religious traditions have provided a rich body of literature regarding the universal features of these stages of life and an awareness of the deep psychological and spiritual needs related to each stage. Midlife requires us to attend to a particular set of issues that were not part of our concerns during the first half of life.

The existence of an “objective,” ontologically based psychology is now supported by discoveries in the sciences, which address the concept of self-organizing systems. The self-regulatory functioning of the body is one illustration of such tendencies. For example, our blood sugar levels are governed by the presence of what are called *periodic attractors*. Like a pendulum moving 30° to the right or to the left, biological rhythms are governed by an innate ordering principle, which serves to maintain our metabolic reactions within a certain, predetermined range.

Jung’s (1969) work on the symbolism in the Mass provides a compelling illustration of the objective psyche. In his essay, “*Transformation Symbolism in the Mass*,” he looks beyond individual experience to the ontological, symbolic meaning of the Mass. Writing of its psychological significance, Jung states:

... human consciousness (represented by the priest and congregation) is confronted with an autonomous event which is taking place on a “divine” and “timeless” plane transcending consciousness, is in now way dependent on human action, but which impels man to act by seizing upon him as an instrument and making him the exponent of a “divine” happening. In the ritual action, man places himself at the disposal of an autonomous and “eternal” agency operating outside the categories of human consciousness. ... It is something outside, something autonomous which seizes and moves him (1969, pp. 249–250, 379).

Jung takes a similar approach to symbolic imagery found in dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations. Traditional psychotherapeutic approaches seek to understand symbols through clients’ associations. Jung looked to the inherent, innate, and universal meaning of these symbols. This approach is illustrated in the following analysis of a dream.

## Dream

I am visiting Florida during a March vacation. I go to the beach on a lovely sunny day and suddenly see baby turtles emerging from a mound in the sand. Hundreds of them are emerging from the sand and moving towards the sea. It is such a beautiful sight that I am moved to tears.

While it is essential to ask for the client’s associations and feelings about the dream, for this example, I will present the approach used in working with the objective psyche in clinical material.

Since this dream presents the motif of turtles hatching, we need to enter the “field” (Conforti 2004) of turtles born on Florida beaches in March. While it is possible for the patient and analyst to have impressionistic or circumstantial information about this topic, it is important to seek out objective and accurate details about the birth of turtles and the conditions required to insure successful completion of the gestation period. In this dream the turtles hatch in March. However, turtles actually *lay their eggs* in March, and they lay burrowed in the sand as a protection against the hot Florida sun. We also learn that predation results in only 1 out of 10,000 hatchlings ever surviving to maturity. Now with these objective facts, we are prepared to work with this dream.

The material provided by our specialist enables us to see that something within the patient’s psyche, and perhaps also within the analysis, is occurring out of sequence. What has just begun its gestation is now hatching, during a time when prospects for reaching maturation are minimal, at best. The requisite incubation period was, for some reason, interrupted, thus jeopardizing what was seeking expression within the patient.

Let’s now explore the image of the turtle. One of the most salient features of turtles is their shell. Their protection is external, whereas with humans and most other mammals, the protective skeletal structure is internal. In many earlier life forms, protective defenses remained external. So the turtle’s ecto-skeletal make up may symbolize an early and somewhat primitive system of



defense, which is also very vulnerable. In the dream, what is attempting to born is a somewhat primitive and necessary system of defense but one that will, in all probability, not survive.

Recent studies have found that our conscious mind generally perceives only 7.4 % of the information available in our field of data. Translated, this means that the ego is aware of only a small portion of its experiences. Jung's discovery of the objective psyche encourages us to look beyond the confines of what we generally perceive, thus allowing for a wisdom far greater than that derived from our conscious minds.

Religious traditions and the world's great spiritual teachers have always spoken about a world far wiser than the one we habitually inhabit. Spirituality is an accessing of the transcendent. In virtually every religious tradition, one has to undergo a series of rituals meant to lessen the hold of conscious reality to allow for the unknown to enter. Meister Eckhart echoes this point: "All the different religions traditions can be traced back to the experience of communion with the Ultimate. . . (with) the one and the same mystical core-experiences of the sense of ultimate belonging" (Fitz-Gibbon; 2008, p. 196).

Our wisdom traditions seek to move beyond the veil of conscious reality a greater knowledge for our understanding about life. This point is beautifully made in *Saul Lieberman: Talmudic Scholar and Classicist* (2002). Discussing Rabbi Lieberman's approach to reading a sacred text, we find him suggesting that:

(...) We are always on safer ground when the reading is sure, and all that remains for us to do is to explain it. Of course a scholar's understanding of a given text depends on what he brings to it: the more he knows the less likely he is to engage in conjectures not justified by the facts; the less likely he is to doctor a text that should be left alone, the less likely he is to offer a labored, intricate explanation, when he should be saying; "I don't know." On the other hand, the more he knows, the more likely he is to select the correct meaning and when necessary, amend one that has been corrupted in transmission (2002: 4/5).

In summation, Jung's discovery of the objective psyche follows in the rich traditions of scientists, theologians, mystics, and investigators of

the human mind, whose search for knowledge about the psyche brought them into dialog with the eternal wisdom traditions, which have shaped personal and spiritual development throughout human history.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Meister Eckhart](#)
- ▶ [Personal Unconscious](#)

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## Occultism

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The term "occult" means hidden and has been used for over two centuries to describe a variety of esoteric philosophies grounded in the Western philosophical tradition. Esoteric doctrines are passed among a smaller group of people than

the outer more public or exoteric forms of spirituality and philosophy. The word “occult” and its derivatives are often used in a pejorative way by religious conservatives who view the wide range of views subsumed under this label as evil and involving devil worship. Rejection of esoteric forms occurs in many religious traditions but has an especially violent history in the Christian tradition.

Occult philosophy or the Western esoteric tradition (WET) is thoroughly syncretic, blending ideas, practices, and symbols of the divine from several streams. Western culture incorporates elements from both classical Greece and Rome, with ideas and practices taken from Judaism and Christianity. The latter takes its Judaic roots and sought to explain its significance through the language of Greco-Roman philosophy. Into this mix is poured ample elements of Eastern thought and practice, particularly in the 19th century. Religious syncretism characterizes the Western esoteric tradition.

From the Greek inheritance comes the font of much Western magic with Pythagoras (ca. 582–507 BCE). He first used the five-pointed star which has now been adopted by Wiccans and other pagans as a religious symbol. Among the oldest of sources, we have less of his thought preserved. He was insightful and skilled in mathematics, his theorem on right-angled triangles is the contribution for which he is best known, but he also saw the relationship between length of string and pitch, another aspect of mathematics. He founded the first Western mystery school in Croton, Italy.

The mystery religions of classical Greece, the Eleusinian mysteries, those of Dionysus, and the Orphic mysteries were a major countercurrent to the exoteric worship of the Olympian deities. Other mystery religions in Egypt (Isis) and the Levant (Cybele and Attis) came to be very influential in Roman times as well as Mithraism which incorporated much of the earlier Persian dualistic religious stream from Zoroastrianism. By the time of the late Hellenistic world and the advent of Rome as the dominant political force in the Mediterranean, all these streams flowed together and mixed. From this the broader streams of Hermetic

philosophy and Gnosticism emerged as traditions that would be passed on to the West after the rise of Christianity and the fall of Rome.

Plato’s thought tended to dominate the world of Hermetic philosophy through a series of great teachers who were prominent Neoplatonists. The first important figure was Plotinus (205–270 CE) whose cosmology of emanations was carried on by his students. Porphyry (233–309 CE) and Iamblichus (245–325) were among the followers of Plotinus whose work became the basis of later medieval esoteric philosophy. Iamblichus brought in expertise in ritual to a tradition that had been mostly contemplative, the philosophical Neoplatonists. Their influence on occult philosophy is significant. The divine is unitary and ineffable, all other forms of spirit are emanations of the One. The creator God or demiurge is different from the One. From that creator god, other spiritual beings emanate, and ultimately, the material world and all its creatures are formed. In Iamblichus this evolutionary path was expressed by way of a mathematical analogy, unity, dyad, triad, and hebdomad (group of seven). It was also expressed philosophically as *nous* (unity, mind) and *psyche* (duality, subject/object). The goal of life is reunification with the divine; Porphyry believed this could be accomplished through contemplation, but Iamblichus held that ritual (theurgy) is needed. He contrasted theurgy with thaumaturgy, the working of ordinary magic for such mundane things as love, health, and wealth. These were and remain the staples of common esoteric practices. But theurgy, or the divine work, has always been held out to be the loftiest ambition.

There is a strong dualistic trend in Neoplatonism; the realm of spirit and of Platonic forms has a fundamental reality and goodness that the material world lacks. Indeed, the body-mind dualism that permeates much Western thought shows the influence of Plato and his later followers. This dualistic trend found favor with early Christian mystics in the rejection of the temptations of the flesh in favor of ascetic practices. Christians, both orthodox and heretical, as in the gnostics, were influenced by the heightened dichotomy of self-mortification for achieving spiritual growth.



Another stream from classical antiquity feeding into modern occult philosophy is the Hermetic Corpus, or group of writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus, or thrice-great Hermes; especially important is the dictum from the *Emerald Tablet*, “as above, so below.” This references the basic tenet of magic that action on either the spiritual or material plane can influence the other; this belief underlies the theory of efficacy of both prayer, ritual invocation or evocation, and divination. Gnosticism is a more specific stream within this broad area of occult philosophy and includes Christian as well as non-Christian versions.

The Hermetic tradition became influential in the Renaissance. Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) translated Plato and the Hermetic Corpus, or body of writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus into Latin; Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1499) translated other Hermetic and Kabbalistic works into Latin and works of the classical Neoplatonists into Latin. Finally, Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) went too far in his espousal of esoteric doctrines Hermetic which were deemed heretical and he was burned at the stake for his promotion of Hermetic ideas.

Alchemy was a practical as well as an esoteric discipline and one of its leading exponents Paracelsus (1493–1541) influenced Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) in the development of what is now known as hypnosis. The Elizabethan magicians John Dee (1527–1608) and Edward Kelley (1555–1597) are important figures as well. But the leading theoretician was Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) whose *Three Books on Occult Philosophy* (1531–1533) remains a much reprinted classic. Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) is a key figure in the recovery of the status of imagination. His principle of “verum factum” holds that truth is established when an idea is able to bring forth some sort of concrete manifestation or invention. Ideas help create new realities.

In the seventeenth century, the Rosicrucian manifestos stimulated a lot of interest in occult philosophy, though the origins of those documents have never been completely determined. The alleged secret college of adepts sent

teachings to benefit humans. Whatever one makes of their foundational mythos, the Rosicrucian documents circulated widely and would later find echoes in any sort of claim of communications from higher spiritual forces or entities, including the Theosophic movement and many modern authors who channel dictated material (e.g., the Seth material).

The modern occult movement begins in earnest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with such figures as Alessandro di Cagliostro (1743–1795) and Francis Barrett (ca. 1770–1780) who wrote *The Magus* in 1801. Albert Louis Constant who wrote under the name Papus was another early figure in nineteenth-century occultism, and his work on the Tarot remains a classic.

But by far the most important developments occurred in the latter part of the nineteenth century when a variety of movements including Theosophy and the Golden Dawn were started. It was in this late Victorian era that modern occultism got a big boost in popularity. In mid-to late 1800s, the spiritualist movement reached its zenith and the use of mediums to contact spirits of the dead was relatively common, which encouraged many charlatans to practice as well as more sincere believers. Theosophy was a spiritual movement started by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891). She is the first of the modern mediums whose writings claim to be received or channeled from Eastern “ascended masters.” Her cofounder Col Henry Olcott (1832–1907) helped spur on a revival of Buddhism and was among the first Westerners to adopt Buddhism. He even designed the Buddhist flag. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was a group of ceremonial magicians centered around the figure of MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918). In Bavaria, Adam Weisthaupf (1748–1830) formed an occult group known as the Illuminati. All sorts of conspiracy theorists now use this group as a starting point for their worries. The New Thought movement of Phineas Quimby (1802–1866) sparked a whole host of esoteric schools, including Christian Science.

Of all the psychologists and psychiatrists, Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) has been the

most favorable in his assessment of the value of occult philosophy or the Western esoteric tradition (WET). He made the detailed links between personal unconscious processes and the wealth of cultural symbolism that has been handed down across time and culture. Myth is a primary medium for conveying symbolic meanings in the collective or cultural unconscious. He wrote about how alchemy is an apt metaphor for the transformations of personality than can occur in analysis or psychotherapy.

Witchcraft was revived, reconstructed, or brought out into the open in the early twentieth century, depending on how you view the likelihood of a continuous tradition as Gerald Gardner (1884–1964) claimed. His lineage survives as do numerous offshoots as well as some others who have announced their teachings. By the 1960s and 1970s, a widespread interest in the occult led to a flowering of all sorts of new amalgams of ancient lore. Some sought to reconstruct the ancient pre-Christian pagan religions of Europe, others sought to come up with their own blends of traditions and new age thought.

## See Also

- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Witchcraft](#)
- ▶ [Zoroastrianism](#)

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## Oden, Thomas

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Born October 21, 1921 in Altus, Oklahoma, United Methodist Thomas Clark Oden was the child of pietistic parents who were also union organizers. During high school, he volunteered with the United World Federalist movement, and at the University of Oklahoma, he worked for the Students for Democratic Action. He received his M.A. from Perkins School of Theology in 1956 and received his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1960, studying with Hans Frei and H. Richard Niebuhr and writing on the ethics of Rudolf Bultmann. He taught from 1958 to 1960 at Perkins and then taught during the 1960s at Phillips University. In 1971 he began teaching as a professor of Theology and Ethics at The Theological School at Drew University, and there he remained until his recent retirement (Hall 2011). A prolific author, Oden has written numerous books spanning 50 years.

During the 1960s, Oden wrote several works in which he argued that God's presence in Jesus Christ could be effectively intuited through the therapeutic relationship, which itself could be understood as a sign of God's gracious activity. In *Kerygma and Counseling: Toward a Covenant Ontology for Secular Psychotherapy* (1966), he argued that rather than an *analogia entis* in which we draw parallels between counseling and psychotherapy and infer God's grace from the psychotherapeutic event, we should move the other direction and see God's gracious intervention in the world as a precursor that allows for the therapeutic event of client-centered counseling. Oden dedicated this book



to his psychotherapist among others. In *Contemporary Theology and Psychotherapy* (1967), he uses Bonhoeffer and Chardin to bridge theology and secular psychotherapy by rejecting the two-sphere solution in which God is separated from the world. During this period, Oden joined theologians such as Daniel Day Williams and James Gustafson in theological reflection on secular psychotherapy.

In the 1970s Oden became critical of psychotherapy. In his symposium *After Therapy What? Lay Therapeutic Resources in Religious Perspective*, a group that he gathered at Drew University, Oden (Warren 1974) cited studies indicating that psychotherapy did not lead to faster remission rates for psychological problems and suggested that lay therapy facilitated by groups may be more beneficial than professional care. He quoted extensively from the anti-psychiatry movement and offered Wolfhart Pannenberg's apocalyptic theology as a way for psychotherapy to think more critically about its *telos*. During this time, Oden was influenced by Will Herberg, a Jewish scholar and colleague at Drew, who encouraged him to explore ancient Christianity.

Beginning with *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*, Oden (1983) examined the pastoral office using premodern theologians. In this volume, he examined fitness for pastoral ministry, the significance of the pastoral office, the functions of ministry, premodern precursors to pastoral counseling, and crisis ministry. Oden defined ministry as a response to God's grace, arguing that it must be rooted in the Wesleyan quadrilateral of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience. He lamented modernism that he suggested is individualistic and pleasure centered and understood specialized counseling as a manifestation of a negative modernist trend. By contrast, he maintained that ministry should be grounded in a premodern orthodox consensus. His hermeneutic of retrieval is expressed similarly throughout the following decades: "I have sought to state without embellishment the core of that ancient ecumenical consensus on the office, gifts, and practice of ministry" (Oden 1983, p. 7). In this text, he advocates for lay ministry but distinguishes ordained ministry as significant in

its own right, arguing for the use of admonition, exhortation, and discipline in the pastoral office. Oden establishes his posture as one who "listens" to the common consensus of premodern Christianity and presents it as a resource to those who have been buffeted by modernity (Oden 1983, p. 12). Therefore, rather than interpreting an ancient tradition to be used by persons in the modern era, Oden views his project as presenting the tradition whole as a judgment on modern times.

In *Care of Souls in the Classic Tradition* (1984), a book in Don S. Browning's *Theology and Pastoral Care Series*, Oden explored Gregory the Great's *Liber regulae pastoralis* as a resource for pastoral caregivers since it presents variable diagnosis based on the situation, explores human ambivalence, examines ministry as rooted in Christ's care, and advocates servanthood as the basis for authority. In the book, he explained his theological transition. Oden states that during the 1950s and 1960s, he was the recipient of client-centered therapy and that this was "profoundly important" for him (Oden 1984, p. 22). As we have seen, he dedicated an early book to his Rogerian psychotherapist. During the 1960s he became an enthusiast for a variety of group processes and, as he states, eventually "began to recognize the potential self-deception of [his] own antinomian temptations" manifested in "anarchic politics and messianic expectations about social experimentation" (Oden 1984, p. 22). He credits Will Herberg, who was a close friend from 1971 to 1977 at Drew University, of divesting him of these expectations by urging him to return to historical Christianity (Hall 2011). In this light, he made a "joyful decision" to focus on ancient Christianity in the mode of a "critique of modernity," which he defined as "autonomous individualism, naturalistic reductionism, and narcissistic hedonism" (Hall 2011, p. 24). Oden concludes that modernity is "rapidly losing its moral power" and argues for a return to classical resources, which he indicates have been ignored in the twentieth century (Hall 2011, p. 24). He expects that this shift to ancient traditions would emphasize intercessory prayer in pastoral care, provide moral guidance that urges couples to



remain married, emphasize group process, and include evangelical witness as an aspect of care.

Continuing this reclamation, Oden published a four-volume series that focused on premodern sources: *Becoming a Minister* (1987a), *Pastoral Counsel* (1989a), *Crisis Ministry* (1994), and *Ministry through Word and Sacrament* (2000). In these volumes, Oden continues to apply ancient Christian theology to the modern situation as a corrective. Multiple block quotations – frequently more than one per page – from Cyril of Alexandria, Augustine, Ambrose, Luther, and Baxter dominate the volumes, while Oden’s own analysis is set in small type throughout between the quotations. In this sense, Oden visually represents his own position as a scholar. His work is now simply a receptacle for the tradition so that his own voice becomes the background and ancient texts become the foreground of his argument. In the first volume he quoted extensively from Peter Damian to argue that homosexuals should not be ordained and implied that homosexuality might be contagious (Oden 1987a, p. 184).

While he was assembling this series on ministry, he was also writing a systematic theology grounded in the same patristic resources, containing *The Living God* (1987b), *The Word of Life* (1989b), and *Life in the Spirit* (1992). In the first volume he intended to “express in straightforward terms what Christian thinking has always understood about its own grounding and empowerment” and do so in a way that would be accessible to pastors (Oden 1987b, p. x). In his personal interlude in the second volume, *The Word of Life*, he maintains that his central identity as a theologian has been to “listen” to the orthodox consensus of the conciliar church (Oden 1989b, pp. 219–220). He argues that many patristic sources have been poorly translated and thus inaccessible to the everyday pastor and so he offers his own translations.

Oden continued his mission of reclamation through the *Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scripture* series in which he depends upon patristic sources as the basis for a commentary on the bible (Oden 2005). Recently, he has

explicitly discussed his dependence upon African Christianity from the first several centuries of the Christian movement and tried to acquaint Western readers with the shape of this early Christianity and the continuities between ancient and current African Christianity (Oden 2010). Even as Oden (1995) attempted to reclaim historical Christianity, he has been adamant in his attempts to reform what he considers to be liberal mainline denominations and seminaries. Toward this end he has been an active member of the Confessing movement within the United Methodist Church.

Thomas C. Oden is a theological ethicist who has made his primary concern ministerial identity and formation at the juncture between salvation and health. His earliest statements introduced the boomer generation to the importance of psychotherapy as an arena of God’s gracious activity and provided theological sources for connection therapy and salvation. His later work began to focus more closely on the work of the congregational minister, drawing important correlations between the ministry of pastoral counsel in the modern congregation and the care provided in the ancient church. During this later period, Oden urged pastoral theology to reclaim its continuity with premodern forms of the care of souls by drawing from ancient resources.

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Biblical Psychology
- ▶ Christ
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Luther, Martin
- ▶ Postmodernism
- ▶ Rogers, Carl

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## Oedipus Complex

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Oedipus Complex, in psychoanalytic theory, is based on the premise of incestuous fantasy in which a child desires the parent of the opposite sex. Sigmund Freud (1921–1955), the father of psychoanalysis, held that children pass through a stage from about ages 3–6 in which they develop a lively curiosity about sex. The son desires his mother and wants the father dead. The daughter wants sex with the father and hates the mother. (“Electra Complex” may be used to label the girl’s

feelings). Freud believed that many adult neuroses originate with the Oedipus Complex. He derived his theory from the Oedipus myth revealed in the oracles of ancient Greece.

The tragic story of Oedipus Rex (Oedipus the King) has been told many times through the ages in literature and plays. According to the fifth-century BCE play by Socrates, an oracle tells King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes that a son will be born to them who will kill the king and marry the queen. When the son is born, the king and queen order a trusted slave to take the infant to the mountains to die. The slave takes pity on the infant and gives him to a childless royal couple in Corinth who name him Oedipus. When Oedipus grows into young manhood, he goes on a journey to Delphi and meets an oracle who tells him that he will kill his father and marry his mother. Knowing this, he is afraid to return to Corinth and goes on to Thebes. At the crossroads between Corinth, Delphi, and Thebes, he gets into a quarrel with an old man in a chariot who pushes him aside to go past him on the road. The old man attacks Oedipus with his long scepter. Oedipus grabs the scepter and kills the old man. Still at the crossroads, Oedipus is confronted by Sphinx who demands that he solve a riddle of what walks on four legs in the morning, what walks on two legs in the afternoon, and what walks on three legs in the afternoon. Oedipus guesses the right answer, which is a man (baby – adult – old person), and Sphinx leaps to her death over a cliff. His trails over, Oedipus goes on to Thebes and receives a hero’s welcome for saving the city from Sphinx. He is crowned the new king to replace the old king who has just died. At the same time he marries the widowed Queen Jocasta. They have a happy life together and produce four children. Years later, a plague strikes Thebes. Oedipus learns that the Gods are angry and brought forth the plague because the murder of King Laius has not been avenged. He goes on a quest to find the murderer and discovers that the old man he killed at the crossroads was King Laius, his father, and that he has married his mother, Queen Jocasta. The terrible news reaches the castle and the queen hangs herself in the bedroom she has shared with her son and

Oedipus's father. Oedipus is so horrified by what he has done that he pokes out his eyes with a pin from her body. Blinded, he goes into exile and mysteriously dies in Athens. Thus, ends the myth of Oedipus, who brought about the very prophecy he had been trying to escape from all his life.

Freud (1927–1955) extended the Oedipus Complex into his theories about religion. He called religion “the universal obsessional neurosis of humanity; like the obsessional neurosis of children, it arose out of the Oedipus Complex, out of the relation to the father.” Ernest Jones (1953) wrote that Freud “grew up devoid of any belief in a God or Immortality, and does not appear ever to have felt the need of it.” Thus, Freud looked at all religions with a jaundiced eye. Based on his theory (1923–1955) of the ego, the id, and the superego, he called God the superego. To him the superego is ever observing of the contact between the ego and the id and intervenes when necessary to impose rules and regulations that were learned by every person from their early caretakers during their formative years. The id is our basic needs for survival and comfort and wants what it wants when it wants it. The word “no” is not in id's vocabulary. The ego helps the id to get what it wants in an appropriate manner. Freud's theory places the superego in the role of a father who supervises the interaction between the id and ego.

The theory of the presence of Oedipal phenomenon in religious ideation has not been accepted as a universal construct and has been argued since its inception. Some of Freud's followers, including Otto Rank, Alfred Adler, and C. G. Jung, broke away from Freud and went on to form their own schools based on their own philosophies. Rank (1929) elevated the maternal role at the expense of the paternal by arguing that the experience of birth is the primary psychological event. Adler (1948) explored nonsexual reasons for neurosis, in particular the role of inferiority feelings. Contrary to Freud's emphasis on the sex drive, Adler believed strivings for social success and power as fundamental in human motivation. Jung (1906) did not support Freud's ideas of infant sexuality and went on to develop his own theories about the psyche, which

he called the Self. He said, “as for Freud's therapy, it is at best one of several possible methods and perhaps does not always offer in practice what one expects from it in theory.” Freud (1914–1955) responded by saying, “All the changes that Jung has proposed to make in psycho-analysis flow from his intention to eliminate what is objectionable to the family-complexes, so as not to find it again in religion and ethics.” He explains that to Jung “the Oedipal Complex has a merely ‘symbolic’ meaning: the mother in it means the unattainable, which must be renounced in the interests of civilization; the father who is killed in the Oedipus myth is the ‘inner’ father, from whom one must set oneself free in order to become independent.”

The debate between psychology and religion over Freud's Oedipus Complex theory has been ongoing for over a hundred years. On the religious side of the debate, some analysts and theologians have called for an abandonment of the Oedipal theory. Brothers and Lewinberg (1999) argue that the so-called Oedipal passions result when children, forced to dissociate aspects of themselves as gendered, find these aspects of their self-experience embodied in caretakers. They go on to say, “In light of recent advances in theory and research that starkly reveal the shortcomings of Oedipal theory, we ask the reader to consider laying Oedipus to rest once and for all.” They also question the Oedipus myth by calling attention to Kohut (1981) and his last paper in which he argued that analysts have “reversed their usual stance as regards King Oedipus by taking the manifest content – father, murder, incest – as the essence.” Kohut believed the story's “most significant genetic dynamic feature” is that “Oedipus was a rejected child” and that a replacement is needed for the Oedipus myth.

In keeping with the thoughts of Brothers and Lewinberg (1999), Judith Van Herik (1983) suggests that Freud's psychology and his theories about religion “are about patriarchal culture, and therefore about mental expression and reproduction of gender asymmetry.” She states that Freud's Oedipal theory acts as a constraint that has the same psychical structure as religious attachment



to the father. Freud's psychology, says Van Herik, "is primarily about the socialized son and secondarily about the socialized daughter in a situation where father-son dynamics are primary." More directly, Gary Ahlskog (2001) says that he is not sure there is even one piece of Freudian theory so sacrosanct that it deserves allegiance and discipleship, which "proper" therapists are supposed to endorse. He goes on to say, "Nominating the Oedipus Complex won't do because of the need to specify 'which Oedipus Complex'? - an indefinite and endless task, since variations of sexual, aggressive, social, and intergenerational conflict are as innumerable as there are individuals on the planet." On a positive side, Esther Menaker (1995) says that the individual self is structured by the internalization of emotional experience with significant others – preferable with those who we have admired and to whom we have been attached and that the "other" lives on is immortalized – within ourselves. Theologian Paul Tillich (1956) confirms this by stating simply that it is "the activity of God *within man* that grounds and makes possible the experience of God *beyond man*."

Today, many caregivers in the mental health field do not believe as Freud did and include spirituality with psychotherapy. Hyman Spotnitz, M.D. (1985), for one. He is a pioneer of group therapy and founder of Modern Psychoanalysis that addresses the treatment of traumas incurred from infancy to the Oedipal stage that Freud did not believe were treatable. He believes that Freud was wrong in calling God the superego. To Spotnitz (1990) religion and going to church is ego supportive and a strong ego is what enables a person to tolerate all their impulses, all of their thoughts, all of their feelings, and what everybody else is doing to them.

The debate over Freud's Oedipus Complex is never ending. Through it all, as Spotnitz, Tillich, and others have maintained, every school of thought works in psychology and religion when it is ego enhancing and helps people to find their way in life and to realize their full potentials and to form meaningful, lasting relationships. This is confirmed in a forward Erik H. Erikson (1963) wrote for his book *Childhood and Society*.

He says that Freud was once asked what he thought a normal person should be able to do well. Freud is reported to have said:

"Lieben und arbeiten" ("To love and to work").

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)

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## Oedipus Myth

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### The Myth

Oedipus is a mythic Greek character thought to originate in Mycenaean folklore. His story is cited by Homer and was central in the lost Theban cycle of post-Homeric epics, before becoming a subject in tragedies written for the Festival of Dionysius in fifth century BCE Athens, most notably in the three Theban plays by Sophocles. Sophocles' plays provide the best-known modern version of the myth, though the story differs to varying degrees in works by Aeschylus and Euripides as well as in the epics and in the original folklore.

The first of Sophocles' Theban plays in story chronology (though second in order of composition) is *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The play begins as Oedipus, King of Thebes, is asked by his subjects to rescue the city from a devastating plague. Brother-in-law Creon brings news from Apollo's oracle at Delphi that the murderer of previous Theban king (and former husband of Oedipus's wife Jocasta), Laius, must be destroyed before the plague can end. In the course of the ensuing investigation, we learn the backstory of Sophocles' drama.

Laius and Jocasta, King and Queen of Thebes, have been warned by an oracle that Laius would die at the hands of his own child. (One reason offered for this terrible fate, found in other mythic sources, is Laius' former kidnapping and rape of the boy Chrysippus.) When a male child is born to the couple, they send him off to be abandoned on Mt. Cithaeron. The servant charged with the task, however, takes pity on baby Oedipus and gives

him to a shepherd, who then delivers the infant to childless Corinthian King Polybus and Queen Merope. They raise Oedipus as their own. When, as an adult, Oedipus hears a prophecy that he will kill his father and marry his mother, he leaves Corinth to escape the dire prediction but on the road argues with and kills another traveler, who (unbeknownst to Oedipus) is his real father, Laius. Oedipus proceeds to Thebes, where he answers the riddle of the Sphinx, thereby freeing the city of this monster's murderous siege and winning the hand of Queen Jocasta.

Sophocles has Oedipus conduct a determined murder investigation, which reveals the facts of his past one by one. By the play's end, Jocasta has committed suicide and Oedipus has both blinded himself and insisted to new king Creon that he be exiled from Thebes.

In *Oedipus at Colonus*, last in composition and second in story order, we meet Oedipus some 20 years after his exile from Thebes; he is a blind old man being guided by daughter Antigone. When they reach the village of Colonus, Oedipus discovers that he is in a grove sacred to the Eumenides. Here, he claims, Apollo's oracle has foretold his life's journey will end and the hosts of his burial ground will be blessed.

Oedipus's other daughter, Ismene, arrives with news about his sons, Eteocles and Polyneices, and Creon, all of whom have heard oracles about the significance of Oedipus's burial site and who want control of that site for various reasons. King Theseus of Athens then arrives, hears Oedipus's story, and gives his sanction to Oedipus for burial in the holy grove, for which Athens will be blessed in future conflict with Thebes.

Later in the play, Oedipus bitterly denies the entreaties of Creon (who attempts to compel Oedipus to come with him and must be thwarted by Theseus) and Polyneices, who – like his uncle/great-uncle – want to avoid the consequences of Oedipus's burial in a foreign land. Oedipus proclaims his innocence of responsibility for his terrible fate and denounces both Creon and his sons for maintaining his banishment before they knew of his new favor with Apollo. Oedipus condemns both sons to die in the assault on





Thebes Polyneices is about to launch. Zeus's thunder signals Oedipus that his time has come to die. Theseus alone is allowed to see the place of Oedipus's death, for its blessing on Athens depends upon its secrecy.

Oedipus is present in *Antigone* (composed first though last in story chronology) as the spirit of the curse which has been fulfilled in the deaths of his sons in their battle for control of Thebes before the tragedy begins. The play tells the story of Antigone's refusal to accept Creon's decree that Polyneices be denied burial because he had led the attack on Thebes. Their conflict of wills results in the deaths of Antigone, Haemon (Antigone's fiancé and Creon's son), and Eurydice (Haemon's mother and Creon's wife), as well as Creon's ruin by the play's conclusion.

## Oedipus and Freud

The Oedipus myth, particularly *Oedipus Tyrannus*, has had an enduring fascination for western audiences and readers, as evidenced by many retellings of the story and perennial production of Sophocles' original. Sigmund Freud was both exemplar and student of that fascination when he proposed that the Oedipus story – specifically, patricide and mating with one's mother – depicts a universal stage of human development. This proposal occurred as Freud formulated his theories of psychoanalysis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Freud's Oedipal theories begin in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), although there is preliminary mention of them in earlier letters. Freud claims that there exists an Oedipal relationship between all children and their parents in early childhood.

According to my already extensive experience, parents play a leading part in the infantile psychology of all persons who subsequently become psychoneurotics. Falling in love with one parent and hating the other forms part of the permanent stock of the psychic impulses which arise in early childhood and are of such importance as the material of the subsequent neurosis. But I do not believe that psychoneurotics are to be sharply distinguished in this respect from other persons who remain

normal. ... [They] do no more than reveal to us, by magnification, something that occurs less markedly and intensively in the minds of the majority of children. Antiquity has furnished us with legendary matter which corroborates this belief, and the profound and universal validity of the old legends is explicable only by an equally universal validity of the above-mentioned hypothesis of infantile psychology.

I am referring to the legend of King Oedipus and the *Oedipus Rex* of Sophocles.

Freud supports his idea that the story depicts a universal psychic reality by emphasizing the uniquely enduring power of the Oedipus myth to move audiences:

If the *Oedipus Rex* is capable of moving a modern reader or playgoer no less powerfully than it moved the contemporary Greeks, the only possible explanation is that the effect of the Greek tragedy does not depend upon the conflict between fate and human will, but upon the peculiar nature of the material by which this conflict is revealed. There must be a voice within us which is prepared to acknowledge the compelling power of fate in the Oedipus, while we are able to condemn the situations occurring in... other tragedies of fate as arbitrary inventions (Brill 1995, pp. 274–276).

Over time, Freud's Oedipus theories became a crux of his construct for human psychosexual development and crucial in his understanding of neurosis. He also attributed the development of such superego constructs as religion to repression of the Oedipal drives. In the third stage of development ("phallic," age 3–6), children experience the Oedipal "complex," which involves erotic attraction toward the opposite-sex parent and jealousy toward the same-sex parent. In normal development, a "dissolution" of the Oedipus complex takes place when fear of castration by the father (or, for girls, envy of the father's penis together with a belief that castration has already been brought about by their mothers) causes children to repress their incestuous desires. This results in the beginning formation of superego, Freud's conception of an unconscious psychic component which enforces the father's/culture's prohibitions. Freud also suggested that the individual psychic process of the Oedipus conflict and its dissolution originally played out collectively in history. He first addresses this theory in



the final section of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), "The Return of Totemism in Childhood." In this passage, Freud imagines a "primal horde," Darwin's speculative idea of an early human society, in which a group of brothers have banded together and killed their father, who had banished them from the social group to deny their lust for their mother, his mate.

We need only assume that the group of brothers banded together was dominated by the same contradictory feelings toward the father which we can demonstrate as the content of ambivalence of the father complex in all our children and in neurotics. They hated the father who stood so powerfully in the way of their sexual demands and their desire for power, but they also loved and admired him. After they had satisfied their hate by his removal and had carried out their wish for identification with him, the suppressed tender impulses had to assert themselves. This took place in the form of remorse, a sense of guilt was formed which coincided here with the remorse generally felt. The dead now became stronger than the living had been, even as we observe it today in the destinies of men. What the fathers' presence had formerly prevented they themselves now prohibited in the psychic situation of "subsequent obedience" which we know so well from psychoanalysis. They undid their deed by declaring that the killing of the father substitute, the totem, was not allowed and renounced the fruits of their deed by denying themselves the liberated women. Thus, they created two fundamental taboos of totemism out of *the sense of guilt of the son*, and for this very reason, these had to correspond with the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex. Whoever disobeyed became guilty of the two only crimes which troubled primitive society (Brill 1995, pp. 884–885).

Freud ends this imagined scenario with his "conclusion that the beginnings of religion, ethics, society and art meet in the Oedipus complex" (Brill 1995, p. 895).

## Oedipus After Freud

Freud's linkage of myth with psychic processes has had a profound impact on subsequent psychology as well as on western culture generally. Over the last century, a great number of thinkers in diverse disciplines have responded to Freud's Oedipal theories either to confirm, deny, or retool

to fit their own purposes. Oedipus has also become, post-Freud, an even more pervasive presence in literature, the fine arts, and popular culture.

One important effect of Freud's Oedipal theories has been their impact on the interface between psychology and religion. The idea that a myth could depict a universal psychic reality raised the possibility that individual psyches are retellings of a greater, mythic reality, where – by searching, interrogating, and recognizing – human beings can find their place in a coherent whole. James Hillman remarks, "What holds us to Freud. . . is not the science in the theory but the myth in the science," and also, "Freud brought in myths and myth brings in God" (1995, pp. 102, 124).

For some in psychology – behaviorists, for example – myth and gods are not objective enough means or content for the conduct of scientific inquiry. Others, however, who share some of Freud's basic ideas (such as the importance of the unconscious) have continued and expanded what the Oedipal theory began in what is broadly referred to as depth psychology. The central early figure in this endeavor was Carl Jung, a one-time disciple/colleague of Freud, who split with his mentor over a fundamental difference in their concepts of human nature.

Jung expanded upon Freud's recognition of the universality of Oedipus in his idea of a "collective unconscious," where primal forms (archetypes) of all human experience exist in a subliminal reservoir, from which individual psyches draw guidance and energy as they seek to realize the potential of their own natures. While Freud implies that the Oedipus myth is a later, cultural construct representing the historical experience of certain instinctive sexual drives, Jung's collective unconscious suggests a more complex origin for myth. In a manner similar to dreams for an individual, myth emerges into consciousness out of the collective unconscious, from whose mysterious depths it derives symbolic content implying a natural teleology not limited to physical evolution of the species. Jung claimed, for instance, that myth and dream contain evidence for the existence of Self, an archetype of the collective unconscious which is



the universal potential for human beings: a perfect merger of individual and the whole of creation, a concept analogous to God.

Jung's extension of the Oedipal theories to the collective unconscious and to his study of world myth and symbology can be cited as having a seminal influence on the development of later twentieth-century psychological fields that emphasize human spirituality over instinct, such as transpersonal psychology and archetypal psychology. Broadly speaking, these may be thought of as religious psychologies in that they premise a link between individuals and enduring, perhaps timeless, forms. In such approaches to psychology, the entire body of human myth – including all the stories of Oedipus – is a context in which the stories of individual lives declare their meaning.

Also, Freud's Oedipal explanation for the origins of religion instigated reactions and accelerated the development of the psychology of religion, a field to which such figures as Erik Erikson and Erich Fromm have made significant contributions. Among contributors to this field are psychoanalytical theoreticians who revise founder Freud's Oedipal theories and – instead of regarding religion as a neurosis to be outgrown – propose a newly harmonious relationship between psychoanalytic theory and religious thought.

## See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Om

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In the Eastern religions, which grew out of the Vedic tradition, sound vibrations are thought to have great power in both the spiritual and physical domains. *Om* is believed to be the first sound of the universe, the creative power from which all else emerged. Pronounced A-U-M (Ah-oo-mm), all sounds are believed to be contained in this *Prandava* or primal sound. A favorite mantra (chant) in Hinduism and Buddhism, *Om* is believed to be the Name – the very Presence – of the Absolute. Many individual or communal rituals begin or end with the chanting of *Om*.

In psychotherapy, if meditation is recommended, the practice of mantra meditation may be very calming and/or uplifting for the client. *Om* is an appropriate mantra for many clients. An alternative sacred word for meditation in the Judeo-Christian tradition is “Shalom” which ends with the same sound vibrations.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Mantra](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Omega Point

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The forthcoming unity of all humanity was defined as the “Omega Point” by Jesuit paleontologist and mystic, Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. In most mystical traditions, the idea of union with God is preceded by the experiential recognition of loving unity with all humanity. Sai Baba, for example, recently has stated that:

All the resources of nature like air are available to all irrespective of nationality or creed or race. This is the unity in diversity that has to be realized. . . . All should seek to live as brothers and sisters. No one should criticize any nation, faith or culture. When you cultivate this broad outlook, your culture will be respected by others. It is this spirit of unity that the world needs today (Sai Baba 1995, p. 214).

In medieval times, the Sufi mystic Ibn al-‘Arabi wrote of similar, cross-cultural breadth of love:

My heart has become capable of every form:  
It is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,  
And a temple for idols and the Pilgrim’s Ka’ba  
And the tables of the Tora and the book of the Qur’an.  
I follow the religion of Love; Whatever way  
Love’s camels take,  
That is my religion and my faith (Cited in Halligan 2003, p. 1).

With the rapid advance of globalization, our society is currently undergoing many challenges related to the interface of various cultures, both those within our midst and those external to our borders. Psychotherapy frequently deals with relationship issues that are tinged by cultural differences. When the therapist maintains a broad, accepting perspective, she or he can more readily facilitate resolution to the interpersonal and group struggles that are inevitable as we try to unite into one world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ibn al-‘Arabi](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Sai Baba](#)
- ▶ [Teilhard de Chardin](#)

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## Oracles

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The term “oracle” can refer to a specific person who practices divination or to the mechanism used for divination (e.g., cards, trance possession, and reflecting bowl of water). The oracle is the medium who bridges between the spiritual world and the mundane world, or the one who interprets or reads significance into the message delivered, known as reading the portents.

An important oracle which has received some broad public attention. The oracle of Apollo at Delphi is perhaps the most famous oracle, but that position has been vacant since the Christian Church persuaded the Roman emperor Theodosius I to close pagan temples in 393 CE. The oracle, known as the Pythia, had provided guidance to both persons and city states since the eighth century BCE., so it represents a very long-standing social and spiritual tradition. One of the most famous sayings from classical Greek antiquity was reputed to have been inscribed on the lintel to the temple of Apollo at Mt. Parnassus, where the oracle resided. “Gnothi seauton,” or “know thyself,” echoes across the ages as surely sage advice.



The service (Gk. *chresmos*) provided was “gnosis,” or knowledge (Burkert 1985). There was an implicit assumption that a special type of knowledge was needed to resolve a troubling circumstance in the individual. This shows the therapeutic effect of knowledge, an idea which continued throughout the gnostic traditions of the mystery religions and early Christian heresy. It is also the basis upon which reason was used in philosophy; there is something corrective about knowing the truth, whether it is in abstract matters or mundane affairs needing decision. Healing is a special type of gnosis; it involves two aspects, diagnosis and treatment. The diagnostic phase is easily seen as open to oracular spirituality. The means of healing can be prescribed in dreams as will be described below.

There are many theories about how the oracle entered into an altered state of consciousness. Some of speculated that the temple lay upon a fissure where intoxicating fumes emerged. The priestess would sit over the fumes. Others speculate that the intoxicant was some psychoactive plant, cannabis, or opium being common and known for their psychotropic properties. But evidence remains mixed and more speculative than consistent. Without reference to intoxicants, there is clear evidence of human ability to enter into trance and perform oracular functions, so the specific details are less important.

The Pythia illustrates one type of oracle, a localized connection between earth and spirit. This oracle remained at Delphi and was indeed part of the sacredness of Delphi. At the very heart of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, where the Pythia made her pronouncements, was the Omphalos, a large stone believed to be the navel of the world. This anchored the place at a spiritual level dating back to animistic times, well before the classical polytheisms. Because of this, those that seek advice must come from afar; this creates a link to the act of pilgrimage as a motive force in human spiritual psychology. The record of the pronouncement mostly concerns the issues of important people; Alexander the Great consulted the Pythia or affairs of state. He also later consulted the older oracle of Amun at the Siwa Oasis in Egypt. Little remains of the pronouncements for more mundane querants.

Healing also was a possible focus as in the case of the temples of Asklepios where the oracular function came to the querant themselves in dreams and the divination in the exegesis given by the priest upon awakening in the morning (Kerenyi 1959). Epidaurus was the main site for the cult of Asklepios, though the practical advantages of a dispersed expertise in healing led his cult to spread more widely in the Greco-Roman world of the Mediterranean. The island of Kos had a sanctuary, and in the heart of Rome on an island in the Tiber River, the temple of Asklepios, Latinized as Asklepios, was established. Asklepiian dream incubation illustrates an interesting variation on the oracular process. In most instances the divine speaks through the seer, but in this case, it comes to the seeker by night. Part of the ritual was entering into sleep with a group of fellow seekers.

An oracle who is still practicing is the Nechung oracle. He is the state oracle of Tibet and serves the court of the Dalai Lama as leader of the Tibetan people in exile ([http://www.tibet.com/Buddhism/nechung\\_hh.html](http://www.tibet.com/Buddhism/nechung_hh.html)). The movies *Kundun* and *Seven Years in Tibet* portray this figure. Like many oracular experiences, the film portrays a fairly active trance state with convulsive movements and guttural vocalizations. Like many senior Tibetan religious officials, he is considered a tulku that is a continued stream of incarnated lamas or teachers. Since oracular traditions in this region date back to the aboriginal Bon religion, we can see in this instance a layered texture to the spiritual experience. The Vajrayana Buddhism overlays an earlier animistic spirituality. The modern form of spirituality was influenced by a degree of formalism, yet more archaic forms such as spirit possession are retained and shaped by the newer world view of Tantric or esoteric Buddhism.

In modern revival/recreation of Norse religion, the oracular “seidh” ceremony is used to offer advice on personal decisions. The deities that possess the oracle in Seidh, of course, are Norse or Germanic in mythic frame, Odin, for example. The same basic formula of spirit possession serves to channel spiritual advice and

guidance. The time of spirit possession is a liminal one; the oracle is physically present in the mundane world but is mentally and spiritually engaged in the realm of the spirit and literally sees and hears things from beyond the veil. Indeed, the physical use of a veil to cover the head is a fairly common physical prop for the performance. In the seidh, one person allows him or herself to become possessed for the duration of the ceremony and enters into a trance state for the pronouncements (Paxson 2012).

There is a formal process of querants coming forth and asking specific questions. As with all divination, this is a dialectical process, that is, one governed by the formal social and communicational properties of question and response. The advice of the oracle is couched to be responsive to the needs of the querant, yet bringing in an outside perspective on the decision or trajectory about which the querant seeks guidance. The advice is also vague enough to leave a number of things unclear. This adds a degree of openness to unfolding possibilities that makes the divination of an oracle a flexible guide rather than a deterministic or fatalistic prediction.

## See Also

- ▶ [Apollo](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Divination](#)
- ▶ [Esoteric Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Tulku](#)

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## Original Sin

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Original sin is the Christian doctrine which says that because of the sin of Adam and Eve, original innocence is lost and all subsequent human beings are born into a state of sinfulness. The doctrine states that human beings do not commit this sin but rather contract it from the Fall of Adam and Eve (CCC: 404). In other words, original sin is an inherited condition.

The doctrine of original sin was most famously formulated by North African theologian St. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) following his conversion to Christianity (Augustine, *Confessions* 8:12). His theology was deeply influenced by Plato's separation of the body and soul, a dualistic vision in which the pure and immutable soul is trapped in the prison house of a corruptible body. Upon his conversion to Christianity, Augustine renounced all pleasures of the flesh and, embracing the spiritual world, chose the celibate life. But he soon realized that the mind could not suppress the desires of the body and concluded from this that there must be some defect in human nature. That defect, he argued, came from original sin.

Although the words "original sin" do not appear in the Bible, the doctrine of original sin is implicit in the writings of the apostle Paul. In his letter to the Romans, Paul says that it is by one man that sin entered the world (Romans 5:12) and that by one man's disobedience, all were made sinners (Romans 5:19). Central to Augustine's argument is the premise that all of humanity was summed up in Adam. Thus, when Adam disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was not just Adam who sinned but all of human nature that sinned. Augustine argued that original sin was transmitted through concupiscence, an idea affirmed by the Council of Trent (1545–1563). As a result of original sin, humanity is



condemned. Hope for redemption comes with the death of the second Adam, Jesus, who atones for the sins of humanity. Participation in his death by baptism washes away the stain of original sin (Romans 6:3–11).

Not all agreed with Augustine in his day. Most notable was a British monk by the name of Pelagius. He argued that human beings sin not because they are predisposed to do so due to the disobedience of Adam and Eve but because they utilize free will and choose to imitate bad example. He was condemned by the Church at the Council of Orange (529 CE), and it was Augustine's view that prevailed. Some believers today, most notably the Disciples of Christ and Mormons, side with Pelagius in rejecting the doctrine of original sin as unbiblical. They argue that human beings are only responsible for the sins that they commit and not the sins of the fathers (see, e.g., Deut. 24:16; Ezek. 18:20; Jer. 31:29–30).

## Commentary

From Freud's perspective, original sin has a parallel in the guilt of oedipal transference, an idea he articulates in his *Totem and Taboo*. Here, Freud argues that the killing of the primal father creates man's sense of guilt. In "Our Attitude to Death" (14: 292–293), Freud argues that the Christian doctrine of original sin further allows us to deduce the nature of this primal guilt. If humanity, he argues, is redeemed from original sin by the sacrifice of Jesus, then by implication, there must have been a murder. Freud therefore concludes that original sin is the primal crime of the killing of the primal father.

Jung was deeply critical of the traditional Christian doctrine of original sin, his principle critique being that it implied that man rather than God is responsible for evil. However, he thought that if psychologically interpreted, it is "...of profound therapeutic significance" (Jung 16 § 186), particularly if understood as an expression of the archetype of the shadow.

## See Also

- ▶ [Adam and Eve](#)
- ▶ [Augustine](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Genesis](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Plato on the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)

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## Orpheus and Orphism

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The image of Orpheus as a semidivine mythological being and perhaps an actual person has inspired countless works of art for well over two and half millennia. Within the domains of myth and art, he is primarily associated with his renowned abilities as poet and musician. Many



versions of his story describe the captivating power his music exerted over anyone or thing near him while he played his cithara. Equally compelling is the story of the death of his newly-wed bride, Eurydice, and his journey to the underworld to attempt her retrieval. He also plays a crucial role aboard the Argos accompanying Jason and fellow Argonauts on the quest for the Golden Fleece. Perhaps most intriguing, from the perspective of religious studies, is his purported role as the founder of a non-Hellenic renunciation cult called Orphism that condemned animal sacrifice and produced a large body of works describing a cosmogony and eschatology that stand in sharp contrast to those described in Homer and Hesiod.

The Orphic doctrine views all of humanity as semidivine in origin due to our having sprung from the ashes of the Titans after they had tricked, killed, and then eaten the infant Dionysos, the divine ruler of the universe. In retribution, Zeus immolated the Titans but only after the infant god had been ingested. Those calling themselves followers of Orpheus based their belief system upon this divine somatic origin myth. Accordingly, the Orphic believer was asked to renounce the mundane and concentrate on cleansing himself of his Titanic ancestry through purification rituals and certain lifestyle choices. Such precepts included vegetarianism and the prohibition from using any sort of animal product, including wool, as it was believed the animal's soul could actually be human and that shearing it could cause the soul harm. The initiate was told of the possibility that several incarnations would be necessary as preparation for his eventual apotheosis. These followers of the priest-initiate Orpheus are also believed to have propagated the literature that scholars nowadays refer to as the *Orphica*. These unearthed texts describe the worshippers' insistence on bodily purification so that the soul could be deemed worthy of returning to its original divine state in the afterworld.

The figure of Orpheus with his lyre first appears in the early to mid-sixth century BCE on the metopes of the Sikyonian *monopteros* at

Delphi, although his name is spelled Orphas (ORΦΑΣ). In Greek literature towards the middle of the same century, he is referred to as "famous Orpheus" by the poet Ibycus. Also beginning at this time, his image is often depicted on vase paintings. No mention of Orpheus is made anywhere in Homer or Hesiod, those two poets whose works provide us with the earliest recorded Greek myths. This is probably due to the rapid southward movement and repopularization of the cult of Dionysos which occurs less than two centuries after the written appearance of Hesiod's *Theogony* and Homer's epics. It is from Dionysos' legendary birthplace of Thrace – a territory considered wild by the Greeks and on the fringes of the geographical domain encompassed by the principal Hellenic cults of worship – that Orpheus is also said to have come.

Whether a historical figure named Orpheus actually lived and delivered the mysteries, or *teletae*, which are said to reside at the ritual heart of such Orphic beliefs is an open question.

## Commentary

Thematically, Orpheus occupies an intermediary position between the Dionysian (earth, moon, body) and Apollonic (sky, sun, spirit) forms of worship. Indeed, most versions of the myths recounting his story acknowledge these contrasting influences upon him in their attribution of paternity to Apollo and his death by dismemberment at the hands of the Maenads (female worshippers of Dionysos). Originally a worshipper of Dionysos, Orpheus travels a narrative arc from the chthonic, earthy domain of Dionysos to the rarefied heights of Apollonian worship.

Images of Christ as Orpheus appear frequently during early Christianity, examples of which can be seen in the catacombs of Peter and Marcellus in Rome and in the catacomb of Domitilla. In most cases, Orpheus is seen holding his lyre surrounded by animals that sit calmly at his feet. Arguably, there are many thematic parallels



between Orpheus' life and those of the life of Christ. Although Orpheus communicated his message in song and word and Christ just with words, the results were captivating for all those within earshot and highlighted by accounts of miracles surrounding their actions. Both were said to have ventured to the underworld and both died violent deaths on behalf of the salvation of their respective believers.

Viewing the story of Orpheus psychoanalytically reveals a fixation based on the unsuccessful resolution of psychodynamic conflicts experienced during the oedipal stage of psychosexual development. The death of Eurydice on their wedding day may indicate a son who is still sexually fascinated with the mother and for whom the wife's image carries no potency. The hero's descent into Hades where he converses with the king and queen of the underworld represents the ego's attempt to negotiate with the subconscious aspects of the parental images that comprise his superego. The warning to not turn back and look at Eurydice as he leads her to the upper world is reminiscent of the incest taboo. That Orpheus does indeed turn to look back at Eurydice suggests an attempt to resolve his oedipal anxiety by actually violating the taboo. Losing his wife a second time causes him to suffer a great depression.

The Orphic doctrine's primary tenet of repeated reincarnation with an eventual return to godliness stated as a goal appears an attempt to reduce the individual's anxiety over dying. The image of returning to a divine state functions as compensation for life's mundane qualities and the individual's limitations, especially mortality. Curiously, Orpheus establishes a cult of renunciation. In Freudian terms, this is reminiscent of the child's attempts to manipulate the parent by controlling the amount and types of food ingested. This behavior indicates further regression to the anal and oral stages.

From the point of view of Jungian psychology, Orpheus is a hero who conquers his desire to return to the mother and thus provides a template for the successful canalization of libido that is necessary for the individual's

individuation. In the case of Orpheus, the obstacle to the flow of libido is represented by Eurydice's death on their wedding day. Her death by snakebite indicates that the complexes awakened in Orpheus are from those domains occupied by images of both the father and the mother. These constellate on the son's wedding day and propel the narrative forward until resolution is achieved at the threshold between the lower and upper worlds when Orpheus looks back at Eurydice. That this look back prevents Eurydice from joining Orpheus in life can be seen to represent his failure to integrate the anima's position into consciousness. Still, as a variation on the night sea journey motif, Orpheus' journey to the underworld does result in the tempering of his soul. In accordance with the motif of the hero's journey, Orpheus is ultimately reborn as the head of a mystery cult. In this sense he successfully canalizes the blocked libido by sublimating it to a higher cultural purpose.

The figure of Orpheus the poet/musician distinguishes himself from other Greek heroes in that he feels compelled to transcend the boundary between the upper and lower worlds for love. In some versions of the myth, he undertakes this journey for the love of his wife. In others, he descends to the underworld to secure special consideration by Persephone for his followers upon their entry into Hades. In both of these examples, Orpheus transcends the physical boundary defined by death in an attempt to intercede for the benefit of others. Perhaps for this reason, and coupled with his reputation as a poet and a musician, his image is often co-opted as an emblem of romantic creativity and inspiration, two qualities revered and required by all artists.

In modern interpretations of the myth, a rich panoply of images emerge depicting other, hybrid modes of masculinity – characterized by corporeal depth and spiritual inspiration – that manifest themselves as amalgams of solar (traditionally masculine) and lunar (traditionally feminine) aspects of psyche. Indeed, the image of Orpheus brandishing a musical instrument

instead of a sword to overcome the obstacles he encounters is emblematic of a form of masculinity that successfully integrates these two poles. In this view, Orpheus' look back to Eurydice is an act that follows conscious deliberation, an act that paradoxically results from and causes an integration of unconscious elements into consciousness. Here, Orpheus is now privy to the secrets of the underworld and understands that Eurydice's death is part of her own process within a larger framework. His look back allows her to return to her path, although the cost to him is great. Sacrificing his personal wishes propels Orpheus fully onto his path of individuation, or self-actualization, in that he finds his true calling as the founder of a mystery cult with the image of Eurydice and her assumed eventual apotheosis functioning as an inspiration.

### See Also

- ▶ [Apollo](#)
- ▶ [Apollonian and Dionysian](#)
- ▶ [Apotheosis and Return](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Dionysos](#)

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## Orthodox Christian Pastoral Care

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Orthodox Christian pastoral care is, essentially, an encounter of persons: the person of the pastor, the parishioner, and the three persons of the Holy Trinity. These encounters can be brief, ostensibly insignificant public encounters, or deep private conversations. Smaller encounters set the stage for deeper encounters in times of struggle or distress. The primary role of the pastor is one of prayerful presence as he enters into the tension of these pastoral encounters, situating each encounter within the life of the parishioner and the life of the Church.

These encounters can be experienced but not fully defined because persons are created in the image of God, who can be experienced, but not be fully explained or defined. Orthodox pastoral care treats people, not problems or diagnoses, and healing occurs within this encounter of “knowing” and being known in relationships. Pastoral care is focused on bringing healing through reconciling persons with God and his Church. Naturally, expressing feelings, gaining insight, changing destructive cognitions, and solving problems are aspects of this process of personal encounter of reconciliation, wholeness, and healing. However, the pastor focuses on facilitating openness, rather than solving problems.

### Pastoral Care as Being Transformed in the Tension

People come to pastors for assistance because they are experiencing distress, or tension, within themselves or their relationships. Tension is considered negative, and our instinct is to fear it, to hide it, or to run from it, which only prevents us from being fully known and fully transformed. Pastoral care is an entry into, and an experience



of, the tension between being and becoming associated with our human condition and vocation. Human beings are created in the image of God and called to grow into the likeness of God. Each person is both the chief of sinners (I Tim. 1:15) and called holy, a saint (I Cor. 1:2). Within each of us is both sin (I John 1:8) and the Kingdom of God (Luke 17:21).

St. Paul says, “I would not have known sin except through the law” (Rom. 7:7). The institution of the Mosaic Law makes the tension manifest. This tension is not a problem, but a place to live, to learn, and to love. The tension becomes destructive when we deny or avoid it. The goal of Orthodox pastoral care is not to solve the tension, but to glorify God and to love in the tension. The tension creates a space for us to exercise our freedom. Avoiding the tension by acting out on desires or impulses in destructive ways destroys relationships, undermines intimacy, and enslaves persons to sin and addiction.

Pastoral care is an encounter of the struggle between sinner and saint without denying the experience and significance of human brokenness or the reality and significance of the true self we are called to become in Christ. No matter how hard we try, we cannot be without sin, and even if we give in to every temptation, we cannot erase the image of God in us. We cannot completely condemn, nor fully accept, ourselves as we are. The truth lies in accepting the tension as the battleground in which we live. The process of pastoral care is the process becoming or emerging as true selves within this tension.

Tension is a natural aspect of all relationships. Pastoral care with couples is a process of assisting couples in recognizing the tension and responding in love toward each other in the tension. The tension becomes creative when we recognize it, not as something destructive but as reality and the source of our growth and transformation. Attempts to escape, or flee, the tension by dominating the other, or becoming passive, serve to destroy relationships, growth, and healing. This tension is the cross of Christ, through which we encounter a real resurrection in ourselves and in our relationships. Avoiding the

cross eliminates the possibility of a resurrection. And, for the Orthodox, the Cross of Christ is always intimately and inescapably connected to the resurrection. The path of the cross is a path of joy and life rather than misery and suffering.

Orthodox theology, dogma, canon law, and tradition are oriented toward this pastoral encounter and find their full meaning within this pastoral encounter. Pastors may make use of secular and psychological theories and methods of human persons, illness, and healing within this pastoral encounter. While we cannot claim to fully define this pastoral encounter, we can describe it as holistic, relational, narrative, theological, ecclesial, eschatological, sacramental, ascetic, and penitential.

### **Holistic**

Orthodox pastoral care concerns itself with the whole person, physically, psychologically, and spiritually, within a particular familial, socioeconomic, and social setting and ecology. Issues of race, class, and gender find their place within this holistic encounter, while remaining focused on the person of the parishioner. The personal does not become political, but for the Orthodox, the political is personal. Hard and fast distinctions between pastoral care, pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and confession are foreign to Orthodox pastoral care. Holistic pastoral care requires the involvement of lay professionals who bring their expertise to bear on the pastoral encounter in support of persons. This includes, but is not limited to, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and family physicians. The pastor draws from any and all of these resources and must collaborate with other professionals in his care.

### **Relational**

Orthodox pastoral care, by definition, occurs within the relationship of the pastor and the parishioner in the context of each person’s

relationship to God. Pastoral care is relational because God is relational and we encounter Him in relationship. In this way, it is the very relational nature of the pastoral encounter that is healing. The Orthodox understand persons to be relational beings, persons created in the image of a relational God, called to the fullness of life in and through relationships with God and others. All relationships in this pastoral encounter share equal importance, necessitating the pastor to have a close relationship with God and the parishioner. The pastor's relationship with God, more so than any formal study, is the source for the spiritual guidance. The skills and characteristics associated with healthy relationships, including openness, vulnerability, intimacy, boundaries, listening, and attending, are critical for pastors in this encounter. Relationships within the entire life of the parishioner are aspects of this encounter, and pastors attend to these relationships. Healing is understood as restoring and reconciling persons within their relationships.

## **Narrative**

While this pastoral care encounter cannot be reduced to stories, it is an encounter expressed and communicated through stories. The pastor is a listener. He listens to the story of parishioner, to his own story, and to the Gospel story. Troubling aspects common to all persons are issues of loss, grief, pain, suffering, shame, betrayal, abandonment, and guilt. The pastor listens for those aspects of the parishioner's story that have yet to be told, typically the more painful, shameful aspects of story. Pastors listen to the affective experiences and cognitive interpretations of the parishioner.

Listening to the story of the parishioner is an act of veneration by the pastor and an invitation to new experiences and meaning making as parishioners open their stories to the healing story of the Gospel. Pastoral care is an integration of our stories into the Gospel story. The Gospel story is life giving and invites new meanings, new interpretations, and new experiences to both pastor and parishioner. The pastor draws out, or calls

forth, new, untold aspects of the parishioner's story and reinterprets past events according to the story of God and his saving acts in history and the Church. While teaching the story of Christ and the Gospel is an aspect of this encounter, more basically, pastoral care is a living encounter of this story of Christ in the world. The story of the pastor, as well, is enriched and expanded in this encounter. In this sense, pastoral care is not something the pastor does to the parishioner but something the pastor encounters with the parishioner. Only within, and until he hears, the story of the parishioner can the pastor offer appropriate guidance. The canons and pastoral guidelines of the Orthodox Church find their place within the unique story of each person.

While Christ, or persons, cannot be reduced to stories, neither can we escape stories. What makes this pastoral care encounter Orthodox Christian, in part, is the specific Orthodox story of humanity and God's saving acts in history that guides the pastor.

## **Theological**

The pastor lives out of and perceives the world through the Orthodox theological story or world view. Orthodox theology of persons, sickness, health, and healing informs the pastor's interpretations, meaning making, diagnoses, and assessment. Persons are comprised body and soul and become fully human through union with God through the Church. Orthodox theology including, but not limited to, anthropology, sacramental theology, ecclesiology, and pneumatology is best understood, not as separate academic disciplines but in the context of this pastoral encounter. The Orthodox Christian story is theological and is known and experienced in the life of the Church.

## **Ecclesial**

Pastoral care is Orthodox because it occurs within the life of the Church, as both institution and mystical body of Christ. The pastoral encounter, although private, is a communal event situated



with the community of faith and connected to the sacramental body of Christ. Rather than a reality separated from the rest of our life, liturgy and Church reveal the reality of God's kingdom as something we experience directly with our whole lives. Pastoral care is patterned after this liturgical offering. We participate liturgically and pastorally as we offer back up to God our broken selves, our suffering, and our sins and receive his healing presence. Healing occurs as persons are restored into the sacramental, prayerful, and worshipping communion of the Church. Pastoral care is the process of integrating persons into the worshipping community. The Church, as Eucharistic community and body of Christ, is understood to be source of all healing. We respond within the internal and interpersonal tension, not as individuals but as persons connected to the life of the Church. For the Orthodox, persons do not serve the needs of the Church. Rather, the needs of the person are fulfilled within the life of the Church.

### **Eschatological**

Orthodox pastoral care is oriented toward the Kingdom of God, not just as a future event but as a present reality within the sacramental body of the Church. True holistic care cannot be limited to just this fallen world. The kingdom of God as a lived experience, now and in the future, informs pastoral care of present struggles. The Orthodox do not define persons according to their fallen state, fallen desires, or struggles but according to their vocation. Our sainthood is an eschatological reality and our sinfulness an earthly experience. This eschatological orientation creates and maintains the tension that enables us to transcend our fallenness. The pastor guides the parishioner to respond within the tension according to the values and virtues of the kingdom of God. The tension is the context for purifying our souls as we choose to walk according to God's commandments. An eschatological orientation holds firm the perspective that we grow and heal as we respond to current struggles with meekness, peacemaking, gentleness,

long suffering, self-control, patience, and kindness. This is not passivity, but strength that is expressed as forgiveness, mercy, and love. It is the eschatological orientation or pastoral care that enables the pastor to attend appropriately to all the real struggles that we face today.

### **Sacramental**

We encounter the divine reality of God through symbol and image and participate in that divine reality sacramentally. As Orthodox, the Church is the one sacrament within which we become Christ's body. We become fully human through uniting with Christ sacramentally through the Eucharist as we live out our vocation in daily life. The Church reveals the sacramental nature of all of reality, namely, that God reveals himself through physical matter and we encounter Him through symbol and image. The Church serves to restore communion between God and humanity through the sacrament of Church. Yet, this sacramental encounter with the living God requires human cooperation and participation. That participation is the response, in the pastoral encounter within the sacramental life of the Church, of turning toward God in the tension.

### **Ascetic**

The Orthodox understand that struggle is in the nature of this world and in the nature of the path of healing and growth. Seeking the kingdom of God in the face of present difficulties requires effort. Asceticism is the struggle to pursue what is true, good, and healing in the face of sinful temptations and desires that hurt or harm the self and others. True asceticism fosters connection to others. When couples resist the temptation to attack or betray each other and struggle to offer themselves to each other, they grow in intimacy and closeness. Pastoral care seeks to direct parishioners along the path of true asceticism as an affirmation of the self and a denial of sin. Pastoral care is ascetic because it demands a selfless sacrifice of the pastor toward the



parishioner. Healthy relationships require self-offering which requires that we struggle to resist the temptation to hide from or to use, abuse, or reject each other.

## Penitential

The Orthodox recognize the ascetic process of turning away from destructive desires and turning toward God as a process of repentance. The pastoral encounter is an ongoing process of turning toward God in the tension. The pastor guides the parishioner to offer up his or her sin, mistakes, and very brokenness to God within the tension. The Orthodox approach confession therapeutically, rather than juridically. Confession is a process of allowing ourselves to be known by the pastor and by God. Confession is an act of hope and joy and an affirmation of God's love and healing rather than a process of shame and guilt. All of the Christian life, and by extension the pastoral encounter, is oriented toward facilitating openness through confession and repentance. Self-knowledge is the fruit of repentance.

Orthodox pastoral care encompasses the whole of the Orthodox tradition and life of the Church, and all of the life of the Church finds its place in this pastoral encounter. The Church seeks to transform persons in the midst of the struggle through relationships that foster a deep communion between persons within the deep communion between God and all of humanity.

## See Also

- ▶ [Asceticism](#)
- ▶ [Confession](#)
- ▶ [Couples, Marriage, and Family Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Eschatology](#)
- ▶ [Fall, The](#)
- ▶ [Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Intimacy](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Sacraments](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)

- ▶ [Sin](#)
- ▶ [Spectrum of Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Care](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Direction](#)
- ▶ [Suffering and Sacred Pain](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)
- ▶ [Vocation](#)

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## Orthodox Judaism

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While the beliefs and practices of Orthodox Jews date back to the very inception of the Jewish faith, the term "Orthodox Judaism" is of modern origin. First coined in the 1800s by assimilated German Jews interested in an updated form of the Jewish religion, "Orthodox Judaism" initially



connoted overly strict adherence to a system of doctrine and law that was no longer relevant in the period of the Enlightenment (Spiro 2010). Perhaps because of the unflattering connotations of the term “Orthodox Judaism,” many modern-day Orthodox Jews refer to themselves as “Torah Jews” or “Observant Jews” – implying that rather than adherence to an outdated system of ritual, Orthodox Jews live in accordance with the timeless Will of God as revealed in the Torah, or God’s Law given at Mount Sinai.

There are several sects of Orthodox Judaism, including Ashkenazi (European descent), Sephardic (Middle Eastern descent), Hasidic (followers of Israel Baal Shem Tov), and Religious Zionist. However, what unifies all Orthodox Jews is the belief in the divinely given and binding nature of the Torah. As such, Orthodox Jews organize and live their daily lives in accordance with *Halakha*, or Jewish Law, as mandated by the Torah and interpreted by the rabbinic sages, also known as the Pharisees. This is in contradistinction to Reform and Conservative Judaism who do not view the entire corpus of Torah and rabbinic interpretation as binding.

The sources of *Halakha* are many. The Torah, or Five Books of Moses, is traditionally understood as containing 613 principle commandments. The Written Torah is supplemented by the Oral Torah, which includes explanations of the commandments as well as their applications. The Oral Torah exists today in written form, as recorded in the *Mishna* in approximately 200 CE and later in the *Gemara*, sealed in approximately the year 500 CE (together comprising the *Talmud*). In addition to the Written and Oral forms of the Torah, Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah vests in the rabbinic sages the authority to institute laws and practices not found in the Torah. The rabbinic holiday of *Hanukah*, for instance, is an example of this authority (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Shabbat* 21b). One final source of Jewish Law is known as *minhag* or custom. For Orthodox Jews, customs make up a rich part of Jewish life, are seen as significant, and are studied for their meaning.

## Basic Practices

There are several practices essential to the daily lives of Orthodox Jews. *Kashrut*, or the system of Jewish dietary law, instructs a Jew regarding the kinds of fish and meat that may be eaten (Leviticus 11:1–46, Deuteronomy 14:3–21). *Kashrut* also mandates the total separation of meat and dairy foods, including the separation of kitchen utensils and dishes into separate “milk” and “meat” categories. Orthodox Jews do not consume packaged foods or dine in restaurants that are not under kosher supervision.

Communal prayer is also essential to daily life for Orthodox Jews, as three times a day, Jewish men gather in groups of ten or more to recite prayers. While Jewish women are also obligated to pray, it is not incumbent upon them to assemble publicly as it is for men. While the text of public prayer is fixed, personal prayer emanating from the depths of one’s heart and expressed in one’s own words is certainly permitted, if not encouraged.

Another crucial part of an Orthodox Jew’s regular routine is the observance of the weekly Sabbath, known as *Shabbat*. During this 25-hour period from sunset Friday evening until the stars come out on Saturday night, Orthodox Jews recall the Divine “Work of Creation” (Genesis 2:1–3). To emulate God, who ceased creating on the very first Sabbath, Orthodox Jews refrain from a host of creative activities, including cooking, writing, gardening, or even striking a match (Exodus 20:8–11, 35:2–3; Deuteronomy 5:12–16). For Orthodox Jews, the Sabbath is a day of quiet and rest, as well as family time, Torah study, and festive meals cooked before the onset of the Sabbath.

Also essential to regular Orthodox Jewish life are the laws of *Taharat Hamishpaha*, or Family Purity, which governs marital sexuality between husband and wife. Briefly, the Torah commands the married couple to abstain from marital sexuality during menstruation. Menstruation is followed by “seven clean days” and then an immersion in a mikveh, or

ritual pool, after which the couple may resume marital sexuality (Leviticus 15:19–29, 18:19, 20:18; Babylonia Talmud, Tractate Niddah).

## Holidays

The major celebrations of Judaism can be divided into two main categories: Biblical holidays and rabbinic holidays. The Biblical holidays can be separated into two subcategories: the “Three Festivals” and the “Days of Awe.” Regarding the “Three Festivals,” the Torah commands the Jewish People to celebrate the festivals of *Pesah* (Passover), *Shavuot* (Pentecost), and *Sukkot* (The Feast of Booths) every year. Each festival commemorates a different aspect of the Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt and forty-year sojourn in the desert as described by the Torah, and each festival coincides with a different phase of the agricultural cycle in Israel (Exodus 23:14–17; Leviticus 23:1–22, 33–44; Numbers 28:16–31, 29:12:38; Deuteronomy 16:1–17). The “Days of Awe,” including *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year, and *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, are an intense period of repentance, forgiveness, and rededication to God (Leviticus 23:23–32, Numbers 29:1–11).

Finally, there are several holidays whose source is not Biblical, but rather rabbinic in origin. These include *Hanukah*, the celebration of the redemption from the ancient Greeks, and Purim, which celebrates the rescue of the Jews from annihilation during the time of the Persian Empire (Esther 9:20–32). Also decreed by the rabbis are a series of fast days observed in memory of different tragedies that befell the Jewish People throughout history. The strictest rabbinic fast day is that of *Tisha b’Av*, which recalls the destruction of both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.

## Role of Clergy

The “rabbi,” or Orthodox Jewish religious leader, may serve in a number of different roles. Perhaps the most common kind of rabbi is the

congregational or pulpit rabbi, whose job is to serve as a religious guide and teacher of his synagogue (the place of Jewish worship) and to provide his congregants with answers in questions of Jewish Law. Other rabbis serve as teachers in *yeshivas*, or religious academies, where young men gather to study traditional Jewish texts. Still other rabbis serve neither in teaching nor in congregational capacities but earn the title of “rabbi” after completing a program in rabbinic ordination.

While Orthodox Jewish rabbis are always male, their wives, known as *rebbetzins*, often serve women in educational and guidance capacities, too. Even so, *rebbetzins* and other well-educated Jewish women do not render decisions in matters of Jewish Law.

## Gender: Relationships Between Men and Women

Orthodox Jews place a very strong emphasis on modesty and appropriate boundaries between the sexes. Accordingly, Orthodox Jews frequently send their sons and daughters to separate schools, particularly after nursery school. Physical contact between boys and girls that are not of the same immediate family is forbidden.

Once they reach the age of about 18 or 19, Orthodox Jewish men and women begin to date for the purpose of marriage. Dating is typically facilitated through a middle party known as the *shadkhan*, or matchmaker, whose job is to suggest matches and serve as a reference for young couples as they get to know one another. Because premarital sex between couples is forbidden, engagement periods are typically short.

In many homes, family responsibilities are divided evenly between husband and wife. While a woman is certainly permitted to pursue a career, the primary responsibility for earning a living (if one spouse cannot work, for example) rests with the husband.

The obligation of Torah study is more demanding for men than it is for women. Nevertheless, many women, like men, invest significant amounts of time studying in Jewish subjects, and



many women enroll in seminaries to do just that. A woman's entitlement to hold Torah scrolls, although common practice within the Reform movement, is an issue of controversy among Orthodox Jews (see Reform Judaism).

## Practices Regarding Death

The Jewish way in death is very respectful of the dead and of the living, somber yet hopeful. Once a death has occurred, Orthodox Jews typically proceed to the funeral as quickly as possible, though not before the body is ritually cleansed and wrapped in simple white shrouds. According to *Halakha*, embalming and cremation are strictly forbidden. For the survivors of the dead, a period of mourning begins at the moment a loved one expires and continues until the burial. At that stage, a mourner is exempt from many religious duties, as his primary obligation at that time is arranging for the burial. Following interment, a 7-day period of mourning, called *Shiva*, begins when close relatives of the dead are visited by friends and relatives. Successive periods of mourning follow that are less intense, such as the 30-day period and the year period. For the loss of a parent, all mourning ends after 1 year, though memorial prayers are recited on the date of death in subsequent years.

## Alcohol/Drugs

Although wine is a sacrament in Judaism and is used in a host of Jewish rituals, Judaism frowns upon drunkenness and gluttony, encouraging a path of moderation instead. As Jewish Law charges Jews with maintaining and protecting their physical health, the use of illegal drugs is forbidden (Code of Jewish Law, *Hoshen Mishpat*, 427:8).

## Psychology

Orthodox Judaism has a positive attitude toward self-actualization and has a rich tradition of

psychological insight that parallels many schools of modern psychology including cognitive-behavioral therapy and psychodynamic therapy. In addition, Orthodox Judaism is not opposed to the use of psychotropic medications. Nevertheless, in many Orthodox Jewish communities, there remains a stigma in seeking psychotherapeutic and psychiatric services, though in some communities this stigma has abated in recent times.

Therapists treating Orthodox Jews should be especially sensitive to their strong commitment to personal responsibility, standards of modesty, Torah study, and normative *Halakha*. Common presenting problems include depression and anxiety associated with perceived religious failings, compulsions related to religious scrupulosity and issues of religious identity (Rabinowitz 2000).

## Conclusion

In summary, Orthodox Jews take pride in a tradition of adherence to the Will of God, whose Torah or Instructions, they believe, were given to the Jewish People at Mount Sinai some 3,300 years ago. Chief of an Orthodox Jew's goals in life is living in accordance with *Halakha* or Jewish Law, both in terms of the strict letter of the law, as well as in its spirit. Indeed, Orthodox Jews endeavor to serve God in every moment of the day, whether they are studying the Torah or at prayer or whether they are eating or working to provide for their families. Orthodox Jews are availing themselves of psychotherapy in increasingly larger numbers, aware that psychological problems, as well as treatments to alleviate them, are quite real.

## See Also

- ▶ [Baal Shem Tov](#)
- ▶ [Conservative Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Exodus](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [Hasidism](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Law](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Mourning Rituals](#)

- ▶ [Jewish Reconstructionism](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Sexual Mores](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Midrash](#)
- ▶ [Mikveh](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Prophets](#)
- ▶ [Reform Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Shema](#)
- ▶ [Substance Abuse and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Talmud](#)
- ▶ [Yahweh](#)

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## Orthodoxy

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“Orthodoxy” means “right belief.” The term comes from the combined Greek words *orthos*, meaning “right, true, straight,” and *doxa*, meaning “praise.” In early Christian history, it was used in contrast with heresy, which literally means “choice.” The classical view of orthodoxy refers to the right belief that Jesus taught his disciples and handed down by them to the leaders of the Christian church. Its most basic form is found in the credal statements adopted by the

four ecumenical councils of the early Church and held by the majority of the believers in early Christian period.

In the history of Christianity, belief in orthodoxy is tied with the idea of primacy or originality. Early Christian theologians emphasized the view that orthodoxy is *primary* and heresies are deviations and corruptions of the original and pure orthodoxy. Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (263–339 CE), established this view of orthodoxy during the time of Emperor Constantine (c. 275–337). The former is considered the most influential proponent of the standard that orthodoxy is primary and innovation is heresy. Other prominent Church Fathers like Irenaeus (c. 130–200) and Tertullian (c. 155–222) expressed the same opinions regarding the opposition between orthodoxy and heresy.

Orthodox Sunnis of Islam and Neo-Confucian scholars also tie orthodoxy with the idea of primacy and early origins. Orthodox Sunnis represent their faith as pure and primary because it has remained unchanged from the beginning. For Sunni Islam, ideal faith meant adherence to the time-honored practice of the tribe and clan. In fact, the word *Sunna* means “beaten path or standard practice of the Prophet.” Thus, orthodox faith is one that is free from any historical developments or innovations. Any innovation or change to the primal path established by the Prophet is heretical. This tradition of Sunni orthodoxy emerged during the latter half of the ninth century.

The Neo-Confucian scholars of the Sung dynasty (960–1279) also affirm the primacy of Confucianism in the world. Chu-Hsi (1130–1200), who synthesized Buddhist teachings with Confucianism, designated the “Transmission of the Way” as the core concept of *Tao* learning. He gave it the name *Tao-T'ung*. The *Tao-T'ung* is understood to have been transmitted from the ancient sage kings to Confucius and his original heirs. The works of the Sung thinkers who inherited this philosophical tradition were deemed orthodox in contrast with the writings of their rivals. The principal Neo-Confucian scholar of the modern times, Mou Tsung-san (1909–1995), formulated a new version of the *Tao-T'ung* but continued to highlight the importance of traditional Chinese philosophical lineage in establishing orthodoxy.



Thus, for early Christians, orthodox Sunnis, and Neo-Confucians, any claim to primacy of teaching must be authenticated by the manner of transmission, which assumes the direct contact between the master teacher and his disciples. The idea of chain of transmission or chain of traditions validates the truth of orthodoxy. Modern ideologies and scientific history also reveals the pursuit of the same standard of transmission.

In addition to the notions of primacy and fidelity, a third feature, unity, was essential to the establishment of Christian and Sunni Islam orthodoxy. In early Christianity, unity of faith and practice was contrasted with the multiplicity that characterized heretical groups and their teachings. Similarly, in Sunni Islam, the concept of *ijma'* or consensus became a central pillar of orthodoxy. In their writings, Sunni scholars are known to diminish the sectarian controversies plaguing the early history of Islam, in order to promote a more harmonious picture of Islamic faith and tradition.

## Commentary

Since beliefs are often translated into some form of social behavior, concern for tradition, fidelity, and unity within religious orthodoxy remain relevant to identity formation and social adaptation. Studies have shown a positive correlation between religion and life satisfaction, revealing that a person's quest for the meaning of life is strongly associated with psychological well-being. Current research also demonstrates that religion plays a role in the development of a person's meaning system, which in turn allows the believer to weave a coherent life story. In other words, religious tradition helps individuals construct their own sense of order as well as find meaning out of life's failures and achievements.

Devotion to religious orthodoxy, coupled with personal faith and church involvement, is important to the formation of a person's identity. As part of the religious community, people can learn about who or what they are. Such religious identification influences how they interpret the world. Studies reveal that those who consider themselves as

having more orthodox religious beliefs have no problem attributing life events to divine intervention. They are willing to give up total control, believing that with denouncement of the self comes greater mastery of life. In addition, as people root their own personal experiences within a fixed and broader narrative, community teachings and practices become part of the person's orienting system for relating to the world. Thus, they are able to face personal limitations and move beyond themselves to find solutions for life's problems and crises. Worldly cares and troubles do not threaten their unity, fidelity, and commitment to faith. In a sense, religious truth becomes a most powerful coping and defense mechanism for the preservation of one's self.

Nevertheless, external forces can challenge the potency of religious orthodoxy as a coping mechanism. Although many studies found that orthodox beliefs help individual attain psychological well-being, there are also those that find religious orthodoxy, in the fundamentalist form, to be more authoritarian and dogmatic and more racially prejudiced.

When a believer is intent to preserving religious orthodoxy, like the attempt of early Christians to rid the Church of heretics and infidels, an inflexible and rigid personality may develop. Such inflexible and rigid personalities seem to be more common among the Christian fundamentalist groups, for example. Research has implicated the latter with prejudice and more discriminatory attitudes towards Blacks, women, and homosexuals. Personal rigidity leaves a fundamentalist susceptible to prejudice when responding to peoples and perspectives perceived as threats to religious traditions.

When people are unwilling to question what is believed to be true teachings about God and humanity, and to discard an inherited set of life's practices, they become vulnerable to the rapidly changing and diverse world. They can acquire "closed minds" and develop a defensive constricted personality generally linked with a religiously orthodox upbringing. In the attempt to protect what is considered the greatest significance to the individual, ideological self-identifications may flourish among the religious orthodox and conservatives.





## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Confucianism](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)
- ▶ [Heresy](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Prejudice](#)
- ▶ [Prophets](#)
- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)

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## Osiris and the Egyptian Religion

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Although the Osiris story represents only one stream of a complex and multifaceted ancient Egyptian religion, the story is perhaps the Egyptian myth that most permeates later religions, alchemy, and the psychology of Carl Jung.

The cosmology in which Osiris originated was located at Heliopolis. There the followers of the

creator god, Ra, first achieved the unification of upper and lower Egypt and set up a capital which remained the major theological and academic center through many dynasties.

The creation of the world in this cosmology began with the masturbation of Ra or Atum. From his seed Shu, the airs, and, his sister, Tefnut, the moisture, were created. They were the first couple. They, in turn, gave birth to Geb, the earth, and his sister, Nut, the sky. Geb and Nut bore Osiris, Isis, Set, and Nephthys. Osiris married his sister, Isis, and his younger brother, Set, their sister, Nephthys.

Osiris and Isis were the parents of Horus. In one version of the myth, Isis and Osiris fell in love in the womb of Nut and produced Horus in utero.

Osiris was a talented musician who came to rule an Egyptian land afflicted by cannibalism and other ills. He converted the Egyptian people into civilized ways not by force but by persuasion and by his music.

After he had brought civilization to Egypt, he left the lands of Egypt under the rule of his sister-wife, Isis, to continue to spread civilization throughout the world. His brother, Set, coveting both Isis and the kingship, devised a plan to murder Osiris. He lured him into a box that he then cast into the sea.

Isis and Nephthys searched for Osiris and saved him, but the frustrated and vicious Seth again captured Osiris and this time cut him into pieces that he scattered throughout Egypt. A grieving and sorrowful Isis collected the scattered limbs of his body and bathed them with her tears.

However, she could not find the phallus so she fashioned one out of wood. Although she could not revive Osiris to the state of living, she was able to vivify him sufficiently as to impregnate herself.

In this version of the myth, Horus was born of Isis's efforts and he avenged his father and fought the forces of chaos represented by a battle with his evil uncle, Set. In the Egyptian mythology, the soul resided in the eye, and Osiris was said to be located in Horus's eye. The struggle between Seth and Horus was



prolonged and both suffered grave wounds. Eventually, a council of the gods declared Horus the victor. Thus, order was restored.

After Isis impregnated herself, Osiris descended into the underworld and became its god. Through this mythic understanding of Osiris's death and resurrection as the god of the underworld, the Egyptians explained the path of the sun and its renewal from its setting in the evening to its rising in the morning.

It was believed the evening sun penetrated a cave in the west and over a period of 12 h passed through the underworld from which it emerges the next morning, regenerated. At midcourse, the sun met Osiris and drew the energy from him for its renewal.

Also in his role as ruler of the underworld, Osiris was thought of as the judge who allows or disallows the dead the passage into the rebirth of an idealized afterlife.

Philosophically, the Egyptian religion professed the belief that the gods had laid down universal laws of order and justice (*maat*) at the moment of creation. The conflict between the forces of evil or chaos as represented by Seth and Osiris represented the disruption of this order, the redemption by Horus, the restoration of it. This also provided a way of understanding the chaos that at times affected the Egyptian political system.

The Egyptian political system itself was based on an identification between the rulers and the Osiris/Horus myth. The Egyptians believed their pharaoh to be both human and divine. Horus was the chief god of the upper world and became the symbol of kingship with which the living pharaohs identified with. Osiris who resided in the underworld was identified with the living pharaoh's deceased father.

The pharaoh was assimilated into Osiris in the afterlife. The process was dynamic with the living king understood as Horus in life and then Osiris after death. Most pharaoh's coffins were fashioned in the shape and pose of Osiris with his distinctive flail and crook held in arms crossed at his chest as a symbolic representation of this transition. It was from this relationship between the upper world and the underworld

that the pharaoh derived his power and wisdom in the Egyptian imagination.

In classical antiquity, Osiris's fame spread outside of Egypt through the writings of Plutarch and Apuleius among others. In fact, the myth of Osiris became the basis of a religion of salvation widely practiced in the ancient world.

## Commentary

The mystique of the Egyptian kingship exemplified for Jung, the force of the archetype in creating a symbolic image that can channel human experience. An archetype can be defined, as a predisposition to experience, and the symbolic image it creates is the best possible description of that experience. In the case of the Egyptian kingship, this would be the experience of the mysterious incarnation of the divine within.

In this mystique of kingship, Horus incarnated in the form of the pharaoh, and then at his mortal death, the pharaoh was reincarnated into the eternal realm of all pharaohs past held in the image of Osiris.

Thus creating a mythic picture and explanation of the soul's experience of eternity.

Because of this move from eternal being into mortality and then to immortality, Osiris acts as an archetypal image for the human experience of having an eternal soul within a mortal body. His story creates a philosophical metaphor for this human experience that defeats rational understanding. In other words, it creates, in a mythic form accessible to the individual psyche, a way of reconciling the experience of being alive with the knowledge of physical death.

Important, too, for the myth's psychological power is the fact that good eventually outweighs evil – meaningfulness prevails over meaninglessness. The archetypal battle of good and evil so much a part of the Christian era was arguably missing from the Hellenistic world, the Christian era's closer ancestor.

Osiris was originally the good divine king of the upper world who kept the cosmos in order. He was also fertility god associated with the force that generated the growth and life of crops.

His brother, Set, represented the forces of chaos and was associated with the desert, which for the ancient Egyptian was associated with all manner of evil.

To understand the importance of Osiris/Set/Horus myth as an archetypal image to the ancient Egyptians, it is helpful to take into consideration just how perilous the climate and conditions they lived under were.

For the Egyptian, the sun was a destructive as well as creative force. To produce crops, the rains had to come and the Nile had to flood. This allowed the land which every summer the relentless sun turned into desert to flood and be saturated, restoring its fertility. This usually happened, but frequently enough it did not and the result was disorder and famine.

Thus, the Egyptians had much less faith in the cycle of nature than the Europeans did. The sun, without adequate rainfall to produce the floods, turned the fertile land into a dead zone indistinguishable from the surrounding desert. The myth of Osiris, his destruction by Seth, and the redemption of Seth's evil by Horus as described above invested a meaning to the cycles experienced by the ancient Egyptian. The drama of the two brothers, Osiris and Seth, provided a mythic understanding of the perilous fertility cycle which was at times disrupted by disorder as it held the hope of a reordering in the eventual dominance of Horus.

Jung believes that the Christian era itself owes its significance, in part, to this archetypal form of kingship and the antique god-man mystery that has its roots in the story of the Osiris/Horus myth.

There is in the relationship between Horus and Osiris a symbolic equivalency to Christ and God the father. In Genesis, the Judeo-Christian god created an order, which became disrupted by Satan, an equivalent of Seth, and was then to be restored by the birth of Christ. The Christian story like the Egyptian myth represents the idea of the good god restoring the original order of creation after it is disrupted by an evil divinity.

From another perspective, Osiris, himself, represents, as did Christ, the god who incarnates and then dies a brutal death to be reborn back into immortality.

Unlike the other Egyptian gods, Osiris shows vulnerability. Though not as immanent as Jesus because Osiris was always god, he shows pathos. He alone of the Egyptian gods does not transcend the vicissitudes of human existence – specifically death. He, in fact, seems completely defenseless against his evil brother, Seth, and without the intervention of Isis would have been completely destroyed.

At the same time, Osiris represented fertility and life. Therefore, even as he was dead, Osiris was the source of life. The ancient Egyptians believed he was the source of growth and reproduction for all animals and plants. He was both dead and the source of life.

As such, Osiris can be understood as a vivid and complex achievement of the Egyptian imagination. He answered the psychological paradox and dilemma of grappling with death even as an eternal life force is experienced.

In sum, the ancient Egyptian imagination created in the archetypal image of Osiris a symbol that explained not only the experience of their particular existence but also the universal experience of humanity in reconciling the immortal experience of soul with the knowledge of physical death. It also provided a mythic carrier for the archetypal battle between good and evil.

## See Also

- ▶ [Astrology and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Our Lady of Guadalupe

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Our Lady of Guadalupe is the psychological underpinning of the Mesoamerican collective Self. In the context of the Christianity that arrived with the Spanish conquistadors, she represents the psychological bonding between the Mexican people and the sacred power of the Mother.

The story goes that early one morning on December 9, 1531, a newly Christianized Aztec peasant, Juan Diego, was walking up a hill in the Tepeyac area near what is now Mexico City when he heard singing. Soon a voice called to him from a cloud and a brown-skinned woman appeared, announcing that she was, in fact, the Virgin Mary. She asked that a church be built for her on the spot where Juan Diego stood. Juan Diego rushed to tell his bishop of the apparition, but the skeptical bishop demanded concrete proof. Juan Diego tried several more times to convince the bishop but had no success. Finally, on one occasion the lady appeared again, and when Juan Diego told her of the bishop's desire for proof, the Virgin instructed him to go to the top of the hill where he would find special Spanish roses that could not possibly bloom there in winter. These he was to deliver to the doubting bishop. Juan Diego cut the roses and placed them in his *tilma* (cloak). When later he opened his *tilma* to reveal the roses to the bishop, an imprint of the Virgin Mary appeared on it. The bishop now believed in the apparition. Eventually, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe was built, and it became the primary pilgrimage site in Mexico. The *tilma* image displayed there is easily the most popular religious image in Mesoamerica.

There are many scholars who point out that the area in which Our Lady of Guadalupe is said to have appeared was once sacred to the Aztec Earth Mother goddess Tonantzin.

Jacques Lafaye (1976), for instance, in his *Quetzalcoatl and Guadalupe*, suggests that

...as the Christians built their first churches with the rubble and the columns of the ancient pagan temples, so they often borrowed pagan customs for their own cult purposes.

It may well be that the story of Juan Diego's vision was a convenient means of displacing one local goddess for another localized and, therefore, believable figure, a de facto goddess whose appearance was Aztec rather than Spanish.

Be that as it may, Our Lady of Guadalupe has been a powerful force for healing and emotional support, for Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in general and perhaps especially for Mexican and Mexican-American women. Surrounded by a mandalic aureole, she is a symbol of inner wholeness, a symbol of the possibility of coping psychologically when all other support fails. The image of the brown goddess on the Aztec peasant's *tilma* speaks to Mexicans as no other vision of Mary can. It says

I am always here with you, protecting you, and you are important whatever your emotional or physical status.

### See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)

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# P

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## Paganism

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### The Origins of the Term Paganism

The term pagan etymologically derives from the Latin adjective *Paganus* which, typically, is taken to mean of the rural countryside. It is also a term which has been used pejoratively from its inception as uncivilized, uncouth, and rustic. However, this interpretation has come under criticism by historians Robin Lane Fox and Pierre Chauvin due to the term being utilized widely in Early Christian Rome when the bulk of the urban population remained pagan in today's terms. Like Chauvin, Ronald Hutton proposes that a more accurate meaning of the term in antiquity is that of followers of the customs and religions of locality (i.e., *pagus*) rather than one of the many cosmopolitan, universalist, and transcendent faiths of the early Christian period (Hutton 1991).

### Paganism and the Countryside

The perceived high prevalence of localized pre-Christian customs, idolatry, and ritual surviving in the countryside led to the association of the

*Paganus* with the uncivilized and rural. This distinction between rural and urban religious practices also links closely with the intensely urban and cosmopolitan demography of early Christianity. In the early Christian era, the term pagan came to represent those who still practiced the predominantly rural and localized expressions of pre-Christian belief in contrast to the predominantly urban and educated Christianity of the Middle Ages. In this sense, western thought has typically presented a universal divide between Christianity and, by association, the other Abrahamic faiths of Islam and Judaism and that of the incredibly diverse and wide ranging other faiths of antiquity, indigenous cultures, and contemporary pagan revivals. The adoption of this dualist distinction by cotemporary pagan revivalists has led to numerous conflicts between western pagan revivalists, eager to integrate traditional pre-Christian religious practices with pagan revivals, and members of indigenous cultures and non-Christian religions (Mulcock 1998, 2001).

### Paganism and the Abrahamic Faiths in Antiquity

With regard to interpretations of the paganism of antiquity, the central distinction that can be made with the Abrahamic faiths is that of locality and cultural pluralism. This distinction is pointed out by Martin Bernal in his discussion of the rise of the transcendent monotheistic and dualist

cosmopolitan religions of the second and third centuries CE, particularly in Egypt, the supposed heartland of the temple based urban paganism of antiquity. He argues that by the third century, the breakdown of traditional local structures of social and religious practice combined with rising urban cosmopolitanism placed enormous pressures on the localized basis of the traditional pagan religious institutions. These pressures were linked to long-term class and social tensions that gave Christianity and other universalist faiths, such as Manichaeism, an appeal when linked with Hellenic philosophy, with which the traditional localized temple religions could not compete. This in turn led to class prejudice and hostility to the old pagan religious practices that were inevitably strongest in the rural sector where traditional structures of community, folklore, and religion held sway and the localized ethnic identity of the religions of the *pagus* held more significance than in the cosmopolitan urban sectors (Bernal 1991).

This construction of a duality between Christianity (or more broadly Abrahamic faiths) and paganism and its pejorative use against non-Christian peoples, customs, and faiths came to dominate perceptions of religious diversity in western thought. A vast array of divergent religious practices, customs, and folklore were linked together by association as the antithesis of Christian values, culture, and ideals. Even where pagan writers were rehabilitated by the intelligentsia, as with the Greek and Roman philosophers and poets such as Virgil, Aristotle, and Plato, the reappropriation of pagan writers was carefully constructed within a dualist worldview of Christian and pagan. In this sense, the term pagan was reconstructed as the shadow side of Christian civilization with the term applied indiscriminately to disparate religious traditions. The notion of the pagan also came to serve as a crucible of symbolic and psychological projections of varying constructions of Christianity. These ranged from demonized images of traditional societies and non-Christian civilizations such as the Norse, to extensively idealized representations of pagan Greece and Rome.

### **Paganism as a Pejorative and Reactionary Term**

In this sense, as well as becoming a pejorative construction of anti-Christianity, ironically enough utilized by Protestants in their criticism of Catholicism as “pagan,” paganism also came to represent a symbolic construction for people’s frustration and dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the ills of Christian society. If Christianity, and by association western civilization, was intolerant, destructive, patriarchal, and rapacious, paganism could then be perceived in antithesis as matriarchal, tolerant, and living in harmony with natural world and society. This particular construction of paganism came to predominance during the massive social upheavals of the nineteenth century and the rise of the Romantic movement in literature and philosophy. Even as early as the seventeenth century, there were prominent cultural trends that described the Noble Savage as evidence of the innate goodness of man in his perceived natural state. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, writers such as Gabriel de Foigny, Jonathon Swift, Denis Diderot, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau commonly utilized primitivist and utopian notions of “natural man” based on the descriptions of “pagan societies” living close to the earth and following nature. These “neo-pagan” movements served to connect an idealized past to the present through ritual, symbolism, and aesthetics, constructing an alternative vision for society and an alternative struggle for cultural and social renewal. This construct attempted to ground itself in notions of historical and cultural authenticity and autonomy as set over and against the repressive and destructive aspects of western modernity, caricatured as universalist reason or an irrational, violent, and patriarchal Christianity.

### **Neo-Paganism and the Contemporary Pagan Revival**

The term neo-pagan appeared in the late nineteenth century and was used to refer to Romantic



discourses that supported the idea of a pagan revival as an antidote to the ills of industrialization and the perceived restrictive nature of conservative Christian morality. During this period, a plethora of new movements arose seeking to reclaim the past as a means of transcending the social ills, conflicts, and destructive aspects of the tumultuous present. These ranged from extensive searches for a historical authentic pagan religious practice to searches for pagan survivals in the present. There was also widespread embracing of the religious practices of indigenous peoples perceived to offer an antidote to the ills of Christianity and industrialism. Perhaps the most famous of these new movements was Gerald Gardner's Wiccan movement founded in the 1950s which came to be the foundation of the later pagan revival in the 1960s and 1970s. Central to these movements was the sense of looking back to an idealized past as a means of shaping the future and transcending the ills of the techno-centric or Christocentric present. While a full discussion of the myriad movements and versions of neo-paganism is beyond the scope of this entry, there are four main approaches to the past, to symbolism, and to symbolic constructions of identity in neo-pagan movements (Waldron 2000).

*Reconstructionist:* Those groups who rely on traditional historiography and empirical veracity in defining their historical legitimacy and socio-cultural identity. Also included in this grouping are the various national and ethnic groups such as Odinist, Celtic, or Creole-based practitioners who utilize the recreation of magical ritual as a means of defining a national cultural identity in the confines of traditional historiography.

*Traditionalist:* These groups derived from ritual magic intensive witchcraft such as Gardnerian and Alexandrian Wicca. These groups tend to be more concerned with the precision of ritual activity and magical practice than the veracity of their historical claims. Some people have used the term "traditionalist" to describe those claiming to have a hereditary or preindustrial background to their witchcraft beliefs.

*New Age/Eclectic:* These groups are heavily reliant on the work of Carl Jung and his theory of the collective unconscious. New Age/Eclectic neo-pagans are particularly concerned with the psychological impact and universality of symbols. They posit the psychic truth of symbolic representations manifested in history and other cultures as the ultimate source of authenticity in ritual opposed to the empirical veracity of truth claims.

*Ecofeminist:* Those groups that are particularly concerned with the plight of women and utilize the symbol of the witch as an ultimate expression of the persecution of women within patriarchal culture and society. These movements typically focus on the capacity of ritual and historical reclamation to empower women to deal with the social and environmental ills created by patriarchal forms of social control.

While these four models of neo-pagan approaches to symbolism and historicity have different structures for legitimating historical interpretation and ideological/cultural perspectives, there are several elements which link them together. The first is a belief that the application of the enlightenment and industrialization represents a distancing of humanity from its more authentic and natural existence uncorrupted by the influence of western civilization. Secondly, the neo-pagan movement is generally unanimous in the belief that western Christianity is guilty of suppressing much of what is free, creative, and autonomous in human nature – in support of a static oppressive patriarchal system of morality and social control. Thirdly, the witch crazes of the early modern period are taken as representative of a conscious attempt to oppress and destroy the vestiges of pre-Christian nature religions. And finally, the reclaiming and recreating of the pre-Christian agrarian past is perceived as the best way for contemporary society to evolve in such a way as to transcend the ills caused by the oppressive aspects of Christianity, the enlightenment, and western modernity.

While most of the neo-pagan movement's attempted initially to ground themselves in claims to empirical historical authenticity, recent

historical findings led to the collapse of many of the arguments upon which the movements were based. Most notable of these was the almost complete collapse of Margaret Murray's thesis of the witch persecutions of Early Modern Europe being an attempt by the Catholic church to stamp out surviving pagan practices (Ankarloo and Henningsen 1990 and Ginzberg 1992). In the aftermath of this collapse, many neo-pagans have abandoned empirical history as the basis of religious legitimacy and shifted onus for perceived veracity of ritual and symbolism in the psychological impact of the symbolism and ritual as archetypal forms. Often, this approach quite consciously embraces the analytical psychology of Carl Jung (Waldron and Waldron 2004). Perhaps the most recognizable exponent of this is Wiccan author Vivian Crowley, author of *The Old Religion in the New Age* (1998). This approach tends to focus on the psychological power of ritual and symbolism to evoke psychological truths while utilizing postmodern critiques of positivism to critique empirical constructions of the past by professional historians. Similarly, Michael York in "Defining Paganism" argues that definition rooted in the cultural forms and rituals of a particular movement is impossible. Instead, he argues that what links neo-pagan movements together is their shared attitude towards culture, nature, and spirituality, defined as "an affirmation of interactive and polymorphic sacred relationships, by individuals or communities, with the tangible, sentient and/or non empirical" (York 2000).

## Paganism Old and New

This particular approach illustrates just how far the original distinction between the religions of the *pagus* or locality and the Christian or monotheistic has shifted in terms of defining what paganism means. It also illustrates just how far many schools of pagan thought have shifted from ritual, philosophical, and symbolic legitimacy rooted in historicity and ethnicity. That being

said, it is worth noting that this approach is largely rejected by reconstructionist neo-pagans who immerse themselves in the material culture of the various paganisms of antiquity. These movements are typically closely attached to empirical forms of historical legitimation as both an expression of religious belief and ethnic identity, albeit often a reclaimed version.

The primary ideological basis of neo-pagan is the belief that it is necessary to gaze inward and to appropriate images from the past to find forms of identity and symbols of meaning perceived as natural, culturally authentic, and in opposition to the forces of the enlightenment and industrialism. Conversely, this also involves a belief in the veracity of symbols, images, and feelings over empirical experience and logic and thus emphasizes the feminine aspects of the psyche over the masculine. Like much of western romantic literature, neo-paganism is fundamentally dominated by a reification of beliefs and images. Quintessentially modern ideological and symbolic sociocultural formations are reinforced by interpretations of a past that is dogmatically protected as a particular symbolic construction that is defined as authentic. Similarly, neo-paganism and romanticism both share a focus on the new and the modern. While neo-paganism and romanticism gaze into representations of the past for symbols of authenticity and meaning, they are far more than simply a reaction of traditionalism against industrialization and the objectification of society. What they represent is a search for cultural authenticity and creative autonomy and a redefinition of the modern as a search for that which is creative, authentic, and autonomous.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)

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## Pan

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The goat god Pan was a god of flocks and shepherds in ancient Greece. His cult began in Arcadia and was elevated from its rustic status after the Battle of Marathon when the Athenians, out of gratitude for Pan's help in their victory, dedicated a cave, Long Cliffs, to Pan beneath the city of Athens (Herodotus 1992). His cult took root and rapidly spread through the Mediterranean basin.

Pan was above all a chthonic nature god. His body was half divine and half goat. He lived outside of the civilized world, sometimes near its borders in huts or hidden, shady glens, but also dwelled in the wilderness in dark caves and on mountain peaks. He was a solitary and rustic god. From his earliest origins he was expected to induce fertility. Pan is an archetypal image of nature's cornucopia of sexual heat, which ensures life will endure. In character, locales, and functions, Pan is seen in service to nature.

## Fear and Panic

Pan is associated with panic and all its legion of psychological burdens. Panic is with him from the moment of his birth when his mother took one look at him and, as told in the Homeric hymn, "sprang up and fled" (1976, p. 63). Pan suffered the loss of his mother because his body was monstrous (even Hephaestus with his broken body could still count on his mother's love), which led to a recurring motif for Pan of unrequited love for the feminine. Paradoxically, Pan was the beloved of the gods. In the Homeric hymn Pan's father, Hermes, wrapped him in the pelt of a hare and carried him up to Mt. Olympus where he charmed the Olympians with his laughter and was named Pan, which the hymn tells us meant "all."

But the themes of panic and a lack of self-control dogged Pan throughout his myths. His unbridled sexuality created panic in the objects of his desire. Yet panic is also a tool that Pan skillfully wields in his role in battle, where he found victory without the aid of his keen-eyed marksmanship but rather by instilling fear and confusion in the hearts of the enemies of his friends. Pan did not instigate wars or fight for his own gain, but his role as an arouser of fear naturally led him to the battlefield. As well as his intervention at the Battle of Marathon, he was also present during Zeus' rise to power and assisted him in his battle with the Typhoeus (or Typhon) (Kerenyi 1998) and was a general

in Dionysus' army in his invasion of India (Polyaenus 1994), and Pausanias reported Pan's aid in a battle with the Gauls. He caused panic to enter the hearts of the Gauls, so they could no longer understand their mother tongue and killed each other instead of the Greeks (1935/1961 [VIII: xxiii]).

## Pan and the Nymphs

Pan was said to have caused *panolepsy*, a seizure that brought laughter and ecstatic rapture. The nymphs were also, and more commonly, associated with inducing altered states in humans. Both *panolepsy* and *nympholepsy* were believed to be gifts that inspire. But these healing trances were also feared because they were thought to sometimes cause a person to be carried off by Pan or a nymph. Untimely deaths were attributed to them (Borgeaud 1979/1988). A recurrent theme, linking danger and ecstasy with Pan, echoes through his stories. Pan's intensity, often dangerous, is a touchstone for the life force. It is associated in different myths with creativity, fertility, and survival.

Pan played his pipes at the center of the nymph's dances yet even then was not allowed to touch them. The nymphs, besides representing the freedom of feminine sexual expression, were nurses and mothers to Greek gods and heroes. They were a soothing balm, a natural force that emitted from thousands of springs, rivers, trees, and knolls. These healers were also associated with the power to engender metamorphosis and served as a balance or an antidote to the overreaching excesses of Pan. His self-absorbed sexual intensity is feared by them, and yet he is the one they run to in the evenings when he returns from his day's hunt, joyfully dancing to the strains of his pipe. The nymphs are near to Pan, but untouchable, even though they are all divinities of fertility.

Pan's myths recount his overwhelming sexual desire and consequent pursuit of many nymphs. The extant primary sources, from Pindar, c. 522–433 BCE (1997a, b) and Apollodorus, second century BCE (1997), to Nonnus in the

early fifth century (1940/1962), do not report any stories where Pan actually rapes the nymph he is chasing after. The pattern in the myths follows this recurring storyline: he chases a nymph and out of fear she asks for help and is metamorphosed. She is still alive but in a different form, transformed by the interaction. Her new form has less of its own power of volition. For Pan, his chases turned up empty. Yet, rapist is a common epithet today for Pan (Hillman 1988) and is perhaps the way he is most often considered.

## Genealogy

In genealogy the Greeks were less inclined to insist on historical veracity than is the prevailing sentiment today. They frequently imagined numerous sets of parents for their gods and goddesses. Pan is a case in point and is a god with more sets of mothers and fathers than most (Nonnus 1940/1962). A popular version of Pan's birth in ancient texts named Penelope, the reserved wife of long-suffering Odysseus, as his mother. She is best known for the subtle wiles with which she handled her suitors while she waited and waited for her husband's return from Troy. Her history with Hermes and Pan is less known, though well recorded by the ancients. The historian Herodotus, b. c. 484 BCE, is the oldest source. His histories (1921/1960) makes reference to "Pan, the son of Penelope (for according to the Greeks Penelope and Hermes were the parents of Pan)" (p. 453 [II. 145]).

## Squilling Ritual

*Pan Agreus* (the hunter) was invoked when the Arcadians needed to find game to supplement their sparse agricultural returns. If the kill was small and so meat on the table was sparse or the hunters returned empty handed, then the young men of the village would perform a ritual called *squilling* (Edmonds 1912/1977). This involved a ceremonially circumambulation of a statue of the god while whipping him around the genitals

and shoulders with large onions still attached to their stalks. The onions, squills, were believed to be a healing agent and were used to ward off evil spirits and to promote growth and, like nettles, were an irritant to the skin (Dioscorides 1934/1959).

## The Death of Pan

Plutarch, a Greek scholar and priest of Delphi, in 83 or 84 CE, recorded the legend of the death of Pan (1936/2003). He told of a group traveling by ship who heard a voice call out that the “Great Pan is dead!” and that the ship’s helmsman was to sail north and call out these same words when they reached Palodes. He did so and his call was met with “a great cry of lamentation, not of one person, but of many” (1936/2003, p. 403 [419D]). This story is an anomaly in Greek theology, since the gods were believed to be immortal (Borgeaud 1983).

On the one hand, the story of the death of Pan had no verifiable impact on the cults of Pan, which are known to have continued to thrive (Pausanias 1935/1961). On the other, the legend’s historical context places it in close proximity to Jesus’ crucifixion. Both happened during Tiberius Caesar’s short reign. The juxtaposition of these two events led to speculation and conjectures about Pan by early Christian writers such as Eusebius in the third century and in medieval times by Rabelais to a fascination with Pan among the Romantics (Russell 1993), and even today we can witness Pan’s reemergence in modern stories such as the film *Pan’s Labyrinth* (Navarro et al. 2006).

Pan and Christ are associated with each other by some of these thinkers. Both were thought of as shepherds, both offered their bodies as sacrifice, and both were thought of as containers of “all” to their worshippers. Pan has also been associated with the Christian devil, both in countenance and in spirit.

The death of Pan would not be worth noting as anything more than one of the historical record’s many oddities except that, over the centuries, it has obstinately continued to linger; it has been used to argue positions diametrically opposed to

one another. The fascination with his death indicates that the story has an archetypal nature because it refuses to die.

## See Also

- ▶ [Chthonic Deities](#)
- ▶ [Circumambulation](#)

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## Panaceas and Placebos

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Of the two terms in the title of this entry, panacea is probably the clearer and least equivocal. By panacea is meant a medicine, treatment, or therapy that can cure or alleviate all illnesses. From that definition, it is clear that any alleged panacea must work, according to present-day scientific thinking, at least partly as a placebo. A placebo (Latin for “I will please”) can be defined as a medical treatment that works (satisfies the patient) not through its apparent agency but by the belief in its efficacy. And since no medical scientist of repute would seriously hold that there is any one medical treatment that can relieve every known illness, it follows that if a treatment appears to be working universally, or even widely, it must be doing so at least partly as a placebo, by virtue of the belief in it.

Yet panaceas have been proposed in the past. Here I look at two panaceas, arguably the two most serious and instructive of the past 300 years. The first was proposed by George Berkeley, now best known as the philosopher, the father of idealism, who denied the existence of matter. But in his lifetime, Berkeley was better known for his advocacy of tar-water as a universal medicine, which he published in *Siris* (1744). The other panacea was developed by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, who published her treatment for all illnesses in *Science and Health* (1903).

## Berkeley's Tar-Water

Tar-water is made by mixing wood tar with cold water and allowing the tar to settle, after which the clear infused water can be descanted and drunk. In *Siris*, sect. 71, Berkeley (1744) says that “there will not perhaps be found any medicine more general in its use, or more salutary in its effects,” than tar-water, and catalogues the many illnesses it has cured. But he stops short of saying directly that it is a panacea. However, in his later *Letter to Prior* (1744), sect. 11, he is prepared to “speak out”: “I freely own that I suspect tar-water is a panacea.” And in the pamphlet’s next section, he says: “Having frankly owned the charge, I must explain . . . that by a panacea is not meant a medicine which cures all individuals (this consists not with mortality) but a medicine that cures or relieves all different species of distempers.”

Berkeley had two justifications for this claim: one theoretical and the other empirical. The theoretical reason is complex, involving chemistry, botany, physics, philosophy, theology, and Scripture. But, as I have suggested elsewhere, the main idea is that tar-water is the closest natural, ingestible thing to fire; and as fire, Berkeley believes, is the natural substance closest in nature to God, it follows that tar-water is drinkable spirit or God, and that is why it is so efficacious as a medicine. Berkeley’s empirical justification was the experiments on tar-water which he carried out on himself, his family, his neighbors, as well as the cures that were gathered by his friend Prior from those who had benefitted from his medicine.

## Eddy's Christian Science

If anything, Eddy’s panacea was and is even more ambitious than Berkeley’s. For not only did she believe that Christian Science could cure all physical ills, but she also believed that it was effective even against death itself. And one main way that Christian Science works is by bringing its subjects to the truth that matter is an illusion. This follows largely from the principle



that God is a perfect, infinite spiritual being, the creator of this world; so everything in this world is perfect. Therefore, since matter and illness are imperfect, it follows that they do not exist. Hence, for the Christian Scientist, whole-heartedly embracing these truths about matter and God is the way to health and immortality. But there is also a third key element in Eddy's cure, which is what gives it its name. This is the role played by Jesus Christ, who showed how apparent illness and death in the world can be overcome by the belief or faith of the sufferers. In short, Jesus found a way to eliminate the illusion of illness and death. Christ was a scientist. What he discovered was essentially Christian Science, which was lost until it was rediscovered by Mrs. Eddy.

### Placebos and Panaceas

We now need to look at the two panaceas from the perspective of medical science in order to see how far they must be considered placebos.

The judgement of medical science on tar-water, briefly, is that it can be useful externally against certain skin diseases and internally against chronic coughs and chest diseases; but as one medical writer put it, its "therapeutic properties are, however, too limited to account for more than a small proportion of the diseases given by Berkeley and Prior" (Bell 1933).

So, the inference is that the great majority of cures must have been brought about by placebo action. But if medical science judges that tar-water was partly a placebo, its verdict on Christian Science must be that it is a pure placebo, since it does not use any physical agency.

That tar-water worked largely as an impure placebo would not have been welcome to Berkeley, even though he believed that ultimately the only real cause is mental or spiritual, in fact God. But his argument in *Siris* is that tar-water works not by any actual physical agency it possesses but only because its observable, sensory properties are followed unerringly by observable physical cures, whose explanation lies in the laws of nature established by God.

So, despite Berkeley's positive attitude to mental agency, he shows no sign of appreciating placebo action either in *Siris* or any other work. Probably the main reason for this is his sensitivity to the criticism that his idealist philosophy seems to break down the hallowed distinction between reality and appearance. Hence, Berkeley is reluctant to recognize the power of the human mind in affecting the physical world. Berkeley is prepared to acknowledge that we have agency, but only over our thoughts or mental images, not the sense data which for Berkeley constitute the physical world.

Another way that Berkeley's concern for keeping the objective, physical realm safe from human agency comes out in his attitude to miracles. As an Anglican clergyman, Berkeley does not deny that there have been miracles, and he believes that God did in the past sanction those of Moses but especially those of Jesus Christ and his disciples. But for Berkeley, miracles ended in the first century CE, one reason being that their continuing occurrence would undermine our confidence in the objective or natural realm, upon which we depend.

Christian Scientists have an entirely different attitude to what are called miracles, placebos, and faith healing. But here, especially, we need to recognize the equivocal nature of these terms and put aside their negative connotations. If a putative placebo does actually work by the action of mind or spirit, then I think a Christian Scientist could agree that placebo action is an acceptable description, although for her a more accurate description would be cures resulting from Divine Truth and Science.

Of course, for medical science this is all perfect nonsense. Illness and disease as material conditions can only be cured by material agents. Miracles and faith healing are superstitions. Here the issue becomes complicated, because we are getting into a deeper debate, where materialistic or natural science itself has to be – at least for the purpose of this debate – called into question. If that is not done, then this ceases to be a debate and becomes a begging of the question, which, no doubt, most scientists would say is entirely appropriate.

## Material Versus Mental Agency

Yet where the naturalistic attitude of science becomes doubtful is just in the area of placebos, which seem to work not by material but by mental causation, by belief. This suggests that the human mind can bring about cures that appear miraculous. And although this is denied by medical science, it does seem that the mind can, working through belief, cause certain observable physical changes in the body. This was dramatically demonstrated to the first important champion of placebos, H. K. Beecher – best known as the author of the influential 1955 article, “The Powerful Placebo” – when he was working as a medic during World War II. On one occasion, there was no morphine to give a soldier who required a major operation. In a moment of inspiration or craziness, a nurse injected the soldier with a harmless water solution, which amazingly produced virtually the same effect on him as morphine. This converted Beecher to the power of placebos.

This crux comes out in a related way in probably the second most important medical article on placebos, that by Levine et al., published in 1978. Levine’s team administered a placebo and found, as expected, that it produced a decrease in pain in their subjects, as well as increasing their endorphins, the body’s natural morphine. Going further, however, Levine and his colleagues then injected the subjects with nolahine, which works against morphine. The result was that the subjects’ pain returned. The conclusion, which was hailed as an important step towards discovering the mechanisms of placebos, was that the endorphins were the physical agents producing the placebo effect. So the endorphins, it was hoped, would be the beginning of the trail leading to the chemical agents that work directly on illnesses responsive to placebos.

What appears to have passed unnoticed, however, is that, *prima facie*, the endorphins came into being directly from mind action – from belief. But if so, then why, in principle, could not the agency that works DIRECTLY on the illness also be belief or some other form of mind agency?

For Berkeley, all power or agency in the physical world is mental, namely, God’s; but God produces the train of sensory data in accordance with His laws of nature; hence, physical cures must be brought about in this indirect, law-abiding way. To be sure, God could allow a change or violation in these laws, thereby permitting a human agent to effect a cure more directly, as with Jesus’s miracles, but He does not now, as that dispensation ended with Jesus’s disciples.

Most natural scientists, especially nowadays, would take a far harder line on this, holding that there is no such spiritual agency and hence no way that the natural laws and processes can be contravened even for such good ends as cures. Thus, in his helpful book *Placebos* (2003), Dylan Evans, speaking for natural science, tells us that “We know now that the processes of thinking and wishing that Descartes ascribed to the ethereal, invisible mind are, in fact, complex patterns of electro-chemical activity that swirl around in the lump of fatty tissue we call the brain” (p. xi). So for Evans, materialism has been proved to be true and dualism and idealism false. Hence, there MUST have been something material operating in the belief of Beecher’s soldier which caused his body to behave as though it had been given morphine. This material something, which we know introspectively as belief, must have been the actual cause of the numbing of his pain and the endorphins which Levine’s team discovered in the placebo effect. But so far no scientist has found this material stuff, either in the brain or anywhere else, which we, in our quaint folk-psychological way, identify as belief. Hence, what Evans and other materialists take to be proven science is in fact an article of faith.

Indeed, I think we can go further and say that materialism and medical science can themselves be described as placebo sciences in the same way as they would describe Christian Science as a placebo science – given, that is, one important condition being fulfilled. The condition is that idealism should prove true. If that were the case, then matter and hence material medicines would be placebos, as things that do not exist, but which

are vitally practical to believe in, as enabling us to live in and make sense of the apparent or sensory world. And, in the final analysis, that is what Berkeley held.

## See Also

- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Pantheism

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Pantheism is the religious doctrine that the divine is infused within all existent beings. The phrase “the divine” is used as a short-hand label for both theistic (personal) and nontheistic (impersonal) definitions of the sacred ground of being. Virtually all pantheistic thought involves a belief in the immanence of the divine, though the doctrines are distinguishable. In some forms of immanence,

particularly within theistic traditions, the deity is not limited to being infused into the material world; it can be beyond it as well. In the case of pantheism, however, there is an identity between the phenomenal world and the divine. God is the natural world personified.

A distinction needs to be made between true pantheism, which equates the divine with the totality of the natural world and pantheism which accepts that idea but adds that the divine is both immanent in the world yet still somehow transcendent in some manner. This view allows some “otherness” to god beyond his or her presence within the natural world. In pantheism, god suffuses the world but is not exhausted by the immanence in the world. There is a sense in which the fullness of god goes beyond the material world of nature.

Pantheism is also contrasted with the view of strict creationism, which holds that the divine is the source of, but cannot be identified with, the natural world. God, being eternal and infinite, cannot be limited by being part of his own creation. He stands over it as ruler and Lord. In western monotheisms (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), creationism is a foundational doctrine rooted in Biblical and Q’uranic texts. But God is not the same as his creation.

True pantheism, as distinguished from pantheism, is found in only a few positions, as it requires exclusion of the concept of transcendence and confines understanding of the divine to the totality of existent and experienced objects in the world. The identification of the natural world with the divine is appealing to secular thinkers who still have a sense of awe at the majesty of the created world, including life and consciousness.

It is not surprising then that early in the Enlightenment when secular thought was emerging, a pantheistic school emerged. Deism is a spiritual philosophy which fairly clearly identified the divine with nature. The God of the Deists creates and sets in motion the world and its deterministic causal mechanisms and laws but does not actively intervene in human history. A Deist who coined the term pantheism was John Toland (1670–1722). His views on both politics and

religion were quite radical for his day. But he sought to keep a religious sentiment based in nature and aided by reason as opposed to based in obedience to and faith in established authorities. He founded the Ancient Druid Order, so his views would today be closer to the sort of Gaian nature spirituality of neo-pagans.

Among those philosophers who are clearly pantheists and who Toland refers back to would be Spinoza and Leibniz. Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677) was born to Portuguese Jews, though he spent most of his life in the Netherlands. His religious ideas were far enough outside the Judaism of his own day that he was excommunicated from the synagogue in Amsterdam. He rejected Descartes dualism and held instead a type of naturalistic monism, where all the world in its diversity was nonetheless dependent on one substance behind the variety of manifest beings and objects.

Such a comprehensive and abstract concept is, of course, difficult to hold on to, so the experience of pantheism is generally fleeting and imperfect. Humans have found the metaphor and primary cognitive structure of personhood to be more compelling, and so theistic spirituality and religious formations have predominated throughout history. The pantheistic vision is a heady one and not shared by most exoteric religious forms and expressions, which are decidedly personalistic.

The philosophic concepts involved in defining pantheism as well as its alternatives require a discussion of primary theological distinctions, whether there is a divine realm of being or not, and if so, what is its nature. The empirical study of the variety of comparative world religions suggests that the primary boundary is between the sacred and divine, on the one hand, and the secular or mundane, on the other. If we look at the variety of world views held by most people, this primary distinction can be sustained a major dividing point. But within those who espouse one or another of the spiritual world view, the next division of ideas is between those who espouse the existence of personal or impersonal basic natures of the divine.

The impersonal nature of the divine is found in such concepts as “chi,” “ki,” “prana,” “pneuma,”

and other labels. Those terms come from Chinese, Japanese, Indian, and Greek cultural spheres, respectively. These embody a force which was also described by Newton and the other formative thinkers in the modern scientific world view. Indeed, the very nature of the modern scientific world view is the metaphysical existence of impersonal forces which determine the manifestation we experience as the phenomenal world. So the spiritual philosophies which incorporate an impersonal force as a significant concept are part of a pantheistic tradition. In Christianity, by counter example, the role of the impersonal force in traditional eastern and pagan western philosophies has been replaced by the person of the Holy Ghost as the third person in the orthodox definition of the Christian trinity of Godhood.

Theistic religions see the divine as manifested in the form of persons. These are the one God in monotheistic traditions and the family of gods in the polytheistic traditions. From a psychological perspective, theism is quite understandable. We understand ourselves as persons, which means we experience our ability to create and govern and rule and determine. These are the qualities we project onto the divine and transcendent realm and whatever quality it has. As human beings, we can only relate to the greatest concept of existence beyond ourself and other than ourself as if they were like us, as sentient, active agentic persons. But that very ability to experience the divine as other as person requires an accommodation with the experience of the divine as immanent.

In theism, pantheism is generally thought of as the suffusion of the divine spirit within creation, including human beings. The classical example comes from Hinduism where the seed or “atman” of Brahman, the divine ground of being, is implanted in each individual human soul. This provides the motive force for the individual to seek reunion with the divine through the course of spiritual evolution across many lifetimes via reincarnation (Daniélou 1964). The mystic vision of the unity of all things can be seen as the experiential side of the idea of pantheism.

A related idea is panpsychism, which holds that everything in the universe has some form of

consciousness or mind. The early psychologist, Gustav Fechner (1801–1887), held this belief. Edwards (1967) quotes him directly in a rapturous meditation on a water lily during which he accepted the possibility of a mental or psychological life in some manner for lower orders of animate beings. Panpsychism is the chief assumption of animism as a worldview (Pepper 1942). All things are alive and have or are spirits in their essential nature, including things science and common sense deems inanimate.

### See Also

- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Immanence](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Paganism](#)

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### Paracelsus

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Paracelsus is the professional name of Theophrastus Phillippus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim (1493–1531), a German alchemist,

physician, and occultist. The professional name was a reference back in time to the Roman physician Celsus (ca. 25 BCE–50 CE). He adopted much of the previous theories of magic passed on from classical antiquity in the writings of the Hermetic corpus and Neoplatonic thought. He wrote at a time when alchemists were beginning extensive studies with metals, and he sought to propagate a theory metallic magic to supplement or supplant the older magic which concentrated on empirical herbal lore and angelic or spiritual manifestations. In addition to his own work on the newly discovered property of magnetism, he served as an influence for Franz Anton Mesmer's (1734–1815) dissertation for the doctor of medicine degree. Mesmer's theory of animal magnetism served as the initial basis of the psychological technique now known as hypnosis.

### See Also

- ▶ [Astrology and Alchemy](#)

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### Paranormal Experience

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Although the word itself did not come into common usage until at least 1920 (from the Latin *para*: counter, against), the cluster of phenomena generally agreed upon as being “paranormal” has appeared in every culture, age, and era of which we have written record. As is the case in every historical excavation, one must take note of the fact that the taxonomies used are indeed our own and, in the particular case of this category, entirely new. What we in the modern age consider outside or next to the limen of experience, other cultures included with the mysteries of the circulation of the blood and the wind, harsh demarcations being the province of the modern age. Generally speaking, however, the paranormal is an umbrella term used to describe unusual

experiences or events that resist scientific explanation. The term is frequently found in conjunction with parapsychology, the scientific field dedicated to the gathering and analysis of paranormal data, under which the following are generally categorized: telepathy, extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, ghosts, hauntings, spirit possession, xenoglossia, angel hair, cryptozoology, paracryptozoology, materialization, UFOlogy, automatic writing, channeling, telepathy, spirit photography, spirit possession, medical intuition, psychic surgery, lycanthropy, and some, such as ball lightning, which have recently been empirically confirmed.

The investigation into the paranormal has taken many forms, from the stringently scientific to the Fortean practice of gathering anomalous anecdotal evidence. The difficulty lies in winnowing away what is (not) to be included in the study as well as what lens should be used. As a recent Gallup poll (2005) indicates, among ten listed paranormal phenomena, 73 % of people believed in at least one, while only 1 % believed in all. Obviously, there is little consensus – even within the religious and psychological communities – as to what warrants actual investigation. And certainly efforts at debunking paranormal claims have exposed many charlatans, leading many in the scientific community to summarily dismiss the entire project.

Collective perceptions of the origin, manifestation, and even veracity of these wide-ranging phenomena are intimately dependent on the sociocultural ecologies within which they occur and arguably determine the very possibility of the event in question. The literatures of ethnopsychology are replete with examples of paranormal “afflictions” that manifest in one culture, but not in any others (e.g., Windigo). Still others, such as the “night mare” appear to arise cross-culturally, though not by diffusion, lending the interpretation that these “events” may be rooted in physiological, rather than in esoteric, processes – or of course, in the night mare herself.

Several theoretical orientations are possible when apprehending the paranormal.

## The Orthodox Approach

These are the “traditional” explanations as they surface from culture to culture. An example, in the Christian tradition, is the interpretation of possession as not being caused by unresolved psychosexual suppression but by the actual presence of a discrete demonic entity in the body of an individual. Different religious systems offer different explanations of paranormal events. Whereas Sai Baba’s ability to materialize objects is understood in Hinduism to be a result of a perfected understanding of the intrinsic unreality of whatever it is he is materializing – and as evidence of *siddhis* or yogic powers – other religious systems might see this as evidence of Satanic intervention or, less spectacularly, simple chicanery.

## The Bicameral Mind

A novel theory that seeks to understand the origin and persistence of clairvoyant phenomena by right-hemispheric dominance in the brains of those genetically predisposed to this type of experience. More finely nuanced depictions of neurological correlations to paranormal phenomena will undoubtedly be revealed as the fledgling field of neurotheology experimentally matures.

## The Pluralist/Inclusivist Approach

This approach aligns itself with the constructivist tendency to view language as the arbiter of what is real. In this model of culturally dependent ontologies, certain phenomena exist because there are certain *words* that circumscribe their manifestations.

## The Psychoanalytic Approach

The hermeneutic of suspicion. A powerful tool for the exploration of the underlying neurotic conflicts and wish-fulfillment fantasies seen by



this school as the actual bases for all events erroneously perceived to be paranormal. This approach is related to other psychological theories that ground belief in the paranormal as evidence of psychopathologies such as schizotypal personality disorder or schizophrenia.

### Progressive Paradigms

When viewed from within the cause-and-effect-bound Newtonian cosmology, these phenomena simply do not seem to “fit”; they are *para*, in every sense of the prefix. With the advent of quantum theory, however, the mystery becomes not why these events happen but why they do not happen more often. A science of possibilities, quantum mechanics allows for what once was once seen as *para* to fit snugly within the realm of the expected.

### Commentary

If taken seriously, the claims of paranormal research impact every domain of human knowledge and experience, challenging us to expand our notions of the body, the mind, and indeed the universe itself, beyond our linear geometries; from the relationship of man and machine (see Pears) to occult influences on evolution (see Noetic Institute), investigation into the paranormal is becoming increasingly integral to evolving understandings of consciousness itself as well as understandings of the chimerical helices of matter and mind.

### Psychology and Religion

With the advent of the fourth force in psychology (the previous three being behaviorism, psychodynamism, and humanistic psychology), the inclusion of the transpersonal has been taken seriously for the first time in the discipline’s history. Whereas psychoanalytic theory offers richly nuanced and psychologically mature analyses of

the paranormal, it is reductive nonetheless, while the other two simply do not deign to discuss it. Transpersonal psychology allows for the existence of the “paranormal” as standing outside the limen of egoic experience – in other words, outside the “visible” bands of the spectrum of consciousness. Whether they be unconscious projections of the lower spectra (as may be the case with possession) or transrational transmissions of higher states of being, or simply transmissions from higher beings themselves, transpersonal cartographies of consciousness are theoretical maps of the intersection of psychology and religion that describe, in Wilber’s famous phrase, the marriage of sense and soul.

For psychology, the resuscitation and integration of the paranormal from out of the pseudoscientific hinterlands demand radical reformulation of the psyche. One might even argue that the “repression” of this dimension of experience has returned as any number of “disorders of the spirit” – addiction, narcissism, etc. (see Hillman).

For religion, an honest understanding and inclusion of the aforementioned demands both self-reflection and eventually change – self-reflection in the sense that there must be more to the human condition than dreamt of in their philosophies, and change in the sense of expanding theological purviews to include the possibility of multiple truths.

And as for where they intersect, both religion and psychology are potentially transformative in their respective understandings of the paranormal, psychology lending academic rigor and a scientific orientation to its study, while religion a sensitivity to the subtleties of spirit.

Perhaps the most pragmatic approach is to use a theoretical “toolbox.” Are Yeti sightings to be lumped with those of UFO’s – or do they mean different things and require different lenses? A psychoanalytic approach might make sense for a poltergeist or channeling (reference) but not for remote viewing or spirit photography. And of course, the question becomes then, is a psychoanalytic reading as reductive as it sounds? Or does a truly comprehensive estimation have room for this perspective as well as

something else? Whatever hermeneutic one employs to read, it will certainly color the way it is read; which is why, if anything, a perspectival plurality should be conscientiously employed when doing so.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)

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## Participation Mystique

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## Mode of Thinking

“Mystical participation” is an idea introduced by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in 1910 to identify what it is about the mentality of so-called primitives that makes them understand things differently from Westerners. Lévy-Bruhl began his lifework as a professional philosopher in search of “unimpeachable truths” that would be universally human in their validity. To escape his own cultural limitations, he began studying the reports of missionaries and colonialists working among preliterate peoples in Africa, Australia, the Americas, and Oceania – all baffled by what they took to be absurd beliefs on the part of the natives. Finding the same sorts of “absurdities” in all parts of the world, Lévy-Bruhl proposed that while Europeans find meaning in events by looking for causal, empirical theories to explain what made them happen, “primitives” find meaning by seeing empirical events as

“participating” in a larger, invisible reality – something on the order of myth, made up of what he called “collective representations” – very similar to Jung’s idea of archetypal images. By 1927 he had identified the powerful emotions that accompany mystical participation as the crucial factor in “primitive mentality.” He argued that *participation mystique* is in some ways superior to our European way of thinking, insofar as it gives natives’ experience a greater depth and meaningfulness than our materialistic empiricism allows us.

### Shared Identity

C. G. Jung borrowed the term for his psychology and expanded its meaning, although he was aware of what a controversial figure Lévy-Bruhl had become – unjustly burdened with a racist reputation for having described “primitive mentality” as “inferior” to the European sort. In Jung’s hands, participation mystique came to mean not only “mythic thinking” but also the partial loss of individuality that people commonly suffer in crowds, tribes, and families, usually without knowing it. Jung found participation mystique to be characteristic of all human psychology, modern Westerners included.

Most frequently, when used in a Jungian context, participation mystique refers to a regrettable state of unconsciousness: as when parents cannot appreciate the individuality of their children but see them primarily as advertisements for their own honor or shame, or when an analyst becomes so unconsciously identified with an analysand as to lose the capacity for objective critique. In truth, however, every interpersonal relationship has elements of participation mystique in it; and when one recognizes this element and makes use of it, a higher level of consciousness can be attained. A state of participation mystique between mother and infant is an essential part of the bonding between them, and it is the platform of trust and immediate understanding which makes their emotional/gestural communications possible and effective. The infant is socialized

and begins to learn language within a cocoon of participation mystique.

Similarly, the rapport or transference relationship between analyst and analysand inevitably involves mystical participation. Whether one thinks in terms of empathy (literally, “feeling into” another person’s state of mind) or of an “interpersonal field” of mutuality, there is always a background condition in which the distinction between “me” and “you” is greatly diminished. By directing attention to the background state of participation mystique, an analyst is able to gain access to the analysand’s condition and by articulating it raise consciousness. Toward the end of his life, Jung often spoke of this participation mystique-based transference relationship in terms of a two-million-year-old man, the personification of the collective unconscious, who brings to the analytic meeting the wisdom of the human race. The mutual field becomes an age-old source of insights relevant to both parties.

### Society and Myth

Every society that shares a mythic narrative which gives meaning and shape to its communal life inhabits a world of participation mystique in both senses of the term: (1) the members share a mutual identity to a greater or lesser degree and (2) they make sense of their communal life and the events they experience by reference to “collective representations” derived from their myth. Meditative states of consciousness are more easily and dependably achieved in ashrams and monasteries where all participate in the same rituals and practices, because the communal activities build a participation mystique with a character that supports those states. Shamans exploit the background state of participation mystique when they make visionary journeys on behalf of a patient to diagnose an illness or to seek out and retrieve a lost soul. Yogis and Sufi masters confer meditative powers upon their disciples by *shaktipat* (Sanskrit, “transmission of psycho-spiritual energy”), which is a form of participation mystique.

## See Also

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Participatory Spirituality

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### Introduction

Participatory expressions of spirituality have begun to flourish over the last few decades through the collaborative efforts and individual journeys of a network of scholars and practitioners. Several authors have made important contributions to the ongoing definition of participatory spirituality (including but not limited to Ferrer 2002, 2008, 2010, 2011; Ferrer et al. 2004; Ferrer and Sherman 2008; Heron 1996, 1998, 2006; Reason 1994b, 1998b; Reason and Bradbury 2001a; Sherman 2008; Tarnas 2001, 2002). By way of orienting the definition given here,

I adopt a three-question format borrowed from an earlier definition (Reason 1998b) of participatory spirituality that includes the questions of methodology, epistemology, and ontology. The order in which these questions will be introduced is not arbitrary. Important methodological and epistemological (outlined below) choices have been made within the network of those developing a *participatory sensibility* or *participatory approach*. By placing these methodological and epistemological choices before the practice of philosophical speculation and definition, the path is made clear for a contemporary (critical) metaphysical realism.

### Methodology

In an early essay on the phenomenology of a shared gaze, John Heron (1970) describes the inherent limitations that arise from a narrow logical empiricism wherein the analytic observer is set over against public objects “out there.” Jorge Ferrer and Jacob Sherman (2008) write that the “participatory turn calls us to move beyond objectivism and subjectivism” (p. 35). Heron (1970) speaks of this “move beyond” as a “more radically constituted empiricism” and in collaboration with Peter Reason (Heron and Reason 2008) describes the participatory methodology of cooperative inquiry (Heron 1992, 1996, 2006, 2007; Heron and Lahood 2008; Heron and Reason 1997, 2001, 2005; Reason 1988b, 1994a, 1998a, 1999, 2003; Reason and Torbert 2001) as follows: “Cooperative inquiry is a form of second person action research in which all participants work together in an inquiry group as co-researchers and as co-subjects” (p. 248). Heron and Reason emphasize this participatory approach by pointing out that such inquiry is developed and executed with self-determination of all participants engaged in an inquiry. Ferrer (2001, 2002, 2008, 2011) pushes the definition of exactly what or who is considered a participant further when he includes three important realms of inquiry: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and transpersonal. In each of these three contexts, a diversity of participants (e.g., instinctual and emotional body, other-than-human

players including trees, birds, and ancestors, as well as a diversity of spiritual ultimates) are invited into the inquiry. In similar critical reevaluations of who/what can be considered as a participant, Jürgen Kremer (2002, 2003) writes of *participatory/shamanic concourse* and *ethnoautobiography*, Ramon V. Albareda and Marina T. Romero in collaboration with Ferrer (Ferrer et al. 2004, 2005, 2007, 2010) engage multiple levels and expressions of human experience through their interactive embodied meditations, Gregg Lahood (2007, 2008) examines various *cosmological hybridizations*, and Ann Gleig (2012) reconciles participatory engagement and critical distance (insider-outsider boundaries) and in collaboration with Nicholas Boevig (see Gleig and Boevig 2009) calls for an emphasis on spiritual democracy. Each of these practices develops what Heron (2006) has called “reciprocal participative empathy” and Gleig (2012) has termed “reciprocal relationships” among *participants* (as broadly defined here).

## Epistemology

Richard Tarnas (1991) has written that a “participatory epistemology ... incorporates the postmodern understanding of knowledge and yet goes beyond it. The interpretive and constructive character of human cognition is fully acknowledged, but the intimate, interpenetrating and all-permeating relationship of nature to the human being and human mind allows the Kantian consequence of epistemological alienation to be entirely overcome” (pp. 434–435). In their *extended epistemology*, Heron and Reason (2008) outline four different ways of knowing that are engaged through inquiry cycles of action and reflection. They include *experiential* (knowing grounded in experiential presence in the world), *presentational* (experiential knowing articulated in image, movement, art, etc.), *propositional* (conceptual/theoretical), and *practical* knowing (knowing how-to-do, with an emphasis on “I do” rather than “I think”). By emphasizing this extended epistemology, Heron and Reason seek to honor and contextualize interpretive and

constructive epistemologies (propositional ways of knowing) within the more concrete and intimate (but less critical/reflexive) experiential, presentational, and practical ways of knowing. In similar fashion, Ferrer (2002, 2008, 2010, 2011) clarifies that even the most participatory ontology or framework will privilege some ontological claims over others, and so he seeks to minimize overly abstract hierarchies through his *emancipatory epistemology*. Ferrer’s epistemology relaxes rigid conceptual frameworks or truth claims by looking to transformational outcomes rather than ontological claims to make qualitative distinctions.

## Ontology

It is essential for those operating under the auspices of a participatory approach to define participation. One way to flesh out a working definition is to consider the who (participant) and the where (locus of participation) of participation. Participatory methodologies and epistemologies like those referenced above have led Heron (1996, 2006) to define participant and loci of participation as *presences in communion with other presences in a great field of mutual participation*. Ferrer (2002, 2008) has used the term *participatory events* to underline his multivalent understanding of participant and has come to understand the loci of participation of our shared *participatory predicament*. Both Heron’s and Ferrer’s understanding of participant and locus of participation require an *enactive* (Maturana and Varela 1987; Stewart et al. 2010; Thompson 2007; Varela et al. 1991) understanding of actuality. In Ferrer’s (2011) words, “participatory events can engage the entire range of human epistemic faculties (e.g. rational, imaginal, somatic, vital, aesthetic, etc.) with the creative unfolding of reality or the mystery in the enactment – or “bringing forth” – of ontologically rich religious worlds” (p. 2). This definition underlines the co-enactive/co-creative nature of a participatory realism. It also points toward an ontological pluralism of multiple spiritual ultimates or worlds. Following Ferrer, participatory spirituality tends toward a creative participatory pluralism.

## Participatory Network

Participatory spirituality, as defined here, has developed over time through the collaborations and individual journeys of a burgeoning network of scholar-practitioners. Many of the authors mentioned so far have overtly committed themselves to a participatory approach, and yet as Ferrer and Sherman (2008) have noted, there are many other themes in the academy that lend themselves to a participatory sensibility. They have underlined seven trends in particular: (1) the postcolonial reevaluation of emic epistemological frameworks, (2) the postmodern and feminist emphasis on embodiment and sacred immanence, (3) the resacralization of language, (4) the “pragmatic turn” in contemporary philosophy, (5) the renewed interest in the study of lived spirituality, (6) the question of religious truth in postmetaphysical thinking, and (7) the irreducibility of religious pluralism. Sherman (Grace et al. 2011) has added to this list the need to include important trends in philosophy of science (e.g., Latour 2010; Stengers 2011) and contemplative studies (e.g., Grace and Brown 2011; Roth 2008) within future conversations around participatory spirituality. Important trends in qualitative research (e.g., Reason 1988a; Reason and Bradbury 2001, 2006, 2008; Reason and Rowan 1981), ecopsychology (e.g., Abram 1996; Adams 2005), indigenous studies (e.g., Bastien 2003; Marks 2007), contemporary Christian theology and spirituality (e.g., Burns 2002; Dreyer and Burrows 2005; Miner 2004), and anthropology and ritual studies (e.g., Appfel-Marglin 2011; Grimes 1995; Lahood 2007, 2008; Tambiah 1990) must also be included. Other themes could certainly be found to help round out this list.

## Critical Perspectives

Several critical perspectives have arisen with regard to participatory spirituality. Ken Wilber (2002) has written that Ferrer’s work in particular falls into performative self-contradictions. Wilber understood Ferrer’s first book, *Revisioning*

*Transpersonal Theory*, to be an attempt to do away with all hierarchical distinctions while holding the participatory approach as superior in some important ways. This critique gets to the heart of the reason for introducing methodology and epistemology before ontology in this definition. Participatory spirituality begins as a methodological critique that leads to more inclusive epistemologies. Heron and Reason’s extended epistemology and Ferrer’s emancipatory epistemology do not seek to discount propositional/theoretical hierarchies. Rather, participatory epistemologies seek to contextualize critical abstractions in relation to more concrete and intimate ways of knowing. In a somewhat similar critique, Gerry Goddard (2009) sees the assertion of participatory pluralism (multiple spiritual ultimates) as no less biased than the assertion of one single Ultimate. Ferrer (2011) finds this line of critique important and writes that a participatory approach does not seek to refute some one spiritual ultimate outright, but rather seeks what Heron (2006) has called “an open-ended, innovative spirituality” (p. 2) that keeps the conversation open by rejecting problematic perennialist equivalencies that conflate distinct spiritual goals and ultimates found in various traditions. Furthering this line of questioning, Zayin Cabot (2013) has written a process-oriented critique of Integral Theory, where a concern for creative innovation and genuine pluralism (participatory enaction) is placed in dialogue with Integral Theory’s *Integral Enactive Theory* (Esbjörn-Hargens 2010), *Integral Perspectivism* (Wilber 2006), and its overarching commitment to one spiritual Ultimate.

## Conclusion

The threefold definition offered here begins with methodology because in important ways the participatory sensibility or approach begins as a methodological critique of postmodernity and what is experienced as its inherent cognicentrism (Ferrer 2003, 2011; Ferrer and Sherman 2008), “pride of mind” (Ferrer 2008; Romero and Albareda 2001), “Euro-centric scholarship” (Reason and Bradbury 2001), and/or “distancing,



disassociated objectivity” (Kremer 2002). By beginning with participatory methodologies, an honoring of multiple ways of knowing arises. In honoring multiple ways of knowing, more inclusive, participatory epistemologies enter the horizon. Extended epistemologies that embrace multiple ways of knowing, multiple inquiry outcomes, multiple spiritual goals, and the incredible diversity of lived experience (both potential and realized) lay the path for viable contemporary metaphysical speculation. Participatory spirituality thus far finds its ontological speculations leaning toward Ferrer’s (2002, 2008, 2011) “relaxed universalism” and genuine (participatory) pluralism.

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Dualism](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Immanence](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [New Religions](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Transpersonal Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Wilber, Ken](#)

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## Pastoral Counseling

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Over the centuries pastoral counseling has been one of the main responsibilities of pastors throughout the church. Jesus provided pastoral counseling to his disciples and to the crowds that followed Him. He talked regularly with those who were physically sick and emotionally hurting. The Apostle Paul also gave pastoral counseling to his young students and preachers such as Timothy and Titus. He also gave pastoral counseling through his letter to Philemon to address the issue of Onesimus returning home. He even gave pastoral counsel to Peter as he attempted to correct the issues facing the church in book of Acts.

Throughout all church history, pastoral counselors have been the foundational and focal point of helping people deal with all sorts of issues and problems. Pastors are frequently the first person church members will seek help from when dealing with grief and death issues, crisis situations, marriage struggles, family issues, health problems, job-related problems, etc.

The goals of pastoral counseling are really quite simple:

1. To develop a relationship based on trust that supports the person seeking help
2. To provide wise Biblical counseling and spiritual resources for church members and others seeking help
3. To provide a safe environment offering confidentiality to people dealing with problems and issues

Pastoral is defined as “Relating to the care of souls, or to the pastor of a church; as, pastoral duties; a pastoral letter” (<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/pastoral>).

Counseling is defined as “professional guidance of the individual by utilizing psychological methods especially in collecting case history data, using various techniques of the personal

interview, and testing interests and aptitudes” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/counselor>).

According to American Association of Pastoral Counselors, “Pastoral Counseling is a unique form of psychotherapy which uses spiritual resources as well as psychological understanding for healing and growth” (<http://www.aapc.org/about.cfm#intro>).

When you combine the two words, you have a pastor (shepherd) caring for the souls (members) of his/her congregation by providing a listening ear, guidance, prayer, hope, and wisdom in how to deal with crisis, family issues, spiritual dilemmas, etc.

It is recommended that we give the same consideration to people with emotional/mental health issues that we do when we help individuals deal with physical problems (such as a physical illness). Just as pastors refer people to seek appropriate medical care, we need to refer people to seek appropriate help to deal with issues of mental illness. As pastors, it is important to understand that unless we have had specific training in the field of mental health, it is dangerous (and, in some cases, criminal) to deal with mental health issues as well. Over the years, there have been a number of cases where churches and pastors have been sued and lost because of the information and advice they provided to someone dealing with a mental health problem.

Another essential area of pastoral counseling is hospital and nursing home ministry. Pastors are generally the first ones called to come and minister to a patient just before a surgery. Pastors are summoned to comfort the sick and dying. He/she will address fears and spiritual conditions and provide comfort from a spiritual perspective. Pastoral counselors often deal with the aftermath of a patient’s hospital admittance or the grief of a family mourning the death of a loved one.

Pastoral counselors are also often called upon to minister in the prisons. He/she is asked to provide wisdom, comfort, hope, and Biblical outlook for the inmate and the suffering family on the outside. The word chaplain refers to that person who feels a special call to minister in

jails, hospitals, military bases, and workplaces. The chaplain’s role is to provide support, encouragement, spiritual perspective, and Biblical guidance in their place of ministry.

A relatively new and developing part of pastoral counseling is the professional pastoral counselor. This individual often has a practice of pastoral counseling, which is not only their ministry, but also their employment. A professional pastoral counselor is often employed by the local church or social agencies that specialize in helping Christians or other religious groups address their issues in an office setting. The professional pastoral counselor studies counseling from a Christian or Biblical view and challenges clients to seek out answers and spiritual truth. Many states require that pastoral counselors be certified or licensed just as other professional counselors. A few states even offer credentials for those serving in the developing field of pastoral counselors.

## Education Requirements

There is a wide range of education and training available for pastoral counselors, including seminars, workshops, distant learning programs, and college level programs covering undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. Many major Christian universities and seminaries offer degree programs in pastoral counseling or Christian psychology. It is very important to review the college or seminary’s accreditations and to understand the state laws regarding licensure of pastoral counseling within the local church and at private agencies.

## Types of Counseling Performed

The content and practice of pastoral counseling is as diverse as psychology. There are generally three distinct groups: the first group is typically referred to as “Bible Only.” This group uses the Scripture as their only tool for counseling. A foundational verse for this is “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and

training in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:16). The Bible is their main authority and they feel that one can find all the answers to life’s questions within the context of Scripture. The second group believes it is appropriate to take from both the Bible and the scientific discipline of psychology to help people address the problems they are dealing with. This group has no conflict using cognitive therapy to help individuals address substance abuse problems or Gestalt therapy to address an individual’s personal decisions in seeking direction for their lives. The third point of view is that a counselor should only use only proven psychological methods to treat mental/emotional problems. This group views pastoral counseling as only an extension (not an integral treatment partner) of the mental health community.

Several therapies are commonly used by pastors when they provide pastoral counseling. Some of those therapies include:

- Rational emotive behavioral therapies
- Solution focus or brief therapies
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Person centered counseling
- Gestalt therapy
- Behavior therapy
- Reality therapy

There are also several professional organizations for pastoral counselors:

- American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC)
- Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE)
- Association of Professional Chaplains
- American Association of Christian Counselor
- National Association of Nouthetic Counselor (NANC)
- Association of Biblical Counselors (ABC)
- National Association of Catholic Chaplains

Professional journals of interest in the field of pastoral counseling include:

- The Journal of Pastoral Care Publications, Inc. (JPCP)
- The Journal of Pastoral Counseling
- The Journal of Pastoral Theology
- The Journal of Biblical Counseling
- Christian Counseling Today

## See Also

- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Psychotherapy and Religion

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## Pastoral Counseling and Addiction

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In *The Science of Addiction: From Neurobiology to Treatment* (2007), Erickson argues that the term *addiction* is too “ill-defined” and “imprecise” to be scientifically valid. He further notes: “You won’t find it mentioned in the best diagnostic manual on mental disorders.” The term addiction, in Western culture, has become so ubiquitous that it refers to anything from entrenched drug or alcohol dependence to compulsive, out-of-control behaviors like “internet addiction,” gambling, sexual compulsion, or obsessive reliance on a cell phone. Erickson notes that the word addiction has become “too broad, too vague, and too misunderstood” to be scientifically useful.

When referring to a person being physically “addicted” to alcohol or other drugs,



Erickson (2007) prefers the term “chemically dependent” – meaning the person has a “brain disease.” When a person is using drugs or alcohol in destructive ways but shows no evidence of a brain disease, Erickson prefers the term “drug abuse.” These distinctions aid pastoral counselors to speak intelligently with other professionals in the field of chemical dependency counseling.

It is important for pastoral counselors to be well informed on the current language, terms, and research in drug dependency and abuse treatment. Most pastoral counselors have some acquaintance with “Twelve-Step” programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and its many spin-offs and probably know something about 28-day treatment programs.

Motivational interviewing (Miller and Rollnick 2002) is an empirically based and substantively tested form of communication which has shown to be extremely effective in helping persons who abuse drugs make better life choices. Its techniques can be learned and applied by pastoral counselors.

The treatment of chemical dependence and drug abuse is a specialized field which mandates specialized training and supervision; however, pastoral counselors can offer unique and helpful contributions in the following ways.

Pastoral counselors can acquaint themselves with the philosophy, spirituality, and practices of Twelve-Step programs by attending “open meetings.” Pastoral counseling with a care-seeker who is simultaneously “working the steps” can effectively complement each other. Most Twelve-Step meeting times and locations are available online. A key to helping persons attending Twelve-Step meetings is to encourage them to get a “sponsor” – a person whom they can contact when tempted to use and one to whom they covenant to some degree of regular accountability.

Alcoholics Anonymous owes its core spiritual principles to a turn of the century, evangelical Christian movement called “the Oxford Group” which Bill W. encountered at Calgary Episcopal Church in New York City in the 1930s. Bill became a lifelong friend of Calvary’s rector,

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker, one of the group’s biggest proponents. The Oxford Group’s Four Absolutes (Absolute Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love) were ultimately retooled into the famous Twelve Steps.

One of the intersections of religion and AA is that they are both concerned with human emptiness. One way to understand a psychology of addiction is to view it as an unrelenting desire to fill a deep and abiding void or emptiness. Paradoxically, addiction often begins as a misguided or misinterpreted way to find a better life – albeit through self-destructive means. If addiction is an attempt to “fill” human emptiness, then it is no accident that many forms of alcohol are called “spirits.” Both religion and addiction share a common interest in seeking to “be filled” in order to have a better life.

Further, another way to understand addiction psychologically is to view it as an obsessive avoidance of pain. Underneath most, if not all, addiction is a compulsion not to feel. Alcohol, drugs, and addictive behaviors become so entrenched precisely because they have the capacity to anesthetize painful emotions, thoughts, and memories and allow persons to “take the edge off” or “forget about life for a while.”

Ultimately, psychological and spiritual healing for recovering persons depend on certain therapeutic capacities upon which both psychology and religion generally agree, i.e., the ability to face “inner demons” and pain through courage, honesty, integrity, empathic support, and making better life choices through the restructuring of previous relationships, habits, routines, choices, and behaviors. AA calls itself a “fellowship” because it provides a safe, nonjudgmental community for recovering persons to learn to be brutally honest by openly sharing their life story; accepting responsibility for their actions; discovering that they are not god; admitting their loss of control over their lives; repenting of hurtful past actions through confession, restitution, and reconciliation; finding strength in a power outside of oneself; combating immature isolation through



connection and accountability to both the AA fellowship and a sponsor; and by bringing this message of healing and hope to others. AA insists that “the best way to keep your sobriety is to give it away.” Both Twelve-Step programs and modern psychology have advanced the treatment of many forms of addiction by rightly understanding them as “diseases” rather than moral flaws or defects of the will.

Counselors and pastoral counselors should familiarize themselves thoroughly with resources in their communities that serve persons wrestling with addictions. Making contact with public mental health centers, private treatment facilities, and local “detox” centers, as well as local clinicians (psychologists, psychiatrists, clinical social workers, and addiction counselors) who specialize in this field, is important. It is also helpful to know those qualified to conduct interventions, the process by which dependent persons can receive “after hours” help, and what assistance is available to those without insurance.

Pastoral counselors may wish to get involved in programs that facilitate local faith communities combining resources to offer help for dependent persons and their families. Many denominations have staff and programs dedicated to helping local faith communities reach this target population. The Rush Center of the Johnson Institute (Allen and Merrill 2005) developed a program called “Faith Partners” that advances the mission of helping faith communities “reduce alcohol and other drug problems among the people they serve.”

Because chemical dependence and addictive behaviors have damaging emotional, behavioral, psychological, and spiritual repercussions for the entire family, it is essential that therapists and pastoral counselors seek to offer family therapy or provide appropriate referrals to the care-seeker’s family. Whenever addiction surfaces in one family member, varying degrees of “denial” and “enabling” surely exist in others. Pastoral counselors must see dependence and its consequences “systemically” – i.e., how both “over-functioning” and “under-functioning” exist in

family members simultaneously. Helping family members see the dependent condition and its related destructive behaviors through a non-blaming stance of a brain disease while maintaining the tension of holding the addicted person to appropriate levels of accountability for his/her behavior is key. Most treatment programs refer the family to groups like Al-Anon or Al-Ateen or offer family therapy or both during and after treatment. Often there are financial and legal matters which have negatively affected the entire family as well which must be addressed.

Pastoral counselors are uniquely equipped to deal with the spiritual wounds nearly always associated with any form of drug abuse or dependence; alienation from others, self, and God; spiritual emptiness and existential loneliness; guilt; depression; forgiveness; denial; betrayal; deception; loss of trust; lying; guilt; shame; loss of authentic self; isolation; and deterioration of spiritual practices, values, and morals. There are a number of excellent texts on addiction and its treatment written by pastoral counselors trained in this field. May (1988/2004) has noted that one way to understand addiction theologically is to see the addicted person as participating in a form of idolatry – the drug is worshipped as a type of “false god.”

Recovering persons are helped best through multidisciplinary approaches which include structured social support, internal reflection, brutal honesty and accountability, specialized counseling, identifying and attending to relapse triggers, identifying and addressing previous destructive behaviors, and developing new life interests and relationships not related to their drug of choice.

### See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Religious, Role of](#)
- ▶ [Substance Abuse and Religion](#)

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## Pastoral Counseling and Personality Disorders

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Borderline personality disorder (or BPD) is one of the ten personality disorders identified in the *DSM-IV-TR* (including paranoid, schizoid, schizotypal, antisocial, histrionic, narcissistic, avoidant, dependent, and obsessive-compulsive). It is a “cluster B” disorder meaning that individuals who have one of these disorders have difficulty with impulse control and emotional regulation. Antisocial, histrionic, and narcissistic disorders comprise the remaining cluster B disorders. BPD is viewed by many as a controversial diagnosis (Paris 2010, pp. 25–43). As one woman who lives with the disorder describes it, borderline personality disorder is “the diagnosis that dares not speak its name” (Van Gelder 2010, p. 16). In this brief discussion of personality disorders and pastoral counseling, I will focus on BPD as an example of a disorder often associated with “clergy killers” or those individuals in a congregation who possess the ability to stir up unhealthy or abnormal conflict in congregations when they perceive that they have been abandoned or rejected by the minister (Rediger 1997, p. 57; Schweitzer 2011, p. 272). Cluster A personality disorders are characterized by social awkwardness or social withdrawal which means individuals who suffer from these disorders would be less likely to be participants in a faith community and less likely to reach out to a minister or pastoral counselor for help.

Roth and Friedman (2003) observe that there is a “gender inequity” in terms of the higher incidence of the BPD diagnosis among women which may be related to a history of sexual abuse but they also issue a caution: “There is certainly a correlation . . . but a simple and direct association is an oversimplification, and does not take

into account factors such as the nature and severity of abuse; other types of trauma and neglect also enter into the picture” (pp. 10–11). This is noteworthy for a pastoral counselor or minister because a woman who is being abused by a significant other may reach out first to a minister. Why? There is less of a stigma associated with doing so and access to a minister may be less restricted than it would be for a secular mental health professional. Approximately 25 % of those diagnosed with BPD are men. Some of the “gender inequity” may result from the fact that men seek treatment less frequently than women, they are less likely to speak about feelings (and here we need to be mindful of the reality that many who suffer from BPD do not recognize the feelings they are having), a clinician’s bias to diagnose BPD more frequently in women, and the “male code” that subscribes to cultural influences which determine that anger is one of the few acceptable emotions for men to demonstrate (Kreger 2008, pp. 42–43). Thus, pastoral counselors and ministers need to attend to gender differences in treatment even while recognizing that most current research focuses on women with the disorder. In religious traditions that do not ordain women, some of these gender inequity issues may be innocently and/or unconsciously reinforced.

The confusion or resistance to the diagnosis of BPD itself is a result of its etiology and the history of research related to the disorder. As Paris contends, “[n]o one believes any more that patients lie on a border with psychosis” and the term borderline “fails to describe the most salient features of the syndrome: unstable mood, impulsivity, and unstable relationships” (2010, p. 3). There is a consensus among researchers (Kreger 2008; Manning 2011; Paris 2010; Roth and Friedman 2003; Widiger and Simonsen 2005) that the vagueness of the criteria (symptoms or dimensions) related to the diagnosis contributes to misdiagnosis since BPD is often diagnosed as something else (e.g., bipolar disorder, dysthymia, depression, PTSD, psychosis). Even more alarming is the reality that BPD is,

in some instances, dismissed entirely because there is still much to be learned about the disease. As Roth and Friedman observe, “some aren’t sure how to treat it, and given the disorder’s complexity, many are hesitant to” (2003, p. 9). This difficulty describes the clinician’s dilemma, but the reality that “symptoms play out in as many different ways as there are individuals with BPD” underscores why diagnosis and treatment are so difficult (Roth and Friedman 2003, p. 12). Moreover, as Paris notes, “BPD is highly comorbid with other disorders, particularly depression” which often results in treatment that addresses a different disorder (2010, p. 26). In addition, he remarks on the “lack of a clear boundary” for diagnosing BPD which is ironic in view of the reality that individuals who suffer with BPD often have difficulty accepting and/or maintaining clear boundaries in their relationships. The broad range of personality trait disturbances as well as symptoms which overlap with other disorders lead Paris to conclude that “co-occurrence” is preferable to comorbidity when describing conditions that exist concurrently with BPD (2010, p. 27).

Roth and Friedman provide a succinct summary of the fairy-tale personalities that Christine Ann Lawson (2000) employs to describe borderline traits. These types are the following: (1) The waif who “feels like a helpless victim . . . may appear social but never really engages with others on a deeper level . . . complains and waves away suggestions or offers for help. The waif feels hopeless and anticipates negativity.” (2) The queen feels empty yet entitled; when challenged a queen will portray the challenger as an enemy. (3) The hermit may appear paranoid and feels fear; this person will perceive threats where others do not (because threat does not really exist). This type will be possessive and domineering and often engages in excessive self-protection. And (4) the witch who “feels white-hot rage” and “seems to emerge from the waif, queen, or hermit when triggered by perceived rejection or her own self-hatred” (Lawson 2000, pp. 21–22). These types – at least to some

extent – depict the symptoms that individuals (both men and women) with cluster B disorders have in common. They are frequently “impulsive, angry, lying, needy, reactive and have relationships marked by instability. They desire to be the center of attention, but they have few close friends. Family members are often worn out by the frequent emotional explosions. Individuals with a personality disorder often engage in high-risk behavior that results in harm to self and others” (Schweitzer 2011, pp. 279–280). They do not respond well to constructive criticism or helpful suggestions and will frequently lash out at those who attempt to offer critique in response to their own requests for assistance.

What does their marked instability suggest for pastoral counseling? Just as their interpersonal relationships are unstable, so are their religious affiliations and spiritual lives. These individuals are likely to move from one faith community to another when they are challenged or they perceive any type of slight. When abandonment or rejection fears are triggered, God is also perceived to be distant or absent. These individuals often demonstrate an inability to claim personal agency thus blaming God and others in their cast of ever-changing interpersonal relationships for their self-created or inflicted hardships. This does not minimize the reality that they are frequently individuals struggling to find peace and healing as they recover from abuse. Thus far we have examined briefly the symptoms that constitute a personality disorder. In the literature on personality disorders, much more is written about the experiences of individuals than actual treatment because there is still much to be learned. Nevertheless it remains to provide a brief overview of how one approaches treatment.

Paris provides a helpful summary of evidence-based practices that have been demonstrated to be successful with BPD including cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy which was developed by Marsha Linehan as a treatment specifically designed for those suffering from BPD. He is emphatic that the first step in treatment needs to be focused on helping those with personality disorders learn to

label their affect (Paris 2010, p. 174). Manning has adapted some of Linehan’s practices for individuals who have a loved one that suffers from BPD. She has proposed five steps for effective responses to borderline behavior which can be adapted by ministers and counselors in their work with individuals who have personality disorders: (1) Regulate one’s own emotion by practicing emotional regulation in situations that do not involve someone who has BPD or in situations that are not characterized as a crisis. This is accomplished by pausing to take a deep breath, focusing on physical sensations and body posture, half-smiling (sending a calming message to the brain), and self-validating. (2) Validate the person with BPD by first learning to validate oneself or others who do not have BPD by finding something to acknowledge. (3) Learn to ask and/or assess needs when someone asks for help by asking clarifying questions focused on what would be helpful. (4) Learn to brainstorm and/or troubleshoot solutions in a collaborative manner and begin to anticipate issues that could impede a resolution. And (5) request information that gives definition to the counselor’s role and develop a plan for follow through on the outcome of the plan. This may also be understood as a “check-in or follow-up” (Manning 2011, pp. 72–78). Manning and Paris both focus their treatment suggestions on BPD, but their overall approach to treatment is beneficial when working with any of the cluster B disorders.

Paris includes many helpful case illustrations in his discussion of therapeutic interventions, but particularly informative and practical for pastoral counseling are his summary bullet points that remind us there is no single way to talk with clients who have BPD but it is essential for counselors to build a therapeutic alliance by being validating and practical. Paris values a counselor’s ability to be “natural, humorous, and forthright” (2010, p. 182). The therapeutic task is focused on “modifying problematic traits and patterns: emotional dysregulation, impulsivity, and conflictual interpersonal relationships” (Paris 2010, p. 182). Lastly, Paris contends that clients “should be encouraged to ‘get a life’ while in treatment and not wait till they feel better.

Problems in recent life events are an opportunity to learn new skills and alternative behaviors” (Paris 2010, p. 182). From the perspective of a pastoral counselor or minister, this task of “getting a life” may include learning to give back to a community of faith that has been supportive during a time of crisis. The positive values which emanate from being able to give include an improved sense of self-esteem or confidence, an ability to claim agency in one’s personal life, an ability to receive grace, and the potential to establish roots in a specific community of faith because there is an ability to tolerate both the “good and bad” in interpersonal relationships without fearing rejection or abandonment.

## See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Breathing](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Love](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Psychiatry](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)
- ▶ [Witch, The](#)

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## Pastoral Counseling to Men

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The field of Men’s Studies in both psychology and religion has gained increasing attention following the rise of Second-Wave Feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. Today, the field remains relatively polarized, particularly within the church. In that original period, Griffiss (1985) made a distinction between Constantinian (essentialist) models of pastoral care and liberation models. Following Griffiss’ lead, this entry will be presented from a liberation model, which is better suited to a variety of men’s needs and their performances of masculinity. “In this model, persons are called into the freedom of the future, while social and ecclesiastical structures are viewed as tentative and revisable” (in Culbertson 1994, pp. 9–10). The fields of biomedical research, psychology, communication linguistics, and behavioral and cultural anthropology suggest that men and women function in different ways. For example, men have much higher rates of suicide, alcoholism, homelessness, and crime,

implying that constructivist and cultural more than biological mechanisms are at work.

The epistemology behind this entry will therefore be one of constructivism (in keeping with Piaget's theory that knowledge is constructed by the learner) – that is, that males of all ages act out a variety of “performances” of the expectations and assumptions that the culture in which they live foists on them, as opposed to “essentialism,” which views the many ways of being male as innate and biologically inherent. Each man has a range of ways in which he can “perform” his masculinity, though few men are immediately aware of *all* of the performance choices available to them, particularly since gender taxonomies and cultural dictates mask the available varieties. A “man,” however defined, can be a man in many ways, as dictated by culture, socioeconomic status, gender assumptions, desire, sexual attraction, educational level, social cohort, institutional coercion, and life experience. We are men, and yet we are not alike. Pastoral counseling and the psychology of masculinity finds its challenge in the richness of this diversity.

### **The Stages of a Man's Life**

Men today live in a world of “pluralistic post-modernism” (Schweitzer 2004). Choices and opportunities never available to our male forebears are suddenly foisted upon us, and what it means to be a man in today's world can be confusing and occasionally overwhelming. From a liberation standpoint, the only assets the vast majority of males have in common are the X chromosome and a penis. Yet the old schema of developmental stages still exert a certain influence, and how we are expected to “be” as individuals of the male sex still retains not only a power over us but also a usefulness in terms of organizing our thinking around a very complex topic. The following is based on Erikson's (1980, 1982) stages in the life cycle.

#### **Young Manhood**

Three recent studies have addressed the spirituality of late-high-school- and college-age men,

a group singularly absent from most churches (Astin et al. 2011; Jones et al. 2012; Longwood et al. 2011). These studies suggest that young adult males are often exploring their senses of spirituality outside of the institutional church, finding spiritual health in friendships and romantic relationships; in music, sports, and nature; and in organized discussion groups on alternative spiritualities. Those providing pastoral care to young men must be willing to listen not only to a critique of the shortcomings of the institutional church but also to engage a broader definition of spirituality that is not couched in traditional theological categories.

#### **Establishing a Professional Life**

Previous generations of men have often found fulfillment through professional or vocational life. Yet those working with men also know how many men, in their professional or work life, feel “isolated, worn out, exploited by “rich money,” helpless, and at a loss as to what to do about any of it” (Boyd 1995, p. 38). In short, their career has left them feeling like they have lost touch with the men they longed to be. The generation of men now in the 20s and 30s continues to look to the activities that previously nourished them outside the church: friendships and romantic relationships, organized discussion groups on alternative spiritualities, music, sports, and the exploration of nature. These men can benefit from pastoral counseling, but often in a wider context than traditional pastoral care. They see few members of the church of their own age and tend to approach clergy as though they were old-fashioned parents rather than spiritual companions. They also may be more focused on getting their personal identity and spirituality sorted out first before they begin to consider settling down with a romantic partner.

#### **Being a Partner**

According to a US Census Bureau survey (2011), 27 % of all households in the USA are single people living alone. The number of single people in most American congregations frequently does not reflect these statistics. However, people of all ages in the church may turn to their pastor for



guidance in establishing or maintaining a long-term relationship. The two most common reasons that men take a committed partner are shaped by the heteronormativity of various American cultures: attaining a sense of normalcy and fathering children. Yet finding a partner also offers a chance to connect with the feminine and to father children (Culbertson 1994, p. 59ff). At the same time, men's primary relationships can be threatened by being too symbiotic so that the boundary is lost between them and their partner, by poor communication skills about each partner's behavioral likes and dislikes, by a sense of entitlement that stems from culture's privileging of males over females, by anxiety around issues of space and boundaries, and by being disappointed that marriage does not actually guarantee the romanticized bliss that gets attached to it.

### Responsible Male Maturity

While Berne's (1963) Transactional Analysis was more popular in the 1970s and 1980s than today, his schema remains useful in the field of marriage counseling. Particularly in a world where so many people carry a sense of "entitlement," the TA role of "adult" seems to be increasingly out of people's reach. Rather, people too often, especially when they are in pain, resort to either their "child" or their "parent," both roles carrying a heavy burden of self-licensing. Borrowdale (1994) observes that "The values that sustain marriage include loyalty and faithful commitment, truthfulness and integrity, respect for the other person, and a proper appreciation of one's own needs. Is it a coincidence that, apart from the last one, these values are precisely those which get little public attention in society?" (Borrowdale 1994, p. 85). The general narcissism that presently infects Western society makes Borrowdale's "values" seem old-fashioned, and yet the life of the New Testament Jesus was modeled on the same qualities that Borrowdale identifies as sustaining marriage.

### Becoming a Parent

A family is an emotional system; as children, we are shaped not only by parental strengths and

nurturing but also by parental disappointments and shortcomings (see Culbertson 1994, p. 46ff). We men *do* disappoint our children, which some developmental psychologists claim to be part of the natural processes of individuation that ultimately allow us to leave home and become our own person. Pastoral counselors who have trained in Family Systems Theory (Bowen 1985; Friedman 1985) will understand this well. Surely we all hope that someday we will be able to forgive our parents for their shortcomings and value them for the ways in which they gave us vision and resilience.

Good (2006) points out that "family values" is not a biblical term. No word in Greek or Hebrew corresponds exactly to the modern word "family," nor is there any word that corresponds to "values" (pp. 13–14). Family values as we know them today are a modern construction and very much shaped by the culture in which the family lives in addition to inherited patterns of relating. The term family values, then, should be used in counseling only to articulate the specific values of a particular family, embedded in a culture and the family's own unique history. Sometimes these are good values and sometimes they are not, but they are a significant part of the "living inheritance" that each counselee carries and are thus worth exploring in the pastor's office (cf. Staley 1999).

### Fathering

Men in the church find a certain image of fatherhood in the overarching biblical portrayal of God – one with high expectations for "His children's" behavior, loving but conditional, and somewhat distant. This portrayal of God reinforces much of the heritage of hegemonic masculinity, perhaps making men who wish to father differently from this model feel somewhat insecure. However, fatherhood, like masculinity itself, is a social construction. Miles (1996), challenging the traditional interpretations of the character of God as Father, portrays God as calling people to adult values and behavior, "adult" to adult, and then giving them enormous responsibility by turning the world and its future over to humanity itself. In this representation,

God asks human adults to grow up and take responsibility for themselves rather than being stuck in relational dependence. With all this fluidity, new opportunities have opened up for men to be more directly involved in the nurture and maturation of their children.

### Transitioning to Elder Status

This transition is often marked by “retirement,” though the meaning of that word is increasingly less clear as people struggle in the present economy. Older men often do not often fare well as they age. Unlike the more traditional cultures of the world, where elders are honored for their wisdom, elderly men in the USA are often marginalized or ignored and thus lose their familiar sense of who they are. This might explain why 84 % of the total suicides among the American elderly are males (Kimble 1990, p. 113; Vaachahaase et al. 2011, p. xix). Men in this age group are not often accustomed to expressing their emotions constructively, being needy, or feeling sidelined.

The aging male body carries a lifetime of memories and meanings. In the pastoral relationship, men may be emboldened to again befriend their bodies as they change with age, finding narratives embedded in their flesh, the telling of which can give them a new sense of purpose (Culbertson 2006b; see also Lopate 1996). As a man’s life draws to a close, he faces the final crisis stage: integrity vs. despair (Erikson 1982). If he chooses integrity, he can contemplate his accomplishments and become able to develop integrity if he sees himself as having led a successful life. If he sees his life as have been wasted or unproductive, or feels that he did not accomplish his life goals, he will become dissatisfied with life and develop despair, often leading to depression and hopelessness. Erikson understood that this stage of life was retrospective, designed to allow us to die a good death if possible. But as advances in medicine and health-care life increasingly extend life, despair can instead lead to that spiritual malaise that Frankl (1985) called “the feeling of meaninglessness” (p. 164).

### The Measure of a Man

Most recent publications about men and masculinity understand masculine gender as a social construction – something that does not automatically come with having male genitals but is held out in the direction of young boys as something to grow into. Gilmore (1990) argues that hegemonic masculinity demands that males grow successfully into three roles: Provider, Protector, and Impregnator. Some biological males grow into these roles with relative ease, but most pay a price – emotionally and/or physically – for the efforts to attain something as ephemeral and amorphous as “masculinity.” Social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1966) understands that the assigning of specific roles and authority to males happens unconsciously, heavily influenced by cultural definitions. Indeed, recently in the United States, the role of “Impregnator” as the proof of a man’s fertility has been reframed as “Procreator,” making the writing of a memoir as important as the siring of sons. Social constructions are underpinned and shaped by personal and cultural narratives.

But as the field of Men’s Studies in Religion matures, we are increasingly aware that the stories we tell about ourselves are mediated by cultural assumptions about gender and sexuality. In examining the Western cultures of White masculinity, Bannister (2007) remarks, “The construction of masculinity as independent of circumstances remains a central feature of Western culture—whether its Hollywood action heroes, All Blacks, Kiwi blokes, or more broadly the intellectual power of science and rationality to exploit nature and transform the world according to human desire” (p. 3). But masculinity looks quite different in non-White cultures. For example, Maliko (2007) points out that the Samoan male body is judged on its usefulness, not its aesthetics. De la Torre (2009) also emphasizes the usefulness of the Hispanic male body, for it is the responsibility of “those with cojones to care for, provide for, and protect” those who have less social power (p. 447), and in this way become embodiments of the crucified

Christ. Liu et al. (2010) describe Asian males' struggle, particularly living in America, to claim a masculine identity that does not recapitulate White stereotypes about Asian men, yet does not simultaneously change them into people who would be identified in traditional Asian cultures as too feminine. In her book *We Real Cool* (2004), bell hooks writes about how a heritage of racial discrimination and stereotyping has forced African American males to become "real cool" caricatures of themselves, particularly in relation to women, all the while mismanaging the ways in which White culture continues to marginalize Black male voices.

### The Pastoral Care of Men

This entry has argued that a man will benefit most when the pastoral counselor adopts a postmodern approach to gender and identity issues. As well as understanding the social constructions of gender and sexuality, the pastoral caregiver will benefit from some training in Family Systems Theory, Narrative Theory, and Object Relations Theory (for all three approaches, see Culbertson 2000). Most men have been trained in their families of origin to suppress deeply their feelings and emotions. Recovering awareness of feelings and emotions can be difficult, for patriarchal masculinity trivializes the world of inner experience as making men more vulnerable (Culbertson 1994, pp. 13–14). Because men are often emotionally repressed and trained not to care about their physical selves, getting them to ministers who might provide help in their confusion can be difficult. Some men find that talking intimately with a male minister raises the specter of homophobia. Others find that talking with a female minister threatens their manhood.

Thus, male Christians will often approach pastoral counseling not even knowing how to deal with their own sense of primal loss (see Corneau 1991). As well, many men are "alexithymic" – that is, poorly equipped to discover their feelings and to language them (Culbertson 2006a, pp. 9–10).

They may bring a sense of fear, loss, shame, confusion, and powerlessness to their minister, asking the minister to do most of the hard work of counseling because the men themselves are at a loss where to begin.

Ministers may need to model emotions for the male counselees. They may also need to find the balance between seeming too directive in the counseling session and creating a space in which men can feel safe about opening up. Ministers may also need to set clear boundaries – for example, no threats of violence against anyone, an understanding about what confidentiality means and why both the clergy and the laity are bound by it, and the importance of taking counsel with people who are trained rather than with family members or bar buddies. Men need help and clear structures in finding themselves (Gelfer 2009), and clergy need professional supervision and support in working with issues of gender and sexuality.

Finally, pastoral therapist Christine Neuger has identified nine critical aspects to encourage the appropriately sensitive pastoral care of men in the church (1997):

1. Let go of your own culturally ingrained assumptions about gender roles and sexual norms.
2. Focus on what might help men help themselves.
3. Men need to be viewed as individuals who are gendered, rather than genders struggling to be individuals.
4. Invite the counselee to bring his body into the counseling space. Too many men are disembodied.
5. Avoid using the power of your role to reinforce or punish gendered or sexual behavior according to your own interpretation of social norms.
6. Work cooperatively to achieve values and choices appropriate to the careseeker.
7. Remain conscious of and sensitive to the careseeker's emotions, particularly when they do not match your own assumptions about what gendered thinking or behavior should look like.

8. Be sensitive to the person's internal influences vs. his external influences, as well as the meaning he attributes to his own life story.
9. Learn all you can from what happens in the interpersonal – i.e., in the space between you and the careseeker.

## See Also

- ▶ Castration
- ▶ Circumcision
- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Faith Development Theory
- ▶ Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Friedman, Edwin
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Purpose in Life
- ▶ Self

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## Pastoral Counseling: Third World Perspectives

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If pastoral counseling, as the literature points out, is the “healing, sustaining, guiding/shepherding and reconciling” (Clinebell 1966, 1984) undertaken by professionals who use spiritual resources as well as psychological understanding for healing and growth, then pastoral counseling in the so-called Third World – currently an anomalous phrase – can be seen as dating back to the work of traditional diviners/healers/priests within these contexts. The history of formal pastoral counseling practice and its coupling with academic discipline in most Third World contexts or Majority World (a much more politically correct designation), however, dates for most countries, to encounters with Western missionary influence and most recently a postcolonial/postindependence phenomena largely after the 1960s.

Most of these more modern pastoral counseling approaches take Western psychological theories and practices as their point of departure in as much as current practices are provided by certified pastoral counselors, many of whom are

mental health professionals, who have also had in-depth religious and/or theological training. Yet the lack of many clinically trained counselors mean that much of pastoral counseling follows the nouthetic pattern of applying insights from sacred texts to presenting problems within culturally acceptable norms. Overall, there is prominence given to religious faith and principles rather than psychological insights. However, the attention to the psychology of the religious believer is not overlooked.

In Africa, for instance, pastoral counseling has moved through three stages of development, the first rooted in European/Western theories of personality which are applied to the African context (Nomenyo 1971; Tjega 1971). The second stage manifested as academic exercises which seek to offer descriptions of mental and psychological ailments to which African thought and traditional therapeutic modalities are applied (Mwene-Batende 1981). This dates to the 1958 Bukavu and 1959 Tananarive pan-African conferences on mental disorders and psychiatry in an attempt to address mental health issues on the continent with attention to particular personality traits of the African peoples. Finally, the thirteenth stage integrates the two systems employing biblical concepts which it couples with a psychodynamically oriented psychotherapy from which it seeks to offer guidelines for pastoral praxis (ma Mpolo 1984). In many respects, this approach closely resembles the psychospiritual ethos of African life and thought, exemplified in African healing practices.

In the Latin American context, Liberation theological sensibilities and feminist voices on the one hand and the largely Evangelical voices that occupy most seminary spaces on the other, frame issues of pastoral care and counseling. While these two groups agree that the heart of pastoral care issues center largely around the concern of suffering and poverty that stem from the macroeconomic and political structures of the society, the former emphasizes the transformation of the sociopolitical structures as the way to ameliorate the situation, while the latter assumes that conversion experiences with accompanying behavioral changes at the individual level is, what

is, needed to make enduring changes. These differing philosophical/theological views thus produce different approaches, emphasis, as well as focus for pastoral counseling. At the same time, the two predominant denominations, Catholic and Protestant, bring varying responses to the identified sociopolitical and economic problems.

The development of pastoral counseling in East Asia follows an almost similar trajectory as the previous two contexts, with the exception of the clear emphasis on the familial approaches and with pastoral counseling being both a task of the church and the state, especially in the more urbanized centers and in Australia and New Zealand, becoming a concern of the Department of Justice's unit of Marriage guidance (Southard 1970).

Additionally, unlike pastoral counseling in the Western world, counseling practice in the two-thirds world favors and accents a community/familial approach. In both Chinese and African cultures, for instance, it is the overall impact of individual life on the family as a whole that is of consideration even in individual counseling. But the rapid urbanization in some of the city centers calls for attention to the cultural changes taking place – the emancipation of women, independence of children from extended familial matrix to a more nuclear family model which needs to pay attention to the individual in new ways.

There is also concern for a more directive and connectional approach in counseling rather than the approach that requires the care seeker to do the intrapsychic work in a clinical setting facing a seemingly aloof counselor. Usually a family member may initiate care seeking, and the interpersonal space between seekers and carers is a little less formal (Augsburger 1986; van Beek 1996). In such collectivistic cultures, with structured gender and age role relations, counselors do well to be attentive to age and gender in counseling relations as well as in among family members in the counseling setting. The importance of the specifically religious resources leading to a favoring of the nouthetic approach in the Christian tradition as well as its coupling with inductive guidance is noted by these authors. The growing industrialization and urbanization comparable to that in suburban America leads to a need for other than pastoral

counselors affiliated with the church for direction, and in some places in East Asia the tide was turning toward psychotherapeutic services as far back as the 1970s (Southard 1970). It means the utilization of both the inductive and educative approaches in support of each other is needed than preferring one to the other.

Of importance to pastoral counseling is diagnosis as how to unearth presenting problems. Etiology and the diagnosis in traditional settings as found in most Third World settings, however, cannot be effectively uncoupled and it is mainly within diagnosis that the interplay of psychology and religion is most observed. The dynamic cosmology composed of seen and unseen forces and belief in the effects of the latter in weakening humans, thus making them vulnerable to ill health, whether physical or psychical, requires not just a psychosocial but also psychospiritual approach to diagnosis and care. The use of psychodrama with spiritual undertones by appeal to the gods and ancestors, for lifting up personal, family, and sociopolitical issues, action/reflection to effect change at the individual, familial, and cosmic levels, has been noted (Ma Mpolo 1991). There is also the call to turn to the reinstating of the traditional concepts which entail a mentored conversation of community members aimed at ameliorating issues through what is identifiable as narrative counseling (Mucherera 2010) and the therapeutic palaver (Janzen 1978). Where other psychological and somatic causes are present, there is tendency to frame and find ultimate causality in spiritual factors and the individual's vulnerability to these evil spiritual powers (p'Bitek 1970). The counselor's ability to work with spiritual and psychological resources in tandem for diagnosis and therapeutic intervention is key to pastoral counseling in such contexts where belief in the spiritual dynamistic forces characterize common life (Acolatse 2010, 2011; Berinyuu 2002). In a sense, it is a return to the inherent psychosocial and psychospiritual underpinnings of health and wholeness within African traditional societies – a complex of priests/diviners, herbalists/healers, and an assortment of therapeutic groups that attend to the task of diagnoses and



treatment of both physical, psychical, and various other personality disorders.

In the above-designated contexts, especially in most of Africa and Latin America, in particular, issues surrounding pastoral counseling still have to do with how to navigate postcolonial effects on identity and the interstitial space that postcolonial subjects still occupy. Residual issues of biculturalism and multi-religiousness in personal and religious identity that require attendance for deep psychological and spiritual scars to be healed (Lartey 2006; Mucherera 2001) but which also require that critical engagement with other disciplines for a thick descriptive analysis for developing a new pastoral theology of care and counseling, as well as psychodynamic understanding of integrative consciousness for these contexts is key. An ongoing dialogic stance between traditional and Western worldviews and their integration, where necessary without overvaluing one at the expense of the client, is prerequisite for sustaining pastoral counseling in context as well as charting a course for its viability as a formal academic discipline with ability to contribute to knowledge in the field. Such integrative work is already present in the works of Acolatse, ma Mpolo, and Lartey from the African continent. Of importance are the latter two's call to the Western world to pay attention to the emerging issues in Africa and the import of that move to the discipline of pastoral counseling in general (Lartey 2002, 2006; ma Mpolo 1991). It requires that approaches to the care of persons that are emic to the African context and mindset be forged not by first being refracted through Western theories and approaches, but from the ground up built on African understandings of personhood and religio-cultural reality. This way the theories for care and counseling speak directly out of and to the situations with which the African can relate without undue pause.

The future direction of Pastoral counseling in the two-thirds world, which is becoming increasingly industrialized and urbanized and yet continues to live in pockets of deep traditional, though in its psychic functioning, means continually coupling new modalities with the traditional ways for helping distressed persons in need.

Here then, pastoral counseling may need to address the issue of understanding of family, a concept which is already expansive, in light of rapid industrialization and secularism and influx of Western ideas as it affects migration and identity. In the case of Africa, for example, attention is to be given to the above, in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, issues of human rights vis-à-vis the numerous genocides and related trauma, gender violence and its related issues of sexuality as well as the entanglements of and repercussions of religious pluralism, and the political ferment. An unavoidable aspect of the future direction of Pastoral counseling, in Third World perspectives, needs to attend to globalization and economic issues and their effect on clients and counseling practices on the one hand and the kind of scholarship that will change the emphasis and focus of pastoral counseling to accommodate changing needs on the other.

Finally, we note that Third World contributions to the pastoral counseling field can be found in the current turn to cross-cultural pastoral counseling in light of migrations of cultural/religious minorities to the West and the changing demographics and the shifts in the cultural and religious landscape of these host cultures. Attention to pastoral care in cross-cultural mode enjoined in the literature, pioneered by migrant scholars in the West, focuses on attending to the particulars and distinctives of cultural minorities, in order to provide appropriate care. But as Lartey (2002) points out, such attempts to address distinctive among people groups, carry enormous drawbacks because it easily polarizes people into us and them, and often ignores the intra-cultural differences among minority cultures, not to mention the real tendency to unwittingly continue the stereotypical stance for which attention to cross-cultural issues are mandated.

### See Also

- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)

- ▶ Evangelical
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Folk Magic
- ▶ Fundamentalism
- ▶ Mystery Religions
- ▶ Paganism
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Polytheism
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Protestantism
- ▶ Psychiatry
- ▶ Religious Identity
- ▶ Witchcraft

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## Pastoral Diagnosis

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Nancy Ramsay writes “Diagnosis is an evaluative process of discerning the nature of another’s difficulty in order to provide an appropriate and restorative response” (Ramsay 1998). She further argues that: “Diagnosis is never neutral. It always reiterates the anthropological and philosophical assumptions of the practitioner.”

Corey et al. (2012) define *psychodiagnosis* as: “the analysis and explanation of a client’s problems;” it usually includes “identifying possible causes of the person’s emotional, psychological, and behavioral difficulties,” and it entails suggesting appropriate therapeutic options to address the identified issues or problems. They define *medical diagnosis* as: “. . . the process of examining physical symptoms, inferring causes of physical disorders or diseases, providing some kind of category that fits the pattern of disease, and prescribing an appropriate treatment.”

Pastoral diagnosis differs from secular medical or psychodiagnosis because of the explicit theological and religious presuppositions and assumptions of the practitioner and the context in which the care is offered. Pastoral diagnosis is a process of combining theological reflection with the language and wisdom of other helping professions with a view towards seeing and treating persons holistically when crafting a practical response or therapeutic intervention. The word “pastoral” infers that the person discerning another’s difficulties is either a pastor or one authorized by a faith community to provide pastoral care.

Diagnosis, then, is a “hermeneutical process” (Ramsay 1998) of discernment, which is highly contingent on the lenses through which the practitioner views a person seeking care. Further, how the care-seeker’s situation or difficulty is named will greatly determine the type of care or intervention the practitioner develops to respond to that person’s difficulty or situation.

Pruyser (1976b) noted that the religious practitioners he supervised in clinical settings were often reticent to tap the richness of their own religious tradition’s experience and wisdom when working in multidisciplinary contexts, and he encouraged and challenged pastoral practitioners reasonably to claim and articulate their theological and spiritual perspectives in order to enrich and deepen the diagnostic process.

The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel and Friedrich 1976) notes that the word “diagnosis” derives from the Greek terms *dia* (through or by the means of) and *gnosis*

(to know through careful and verifiable observation). Pruyser (1976b) notes that in any field of knowledge, the term diagnosis points to a discerning and discriminating capacity “to distinguish one condition from another.”

Schlauch (1993) notes that the Greek word *diagignoskein* means “to perceive or know apart.” Nathan (1967) suggests that diagnosis means “to discern, distinguish, or differentiate” with a view towards “grasping things as they really are, so as to do the right thing.” Knowing things “apart” suggests a comparative process where certain issues are lifted out of context to highlight them in order to understand them more fully. Schlauch writes: “. . . something is now figure as compared to ground, or foreground as compared to background.”

The practice of diagnosis has both its proponents and detractors. Those who favor employing diagnostic procedures generally argue that employing such procedures enable practitioners to obtain sufficient information about the care-seeker’s past and present condition to craft an appropriate treatment plan. Further arguments for diagnosis are that diagnostic labels embrace a wide spectrum of symptoms or characteristics, are intended to be descriptive, give clarity to a person’s condition and such clarity may lower the care-seeker’s anxiety, and provide some hope in predicting both the course and outcome of a person’s difficulty.

Although most practitioners employ some form of diagnosis, some caution its use so that it does not unnecessarily label or harm those seeking care. The projective nature of those offering the diagnosis has already been noted. The act of offering diagnosis implies one person having power over another. The practitioner offering the diagnosis can be unduly viewed as “the expert” who knows what is best for the other, and subsequently care-seekers can potentially lose their voice in the treatment plan. Some argue that diagnosis can woodenly categorize persons in a system of rigid categories such that care-seekers lose their particular distinctiveness and uniqueness. The potential harm here is that human beings get reduced into limiting diagnostic categories.

Employing pastoral diagnosis of respectfully means “knowing” persons deeply “through” the complexity of their multifaceted stories, personalities, experiences, histories, social locations, beliefs, faith journeys, and spiritual perspectives by being in critical conversation with the language and observations of other helping professions. Pastoral diagnosis employs the best of what the helping professions have observed and catalogued about the complexity of the human condition and filtering it through one’s religious world view and spiritual lenses with critical openness and self-awareness.

### See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ God Image and Therapy
- ▶ Hermeneutics
- ▶ Personal God
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Pruyser, Paul
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Transference
- ▶ Wounded Healer, The

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## Pastoral Psychotherapy and Pastoral Counseling

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Socrates was reputed to say that “the beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.” I suspect, given the Socratic method, that the beginning of wisdom is the double realization that definitions carry the illusion of certainty and elude univocal agreement. Definitions, we know, vary according to the historical and cultural contexts and traditions and sometimes as a result of conscious whims and unconscious desires. Yet, the Sisyphean work of defining concepts is nevertheless necessary, for without definitions we begin to lose clarity of who we are, what we do, and where we are headed. The plasticity of defining terms, which did not dissuade but instead emboldened this Athenian gadfly, is immediately evident when faced with defining pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy, especially in such a short entry. It seems to me that

a wise approach takes into account, if only briefly, the history and traditions from which these concepts are founded. More specifically, I locate and depict these concepts within the Judeo-Christian traditions and describe how each concept took on particular meanings given the social and scientific changes in Western societies during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in general and in the United States in particular. My overall aim is to provide some of the key contours that help differentiate both pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy.

The term “pastoral counseling” is not found in Judeo-Christian scriptures, yet there are many examples of diverse forms of counsel. God, sometimes directly and other times through intermediaries, advised and admonished Moses (Exodus, 3:1–8) and David (2 Samuel 12). The prophets, like Isaiah (12:13–22), Ezekiel (7:2–25), and Amos (5:7), reproached and warned Jewish rulers and the Jewish people. Jesus, the wise counselor (Gerkin 1997), gave advice to his disciples (Matthew 5:1–14), reprimanded the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 3:7), consoled the grieving (John 11:20–57), imparted wisdom to the crowds (Mark 1:22), and encouraged the wayward (Luke 24:13–35). St. Paul’s pastoral letters exhorted, praised, warned, and advised Christians in Rome, Corinth, and elsewhere. The desert mothers and fathers, such as Theodora of Alexandria, Melania the Elder, St. Simeon the New Theologian, St. John Climacus, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, proffered counsel to other monastics and to people of God. In the sixth century, Gregory the Great wrote the book, *Pastoral Care*, which was used for centuries to train clergy. In this book, Gregory (1978) described a pastoral method for giving counsel to individuals in distress. This excessively brief overview of scripture and the early Church makes clear that pastoral counseling or, more broadly, giving counsel (Capps 2001) was an integral part of communal life and something expected of those identified to lead and care for the community of faith (see also Clebsch and Jaekle 1994).

The Reformation, with its shift toward emphasizing and privileging the Word of God (*sola*

*scriptura*) eventuated in greater stress in the clergy’s role in giving counsel to congregants and less prominence in the role of sacraments in giving care. In his book, *A History of Pastoral Care in America*, Brooks Holifield (1983) provides numerous illustrations of clergy who understood themselves to be physicians of the soul and thus interested in both pastoral diagnosis of maladies of souls and pastoral methods for providing effective counsel. During the colonial period in the United States, for example, Reverends John Dodd and Thomas Hooker engaged in *pastoral conversations* with the aim of curing troubled souls (Holifield 1983, pp. 32–34). Pastoral conversations were occasions for offering expert counsel; these ministers and others (e.g., Samuel Willard; William Ames; Holifield 1983, pp. 41–51) published case studies demonstrating effective pastoral counseling methodologies and techniques. During this period, pastoral conversations or counseling clearly fell under the purview of pastors, which then meant that they had a theological and ecclesial responsibility to be experts in diagnosing maladies of the soul and in developing interventions that invited cure and, if not cure, solace. In brief, forms of pastoral counseling during early America were largely in continuity with Gregory the Great’s view of attending, listening, and conducting theological assessment, all aimed toward cure of souls.

In the West, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw the rise and cultural dominance of the human sciences for understanding and responding to human suffering. William James, Morton Prince, James Jackson Putnam, Pierre Janet, Jean-Martin Charcot, Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, Carl Jung, and many others developed theories and methods – under the umbrella of science – that dealt with diagnosing and healing psychological maladies. These new ideas and methods influenced many Liberal Protestants. Oskar Pfister, a Swiss Lutheran pastor, first became enamored with Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and later with Freud himself. Pfister (Breger 2000; Meng and Freud 1963) believed deeply that psychoanalytic theory and conceptual tools could be used by clergy in giving counsel to parishioners. Across the Atlantic,



the Emmanuel Movement (1905) in Boston represented an attempt to make use of the psychological sciences in counseling ministries (Holifield 1983, pp. 201–209). This movement, which eventually spread throughout many US cities, contained the notion and premise that clergy already conducted “psychotherapy” – the gospel of faith as therapeutic (Holifield 1983, p. 202). Many Protestant ministers recognized the value of psychological methods and techniques in giving counsel to congregants, and this appreciation found its way into “seminary curricula in the 1920s and 1930s, where seminary-trained pastoral counselors found homes in congregations where they became resident psychologists” (Townsend 2009, p. 16). During this period, pastoral counseling gradually edged away from something that all pastors engaged in during their ministry to a specialized ministry that required specific knowledge, training, and skills, as well as a particular ministerial identity. This specialized ministry sought, with varying success, to bring theology and psychology together with the aim of providing wise counsel to individuals, couples, and families struggling with emotional and relational difficulties.

This view of pastoral counseling gathered steam and, by the middle of the twentieth century, there was a movement to professionalize pastoral counseling. Members of the American Foundation of Religion and Psychiatry (AFRP) were instrumental in forming a new guild in 1963: the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC). The emergence of AAPC made explicit and further concretized significant changes vis-à-vis traditional notions of pastoral counseling. First, pastoral counseling, as a specialized ministry of the clergy, now had a professional organization that established bodies of knowledge, criteria for membership, certification, and accreditation. Ordination was not sufficient to call oneself a pastoral counselor, and, as a result of professionalization, pastoral counseling was no longer something that all pastors did in the course of their ministry. Gradually, AAPC let go of the clerical requirement for certification, opening its ranks to lay women and men, but

this only furthered the view that pastoral counseling was a specialized ministry. Another consequence of pastoral counseling becoming a guild or professional occupation was the loosening of accountability for ministry vis-à-vis communities of faith and their respective traditions and polities. The pastoral counselor, in other words, was professionally accountable primarily to the credentialing body and secondarily to his/her particular community of faith and its polity.

The issue of community and accountability was a reason why several prominent pastoral theologians did not greet the emergence of AAPC with enthusiasm. For instance, Seward Hiltner argued passionately that professionalization would shift accountability, violating a fundamental ecclesiological premise of pastoral counseling (Townsend 2009, p. 27). Prior to this, pastors giving counsel were accountable to their communities of faith, and, indeed, their very ministry emerged from and was grounded in their respective communities of faith. Wayne Oates also believed that a professional organization that certified specialists in pastoral counseling would undermine the ecclesiological premise that all ministry is grounded in the community of faith (Holifield 1983, pp. 346–347). As Townsend (2009) noted, pastoral counselors’ “primary responsibility was to the psychological needs of individuals and only secondarily to the broader mission of the institutional church” (p. 27). It now became possible for a pastoral counselor to be in private practice, which in previous centuries would have been inconceivable. Before, it was ordination along with the authority of the polity and community of faith that established a pastor’s ministry of counseling. The emergence of AAPC, while retaining the importance of the community of faith, shifted pastoral counseling from a ministry within the role and identity of pastors to a distinct ministry with a professional identity, methods, and practices, thereby loosening the ties to church institutions and communities.

In the twenty-first century, the professionalization of pastoral counseling continues with a number of states licensing pastoral counselors, slackening further the ties to church institutions



and communities of faith. There have been other changes. During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, pastoral counselors relied heavily on psychodynamic theories and concepts and secondarily on theology to understand and respond to diverse forms of human suffering. Since then, AAPC has moved away from its heavy reliance on psychodynamic theories and embraced other theories and practices of therapy (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, solution-focused, narrative, and structural family systems), as well as other theological or religious perspectives and traditions (e.g., Buddhist). There has also been greater openness to a) psychotherapists interested in religious and spiritual issues and b) counselors from other religious traditions and communities (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist). Pastoral counselors now can come from diverse religious traditions and establish their identity and credentials through a professional organization like AAPC. While these significant changes in the understanding of pastoral counseling signal discontinuity from earlier forms of giving counsel, there is continuity seen in the ongoing interest and development of diagnostic methods and communicative interventions aimed at healing, liberation, solace, and insight.

The notion and practice of pastoral counseling have been around for centuries, but the idea of pastoral psychotherapy emerged after the mid-twentieth century. References to pastoral psychotherapy began appearing in journals during the 1970s (Houck and Moss 1977). Carroll Wise (1980), a professor at Garrett Biblical Institute, wrote *Pastoral Psychotherapy: Theory and Practice* wherein he identified a specific form of religiously and spiritually informed counseling aimed at psychologically therapeutic interventions. Like the concept of pastoral counseling, definitions of pastoral psychotherapy varied (Schlauch 1985). For instance, a prominent pastoral theologian, Pamela Cooper-White (2011), recently attempted to differentiate pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy. While all forms of “pastoral care and counseling are intended to foster growth, healing, and empowerment,” she wrote, “the special charge of pastoral psychotherapy is to help, accompany,

and support individuals (couples and families) in recognizing and healing especially painful psychic wounds and/or long-standing self-defeating relationships to self and others” (Cooper-White 2011, p. 5). Cooper-White further clarifies pastoral psychotherapy “as a mode of healing intervention that is specifically grounded in psychoanalytic theory and methods. . . and held in a constructive, creation-affirming theology” (p. 155). The distinction Cooper-White makes between pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy appears, then, to be framed largely by frequency, length of time, and extent and depth of the wounds of those seeking help and not necessarily by theory and methods used.

The contrast between pastoral psychotherapy and pastoral counseling, while not definitive, can move us to clarify their respective ministries. Pastoral psychotherapy is a specialized ministry conducted by highly trained, credentialed, and licensed ministers, providing healing for individuals, couples, and families confronting significant and pervasive psychological and relational struggles. Despite Cooper-White’s argument, this specialized ministry can be informed by psychological traditions that are not psychoanalytic. Pastoral counseling likewise involves theologically and psychologically educated ministers, though they deal with more routine and less severe relational problems, suggesting shorter duration of care, fewer educational requirements, and, perhaps, no professional certification or licensing. The latter definition recognizes that Christian communities have provided counsel from Christianity’s earliest origins, and the former takes into account the current need for more specialized theological and psychological education in providing best practices in giving counsel to individuals, couples, and families who struggle with more complex psychological and relational issues.

Pastoral counseling and pastoral psychotherapy will continue to undergo changes with regard to how each is defined and practiced. Despite differences, the thread that connects these two definitions and demonstrates their continuity with depictions of pastoral counseling in centuries past is that they involve practices aimed at

(a) understanding diverse human maladies from theological and psychological perspectives and  
 (b) addressing these maladies through various communicative, relational methods, and strategies with the aim of providing solace, healing, vitality, and/or freedom.

## See Also

- ▶ Adler, Alfred
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Evangelical
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ God Image and Therapy
- ▶ Hiltner, Seward
- ▶ Interfaith Dialog
- ▶ Intersubjectivity
- ▶ James, William
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Protestantism
- ▶ Pruyser, Paul
- ▶ Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Religious, Role of
- ▶ Transcendence

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## Patience in Sunni Muslim Worldviews

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Patience is one of the predominant themes of the Sunni Muslim worldview. The population of Muslims worldwide is more than 1.5 billion. The Sunni, derived from the Arabic word “*Sunnah*” meaning the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, is the largest branch of Islam, constituting 90 % of the religion’s followers, stretching from Indonesia to Morocco. Muslim merchants, skillful in trade, and Islamic mystics, with their peaceful manners, played an important role in the spread of Islam in various countries, including India in the early seventh century (el-Aswad 2012b, p. 358). The Shi’a is the second-largest denomination of Islam. Countries with a Shi’a majority include Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain. Shi’i Muslims are followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the Prophet Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law. They believe that Ali should have been the first imam or successor of the Prophet. For the Sunni, Ali is the fourth of the rightly guided caliphs (el-Aswad 2012c, p. 350). Although the conceptualization of patience is embedded in the Shi’i worldview, here I focus on the concept of patience or self-control as represented in the worldviews, discourses, and everyday lives of Sunni Muslims. “Worldview” indicates belief systems and related symbolic actions; it is an interpretative and integrative paradigm encompassing the assumptions through which people view the world in which they live and with which they interact (el-Aswad 2002, 2012a, pp. 1–2).

The Arabic word *ṣabr* (derived from the root *ṣ-b-r*) implies two intertwined meanings, one material and the other ideational. The material meaning refers to the aloe plant (*ṣabbār*) as well as to the bitter, laxative drug or medicine made from the juice of aloe leaves. Ideationally, *ṣabr* means patience, steadfastness, and self-control. The concept of patience has multiple meanings and nuances, including self-command, forbearance, endurance, clemency, kindness, tranquility, and serenity (el-Aswad 1990, pp. 40–44). The English word “patient” denotes two different meanings, self-control and a sick person. A person might be sick but not patient, and conversely, a person might be patient but not sick. However, the Arabic word *ṣabr* or patience does not refer to a sick person.

According to the Sunni worldview, patience, a core concept in Islam, leads to peace or peaceful relationships between people and is considered to be “half of faith.” In the Qur’an, it is said, “Our Lord! pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto thee as Muslims” (7:126). Patience, encompassing psychological, emotional, social, ethical, and physical factors, is among the central themes of the Qur’an. Those who are patient are rewarded and blessed infinitely by God. They are also promised the attainment of paradise for enduring any misfortune that may have befallen them. The significance of “patience” is also expressed in various Muslim exegeses including those of Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, a great medieval Sunni scholar. Al-Ghazālī discussed the virtues of patience (*ṣabr*) and gratitude (*shukr*) in great detail, using examples from the Qur’an and the Prophet’s Tradition or *Hadith*.

Patience embraces twofold dimensions, one is inactive or negative (associated with bitter or unpleasant experiences) and the other is active or positive (associated with sweet or fruitful outcomes). Passive or inactive patience refers to the ability to willingly refrain from or forgo specific actions in response to both uncontrolled and controlled conditions. Restraint or tolerance in the face of provocation is a good example. To be patient is to abstain from saying or doing something (usually forbidden). Patience or self-control

is required to resist temptation and avoid committing taboos or prohibited behavior (*ḥarām*). Also, in the case of sickness, the sick person is expected to show patience by waiting calmly (without complaining) until he/she recovers. Observing or maintaining modesty and chastity requires patience for not doing what is considered to be shameful or prohibited. During difficult and stressful times, Muslims are reminded to be patient and hopeful. Patience is frequently equated with silence (*ṣamt*), the ability to keep silent (*kitmān* or *katūm*), and managing one’s anger or rage (*katm al-ghayz*). In many social contexts, Muslims view silence as a sign of contentment and acceptance.

Metaphorically, patience (*ṣabr*) is associated with the gallbladder (*marāra*) indicating bitterness in the sense of overcoming a sour or bitter experience. To express such an unpleasant experience, Sunni Muslims say, “patience is bitter” (*aṣ-ṣabr murr*). Women, using folk sayings to express their relief and release of stress through the experience of conversing with somebody, say, “if my neighbor were not (with me), my gallbladder (*marāra*) would burst.” This indicates that social relationships help people endure the calamities they might experience.

Active patience refers to the positive actions of people, who, without complaining, are involved in arduous, serious, and difficult activities, including economic, educational, and social endeavors (el-Aswad 1990, pp. 51–59). In such cases, patience is metaphorically described as a “key to a happy ending or relief” (*aṣ-ṣabr muftāḥ al-faraj*), meaning that what was possible or potential (having an unexpected positive outcome) has become real or actual prosperity. Not only economic success but also bravery, especially in defending one’s country or family, necessitates active patience.

The positive aspect of patience, however, does not mean that it is more prevalent than the passive aspect. Both of the two aspects are complementary and constitute the meaning of patience as being shaped by the Sunni culture or worldview. With both the positive and negative aspects of patience, “self-control” is the focal point. Using a proverb to express the values of self-control and

endurance, a Sunni person says, “to be patient with myself is much better than asking people to be patient with me.”

Patience is a key factor in psychological development especially in dealing with discomfort, pain, and suffering as well as in attaining inner strength and internal peace. The physically or emotionally injured person who displays a great sense of integrity and patience during a crisis becomes the exemplary role model for the Sunni Muslim. Through pain and suffering people develop a deep sense of passion, compassion, and understanding. Patience, therefore, indicates the psychological state of being emotionally stable and freed from the anxiety that one might experience in dealing with uncertain circumstances and events of daily life. It is interesting to note that when Muslims get hungry either after hard work or between meals, they say, “let us have *taṣbīra*,” which means a light meal or snack. *Taṣbīra*, derived from the Arabic word *ṣabr*, means making someone patient.

Patience (*ṣabr*) is not just a virtue to be maintained but also a practice. Put another way, patience can be achieved through practice and exercise. Observing and maintaining social, spiritual, and religious values such as piety, tolerance, modesty, and chastity require ongoing practice. Peaceful relationships between people are maintained by observing the virtue of patience. For instance, when a person becomes angry for whatever reason, he is usually reminded by people with whom he interacts to be patient and not to show any sort of unjust or irrational reaction. Muslims frequently quote the Qur’an: “I swear by the time, Most surely man is in loss, Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other patience” (103:1–3). Further, the Islamic holy month of Ramadan during which Muslims practice fasting, one of the five corners of Islam, is called the “month of patience” (al-Ghazālī).

Sunni Muslims value the temporal dimension of patience. The “practice of patience” requires time, the waiting for something to be done or the anticipation of what is desired or hoped for. Patience heals but necessitates time. On various occasions, Muslims use proverbs expressing the

optimistic-temporal frame of patience. Some of these proverbs include “patience is kind” (*aṣ-ṣabr tayyib*), “patience is beautiful” (*aṣ-ṣabr gamīl*), and “patience is sweet” (*aṣ-ṣabr ḥulw*). For Muslims, hope and anticipation demand consideration and endurance (*ṭūl al-‘umr tiballagh al-‘amal*). Hastiness or rashness of any sort is considered not only a violation of the value of patience but also a result of the devil’s prompting. Impatience results in failure, or as Egyptian Sunnis say, “a hasty person cannot lead camels.” The idea of a stretch in time is represented in what Sunni Muslims call a long breath (*naḥās ṭawīl*). The self or psyche (*naḥās*), soul (*rūḥ*), and breath (*naḥās*) are metaphorically used in the context of practicing patience. One’s self or psyche must be governed and controlled, while his soul (*rūḥ*) is given extra time to reflect and cope with unpleasant and critical situations.

In their daily practices, Sunni Muslims seek to transform the virtue of “patience” to be a “pattern of behavior” or “personality trait” through which they show how to cope with hardship and sufferings. Popular maxims such as “patience is a virtue” denote the “desirability of the trait” (Schnitker and Emmons 2007, p. 177). A persistent and determined person can be depicted as having the traits or behavior of Ayub, the Prophet Job, who patiently and fully submitted himself to God during the plague or crisis that threatened his health, family, and possessions. Job (Ayub) is praised in the Qur’an: “Truly We found him full of patience and constancy. How excellent in Our service! Ever did he turn to Us!” (38:44). Interestingly, some Muslims are named after the Prophet Ayub. Also, some men and women are named after the trait of patience. For example, a man can be called Ṣabrī or Ṣābir (patient). Also, a woman can be named Ṣābra, Sābrīn, or Sābrīyah. One of the ninety-nine glorious and beautiful names of God is *Aṣ-Ṣabūr* (the Patient), and a person can be named “Abd aṣ-Ṣabūr,” meaning the slave of the Patient (el-Aswad 1990, pp. 258–260).

In their quest for exoteric and esoteric knowledge, Sunni and other Muslims confirm the practicality of patience. The notions of patience and divine or hidden knowledge are inseparable from

the overall mystic tradition of Sunni Muslims. This is clearly evident in the mystical story of al-Khiḍr and the Prophet Moses. Al-Khiḍr, the evergreen but invisible Walīy, believed to be alive and attentive to whoever mentions his name, is known as the “Pious Slave” (*al-‘abd aṣ-ṣāliḥ*), upon whom Allah has bestowed divine mercy (*raḥma*) and hidden knowledge (*‘ilm ladunnī*) and whom Moses met at a place where two seas conjoin. Al-Khiḍr explained to the Prophet Moses, through three exemplary events, the hidden or unseen but real dimension of life. In the story al-Khiḍr expressed his fear that Moses would not be patient with or able to understand his seemingly illogical deeds. If Moses could not show patience, trust, and understanding, al-Khiḍr would depart from him. The events were that al-Khiḍr scuttled a fishing boat owned by some poor fishermen, killed a young man, and then fixed and restored the fallen wall of a city known for its corruption. Moses, overwhelmed and confused, questioned al-Khiḍr who, before his departure, explained what he did. He scuttled the boat in order to save it from an unjust ruler who wished to confiscate the good boats in the city. The young man was killed because he was not good to his pious parents and intended to commit a crime that would disgrace them. Finally, al-Khiḍr restored the fallen wall because there was a treasure buried under it. That treasure belonged to two orphans who would suffer economic hardship in losing it. The underlying message of this narrative is that, beside the common sense knowledge that depends on the logic of daily experience and observation, there is spiritual hidden knowledge guided by inner insight and revelation that requires great patience. At the literal and visible level, al-Khiḍr’s actions seem to be illogical and evil, but at the deep, symbolic, and hidden level, they are not (el-Aswad 2012a, pp. 84–85).

## See Also

- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Job
- ▶ Qur’an

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She always has the last word. She is unpredictable, impulsive, violent, fiery, and irresistible. But she is also loving. At a sensuous dance ceremony, she fell in love with a handsome young chief Lohi’au. But after a brief romance, she was drawn away to fight several battles. On her return, she found that her beloved had died of grief over her disappearance. But she found his spirit and returned it to his body, restoring him to life. She is Pele, the Hawaiian goddess of fiery volcanoes, revered to this day by Hawaiians.

Pele is the ancestral spirit, the grandmother (Tu-tu) who accompanied the sailing boats from the Polynesian Tahiti group of islands, before 450 BCE. They settled in the Hawaiian Islands, built up from millions of years of volcanic eruptions



**Pele, Fig. 1** Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park. Public Domain. <http://www.nps.gov/havo>



that transformed into beautiful islands west of Mexico. As an ancient song goes, “From Tahiti comes the woman Pele/From the land of Bora-Bora” (Kane 1987, p. 11).

It is said that when Pele’s volcanic fire cools into ash and cracks, her lover’s seeds take root, grow into green life-forms, and slowly transform the ash into soil. The highest volcano is Pele’s home, Mauna Loa, 13,277 ft above sea level, and on its slope is Kilauea. Both peaks have active pools of red-hot lava (Fig. 1).

Pele is a soulful personification of nature, an archetypal expression of human soul about the terror and unpredictability of volcanoes blended with romance, ancient psychology, and religious reflections on ultimate reality. The creation account tells of the original infinite nothingness, a darkness in which intelligence emerged, then the Earth-Womb mother and the Light-Sky father. From their embrace was created this world of opposites. From the Great Mother Kane, the Creator was born, the eldest and ruler. Then came Kanaloa of the Ocean, then Ku, patron to human works, and Lono, patron of farming and healing. These gods came to Hawaii in wild thunderstorms and lightning flashes.

Also came the goddess Hina or Haumea, patroness of fertility and other women’s works, and La’ila’i, mother of humankind. These deities had a power called *mana* that passed down to the

bloodlines of the high-ranking families. *Mana* is the power that motivates everything in the universe. Pele was born from Haumea in the ancient island homeland and came to Hawaii long after the elder gods and goddesses. Her brothers are the spirits of thunder, fire, explosions, and rain.

Pele’s sisters include Laka, goddess of fertility and, like Pele, patroness of the dance. Kapo is a goddess of sorcery and dark powers in many forms. Pele’s favorite is Hi’iaka, spirit of the dance, carried by Pele as an egg from Tahiti; she was born in Hawaii. A mortal sister was Ka’ohelo, transformed upon her death into the ‘ohelo bush that grows high on the volcano’s sides; her edible red berries are thrown into the fiery crater to honor Pele.

### See Also

- ▶ Goddess Spirituality
- ▶ Hawaiian Religion
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ Spiritual Ecology

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## Persona

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Persona is the term Jung used to denote the outer face that is presented to the world which he appropriated from the word for the mask worn by actors in antiquity to indicate the roles they played. Jung conceived of it as an archetypal meaning that it is universal and it is the archetypal core of persona that facilitates the relating that has evolved as an integral part of humans as social beings. Different cultures and different historical times give rise to different outer personas as do different life stages and events in an individual's development. However, the archetypal core gives the persona its powerful religious dimension that raises it from the banal, workaday outer vestment of an individual via its connection to the depths of the psyche.

In his writings on persona, Jung often emphasizes its superficial aspects as, for instance, in his paper *The persona as a segment of the collective psyche*, where he makes the point that the contents of the persona are similar to the impersonal unconscious in being collective. "It is only because the *persona* represents a more or less arbitrary and fortuitous segment of the collective psyche that we can make the mistake of regarding it in toto as something individual" (Jung 1953, p. 157) (Original italics). He goes on to say: "It is. . . only a mask of the collective psyche, a mask that *feigns individuality*, making others and oneself believe that one is individual, whereas one is simply acting a role through which the collective psyche speaks" (Jung 1953, p. 157) (Original italics).

He goes on to say the essential components of the persona may be summarized as a compromise between individual and society, a semblance, and a two-dimensional reality. However, in the course of analysis, the persona often begins to break down with the result that the conscious mind can become suffused with material from the collective unconscious. The resultant release

of involuntary phantasy material seems to be the specific activity of the collective psyche. As the influence of the latter increases, the conscious personality loses its power of leadership and is "pushed about like a figure on a chess-board by an invisible player" (Jung 1953a, p. 161). Jung illustrates this process with case material from a patient whose persona was identified with that of the supremely wise, grown-up, all understanding mother-daughter-beloved behind which her authentic self lay hidden. Her transference onto Jung consisted of the intellectual father who would collude with her intellect as her actual father had done. In the course of analysis, she had dreams that brought up material from the collective unconscious which in turn led to her realizing her own real potential instead of her previous role playing.

From these brief comments, it can be seen that persona has a paradoxical nature in lying between consciousness and the contents of the unconscious so it is important to stress that the persona is not itself pathological but may become so if an individual is too identified with their social role of mother, lawyer, teacher, and so on. This kind of persona identification which is concerned with conscious and collective adaptation leads to rigidity and an ego which is capable only of external orientation so that unconscious material will tend to erupt into consciousness rather than emerging in a more manageable form.

## Persona Versus Vocation

As has been said above, the persona is the psychic mechanism that consciously adapts an individual to the demands of the external world, but being an archetype, a part of it lies in the unconscious. There may come a time in any individual's life when conscious adaptation proves insufficient and the unconscious part of the persona becomes active often through neurotic symptoms which can lead the person into therapy. Jung's view of anyone seeking that kind of help was that they were ultimately seeking a spiritual solution to problems. Paradoxically, the path to the inner spiritual quest for anyone lies in the unconscious

part of the persona: “But since the soul, like the persona is a function of relationship, it must consist in a certain sense of two parts - one part belonging to the individual, and the other . . . in the unconscious” (Jung 1971, pp. 167–168).

On the whole, Jung’s view of persona was somewhat negative equating it with unconscious adaptation to mass demands. He poses the question of what induces anyone to emancipate themselves from the “herd and its well-worn paths” (Jung 1954, p. 175), the latter induced by identification with a collective persona. The answer lies in “*vocation*” (p. 175) which “puts its trust in it as in God. . . vocation acts like a law of God from which there is no escape” (p. 175). This vocation or inner voice is a different one to the voice of the persona (from the Latin *personare*: to make resound) which can boom loudly in order to compensate for feelings of inferiority: “. . . whenever people are called upon to perform a role which is too big for the human size, they . . . inflate themselves - a little frog becomes like a bull. . .” (Jarrett 1988, p. 1213).

The religious life is the one that follows its own destiny by separating from identification with the herd persona. As Jung says: “We can point to Christ, who sacrificed. . . to the god within him, and lived his individual life to the bitter end without regard for conventions. . .” (Jung 1958, p. 340). And as Jung goes on to say about the god archetype: “. . . since experience of this archetype has the quality of numinosity, often in very high degree, it comes into the category of religious experience” (Jung 1958, p. 59). What the conscious part of the persona may regard as evil is a perception based on it not conforming with what an individual considers to be good so that paradoxically it is through confrontation with and conscious integration of the evil and, therefore, rejected parts of the personality that a truly religious and meaningful attitude to living evolves. As Jung states: “. . . all religious conversions that cannot be traced back directly to suggestion and contagious example rest upon independent interior processes culminating in a change of personality” (Jung 1953b, p. 175).

## Jekyll and Hyde

A fictional example of where an individual cannot perform the task of confronting the evil that lies in the psyche is attested to by Murray Stein in his writings about the persona in his book *Jung’s Map of the Soul*, wherein he highlights Jung’s special interest in this phenomenon which has to do with playing roles in society. “He was interested in how people come to play particular roles. . . and represent social and cultural stereotypes rather than assuming and living their own uniqueness. . . It is a kind of mimicry” (Stein 1998, p. 111). He goes on to say that character is often situational and cites the Jekyll and Hyde story as an extreme form of that. In looking more closely at that particular story, one could say that Jekyll was identified with the persona of the caring doctor whose sole aim was to be in the service of humankind. He was in denial of his more animal instinctual side, which, through being repressed, grew in force until eventually it got the upper hand and gained control of his whole personality. The latter exemplifies what Jung calls *shadow* which stands in relation to the persona as polarities of the ego, and in this way, they represent a classic pair of opposites. Where there is a weak ego, shadow and persona can split into extreme polarities leaving no possibility of a dialog between the two as in the fictional case of Jekyll and Hyde. It may be of interest to note that Robert Louis Stevenson said that much of his writing was developed by “little people” in his dreams and specifically cited the story of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in this context. This writer has speculated on his use of the name “Jekyll” for the human side of the character he was depicting as it bears an obvious resemblance to the word jackal. It may be that, in choosing this ambiguous name, Stevenson is drawing attention to the animal nature from which the persona evolves.

## Soul as Persona

Jung’s interest in the persona arose out of his study of multiple personalities and dissociation

in an individual which, in turn, was sparked by his experience with the French school, in particular the work of Pierre Janet. “One has only to observe a man rather closely, under varying conditions, to see that a change from one milieu to another brings about a striking alteration of personality...’Angel abroad, devil at home” (Jung 1971, p. 464). Different environments demand different attitudes which depend on the ego’s identification with the attitude of the moment. This personality splitting is by no means only abnormal but led Jung to state that “such a man has no real character at all: he is not *individual* but *collective*, the plaything of circumstance and general expectation” (Jung 1971, p. 465) (original italics).

Jung links *soul* to *persona* by differentiating the former from *psyche* in the following way: “By psyche I understand the totality of all psychic processes, conscious as well as unconscious. By soul, on the other hand, I understand a clearly demarcated functional complex that can best be described as a ‘personality’” (Jung 1971, p. 463). Jung gives an instance of a man whose persona was identified with the soul leading to “a lack of relatedness, at times even a blind inconsiderateness” (Jung 1971, p. 467). This kind of rigid persona can result in a person “who blindly and pitilessly destroys the happiness of those nearest to him, and yet would interrupt important business journeys just to enjoy the beauty of a forest scene” (Jung 1971a, p. 467). In other words, persona identification with soul can lead to a deep aesthetic sensibility but also to a lack of heart and a capacity for relatedness.

On the other hand, a lack of connection between soul and persona can have grave consequences as Jung demonstrates with Spitteler’s prose epic *Prometheus and Epimetheus*. In this work, Prometheus is depicted as having sacrificed his ego to the soul, the function of inner relation to the inner world, in the process losing the counterweight to the persona, which would connect him with external reality. An angel appears to Prometheus saying: “It shall come to pass, if you do not prevail and free yourself from your forward soul, that you shall lose the great reward of many years,

and the joy of your heart, and all the fruits of your richly endowed mind” (Spitteler 1931, p. 23). As Jung points out, the soul, like the persona, is a function of relationship and hence consists of two parts – one belonging to the individual and the other to the object, viz., the unconscious.

In conclusion, it should be clear from the above that the development of a well-functioning persona is an essential task for any individual but in the process two major pitfalls must be avoided. The first is an overvaluing of the outer persona which leads to dissociation from its unconscious side and hence from connection to the symbolic life; the second is an undervaluing of the persona which can result in dissociation from the external world of reality. Jung cites Schopenhauer’s claim that the persona is how one *appears* to oneself and the world but not what one *is*. In view of this, it is wise to bear in mind the well-known saying that one should never judge a book by its cover. As Jung states: “. . .the temptation to be what one seems to be is great, because the persona is usually rewarded in cash” (Jung 1959, p. 123).

## See Also

- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Psyche

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## Personal God

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A personal God is a supreme being with self-consciousness and will, capable of feeling, has the attributes and desires of a person, and enters into relationships with individuals and people groups. Although not all Christians believe in a personal God, the belief is integral to and most prevalent in Christianity. Atheists do not believe in God or gods. Agnostics believe that there is a God or gods but that they are unknowable, and Deists believe in an impersonal supreme God that exists and created the universe, but does not intervene in its normal operations. Other god or gods may have human characteristics and feelings that encompass the entire range of human attributes, emotions, and abilities but lack the holiness and relational attributes of the unique God of Judaism and Christianity.

A major survey by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life finds that six in ten adults in the United States believe in a personal God. However, to say that God is a person is to affirm the divine ability and willingness to relate to others and does not imply that God is human, evolved from humanity, or is located at a specific point in the universe. Although the Christian concept of a triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, could imply a belief in three

gods, Christian creeds are quick to clarify that there are not three gods, but only one God existing in three persons. In this sense, the word "God" must apply to a person or a whole composed of interrelated persons. A personal God has all of the maximum attributes of a human person and in addition is omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternal, and morally perfect. The belief in a personal God presupposes that God is active in the affairs of humanity while enacting an eternal plan for humankind and all of creation. God, who has attributes of male and female, is usually referred to in the masculine. He is actively sustaining and preserving his creation for his own purpose. Since God is divine and may have attributes unknown and unknowable by humanity, God must be self-revealing.

Christians believe that God is self-revealing in nature, in special relationships with individuals and groups of people, but especially in Christian scriptures or Bible. Although the Christian Bible does not try to prove the existence of God, it does give insights into God's nature and attributes. From this self-revelation, God is described as a spirit, who wants to be known by humanity, who has a name or names, and who is wise, faithful, truthful, patient, good, loving, gracious and merciful, holy, righteous, and just. Many of these same moral attributes are found in the characteristics of humankind, but God's attributes are exceedingly greater in intensity and holiness. The God of Judaism and Christianity emulates the positive absolutes that humanity strives for but fails to achieve.

## Commentary

The presuppositions that an investigator brings to the discussion will have a bearing upon his or her belief or disbelief in a personal God. Psychology and religion have had an ongoing tenuous relationship. At times, their relationship could be described as warfare between science and religion with psychology attempting to replace religion or at the very least enter into the discussion of the origins and functions of

religious beliefs and practices. For some, a personal God is an anthropomorphic human creation and a mere reflection of humanity and has no place in the world of science. While others who understand the positive effects of faith and belief, blend psychology with religion until a belief in a personal God is no longer necessary. At other times, psychology and religion agree as they consider spirituality a central part of the human journey seeking ways in which psychology could deepen the understanding of the foundation and positive effects of religion on the human condition including the belief in a personal God.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anthropomorphism](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)

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### Personal Unconscious

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The unconscious has a long history in psychology. Although Freud is credited for his contributions on the understanding of the unconscious, contemporary psychology has failed to find evidence for much of Freud's assertions concerning what the unconscious part of human beings contains. The unconscious is now considered to be indicative of automatic thought processes. Automatic thought is generally characterized as nonconscious processing. Automatic thought processes involve reflexive responses to certain triggering conditions. These processes require only that a stimulus event or object be detected by an individual's sensory system. Once that triggering event is detected, the process runs to completion without awareness (for a review, see Wegner and Bargh 1998). Such nonconscious influences on thoughts can, in turn, automatically influence behavior. One frequently cited demonstration of this effect involved the priming of some participants with the concept of the elderly. Results showed that these elderly-primed participants subsequently walked slower than did control participants (Bargh et al. 1996).

What are the nonconscious components of thought for religion and the religious believer? Is it possible that mental representations that shade the way an individual interprets a variety of situations, such as religious beliefs, could have automatic influences? Research in this area suggests the answer to this question is yes, particularly for religious individuals. For example, using a method designed to measure implicit (i.e., automatically activated) evaluations, Hill (1994) found that religious and nonreligious people made similar implicit evaluations towards religiously neutral objects. In contrast, implicit evaluations of religious objects were stronger among

religious people than among nonreligious people. Going one step further, recent research has shown that subliminal (i.e., outside of conscious awareness) presentations of the concept of God actually reduce causal attributions to the self for believers of God (see Dijksterhuis et al. 2005). Can religious representations in turn automatically influence behavior outside of awareness? Research once again says yes. Subliminal presentation of religious words (e.g., amen, faith, saved) has been shown to increase prosocial behavior (helping, honesty) and does so without participants' conscious awareness of such influence (Pichon et al. 2007; Randolph-Seng and Nielsen 2007). Furthermore, these behavioral effects are not moderated by self-reported religiosity (Randolph-Seng and Nielsen 2007; Shariff and Norenzayan 2007).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Peyote Ceremony

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The Peyote ceremony has been described in a number of ethnographic works (Anderson 1996; Hultkranz 1997; Schaefer and Furst 1996; Steinmetz 1990). While the interpretations these works offer are suspect for their ethnocentrism, the ritual descriptions are largely consistent with observations of the ceremonies. The second author has attended peyote ceremonies, on both personal and professional levels, as both an invited guest and as part of his research, and will describe the process of the peyote ceremony. The conduct of the peyote meeting is fairly simple when compared to the complex rituals many of the shamanistic societies of the plains have or had (Wissler 1916).

The ceremony is typically held in either a plains style tipi or a Navajo hogan, although some chapters have buildings set aside for their services. In any case, there is always a dirt floor, and participants sit or kneel on blankets for the duration of the 8–10h service. Exceptions are made for elderly, who may sit in a chair, or for prepubescent children, some who will lie down being their adult guardians, being allowed to sleep. The ceremony itself begins with the lighting of the fire at sunrise on the morning of the service. A fire-keeper tends the fire throughout the day praying. Participants arrive in the hours preceding the service proper, which usually begins at about 4 h before midnight. There are



opening prayer songs, prayers, and words of instruction by the Roadman. Each person present is usually acknowledged and made welcome, with special attention being given to the elderly, youth, those who have traveled far, and individuals new to the religion.

A roadman is a man qualified to conduct the ritual who serves in the role of facilitator more than medicine man, priest, or minister, although some Roadmen are also highly skilled shamans and orators. The service continues with the sponsoring party saying a “few” words about the nature of the service, why, and in some cases for whom the service was called. Peyote Way services are not routine, for the most part, but are called a specific purpose of healing, thanksgiving, or celebration. While the opening of the ceremony is happening, corn husks and tobacco are passed to all participants, who roll prayer smokes. Some participants carry ground peyote into the ritual that they add to the prayer smokes. These prayer smokes are then smoked in unison with all participants addressing the Chief Peyote to intervene on behalf of their prayers. The Chief Peyote is a whole dried peyote plant placed prominently on the altar (viewed as the symbolic road of life) and is not thought of as a deity itself but as an intercessor to God.

Many peyotists profess to be Christians and view the Chief Peyote to be a manifestation of Christ. Once the initial prayers and songs have been said, the peyote is passed around. Referred to as medicine in both English and most indigenous languages, the peyote is consumed either green or fresh, in powdered form, in slurry of ground peyote or as a tea. Medicine is passed around after several rounds of singing; however, individuals can usually ask for more throughout the ceremony. Once the medicine has been passed, a staff, fan, and rattle are passed sequentially to each participant who then prays silently or sings four songs, accompanied by a drummer.

The Peyote Way services use a water drum, usually made of a cast iron kettle and partially filled with water, which produces a unique droning sound. The drummers are usually highly skilled and fast-paced beat contributes to the transcendent state. The drumming, rattling, and

singing continue for about 4 h until midnight when there is ritual water brought in by the sponsoring woman or the wife of the Roadman. Participants usually leave the tipi to stretch, or relieve themselves. The service resumes following the short break and continues in a similar manner to the first round. The water woman brings in more water at sunrise, again offering words of gratitude and thanksgiving, usually addressing each participant personally. She then smokes over the water and which is then passed around for participants to take a drink. The water is followed by a ceremonial meal consisting of dried pulverized deer meat, corn meal, a fruit pudding, and a sweet desert. Then the service is ended, but the ceremonial space is not disbanded until after the participants have taken a lunch meal.

The atmosphere of the service is usually quite reverent and sedate. This is in striking contrast to the atmosphere when the service is completed which is quite animated, with humor being the order of the day, with old and new acquaintances poking good-natured fun at themselves and each other. People appear quite emotionally open during this period. Individuals that I have known for years and thought to be quiet and reserved openly shared personal challenges or intimate concerns about themselves or others. The ceremony seems to help participants become more vulnerable and emotionally connected with one another. Caution is advised in assuming that this animation and openness is caused by the intoxicating effects of peyote alone. The same behavior can be observed following other intense indigenous rituals (e.g., sun dance, Vision Quest, or Sweat Lodge ceremonies).

## **Ceremonial Use of Peyote and the Professional Healthcare System**

### **Beginning Discussion**

There is evidence that the medical community in the United States is ambivalent about how to comprehend and view the ceremonial use of peyote (Salladay 2005; Yuill 2006). How should a professional healthcare provider react or

respond when he or she learns that one's patient is active in the peyote religion and periodically attends a peyote ceremony? While there are emerging studies that show that the ceremonial use of peyote does not correlate to increased risk of psychological or cognitive deficits (Halpern et al. 2005), there is also evidence that the illicit use of peyote (outside a ceremonial context) is associated with low levels of social support, low levels of self-esteem, and low identification with American Indian culture (Fickenscher et al. 2006), more research needs to be done looking at the interactions between peyote and prescribed medications.

Peyote has been classified under federal law as a Schedule I controlled substance; however exemptions have been enacted, through the American Indian Religious Freedom Amendments Act of 1991 (AIRFAA) to protect members' exercise of traditional peyote ceremonies of the Native American Church. While there are exemptions for members of the Native American Church of Native American descent, the interpretation of this federal legislation has been subject to various interpretations by the states (Parker 2001). Parker notes, "While current exemption structure seems to provide ample protection to Native Americans practicing peyote religion, continuing challenges to the constitutionality of the exemptions by non-Native Americans indicates that Congress could strengthen and clarify the exemption to avoid future problems and court challenges" (2001, p. 13).

## See Also

- ▶ Christ
- ▶ Native American Messianism
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Shamans and Shamanism

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## Peyote Religion

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## Peyote Way: Background and Cultural Context

The term "Peyote Religion" describes a wide range of spiritual practices primarily from

tribes of the American Southwest that has expanded into a kind of pan-Indian movement under the auspices of the Native American Church (NAC). Peyote Religion, formally recognized as the Native American Church (NAC), incorporates the ritual use of peyote, the small spineless peyote cactus *Lophophora williamsii*, into its spiritual and healing ceremonies. The Peyote Ceremony is led by a recognized practitioner who is referred to as a Roadman, who is sponsored by an individual or family requesting a ceremony, usually for some specific need or healing or to recognize some event, such as a birthday or an important life transition.

Derived from the Aztec word *Péyotl*, the Peyote Way religions have expanded their spheres of influence from an area around the Rio Grande Valley, along the current US-Mexico border, to Indigenous groups throughout Central and North America (Anderson 1996).

The ritual use of peyote has roots in antiquity. A ritually prepared peyote cactus was discovered at an archeological site that spans the US-Mexico border dated to 5,700 years before the present. Other archeological evidence, paintings and ritual paraphernalia, indicates that the Indigenous people of that region have been using both peyote and psychoactive mescal beans ritually for over 10,500 years (Bruhn et al. 2002).

The Peyote Way is a complex bio-psychosocial-spiritual phenomenon that encompasses much more than the pharmacology plant. The contemporary peyote practice found in the United States, Canada, and by Mestizo peoples in Mexico differs significantly from the older rites that continue to be practiced by the Huichol, Cora, and the Tarahumara in Mexico (Steinberg et al. 2004). The forebearers of the modern Native American Church were the Lipan Apache, who brought the practice from the Mexican side of the Rio Grande to their Mescalero Apache relatives around 1870. From the Mescalero, it spread to the Comanche and Kiowa in Oklahoma and Texas. It quickly spread to most of the Eastern Tribes forcibly relocated to the Oklahoma Territory. The quick spread from the Mescalero to most of the Oklahoma Tribes has been attributed

to the loss of traditional religions due to oppression (Anderson 1996).

The psychedelic properties of peyote are just a part of the whole spiritual package “this is not to say that peyote does not facilitate visions but rather that it is only one influence in a total religious setting” (Steinmetz 1990, p. 99). It is important to note that describing peyote as a “psychedelic” while accurate is fraught with problems, particularly when the Peyote Religion is studied outside its indigenous context. Here, one needs to differentiate the ritual use of peyote by Indigenous practitioners, called Roadmen, and Native American Church participants from use or abuse of peyote by curiosity seekers and experimenters who are simply seeking a “high” devoid of a ceremonial and cultural context. Peyote has been described as both a psychedelic as well as an entheogen. An entheogen is a chemical or botanical substance that produces the experience of God within an individual and has been argued to be a necessary part of the study of religion (Roberts and Hruby 2002). Elsewhere, an entheogen has been defined as a psychoactive sacramental plant or chemical substance taken to occasion primary religious experience. Within such an understanding, the complementary use of Peyote Ceremony within the context of mental health treatment has been viewed as a form of cultural psychiatry (Calabrese 1997). Other entheogens include psilocybin mushrooms and DMT-containing *ayahuasca*, which, similar to the use of peyote, have been used continuously for centuries by Indigenous people of the Americas (Tupper 2002).

### **Civil Rights Versus Indigenous Rites: New Pathways for Treatment**

Mental health practitioners from across disciplines may view Peyote Religion and the Native American Church with some degree of suspicion, if not, with downright skepticism. Mack (1986) discussed the medical dangers of peyote intoxication in the peer-reviewed *North Carolina Journal of Medicine*. Mack refers to the users of peyote as “the more primitive natives of our

hemisphere” (p. 138) and gives repeated attention to details of nausea, vomiting, and bodily reactions that happen, at doses that he failed to mention were 150–400 times higher than the ceremonial amount reported nearly a century prior (Anderson 1996). So, there is need for reasoned and open discourse on this important resource and potential partner for the mainstream mental health practitioner.

Psychiatric researchers, Blum et al. (1977), looked at the mildly psychedelic effects of the peyote, coupled with Native American Church ritual and exposure to positive images projected by the skillful use of folklore by the Roadman. They found these components facilitated an effective therapeutic catharsis. Albaugh and Anderson (1974) hypothesized that the effects of peyote created a peak psychedelic experience that were similar to those found when using LSD as an adjunct to psychotherapy with alcoholics. In their study of a group of lifelong drug and alcohol abstaining, Navajo et al. (2005) found no evidence of psychological or cognitive deficits associated with regularly using peyote in a religious setting. However, the placement of peyote, LSD, and other psychedelics on the Schedule 1 classification of drugs has eliminated public funding of psychedelic research (Strassman 2001) and has limited scientific inquiry on the effects of such. The current biomedical opinion on efficacy of entheogens is inconclusive (Halpern 2001), and yet there is limited evidence that further study is warranted. Wright has suggested that the behavioral sciences should once again open its mind to the incorporation of mind-expanding substances in the psychiatric or psychotherapeutic treatment milieu (2002). As science takes a more benign look at the effects of traditional healing practices and brain chemistry, new pathways for treatment and renewed discussions about traditional indigenous healing methods may be opened up for study (see Hwu and Chen 2000).

## See Also

- ▶ [Peyote Ceremony](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Pharmacotherapy

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A pastoral counseling treatment plan that includes an option for pharmacotherapy presents several issues for consideration at the outset. By definition, this will be an interdisciplinary, combined, or “integrated” approach that necessitates a consultation with a physician – preferably, a psychiatrist since they are the physicians who specialize in pharmacotherapy for psychiatric disorders. As Riba and Balon (2005) contend, a combination of psychotherapy with medication is “more efficacious and beneficial than each modality alone” (p. vii) but many medical residents and educators decry the “‘loss of mind’ in the increasing emphasis on the biological basis of mental illness and the shift toward somatic treatments as central therapeutic strategy in psychiatry” (p. ix). If the suggestion that secular forms of treatment emphasize medical modalities at the expense of “talk therapy” raises issues and concern among those in the medical and psychotherapeutic communities, the intensity of concern is likely to rise more quickly among pastoral counselors, especially those who may emphasize a biblical or spiritual approach to counseling. Moreover, it is just as likely that a pastoral counselor who maintains a friendly posture or attitude toward collaboration with a physician and the possibility of pharmacotherapy will encounter resistance from clients based

on misinformation, theological orientation to the world, and/or their general predisposition of suspicion aimed at psychotherapeutic methods of treatment. A few pointed illustrations will suffice to make the case that there is tension and competition among differing viewpoints from within as well as external to faith communities.

Pastoral counselors are not univocal in their approaches to counseling; some are inclined to eschew any insights from psychology or psychiatry as David Winfrey (2007) acknowledges in an article which describes the United States Southern Baptist Convention’s complete rejection of psychotherapeutic methods. Winfrey cites a trustee from Southern Seminary (home to Wayne Oates considered to be a founding father of the pastoral counseling movement) who stated: “In this psychotherapeutic age, it is really important that we think as Christians, that we employ authentically Christian thinking, biblical thinking to human life, and that we do this in a way that, without apology, confronts and critiques the wisdom of the age and seeks the wisdom that can come only from God and from God’s Word” (p. 24). Thus, God’s Word alone is sufficient for healing. Illness may be understood to derive from an individual’s struggle with sin from this perspective. Faith heals by reconciling the sinner with God. This view, while often most directly associated with more conservative theological traditions that take a narrow or more literal view of their scriptural documents, is also espoused by some who are more readily identified with mainline (and more moderate) Protestant views. Walter Brueggemann (1995) is one such representative insofar as he has stated: “Hope is not something one does at the margins of life when our resources fail, but it is definitional for persons in covenant with this God. I submit that despair and its psychologically acceptable form, depression, are in fact covert acts of atheism in which we conclude that nothing can happen apart from us and no one is at work but us” (p. 157). As I have suggested elsewhere, to take up a position that equates despair and depression with covert acts of atheism is either misinformed or irresponsible since many who are familiar with the wide range of this biblical



scholar's work may be influenced by this claim in such a way that they decline to seek help when it is needed. Thus far we have seen opposition raised to psychotherapeutic treatment modalities and/or understandings of mental illness from two very different theological orientations along a broad continuum. Theologians and pastoral counselors are not unique in raising doubt or suspicion concerning contemporary treatment methods.

Psychiatrists, physicians, and psychologists are also among those who sound the alarm concerning the need for caution when considering pharmacotherapy. A recent article by Richard Friedman (a professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medical College), which appeared in *The New York Times* (2012), highlights a disturbing trend in the manner in which antipsychotic drugs are prescribed for off-label treatments – specifically for generalized or social anxiety disorders. Friedman cites “the landmark Catie trial” which “failed to show that the new antipsychotics were any more effective or better tolerated than the older drugs” in treating symptoms of schizophrenia including “apathy, social withdrawal and cognitive deficits” (p. D6). Though this second generation of antipsychotic drugs (often referred to as atypical) was initially deemed safer than first-generation antipsychotic drugs, they have been demonstrated to include risks such as increased blood sugar, elevated lipids and cholesterol, and weight gain but have not eliminated the risk of a permanent movement disorder (tardive dyskinesia) associated with the first-generation drugs. Nevertheless, Friedman cites the disquieting increase in the number of prescriptions for atypical antipsychotics from 28 million in 2001 to 54 million in 2011. He acknowledges that these drugs have been beneficial for the treatment of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and treatment-resistant depression but urges patients and doctors alike to proceed with caution when using them for off-label treatment of “low-grade unhappiness, anxiety and insomnia that comes with modern life” (p. D6). Friedman's work highlights one level of concern for pastoral counseling and pharmacotherapy.

There are other concerns for combined therapy approaches addressed by Riba and Balon which include the reality that there are no recognized guidelines for determining best types of care based on symptoms, diagnosis, age, gender, or comorbid psychiatric or medical disorders when it comes to making determinations about integrated versus split care. This is further complicated by the fact that there is too frequently little collaboration between various professionals who are competing for clients in a climate where triage and treatment are dependent upon an individual's ability to pay or the limits imposed by insurance companies (Riba and Balon 2005, p. 3). Cost for medications limits their availability for many, and as Friedman suggests, there is a tendency to prescribe newer and more expensive medications even in situations where the data to support using these drugs in off-label treatments is weak or nonexistent. These concerns do not take into consideration the additional layer of a religious worldview for pastoral counselors (and their clients) when an attempt to collaborate with other mental health professionals is sought after. Riba and Balon suggest three major challenges for combining psychotherapy and psychopharmacology which need to be considered by pastoral counselors who wish to engage in an integrated approach: (1) the question of which professional will be responsible for providing a specific treatment (some psychiatrists do provide for more than a 15-min medication monitoring session), (2) the question of the timing and staging of the treatments in combination (e.g., begin at the same time or separately?), and (3) the matter of how individuals present for treatment (Riba and Balon 2005, p. 2). In other words, is the individual receptive to a combined or interdisciplinary approach? These challenges may pose difficulties in an environment that is generously disposed toward an integrative treatment; they can pose serious risk where there is a lack of cooperation and/or collaboration between patient and treatment professionals. Thus far we have considered some of the challenges, which originate primarily from the position of the counselor and his/her ability and/or willingness to work collaboratively



as well as the medical community's concern for a diminishing focus on the "speaking cure" or the mind in psychotherapeutic responses. It remains to examine the perspective of the one who seeks treatment.

What are often referred to as "aggressive direct-to-consumer advertising campaigns" (Abramson 2008; Friedman 2012) are likely to have an effect on those seeking pastoral counseling to the extent that these individuals may be more resistant to talking and more inclined to be looking for a prescription cure-all. Abramson observes that marketing campaigns "even pathologize normal human experiences such as menopause and aging, reframing the transitions of a healthy life into medical problems that require diagnoses and drugs" so much so that we are alienated "from the meaning inherent in the landmarks of a healthy life" (2008, p. 209). Friedman notes that "combined spending on print and digital media advertising for these new antipsychotic drugs increased to \$2.4 billion in 2010, up from \$1.3 billion in 2007" (2012, p. D6). Abramson's research is not focused solely on psychopharmacology but rather on pharmacology in the scope of the practice of medicine. Nevertheless, much can be gleaned from his research especially if we consider one treatment anecdote that bears directly upon pastoral counseling and the significance of establishing a relationship that bears the marks of collaboration and partnership.

Abramson writes about a relationship that evolved with one of his patients – "Sister Marguerite" – which underscores the "importance of shared values in the challenge of providing good medical care. Visiting her family, attending mass, meditating in the chapel, and being an active part of her community – these were the things that gave Sister Marguerite a sense of meaning. . . Sister Marguerite and I were partners in her care, working together on the same project . . . our partnership became all the more rewarding because she was so open about the deeper values that made the project worthwhile for her" (Abramson 2008, pp. 9–10). He cites this as an example of providing good care, which has begun to appear antiquated in stark contrast to the care espoused by

pharmaceutical companies and the medical "industry" itself. Abramson desired opportunities to engage his patients "in constructive dialogue about their health risks and habits" but found it increasingly difficult to do so in direct proportion to the allure of "direct-to-consumer" advertising beginning with the early part of the first decade of the twenty-first century (Abramson 2008, p. 10). Pastoral counselors would do well to attend to Abramson's concern for the erosion of relationship and collaboration between patient and physician or in this instance between patient and counselor.

Abramson's focus on relationship and the "deeper values" held by his patients that provide a sense of meaning – and I would add, purpose – need to be at the center of pastoral counseling. The centrality of relationship may be a value that is privileged by those in the pastoral counseling community who tend to view psychology and pharmacotherapy with an inordinate amount of suspicion or hostility. The addition of pharmacotherapy to pastoral counseling does offer hope to those who struggle with debilitating mental illness, but it is not a panacea for the "low-grade unhappiness" identified by Friedman (2012, p. D6). Pastoral counselors who desire to work collaboratively with other mental health-care professionals do need to seriously consider the three major challenges outlined earlier when negotiating this decision with their clients. Pastoral counselors also need to recognize that we are not immune from the direct-to-consumer advertising campaigns that have eroded the relationships between physicians and their patients. What is at stake in these interdisciplinary conversations and relationships are questions of religion and health or sin and salvation and which professional's values will be privileged in a counselor-client relationship.

### See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)

- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Oates, Wayne
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Protestantism
- ▶ Psalms
- ▶ Psychiatry
- ▶ Psychosis
- ▶ Religion and Mental and Physical Health

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## Phenomenological Psychology

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Phenomenological psychology is a type of human science psychology that emphasizes close attention to, and rigorous, detailed description and understanding of, personal lived experiences within respective lifeworlds. One's lived experience within one's lifeworld is how one experiences and makes sense of everyday events *as it is to the one experiencing* those events or happenings. Entry into meaningful experiences is accessed by descriptive approaches, rather than explanative ones, and through intuitive, empathic resonance with the intersubjective meaningfulness of an individual's enactments of significance in the world.

The formal discipline of phenomenological psychology was founded by Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911; 1989). Dilthey distinguished between the natural sciences (*Naturwissenschaften*) and the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), believing the latter to be the more appropriate approach to understanding human existence. He used hermeneutical theory, or the art and science of interpretation, as the earlier hermeneuticist and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834; 1893) understood it, and broadened its scope. For Schleiermacher, interpretative skills were tools used for textual analysis, particularly sacred texts, and interpretation was partly accomplished through empathic resonance with an author's intentions for textual meaning. Dilthey expanded the interpretive process beyond textual analysis to include an analysis of human experience as disclosed in actions, experiences, products, and cultural artifacts. For Dilthey, though, meaning cannot be experienced directly and must be “de-coded” through interpretive inquiry. On the other hand, Dilthey argued that what allows for empathic and communal sharing at all is that, mediated as it is, we all share a common human existence (Burston and Frie 2006). Moreover, Dilthey rejected any sense of unconscious representation, thus founding a central tenet of phenomenological psychology, namely, that what shows itself in existence is inextricably intertwined with the *ways* in which we experience those things (Burston and Frie 2006).

Edmund Husserl (1859–1938; 1962) furthered Dilthey's project and, through the influence of his teacher Franz Brentano (1838–1917), developed what became known as transcendental phenomenology. Husserl and his teachers were influenced by Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) work on the possibilities and limitations of knowledge. Husserl insisted that the phenomenologist remain focused on “the things themselves,” bracketing biases and assumptions that would prevent a clear perception of things as they presented themselves to our consciousness. For Husserl, borrowing from his teacher Brentano, experience, or consciousness, is intentional, which is to say that experiences, objects, persons, things, and events are taken up by each of us in meaningful ways. We are always “about” some directive. Objects,

for instance, are objects for us, have a certain calling to us, and are placed within a particular project and direction or goal of significance for us. Husserl fused the traditional distinction between noesis, or the thinking process itself, and noema, or the meaning attributed to objects experienced in consciousness. This move steps beyond a Kantian loyalty to the conditions of knowledge over the objects of knowledge and, instead, refigures knowledge as a co-construction between how we experience things and how the things themselves shape and delimit how we experience them.

Transcendental phenomenology developed into phenomenological research methodology. The challenge for transcendental phenomenological psychology became how one could move from particular experiences to general claims. Although we may have different lived experiences of any given event, human experience is structured in such a way that if we can understand the general structure of how things come to be experienced as they are, potentially anyone undergoing the same experience could find resonance with any other person having encountered it. The experience of being anxious, or angry, or desirous, albeit from differing life stories, nonetheless has the potential of sharing a common human “way” of undergoing these experiences. Arriving at this common structure of experience for any given event, though, necessitates an act of “bracketing” pre-understandings, biases, prejudices, or other assumptions about how an experience should be, in order to clear a space for things to show themselves as they are to us.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Husserl’s student, concurred that experience was structured but understood this fact in very different ways. Heidegger became known as the founder of hermeneutical or existential phenomenology and saw all experience as conditioned by common, existential givens: temporality, spatiality, mortality, coexistence, mood/attunement, historicity, and bodyhood (Heidegger 1962). Heidegger thought that the idea of an objective, isolated, egoistic person that is separate from the world in which he experiences things as

a dualistic illusion and instead considered the person-world co-construction an inseparable process.

Heidegger described this process as being-in-the-world, with “being” described as a comportment of existence rather than an isolated and self-contained ego, and thus preferred to use the intentionally untranslated German word *Dasein* or “being there” for “being,” in order to accentuate a process rather than a “thing.” Existential-phenomenological psychology became a practice of interpreting the presencing of *Dasein* in eventful situations. Interpreting *Dasein* required an acknowledgment of one’s own biases and pre-understandings, rather than rid oneself of them, as any understanding presupposes an already pre-understanding. Our pre-understandings are ways in which we enter a phenomenon we want to understand better and use what we do know about it as points of entry. One leads with the bit of awareness and experience one knows of a phenomenon and dialogues with the undulation of concealment and disclosure.

## Commentary

Contemporary expressions of phenomenological psychology include methodological applications to a wide range of psychological subjects, such as assessment, diagnostic, and research practices (Fischer 1994; 2006), Jungian studies (Brooke 1991), stress (Kuglemann 1992), and in critically analyzing technological impact on lived experience (Idhe 1995; Romanyshyn 1989). There are a plethora of countries around the world in which formal phenomenological organizations are operating and in which research is thriving. One only need explore the umbrella organization known as the *Organization of Phenomenological Organizations* or peruse the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* to find how many possibilities are available for interested human scientists.

Phenomenological psychology as a collective field of research today centers around the debate of whether the focus should be on description or

interpretation. Most theorists agree that the dichotomy is false. Any description is an interpretation, and an interpretation, at least in phenomenological circles, is descriptive rather than explanative and is an invitation to further disclosure rather than a reductive pronouncement of “what is the case.” Reliability and validity are understood in very different ways than in natural science research. What is true is not what can be objectively isolated, operationalized, and controlled in order to pin down unilinear causal relationships as is the case in logical positivistic styles of scientism. Truth as valid and reliable, for a phenomenologist, rests in how well one is able to describe the depth and breath of a phenomenon as it shows itself in the world. The structure of an experience is discerned through imaginative variation in which every manner of a phenomenon’s presentation is considered from all advantage points until no matter how one looks at it, certain meaningful aspects of the experience are always present. One’s validation as a phenomenological researcher comes when a human experience is so well disclosed by way of rigorous description that any human being undergoing that experience can find it familiar. Nevertheless, there is always a mystery to phenomenological disclosure in that the undulation of concealment and disclosure is never finished.

The spiritual themes within phenomenological psychology are numerous. To start with, the phenomenological psychology of religious experience has a long and brilliant history and includes Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), William James (1842–1910), Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890–1950), Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), Paul Tillich (1886–1965), Langdon Gilkey (1919–2004), and David Tracy (1939–), just to name a few scholars. The process itself can be compared to a type of spiritual discipline. Within the emphasis on bracketing to allow things to show themselves lies the heart of a spirituality of freedom, respect, and mystical – though not mystifying – openness. Meaning making and the primacy of validating lived experience privileges depth relating in

intersubjective ways. Phenomenological psychology warns against the hubris of a “god’s eye view,” in which we presume to step out of our horizons or perspectives to “know” about phenomena more objectively. On the contrary, objective knowing misses the richness of truth revealed to us subjectively. Knowing about swimming theoretically is very different from jumping in a pool and doing it. Subjective experiencing does not mean isolationist experiencing. We co-construct experiences and thus build communion in our co-dwellings as we ready ourselves to receive revelations of Being itself.

Finally, the French phenomenologist Michel Henry (2003) has taken phenomenology in its most radical direction to date, thus challenging many foundational assumptions of phenomenological psychology, while ironically returning to Husserl’s thought to do so. For Henry, life is “invisible” in that it is lived rather than abstracted, conceptualized, or objectified. Interestingly enough, Dilthey was found of a similar way of thinking, noting often the Latin phrase, *individuum est ineffabile* to describe the unfathomable nature of human existence (Burston and Frie 2006). Henry’s work not only radicalizes phenomenology but also radicalizes Christian thought as his work is in essence a radical phenomenology of Christianity (Henry 2003). If Life is invisible, then I would argue that it is likewise immeasurable and incomparable. We may hear the sound of it and may very well succeed in describing it to some extent, but we cannot know from where it comes or to where it will go from here.

### See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Psychology](#)

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## Pilgrimage

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Pilgrimages in various cultures are remarkably similar in essential form. The pilgrimage, whether to Lourdes, Jerusalem, Banaras, Ise, or Mecca, involves three essential steps, suggesting a rite of passage and a process of curative renewal. The first step involves a significant separation of the pilgrim from home and ordinary life and the journey to a sacred center. The separation can be signified by particular clothes, by rituals of departure, or by any consciously unusual behavior. It is usually characterized by a deep sense of religious community, a concept suggested by the etymology of the word religion, suggesting a binding back or gathering together under the influence of the numinous. The second and most important step is the interaction with the sacred, the given culture's spiritual energy source. Typically this aspect involves certain ritual acts, most notably circumambulation, a gathering up of energy in the creation of a living mandala of completeness, a ritual cleansing, or ablution in preparation for a new beginning and the recitation of certain sacred formulae or mantras. The third step is the return home. The return is always marked by a sense of renewal. The pilgrim has been re-created by the encounter with the numinous center of the collective being.

It is important to differentiate the pilgrimage from its close relative, the quest. Both the questor and the pilgrim go on journeys that can be difficult, even treacherous, and both have some goal

in mind, but the questor is in search of the goal while the pilgrim knows exactly where it is and how to get there. The questor never knows what might happen on the journey, whereas the pilgrim's "progress" is essentially a ritual process. One might say that the labyrinth is the pilgrim's signifying model while the maze is the questor's.

Important examples of pilgrimage exist in most religious systems. The Hindu might visit Banaras (Kashi) and bathe ritually in community with thousands of fellow pilgrims in the sacred living waters of the Ganges. There he will recite certain mantras and circumambulate important shrines. If particularly devout, the pilgrim might make a point of literally circumambulating sacred India herself, creating a gigantic mandala of completeness by visiting the seven sacred cities. The Buddhist can visit the footprint of the Buddha on Adam's Mount in Sri Lanka. For the Christian or Jew, the footprint is said to be Adam's, and for the Hindu, it is Siva's. Again, circumambulation and mantras are important, and sometimes ablutions. In keeping with ancient traditions of prescribed visits to the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jew in our time will visit the Wailing Wall of the Old Temple. The Christian will circumambulate the sacred places in Jerusalem associated with the passion of Jesus or visit curing shrines such as Lourdes or, like Chaucer's famous pilgrims, travel to the shrines of martyrs. People of animistic traditions tend to see the whole world as a sacred place, so that anywhere one is can be a pilgrimage site, and buildings, such as Navajo hogans and Pueblo kivas, are themselves metaphors for constant pilgrimage to the center.

Perhaps the most elaborate pilgrimage is the Hajj, one of the five essential "Pillars" of Islam. For this pilgrimage, taken by the community of Muslims, there are special requirements for the home-leaving and the journey, very specific rules of behavior while at Mecca, clear rituals that involve ablutions, various sub-pilgrimages to outlying areas, and a sacred mantra of humility and obedience recited during a circumambulation of the Kab'ah, the structure in the great mosque of Mecca that is the center of the Muslim world. As in the case of all great pilgrimages, the

Hajj-pilgrim, or Hajji, returns home renewed and re-created by his experience. It should be noted that back home, the Muslim makes the pilgrimage symbolically and spiritually every time he faces Mecca and prays.

Liturgies are, in fact, often symbolic pilgrimages. The Eucharist of the Catholic tradition, for example, is an elaborate symbolic communal pilgrimage to the sacred center, reinforced even by the architecture of the various types of church building. Holy water at the door (in ancient times, the baptismal font was there as well); the ablutions of the priest; processions; the circumambulating of the altar, or sacred center, during its censuring; and the complex system of mantras all suggest the pilgrimage.

Having once more noted the aspect of community or *communitas* in pilgrimage, it must be noted that this element is associated more with external as opposed to internal pilgrimage. External pilgrimage has been called "exteriorized mysticism." To the extent that such a characterization is valid, interior pilgrimage might be equated with mysticism itself. Thus, the pilgrim who travels to Mecca or Banaras is acting out the interior journey taken by the Yogi or the contemplative nun to the sacred center. The process for the mystic, which involves *communitas* only in the sense that nuns or monks, for instance, are a community of contemplative prayer, nevertheless resembles that of the external pilgrim in its basic plot. The interior pilgrim establishes a separation from ordinary life by accepting some prescribed discipline, involving such matters as clothing, breathing, posture, or particular objects of meditation.

The pilgrim then proceeds to the sacred center found within. John of the Cross enters upon the Dark Night of the Soul, the purifying process by which God prepares the mystic for union. The Hindu ascetic – the Yogi – never moving from one place, can visit the seven sacred cities. The Mevlevi (Mawlawiya) Sufis or Whirling Dervishes are perhaps unique in that each dancer turns on his own axis entering a trance-like ecstatic state even as he circles the sacred center in an intricate expression of perfect community with his fellow interior pilgrims. Upon his return,



the interior pilgrim, whether the Yogi, the Mevlevi, or the Christian mystic, like the external pilgrim, is a person who has been renewed by the numinous power of the center.

The idea of the pilgrimage as spiritual therapy, then, is universal, and humans of all sorts – mystical and otherwise – have traditionally turned to pilgrimage as a source of curing. People go to Lourdes and other holy places to be cured of physical disease, of course, but the more typical pilgrim is the one who is experiencing a malaise of the soul or the psyche. A person who is in this sense “lost” takes a journey to his/her culture’s spiritual center, participates in the prescribed activities, and returns home in a centered state. A similar goal is achieved through participation in religious ritual. It is not surprising that Jung and other modern psychotherapists have suggested religious activity for persons whose backgrounds provide an opening to the numinous through such activity.

An attempt to interpret the pilgrimage psychologically can begin with the assumption that human beings are naturally attracted to the phenomenon by reason of their consciousness of what Aristotle called “plot.” A defining characteristic of our species is our universal and perhaps even obsessive concern with questions of beginnings, middles, and ends. We see life as a journey, and to the extent that we are goal oriented, we see it sometimes as a quest, but often as a pilgrimage. For the human species, pilgrimage may be said to be an archetypal pattern, a representation of an essential collective psychological tendency. We understand that if we are in any sense broken – collectively or individually – we would do well to take the difficult journey to the center and work towards a state of renewal or re-creation. As in the case of all pilgrimages, to reach this center, we are greatly helped by an experience of the numinous, whether induced through sectarian religious activities, meditation, love, music, or various kinds of mantra. When we speak of the individual journey, our pilgrimage analogy is that of the interior pilgrimage, which, in psychological terms, becomes a journey to the Self. The Self is the totality of personality from which we can

receive the ablative power that renews and leads towards Individuation, that is, Self-realization. In short, the psychological pilgrimage, if accomplished, takes the individual to a curing circumambulation of or assimilation of the sacred center of one’s very Being.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Circumambulation](#)
- ▶ [Communitas](#)
- ▶ [Hajj](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Ka’bah](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Plato and Religion

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Plato (428/427–348/347 BCE) was a Greek philosopher, a citizen of Athens, and a follower of Socrates. He founded the Academy, a school for statecraft, circa 387 BCE, his most famous student being Aristotle. His work – in the form of dialogues – has had an immeasurable influence upon Western civilization. The modern philosopher, Whitehead, once famously quipped that “the whole of Western philosophy is nothing but a series of footnotes on Plato.” The same might be said of other fields of learning where Plato’s

thought has been seminal. He has made a profound contribution to both the arts and sciences, including psychology. Many aspects of his thinking foreshadow modern theories. In psychology, for example, his teachings regarding *eros* as a foundation for human motivation clearly foreshadow the theories of Freud, or, as some prefer, Freud's theories are a decadent version of Plato's earlier theory. In religious thought, Plato has long been acknowledged as prefiguring aspects of the Christian faith, even to the extent that some churches have canonized him as a pre-Christian saint. More generally, he has influenced important streams of mystical thought and spiritual psychology in Judaism, Christianity, and the Sufi schools of Islam.

It should be noted that while we commonly attribute theories and ideas to Plato himself, these are usually taken from the words of Socrates as presented in Plato's philosophical dramas and that, in a famous passage in a letter to a friend called Dion, Plato states that his own ideas are nowhere to be found in his dialogues. This is the so-called Socratic problem – to what extent does Plato's Socrates speak Plato's mind? All the same, the teachings and arguments of Plato's Socrates are, for convenience, referred to as "Platonic," and it is common to refer to the "Platonic tradition" of thought that has its roots in Plato's dialogues. This tradition extends across the last 2000+ years of occidental culture and has penetrated most fields of learning. Nearly all of the dialogues might be construed as contributing to Platonic psychology, but the main contributions are found in the dialogues called *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, and to some extent *Timaeus*.

Plato (i.e., Plato's Socrates) argues that there is a mental, supra-physical realm of "Forms" or "Ideas" or "archetypes" that is beyond the restraints and limitations of time and space and that the spatiotemporal realm is related to this archetypal realm as a copy is related to a model. Plato's psychology, like his political philosophy and everything else, needs to be understood in the context of the metaphysical framework of this pervasive "Theory of Forms." For Plato, for example, human beings – as creatures of time

and space – yearn for eternity and for the pure reality of the Forms. This is the basis of all human motivation. It is why the hero does brave deeds – he seeks the immortality of fame. And it is at the root of the sexual drive – lovers seek a surrogate immortality through procreation. By extension, the religious impulse is an expression of the same urge but on a higher plane.

An important corollary of the Theory of Forms is the Theory of Recollection. This states that human beings possess a faculty (*nous*) that comprehends the traces of the Forms in their physical copies. When we see beauty in a rose, for example, it is because the rose *reminds* us of the Form of Beauty, i.e., Beauty Itself. The Forms are structural and innate. Plato is at pains to insist that our senses are unreliable and that the mind, not the senses, is the agent of cognition. When we see a circle our eyes merely register an unintelligible set of data; it is our mind (or the faculty of *nous*) that matches this data to its innate knowledge of the Form of Circle, thus making the sensory impression intelligible. That is, Plato proposes that we are born with a stock of (supra-physical) mental templates and that these are the basis of all cognition.

Exploring this theory throughout his dialogues, Plato next proposes that there must be a hierarchy of such Forms and that at the pinnacle of this hierarchy there must be a Form of the Forms, namely, what he styles "the Form of the Good." The theory seems to be an adaptation of aspects of ancient Greek religious thought where natural phenomena were understood as expressions of various simple allegorical deities such as Love, Night, and Chaos. For example, Plato's Forms of Sameness and Difference (two of the most basic Forms) seem to be extrapolations from the deities Love and Strife, a principle of union or similarity and a principle of dissolution or differentiation. In a similar way, Plato's creator-god, the "Demiurge," appears to be a philosophical rendering of the Olympian craftsman god, Hephaestus. Whereas Greek religious thought personified such principles, Plato's Forms are nonpersonal archetypes. His "Form of the Good" is very like the Judeo-Christian/Islamic notion of God but, importantly, has no personhood.

In modern terms, we would say it is an “abstraction” but for Plato this is exactly wrong since the world is “abstracted” from the Forms not the other way around.

There are several descriptions of the human psyche given in the dialogues, most notably in the form of allegories. In the *Phaedrus* (246a–254e), Plato compares the human soul (*psyche*) to a chariot with a charioteer driving two horses, one white and one black. The white horse is well trained, while the black horse is ill-bred and unruly. The charioteer represents the intellect or reason (*nous*) that must reconcile conflicting impulses as it steers the vehicle (body) through life’s journey. In the *Republic* (514a–520a), Plato offers a parable of the human condition in which prisoners have been held in a cave since childhood and compelled to watch a puppet play of shadows on the cave wall. Not knowing any better, they mistake this for reality. It is only with great effort that they might escape from their bonds and eventually discover the source of these shadows and, beyond the cave, the light of day. This is an epistemological parable but also a model of human psychology with the shadows on the wall representing the conscious realm, that small portion of the mind we regularly assume to be reality with the rest of the cave representing other hidden levels of consciousness.

This line of thinking is often criticized for being counterintuitive, dualistic, and life-hating. The world is a mere copy of the “true” world which is beyond death. The body of flesh, with the vicissitudes of pleasure and pain, is a prison in which the mind is trapped. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates seems to regard life as a disease and as a punishment with death as a cure and a release. Platonic psychology, therefore, is deemed anti-naturalistic. To a great extent, the entire modern scientific enterprise can be seen as a process of shedding the influence of Plato in that it situates man in a natural context and attempts to understand human beings as a product of natural rather than supernatural forces. For Plato, the natural world is derivative and therefore fundamentally unreal – he presents the study of natural science (*phusis*) as an inherently unworthy enterprise that offers a “likely tale” at best.

There are readers of Plato, however, who argue that on closer examination this dualism is only a first step in the Platonic enterprise and that, ultimately, Plato is fully aware of the shortcomings of the Theory of Forms. In the dialogue called *Parmenides*, in particular, Plato seems to demolish the theory and looks beyond the duality of copy and model. Others point out that Plato is not a pessimistic philosopher with a bleak view of the human condition. One of the most notable correlatives of the Theory of Forms and its culmination in the Form of the Good is the Socratic dictum that ignorance is the root of evil. According to this theory, no one does evil willingly; rather, the evil-doer has made a miscalculation and mistakenly supposes that his evil deeds will bring himself or others some good. This is a profoundly optimistic view of the human state since it proposes that people can be taught to be good, that education is the key to human advancement, and that evil-doers can be shown their miscalculations and that they will then correct their ways since they, like everyone else, are in pursuit of the transcendent Good (whether they are aware of it or not). For Plato, the highest human achievement is the “Vision of the Good,” the pneumatic apprehension of the Good Itself, equivalent to the mystical vision of God in religious systems.

Regarding popular religion, the indications throughout the dialogues are conflicting. Socrates is presented as being dutifully obedient to the established religious cults and yet elsewhere is so opposed to anthropomorphism that he would ban Homer and other poets from his ideal society. In an infamous provision of the dialogue called *Laws*, atheism is made a crime punishable by execution. In Plato’s account of the trial of Socrates, Socrates is accused of introducing false gods and, by implication, impiety regarding the established religious order.

The influence and reputation of Plato has declined especially since World War II and the publication of such works as *The Open Society and Its Enemies* by Karl Popper (1945) which paint him, with some exaggeration, as the father of both right- and left-wing totalitarian ideologies. The main exception to this waning influence has been a revival and reinterpretation (some

would say perversion) of Plato's political philosophy through the teachings of Leo Strauss, regarded as one of the intellectual founders of contemporary neoconservatism in the United States. Strauss' studies concentrate on the so-called Noble Lie passage in the *Republic* where Plato justifies rulers creating myths to pacify the ruled. For Strauss, an atheist, this is the role of religion. Most people, he argues, are not psychologically or emotionally equipped to be atheists and to face the bitter meaningless of existence; it is better if the rulers of society maintain religion as a "Noble Lie" to help preserve psychological stability in individuals and cohesion in society as a whole. This is surely a far cry from Plato's intention, but it illustrates the ways in which, for good or for bad, Plato's works continue to stimulate contemporary ideas.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Plato on the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Plato on the Soul

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The ancient Greek philosopher Plato (424–348 BCE) wrote copiously on the question of the human soul. The soul is given substantial treatment in many of his dialogs – the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus* primarily, though the *Meno*, *Ion*, and *Philebus*, as well as other dialogs, are at least tangentially concerned with topics related to his view of the soul as well. Of these treatments, two particular items of interest to the student and historian of psychology are his "tripartite" theory of the soul and his epistemological theory of anamnesis, or learning by recollection.

Plato's tripartite theory is given most explicit expression in Book IV of the *Republic*. According to Plato's view, there are three elements which constitute the life of the soul. Of these the one that is unique to human beings, and thus privileged by Plato, is *reason*. Plato's accent on reason would be the impetus behind Aristotle's – and historically, the Western tradition's – characterization of man as *animal rationale*. The other aspects of the soul are the *spirited* element, which seems to correspond to the emotions, and the *appetites* of the body which we share in common with the beasts. Reason and the appetites are often in conflict, with the spirited element capable of lending its weight to either side in this internecine struggle of the soul. The individuals lauded by Plato are those in whom reason successfully reigns, though these would seem to always constitute a minority.

Plato's theory is a historical curiosity, as it seems to anticipate Freud's psychodynamic model of the mind and its intrapsychic conflicts among the id, ego, and superego. Indeed, Freud may have been aware of Plato's theory as he employed a metaphor similar to the one from Plato's *Phaedrus* where the philosopher compares

the appetites to an obstinate horse who must be firmly guided by the charioteer of reason (a second horse, corresponding to the spirited element, does not resist the commands of its master).

Plato's epistemological theory of *anamnesis*, or learning by recollection, is based on what has come to be described as the *learning paradox*, first formulated by Plato in his dialog the *Meno*. There Socrates asks the question how learning is possible. If we are seeking after something we do not know, we will be unable to recognize it if and when we do encounter it. If we do recognize it, we must have had some previous knowledge of it in order for this recognition to occur in the first place. Either way, learning seems to be a paradoxical enterprise. This leads Plato to present his own theory of learning as recollection based on his belief in the reincarnation of the soul. In dialogs like the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, Plato will argue that learning/knowledge is possible based on our pre-earthly existence in the realm of divine forms. These forms are the templates of all sensible objects, undergirding the sensible realm and giving the world its rational structure. When the soul incarnates in matter, it temporarily "forgets" its previous experience of the forms. Learning occurs when certain earthly experiences "trigger" these memories. Anamnesis is thus a form of "cryptomnesia" as described by Jung. It should be stated that Plato's belief in the transmigration of the soul had strong precedent in the Pythagorean cult as well as other mystery cults extant at the time.

The linguistic and cognitive theorist Noam Chomsky has identified his own "innateness" theory of linguistic acquisition as based on a kind of Platonic learning paradox. According to Chomsky's theory, linguistic ability may be structurally fixed or "hardwired" into the mind; we may be able to postulate a "universal" a priori grammar based on what has been described as "the poverty of the stimulus." Put simply, we evidence a degree of intricacy and depth in our knowledge and utilization of language far in excess of what we could have formally learned.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Plato and Religion](#)

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## Polytheism

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Polytheism is the worship of many forms of the divine. Etymologically it means many gods, but to say that is to delve into the nature of personhood. Among the polytheistic religions are nearly all of the indigenous religions usually termed "animistic" as well as the major religion of Hinduism and the many modern Neo-Pagan religions. Most of the pre-Christian religions of Europe and the Near East had a plurality of deities organized into pantheons. Many had familial relationships to link them together. Much of the world's mythological literature chronicles the origins and actions of the many families of deities worshipped in the ancient world. Pepper (1942) in his summary of epistemologies set out six world hypotheses, four of which he felt were minimally acceptable in rational discourse and two unacceptable because of their reliance on faith. Each of the six world hypotheses (similar to the modern concept world view) is grounded in a root metaphor. The two unacceptable world views were animism and mysticism. The former was based on the metaphor of the person, which makes it particularly relevant to polytheism. He was less clear on the distinction between animism and mysticism but seems to refer to the distinction

between the natural religions and revealed religions. His identification of the concept of the person as being at the heart of a spiritual world view was correct. Indeed, to understand theism whether mono- or poly- requires understanding the nature of the person.

Pepper's psychologism was saying that because we experience the divine in us and we are people, we project out onto the world our own experience of personhood. We attribute all the experiences we have to the powers which are divine. Since we have consciousness, our gods must have consciousness, and since we have choice and agency, our gods must have nothing less than that since they are transcendent to us and greater than us, much like a whole is greater than the sum of its part. Whatever is divine must be no less than what we are and must be anywhere from somewhat to immensely greater than us.

There are several types of spiritual world views, so polytheism must be set into its context. Though it may not have been the first spiritual view to arise historically, the belief in some impersonal divine ground of being that is the source of life, and all that is, is possible. The clearest example of non-theistic belief comes from Chinese traditional religion and philosophy. Chi (Jap. ki) is the impersonal force that animates all living being and is imbued within even inanimate matter as well. This life force is also found in the Indian concept of "prana," common to both Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. It is also found in Stoic philosophy as "pneuma." Both literally mean the breath of life.

To some with a completely secular scientific world view, the very laws of nature may be likened to an impersonal divine ground of being in an existential sense. This is basically the position of either pantheism or its close variant panentheism. Spinoza and Leibniz are two early modern philosophers who represent this stream of belief. This is also the position of the Deists, that group of Enlightenment thinkers who first articulated a basically secular philosophy while preserving that sense of reverence and awe to the existence of life itself. These positions hold that the Divine is immanent within the natural world.

What, of course, makes the respect for the impersonal forces behind life and existence divine is the religious experience. Both James (1902/1958) and Otto (1917/1958) support the notion that the beginning of the life of the spirit is a religious experience – not belief, not acts, but the experience of awe in the face of the great *mysterium tremendum*. Belief in the near universality of religious or spiritual experience makes us all mystics at the core; some may tenderly stick their toes in these deep waters, while others jump in with both feet in ecstatic joy.

The next question is whether we ascribe personhood to the divine force or forces and whether belief in an inanimate divine force or power is incompatible with personhood. On the basis of the principle that the lesser is included in the greater, the burden of proof rests with those who would exclude an impersonal force as not present with the divine person(s) to say why.

Assuming that the divine can take on the qualities of a person, the next question is one or many. This is related to the philosophical debate as to whether the "physis" or stuff of the universe is one or many, perhaps no more resolvable now than to the Pre-Socratics who took up the question in the first millennium BCE. It is also related to the related debate between Parmenides and Heraclitus as to whether stasis or change is more fundamental. Belief in stasis tends to favor ontological monism, which would include monotheism. Belief in change tends to favor polytheism by providing the means by which the divine may be ever present, though the actors may shift among the many masks of God (Campbell 1955, 1962, 1964, 1968).

The historical records support a vigorous and ancient period where polytheism was the dominant spiritual world view. Part of the rhetorical appeal of monotheism is the rejection of the confusion multiplicity of divine coupled with a moral rejection of the all too close modeling of human foibles and flaws into the biographies of the gods. But across the widest reach of the planet and throughout all human times, polytheism has continued despite competition from monotheism with its aggressive proselytizing.



One instructive development was the synthesis of Hindu polytheism to harmonize with an underlying spiritual monism. Behind Brahma, Shiva, Vishnu, and all the other Hindu gods was Brahman. Although it was based in earlier statements in the Upanishads, it took Adi Shankaracharya to provide a coherent integration of polytheistic outer forms with a single unifying singleness beyond all concept or duality, the ground of being. So even in the midst of polytheism one can see a sort of monotheism as consistent. It should be noted that Brahman, like prana, chi/ki, and pneuma, is impersonal in nature, beyond all human concepts. In Buddhism, the Vajrayana as well as Mahayana schools accept an impersonal unity beyond the obvious multiplicity of the world. The Vajrayana Buddhism of Tibet in particular has a whole catalog of personal forms of the deity and an equal number of demigods, dharma protectors, dakinis, and so on. Yet with Nagarjuna's Madhyamakha philosophy, the unity of non-duality and emptiness provides a fertile ground upon which phenomenal existence can play out our many incarnations in the samsaric wheel of life. In the Western Esoteric Tradition (WET), or occultism as it is often known, the first model of this same sort of coexistence of impersonal monism as an originating point for a phenomenal polytheism is the Neo-Platonic hierarchy of emanations found in Gnosticism in its many forms.

The next question is whether there are any true polytheisms, given that the most sophisticated forms of philosophy and theology among historically and culturally polytheistic religions. The answer is yes, at least in the sense that in polytheistic systems there is at least a modeling of the male/female dimorphism of human persons. If we allow that the divine can be said to be a person, then why would we use just one gender? Many contemporary positions within the Western monotheisms that are response to the feminist critique of patriarchy allow that what may have been historically gender-biased language can be best understood as inclusive of both genders or beyond both genders, whether we

continue to use the male-oriented language or modify our liturgies and prayers. The whole leverage about Brown's *DaVinci Code* sought to raise the magnitude of awareness about the divine feminine. Polytheism provides the minimal coverage of both genders and in nearly all historical settings had several families of deities modeling the diversity of the human family, complete with extensive genealogies.

One curious case is Mormonism, the major type of restorationist theology in Christianity, and associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS). They are explicitly and clearly monotheistic in the aim of their worship, but their theology implies a Heavenly Mother as well a Heavenly Father. Implicit is an unknown possibility for an endless series of gods of both genders stretching back in ageless time and moving forward as individual humans deceased, now existent, or yet to come achieve salvation at the highest level, in the celestial kingdom. Mormonism expresses a radical doctrine of spiritual evolution arising out of its American historical roots and a philosophy of progress (McMurrin 1959, 1965).

Contemporary Neo-Paganism or earth-centered religions are all clearly polytheistic in their worship and spiritual focus. The primacy of the Goddess and her male consort, with a variety of names from Celtic or other cultures has led Wicca to be termed a duotheism. There are many reconstructionist groups that come with many names; those in the Norse or Germanic traditions prefer being called heathens. The varieties of traditions in occultism (cf.) as it is often called, likewise, are polytheistic; each honoring a pantheism found in one or another of the pre-Christian religions of Europe of the Near East. Important contemporary discussions of polytheism from insiders' perspectives come from Greer (2005) and Paper (2005).

In summary then, the veneration, worship, and mythological narratives of multiple gods and goddesses are alive and flourishing through contemporary animistic aboriginal or native religions, through highly evolved religious traditions such as Hinduism and many forms of

Buddhism where multiple deities are yet subsumed into a nonpersonal divine ground of being beyond human labels or names. It has also been reconstructed as part of a revival of earth-based religious movements founded in Western Europe and America from the nineteenth century onward. Even an explicit monotheism such as Mormonism contains some elements of polytheistic theology. So polytheism is alive and well. It was never completely supplanted by monotheism, though the two forms of theism are shaking hands in some instances.

### See Also

- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Immanence](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Mormonism](#)
- ▶ [Occultism](#)
- ▶ [Paganism](#)
- ▶ [Pantheism](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)

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## Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy

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### Nossrat Peseschkian: His Life and Work

Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy is mainly a psychotherapeutic method and theory created by Nossrat Peseschkian M.D., Ph.D. (Iran, June 18, 1933 – Germany, April 27, 2010). Born and raised in Iran, Peseschkian moved to Germany in 1954 for his studies in medicine, where he became a specialist in neurology, psychiatry, psychotherapy, and psychosomatic medicine. He was also a faculty member of the European Evolution Conference of Psychotherapy, held in Hamburg between July 27 and 31, 1994, next to Ellis, Lowen, Frankl, Masters, Madanes, Szasz, Beck, Wolpe, M. Goulding, Yalom, Selvini, Masterson, Minuchin, Marmor, Meyer, Stierlin, Lazarus, Glasser, Kernberg, Gendlin, Watzlawick, Trenkle, Grawe, Hillman, Haley, Meichenbaum, Polster, Rossi, and Zeig.

Due to his own transcultural situation (Germany-Iran), Peseschkian coordinated a cross-cultural research in more than 20 cultures, with conclusions that become summarized in what is known as Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy, a conflict-centered and resource-orientated psychodynamic method with humanistic roots, “that encompasses a range of possibilities, from individual treatment at one end of the scale to ecotherapy at the other” (Peseschkian 1996, p. 16). It integrates cognitive-behavioral aspects on the basis of a positive, transcultural approach.

With this in mind, its terminology has been developed to be accessible and comprehensible to everyone, therapists from all scientific and methodological perspectives, as well as to patients and other people, regardless of their cultural and social backgrounds.

The main objective of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy is to promote physical,

mental, social, and spiritual health of individuals, families, and groups, by promoting awareness that humans have the potential to elicit noble values, as well as of mutual understanding and tolerance between different cultures. These ideas are rooted on the Bahá'í religion to which Peseschkian was enrolled. Being a Bahá'í, he regarded “man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value” (Bahá'u'lláh 1983, p. 122), and all mankind as equal citizens, of one common country – one may find in the Bahá'í scriptures “The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens” (Bahá'u'lláh 1983, p. 117).

In 1999, a joint endeavor by the University of Erlangen and the Center for Positive Psychotherapy in Wiesbaden published a longitudinal quality assurance and effectiveness study, held in 1997, showing “a distinct reduction of symptoms as well as improvement with regard to the way the subjects experience and behave” comparing those patients who ended Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy treatment to those of a control group. The findings indicate lasting stability of the therapeutic effects, which were detected up to 5 years after the treatment. This study ended up awarded with the Richard-Merten Prize 1997, a medical quality assurance and research award in Europe.

On an international level, Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy is represented by the World Association for Positive Psychotherapy and the International Academy of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy – The Peseschkian Foundation. According to the data provided by the International Academy, Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy has been accepted as a scientifically based psychodynamic method of psychotherapy by government institutions in Germany (such as the State Medical Chamber in Hesse), the European Association of Psychotherapy, and the World Council of Psychotherapy; it has been introduced to 80 countries, with 40 independent affiliated centers throughout the world, especially in Eastern Europe – in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Kosovo, and Russia; it is one of the most well-known and well-established psychotherapeutic methods. Its books count to 25 major books, translated into 20 languages.

Nossrat Peseschkian has also received many prizes, among which the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, in 2006.

## Applications

Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy is based on the conception that all men are good by nature and they have two basic capabilities: to love and to know. One may consider this conception of man to be rooted on one of the three Obligatory Prayers Bahá'ís must choose on a daily basis that states that humans are created with the ability to know and love God (Bahá'u'lláh 1993), as well as the Oriental Traditions Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, recalls in the Seven Valleys, in which a pilgrim goes into a journey towards God; in this journey, he must pass by seven cities, or valleys, being the first ones Search, Love, and Knowledge. Hence, one may consider all men are capable to love (representing emotions) and to know (representing cognitions), Peseschkian's basic capabilities.

In this model, conflicts are interpreted as challenges to the development of such capabilities. Every situation endows a possibility to transcend and grow. It may be considered close to the conception of finding meaning through suffering, developed by Viktor Frankl, to whom Peseschkian was acquainted.

The positive process allows the person to accentuate the common grounds for understanding within the social environment and family and thus to produce a basis for the therapy of different disorders and ills. Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy has proven to be highly effective within and out of therapeutic settings. Its accessible nature endows Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy to also be applied, on the one hand, to conflicts and disorders related to substance abuse and other forms of dependencies, marital problems, educational problems, depression, phobic disorders, sexual disturbances, and psychosomatic complaints and, on the other hand, to problems concerning foreign labor, with foreign aid for development, difficulties

which arise in interactions with members of other cultural systems, problems with intercultural marriages, and the overcoming of prejudices. It has also been used as training and coaching, as well as in transcultural and international situations – prejudices, materialism, fundamentalism, migration, and worldwide development.

The concept of Positive is forwarded by this model as factual, actual, and, hence, the opposite to chimerical. In the Bahá'í Texts, one could find the assertion that “Every age hath its own problem, and every soul its particular aspiration. The remedy the world needeth in its present-day afflictions can never be the same as that which a subsequent age may require. Be anxiously concerned with the needs of the age ye live in, and centre your deliberations on its exigencies and requirements” (Bahá'u'lláh 2006, 1.4).

The school of Positivism, founded by Auguste Comte, conveys the creation of a logical harmony in the essence of the individual as well as the community spirit – the positive spirit. This leads to finding meaning and establishing harmony between existence and motion, interrelating organization and life, and solidarity between order and progress (Peev n.d.). Thus, the human spirit is understood as inseparable, united, and complete, and so should the social system be. Such a perspective would demand to accept both the contributions of Western and Eastern philosophies, interests, and values in a transcultural world, synthesized in the visions of Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy.

### **Specific Models, Methods, and Techniques**

This shift from a monocultural and monocausal consideration to a multicultural and multicausal one allows to conceive man as more than only an isolated individual, taking into consideration interpersonal relationships he establishes throughout his life. Very similar to the system approach, which envisions the transmission of concepts through one generation to the other, Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy also views symptoms as transmitted and then

reworked in the family situation. It is therefore of utmost importance to understand the meaning of the symptoms and the concepts behind them, since they are closely related to the ways one may deal with conflict, the modal dimensions, and the actual capacities.

Potentially common to all humans, actual capacities are norms of socialization which are learnt and developed throughout the individual's lifetime, acquiring a specific meaning for each person and each situation. They are in a total of 26 positive values or virtues, including emotionality, modeling, patience, time, contact, sexuality, trust, confidence, hope, faith/religion, doubt, certitude, unity, punctuality, cleanliness, orderliness, obedience, courtesy, honesty/candor, faithfulness, justice, diligence/achievement, thrift, reliability, precision, and conscientiousness.

With such a positive view of man, Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy advocates that patients bring with themselves not only disorders and conflicts but also the capacity for dealing with the conflict – the so-called principle of hope. Within such framework, therapy should endow clients to give up their role as patients and become the therapist for themselves and their environment, moving from a top-down model of therapy to a sort of self-help system.

This is possible due to the microtrauma theory, which focuses on both the conflict the client talks about and in the dynamics within. The assertion behind it is that pathologies are lead by more than one traumatic experience of one individual, but by the sum of everyday hassles. Illness would, then, reflect the quality of relationships within the family and society and, hence, be adapted to each patient's unique universal character.

In this sense, the role of the therapist would be to identify the family's existing potential for self-help and, at the same time, work through existing conflicts, pinpointing one or more of four domains of life quality. Some develop somatic symptoms (body senses dimension), others react by escaping to work or going deep into it (achievement dimension), others run into relationships or withdraw from them (contact dimension), and a fourth group goes into manifestations of the spirit, either in religiosity or in fantasies

(spiritual dimension). This is summed up in the balance principle, which states that one should attain a balanced focus on all four of the dimensions in order to come to a conflict-free life, which is not easily possible because we have the natural tendency to differently learn and acquire knowledge. Savi (2010) states four ways through which, according to a Bahá'í philosophy, one could attain knowledge: through our body senses; the intellect, through which we can see the abstract reality of things, allowing us to achieve more by developing our potentials; insight, which allows the development of the spiritual dimension; and holy scriptures, which sometimes are transformed in traditions that may guide relations between fellow men.

Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy also uses specific techniques, such as positive reinterpretations and metaphors, usually in the form of transcultural stories, wisdoms, and folk knowledge. The former, in close connection to systemic ideas (Simon et al. 2002), intends to provide “stimulus for rethinking old concepts and for seeing if there aren't alternative interpretations and forms of treatment available for the patient” (Peseschkian 1996, p. 116). With it, depression is no longer seen the sense of inability or a passive attitude of spiritual and emotional stress, but the ability to react with deep connection to one's own emotions. Fear of loneliness is not the fear to be abandoned but an expression of necessity to develop relationships with other people. Female frigidity is more than the incapacity to feel sexual pleasure; it is the ability to say no with one's body. This new vision enables the patient to distance himself from his problems and eventually leads to an expansion of his perspective on them. The logotherapist Elizabeth Lukas (2003), with whom Peseschkian came into contact, mentions that “much effort in argumentation, exemplification, and opposition by the therapist side” (p. 153) is needed in order to make this technique effective, since logical arguments cannot be enough. Peseschkian solves this problem by using more figurative means, such as the stories mentioned above.

Stories, metaphors, examples, and wisdoms from different cultures serve to project needs

and mold useful meanings to the patients, so they can reflect on them, learn conflict management strategies, and serve as models that may reveal possible solutions while acting as mediators between the therapist and the patient – empowering the latter without directly attacking his resistances. Throughout history, stories have been used by religions in order to provide explanations to life events while providing moral standards for their societies to act. Used therapeutically, these stories allow its listener to use them in the future, when he (on a more or less conscious level) considers them important, independent of the presence or opinion of the therapist. In the same sense, Bahá'ís believe that this is a feature of modern ages, when we no longer need clergy to guide, but we can use our awareness to seek the truth by ourselves, being forbidden of imposing our conclusions or interpretations of stories and principles to others.

Stories, like religious traditions, are more than mere descriptions of facts. They demonstrate a path to change problematic reference points by trying to diminish tension: listening to the stories, the person finds himself surprised and ends up changing his perspective, by finding the answers within himself. The same is also true to Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy.

## See Also

- ▶ Bahais
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Frankl, Viktor
- ▶ Positive and Transcultural Psychotherapy

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## Possession

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In common usage, "to possess" means "to hold as property," "to own," or "to occupy." The English word derives from the French *posséder* and originally from the Latin *possidere*, from *potis* meaning "able" and *sedere*, "to sit." The metaphoric image which resides behind the concept of possession is perhaps, then, of a being successfully claiming space, perhaps "sitting" in a position of power. Hence, the suffering and distress associated with "possession" we attribute to foreign entities or partial aspects of the personality occupying the seat of selfhood by virtue of a tyrannical overthrow. For example, in the Christian tradition, according to the Synoptic Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, Jesus cures people suffering from various mental and physical ailments caused by occupying demons (*daimonia*) which he drives out of them; in the Gospel of John, while Satan as "adversary" confronts and tempts Jesus, he enters Judas (John 13:27). Inherent in the Christian understanding of evil, then, is the notion of an "obstruction" (*skandalon*, Matthew 16:23) that "holds," "claims," or "occupies" the embodied self (Kelly 2006).

The subsequent language of possession in the history of European religion has been far more fluid than one might imagine, and the set texts identifying orthodox criteria for establishing

legitimate cases of possession were very much of a specific time and place. For example, in Christianized Europe's early Middle Ages, the possessing devil's field of action is defined as the imagination, not the body or corporeal reality. As portrayed in the writings of Tertullian, Augustine, and John Cassian between the third and fifth centuries, the devil is most importantly a deceiver who employs *fantasmata* in order to take possession of the soul, and it is particularly in dreams that we fall prey to the devil. True dreams come from God; the devil fills dreams with false and tempting images. However, in 1233, the pontifical constitution *Vox in Rama* described the ritual homage to Satan as a feudal *osculum* in reverse (that is to say, by kissing the devil's buttocks), and what the Church once considered nocturnal dream voyages were now redefined as sectarian meetings marked by physical (not imaginary) acts of incest, sodomy, infanticide, and cannibalism. By 1484, according to the Papal Bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus* promulgated by Innocent VIII, witches and sorcerers abjured their faith by inviting the devil to enter their bodies. Since the body became increasingly the subject of diabolical attack in the higher Middle Ages, terms such as "possession" and "obsession," which had been used almost synonymously to describe the intermittency of manic attacks, come to be more highly differentiated. Etymologically, *obsidere* denotes "to sit at or opposite to," "to sit down before," or "to besiege" as when an enemy force sits down before a fortress. Hence, an obsessive spirit is perceived as assailing, haunting, and harassing a person from outside, while a possessing spirit is considered to have taken up residence inside the human body. Such distinctions are not so very far away from current Western psychopathological diagnostic criteria which differentiate, for example, between paranoid feelings of being persecuted from without and delusional notions of being preoccupied by thoughts which are not one's own but which one believes have been inserted into one's mind. While psychiatry co-opted the word "obsession" and stripped it of its religious connotation, the word "possession" has remained outside psychiatric discourse (until its recent tentative entry into



the appendix of the DSM IV as a dissociative disorder currently under review).

The most important source for contemporary literature on possession is anthropological. As a social anthropologist, I. M. Lewis (1971) argues in an objectivist manner that possession and shamanism are two components of ecstatic religion which can best be interpreted from within a structural functionalist framework of delineating power and social status. From within this perspective, possession functions as an obliquely aggressive strategy with which disempowered or marginalized individuals, especially women, seek to redress their political subordination within oppressive, predominantly patriarchal cultures. Lewis defines the suffering caused by possession as linked to status deprivation and portrays possession cults as socially motivated maneuvers which heal, at least in part, by enhancing the social status of sufferers, recasting them in fantasy or belief as humans “seized by divinity.”

Paul Stoller (1989) emphasizes the particularity of Songhay possession in Tillaberi, Niger, as a fusion of human and spirit. Possession as “fusion” signifies a white-heat meshing of elements foreign to each other, an active seizing, a loss of identity for each of the elements, a loss of soul, and an interpenetration. Stoller describes how the Songhay sorcerers perform rituals of separation or cleansing to alleviate suffering caused by fused states, for example, leading their mediums to a crossroad where they fling millet seeds (which correspond in number to the possessing spirits) onto an anthill and flee from their state of fusion and oneness to the enclosed compound, to a separated state of twoness. Stoller investigates possession through its theatricality, the possession troupe functioning like a repertory company, the *zima* as stage director and dramaturge, and the mediums as actors. The ceremonies are theatrical events in which possession troupes offer healing through compensatory existential reenactments of an ancestral world, replete with historical, sociological, and cultural themes, in which mediums learn to fuse with and later separate from a collective *imaginaire*.

Janice Boddy (1989) delineates in terms of cultural symbolism and morality several levels at

which *zar* possession in the northern Sudanese village of Hofriyat performs a therapeutic function. For instance, when *zar* spirits usurp and block a woman’s fertility, the husband must enter into an exchange relationship with her spirits and thereby implicitly renegotiates his relationship with his wife, both human beings being equally powerless before a transcendent third, the *zar*. Boddy argues that Lewis’s social functionalist analysis of *zar* possession is inadequate because it glosses over the issue of belief. *Zar* practitioners, though not with conscious intent, take the potentially destructive ambiguities in a marriage and open them up to a symbolic performance and subsequently to interpretations which might lead the marriage in a positive direction. The performance does not necessarily resolve the conflict or its ambiguities, despite the adoption of a spirit idiom. Part of its therapeutic potential resides in the fact that the ceremony articulates a possible world and a possible way of orienting oneself within it. If the husband chooses to receive this other language elucidated by the adepts, the marriage relationship may be enriched by new meanings and by new ways of communicating.

According to Boddy, the *zar* possession cult is a resource used only by specific individuals within the culture. A spirit must make sense to those whom it encounters; the sense it makes is a product of human and spirit collaboration. Consequently, possession by a *zar* requires control on the part of the possessed. The hosts must have the ability to enter trance, at the same time remaining alert to their surroundings. Even when the spirits descend, the hosts are expected to be sensitive to cues from other spirits and the audience of human observers. Seriously disturbed people would focus on their own intentions and neglect those of the spirits and would be classed as misdiagnosed, seen as engaging in idiosyncratic fantasy which the *zar* patently are not, or accused of playing with the spirits and provoking their wrath. Individuals who can successfully enact such dramas become increasingly familiar with the “roles” they may – as spirits – be required to play. Paradoxically, then, the possessed are able to bracket their own substantial concerns and suffering in deference to those of the *zar*.

Central to the experience of possession is the diagnostic act, that is to say, testing the spirits, to see whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). Boddy emphasizes that the Hofriyati differentiate between *zar* spirits (whom the culture believes can be integrated through ceremonial marriage) and others (such as black *jinn* which must be exorcized if possible) and that the diagnostic act of giving the spirit its right and proper name, of differentiating between *zar* spirits and black *jinn*, already contributes a positive effect to a suffering individual. Subsequent marriage with correctly identified spirits in a rite of passage suggests that the status of the sufferers changes paradoxically for good and that thereafter the spirits will not simply possess them; rather, they will allow themselves to be invoked, and the interplay will be potentially productive.

In analytical psychology, Jung describes a similar apotropaic effect of diagnosis, a partial alleviation of suffering when a repressed complex is identified and thereby acknowledged by ego consciousness: "The true symbol, the true expression of the psychological fact, has that peculiar effect on the unconscious factor, that is somehow brought about by giving it the right name" (Jung 1984, p. 581). And describing the psychological life process of differentiating and, as much as possible, integrating otherwise dangerous and difficult unconscious complexes/spirits into consciousness (a process he called "individuation"), Jung argues that the goal is best symbolized by the alchemical image of a "marriage of opposites." By the time he writes *Aion* in 1951, Jung has revised that notion, taking it from a universalist symbol of marriage as representing ordered wholeness, to cross-cultural images of an intricate and never-ending interplay of opposites, of an Otherness inherent in experiences of selfhood.

Writing about cannibalism, Claude Lévi-Strauss argues:

It would be tempting to distinguish two contrasting types [of societies]: those which practice cannibalism - that is, which regard the absorption of certain individuals possessing dangerous powers as the only means of neutralizing those powers and even of turning them to advantage - and those

which, like our own society, adopt what might be called the practice of anthropemy (from the Greek *émein*, to vomit); faced with the same problem, the latter type of society has chosen the opposite solution, which consists in ejecting dangerous individuals from the social body and keeping them temporarily or permanently in isolation, away from all contact with their fellows, in establishments specially intended for this purpose (Lévi-Strauss 1955, p. 388).

Michel de Certeau (1970) applies Lévi-Strauss's structuralist distinction between ingurgitating and vomiting to the most famous case of possession in the Western history of religion, the possession of the Ursuline nuns at Loudun, France, in 1631. Certeau suggests that there exist two opposing responses to the suffering caused by spirit possession: to vomit out and exorcize the spirit or to absorb, literally incorporate, and integrate the spirit as Other, in an attempt to neutralize and even turn to one's advantage its dangerous power. Most of the iconography of the Christianized West confirms the extent to which its societies have one-sidedly identified with anthropemy, although there exists with the canonical literature the possibility of divine as well as demonic possession. In this regard, Lacan (1966), as the great reader and interpreter of Freud, rescues psychoanalysis from the positivist medical interpretation that rendered Freud exclusively "anthropemic" in his approach to the unconscious; that is to say, Lacan corrects the inclination to read Freud as characterizing all psychological symptoms as foreign elements which ought to be expelled.

The goal of contemporary psychotherapy is for the patient to be "self-possessed": at its most banal, this suggests the ability to habitually exercise control of one's self, as when, for example, one is said to possess oneself in patience; at its most profound, it evokes the image of selfhood as "able to sit" squarely in its own seat. In this context, it may be important to note that the English verb "exorcize" comes from Greek *exorkizein* meaning "an oath" and is translated into Latin as *adjuro* or *conjuro*. Etymologically, then, the verb *exorkizo*, "to exorcize," originates in attaching the prefix *ex* meaning "out" to the root [*h*]orkos, "the demon of oaths."

The Greek divinity Horkos is the demon-son of Eris, goddess of Discord or Strife, who punishes those who do not honor oaths they have sworn. But his name also denotes “fence” or “bulwark,” suggesting that taking an oath functions as a protective enclosure. The etymological image behind exorcizing is of casting “out” a “demon” but also of “invoking and putting on oath.” That is to say, hidden behind the one-sided anthropomy of the Christianized West may reside also the image of an exorcist solemnly (by naming God) invoking a devil ironically in an attempt to thereby establish a truth.

### See Also

- ▶ [Complex](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)

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## Possession, Exorcism, and Psychotherapy

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### What Is Exorcism?

*Exorcism* – the ritualistic expulsion of malevolent spirits inhabiting body, brain, or place – has been practiced in some form throughout human history and is probably the primeval prototype for psychotherapy. Exorcism is a traditional treatment for possession by evil spirits or demons and was a method employed for millennia by prehistoric shamans, witch doctors, priests, and medicine men prior to and during ancient Greek and Egyptian cultures. Hippocrates, the father of Western medicine, was purportedly first trained as an exorcist.

Exorcism is deeply rooted in demonism and demonology, presuming that the “victim’s” symptoms are caused by evil entities that have invaded and taken possession of body and soul. Jesus of Nazareth reputedly practiced exorcism in healing “demoniacs,” as described in the New Testament: “They brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. . . And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils” (Mark 1:32, 34). The Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Protestant (especially Methodist, Charismatic, Evangelical, and Pentecostal) Church still practice exorcism in extraordinary cases deemed – usually after at least some scientific scrutiny and in keeping with current Vatican policy – to be bona fide demonic possession. References to exorcism and possession can also be found in Judaism, Hinduism, and Islam, as well as Scientology.

Exorcism entails forcing the evil spirits out of the victim by religious ritual, prayer, supplication, admonition, threats, bargaining, enticement, confrontation, and other means. Typically, the victim’s symptoms of possession worsen as an

exorcism is initiated and the ceremonial symbols of the higher power (incantations, holy relics, crucifix, holy water, Bible, etc.) are introduced. Rage is notably and predictably the predominant response to exorcism, traditionally known as the “rage of the demon” resisting expulsion, and the possessed person is frequently physically restrained so as to prevent hurting themselves or others while in this furious state. *Exorcistic catharsis* consists of the unbridled expression of the typically uncharacteristic anger or, rather, the demon’s rage expressing itself violently and autonomously through the victim. However, unlike in psychodynamic psychotherapy, there is no conscious ownership of the previously repressed anger required during this primitive process: the rage belongs instead only to the demon, to whom it is solely attributed, not to the victim. Once the victim is cathartically purged (abreaction) of the demonic (see demonic) rage, he or she returns, at least temporarily, to a previous – albeit still relatively unconscious, naïve, and tenuous – state of precrisis psychological equilibrium, the demon or devil having presumably been driven out.

### Demonic Possession

The idea of demonic possession is a theological or spiritual explanation for human evil, suffering, and aberrant behavior. Possession has been a well-documented phenomenon occurring across cultures in virtually every era. But the term *possession* is seldom mentioned in the mainstream psychiatric and psychological literature. Instead, psychiatry and psychology speak of *obsession*, which has similar intrusive, involuntary, ego-dystonic qualities. Mild cases of demonic possession were referred to by the Catholic Church as obsession as far back as the fifteenth century, and psychotherapists still use that diagnostic term today. Or we refer to “multiple personality disorder” (dissociative identity disorder) in which one or more so-called subpersonalities temporarily take total possession of the person against his or her will. Or we diagnose bipolar disorder in those possessed by mania, irritability, or melancholy

and intermittent explosive disorder to describe someone possessed or overtaken by uncontrollable rage. Indeed, the subjective experience of possession – being influenced by some foreign, alien force beyond the ego’s ken or control – can be considered more or less a phenomenological aspect of most modern psychiatric disorders. Today, this *possession syndrome* (Diamond 1996) is seen by psychiatrists and psychologists as a mental disorder more often than not caused by some underlying neurological or biochemical aberration. Biochemistry, in the form of the tiny neurotransmitter, has become our demon *du jour* to which all manner of psychopathological evils are attributed. But despite its obscurity in the psychiatric and psychotherapeutic texts, it must be admitted that the enigmatic experience known for millennia as “demonic possession” persists today in differing forms and varying degrees. The only difference is the way in which we now attempt to explain and treat it.

### Exorcism Versus Psychotherapy

At least since Freud’s day, it has become commonplace to refer metaphorically or poetically to struggling with one’s vexing psychological problems as wrestling with “demons.” Carl Jung (1921, 1971) theorized that, from a psychological perspective, “demons are nothing other than intruders from the unconscious, spontaneous irruptions of unconscious complexes...” (cited in Diamond 1996, pp. 64–65). Psychotherapy, a structured process of psychological treatment originating in the pioneering work of Freud and Jung, has been practiced now for little more than a century and has deep roots in and remarkable similarities to exorcism. According to psychiatric historian Henri Ellenberger (1970), “Exorcism is the exact counterpart of possession and a well-structured type of psychotherapy.” He explains that the exorcist typically addresses the possessed and the demons in the name of a “higher power,” as, for example, when the priest invokes the power of Jesus Christ in the Christian ritual of exorcism. Complete conviction in both the demonic and spiritual power and confidence in

his or her own skills are essential for the exorcist's success. Psychological and spiritual support for the victim is provided, while at the same time, the possessing evil spirits are verbally attacked, challenged, named, and provoked to speak directly to the exorcist. In some cases, contentious negotiations are engaged in between the demonic powers and exorcist, in an effort to force them to release their disturbing and debilitating grip on the victim. This demanding, dangerous, arduous process can last for days, months, or years and is not always successful.

Much the same may be said about the psychotherapist. Despite the ostensibly secular, scientific persona of most contemporary practitioners, scratching the surface of rationality and objectivity reveals a latent exorcist. Psychotherapists also speak in the name of a "higher power," be it science, psychology, or some metaphysical belief system. They too firmly believe in the reality of the pathological problem manifested in the patient's symptoms and suffering and in the therapeutic power of diagnosing or properly naming it. And they dispense encouragement to troubled patients while joining with them in a sacred "therapeutic alliance" – the common healing denominator in all types of psychotherapy – against the wicked and destructive forces bedeviling them. Psychotherapy can, like exorcism, consist of a prolonged, bitter, soul-wrenching, sometimes tedious, battle royale with the patient's diabolically obdurate behaviors and emotional "demons," a war frequently waged over the course of years rather than days, weeks, or months, and not always with a victorious outcome. And, as in exorcism, there is recognition especially by psychodynamic psychotherapists of the very real dangers and risks of "psychic infection" or *countertransference*, which can cause the therapist to suffer similarly disturbing, subjective symptoms during the strenuous treatment process. Hence the ever-present importance for both the exorcist and psychotherapist to perform his or her sacred duties within a formally ritualized structure, frame or sacred container (*vas temenos*); to make full use of collegial support, cooperation, and consultation; and to maintain inviolable professional boundaries. To paraphrase

Freud: No one wrestles with demons – not even the demons of others – and comes away unscathed. The so-called psychological infestation (countertransference) is an occupational hazard shared by both the exorcist and psychotherapist that can subtly undermine or sabotage the healing process and must therefore be consciously recognized, monitored, and constructively resolved.

Italian psychiatrist Gaetano Benedetti (1960) compared exorcism to his own therapeutic work with schizophrenics. Benedetti points out the many parallels between the process of exorcism and psychotherapy, noting how both the exorcist and psychotherapist must tend first to themselves spiritually or psychologically prior to entering the chaotic inner world of the victim or patient. The standard worsening of symptoms as the process proceeds is psychologically understood as a form of *resistance* to the treatment or remedy. The psychotic or demonically possessed person attempts to overpower the therapist, who must maintain control of the process, set consistent limits and boundaries, and not retreat from or submit to the patient's anger, rage, and aggression. Both the exorcist and psychotherapist align themselves with the healthy part of the personality against the evil or pathological aspects, repudiating all destructive, defensive expressions of the latter. Toward the end of such intensive treatment for schizophrenia, during the final "rebuilding" phase of what psychologist Jack Rosberg calls Direct Confrontation Therapy:

the patient doesn't understand all of what has happened and is happening to him, and he [or she] is very angry with the therapist. . . . The patient must be kept from regressing and must be increasingly motivated to get out into the world. . . . Thus, slowly, gradually and painfully, healthy defenses are substituted for unhealthy [ones], and strengthened (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 213).

Born-again Christian psychiatrist M. Scott Peck (1983) noted that, unlike exorcism, traditional psychotherapy "is conducted in an atmosphere of total freedom. The patient is free to quit therapy at any time. . . . Except for the threat of refusing to see the patient anymore, . . .



the therapist has no weapons with which to push for change beyond the persuasive power of his or her own wits, understanding, and love” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 214). In stark contrast, exorcism makes full use of power to overcome the patient or victim’s illness. Almost always conducted by a team or group as opposed to the one-to-one relationship of psychotherapy, exorcism controls the situation completely. Whereas the duration of a psychotherapy session is typically predetermined:

The length of an exorcism session is not preset but is at the discretion of the team leader. In ordinary psychotherapy the session is no more than an hour, and the patient knows this. If they want to, patients can evade almost any issue for an hour. But exorcism sessions may last three, five, even ten or twelve hours. . . . Exorcism is psychotherapy by massive assault (Peck, cited in Diamond 1996, pp. 214–215).

As in exorcism, the constructive use (but not abuse) by the therapist of power is essential in psychotherapy, particularly in the treatment of the most debilitating mental disorders.

In Christian exorcism, writes Peck, “the exorcism team, through prayer and ritual, invokes the power of God in the healing process. Indeed, as far as the Christian exorcist is concerned, it is not he or she who successfully completes the process, it is God who does the healing” (Peck 1983, p. 186). This attitude can also frequently be found in secular or even atheistic psychotherapy, with the healing power being attributed not to God, but to the palliative nature of the treatment process itself. Peck draws a distinction between human evil and supernatural, metaphysical or demonic evil, the latter being the cause, he contends, of *genuine possession*. Peck further distinguishes demonic possession from mental illness, stating that though in such cases “there has to be a significant emotional problem for the possession to occur in the first place, . . . the proper question to pose diagnostically would be: ‘Is the patient just mentally ill or is he or she mentally ill and possessed?’” (1983, p. 121).

For Dr. Peck and others of his spiritual persuasion, the demonic – unlike the daimonic – is purely negative, a power so vile it can only be exorcized, expelled, and excluded from

consciousness. It has no redeeming qualities and is unworthy of redemption. On the contrary, the *daimonic* includes the potentially healthy, vital, creative, compensatory, empowering life forces whose conscious integration is required for any true, lasting therapeutic transformation. Psychiatrist C.G. Jung and existential analyst Rollo May (1969) both provide psychologically sophisticated, secular theories of human evil and daimonic (as opposed to demonic) possession which, unlike Peck’s, do not demand literal belief in the Devil or demons.

Out of vogue for centuries since the Enlightenment, exorcism is experiencing a twenty-first-century rebirth in Europe, Australia, the United States, and elsewhere. Growing numbers of postmodern pilgrims are turning desperately to exorcism to try to alleviate their psychological or spiritual suffering, due, in part, to a growing dissatisfaction with contemporary psychiatric and psychological treatment. William Peter Blatney’s popular film *The Exorcist* (1973), derived from his book about an actual case, as well as films like the *Exorcism of Emily Rose* (2005), present a highly dramatized picture of possession and exorcism, restimulating public fascination with this bizarre phenomenon. Based on the current resurgence in exorcism – being met reportedly by an acceleration in the formal training of priests as exorcists by the Vatican – it appears that, for many, the archetypal myths of “demonic possession” and “exorcism” offer a more meaningful and compelling explanation for such numinous experiences than do the banal scientific theories of biological psychiatry and cognitive-behavioral psychology. If psychotherapy as a true healing of the *soul* or spirit (*psyche*) is to survive and thrive into the future, a seemingly dubious prognosis at present, it will need to more deeply apprehend and address the archetypal *possession syndrome* and the perennial problem of human evil.

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## See Also

- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)

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## Post-Jungians

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Carl G. Jung was such a prolific source of ideas in twentieth-century psychology that subsequent generations of Jungian analysts and scholars were bound to take divergent paths. There existed around the year 2000 more than 2,000 Jungian analysts worldwide in 28 countries. Another approximately 10,000 psychotherapists and counselors have been more or less influenced by Jungian psychology. They share many common

themes, such as archetypal theory, but vary in their priorities in many ways. Jung's usually unacknowledged influence in the broader field of psychology appears in theories such as introversion and extraversion. But his emphases on the unconscious and religion has largely excluded him from the strongly scientific psychologies. Jung's influence in culture studies was strong on authors such as Mircea Eliade in world religions and Joseph Campbell in mythology. The rise of feminism, following increasing women's increased educational opportunities and widespread use of liberating birth contraceptives, combined with Jung's broad influence culturally. Thus, the collective unconscious has responded by stimulating a growing exploration of goddesses in patriarchal societies.

A preliminary sketch of post-Jungian development in psychology is threefold:

1. *The Classical School*, formerly called the Zurich School, has tended to explain and amplify Jung's theories.
2. *The Developmental School*, formerly called the London School, emphasizes the need to add theories of development, especially in the area of childhood psychology. They borrowed many theories from Freudian principles and modified them.
3. *The Archetypal School* emphasizes a more radical postmodern approach to Jung's theories (Samuels 1985).

Over time, these three groups have grown less distinct, overlapped, and come to share certain common elements, such as myth studies and the feminist alterations of Jung's theories. Their priorities can be grouped into theoretical and clinical emphases.

## The Classical School

This post-Jungian group, mainly trained in Zurich, following Jung, emphasizes the *theories* of (a) the concept of the Self, (b) the definition of archetype, and (c) the development of personality, in that order.

Their priorities in *clinical* practice emphasize (1) the concept of Self, (2) sticking to imagery,

and (3) the focus on transference and countertransference.

The Classical Jungians include figures such as Edward Edinger, Esther Harding, Joseph Henderson, Jolanda Jaffé, Sylvia Brinton Perera, June Singer, Ann Ulanov, Marie-Louise von Franz, and Edward Whitmont.

Classical Jungians, or “Analytical Psychologists,” accept Jung’s theory of the innumerable archetypes, as opposed to Freud’s limited scope, opening a wide horizon for exploring dreams. Jung’s central Self archetype is seen as regulating and harmonizing conflicts. They compare baffling dream images to similar mythic symbols in “amplification” that helps deepen their meanings in the given life context. Rather than reduce dream images to a conscious schema, as Freud’s Oedipal Complex dictated, Jungians listen to the raw unconscious with a more constructive approach, going past the personal unconscious to the images such as the persona, shadow, great mother or father archetypes, and eventually to the Self. But first, attention to images and feelings is emphasized, rather than translating them easily into conscious theoretical concepts.

I remember a “big” dream in therapy: I was walking on a mountain ridge, looking for Michelangelo’s heroic young “David.” Instead, I saw a little statue of Michelangelo’s “Moses” seated on my shoulder. From deep within came the feeling that I had outgrown my father, but he was still a “chip on my shoulder.” Only later did I think of the archetypal father-son constellation, guided by the healing Self. First I had to *feel* the meaning of the images.

Jungian theory overall includes (1) polarities of positive/negative, instinct/spirit, and individual/collective, (2) complementarity, in which balance between extremes is a psychic tendency, and (3) interaction between various archetypal complexes. The ego is led past its natural defenses and narcissism, and the archetypes are guided in therapy to cooperation, listening to each other, rather than the ego’s trying to convert the unconscious into conscious control, in Freudian fashion. Ego, the center of consciousness, relates to the outer world as a reality check and also moves between the world and the Self, the central archetype in

the collective unconscious, and ego’s primal source that regulates and balances archetypal dynamics.

Jung’s personality typology seeks a balance in therapy between introvert/extravert, thinking/feeling, and intuition/sensation. In life and therapy, the personal and collective ego (symbolized by the mythic hero) typically easily encounters archetypes such as the persona (social mask, e.g., doctor), the shadow (dump for all negative fears and feelings, e.g., monsters and devils), and the anima or animus (the contra-sexual archetypes, e.g., ideal lovers). These and other new archetypal images from the depths emerging in therapy are probably surprising to the ego but are important to bring to consciousness.

The Self is the central archetype that regulates and balances inner conflicts. It may be symbolized in innumerable ways, such as the circular/cross mandala. Therapy seeks to help the ego relinquish its illusions of psychic control and, by feeling the archetypal messages from below, promote growth and integration, coming to see the Self’s connection to the divine, and to serve it. Without indoctrination, the important experience of the unconscious hopefully leads the ego to feel the presence of the sacred in life in many ways, healing and guiding.

One woman dreamed of an energetic floating sphere (Self-mandala), swirling with electrical charges, that pursued her, shattering glass, until she backed into a corner yelling “All right, I believe, I believe in God!” This dream brought her peace and confidence. Empathy with other people, animals, and nature increases a sense of the mystical *unus mundus*, or one world below the surface of ego’s surface dualisms. The Self should not be used to deny the importance of other archetypal complexes, but can lead to individuation, or one’s unique healing psychic constellations (Samuels 1985, pp. 23–132).

## The Developmental School

This group, mainly trained in London, prioritizes its *theoretical* focus thus (a) the development of personality, (b) the Self, and (c) the archetypes.

Their priorities in *clinical* practice are (1) analysis of transference and countertransference, (2) symbolic experiences of the Self, and (3) sticking to the imagery. There has been significant exchange and blending of post-Freudian child psychology with Jungian views.

Developmental post-Jungians include such figures as Michael Fordham, M. Jacoby, Erich Neumann, Andrew Samuels, and E. Seligman.

Jung did not focus much on personality stages and development. He did, however, expand from Freud's focus on childhood dynamics to include the whole spectrum of life and from Freud's mother emphasis to the father archetypal dynamics. Out of this came later various midlife crisis, geriatric, and end-of-life grieving psychologies. Developmental Jungians borrowed Freudian themes to understand infancy and childhood. They also shared theoretical and clinical principles with Heinz Kohut, Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, and other Object Relations psychologists.

One debate was over whether a therapist can talk accurately about an *empirical* observation of a "child" or whether a therapist's *empathy* is presenting archetypal images from the collective unconscious (Samuels 1985, pp. 144–147). Another is whether the ego develops in predictable stages or not (Samuels 1985, pp. 140–142). Jung's view that the child's psyche is shaped by the parents' psychopathologies is now an acknowledged principle of family therapy (Samuels 1985, p. 154).

The child's earliest bond with the mother is an archetypal given, but for Jungians the mother is not psychologically dominant; rather, the bond has a mutual feedback. She can provide essential empathetic "mirroring" of the child's expressions that promote acceptability and healthy growth. If the child's parents or environment do not activate security and confidence, the child may well grow up with a weak ego, unable to deal with life's difficulties, or narcissistic defenses (Samuels 1985, pp. 158–160). Overall, mother provides a model for the daughter and the father for the son, positively and negatively. Mother models a son's anima, and father models a daughter's animus. These views of feedback

and interaction eventually shaped family therapy, when it moved away from the Freudian cause/effect model (Samuels 1985, p. 166). The child must de-integrate from the family *participation mystique* and separate from the parents in order to grow up.

Freud saw the importance of patient-therapist transference, or projection of unconscious images onto the therapist as love, hate, or other feelings, that need to come to consciousness. Jung went farther, adding the importance of the therapist's countertransference, or similar feelings for the patient, which Freud had discounted. So therapy shifted from a Freudian authoritarian relationship, with the therapist sitting out of sight of the patient on a couch, to a far more egalitarian relationship. Seated face-to-face, both client's and therapist's reactions, loving, infantile, bored, or angry, are important for the Jungian therapist to consider (Samuels 1985, pp. 133–172). Developmental psychology has expanded to become an important type of psychology.

## The Archetypal School

The post-Jungian archetypal school's emphases in *theoretical* priorities are (a) the archetypal images, (b) the Self, and (c) the development of personality (with little attention paid to the latter two).

In *clinical* practice the archetypal school's priorities are (1) sticking to the imagery, (2) symbolic experience of the Self, and (3) analyzing transference and countertransference (Samuels 1997, p. 10).

Notable figures in the Archetypal School include James Hillman, A. Guggenbuhl-Craig, Patricia Berry, Henri Corbin, Wolfgang Giegerich, Rafael Lopez Pedraza, and David Miller.

Archetypal psychologists see Jung's emphasis on the Self as a product of Western monotheism and have thus emphasized polytheism as a way of imagining the unconscious as full of many archetypal patterns, in various constellations. So various gods and goddesses, ever-present numinous images, are given more attention than the classical Self. Mars is present in war, Aphrodite in

love, and Artemis in women's athletics. David Miller wrote *The New Polytheism* on this theme. Therapy is not seen as theoretical progress through classical archetypes such as persona, shadow, and anima/animus toward the Self, but rather a journey of the ego into the depths, where it loses its controlling fantasy, with no expectations of what images might emerge. There is a strong emphasis on "sticking with the image" that appears rather than fitting it into a theoretical concept.

James Hillman urges depth psychology to move out of its medical background and into a sense of the soul's poetic and religious roots, speaking less of "symptoms" and more of imagination and culture. Influenced by postmodern philosophy, Hillman reminds Jungians of what Jung said that we can never perceive or know an "archetype" as a substantive thing, for it is only a theoretical construct, like Plato's forms, so we can only experience and speak of "archetypal images" – not a shadow but an image such as a "devil." Nor is therapy always so set on healing but may just stay with a pathology's falling apart until the soul's images reveal their needs.

Archetypal psychologists reject the subject/object language of standard psychology's Cartesian philosophy. Psychotherapy is not a science but a hermeneutics, interpreting soul's personified images – warriors (Mars), lovers (Venus), and tricksters (Mercurius). Moving deeper into the soul is not just as having an inward feeling but also being part of the whole world. Feeling beauty or threat is part of the *anima mundi* – soul in the world. Archetypal psychology is not humanistic but sees the gods as "cosmic perspectives in which the soul participates" (Hillman 1975/1977, p. 169).

Hillman and Michael Ventura wrote the challenging book *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World's Getting Worse*, where they critique psychotherapy's focus on inwardness to the neglect of the world's relations with the soul. We are abused less by our personal lives, they say, than by our collective systems, such as industrial society's ravaging the environment. Hillman says he gets depressed when he is in a city full of pollution because depression is

not just an internal, subjective psychology but the soul's response to the world. Environmentally oriented sciences are now showing how problems such as autism may well be rooted in widespread largely ignored environmental pollutants (Belli 2012).

Hillman (2004) challenged conventional thinking farther in his *A Terrible Love of War*, where he argued that war is normal, inhuman, sublime, and a religion. Archetypal psychology takes us for a ride, rocking the boat of many complacent assumptions, from subjectivity and environment to war.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetypal Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Dreams and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James](#)
- ▶ [Modern Mythology](#)
- ▶ [New Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)

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## Postmodernism

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Postmodernism refers to a body of ideas that represent a new era succeeding modernism and in response to it. Postmodern thought characteristically undermines modernist assumptions concerning the universal, rational, nonhistoric foundations of human society. It is based on perception of multiplicity, complexity, or chaos of experience, rather than unity or organization, while repudiating meta-narratives. Postmodernism inclined towards relativistic, irrational, and nihilistic conceptions of human reality. Postmodern theorists reject the concepts of foundational knowledge, essences and universals, cause-and-effect relationships, and the notion of scientific progress. They prefer theoretical pluralism over the claims of any single explanation and assert that all knowledge is partial.

There is no absolute agreement as to precisely when the postmodern era first appeared on the time axis. In economic-political terms, the main reference point is the Second World War, during which acts of slaughter and warfare on an unprecedented scale were committed in the name of different ideologies, including the Holocaust and the atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This war left the Western world pessimistic about progress, rationality, and science. The renouncement of Newtonian science's mechanistic thought and the changeover to electronic and photonic thought (the relativity revolution, the quantum revolution, and the digital revolution) are considered significant points in postmodernism. Another reference point is the end of the cold war between the Soviet Union and the United States and the latter's becoming the only superpower as well as the demise of the imperialistic era and the establishment of new countries around the world – the formation of a new political world, divided into hundreds of autonomous political and cultural units, seeking pluralism and acknowledgment. Emanuel Kant is considered to be one of the

first postmodernists, as well as Friedrich Nietzsche who was the first to criticize modernist thought.

For those who lived during the nineteenth century, “god died,” as articulated by Nietzsche, and science provided a hedge to nihilism. In modern times, scientific truth resided in the space previously taken by religious truth. While in the modernistic era many believed that science could provide humans with the tools through which to gain access to the enigmas and structure of the universe, one of the main tenets of postmodernism is that there is no one objective truth. Accordingly, it is now plausible to assume that postmodern Western religious pluralism led to a search for spiritual alternatives such as Westernized versions of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Postmodernism asserts that every view of the world is a view from a specific perspective and that there is no external viewpoint from which one can see everything objectively. Michel Foucault wrote that there is no truth to uncover but rather control mechanisms that produce truth. This conception emphasizes the relation between words and truth, as discourse is produced through language, usually the language of hegemonic groups, thereby increasing their power.

The postmodern claim concerning science is that science, like literature and art, is a text that each reader interprets on his or her own through deconstruction (the disassembly of the text and its restructuring) in any way one wishes. Science, they believe, depends on contemporary needs and social interests. Therefore, science does not provide correct objective knowledge, but rather depends on society, and each period has the science that befits it and that maintains power in the hands of the dominant elites.

Postmodern psychology emphasizes process over structure in conceptualizing the mind and nonlinearity over linearity in conceptualizing development. While modern psychological concepts, as expressed by Freud and developmental psychologists such as Piaget, articulated set developmental stages of the human psyche, postmodernism rejects the assumptions regarding an invariant, stable core – one self. This newer way of thinking concerns itself with the meaning

of different kinds of discourse and interactions with the world and with the conception of multiple selves.

Freud viewed the intellect and the brain as objects of scientific research in the modernistic sense. To him, the analytic method provides a “correct” understanding of the mind. By contrast, relational psychoanalytic theory is considered to be a postmodern, post-scientific theory, and as written by Mitchell, Aron, Benjamin, and others, it stresses our inability to stand outside nature so as to objectively describe what happens within it. All types of knowledge are therefore pluralistic, not singular; contextual, not absolute; constructed, not uncovered; changing; and dynamic. Michael Eigen and Lew Aron are both important postmodern psychoanalysts who also consider religious themes in their writing. Among other prominent postmodern thinkers whose ideas are reflected in the psychology literature are Martin Heidegger, Michel Foucault, Friedrich Jameson, Jacques Derrida, and gender researcher Judith Butler.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Holocaust](#)
- ▶ [Relational Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Poverty

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After a brief consideration of how poverty is viewed in five world religions, some psychological aspects of poverty will be considered.

### Attitudes and Actions Concerning Poverty Among the Five Major World Religions

Poverty is a major concern for every world religion. Every religion makes room for a conscious consideration of what one is to do with and for the poor. Each religion gives instruction regarding the proper attitude and action to take regarding the poor. These attitudes and actions affect one’s own life, for faithfulness in each religion requires attitudes and actions of compassion and the sharing, to whatever degree, of what one has with those who have significantly less. Poverty thus directly affects oneself. Indeed, for most religions, one’s attitude and actions toward the poor is an essential element in the determination of one’s own spiritual development and destiny.

### Poverty in Judaism

- The concern for the poor is closely linked to the maintenance of justice:

you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit. . . . You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits (Exodus 23: 2b-3, 6).



(All quotations from the Hebrew and Christian Bibles are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 1994).

from the profit of their trading they will get no enjoyment. For they have crushed and abandoned the poor, they have seized a house that they did not build (Job 20:19).

Thus says the Lord of hosts: render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien or the poor. . . . (Zechariah 7:10).

- Leaving fields and crops for the poor is a religious duty:

In the seventh year you shall let (the land) rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of your people may eat (Exodus 23:11).

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19:9–10).

- God is compassionate toward the poor and judges those who oppress them:

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. . . . for he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper. He has pity on the weak and the needy and saves the lives of the needy (Ps 72:4,12, 19, 21).

Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy (Psalm 86:1).

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy (Ezekiel 16:49).

Hear this word, you cows of Bashan who are on Mount Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy. . . . (Amos 4:1).

## Poverty in Christianity

- The poor receive God's favor:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven (11:5). Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the

lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have good news brought to them (Matthew 5:3).

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God (Luke 6:20).

- Disciples are sometimes urged to become poor themselves:

He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics (Mark 6:8–9).

You lack one thing: go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me (Mark 10:21, cp Luke 18:22, and John 12:1–8 where words are spoken by Judas).

- Poverty for disciples is recommended because it is following Jesus' example:

For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich (1 Corinthians 8:9).

- The surrender of private ownership to communal property is a natural expression of the new life found in Christ:

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. . . . There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need (Acts 4:32).

- And yet there is a place for extravagance and abundance:

Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denari, and the money given to the poor;' and they scolded her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do

you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me' (Matthew 26:9–11).

- A distinction is made between those who are materially poor and those who appear to have everything, but have nothing:

For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.' You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked (Revelation 3:17).

In a contemporary expression of Christian concern about poverty, people at Union Theological Seminary in New York City started The Poverty Initiative to raise awareness and take action on behalf of the poor. Their perspective is reflected in an essay entitled "Who Are the Poor?" written by Willie Baptist and Liz Theoharis, August 2008:

If you can't get the basic necessities of life, you're poor.

The poor and dispossessed today differ from the poor and dispossessed of the past. They are compelled to fight under qualitatively new conditions and to creatively wield new weapons of struggle. In other words, the socioeconomic position of the low waged, laid off, and locked out is not that of the industrial poor, the slave poor, or of the colonial poor of yesterday. The new poor embody all the major issues and problems that affect the majority of other strata of the country's population.

Presently, we are experiencing the wholesale economic destruction of the so-called middle class in this country. This is huge in terms of political power relations and of strategy and tactics. This "middle class" is beginning to question the economic status quo. The point here is that the economic and social position of the poor is not one to be pitied and guilt-tripped about but that it indicates the direction this country is heading if nothing is done to change it. Poverty is devastating me today. It can hit you tomorrow. The crisis of healthcare is currently the cause of half of all the bankruptcies in this country (see [www.povertyinitiative.org](http://www.povertyinitiative.org) and [www.universityofthepoor.org](http://www.universityofthepoor.org)).

## Poverty in Islam

According to Osman Guner, in an essay on "Poverty in Traditional Islamic Thought: Is It Virtue

or Captivity?" the Islamic words for poverty occur in the Qu'ran 12 times. Two of those times refer to spiritual poverty, meaning human finitude and humans' absolute need for Allah; the other ten refer to material poverty and how Muslims should help them. Additionally, in the Sufi tradition of Islam, the giving up of property and goods is an essential aspect of emphasizing one's utter dependence on Allah.

For most Muslims, however, there is nothing wrong with acquiring material goods, and material well-being is seen as an imperative. Nevertheless, greed and oppression are considered unlawful, and poverty is considered a social anomaly that should be changed. The poor are looked upon with favor both in this world and the next: "While the food of the poor will be delicious, the food of the rich will not be. . . . Allah certainly gives the deliciousness of the food of the rich to that of the poor. . . . The superiority of the poor over the rich will continue in the Hereafter too. . . . the poor of your community enter the Paradise five hundred years before the rich."

According to one author, Islam has the key to solving the world's problems of poverty and hunger through its tradition of *zakat*. *Zakat* is an obligatory gift to be distributed among the poor and needy. Muslims are expected to give 2.5 % of money that they have had in their possession for over a year. The author concludes:

Now consider this simple fact: Forbes Magazine reported that in 2004 there were 587 billionaires worldwide, with a combined net worth of \$1.9 trillion dollars. If in 2004, these 587 richest people in the world paid *zakat*, we would have had \$47.5 billion dollars distributed among the poor ([http://www.al-islami.com/islam/islam\\_solves\\_poverty.php](http://www.al-islami.com/islam/islam_solves_poverty.php)).

## Poverty in Hinduism

Hinduism has sometimes been accused of creating and exacerbating poverty because of its caste system. In Hindu tradition, humankind is divided into four castes, called *varnas*: the highest is the Brahmin, which is for priests, teachers, and wise

men. The second is that of *Kshatriya*, which is for warriors, rulers, and leaders. The third varna is *Vaishya*, which includes merchants, farmers, and those who work in commerce. The lowest varna is *Sudra* for those who do manual labor and service. One is born into one of the levels at birth based on one's karma, that is to say, the effect of how one has lived in previous lifetimes. Each varna has its own set of rules and expectations, its particular *dharma*, which, if one follows it well, will enable one to be born at a higher level varna in one's next lifetime.

Thus understood, although people in the lowest level often live in serious poverty, in Hindu thought it is not a source of disapprobation since everyone is, in every varna, in each person's current lifetime, working out their own karma and anticipating raising the level of their varna in the next lifetime. Westerners may see a parallel between the Hindu notion of karma and the tradition in both Judaism and Christianity that assumes one's status of both physical and economic well-being to be determined, when negative, by one's own sin or the sins of forebears.

Far from seeing poverty as a virtue, however, Hindu thought emphasizes the value of acquiring wealth and a better standard of living, often through prayers to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

As Hindus have experienced globalization, however – both in terms of Hindus going to other cultures and others coming to them through business and media – there is a significant shift taking place in the understanding of caste and its place in Hindu spiritual development.

## Poverty in Buddhism

Buddhism's attitude toward poverty stems from its understanding of all existence according to the first two of the Four Noble Truths propounded by Shakyamuni Buddha in the fifth century BCE. Taken together, the first two Noble Truths comprise a profound critique of the role of poverty in the conditions of all people around the world.

The First Noble Truth is that all of life is *dukkha*, usually translated as suffering, sometimes

as anxiety, frustration, of dissatisfaction. Poverty – meaning not having enough material goods for health, safety, and the kind of well-being needed to realize oneself – is bad, therefore, because it usually entails suffering and the loss of conditions needed to flourish. It was Shakyamuni's experience that ascetic practices did not, in themselves, lead to enlightenment, and therefore even voluntary poverty – the deliberate surrender of worldly goods – for the Buddhist requires the meeting of ordinary conditions for health, safety, and well-being, which is called the “middle way” in between ascetic denial and personal riches.

The Second Noble Truth is that the cause of suffering is *tanha*, perhaps best translated as “craving” or “desire.” In the Buddhist analysis, poverty is one of the primary conditions that give rise to craving, because one's ordinary needs for food, clothing, shelter, and care have not been met. Thus, poverty is bad because it gives rise to the kind of craving that increases suffering, leading people to extreme behaviors that add suffering to oneself and others.

Any social, economic, and political conditions, therefore, that create poverty are bad because they thereby increase the suffering in the world. Thus, Buddhists are urged to engage in “right livelihood,” ways of making a living that do not create further suffering in the world, as part of the Fourth Noble Truth concerning the following of the Buddha Way. It follows from this concern that a society that is built on creating desire in order to induce people to acquire goods and be consumers of more goods than are needed will be a society that increases the suffering in the world. When the wealth of the few requires the inordinate consumption of the many because of artificially induced desires, poverty becomes a necessary corollary to wealth.

It is one of the primary insights of Buddhism that dualistic views – perspectives or attitudes in which reality is divided into two opposing positions – will necessarily increase the suffering in the world, because one side has been reified, elevated into a fixed position, at the expense of the other. Buddhist analysis pays keen attention, therefore, whenever dualism appears, and finds

there another cause of suffering. Seen this way, poverty is but one side of human life, of which the other extreme is riches, and the Buddhist point of view is that such dualisms are entirely interrelated and interdependent, such that you cannot have one without the other. Poverty so seen is a direct outcome of the accumulation of wealth by one group at the expense of another.

For Buddhism, such a proliferation of wants is the basic cause of unnecessary ill-being. This implies that poverty can never be overcome by proliferating more and more desires which are to be satisfied by consuming more and more goods and services. . . . In short, there is a fundamental and inescapable poverty “built into” a consumer society (Loy 1999).

In this sense, even the affluent suffer in a consumer-oriented society, because their desires are never satiated. The poor in material goods suffer additionally because they do not have their basic needs for safety, health, and well-being met. Moreover, the many efforts by governments and institutions such as the World Bank to eliminate poverty may be seen as serving the needs of development for the purpose of creating and sustaining consumers, thus increasing the wealth of the rich, while making others poor.

Global poverty is thus conceptually necessary if the world is to be completely commodified and monetarized. . . . The poverty of others is. . . necessary because it is the benchmark by which we measure our own achievements. . . . In all these ways, then, we need the poor. . . . among the causes of poverty today are the delusions of the wealthy. . . . (therefore) we should not allow ourselves to be preoccupied only with the poverty side of the problem; to correct the bias, we should become as concerned about the wealth side: the personal, social, and environmental costs of our obsession with wealth-creation and collective growth (Loy 1999).

### Some Psychological Aspects of Poverty

The Buddhist concern for dualism finds its psychological corollary in the Jungian concepts of *persona* and *shadow*. Carl G. Jung, founder of analytical psychology, noted that personality may be divided between the *persona* and the

*shadow*. The *persona* is the “mask” or “face” that one presents to the world and includes all aspects of the person which the person consciously wants to be seen. It generally includes everything about one that may be expected to receive approval and consists, therefore, in all aspects that one considers good and acceptable. The *shadow*, on the other hand, contains all those attributes about oneself of which one disapproves or those of which one believes others will disapprove; it includes all things about which one might feel shame and which one therefore hides or denies. When it comes to the poor, the psychological situation was articulated by Malthus:

Even in the relief of common beggars we shall find that we are more frequently influenced by the desire of getting rid of the importunities of a disgusting object than by the pleasure of relieving it. We wish that it had not fallen in our way, rather than rejoice in the opportunity given us of assisting a fellow-creature. We feel a painful emotion at the sight of so much apparent misery; but the pittance we give does not relieve it. We know that it is totally inadequate to produce any essential effect. We know, besides, that we shall be addressed in the same manner at the corner of the next street; and we know that we are liable to the grossest impositions. We hurry therefore sometimes by them, and shut our ears to their importunate demands (Malthus 1992: 283, quoted in Johnson 2007).

Poverty thus constitutes society’s shadow, for the poor elicit an uncanny loathing on the part of those who are not poor. The loathing is uncanny precisely in the way Malthus describes, in which the giving of a “pittance” does not relieve the “painful emotion at the sight of so much apparent misery.” It is uncanny further because, as Malthus says, the sheer scope and intractability of poverty baffles the mind, invoking an unshakeable ambivalence.

The direct experience of the people who are poor – if one is not – is unsettling. To put oneself in their shoes is to imagine who and what we are underneath our clothing, our roles, our relationships, our money, credit rating, or house or car – it is to become aware of how thin and arbitrary the line is between the haves and the have-nots. In manifesting this core vulnerability and fragility, the poor live close to the border of life and death, which is the province of all spirituality. (It is to be

that intimate with the divine that some people choose poverty voluntarily).

The psychological point reinforces the Buddhist point regarding the dualism of poverty and wealth: the persona by definition requires the shadow. Indeed, the persona requires the shadow, for the persona itself is based on what it consciously declares it is not, namely, it is not the shadow. Without the shadow, the persona would not exist; without the persona, the shadow would not exist. They are interdependent. The rich require the poor psychologically, just as the poor require the rich.

Insofar as an individual accepts this division of reality into personality/shadow and rich/poor and identifies with only one aspect, one will be locked, psychologically, into only one half of one's actual possibilities and in denial about the other half. For the wealthy, they will be locked into maintaining their persona aspects: qualities of competence, superiority of ability and virtue, worthiness, and the right to all that is considered good in life, including creativity, power, dignity, and pursuit of happiness. To maintain the split, to make sure the shadow is suppressed, whole systems of thought will be devised to justify their position and to manifest *les droits du seigneur* – the rights of the lord. This psychological position will seek manifestation in every aspect of the social structure, from the economy to the politics to the arts and religions. All of society will become organized around the split between the persona and shadow, and the rich and the poor, in such a way as to insure the split and thus insure each side remains what it is and remains separate from the other.

The poor, for their part, insofar as they accept this division of reality, will become entirely identified as the poor, with all the psychological expectations demanded by their status as separate from the rich. They will not expect themselves to have a voice in the society nor a place; they will not expect to be treated with full human dignity; they will not expect to contribute to the arts nor have any place in religion except that of helpless victim, and thus they will adopt a form of a religion that reinforces their helpless status.

Consciousness and liberation for all people require the integration of split-off aspects of the personality. Programs to help the poor or end poverty will necessarily serve the divided psyche unless it speaks to the psychopathology of the division itself. Such a perspective cannot be imposed from only one aspect of the population, but must come from the ground up, from the people as a whole.

It is almost impossible to understand the psychological power built into the dynamics between the persona/shadow dynamics of the rich and poor. It is cross-cultural, at least among developed nations. It is built into the nature of what it is to be human, because to be poor is to express and manifest the core powerlessness and vulnerability of the human condition and to recognize how tentative and fragile human life is.

A psychological consideration of the persona/shadow dynamics of the rich and poor requires a spiritual vision, a vision of the whole, in which wealth and poverty are each integrated in relation to the other in mutual interdependence, and only from such a vision can the division between rich and poor even be imagined.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Power

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Defined as the ability to influence other's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in order to achieve one's own agenda. Power can be communicated through indirect methods (i.e., non-verbal behaviors) or direct verbal exchange. Intimate relationships, such as spouse, parent, or sibling, may engender a different influence compared to religious or political leaders. French and Raven (1959) assert that there are five social bases of power that influence relationships. These include reward, coercive, expert, legitimate, and referent. Raven (1999) further explains how reward power can be defined through rewards or approval from others, whereas coercive exchanges encompass punishment or disapproval. Expert power gives strength to the "influencer" through their knowledge or skill set. Legitimate power signifies a hierarchical structure or position within the relationship. Lastly, referent power describes the influential nature of identifying with or caring about another individual.

## See Also

► [Communal and Personal Identity](#)

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## Prajna

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Prajna is the Sanskrit term for wisdom, intuitive knowing, intimate knowing, "quick knowing" (Evans-Wentz 1954, p. 208), or simply "wisdom" (Okumura 2010). For the Zen practitioner, it is the direct seeing into reality "beyond words and letters." Prajna stands in contradistinction to knowledge based cognition or discursive, linear thinking, which from a Buddhist perspective would be considered dualistic and therefore limited. Prajna is the intuitive wisdom that reveals the truth of reality as embodied in the doctrine of emptiness and dependent-arising and that frees one from suffering. Prajna derives through the personal experience of meditation practice. The important Buddhist scripture, *Prajna-paramita Sutra (Perfection of Wisdom Sutra)*, describes prajna as unsurpassed and unequalled.

A direct parallel to psychoanalytic thinking can be found in the writings of the British psychoanalyst Wilfred R. Bion who makes a distinction between "K," knowledge that is known discursively and through the senses, and "O," which is his symbol for ultimate Truth and that can be intuited but not known. He writes: "O does not fall into the domain of knowledge or learning save incidentally; it can 'become,' but it cannot be 'known'" (Bion 1970, p. 26).

## See Also

► [Bion, Wilfred Ruprecht, and "O"](#)  
► [Zen](#)

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## Prayer

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Prayer is a central act of religion that involves seeking and responding to the presence, interest, will, purposes, and aid of the Divine. It entails orientation toward the transcendent realm, whereby expression is given to one's own, and others', struggles, regrets, needs, and desires. This expression occurs in individuals and groups, in verbal and nonverbal forms, through conscious and unconscious states, and according to ritualized and non-ritualized methods. Motivations and effects of prayer may be understood in religious and psychological terms.

## Religious Understandings

William James called prayer "the very soul and essence of religion" (James 1902/1987). Viewing prayer religiously can involve to appeal objective and subjective factors (Pratt 1920; Wulff 1997). Objective factors generally pertain to two matters. The first is the belief that prayer is offered to, received by, and acted upon by an ontologically real and supernatural divine being. Many religious traditions, particularly monotheistic ones (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), refer to this being as God. When human beings pray to God, they do so to one that exists and functions outside of their own subjectivity. They seek an encounter with or relationship to an objective, transcendent, but living and acting entity. A second matter involving objective factors of prayer concerns its effects. Appeal is made to tangible external criteria to discern prayer's

benefits, such as improvement in physical or emotional state, or provision for one or more needs. In many Jewish and Christian religious traditions, prayer is viewed as a human response to God's acting on our behalf, such that God always acts first and, even in prayer, human beings act subsequent to God's initial action. Even so, many of these same traditions subscribe to belief in divine passibility (i.e., God's capacity to feel and empathize). God's nature is such that human prayer can affect God's will and purposes and enlist God's concern and help.

Subjective factors of prayer relate to how it involves and changes the one who prays. Søren Kierkegaard, a nineteenth-century philosopher, claimed that one should pray out of devotion to God, but especially to bring one's own will, efforts, and needs in line with those of God (Kierkegaard 1990). Kierkegaard held that prayer does not change God, for God is unchangeable. Rather, prayer changes us. Herein lay its purpose and value.

Twentieth-century theologian Paul Tillich echoed this perspective. He claimed that in prayer we surrender to God, "the ground of being," and are taken into God's creative acts (Tillich 1951; McKelway 1965). In prayer, we become part of God's "directive creativity" in the world. Kierkegaard and Tillich stressed the role of human subjectivity in religion. Kierkegaard anticipated psychological perspectives on matters of religion, faith, and practices such as prayer, while Tillich appropriated these perspectives for theology and the philosophy of religion. Support for the veracity of both objective and subjective claims concerning prayer is found in sacred texts of many religions.

## Psychological Understandings

Psychological perspectives on motivations and effects of prayer consider how it relates to religious practices and experiences, but especially as these involve what transpires within the praying subject with respect to cognitive, emotional, relational, and behavioral states.

Some psychological perspectives, particularly those tied to Freudian thought, view prayer negatively. Like all religious beliefs and practices, it is said to involve an infantile form of seeking wish fulfillment (Freud 1961). In this view, one pursues in prayer the presence and provision of an all-powerful deity that compensates for human limitations and unmet needs or desires. As we look to parents to meet our needs in childhood, we look to God as we age. Such pursuit is viewed negatively because of its basis in irrational thinking and delusion and its appeal to superstition or magical powers.

Other psychological perspectives hold a more positive view of prayer and stress its potential benefits for human well-being. Some like William James and other psychologists of religion who were his contemporaries have suggested that prayer is “the religious experience *par excellence*” (see Capps 1982). Others have found that prayer is a common source for religious experience, second only to music (Argyle 2000/2004; Greeley 1975). Prayer promotes a particular type of consciousness, including inward communion marked by earnestness, openness, and expectancy; and something is “transacted” in prayer that involves “spiritual energy” and which can promote therapeutic gain (James 1902/1987). Moreover, prayer may lead to enhanced self-awareness, which can include a deeper consideration of held values, ideals, goals, and responsibilities (Jung 1961/1989). Prayer can also promote “active cognitive coping” (Argyle 2000/2004) and cognitive restructuring, particularly as understood by principles of cognitive therapy (Beck and Emery 1985; Cole 2008a, b). In this view, how one feels and acts is directly related to how one thinks. As one becomes more aware of one’s thoughts, patterns of thinking, and how these inform one’s feelings and behaviors, one may then alter how one feels and behaves by altering what and how one thinks. Prayer has the capacity to foster thinking, and thus feeling and behaving, in more faithful, peaceful, healthy, and whole ways. Seeking a type of cognitive restructuring through prayer parallels what occurs in various methods employed in a therapeutic setting.

## Types of Prayer

In the early twentieth century, the German historian of religion Friedrich Heiler (1892–1967) proposed a typology of prayer consisting of nine distinct forms (Heiler 1932). These include primitive, ritual, hymns, Hellenistic, philosophical, prayer of the religious expert or genius, prayer of great poets and artists, prayer in public worship, and prescribed and meritorious prayer. Heiler’s typology still has value, but a simpler and perhaps more relevant approach considers four primary types of prayer: meditative, ritualistic, petitionary, and colloquial (Argyle 2000/2004; Poloma and Pendleton 1991).

In meditative prayer, one attends to acts of contemplation and seeks the presence of God and communion with God. Meditative prayer usually results in altered states of consciousness. Although practiced less frequently than other types, its effects can be significant (Argyle 2000/2004). In ritualistic prayer, spontaneity gives way to more formulaic, if not prescriptive, forms. Ritualistic prayer also tends to be practiced among groups whose leadership consists of an identified priestly class that regularizes expectations and practices of prayer life (Heiler 1932). This form of prayer is often practiced in particular places held to be sacred, which informs a degree of emotional investment and perceived power in praying that otherwise may be lacking (Argyle 2000/2004). Petitionary prayer is the most spontaneous form. In using it one makes explicit requests of God for intervention or help, but this generally lacks critical reflection (Heiler 1932). Whether offered by individuals alone or collectively by a group, it usually involves more intense emotional states, and it often issues from a need for God’s aid amidst a perceived threat (Heiler 1932). Colloquial prayer shares many qualities with petitionary prayer and especially relates to efforts for “religious coping” (Argyle 2000/2004). As the most common form of prayer, it involves talking with God as a friend or close associate and using a familiar tone with ordinary language (Poloma and Pendleton 1991). A major study has shown that among conservative Protestant Christians, experience with prayer is

predictive of overall existential well-being, whereas for mainline Protestants, prayer is less predictive of well-being than regular church attendance (Argyle 2000/2004; Poloma and Pendleton 1991).

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ James, William
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Kierkegaard, Søren

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## Predestination

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Predestination (election) is an ancient Christian concept that is perhaps the most widely misunderstood of all Christian doctrines. In the Christian Canon it is mentioned first in the Pauline literature, Ephesians Chapter 1 in which Paul defines the Christian community as being “preordained” by God for adoption since before the beginning of creation.

In many respects this assurance to the congregation in Ephesus establishes the “legitimacy” of Gentile Christians amid an atmosphere of largely Jewish Christians. As Jews became a chosen people because of the unilateral covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendents, so God now makes a unilateral covenant with Gentiles. Gentile Christians are thus “predestined” and are the equals of God’s chosen people: the Jews.

The church in Ephesus to whom this was written suffered under great persecution in the Roman Empire. Paul’s assurance of God’s choice of them serves to give courage to this persecuted community. Viktor Frankl observed during World War II that harsh conditions can be endured with the knowledge of a deeper meaning to life. Love, he reasoned, could enable people to live through conditions that might seem to be unlivable.

In early Christian times, the Church Fathers wrestled with the concept of predestination (election) feeling the tension between this doctrine and “free will.” Others confused this doctrine with “fatalism” in which one’s life is scripted by God and each second of life is predetermined.

Scripture however says nothing of a life script. It speaks of God's irresistible love that will ultimately bring those elect to salvation. It describes the ultimate destination but does not in any way suggest a scripted life.

During the Protestant Reformation, John Calvin, in order to combat what he perceived to be the salvation by works taught by the Roman Catholic Church, expanded this doctrine to include a "double decree" of predestination (election). This double decree put forth the thesis that as some people are predestined for heaven, others are predestined for damnation. Calvin, although putting forth this idea, did warn that speculating on the roster of such a list would not be productive.

In later years Arminian thought challenged Calvinists. James Arminius, who studied under Beza, a student of Calvin's, put this thought forth. Arminius argued that God's grace was indeed resistible, and humans ultimately participate in their own salvation through their decisions. Thus began in the Netherlands, the controversy between Arminianism and Calvinism led to the Synod of Dort (1618). This synod affirmed predestination (election), repudiated Arminianism, and cemented the rift between believers in each of these schools of thought.

In the twentieth century, Swiss theologian Karl Barth again tackled the doctrine of preordination (election). He upheld the double decree of election but argued that in the atoning work of Jesus, God leaves the list of those damned under the double-decree vacant, thereby opening up the role of the elect to all people.

The doctrine of predestination (election) represents the full unconditional love of God for an individual. Much like a child yearns for parental acceptance, so those adhering to this doctrine know the true joy of acceptance by their creator. They are chosen, as were the ancient Jews through the Abrahamic covenant. In a world where often we see the breakdown of traditional social groups and institutions, this doctrine emphasizes belonging and can be seen as an antidote for an anomic person. During personality development the knowledge of this connection by election gives a person a grounding of belonging.

## See Also

- ▶ [Augustine](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)

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## Prejudice

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Psychologically, prejudice can be defined as a predetermined judgment of a group of people including its individual members. This preconceived judgment is usually considered to be negative. Within religion, many historical examples of prejudice can be found from Christian persecution of Muslims to Muslim persecution of Jews. Therefore, a powerful

justification for prejudice is the religious belief that God has ordained a specific social order. However, a powerful justification against prejudice for a religious believer is the belief that God has ordained that “all are created equal.” Many historical examples could also be cited as evidence to this association (Meyers 2008). What then is the connection between prejudice and religion? The answer to this seeming contradiction can be resolved upon closer examination of the psychological components of an individual’s religious belief and action (Donahue and Nielsen 2005). Individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation understand all of life by their religion. Religion is an essential part of their orienting system towards themselves, others, and the world at large. Individuals with an extrinsic religious orientation on the other hand see religion as a means to other types of ends like social activity or power (Allport and Ross 1967). Compared to more extrinsically motivated religious individuals, these intrinsically religious believers tend to be less prejudice. Therefore, depth of religious commitment may be the key to either making or unmaking prejudice in religious domains (Meyers 2008).

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Primal Horde Theory

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In *Totem and Taboo* (1913–1955), Freud analyzed the phenomenon of totemic religion, characterized by the centrality of the totemic animal, symbolizing the clan, in worship, and the incest taboo applied to all members of the same clan. This could still be observed directly among preliterate cultures in our time. Freud asserted a connection between totem, taboo, and paternal authority.

He suggested that this connection stemmed from human prehistory, when humans lived in large groups, the primal horde, dominated by one older male, who could monopolize all females (this was first proposed by Charles Darwin). This tyrannical father was murdered and then eaten by the resentful young males, his sons, who then possessed all females, including mothers and sisters. The murdered father was then symbolized in the totem animal, which holds the authority within the horde. Through the sacrifice of the totem animal, the sons could try to allay their burning sense of guilt and to bring about a reconciliation with their father.

The primal crime and the resulting guilt were the starting point for civilization, morality, the incest taboo, and religion. The guilt-stricken brothers agreed to a social contract: Stop the war of all against all and to prohibit copulations within the clan, thus controlling, if not conquering, the disruptive and destructive impulses of sex and aggression.

The primal crime left a legacy found everywhere in culture. From the prehistorical to the more abstract and symbolic, the functions of commemoration, appeasement, and renunciation of instinct remained integral to the cultural compromise of the Oedipus complex expressed through religion. Religious myths and rituals obsessively reenacted the primal crime, and the totemic meal, in which the primal crime was celebrated and atoned for, became the Christian Eucharist, and the Jewish Passover.

While Freud's assertions regarding the events of human prehistory have been rejected by most scholars, his psychological observations regarding the dynamics of totemism and ritual have been treated with respect.

Some of the best known anthropologists of the twentieth century, while critical of Freud's thesis about the primal crime in the primal horde, embraced his phylogenetic insights. These included A. L. Kroeber, Ernest Becker, Meyer Fortes, and Derek Freeman. Margaret Mead speculated that Freud was, after all, right about the "primal crime," except that this deed was committed much earlier in the evolutionary history of humanity. It was a prehuman horde, when sexual maturity was reached at age 7 or 8, and life was much shorter. And the deed was committed repeatedly, as each generation got rid of the earlier one over hundreds of thousands of years, until these prehumans became real humans.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)

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## Primordial Waters

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All cultures naturally recognize water as a necessary source of life and survival, making

it a useful symbol of creative fertility – spiritual and psychological fertility as well as physical fertility. At the same time, large masses of water are uncontrollable and, therefore, aptly representative of chaos – the chaos that precedes creation. Together, these two symbolic functions lead us, like the cosmic egg symbol, to the idea of potential, as yet unformed reality. The primordial waters figure strongly in creation myths from all corners of the world. The waters speak to the larger metaphor of creation as birth. We are all born of the maternal waters, and so, in creation mythology, worlds are typically born of the waters.

In the earth diver type of creation myth, a diver, usually a humble animal, is sent by the creator to the depths of the waters to find soil with which to begin the creation of Earth. In several Native American myths, a toad or a muskrat, for instance, succeeds after much difficulty, in penetrating the waters, like the lonely sperm which penetrates the egg, and brings back the fertilizing germ of creation, a tiny bit of earth, a fetus to be nurtured. In India, the Garo people say it was Beetle who succeeded in the dive. The Gond people say that the creator, sitting on a lotus leaf on the waters, sent the crow to find the seed of life. The Birhor creator also sits on the lotus, by means of which he himself has emerged from the waters, and he sends the lowly leech to find the germ of creation. In a Hungarian myth, the sun takes the form of a duck and makes the successful dive for the "seed." Out of this small beginning in several Native American myths – particularly of the Iroquoian speaking peoples – a woman who falls from the sky, the heavens, now an Earth Mother, directs the process of creation and civilization resulting from the bit of earth. The maternal birth-giving waters are, after all, feminine.

In a Polynesian myth of Samoa, the creator broke out of a cosmic egg and allowed parts of the shell to "fertilize" the Primordial waters causing the formation of the Samoan Islands. Some Samoans say that the creator himself dove to the depths to find the stone that would form the basis



of creation. A myth of the Papago of Arizona tells how in the beginning darkness rubbed with the primordial waters and so impregnated “her” with the first human. A Mongolian myth relates how the creator simply stirred the waters – perhaps a veiled image of intercourse – and filled them with creation.

The primordial water can stand as a symbol of the possibility of rebirth, a psychological and spiritual new beginning. Baptism contains the elements of this symbolism. The initiate dies to the old life in a kind of symbolic drowning but is reborn from the maternal and cleansing water as a new “whole” being. The water is also an archetypal representative of the unconscious, in the depths of which the earth diver – the individual – can, sometimes at great risk, discover the seeds of individuation. The waters are the amniotic fluid in which preconscious Self is formed and from which conscious Self will emerge.

### See Also

- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Chaos](#)
- ▶ [Cosmic Egg](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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### Progoff, Ira

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Ira Progoff’s (1959) *Depth Psychology and Modern Man*, behind his theory of “dynatypes,” is the presence of the archetypal image of the American Bard, for which Walt Whitman serves as an exemplar. Progoff grasped that Whitman had “reached a stage in his inner development that enabled him to recognize, and spiritually participate in, the holistic process of the cosmos” (Progoff 1959, p. 91). Whitman’s participation in the Divinity within the Cosmos, and his celebration of his own life, as a speaker of Divinity out of his own essential Nature spoke directly to Progoff and made a profound impact on him. Progoff’s theory of *dynatypes* may be traced to a study by Jan Christian Smutts, *Walt Whitman: A Study in the Evolution of Personality* (Smutts 1973), and Carl Jung.

Progoff had been inspired to explore the process of organic evolution in human nature in depth as a social psychologist and psychotherapist after his meeting with C. G. Jung, in Zurich in 1951, when he recognized that the process of individuation could also be *evoked* through a literary channel outside analysis, namely, through writing.

Creating a new method to *evoke* the individual Personality in a natural way, through Journaling, outside the container of analysis, is where Progoff made his greatest contribution to twentieth century humanistic thought. The aim of his technique of Journaling is to evoke the inborn blueprint for wholeness in the human being. In *Depth Psychology and Modern Man*, Progoff advanced his original hypothesis that the psyche is made up of “dynatypes” or “enacting images” that form the basic patterns for completeness in all humans. He developed this notion with C. G. Jung’s fundamental conception of the psyche, at the Eranos Conference of 1946, in hand, where Jung had pointed out that there are inherent

propensities for human action, analogous to patterns of behavior in the animal world, patterns of activity which are inherently unconscious and that cannot become conscious, except by means of images. These *dynatypal images*, Progoff argued, operate out of a “psychoid continuum,” which is only “psychelike,” that is, neither fully instinctual (biological) nor psychological. By this, Progoff means that dynatypes have two complementary feet: one foot rooted in material reality, the other in psychic reality. These two feet make up what Jung referred to as the unitary nature of the psyche: the “*third area within and between ordinary and non-ordinary reality: the Psychoid*.”

Although Jung had worked out his main points about the archetype, as early as 1919, Progoff’s extension of the central notion of the dynatype added a new dimension to the idea of vocation as a psychological and spiritual path. Progoff incorporated Jung’s concept of the archetype and Whitman’s idea of the evolution of the Personality into his theory of “dynatypes,” suggesting that – like all animals – we carry within us “images of activity” that form the basic ground plan for our existence:

There is the dynatype of the seer and the dream interpreter, a figure whose prototype is Joseph in the Bible, and who Sigmund Freud re-enacted in recent times. . . . Corresponding to this there is the dynatype of the seeker for truth in various forms. The seeker for truth in nature is expressed in modern times as the scientist, and in earlier times as the astrologer and alchemist (Progoff 1959, pp. 185–186).

Progoff saw plainly enough that the dynatype is what gives us all coherence. It is the unifying factor in every human being. Dynatypes are what make us all separate, unique, and different – distinct from everyone else. All life strives for individual distinction: a *vocation to live by*. Vocation is an experience of the Self that can only be communicated to the world through a *calling*, and as the central mystery of life the dynatype can never be fully known except by means of *symbols*. Dynatypal images have two main constituents, in Progoff’s view: the known and the unknown, the relative and the absolute.

The known aspect relates to the conscious ego, the absolute to the Self, the essential design of totality in the human personality that touches the Cosmos at its greatest interior and exterior depths. The dynatype *calls* each person to conscious Self-realization from the core of Personality. For each individual, then, vocation partakes of the absolute knowledge of the Self as the nuclear image of personality creation.

The impersonal “voice” of the dynatype that speaks during the writing of an epic poem, for instance, as a living expression of the omnipresence of the Divinity in All, comes directly from the transpersonal world. One of the best examples of this kind of subjection to a higher spiritual power in Western poetry may be found in Whitman’s poem “By Blue Ontario’s Shore,” where he actually hears the voice of “the poets of countless generations” or the *Dynatype of the Poet* of all ages summoning him to “chant” the Civil War victories of “Libertad”:

By blue Ontario’s shore,  
As I mused of these warlike days and of peace  
returned, and  
the dead that return no more,  
A Phantom gigantic superb, with stern visage  
accosted me,  
*Chant me the poem*, it said, *that comes from the  
soul of  
America, chant me the carol of victory,  
And strike up the marches of Libertad, marches  
more powerful yet,  
And sing me before you go the song of the throes of  
Democracy*  
(Whitman 1982, pp. 468, 474, 484).

The inception of Progoff’s intellectual development began with his first major publication in 1953, *Jung’s Psychology and its Social Meaning*, where he started to focus early in his career on the explication of Jung’s understanding of the “God-archetype in relation to mystical and cosmic experiences” (Progoff 1953, p. 210). Progoff saw in Jung’s work that the world was undergoing a death to its various god symbols and was standing on the verge of spiritual rebirth. “When a god dies,” Progoff writes “the structure of value looses its support; its vital quality is gone; it looses its meaningfulness, its authority, and its ability to inspire. . . . New gods will in time be

brought to birth; Jung is sure of that. The human race can do nothing else, unless it exterminates itself” (Progoff 1953, pp. 217, 219).

The dynatype and the “protoplasmic image” are analogous concepts: “The life of the scientist is the unfoldment of such an image. It is his dynatype, the image that propels him forward from within, directing him toward goals he can see only dimly and distantly but to which he is dedicated with all his being” (Progoff 1959, p. 209). Progoff’s aim was to integrate the fields of psychology, science, and religion:

Increasingly the modern person will feel at home on the dimension of spirit having his way there integrally via the depths of the psyche. He will have forged out of his personal experience a new awareness of what spiritual reality is, not as an object of dogma but as a place of meeting in the depths of man where meaning unfolds (Progoff 1963, p. 226).

In 1973, in *Jung, Synchronicity, and Human Destiny*, Progoff went further to elaborate Jung’s theory of synchronicity with remarkable precision, particularly as it applies to the process of human Destiny as a whole. This book was written in manuscript form by 1953, and Jung saw then that Progoff was one of the few who really understood his concept of synchronicity. In this seminal book, which I see as his masterpiece, Progoff tells a very interesting story of how, one day in 1953, he had been sitting with Jung beside the Lake of Zurich when Jung suddenly turned to him and asked if he had ever used the *I Ching*. Progoff replied “No,” to which Jung answered, then “let’s do it.” Based on his experience, Progoff wrote convincingly: “the *I Ching* oracle can be truly meaningful in reflecting the wide breadth of time in which a person’s destiny is unfolding” (Progoff 1973, pp. 24, 26).

By 1953 Progoff had found the key for his notion of the dynatype, when he wrote that when psychic energy reaches the non-psychic level, it passes beyond the psychological realm into the psychophysical realm that unites psyche with the realm of Cosmos. It is in this transpsychological realm that the dynatype touches upon the realm of the Real or what Jung calls the archetype of Destiny. In Jung’s view, fate and

Destiny cross our paths every day and face us with ethical decisions, without which we might never become personalities and achieve full Self-consciousness. As Jung saw it, we are blessed by fate and we suffer from it, and the same is true for human Destiny: fate and Destiny may be *felt* to be either a charisma or a curse. We cannot know our fate any more than we can know our Destiny. Fate comes to unbidden and the same is true of human Destiny: it comes to us from the objective psyche and the world, of which we are an integral part. One aim of analysis is to help patients make what is objective real, to manifest one’s Destiny pattern through a vocation to live by, and if one does that one lives in Tao.

From the beginning of his published work, Progoff was moved to speak for the field of transpersonal psychology as “a method that is *beyond psychotherapy* because it takes a *transpsychological* approach to what has been thought of as psychological problems. Here the word *transpsychological* means that it brings about therapeutic effects not by striving toward therapy but by providing active techniques that enable an individual to draw upon his own inherent resources for becoming a whole person” (Progoff 1975, p. 9). Progoff ends his basic text by quoting Emerson’s essay on *Self-Reliance*: “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself” (Progoff 1975, p. 15).

## See Also

- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Whitman, Walt

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## Projection

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Projection is the term used to describe a common psychological dynamic, well known in psychotherapy and critical studies of religion. It means the attribution of qualities of person A to person or thing B that can be traced back to the unconscious contents of person A, such as love, hate, or divinity. It is a useful theory that describes both normal and pathological ways of involvement in the world, such as falling in love at first sight. It has been used to attack religion as “nothing but” illusory projections of an infantile father complex, but recent thinkers have challenged this view. Pre-theoretical “projections” are described in ancient literature.

### Ancient Greeks

Pre-theoretical “projections” are described in ancient literature. Xenophanes proclaimed: “But if cattle and horses or lions had hands, or were able to draw with their hands and do the works that men can do, horses would draw the forms of the gods like horses, and cattle like cattle, and they would make their bodies such as they each had themselves” (Kirk and Raven 1957, p. 169). Xenophanes’ critique is not atheist, but is an effort to clear away attributions [“projection” is a modern term] that distort his view of a refined

monotheism: “One god, greatest among gods and men, in not way similar to mortals either in body or in thought” (Kirk and Raven 1957, p. 169).

Plato reports on a Sophist argument that the differences between different tribal gods reflect merely tribal qualities: “This party asserts that gods have no real and natural, but only an artificial being, in virtue of local conventions, as they call them, and thus there are different gods for different places, conforming to the conventions made by each group” (1961, *Laws* X, 889E).

Plato also describes what psychologists commonly call “projection” in a lover’s passion, rooted in an unconscious complex: “So he loves, yet to knows not what he loves; he does not understand, he cannot tell what has come upon him” (1961, *Phaedrus* 255D). Lovers attribute qualities to their beloved ones, Plato says, because they are unconsciously adoring a god:

All this, mark you, they attribute to the beloved, and the draughts which they draw from Zeus they pour out, like bacchants, into the soul of the beloved, thus creating in him the closest possible likeness to the god they worship (1961, *Phaedrus* 253A).

Similarly, Freud says centuries later, parents project royalty onto “His Majesty the Baby,” because “they are under compulsion to ascribe every perfection to the child” (1974, Vol. 14, p. 91). Like Plato’s lover, Freud’s theoretical parents project godlike perfections onto their beloved children.

Plato’s lover is projecting forth a flowing stream that originates in Zeus, for example, and floods his beloved with a passion. But “he cannot account for it, not realizing that his lover is as it were a mirror in which he beholds himself” (1961, *Phaedrus* 255D). Like Freud, Plato recognizes that the lover is unconsciously looking in a mirror, but unlike Freud, Plato believes that what we call “projections” originate in gods, not in subjectivity.

### Ludwig Feuerbach

Plato’s theory was theological, but in the nineteenth century, Ludwig Feuerbach reversed

Plato's theology, arguing that "The personality of God is nothing other than the projected personality of man" (1841/1957, p. 226). Unlike Xenophanes and Plato, Feuerbach did not want to clear the way of projections, so we could see a purified divinity or Being. On the contrary, he was immersed in the materialist subject-object metaphysics that sought to reduce religious ontology to the metaphysics of subjective contents. He stresses not just the illusions of such projections. The positive contents of religion Feuerbach wants to return to human self-awareness:

God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man - religion the solemn unveiling of a man's hidden treasures, the revelation of his ultimate thoughts, the open confession of his love-secrets (1841/1957, pp. 12–13).

Although Feuerbach's theory of projection was adopted widely by atheists, ironically he did not use the term "projection," which was available in German as *projizieren*. His English translator George Eliot provided this word. Feuerbach used the terms *Entäusserung* ("externalization" or "alienation") and *Vergegenständlichung* ("objectification" or "alienation"), so his theory is better termed one of "theological alienation." Marx borrowed this.

## Camera Obscura

Where did the image of "projection" originate that was attached to these early psychological and religious insights? Two old related machines were the experiential collective source: the *camera obscura* and the "magic lantern." The *camera obscura* is a dark room with a small hole allowing the external scene to be projected onto an internal screen. In the tenth century, Alhazen experimented with solar eclipses projected into a dark room. Roger Bacon also experimented with the dark room, using mirrors (Bacon 1614). Leonardo daVinci also experimented with a small *camera obscura* and made the first surviving comparison to the human eye:

When the images of illuminated bodies pass through a small round hole into a very dark room, if you receive them on a piece of white paper

placed vertically in the room at some distance from the aperture, you will see on the paper all those bodies in their natural shapes and colors, but they will appear upside down and smaller . . . the same happens inside the pupil (DaVinci 1490).

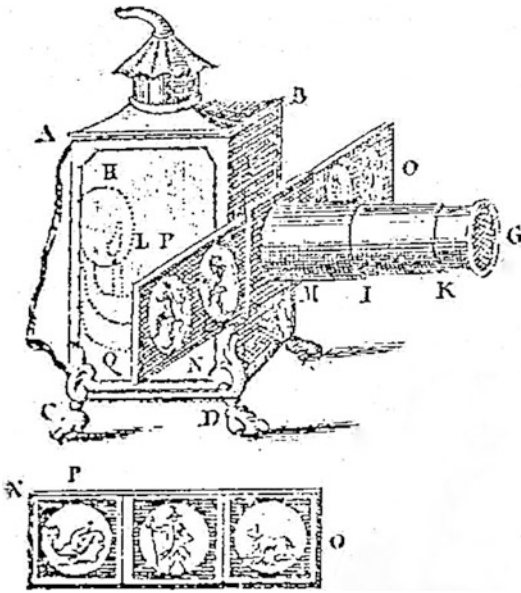
Descartes explored the *camera obscura* with an ox-eye in the aperture to invert and focus the image. He considered the results unreliable, but John Locke believed the images to be reliable pictures of the outer world, which supported his psychology of representation. The *camera obscura* was a widespread instrument by the Renaissance era and fed both the collective images of mental projection and of mental subjectivity.

## The Magic Lantern

While the *camera obscura* received external images into a dark room, the "magic lantern" projected images, painted on mirrors or glass, into a dark room, often with dramatic intent. The Dutch physicist Christian Huygens first combined the elements of candlelight, lens, and picture on glass around 1659. The Jesuit Athanasius Kircher published the first illustration in his *Ars Magna*. The magic lantern spread around Europe with traveling magicians and carnivals using images such as angels and demons that produced shocking effects on audiences. Diderot's *Encyclopedie* explained the technique in 1753, but many were still in the dark (Fig. 1).

A Belgian magician named Etienne Robertson's traveling *Phantasmagorie* show used the magic lantern dramatically. He tossed chemicals into a brazier in front of an audience, producing smoke, and images were projected from concealed magic lanterns onto the smoke. Demons, skulls, skeletons, and dead heroes appeared in the smoke (the "smoke screen"). Spectators sank to their knees, drew their swords, or covered their eyes in terror. Such shows multiplied, and their tricks were exposed in popular magazines (Barnouw 1981). By the nineteenth century, the magic lantern was spreading the idea that angels and demons alike were "nothing but" projections from a magic





**Projection, Fig. 1** Magic Lantern machine (Diderot 1753)

lantern into a dark room. Thus, Feuerbach was able to translate this collective image into a philosophical theory by 1841 (Fig. 2).

## Sigmund Freud

By 1895, when the movie projector was finally working in Edison's lab, Freud's first formulation of the theory of psychological projection also appeared that year. He proposed that paranoia uses projection as a defense: "The purpose of such delusions," Freud writes, "is to fend off the idea that is compatible with the ego, by projecting its substance into the external world" (1974, Vol. 1, p. 209). Freud added to the popular image of projection by a magic lantern and to Feuerbach's philosophy of projection from subjectivity, not only psychological depth, but the notion of projection as a mental "mechanism," modeling on nineteenth-century technological inventions (such as magic lanterns). He used the theory commonly from clinical analyses to cultural criticisms of religion:

I believe that a large part of the mythological view of the world, which extends a long way into the

most modern religions, is nothing but psychology projected into the external world (Freud 1974, Vol. 6, pp. 258–259).

Here Freud illustrates the positivist effort to reduce religion to subjective contents using the theory of projection. Projection became a major argument for atheism in the twentieth century by reducing gods to subjective illusions. It also offered a useful perspective for cleansing religions of inappropriate projected accretions, such as nationalism and racism.

The theory of projection was applied in the clinical development of analysis of psychological transference and countertransference between patients and therapists. The "withdrawal" of projections was the description often used in the therapeutic work of "owning" or recognizing one's own unconscious feelings initially experienced in other people or in the world in many developing schools of psychotherapy.

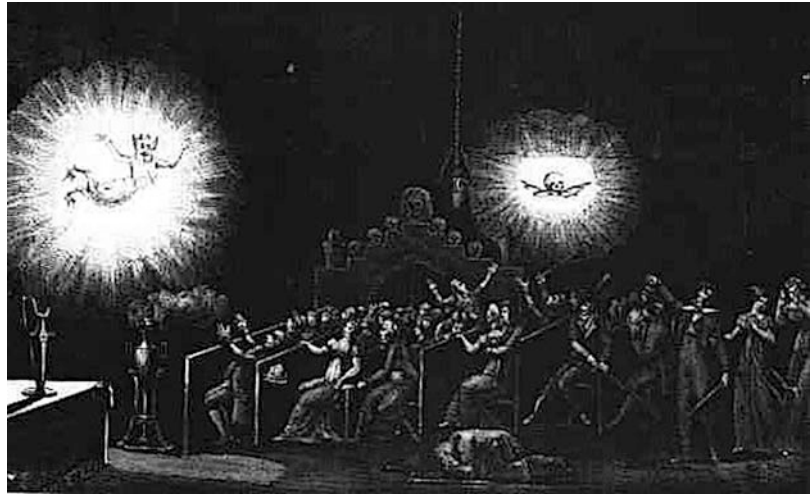
## Carl Jung

When Jung developed his theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes, he welcomed Freud's theory of projection but modified it. Like Freud, he saw projection in culture saying: "All human relationships swarm with these projections" (Jung 1953–1978, Vol. 13, para. 507). Projections generate "blinding illusions which falsify ourselves and our relations to our fellow men, making both unreal" (Jung 1953–1978, Vol. 7, p. 373). Jung agrees with Freud that in transference, projections are often rooted in unreal infantile and erotic fantasies. However, he rejected Freud's theory that projection is primarily a defense mechanism, infantile and personal in content. Jung also rejected the view that projections are caused by individual repression, as he realized the collective, impersonal contents in projections. Patients not only fell in love with him but also fantasized that he was a devil or a savior (Jung 1953–1978, Vol. 7, p. 99). Not only illusions but also strengths may appear in projections, Jung found.



**Projection,**

**Fig. 2** Phantasmagorie, Magic show frightening spectators using magic lantern projecting demons onto smoke (Robertson 1831)



Jung did keep projection largely in the subject-object metaphysics (Jung 1953–1978, Vol. 18, p. 367). However, he occasionally questioned this dualism, saying: “The word ‘projection’ is not really appropriate, for nothing has been cast out of the psyche” (Jung 1953–1978, Vol. 9, Pt. 1, p. 53). He came to reject the positivist view of projections as “nothing but” subjectivity. Throughout his work, Jung says that gods in themselves are beyond the grasp of human consciousness but have real psychological, symbolic meanings that are important, not illusory.

After his 1944 near-death experience, Jung’s mystical explorations into alchemy led him to see projections not as simply part of the subject-object metaphysics of empirical sciences. He saw projections as part of an ontologically deeper participation in the depths of existence. This was expressed in the paradoxical and obscure symbolic alchemical language that he translated. Here *proiectio* is part of the casting forth of the philosopher’s stone (which is not a stone but a wisdom) into the banal world, which transforms it into a precious mystical treasure, including awakening to the *unus mundus* (one world), below its multiplicity. Jung agrees with projection theory’s separation of inner from outer, but he is also compelled to describe the one world containing the collective unconscious, below the subject-object divide. This paradox of the one and the many and their

relations is a deep mystery explored by philosophers since Plato. Jung enriched its psychological dimension.

The Jungian analyst Marie-Louise von Franz explored projection thoroughly in 1980. She shows the value of projection theory and touches on the difficulty of its subjectivism: “outward-material and inner-spiritual are only characteristic labels” (Von Franz 1980, p. 91). This theme makes projection less of a serious critique of religion. The archetypal psychologist Wolfgang Giegerich criticizes the theory of projection as the servant of physics, withdrawing soul and Being from its mechanistic framework.

Object-relations psychology expands projection theory with Melanie Klein’s theory of introjection (the opposite of projection), the process of taking external images and reality into the inner world of the self.

## The Netherlands

In the Netherlands after World War II, the study of projection theory was greatly expanded (but not translated from the Dutch) by several thoughtful scholars, notably Simon Vestdijk, Fokke Sierksma, and Han Fortmann (Bailey 1988). Vestdijk and Fortmann, for example, both stressed that projection is not a psychological fact, but an explanatory hypothesis.

In his 1947 *De Toekomst der Religie* (The Future of Religion), Vestdijk criticized absolute metaphysical religion as a projection but argued for a mystical, introspective religion that withdraws projections in Buddhist fashion. The book evoked a storm of protest in Holland.

Fokke Sierksma's 1956 *De Religieuze Projectie* (Religious Projection) placed projection in a framework of a psychology of perception, taking it out of the theory of being a pathological defense. Han Fortmann, a phenomenologist of religion, influenced by Jung and Heidegger, dismantled the subjectivist philosophy underneath the theory of projection in his 1968 *Als Ziende de Onzienlijke* (As Seeing the Invisible). For him, projection is not a subjective interiority projected into an objective world, but participation in qualities in the lived world (*Lebenswelt*). Participation in the world, as in ritual, is not just primitive, delusory, or infantile, but a normal way of being-in-the-world, as in Feuerbach's and Buber's I and Thou relations, Freud's "oceanic feeling," Jung's collective unconscious, Heidegger's ontology, Vestdijk's mysticism, and Sierksma's perceived world. There are no subjects, no objects, no projections, for these concepts are reified theories of the mechanical metaphysic. Thus, a door to religion in a new key is composed. The theory of "projection" is a useful tool in psychotherapy and religion to separate personal feelings from outer situations, but its philosophical foundations have been deepened enough to challenge its use in dismissing religions.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Plato and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Plato on the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Von Franz, Marie-Louise](#)

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## Projection and Han Fortmann

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Han Fortmann (1921–1970) was a major Dutch thinker who completely rethought the psychological theory of projection and religion and overcame the old Freudian way of saying that God is a “projection” of the infantile father complex from the subjective psyche. Fortmann put the theory of projection on completely new ground, beyond the Cartesian subject/object dualism. He was a creative and prolific writer, and Professor of the Psychology of Religion and Culture at the Catholic University of Nijmegen (1957–1970). He was largely unknown to English readers, since his major work was not translated into English until 1991 as *Envisioning the Invisible*.

Fortmann’s work on projection was the third in a Dutch series of three books on the theme. First, Simon Vestdijk (VEZ-dike) wrote *The Future of Religion* in 1947. He took the (at that time) scandalous post-Freudian and post-Christian position, exploring world religions, that “metaphysically projecting man stays put in his religious development because he has placed his religious ideal outside of himself” (Fortmann 1947, Chap. 43, section 4).

Secondly, Fokke Sierksma (SEER-ks-ma), in *Projection and Religion* (1956), built a new view

of projection on Kant’s a priori rational categories, necessary to thought, such as space and time, saying, like Vestdijk, that these can be seen as normal projections, not Freudian illusions. Sierksma placed projections into the psychology and phenomenology of perception. He sought to develop a more scientific, biological basis for projection as a part of every animal’s *Merkwelt* (marked world), a framework of meanings necessary for stability, both in logical and religious thought. So, for example, hungry Eskimos project the image of an angry sea goddess under water, withholding food. This keeps chaos at bay in their *Umwelt* (surrounding world). Sierksma saw that some humans, notably mystics and Buddhists (as Vestdijk also said) can step back from such projections and “deproject.”

Fortmann wrote a major reevaluation of the theory of projection in psychology and religion, leaping past Freudian subjectivism into twentieth-century archetypal psychology and ontological phenomenology. He rejects both the “wholly other” God of remote transcendence and the Cartesian construct of the subject/object dichotomy, upon which Freud’s theory of projection rests. Projection is not an empirical fact, Fortmann says, but a hypothesis, needing reevaluation of its foundational thought. Projection of emotional subjective contents onto a theoretically dead objective world or heaven is a badly distorted psychology, religion, and philosophy, Fortmann argues. It is a useful mental tool for scientific thinking, we might say, to make distinctions between bias and world, but it is not total; it does not “go all the way down.” As Jung (1953–1979, 1961) came to believe in his later days, the world of the collective unconscious is *unus mundus*, a whole in which we participate deeply in our holistic oneness with the world. This is where religious experiences emerge, in the one world of our souls and the stars. The deepest spiritual truths are full of the clouds of mystery, paradox, and *coniunctio oppositorum* that mark the collective unconscious, inwardly and outwardly expressed in symbols, myths, rituals, and religions. Psychology is not a matter of subjective dynamics, not just the Oedipal complex, not just human archetypal images; rather these grow out of a planet full of

mystery and wonder. We *participate* deeply in psychology, both within and without.

Fortmann restores the experiences of participation mystique from Levy-Bruhl's early mistake of seeing as a "prelogical mentality." He agrees with Levy-Bruhl's late reevaluation (1949). Both argue that participation is constantly present underneath modern consciousness. "The unconscious" is a fiction, he says, a Cartesian effort to squeeze the world of soul-world relations into subjectivist philosophy. Mythological images not integrated into consciousness are not really interior. Such collective images participate in the world's deeper nonhuman wholeness. We swim in it like the mythic fish who does not know what water is. Archaic, "primitive" *participation mystique* is not just a bygone phenomenon dismissed by science. Fortmann agrees with Levy-Bruhl that participation is mythical consciousness. He draws on Jean Przyluski (1940), who differentiates different levels of participation, and Paul Tillich, who calls on participation in theology (1957, pp. 176–178). (A more recent work on participation is by Skolimowski (1994)). As in transference and countertransference, participation is a strong bond of relatedness, not a subjective projection. It is usually unconscious and needs to come into awareness. "Projection" is a theory that strives to do that, but it uses the wrong subject/object philosophical basis.

Fortmann reviews Jung's theory of projection as it moves from a Freudian view of subjective "value added" to objects that makes them problematic and in need of therapeutic "withdrawal" back into the subject, who then becomes conscious of new inward depths (Fortmann 1991, Chap. 26). But the notion of "withdrawal" back into the subject, while it helps dispel mass consciousness and awaken one to unconscious contents, nevertheless is part of the scientific project's disenchantment of the world. The archetypal lover does not just receive projections but bathes in the common waters of *participation mystique*. Gods are not just projections of the archetypal inner Self, but swim in these oceanic waters, mingling human psychology and transcendent mysteries. But they need to be *experienced*. Religious *belief* is

a dogmatic equivalent to the absence of authentic religious *experience*, as Jung and Fortmann both stress. Dogmatic images must be read not literally but symbolically, for we are living in a time of a "renewal of the gods." Ancient archetypal religious images are losing their power. Knowing is not feeling, as we discover in psychotherapy. Dogmas such as the virgin birth, salvation by a god-man, and the trinity, without the psyche's *experience*, are no longer authentic, says Fortmann: "A turning back to the archetypes through self-knowledge, contemplation, and meditation will re-establish the connection between the conscious mind and the unconscious, giving rise to new symbols for eternal truth" (Fortmann 1991, pp. 26–28).

Fortmann expands his thesis with Martin Heidegger, who "vanquishes the subject-object split" (Fortmann 1991, Chap. 29). Heidegger thinks the phenomenological concept of hermeneutics deeply. "Hermeneutics" is the examination of a methodology's basic principles that differ, for example, in art, science, and religion. Thus, the study of religion cannot be a scientific question, which some atheists and some psychologists neglect to consider. Heidegger presses phenomenology into *ontology*, that is, more intuitive reflections on ultimate reality, or "Being," in contrast with *metaphysics*, which is a more rational study of ultimate reality. In his monumental *Being and Time* (1927) and later, Heidegger speaks poetically, using words in new ways, pressing thinking toward new paths. His language is likely to cause the reader some anxiety. But he sees anxiety itself as what seems alien but is the presence of "uncanniness," in the call of conscience (Heidegger 1962, p. 321). Even more deeply: "Uncanniness is the basic kind of Being-in-the-world, even though in an everyday way it has been covered up" (Heidegger 1962, p. 322). So Being-in-the-world is going to be uncanny, strange, and weird, like what the uncovering of we call "unconsciousness," as in dreams and a new awareness. When we intuitively read a person's gestures and perceive, for example, shame, fear, or love, this is Being-in-the-world disclosed, uncanny because it is normally concealed (cf. Freud's 1919 "Uncanny" (*unheimlich*)).

Heidegger rejects the mistake of post-Cartesian philosophies that attempt to isolate humanity in a subjective shell, for the human subject is never without world. Humans are always in the world and society; there is no total withdrawal, no total innerness. Human existence is a being-in and a being-with. We may partly place ourselves cognitively outside the world for scientific analysis, but underneath this standing back is a much more fundamental relatedness. *Dasein* is his term for human existence, meaning “being-there,” which is a “non-closedness” (*Erschlossenheit*). Being-in-the-world is the basic state of *Dasein* (being-there). Thus, the old philosophical problem of how the subject knows the object is a non-question, for consciousness is at the beginning outside. The world reveals itself through an “attunement” which is always there and in which we constantly participate. Care is the Being of *Dasein*, and conscience is the call of care, that brings forth the authentic potentiality-for-Being. One might interpret what depth psychology calls the withdrawal of projections, when one discovers unknown images, understandings, and cares, as Heidegger’s “call.” He says: “‘It’ calls against our expectations and even against our will. . . . The call comes *from* me and yet *from beyond* me” (Heidegger 1962, p. 320).

Understanding (*Verstehen*) is not an internal mental activity, but a way of Being-in-the-world. Nor is language a transfer of information, but is a participation in Being, full of overtones and implications, logic, and soul. Humans are neither the center of all that is nor the measuring-stick of truth and value, as the scientific revolution seeks to work out in technology. Now we can see how the ecology crisis is partly a result of the subjective view of knowledge, putting psyche at great risk of narcissistic ignorance of our deeper Being-in-the-world, dependent on clean oxygen, water, food, etc., in danger of destruction by industrialism’s toxic domineering psyche. Knowledge is not a narrowly logical grasping of the world as if it were opposite us to be grasped, but an experience (*Erlebnis*) of the unconcealing presence of Being. Thus, the secular effort at de-deification (*Entgötterung*), combining rationalist aggressiveness and monotheistic attacks on other

religions, has attempted to strip the industrial world of experiences of this presence of Being or freeze experience in dogmatic frameworks. The diminution of the authentic sacred presence of Being, says Fortmann, is the greatest disaster of the modern era.

Fortmann reminds us that the erroneous dualistic philosophy underlying the Cartesian disaster is repeated every time we think of the concept of projection and withdrawing projections back into subjectivity. We can and should stand back and detach a bit from our participation in experiences, such as love or fear, and think meditatively about them. This is the dance between imaginative, mythic Being-in-the-world and conscious, critical Being-in-the-world. But finally there is no possibility of strong “objectivity,” for we are always Being-in-the-world. There will always be archetypal enchantments, poetry, beauty, love, passion, paradox, and mystery just under the surface of consciousness, in the implications, the nonverbal hints, the intuitive feelings, and the hunches – erotic, technological, aggressive, or religious. We could not avoid despair without these depths, for they give us the essential meanings of life.

For Heidegger “projection” (*Entwurf*) is a potentiality-for-being thrown up by *Dasein*. It discloses possibilities (Heidegger 1962, p. 376) such as designs, plans, proposals, and interpretations. Mathematics is a projection of *Dasein* (Heidegger 1962, p. 414). Psychology and spirituality are projections of possibilities, or better said, the “presence” of ontological Being-in-the-world.

Thus, Fortmann redesigns the old theory of projection into the emerging presence of Being-in-the-world.

### See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)
- ▶ [Tillich, Paul](#)



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## Prophets

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## Eleventh–Ninth Century BCE

The most highly developed manifestation of prophetic activity in the ancient Near East is to

be found in the Hebrew Scriptures. In examining the words and actions of these ancient prophets, one can discern many psychological factors that describe and explain prophetic behavior. These include possession, ecstatic behavior, altered consciousness, obsession or compulsion, having an unmediated relationship with the Divine, visionary experience, and irrationality. For the earliest prophets, we can begin with Abraham and Moses and conclude with Deborah, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha. There is a single reference to Abraham as a prophet, “for he is a prophet and he will pray for you, and you shall live” (Genesis 20:7). According to Genesis 15, Abraham has an ecstatic experience, especially if the Greek translation (*exstasis*) of the Hebrew *tardemah* (deep sleep) is taken into consideration. The case of Moses warrants particular attention, both as a paradigm for other prophets and as an anomaly: “Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses – whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10).

Each of the other prophets listed above is an example that contributes to a composite portrait of the eleventh–ninth century BCE prophets. For instance, Deborah, seated under a palm tree in the hills of Ephraim, functioned as a judge and advisor (Judges 4 and 5). Samuel was dedicated to the Lord and served in the Temple at Shiloh, where he was called to be a prophet (I Samuel 1–3). Saul is seized by a prophetic frenzy, caught up with the guild prophets (e.g., I Samuel 10:9). He also practices necromancy when he causes the medium of Endor to call up Samuel from the dead (I Samuel 28). David’s court prophet, Nathan, condemned the actions of his king and employer. Questioning the authority of the ruler and advocating for the powerless, Nathan thus embodies two of the characteristics of the later Hebrew prophets (II Samuel 11–12). Elijah, “troubler of Israel” (I Kings 18:17), and Elisha, his heir, work magic, perform miracles, and speak unwelcome truths to the kings of Israel. In addition, their ecstatic behavior is a model for the visionary experience of the prophets described next.



## Eighth–Sixth Century BCE

Fifteen books in the Hebrew Scriptures are named after individuals, with Isaiah assigned to three distinct historical periods. In chronological order, these books are Amos, Hosea, I Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, II Isaiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, III Isaiah, Obadiah, Joel, and the folktale of Jonah. There is a breadth of prophetic voice and a range of personalities and professions found in the prophetic canon. For instance, Amos claims to be simply a shepherd and a farmer: “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’” (Amos 7:14–15). Isaiah, on the other hand, is a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem, truly part of the institutional religion (Isaiah 6). Jeremiah laments and suffers abuse. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel go into exile. Jonah sulks.

### Characteristics of the Prophet

A prophet is not a fortuneteller or is the prophet particularly interested in the distant future, except in so far as it is influenced by actions taken in the present. In fact, the portrait of a prophet is rather complex. First of all a prophet must experience some kind of *calling*. In the biblical tradition this comes from God. This *calling awakens the prophet to injustice*, elicits both a feeling of *impending doom* and a *deep compassion for the oppressed*. *Drama and passion energize the message of the prophet*. The task is onerous and, thus, prophets frequently express *reluctance to accept the role*. Even so, a prophet is *compelled to speak* out and may seem, to others less sympathetic, to be a fanatic or zealot. In psychology, we might deem this obsession. The prophet’s words carry a clout that does not spare those responsible for the suffering of others. Yet it is important that the prophet’s *perspective is rooted in a broad*

*view of humanity*; she or he *must work for the good of all people*. Furthermore, a prophet must be *selfless* and *self-confident* but also *provocative*. The prophet’s *charisma* draws followers but, nevertheless, the prophet frequently experiences *loneliness* and *may even be cast out*, for the message is one that few want to hear. Above all, the prophet’s message *challenges the status quo* and *questions the authority of those in power*. Prophetic arguments are *articulate* and *persuasive*, often *fueled by ecstatic behavior*, supported by visions, and voiced in *powerful poetic meter*. Finally, a prophet most often *rejects the designation* and *never receives remuneration* for prophesying. Above all, prophets emphasize *justice, righteousness, humility*, and *kindness*. A summary of these central concepts is voiced in Micah: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God” (6:8).

### Psychology of the Prophet

The prophet’s relationship with the Divine, the prophetic call, ecstatic behavior, visions, and poetry are all facets of what we might treat in any study of the psychology of the prophet. Passages from the texts of the classical Hebrew prophets illustrate these characteristics.

The prophet’s relationship with God is profound and often disturbing. “The lion has roared, who will not fear? The Lord has spoken, who can but prophesy?” (Amos 3:8). A shocking example, even if it is only a metaphor, is the expectation that Hosea’s life will mirror God’s relationship with Israel: “Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord” (Hosea 1:2). The central phrase *neum Adonai* (“thus says the Lord”) repeated throughout the prophets and many other metaphors leave no doubt that according to the biblical perspective, the prophet is a vessel for God’s words. This implies that prophet must lose sight of all personal needs and be subsumed in divine expectations.

Most prophets experience a call, but the circumstances vary considerably. For instance, Isaiah encounters a numinous vision of God in the Temple in Jerusalem, his lips are seared and purified by a burning coal born by a fantastic creature, and he is forewarned that the people will turn a tin ear to his prophecy (Isaiah 6). Jonah responds to his call by fleeing in the other direction (Jonah 1), a radical and physical denial of the call. Jeremiah is summoned as a youth and learns that he had been appointed a prophet even before he was born. He depicts his call as a physical gesture, "Then the Lord put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the Lord said to me, 'Now I have put my words in your mouth'" (Jeremiah 1:9).

Often ecstatic behavior precedes the voicing of the prophetic message, and this is where we can point to a kind of possession, what might be called, in psychological terms, an "altered consciousness." "As for me, I am filled with power, with the spirit of the Lord, and with justice and might" (Micah 3:8). Jeremiah echoes a metaphor common in the prophets, the swallowing of God's words: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts" (Jeremiah 1:16). Significantly, he denies that he has used wine to evoke this state: "I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice; under the weight of your hand I sat alone for you filled me with indignation" (1:17). Several psychological states of mind that might be called "unbalanced," irrationality, enthusiasm, possession, in sum, a variety of states of altered consciousness, activate prophetic speech. The words of the prophets are met with utmost seriousness, whether out of fear or reverence. Ecstatic behavior, then, enhances rather than diminishes the power of the message.

Out of ecstasy come visions, and prophetic texts are rife with revelations of both wrath and restoration. Perhaps the most well known is Ezekiel's colorful vision of the fiery chariot (Ezekiel 1), but plenty of visions are more mundane by comparison. Everyday objects might become catalysts for vital lessons, such as when

Jeremiah visits the potter's house and watches as the potter reshapes a spoiled vessel. This sight is understood symbolically as an indication of God's intention to break down and rebuild the people Israel (Jeremiah 18:1–12). For Joel armies of locusts, surely observed in times of natural disaster, become signs of invading armies (Joel 1). Visions reveal much about the environment of ancient Israel and demonstrate the practice of the prophets to be out and about, in the marketplace, at sacred centers, at the city gates, and walking the streets, anywhere where people are gathered, so that an audience is always at hand.

Many of the passages cited in these samples are rendered in the meter of Hebrew poetry, an aspect of biblical prophecy that lends the prophetic words dignity and elegance. It is poetry that allows the prophet to ascribe to God both the power of a warrior and the empathy of a laboring woman: "The Lord goes forth like a soldier, like a warrior he stirs up his fury; he cries out, he shouts aloud, he shows himself mighty against his foes. For a long time I have held my peace, I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor, I will gasp and pant" (Isaiah 42:13–14). Hebrew poetic lamentation meter enhances the grief already inherent in Amos' words: "Fallen no more to rise is maiden Israel; forsaken on her land, with no one to raise her up" (Amos 5:2).

Questions have been raised about whether prophetic possession should be described as a kind of neurosis or madness. Clearly prophetic behaviors are not average or muted in any way. For instance, some assert that Hosea's willingness to marry a prostitute, as a concrete symbol of Israel's rejection of God, was indicative of his madness. Isaiah's walking naked for 3 years to call attention to the captivity of the Assyrian king could indicate some exhibitionism. But this is mere speculation at a distance of well over 2,000 years and is, perhaps, not so instructive. At most it seems that we can only point to some marginal behaviors in addition to the characteristics of possession, ecstatic behavior, altered consciousness, obsession or compulsion, having an unmediated relationship with the Divine, visionary experience, and irrationality outlined above.

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Biblical Psychology

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## Protestantism

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Protestantism is a general term describing the third main form of Christianity alongside Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity. It originated in the sixteenth century when in 1529 German princes presented a *Protestatio* or letter of protest against the Catholic Church's prohibition on innovation in the field of religion. This act by the "Protestants" – later also called "Evangelicals" – initiated a movement called the Christian Reformation asking "Who is the true and holy church?"

Despite holding worldviews ranging from open and liberal to nationalist conservative and even fundamentalist, Protestantism is most often characterized by the following: proclaiming that all glory belongs to God (*solī Deo Gloria*); salvation is by grace alone (*sola gratia*); the centrality of the spoken and written Word (*sola Scriptura*); freedom and independence; truth and the church are ever evolving; baptism and communion as the only sacraments; and placing a person's relationship with God above allegiance to the church. These traits can be summarized as only grace, faith, and Scripture should govern life inside and outside the church. The church, therefore, is not the carrier of grace and salvation. In light of this belief, baptized believers are called, through the priesthood of

all believers, to be instruments of grace and salvation empowered by God's Spirit.

A strength of Protestantism is its critical nature, but the same orientation has created lack of unity in dogma and institutional structure. After nearly 500 years of experiencing schisms and internal conflict over doctrinal issues such as infant or adult baptism and the nature of Holy Communion, Protestantism incorporates many different traditions. Their traditions have a unique character as they developed around spiritual leaders in a specific social context. Groups include Anglican (Episcopal), Congregationalist, Lutheran, Methodist (including the Salvation Army), Reformed (Calvinist/Presbyterian), Waldensian, Zwinglian, and also Baptist, Anabaptist (Mennonite, Brethren), and charismatic Pentecostal Protestants. Most of these groups experience secularization, loss of church membership, and internal struggles. The cultural and doctrinal diversity within Protestantism is best expressed in numerous confessions of faith. Traditionally, an Anglo-Saxon faith, forms of Protestantism are growing rapidly in the developing world (African Independent Churches; South America) and in Asia (especially South Korea) due to Protestantism's missionary fervor.

Protestantism's general orientation to critical distinction rather than synthesis impacts its relationship with psychology. Yet Protestantism's search for truth brings interdisciplinary exploration. Protestants engage in *critical evaluation or correlation* of psychological theories and use whatever is deemed compatible with their worldview. Others engage in *theory building*, reworking psychological theories, especially cognitive theories, according to Protestant presuppositions. Some seek a *dialectical* approach, holding the tension between two diverse disciplines. Others yet argue that postmodern rationality, refusing objective truth, allows different disciplines to speak into each other's world without losing unique identities. Protestants also use psychology as a lens through which to read Scripture.

One goal that Protestants and psychology share is seeking ways to facilitate the good life. Typical topics of contention Protestantism has with psychology, however, are the following: wholeness found through a personal relationship

with Jesus, Scripture as a special revelation, the problem of suffering, the reality of evil and sin, what it means to be a human being, and how truth is defined. Protestantism can inform psychology on the human spirit's search for meaning around ultimate concerns. Psychology, in turn, can educate Evangelicals on the depths of an embodied existence. In dialog, mutual illumination is possible around concerns such as models of personhood, disease and health, individuality and community, and how transformation occurs.

### See Also

- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Calvinism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Evangelical](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)
- ▶ [Grace](#)
- ▶ [Luther, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Original Sin](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)

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### Providence

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This is a critical theological term of profound psychological significance. Providence refers to God's creative and sustaining care of the universe. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, it identifies events or circumstances of divine interposition. It also signifies revelation through insight.

In 400 BCE Greek philosophers used the word *prónoia* to describe a power which rationally guides the world and human destiny by a fixed set of natural laws. This became a dogma of Stoicism. It also bears points of contact with the biblical idea of the Creator being directly

involved with creation. The Old Testament records a gradual development of the *belief* in providence. Nevertheless, the Hebrew Scriptures reveal a dynamic theme: God guides history in such a way that independent and free human actions are not annulled. Unlike the impersonal Stoic concept, this conception requires the Creator's intimate involvement with humanity. The New Testament develops this view but not as a theoretical explanation. It is an eschatological perspective, inherently implied far more than explicitly mentioned. The incarnation was providence personified.

Early patristic literature was strongly influenced by Greek philosophy, particularly cosmology. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215) best expressed the synonymous relationship of God and providence. Conversely, he contended that the denial of providence was to be equated with atheism. The Church Fathers also explored the biblical idea of freedom with responsibility under God's provision. During the Middle Ages, the Scholastic theologians set forth philosophical speculations about the nature and meaning of providence. Inspired by Augustine of Hippo (354–430), Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274) produced a penetrating examination of this belief. Subsequently, the Council of Trent (1545–1563) designated providence as a *doctrine* of the Church. However, the Reformation was already underway. This represented a break with Catholic intellectualism. Reason was not dismissed but experience was elevated to a primary importance. The Reformers also presented new views about providence. Their writings no longer centered on an explanation of the universe, but in realizations of *faith* and practical living. John Calvin's (1509–1564) teaching on predestination was exceptionally controversial. In his theological system providence was restricted and free will was restrained. Popular expressions of the Protestant belief in providence were published chiefly in devotional literature and hymns. In the eighteenth century scholars of the Enlightenment viewed providence from a more rationalistic position. As a result, this dimension of reality became the fulcrum of natural theology.

G. W. Leibniz (1646–1716) described providence as the rational and meaningful order of human history and the cosmos.

Systematic explanations of providence eventually raise problems of theodicy, questions about the goodness and fairness of God given the evil and suffering in creation. Pastoral theology emphasizes the ascendancy of the former over the latter. Consequently, providence is the basic source of hope for human development. In the twentieth century this belief was reemphasized by the growth of pastoral counseling as a specialized ministry. From such a therapeutic perspective, providence can be defined as an *awareness* that out of every unfortunate experience, as long as one chooses to look with insight, beneficial results will be revealed.

### See Also

- ▶ [Augustine](#)
- ▶ [Incarnation](#)

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### Pruyser, Paul

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Paul W. Pruyser (1916–1987) was a clinical psychologist who, especially by means of his prolific writing, contributed greatly to psychology

of religion while working at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas (now located in Houston, Texas). He was born in Amsterdam, and he moved to the United States in 1943 to complete his doctoral studies at Boston University in clinical psychology. He graduated in 1953. His monographs include *A Dynamic Psychology of Religion* (1968), *Between Belief and Unbelief* (1974), *The Psychological Examination* (1979), and *The Play of the Imagination* (1983). He edited *Diagnosis and the Difference It Makes* (1976b) and *Changing Views of the Human Condition* (Pruyser 1987). And, with Karl Menninger and Martin Mayman, he wrote *The Vital Balance* (1963). In addition to these books, he also wrote some 30 book chapters and 80 journal articles. Pruyser also contributed to the field of psychology of religion by serving as president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and by serving on the editorial boards for *The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* and *Pastoral Psychology*. Before his death, he struggled with cancer, but he died of a sudden heart attack (cf. Allen 1987; Capps 2011).

### Pruyser and the Menninger Clinic

Pruyser moved to Topeka, Kansas in 1954 to work in the Topeka State Hospital. He joined the staff of the Menninger Clinic in 1956 and worked there until his death. He developed a close relationship with Karl Menninger, founder of the Menninger Clinic. Karl was psychoanalyzed by Franz Alexander and received the first psychoanalytic certificate from the training institute in Chicago (Wallerstein 2007). At Menninger, Pruyser rose through the ranks – but never to the very top, because he was “a psychologist among psychiatrists.” He also participated in “the palace revolt” that removed Karl from power in his own institution, a revolt that Karl believed had affinities with Freud’s (1913/2001) *Totem and Taboo*. Nevertheless, Pruyser still viewed Karl as a father figure, perhaps because Pruyser’s own father had died at a young age. Pruyser wrote Karl these words in 1971: I hope you would “appraise the last 10

years as a period in which I have not only kept your great heritage, but nurtured, fostered and expanded it” (Friedman 1990, p. 324). In any case, after the overthrow, Pruyser developed a facial tic and aged “precipitately,” perhaps an indication of Pruyser’s guilt and a testimony to Karl’s interpretation of the overthrow (Friedman 1990, p. 324). In the political struggles that followed, Pruyser was able “to retain a significant position,” but he was eventually pressured into resigning from his position as education department director, then to assume the post of resident teacher-scholar (1990, p. 338).

### Pruyser’s Contributions to Psychology of Religion

Pruyser’s contributions to psychology of religion are sadly overlooked today. Sometimes Ana-Maria Rizzuto is thought to be the first person to have brought the ideas of D. W. Winnicott, a major proponent of a British appropriation of psychoanalysis known as object relations theory, to the psychoanalytic study of religion, as she does in her classic *The Birth of a Living God*, published in 1979. However, Pruyser (1974) had already done so in his *Between Belief and Unbelief* (cf. Hamman 2000, pp. 137–138). A few major points that Pruyser makes in this book – insights that are still valuable today – include the following: (1) “it is implied in Freud’s approach to religion that many forms of unbelief can be at the same developmental level as belief itself” (1974, p. 61); (2) “unbelief can be just as primitive, neurotic and drive-determined as belief” (1974, p. 61); and (3) “[i]f belief is personal, so is unbelief” (1974, p. 65). While Pruyser, following Freud, did see religion as an illusion, he did not, as opposed to Freud, view illusion or religion pejoratively. Using Winnicott’s notion of illusion – which departed greatly from Freud’s usage (cf. Jones 1991, 38 ff.) – Pruyser viewed illusion as something deeply positive, transformative, and creative.

But this is not to say that Pruyser uncritically or simplistically accepted religion. While he served as an elder in the Presbyterian Church,



he stopped going to church services in his later years, apparently because he was unsatisfied with such services. He also held the view that “much of the force of current religion comes from the persistence of irrationality in both culture and our individual lives” (Spilka and Malony 1991, p. 14). Jansje Pruyser, his wife, once described her late husband as a “rebel” in an interview with H. Newton Malony and Bernard Spilka, two other leading scholars in psychology of religion. They added, “Indeed he was a rebel, but not one who was strident, noisy, or bellicose. . . . He had the rare knack of propounding controversial and iconoclastic ideas in a manner that might elicit disagreement but never hostility” (Spilka and Malony 1991, p. 3). And so Pruyser was a man who struggled deeply with matters of faith and reason, matters of subjectivity and objectivity, and matters of the inner and the outer worlds. And the way in which he could stand by his own idiosyncratic faith was by means of a middle way, a way inspired by Winnicott’s psychology, a way, finally, that enabled him to make his own faith real to him.

### Pruyser and Pastoral Theology

In addition to writing for the field of psychology of religion, Pruyser also wrote for pastors, including works such as *The Minister as Diagnostician* (Pruyser 1976a) and an important essay in *The Journal of Pastoral Care* (now called *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*) titled “Religion in the Psychiatric Hospital” (1984). Both of these works call pastors to bring the tools that are unique to their trade – especially theology – when dealing with people’s problems.

Pruyser’s work has influenced many thinkers in the field of psychology of religion. H. Newton Malony and Bernard Spilka (1991), themselves significant contributors in psychology of religion, edited a volume of Pruyser’s work and dedicated it to his wife. Pruyser also greatly influenced Princeton Seminary’s Donald Capps, the most prolific writer in the fields of psychology of religion and pastoral care today. Princeton Seminary had tried to recruit Pruyser to teach in their

practical theology department, but he declined the offer and instead recommended to the president that they hire Capps. And so Pruyser’s influence still lives on in the work of Capps (2001) and his protégés, notably in the eloquent writing and preaching of Robert Dykstra (2001, 2005).

### See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Winnicott, Donald Woods

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## Psalms

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*The Book of Psalms*, also known by its traditional Hebrew title *tehillim* (praises), belongs to the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures and the Old Testament of the Christian canon. Comprising 150 individual psalms (from the Greek word *psalmoi* or songs sung to a harp), the Book of Psalms is both the longest and most varied in tone, content, and message of its individual religious lyrical poems. While authorship of the psalms is attributed to King David, biblical scholars note that the period of their composition spanned half a millennium (c. 1000 BCE–c. 500 BCE) and its compilation most likely took place after the end of the Babylonian captivity (c. 537 BCE), with reference to the Book of Psalms as an entity around the first century CE, in the New Testament books of the Gospel of Luke (20:42) and the Acts of the Apostles (1:20). The psalms have been classified under different genres, such as praise; thanksgiving; supplication psalms; individual and communal lament psalms; songs of trust and confidence; pilgrimage; historical, wisdom, or instructional psalms; royal and messianic psalms; and temple or liturgical songs; however, these distinctions do not take into account the psalms' fluidity of message and intent.

Walter Brueggemann, an Old Testament scholar, has proposed taking the Book of Psalms in its entirety and organizing them under three themes: orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. This thematic organization of the psalms supports the wholistic understanding that human life and ordinary experience, along with one's faith life and relationship with the Divine, are not about the occurrence of single events but are taken within the process and flow of an unfolding and ever evolving complex life journey.

What is commonly recognized is that the Book of Psalms reflects themes universal to human life and experience as well as particular to the divine-human relationship: creation, destruction, and transformation; death and life; suffering and relief; good and evil; sin and contrition; repentance and forgiveness; justice and judgment; war and triumph; injustice and loss; betrayal and vengeance; wisdom and worship; and darkness and light. Many believers of both the Jewish and Christian traditions cyclically recite or sing the entire Book of Psalms, thus acknowledging how its prayers embrace and encompass the totality of human reality and how they mirror the diversity of life's facets and textures.

There are psalms and verses favored and held in memory to bring comfort and courage, strength, and hope, such as Psalm 8 ("When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"), Psalm 23 ("The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want"), Psalm 51 ("Have mercy on me, God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin"), Psalm 63 ("O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you, my soul thirsts for you; my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water"), Psalm 121 ("I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth"), Psalm 127 ("Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain"), and Psalm 139 ("O Lord, you have searched me and you know me").

The lament psalms, which make up more than a third of the book's composition, are given less focus and attention in individual prayer and liturgical worship. While the Book of Psalms mirrors all of humanness and life, the lament psalms (3, 5–7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 22, 25–28, 31, 35, 38, 39, 41–44, 51, 52, 54–57, 59–61, 63, 64, 69–71, 74, 79, 80, 82, 83, 85, 86, 88, 90, 94, 102, 106, 108, 109, 120, 123, 126, 130, 137, 140–143) are particularly about life assailed by suffering and pain, brokenness and dislocation, and anguish and affliction. All have some experience of betrayal, rejection and abandonment, illness and death of a loved one, emotional and relational conflicts, crisis and powerlessness, oppression or abuse, and even trauma. In them, the encounter with emotions of fear and terror, anxiety and bewilderment, loneliness and despair, grief and sadness, anger and resentment, and rage and hatred is palpable.

In the human search for words with which to speak of experiences of disruption and express vital emotions, the lament psalms provide speech and language that reverberate through centuries and are relevant across cultures. The psalms provide vivid imagery, provocative metaphor, and piercing, pointed words, offering a way of expression that resonates with the ache and agony accompanying the tearing and breaking of every human heart. The lament psalms provide voice to speak of the pain, from the pain. In and through the psalms, one may give vent to the most intense hurt, the deepest rage, and the most profound grief with words that are neither meek nor polite but are bold and direct, harsh and biting, cutting and honest, and at times brutally frank.

Lament psalms also contain imprecatory verses, those that invoke curses of violence and vengeance. The Christian Psalter excludes these verses, setting them off in bracketed form. Ordinarily, they are not recited or sung in communal prayer nor are they used in liturgical readings and rites. Some examples of these verses are the following: Psalm 3, "Deliver me, O my God! Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked"; Psalm 11, "On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot"; Psalm 69, "May their eyes be

darkened so they cannot see, and their backs be bent forever. Pour out your wrath on them; let your fierce anger overtake them. May their place be deserted, let there be no one to dwell in their tent. . . . May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous"; Psalm 137, "O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us – he who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks"; and, perhaps the most detailed and elaborate of the imprecatory psalms, Psalm 109, "May his days be few. . . . may his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from their ruined homes. May a creditor seize all he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor. May no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his fatherless children. May his descendants be cut off, their names blotted out from the next generation. May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the Lord; may the sin of his mother never be blotted out. . . . He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like water, into his bones like oil. May it be like a cloak wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him."

Many individuals in psychotherapy struggle with allowing themselves the space, freedom, and spontaneity to enter into and express emotions that accompany their wrenching stories. They might speak of their sufferings from the outside, looking in, rather than speak from the heart of their suffering. They might talk about their feelings rather than talk from the depth of these feelings. Some patients profess not to have the words and the language with which to identify and distinguish their feelings of grief, anger, fear, rejection, and humiliation. Others are unable to give voice to emotion for fear these feelings might intensify and overpower, leaving them out of control. One resists giving in to her grief for fear she might never stop weeping once she begins. Another resists giving voice to his anger for fear he might become violent and unmanageable. Because of the fear of feeling, patients will split off from these emotions and disavow their presence. Ironically, when emotions are banished from the space of conscious

awareness and dissociated and when they are unsymbolized, unrecognized, and unarticulated, they gather greater energy, power, and force in the shadows of unconsciousness than they would have in being given space and voice to be put into words, heard, held, and contained in speech and language. Just as the imprecatory verses are excluded from the Christian liturgy and Psalter, so too are the urges for violence and vengeance left unspoken. When fragmented from consciousness, this powerful energy of hatred, rage, and aggression becomes manifest in relational enactments. Cut off from this vital force, one is unable to fully connect with the totality of all that is human and unable to take in shadow experiences and emotions whose release into the light of consciousness and verbal expression permits a full experiencing of all that is authentic and real.

Patients may be helped to discover emotional speech and language, to identify and distinguish, and to give voice and words to the *mélange* of sensations and feelings that can seem chaotic. A therapeutic relationship that provides emotional safety and consistency allows patients to become more secure in the capacity to acknowledge, engage, and befriend the expansive range of their inner life without fear of being overwhelmed. As with the God of the psalms who receives profound angst and the most vicious urges in the lament, no part of life need ever be beyond speech or conversation in the therapeutic space. For the psychoanalyst who has undergone intensive personal analysis, an internal space opens to hold and contain more of the patient's deepest experiences and emotions, to enable a total presence to courageous efforts to encounter and put into words whatever feelings might emerge, be they anger and rage, envy and jealousy, hatred and wrath, shame and guilt, or kindness and tenderness. For the patient to engage and be present to the immediacy of the experience of the inner world, the analyst must be in this immediacy, with a fullness of presence. For patients to feel greater ease and comfort with their aggression, the analyst must be capable of receiving, holding, and containing the power and energy of this verbalized force

without censure, judgment, or condemnation. As in the psalms, with even the imprecatory verses, everything that can be said may be said in the safety of the analytic space. Before the analyst who holds her own experiences and emotions, the patient need not be nice, well mannered, meek, or polite. The patient need only be as the self presents and is present to self, with a growing range of experiences and their accompanying emotions being given voice.

The Book of Psalms acknowledges that pain and suffering are an intrinsic part of life. That the lament psalms significantly comprise the Book of Psalms emphasizes that one must deal with chaos, disruption and disorientation, and the agony and anguish of life's difficulties not by denying, ignoring, or minimizing their presence in life nor by splitting them off, shunning this darker and seemingly less tolerable aspect of oneself by relegating their emotional impact to unconsciousness. The Book of Psalms offers voice and language with which to speak and entrust the depth and breadth of fear, frustration, rage, grief, despair, bitterness, meanness, spite, and desire for vengeance. It provides a way to give expression to these experiences and emotions with powerful yet finite, containable words rather than by impulsive, destructive activity. The therapeutic process shares this way of the Book of Psalms in the acknowledgment of the need for language that is forthright, for containment and verbalization in words that are honest, in the moving through intense emotions which enables a delving into the meaning and depths of one's humanity and the dark corners of one's humanness. These processes awaken the possibility and potential for metabolizing and transforming the energy and power of such emotions and experiences. In the sacred space held by the Book of Psalms echoed in the therapeutic space come a gentle reorientation of life's meaning, a more profound connection with self and with all who partake and share in the universality of lived humanness and reality, and a more profound awakening to the freedom, receptivity, and compassion of God who hears, welcomes, and holds all, spoken, unspoken, and unspeakable, in the Divine lyrical embrace.

## See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)
- ▶ [Dissociation](#)
- ▶ [Feeling](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Psyche

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Psyche, the ancient Greek word meaning “soul” or “spirit,” is also the name of the Greek goddess of the soul, one of whose symbols is the butterfly. The term was employed by Sigmund Freud to describe the unity of unconscious and conscious, the tripartite structure of the mind divided into id (i.e., the repository of unconscious drives and wishes that determine our conscious behaviors), superego (i.e., the repository of superconscious extreme moralistic elements that compensate for the opposite extremes of the id), and the ego (i.e., the conscious referee between the dichotomous ongoing conflict between id and superego). It was also adopted by Freud’s student Carl Jung to encompass the mind and its evolving, developing relationship with the world over the course of life,

manifest in the individuation of the self from the more limited ego (Jung 1978).

The concept of psyche links psychology and spirituality in several ways. In the Greek myth of the goddess Psyche, a human woman becomes elevated to the status of a goddess through her tumultuous relationship with Eros, the god of love. She at first loses Eros through the machinations of his mother Aphrodite and later is restored to him through the intervention of Zeus, king of the gods. Symbolically, this myth illustrates how the human spirit/soul is elevated and ultimately transformed through the vicissitudes love and how sexuality and spirituality spring from the same libidinal source – a connection recognized by Freud in his theory of psychosexual development. In Jungian terms, the myth calls to mind the unity of anima (the feminine aspect of the psyche) and animus (the masculine aspect of the psyche), the Hierogamos (i.e., the sacred marriage of opposites) in the quest of the ego to become the self. Moreover, the butterfly aspect of Psyche evokes the image of the caterpillar building and ultimate discarding the cocoon, which it sheds upon its transformation into a butterfly. This image brings to mind Platonic dualism – in which the soul or spirit sheds the outer physical flesh in death, flying free – an idea that is still found in many religious traditions throughout the world. Ulanov and Ulanov (1991) point out that Jung regarded Psyche as the “mother of consciousness” – that which joins with the father that is spirit (p. 12), effectively linking Christian ideology with the older Greek images described above.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Cupid and Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Drives](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Eros](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Hierogamos](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)

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## Psychiatry

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## Introduction

Psychiatry and religion have had a complicated, at times collaborative and at times competitive, relationship over their respective histories. Since the earliest days of Western medicine, scientifically trained physicians have recognized that religion and spirituality can affect the mind for both good and ill. Historically regarded as the first spiritual healer, the shaman is a prototype of the modern physician and psychotherapist. Prior to the fall of the Roman Empire and the growth of the Catholic Church, priests and physicians were often the same individuals in different civilizations around the world.

For all cultures, it has been a long journey to look for natural rather than supernatural explanations for mental illness. Ancient Jews seemed to have viewed madness in both natural and supernatural terms. Most Christian thinkers saw no inherent contradiction between a medical view of madness and a Christian view. Islam has a long tradition of compassion for those who were labeled mad. On the other hand, religions of Asia and Africa tended to fuse ideas of

madness and demonic possession. Enlightened views on the mentally ill were found in early Christian hospitals, by Buddhist missionaries, Confucian scholars, medieval Jewish physicians, and in the Islamic hospitals of the Middle Ages. However, many societies later reverted to unscientific and at times inhumane practices. These were epitomized in the medieval Christian Inquisition, where mentally ill individuals, accused of being possessed by the devil, were put to death as witches.

## Background: Science Versus Religion

Fundamental controversies between science and religion laid the groundwork for the modern origin of the antagonism between psychiatry and religion. Concerning psychiatry, a number of prejudices have stood in the way of a closer relationship with religion: the view that religions attract the mentally unstable, that religions may have their origins in madness, that religious experience is phenomenologically similar to psychopathology, that paranormal experiences are a product of definable patterns of brain functioning, that religions are harmful – inducing guilt – or that religious belief is ineffective. Research has proven these prejudices false.

Deeper reasons for the separation between psychiatry and religion have to do with the identification of psychiatry with the “medical” model. As a science, psychiatry is assumed to be based on observation and experiment and in principle open to objective testing. Religion, on the other hand, is said to be “revealed.” Psychiatry employs an essentially deterministic model, whereas religion assumes freedom of action. Yet the separation between science and religion is perhaps a peculiarly Western phenomenon.

During the early years of the twentieth century, psychiatry in the USA and Europe underwent a number of changes, most notable an increasing focus on social progress and general societal welfare. In addition to an evolving body of literature on psychoanalysis, other forces that shaped the field included new religious movements such as New Thought, Christian



Science, theosophy, and spiritualism, as well as the growing social marginalization of fundamentalism. Moreover, in terms of diagnosis psychiatry began moving away from classifications based on course and prognosis of disease. Specifically, “religious insanity” or “religious mania” – diagnoses based on the content of a delusion – became irrelevant to classification and treatment.

## **Influence of Freud**

Although the notion of religious insanity faded with the coming of twentieth century psychiatry, it lived on in some form in the ideas of Sigmund Freud. Challenging the notion that truth can be found in religion, Freud viewed religious faith as based in the illusion of an idealized Father God who provides needed comfort and security; Freud in turn understood religion as a “universal obsessional neurosis.” A goal of psychoanalysis was to trust in the scientific method as a source of truth concerning the nature of one’s being and the world.

Since Freud, modern psychiatry and psychology make claims to have supplanted a number of religious concepts central to understanding human nature. Among these are notions of a soul, of sin, and of morality. Soul and sin have been replaced by notions of human consciousness and psychological and social pathologies. Deficiencies in morality are understood as products of inadequate socialization processes, thus obviating the need for confession and redemption. Religious teachings traditionally promoted the view that unhappiness, despair, and other physical and mental sufferings are meaningful events. While Western religious traditions recognize illness to have a purpose within a grander design and emphasize the spiritual meaning of suffering, conservative psychiatry maintains a materialistic and mechanistic orientation. Thus, the two disciplines have functioned as competing belief systems for providing life meaning and purpose.

From Freud’s work through the 1976 report on mysticism by the Group for the Advancement of

Psychiatry (GAP), there has been a tendency to associate spiritual experiences with psychopathology. The report of GAP on “The Psychic Function of Religion in Mental Illness and Health” (1968) acknowledged that religious themes often surfaced during psychoanalysis and that religion could be used in both psychically healthy and unhealthy ways. Yet the residue of nineteenth century interest in religious insanity could still be found in the glossary of the third edition of the DSM (Diagnostic Statistical Manual) and in the 1989 edition of the Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry.

## **DSM-IV: Religious or Spiritual Problem**

In order to redress lack of sensitivity to religious and spiritual dimensions of problems that may be the focus of psychiatric treatment, a new Z code category for DSM-IV was proposed, “psychoreligious or psychospiritual problem.” The impetus for the proposal to add a new diagnostic category emerged from transpersonal clinicians and the work of the Spiritual Emergence Network. Their focus was on spiritual emergencies – forms of distress associated with spiritual practices and experiences. The proposal had the following goals: (1) to increase accuracy of diagnostic assessments when religious and spiritual issues were involved, (2) to reduce occurrence of medical harm from misdiagnosis of religious and spiritual problems, (3) to improve treatment of such problems by stimulating clinical research, and (4) to encourage clinical training centers to address the religious and spiritual dimensions of experience.

The DSM-IV category was accepted under Religious or Spiritual Problem as follows: “This category can be used when the focus of clinical attention is a religious or spiritual problem. Examples include distressing experiences that involve loss or questioning of faith, problems associated with conversion to a new faith, or questioning of other spiritual values that may not necessarily be related to an organized church or religious institution” (APA 2000, p. 741). Frequently reported religious problems

in the literature are a loss or questioning of faith, change in denominational membership or conversion to a new religion, intensification of adherence to the beliefs and practices of one's own faith, and joining, participating in, or leaving a new religious movement or cult. Spiritual problems cited in the literature involve conflicts concerning an individual's relationship to the transcendent and questioning of spiritual values. Moreover, questioning of spiritual values can be triggered by an experience of loss or a sense of spiritual connection. Spiritual problems also may arise from spiritual practices, e.g., someone who begins a meditation practice and starts to experience perceptual changes. As well, mystical experiences and near-death experiences can lead to spiritual problems and were a focus for concern by the Spiritual Emergence Network. It was argued that inappropriately diagnosing disruptive religious and spiritual experiences as mental disorders can negatively influence their outcome. For example, some clinical literature on mysticism has described mystical experience as symptomatic of ego regression, borderline psychosis, a psychotic episode, or temporal lobe dysfunction. As well, "dark night of the soul" experiences have been equated to clinical depression. Moreover, the interaction of contemporary psychiatry and religion can take place at several levels: patients may have religious beliefs that need to be taken into consideration when planning treatment, and patients' values may affect acceptance of treatment.

While introduction of the V code represents a significant first step toward explicit delineation of religious and spiritual clinical foci, it is but a modest accommodation. One limitation is the tendency to compartmentalize clinical focus on religious or spiritual issues, versus viewing them as interwoven among all other areas of functioning. With the secularization of medicine, mental health practitioners increasingly have assumed three functions traditionally recognized as being in the realm of religion: explanation of the unknown, ritual and social function, and the definition of values.

## Training and Research

On average, psychiatrists hold far fewer religious beliefs than either their parents or their patients. Moreover, despite the importance of religion and spirituality to most patients' lives, psychiatrists are not given adequate training to deal with issues arising from disturbances in these realms. Accreditation standards for medical schools and postgraduate programs in the USA and Canada now require competency in understanding ways in which people of diverse cultures and belief systems perceive health and illness.

Disorders of the mind raise questions about the meaning of life, the presence of evil, and the possibility that forces beyond the senses are influencing one's life. "Spirituality" has come to be understood as a way of talking about such topics as transcendence, immanence, meaning, and purpose and may be theistic or nontheistic. Contemporary psychiatry and religion can be viewed as parallel and complementary frames of reference for understanding and describing human experience and behavior. Thus, while they place different degrees of emphasis on body, mind, and spirit, integration is possible to achieve comprehensive patient care.

It is only recently that religion and mental health issues have been addressed through research. In large part, results from studies have indicated a salutary relationship between religious involvement and health status. The consistency of findings, despite diversity of samples, designs, methodologies, religious measures, health outcomes, and population characteristics, serves to strengthen the positive association between religion and health. For several decades, empirical research findings and literature reviews have reported strong positive associations between measures of religious involvement and mental health outcomes. A beneficial impact of religious involvement has been observed for outcomes such as suicide, drug use, alcohol abuse, delinquent behavior, marital satisfaction, psychological distress, certain functional psychiatric diagnoses, and depression. A next logical step

for research on religion and mental health is to explore possible explanations for this mostly positive religious effect. A variety of potential factors have already been identified, such as social cohesiveness, the impact of internal locus of control beliefs, religious commitment, and faith. Research in positive psychology, which promotes spiritual values such as gratitude and forgiveness, suggests a positive correlation between these values and improved health. Moreover, emerging research in neurotheology explores the relationship between spirituality and neurological processes.

### Future: Religion and Culture

In the twenty-first century, religious and spiritual dimensions of culture remain important factors structuring human experience, beliefs, values, behavior, and illness patterns. Sensitivity to the cultural dimensions of religious and spiritual experiences is deemed essential for effective psychiatric treatment. The majority of the world's population relies on complementary and alternative systems of medicine for healing. It follows that in order for a psychiatrist to effectively work with an indigenous healer, he or she must have some understanding of the patient's cultural construction of illness, including the meaning of religious content. C. Jung's work on the importance of recognizing the "shadow" in healing of minds and souls has contributed a great deal to cementing productive relationships between patient and therapist and priest and counselor. Different ways exist to engage with spirituality, e.g., learning mindfulness and meditation, cultivating spiritual values, and promoting spiritual practices. Inclusion of spiritual and religious issues in psychiatry, however, requires sensitivity to potential ethical issues regarding privacy, therapeutic boundaries, and discrimination.

Finally, religion and spiritual issues have been identified as a research agenda for the development of DSM-V. Examination of religion in history taking and cultural formation processes and

spirituality as a factor in self-identity, self-care, insight, self-reliance, and resiliency are being promoted. Research on the similarities and differences of religious and spiritual issues across ethnic and cultural groups is being encouraged, as is research on the transgenerational process of acquisition or transmission of religious and spiritual norms and their impact on diagnosis.

### See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav

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## Psychoanalysis

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Psychoanalysis is a school of psychology originated by the Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Born out of struggle, it is a scientific approach to the investigation of conscious and unconscious processes, as well as a clinical discipline of artistic application and therapeutic scrutiny. Psychoanalysis is the sine qua non of modern psychology.

Philosophically, psychoanalysis is based on psychic determinism, a theory of human behavior rooted in a premise that certain causes predictably engender particular psychological effects. Prior to Freud, psychiatric studies theorized that organic conditions were the elementary basis of human behavior. Freud asserted that deep personality conflicts shaped the psyche, as did interpersonal and cultural influences. These dynamic forces became the psychic determinants of attitudes, opinions, and behavioral patterns – including religious practices and faith convictions. Psychoanalysis, by pointing to their roots, offers a mode of shifting or managing and, to some extent, changing the consequences of these influences. This hope is Freud's major gift to depth psychology.

## Personality Constructs

Freud's belief in unconscious motivation was the foundation from which he developed an elaborate theory of personality that virtually reshaped Western thought. He believed that the fundamental source of psychic energy underlying human behavior stems from an instinctive drive called libido which is sexual in nature. By "sexual" he meant any type of physically pleasurable activity, particularly those of the mouth, anus, and genitals. The libido also enables an individual's survival, motivating one to eat and drink. Along with propagation, this survival drive is the essence of what Freud termed Eros, the life instinct. The opposite of Eros is Thanatos, the death instinct aimed at a return of the human organism to an inorganic state.

While Thanatos has been debated and denied by countless critics, Freud's personality divisions have been well accepted as psychodynamic constructs. Basically he contends that the interaction of the id, ego, and superego forms the personality. The id is an unconscious dimension of the mind that serves as a storehouse for the libido. Freud claimed that this "dark, inaccessible...cauldron full of seething excitations" composes all instinctive organic cravings. The id is a substratum characterized by unrestrained pleasure-seeking impulses constantly demanding expression via thought and behavior.

Ideally, these unconscious libidinal drives are controlled by the conscious ego. This is the rational aspect of the personality which governs the activities of the id and directs a person's behavior so that the demands of reality are met. The ego is basically concerned with the maintenance of social approval, self-esteem, and the alteration of libidinal drives so that they are in compliance with normative society.

Morality is not necessarily the product of the ego though. Ethics, folkways, and mores reside in the third part of Freud's personality schema, the superego. A product of parental authority and institutional standards – especially religion – the superego uncompromisingly guards ideas of right and wrong. In turn, the superego's wishes continually conflict with those of the id and both battle

for expression through the ego. When their tension is relatively acute the latter employs compromise mechanisms such as sublimation or compensation. Generally, such a compromise is aimed at satisfying both the id and superego. However, if the ego fails to accomplish this goal, neurotic symptoms may result, symbolically venting the frustrated libidinal impulses.

## Developmental Stages

Psychoanalytic theory claims that the first exposures to crises shape the child's personality and therefore the ways in which he or she handles stress throughout life. Like his personality structure, Freud believed that early growth can be dynamically differentiated into three parts, each of which is a stage of development during the first 5 years of life. He defined these stages mostly in terms of the individual's awareness and the basic reaction of particular erogenous zones. For example, the oral stage is the first or infantile stage in a person's psychosexual maturation. The anal is the second stage and the phallic is the last pregenital phase. The next period of development is latency, a time during which pregenital impulses are repressed. These impulses are then reawakened during adolescence when the genital phase is reached.

Although family influence is important during all of these stages, Freud laid particular weight upon the pregenital periods. During the oral period one may form certain dominant character traits as a result of feeding, weaning, and the mother's attention. For instance, an overprotective mother may cause a child to be abnormally dependent. Another sign of oral fixation is the argumentative person, one who displaced an early need to bite with sarcasm or quibbling.

Usually a child is toilet trained at the anal phase. Like weaning (and delivery before) this, too, is a crucial experience that may determine future attitudes and behavioral characteristics. A strict mother may produce an anally retentive child who will continue to be obstinate and stingy. She may also encourage an explosive type of personality who will be cruel, destructive,

and disorderly. Conversely, a mother who coaxes and rewards may help her child to become creative and productive.

The most important point about the phallic stage is that it is the period during which the child experiences an unconscious sexual attachment to his mother and a feeling of jealousy toward his father. Freud called this the Oedipus complex and said that it results in a feeling of guilt and emotional conflict on the part of the child. Yet, like the oral and anal phases, the danger of such conflict is relative to the individual. In other words, fixation is not inevitable even though most males supposedly have this experience.

Again, latency is a period generally characterized by repression. However, if painful conflicts are repressed without being adequately resolved, they will continue to unconsciously influence the individual's thought, feelings, and behavior. This will cause emotional tension or anxiety and possibly an inability to adjust. Such anxiety manifests itself in varying degrees. Freud used two standard categories to portray the magnitude of a person's maladjustment: neuroses and psychoses. To him, the former is chiefly a product of id versus ego, while the latter is a breakdown of ego, defense mechanisms, and the projection of unconscious wishes onto the external world.

## Religion

The projection of wishes is a key factor in Freud's use of dreams as "the royal road to the unconscious." While dream work is a central ingredient of psychoanalytic interpretation, it is also a medium of religion. Yet Freud contended that religion was an illusion, a belief system largely based on wishes. He appreciated the particularity of religion in providing a sense of emotional protection from external threat, as well as a cultural reservoir of ethical standards. Nevertheless, he believed modern mankind was capable of maturing beyond the irrational, superstitious, and magical thinking of religious ideation.

Freud was an atheist who referred to himself as a "godless Jew." He saw God as a magnified

father figure or parental ideal at the hub of a social neurosis one must grow beyond to be truly educated and able to cope with reality. He believed that primitive religions in patriarchal societies with strong totemic beliefs were profoundly influenced by the Oedipus complex. Young men of a tribal horde murdered their father to possess his wives. Totemic worship was to atone for such death and reinforce ethical restrictions founded on shame and guilt.

## Struggle

Freud's beliefs about religion have been criticized since their first publications. They are intellectually valuable, but they do not represent the driving force of psychoanalysis the way his personality constructs do. These models – especially infantile sexuality – have also been challenged since their initial presentations more than a century ago. Such controversies have led to the development of other schools of depth psychology. These range from analytic psychology and individual psychology to ego psychology and self psychology. Clinically, all of these orientations use Freud's basic tools – free association, transference, and interpretation.

Schools of psychoanalysis vary in their expectations about treatment length and frequency of sessions. Customarily, an analyze will spend at least three hours a week on the couch for months if not years. This is because the process of analysis is not symptomatic in focus. Psychoanalysis is insight-oriented psychotherapy devoted to a reeducation of the self. An effective analysis can enable one to harness neurotic energy in the interest of interpersonal responsiveness and intrapsychic balance.

Shortly before his death Freud made a brief recorded public message in which he noted his “good fortune” in the discovery of psychoanalysis. Yet he concluded, “People did not believe in my facts and thought my theories unsavory. Resistance was strong and unrelenting: In the end, I succeeded in acquiring pupils and bringing up an international psychoanalytic association. But the struggle is not yet over.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)

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## Psychoanalytic Cultural Analysis

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### Introduction: Psychological Approach, Psychoanalytic Process, and Analysis of Culture

The primary psychological tool for psychoanalytic cultural analysis is depth psychology, which is integral to psychoanalysis, plus personality psychology, cross-cultural psychology, Jungian psychology, and social psychology. These tools are best suited to examine the full range of culture in all aspects. Additional specialized tools include psychology of religion, archetypal psychology, relational psychology, community psychology, psychologies of liberation, peace psychology, and ecopsychology. Important elements of culture to be analyzed include religion, mythology, social networks, social



conditions, public awareness and discourse, and institutions of all kinds. Social location takes into account many of these factors and is critical to locating the person, relationship, society, and culture itself in time and place.

## Psychoanalysis of Culture

Analysis can be done using three main approaches. One is to psychoanalytically examine culture in general or a particular culture. In this approach, it is culture that is being observed, and depth psychology is employed as a tool or framework within which to understand the culture in psychoanalytic terms. It is an external, structural, phenomenological, empirical approach. The second approach is to examine the psychodynamics of the culture being considered. This approach looks at the internal dynamics of the collective psyche or a functional approach. These two approaches are often used in tandem, in intersect, or interchangeably. The third approach is to examine the relationship of the person to the culture, with views toward understanding individual participation in the culture and seeing how the culture may be constituted by individuals. The third approach, analysis of the relationship of the individual to culture and society, often employs both the first and second approaches.

## Cultural Psychodynamics

Cultural analysis done psychoanalytically examines extant culture, attempting to elucidate unconscious dimensions of the collective cultural psyche and of individual constituents and seeking to understand correlations between the individual psyche and the cultural collective psyche including its connection to the Jungian collective unconscious. In the history of the psychology of religion, arguably the most intense analyst of culture and people was Sigmund Freud. He was expert in applying his theoretical structure of the unconscious to the workings of culture and in psychoanalyzing how the manifestation of culture and the collective psyche

are in dynamic tension. In *Totem and Taboo* (Freud 1913/1960), he says:

The asocial nature of neuroses has its genetic origin in their most fundamental purpose, which is to take flight from an unsatisfying reality into a more pleasurable world of phantasy. The real world, which is avoided in this way by neurotics, is under the sway of human society and of the institutions collectively created by it. To turn away from reality is at the same time to withdraw from the community of man (p. 74).

Among his best-known works on culture are *Civilization and Its Discontents* and his most pointed work in the psychology of religion, *The Future of an Illusion*.

Berry et al. (2011) describe “culture as context for development. . . We learn about norms and beliefs and how to read and write via the different routes of cultural transmission. . . Culture is thus not only what we explicitly learn socially, but is also constituted simply by using cultural artifacts which are often built or invented by earlier generations. . . Hence, human behavior can be qualified as ‘culturally mediated.’” (pp. 36–38).

Different cultures view psychoanalysis itself differently. Discussing the depth psychological notion of ego, Kirschner (1996) has contrasted American and French cultural conceptions.

In general, [this] preoccupation with strengthening the ego and/or the self is absent from the French analytic attitude. . . most radically true in the case of Jacques Lacan, for whom the self or subject is an illusion to be dissolved, itself the problem (or rather the symptom). Particularly the notion of self-direction. . . is disdained by many French analysts, even those who are not exclusively Lacanian. . . Themes of the self and its individuation, of oneness and separateness, are highly salient for Anglo-Americans because of their relation to our ideals of independence and self-direction (pp. 60-61).

Relationships between cultures, societies, religions, and communities are in new focus today with the need for interfaith, peace, and cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. On the dynamics of intercultural and interfaith dialogue and conflict resolution, Abu-Nimer (1999/2002) has said:

Once opponents meet in a genuine dialogue setting, they will never return to the same positions or level of awareness that they had before. It is as if they

have joined a new society. Their views and perceptions of the conflict and the enemy change, mostly because of the powerful turning point in the dialogue process when participants realize, acknowledge, and understand their mutual fears and concerns. When that bridge is constructed between the two sides, a powerful connection has been made... Dialogue is not a substitute for social action. Protest and resistance to oppression are still needed for social and political change to occur. However, dialogue provides an additional path on which to accomplish such changes... full of positive and constructive joint energy... based on creativity and trust (pp. 15-16).

In the introduction to her book *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (1992), Rosemary Radford Ruether says:

If dominating and destructive relations to the earth are interrelated with gender, class, and racial domination, then a healed relation to the earth cannot come about simply through technological "fixes". It demands a social reordering to bring about just and loving interrelationship between men and women, between races and nations, between groups presently stratified into social classes, manifest in great disparities of access to the means of life. In short, it demands that we must speak of eco-justice, and not simply of domination of the earth as though that happened unrelated to social domination (pp. 2-3).

She focuses on the social, institutional, collective dimensions of these negative relations, and she advocates "a social reordering" to heal them.

## Individual and Culture

Individuals participate in culture, have unique relationships to the culture, and have relationships to each other within the culture. Institutions such as religion play a role in such relationships.

Edinger (1972) says:

Religion is the best collective protection available against both inflation and alienation. So far as we know, every society has had such suprapersonal categories in its collective ritual of life. It is quite doubtful if collective human life can survive for any period without some common, shared sense of awareness of these transpersonal categories. However, although collective methods protect man from the dangers of the psychic depths, they also deprive him of the individual experience of these depths and

the possibility of development which such experience promotes... When the collective psyche is in a stable state, the vast majority of individuals share a common living myth of deity (pp. 64-65).

Freud in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, part XI "Combined Faulty Acts" (Freud 1938/1966) examines individual cases of people with good intentions in resolutions for purposeful social actions. But actions done were not those intended. Because the psychodynamic is common to all cases, he sees this as a collective as well as individual human phenomenon, a matter of consciousness. He says:

That unconscious something which worked against these resolutions found another outlet after the first road was closed to it. It requires something other than the conscious counter-resolution to overcome the unknown motive; it requires a psychic work which makes the unknown known to consciousness (Freud 1938/1966, p. 149) (Fig. 1).

On the dynamics of the individual and of the relationship of the individual to society, Carl Gustav Jung said:

The individual is determined on the one hand by the principle of uniqueness and distinctiveness, and on the other by the society to which he belongs. He is an indispensable link in the social structure (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 7, para. 519).

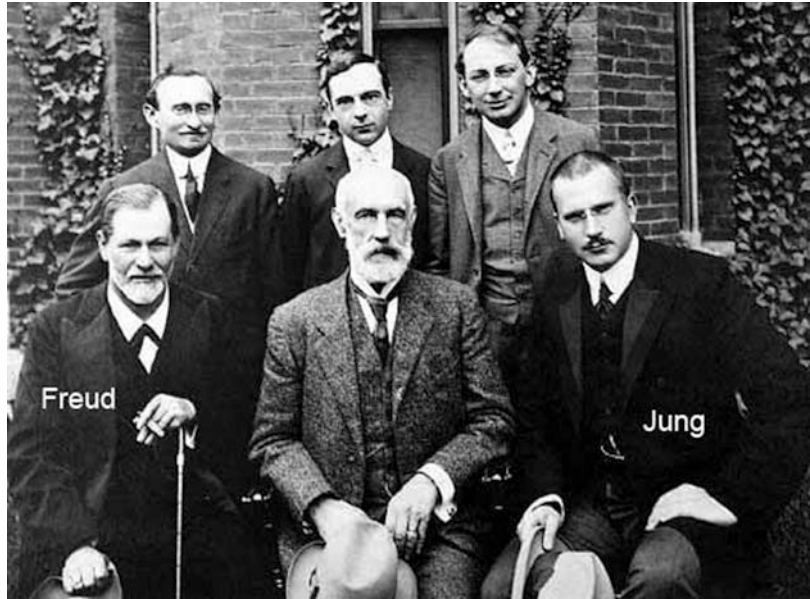
The individual is precisely that which can never be merged with the collective and is never identical with it (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 7, par. 485).

The larger a community is, and the more the sum total of collective factors peculiar to every large community rests on conservative prejudices detrimental to individuality, the more will the individual be morally and spiritually crushed, and, as a result, the one source of moral and spiritual progress for society is choked up (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 7, par. 240).

The individual will never find the real justification for his existence and his own spiritual and moral autonomy anywhere except in an extramundane principle capable of relativizing the overpowering influence of external factors... For this he needs the evidence of inner, transcendent experience which alone can protect him from the otherwise inevitable submersion in the mass (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 10, par. 511).

Jung's theory of individuation, the differentiation and development of the individual across the life cycle, describes how the individual first grows in realization and actualization of self, then

**Psychoanalytic Cultural Analysis, Fig. 1** Public domain (Image Source Page: <http://www.crystalinks.com/jung.html>)



in participation in the collective, and lastly in relation to the transcendent. Jung expresses his view of individual and social transformation in the final textual volume of his *Collected Works*, in a “miscellaneous writing” on *The Symbolic Life* (Jung 1953/1979, Vol. 18, paras. 1378–83).

If the whole is to change, the individual must change himself. Goodness is an individual gift and an individual acquisition...acquired only by the individual as his own achievement. No masses can do it for him. But evil needs masses for its genesis and continued existence. The mastermen of the SS [*Schutzstaffel* “defence squadron”, Nazi special police force - Jung is writing this in Europe after WWII] are all, when segregated each by himself, indescribably small and ugly. But the good man shines like a jewel that was lost in the Sahara...Only with the individual can anything be done...What we need are a few illuminating truths, but no articles of faith. Where an intelligible faith works, it finds in faith a willing ally; for faith has always helped when thinking and understanding could not quite make the grade. Understanding is never the handmaiden of faith – on the contrary, faith completes understanding...The people seek, despite everything, to understand.

**See Also**

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Liberation Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Psychoanalytic Spirituality

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In their survey of the relationship between psychology and religion, William Parsons and Diane Jonte-Pace (2001) note the emergence of what they label as “psychology as religion.” Rather than employ psychology to interpret religion, this approach seeks to offer psychology as a religion. Presenting itself as a modern secular way to experience one’s religiosity, psychology as religion has flourished within a wider therapeutic climate as an alternative method to guide an individual’s quest for meaning and the sacred. The contemporary rise of psychology as religion, or what is often referred to as psychospirituality, has been noted by a number of scholars who have focused their attention on Jungian, humanistic, and transpersonal schools (Barnard 2001). A similar phenomenon that can be identified as “psychoanalytic spirituality” has also emerged within the field of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic spirituality is defined here as the radical claim, explicitly advanced by a number of contemporary influential analysts, that psychoanalysis has inherently spiritual or mystical dimensions and can function as a modern spiritual practice.

Sigmund Freud’s (1927) rejection of religion as nothing more than an illusion, which was designed to protect humans from early childhood feelings of powerlessness, established the classic psychoanalytic view of religion as regressive and antithetical to the psychoanalytic enterprise. Similarly, Freud’s (1930) dismissal of mysticism as a regression to an early developmental stage of merger with the mother established the reductive psychoanalytic perspective of mysticism as narcissistic and pathological. Following Freud, as late as 1977, an overview of the psychoanalytic treatment of religion concluded that approaches were restricted to establishing parallels between religious practices and beliefs and obsessional neuroses (Ducey 1977).

Since the 1980s largely due to the influence of Donald W. Winnicott and Wilfred Bion, however, psychoanalysis has been witnessing a rapprochement with religion and particularly with modern, deinstitutionalized, and eclectic forms of spirituality, which are concerned with personal experience, self-transformation, and an immanent divinity (Anderson and Winer 2007; Black 2006). While often overlapping, two main positions can be delineated in current psychoanalytic-spiritual conversations: (1) a dialogical approach which attempts to bring the two distinct disciplines into conversation and (2) a more provocative perspective, in which the two disciplines begin to converge and psychoanalysis is seen as having inherently spiritual dimensions. The second position identified here as psychoanalytic spirituality is best illustrated through an examination of the writings of some of its most vocal proponents and critical commentators.

At the forefront of the contemporary embrace of psychoanalytic spirituality is Michael Eigen. Eigen is aligned with the relational school and has been described as an affective phenomenologist (Gordon 2004). His work is an exploration of subjectivity that places the feeling self, the impact of the other, and affective experience at its center. Eigen portrays a self caught between the extremes of deficiency and excess, claiming that the self’s unconscious primary processes are often unable to metabolize the intense impacts of affective experience. One of Eigen’s primary analytic concerns,

therefore, is to facilitate the self's capacity for experiencing, an ability, he implies, that is connected to a type of mystical immediacy or transparency to ultimate reality. Eigen wants the self to open to and digest wider ranges of experience. This includes mystical experience, which, he claims, is more common and ordinary than is supposed, an intrinsic dimension of experience that has been discarded in psychoanalysis.

According to Eigen, however, despite this neglect, a strong mystical thread has been present in psychoanalysis since its inception. He argues that many analysts are mystical and use mystical imagery as intuitive models for psychoanalytic experience and that there is a mystical aspect to the analytic process. In a series of books and articles, Eigen has developed the thought of a number of analysts – most notably Bion, Jacques Lacan, Marion Milner, and Winnicott – to recover a lineage of “psychoanalytic mystics.” Writing intimately of his own mystical experiences, Eigen outs himself as one of the latter, revealing that Buddhism and Judaism are “his umbilical connections to the universe” and that he has also dipped into Catholicism, Hinduism, Taoism, and Sufism. Just as his own mystical exploration has been unashamedly promiscuous, so his understanding of mysticism and his readings of the psychoanalytic mystics are unabashedly eclectic and innovative (Eigen 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001).

Eigen claims that there is a basic religious force that specific religions grow out of and elaborate on and which expresses itself in a wide variety of mystical experiences and states. He refuses to define mysticism on the grounds of the paradoxical nature of the experiencing involved, and rather than present a systematic theory, he offers autobiographical snapshots, clinical vignettes, and meditations on the inherent mysticism of a number of seminal analysts. What emerges from these excursions is an unruly multiplicity of mystical experiences, numinous encounters, and religious ecstasies. Eigen locates mysticism both with a distinct personal God and an impersonal monistic force; he values mysticisms of identity and mysticisms of difference; he connects mysticism to aliveness, vitality, and generativity yet also stresses its relationship to

death, dread, and destruction. Celebrating these various mysticisms, Eigen finally settles on what he calls a “paradoxical monism”: a spirituality that embraces both the impersonal void and the personal God, difference and union, dread and ecstasy, immanence and transcendence.

In terms of the relationship of such forms of spirituality to psychoanalysis, Eigen moves between advocating a dialogical approach and embracing the places where the two fields converge and conflate. Dialogically, he calls for the cross-fertilization of the two disciplines and argues that they can correct and amplify each other. Using his patients as examples, he discusses how mystical experiences can be transformative and life enhancing or used for defensive and destructive ends. Analysis, he suggests, can help people metabolize the impacts of spiritual experience and use their mystical capacities in ways that further rather than stunt personality growth.

Mysticism and psychoanalysis can operate, therefore, as distinct practices that potentially correct the deficiencies and excesses of each other. Eigen also believes, however, that the boundaries between the two are porous, overlap, and ultimately dissolve in the face of the “one reality” that pours through them both. Beyond aiding in the healthy psychological integration of mystical experiences, psychoanalysis can function itself as both a spiritual process and practice. In support of this claim, Eigen draws from Winnicott, Milner, Lacan, and Bion. He argues that there is no reason to set artificial limits on how far or where the analytic process can go and challenges analysis to move beyond a technology of cure focused on the resolution of symptoms, towards a creative life process that is concerned with a deepening of the soul.

Just as Eigen refashions the analytic enterprise as a spiritual unfolding so he treats the unconscious to a mystical makeover. Eigen understands the unconscious as both bridge to and mediator of the sacred. The timeless-spaceless aspect of the unconscious does not replace God but rather provides a privileged point of contact between the transcendent “Unrepresentable One” and psychic life. It mediates and filters the divine through dreams, myths, and narratives (Eigen 1992).



Similar themes to Eigen's have appeared in the work of other contemporary analysts. For example, James Grotstein, who is heavily influenced by Bion, has declared that he wishes to return the unconscious to its former Gnostic status before Freud. According to Grotstein, within the sacred architecture of the unconscious is the "Ineffable Subject" a preternatural second self that is separate from, but as near as we can get to, a divinity that is utterly beyond contemplation. This immanent numinous presence is the analytic third that is birthed in the therapeutic encounter and signifies the point where analysis and mysticism converge. Reunited with the Ineffable Self, one attains the "transcendent position," a transient state in which we become one with Bion's designated O, directly experiencing our pure beingness and aliveness. This is not to be rarified as any otherworldly ecstasy, however, but is rather an immediacy of one's emotional reality without defense in which one realizes the sacred in the mundane, the extraordinary in the ordinary (Grotstein 2000).

In a related vein, analyst Kerry Gordon has discussed the inherent mysticism of Christopher Bollas, Grotstein, and Eigen and interpreted psychoanalysis as a contemporary manifestation of the Gnostic quest for an immanent divinity. Gordon believes that there has always been a powerful spiritual current within psychoanalysis but that it has been neglected to make it palatable to the majority of atheist or agnostic analysts. For him and many of his patients, however, psychoanalysis is a psychospiritual process that reunites the sacred and mundane and responds to a universal human drive to experience the divine (Gordon 2004).

Drawing from Winnicott and negative theology, Gerald Gargiulo distinguishes natural spirituality from dogmatic religion and finds within analysis an "everyday transcendence" that grounds the human condition rather than attempts to escape from it. Gargiulo understands psychoanalytic theories as living metaphors that create the found world amongst a midst of infinite possibilities. Rooted in an apophatic perspective that embraces the creative potentialities of unknowing, analysis becomes a natural spirituality. It discovers within the self a sacred ground of

being – a profound aloneness or great emptiness that is paradoxically teeming with life. This opening to mystery and personal creativity is, Gargiulo claims, ultimately the goal of both analysis and spirituality (Gargiulo 2005).

In terms of secondary scholarship on the phenomena of psychoanalytic spirituality, Dan Merkur (2010) has recently argued that a mystical lineage can be found within the field of psychoanalysis. He identifies a lineage of "psychoanalytic mystics" – ranging from seminal thinkers such as Winnicott, Bion, and Heinz Kohut to contemporary analysts such as Eigen and Grotstein – and locates these thinkers in a distinctive deinstitutionalized strand within the wider history of mysticism. In a related vein, William Parsons (2008) has discussed what he labels as "perennial psychology," an unchurched, psychological form of spirituality whose origins can be seen as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the appearance of mysticism as a subjective experience divorced of church and tradition. Psychoanalytic spirituality can be located as a contemporary expression of this perennial psychology.

## See Also

- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Psychological Types

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A theory of personality developed by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung in the early years of the twentieth century. Jung theorized that people's behaviors are directed by inborn tendencies to think and act in different but equally valid ways. His theory posits two basic orientations to the world, called *attitudes*, and four main mental processes, called *functions*. He considered these

psychological preferences innate tendencies, like a preference for right- or left-handedness, and speculated they were biologically based.

Jung's stated purpose in developing a theory of psychological types was not to sort people into boxlike categories but rather to expand the language of the then-new science of psychology to facilitate more methodical, empirical research on human behavior. He developed his ideas on psychological types in part from observations of his patients, both individuals and couples. In his book *Psychological Types*, first published in 1921, Jung acknowledged the historical roots of personality types in oriental astrology, Hippocrates' theories on the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water), and Greek physician Galen's system of four temperaments (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic), among others.

## Extraversion and Introversion

Jung's first and central idea on psychological types was that people prefer one of two fundamentally different attitudes toward the world. A tendency to focus on the outer world of objects and people he deemed extraversion and an orientation toward and preference for the inner world of ideas and emotions he called introversion. *Extraversion* and *introversion* describe two opposite ways of using and renewing one's psychic energy. Extraverts direct energy to and receive energy back from the external world, and introverts direct energy to and receive energy from the inner world of reflection.

The preference for extraversion or introversion is easily understood by most people in their recognition of extraverted people who are outgoing, talkative, uninhibited, and involved in multiple groups and activities and introverted persons who are more reserved, quiet, and harder to know. These differences can be observed in infancy in an extraverted child's quicker and easier adaptation to and participation in the outer world and an introverted child's tendency toward shyness and reluctance to engage with objects and people. The innate nature of the preference for one or the other attitude helps

explain differences in personalities of children raised in the same family. Jung stated that it was incorrect to assume extraverts were active people and introverts were passive people, saying instead that extraversion correlates with acting in an immediate, unreflective way, whereas introversion correlates with acting after reflecting or acting with forethought. He emphasized that neither way was better or more valid except as called for in a particular situation.

### The Four Functions

In addition to a preference for an attitude of extraversion or introversion, Jung theorized four different mental processes that explain how people use their minds. Two of these, which explain how people gather information, are called the perceiving functions, *sensing* and *intuition*. The two ways people make judgments and decisions are called the judging functions, *thinking* and *feeling*.

When using one of the perceiving functions, *sensing* or *intuition*, people become aware of what is happening, without interpreting or evaluating the experience. Sensing, which is perceiving through the five senses, is concerned with concrete realities and is therefore focused in the present, the “what is.” Intuition, which is perceiving information through a “sixth sense” or the unconscious, looks for hidden possibilities and is therefore more concerned with the future, the “what ifs.” A person whose dominant function is sensing focuses on facts, and one whose dominant function is intuition prefers using imagination.

Evaluating the information that has been gathered via the perceiving functions is done by one of the two judging functions, *thinking* or *feeling*. Thinking relies on logic to make decisions and judgments, weighing the pros and cons to decide whether something is “right or wrong.” The feeling function makes judgments based on one’s personal values, deciding with compassion and empathy whether something is “good or bad.” The thinking function is more concerned with truth and justice, and the feeling

function is more concerned with kindness and harmony. Thinking makes judgments from the outside, using an objective viewpoint, and feeling makes judgments from the subjective viewpoint of “standing in another person’s shoes.”

Jung observed that an innate preference for one of these four functions emerges in early childhood and develops as the dominant mental process. Later, a second or auxiliary function emerges. The other two functions remain less developed but available to the individual through the unconscious. As with the attitudes of extraversion and introversion, Jung emphasized that all four functions are equally valid and useful.

### Type Dynamics

All four of these functions are used in either the extraverted or introverted attitude, which led to eight possible combinations of preferred attitude and function, which Jung called the eight function types. It is important to understand that Jung’s is a dynamic system of personality. Rather than static boxes, these eight type combinations interact in the conscious and unconscious mind of each individual in unique ways. Each set of preferences are like poles on a continuum, with most people’s strength of preference somewhere along the continuum. Some more developed and some less developed, the functions and attitudes work as templates for potential behaviors that result in infinite varieties of individual expression, much the way that the template that governs the crystallization of frozen water into six-sided figures produces an infinite variety of snowflakes.

Throughout life a person will have an interaction and flow of energy between the poles of extraversion and introversion, sensing and intuition, and thinking and feeling. Because one’s preferences are viewed as innate, they do not change during a lifetime, but with normal development people learn to use all the functions in both attitudes to some degree. Jung postulated that a “falsification of type” sometimes occurs where cultural influences cause a person to develop a lesser preference, much

as left-handed children once were forced to use their right hands and that this condition is a primary cause of neurosis.

## Application of Psychological Type Theory

Jung's type theory has been popularized through the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a questionnaire based on Jung's typology developed by the mother-daughter team of Katherine Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, referred to as the MBTI, includes the additional category of Judging/Perceiving to indicate a person's preference for the perceiving functions or the judging functions. The MBTI gives scores for one's preference for E or I (extraversion or introversion), S or N (sensing or intuition), T or F (thinking or feeling), and J or P (judging or perceiving). These four categories yield 16 combinations of preferences, called the 16 types, thus doubling Jung's original 8 types to 16. The types are referred to by a four-letter designation that shows these preferences. For example, a person whose scores showed a preference for Extraversion over Introversion, Sensing over Intuition, Thinking over Feeling, and Judging over Perceiving would have the designation ESTJ.

The MBTI, a practical application of type theory, is the most widely used personality test in the world and has made Jung's ideas useful for ordinary people in understanding themselves and developing their potentials. This tool is commonly used in career counseling, marriage and family counseling, education, and in organizations. Recent works in psychological type have examined the role of type in religion and spirituality, studying the ways in which each of the 16 types approaches worship and engages in spiritual practices and works. A less-recognized test of psychological types called the Singer-Loomis Inventory of Personality (the SLIP) was developed by two Jungian analysts and uses as categories the eight function types originally described by Jung.

In recent years a worldwide community of type practitioners, called typologists, has developed.

Hundreds of books have been written and studies conducted applying typology to numerous fields of human activity. The prevalence of the MBTI and typology indicates that Jung's theories on personality type continue to have value in helping increase self-awareness and self-acceptance in individuals and by promoting better understanding and communication in human relationships of all kinds.

## See Also

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Extraversion](#)
- ▶ [Introversion](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Psychology

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What is psychology? There is little dispute about the broad definition of psychology as the study and understanding of human behavior, cognitive processes, experience, and emotion. However the history of psychology has been colorful, peppered

with disputes about how such understanding and study should be done. The different views on the “how” of psychology have impacted on the psychological study of religion.

This entry will highlight some important features of the history of psychology and suggest how these features may have impacted on the psychological understanding of religion.

## Psychology and the Early Study of Religion

In its early days, in the nineteenth and very early twentieth centuries, psychologists had no problems with asking people to introspect or report on their “inner” experiences. Two often-cited examples are (1) the Wurzburg school (Wundt 1902), who asked for detailed introspective reports on what went through people’s minds when they saw a picture, for example, or solved a problem, and (2) psychoanalysis (e.g., Freud 1964) in which people were asked to free-associate, to talk about the first things that came to mind. In this climate, the work of William James, described in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) was perfectly at home. James was able to use descriptive, experiential material and described pioneering uses of the psychological questionnaire method in which people were asked to describe their religious development.

But as the twentieth century grew older, scientific psychology was dominated by positivism, in which it was held that the objects of scientific investigation should be publicly observable and measurable. This entailed a shift from a focus on experience to a focus on behavior, epitomized in Watson’s *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* (1919). The psychological study of religion was seen to be incompatible with behaviorism – since the object of religious activity and feeling cannot be observed and measured, this was thought to make the study of religious activity and feeling unworthy of scientific attention. The psychological study of religion fell into a decline, and this decline was assisted by the influential and rather derogatory views of Freud on religion (e.g., Freud 1927).

Religion was seldom indexed in psychology textbooks, and where it was indexed, the explanations of religious behavior and feeling were almost always pejorative (Loewenthal 2000).

Within psychology, there remained considerable interest in personality and in the psychometric assessment of personality and social attitudes, using psychological tests and measures. This was reflected in the psychological study of religion, particularly the seminal work of Gordon Allport on religious orientation and prejudice (1966), followed by pioneering works on the psychology and social psychology of religion involving extensive use of psychological and social attitude measures (e.g., Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi 1975; Francis et al. 1981; Islam and Hewstone 1993).

## Recent Shifts in Psychology and the Study of Religion

Towards the end of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, there were important shifts in psychological methodologies and perspectives, reflecting a general postmodern tolerance of different perspectives. This resulted in a growth of the range of methods used to study religious behavior and experience (Belzen 2010). Religion was indexed more frequently in psychology textbooks and explained and studied in non-pejorative ways. The most important shifts were (1) the development of qualitative research methodologies, alongside the acceptance of experiential and phenomenological perspectives, which enabled the development of valuable work on the experiential aspects of the psychology of religion, and the emergence of interest in spirituality (Hay and Morisy 1978; Nelson 2009; Paloutzian and Park 2005; Tacey 2004); (2) the development of experimental methodologies, in particular their applications to areas of psychology other than the cognitive domains to which experimental methodology had traditionally been applied. Experimental work on social cognition and attachment theory, for example, is being usefully extended to the understanding of religion in relation to social cognition and religious feelings (e.g., Granqvist and Kirkpatrick 2008); (3) the development of

cognitive science has included the study of cognitive universals in religion (e.g., Andresen 2001; Pyssaiainen and Anttonen 2002); and (4) the development of neuroimaging techniques in the study of psychological processes has included the use of neuroimaging in the study of religious thinking and experience (e.g., Azari et al. 2005).

## Conclusions

In brief, the early twentieth century development of psychology as a positivist discipline stultified the psychological study of religion. However from the mid-twentieth century onwards, psychology developed into a discipline involving a broad range of approaches and methodologies, with major and beneficial impact on the way the psychological processes involved in religion have been studied.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ James, William
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Psychology and the Origins of Religion

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## Controversial Issues

To pose questions regarding the origin of religion from a social scientific stance is to enter a dangerous territory. Deviation from orthodox stances espoused by religious authorities has always been negatively viewed and often suppressed. In the mid- to late twentieth century,

this has taken the form of serious confrontation in education even involving the federal courts. Religiously premised frameworks termed scientific creationism and intelligent design continue to be aggressively pursued by religious conservatives to counter scientific, biological, and evolutionary teachings that are viewed as challenging scripture and church doctrines.

## A Brief Look at History

Anthropologists introduced such variation in the nineteenth century though their orientation was not to analyze or question the Judeo-Christian tradition, but to follow a safe path by examining the faiths of peoples they termed primitive. This approach did not threaten the Western religious establishment and was intellectually and emotionally accepted. Another major factor was that the religious perspectives of native groups in obscure locations were largely discussed in terms of the mythology of those studied. F. Max Muller (1879) wrote on the religions of India and Edward B. Tylor (1896) referred to the “religion of the lower races,” “uncultured races,” and “savages and barbarians” (p. 342). Readers of Muller, Tylor, and their ilk considered themselves “civilized” as opposed to the “primitives” whose faiths were treated as naïve mythological tales.

Muller (1879), however, initiated a cognitive approach to the issue of religious origins by claiming that sensory experience with the finite world plus reason leads a person to contemplation of the infinite. He further asserted that from this “sprang the first impulse to religion” (p. 360). Concurrently, the notion of a religious instinct was rejected. He correctly argued that it did nothing more than substitute one unknown for another. The death knell to this approach was sounded in 1924 by L. L. Bernard who found 83 religious instincts in the literature.

The next development emanated from behaviorism when the search for religious origins stressed natural processes such as evolution and neural processes. Given the substrate of human biology, emphasis shifted to learning and the influence of environmental forces. Objectivity

and measurement now dominated psychology, and since theories of religious origins could not be empirically verified, they were relegated to the realm of opinion and simply ignored.

Classical learning theory gave way to cognition and the revival of Muller’s stance via John Dewey (1929) who crossed both philosophy and psychology. Dewey saw the difficulty as experiential. Attempts to understand life’s uncertainty implied a basic cognitive weakness which aroused insecurity and a “quest for certainty.” According to him, “Religion was, in its origin, an expression of this endeavor” (p. 292).

## The Modern Approach

Increasing conceptual sophistication replaced the absolutist heredity-environment distinction. One now calculated the degree to which environment and genetics separately contributed to the phenomenon in question. A new perspective in which psychological processes and behavior were examined in twin studies plus the idea of heritability entered the picture. Reviews of this rapidly developing literature suggest that up to 50 % of the variance in religion measures may be referable to genetics. Keep in mind that heritability estimates are derived from group data and do not hold for any specific person (D’Onofrio et al. 1999).

## Sociobiology

The first major effort along these lines was E. O. Wilson’s 1978 formulation of sociobiology. His basic principle is that evolution has endowed the human mind with some basic guiding rules. Though these are concerned with collective social behavior, including religion, he cautiously invoked the joint influence of both genetics and environment. Wilson (1978) claimed that religion “can be seen to confer biological advantage” (p. 188). He attempted to support this position via an understanding of the role and function of myth for both society and the individual. His argument enlisted natural selection in the process.



## Evolutionary Psychology and Biopsychology

This approach contributed to the growing school of evolutionary psychology. Its advocates embrace both genetic and environmental influences, but there is a tendency for the latter to be minimized in favor of a search for biological bases of behavior.

Interestingly, the psychology used to theorize possible religious origins has been largely employed by anthropologists who exclusively look to cognition. Usually, without elaboration, they refer to biology and evolution for their final answer.

Pascal Boyer (2001) has been in the forefront of this movement. He initially claimed that religious ideas must be influenced by the way the brain is organized to make inferences. Theoretically, the seeking of causes and the making of attributions is given a biological foundation. This position is buttressed by noting the involvement of emotion in religious expression. Biology is joined with environment by acknowledging the important individual and social functions that religion plays in life. Above all, genetics and evolution loom in the background primarily for handling cognition. In addition Boyer appreciates religion's function in maintaining the group. Group selection, however, is largely rejected by the biological community. Hypotheses are then posited regarding the association of cognition and social behavior with natural selection. Religion thus develops because there is need for these concepts, socially, culturally, and biologically.

Among a number of others who look to cognition for religion's origin is Stewart Guthrie (1993) who extensively and impressively details the tendency of people to anthropomorphize virtually anything that may provide meaningful explanations. The result is that religion is reduced to anthropomorphism and ritual and all other religious forms fall into line.

Anthropologist James McClenon (1994, 2002) has taken an approach that explicitly combines cognition with emotion while assuming an evolutionary foundation though the latter remains vague and undefined. His emphasis is on the

experiences of early humans with what he terms "wondrous events." Though "wondrous healing" is stressed as a basis for religion, religion is primarily treated as belief. Leading also to this conclusion are trance states, hypnotizability, out-of-body experiences, and the like. Helplessness in the face of the unknown especially death results in the development of shamanism and ritualization which offer the delusion of meaning and control. The theoretical views of Freud and Malinowski among others are used by McClenon to buttress his arguments.

Cognitive theory offers a powerful entre into questions about the psychological origin of religion. One can, however, argue that it may not be enough. Religion does much more than help make life and the world sensible. From a motivational perspective, it aids people to maintain and/or enhance personal control over themselves and their environment. Lack of control is also one correlate of lack of meaning. Religion not only has the potential to satisfy needs for meaning and control but furthermore brings people together, supporting them both individually and collectively. Natural selection may be invoked for all three of these functions as it can easily be shown that survival and reproductive success follow from meaning, control, and sociality. Furthermore, biological and evolutionary bases for these factors are available, and researchers are continually discovering their neuropsychological and hormonal correlates. In all likelihood, these elements account for the observation that there is a moderate component of heritability in religious belief and adherence. For example, data suggest that up to 50 % of the variability in measures of control motivation is heritable. This overall framework is introduced and discussed elsewhere (Hood et al. 2009). Inherited hormonal factors in sociality have also been identified. An indirect test of these views is possible. One can hypothesize that partialling out these factors from the religion-genetics relationship in twin studies should make this association disappear. This does not deny the necessity of conducting additional research to define other neurobiological possibilities for understanding the place of heritability in personal

faith. The content of the three domains just cited still has to be defined though excellent insights have been offered by Boyer, Guthrie, and Kirkpatrick.

Kirkpatrick (2004) rejects the role of natural selection and religion as basically a biological adaptation. He sees it as a set of evolved by-products that involve cognitive, motivational, and social factors. Further development should not gainsay the role of environment in the learning and expression of religious beliefs, experience, and behavior. In coming to understand the nature of religion cross-culturally, naturalistic approaches ought not be viewed as threatening and blasphemous. There is room for comprehending the character of faith and spirituality from as broad a perspective as possible.

## Neuropsychology

Evolutionary forces involved in the development and expression of religion must rely on changes in the brain. Religious experience and behavior has been associated with temporal lobe epilepsy, magnetic stimulation of the parietal and temporal lobes, and neural activity in the prefrontal and medial frontal lobes and cortex (Hood et al. 2009). Though work in this area is increasing at a rapid rate, a clear need for repeated cross-validation is a necessity before findings can be accepted.

## See Also

► [Psychology](#)

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## Psychology as Religion

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In a useful survey of the terrain between religion and psychology, William Parsons and Diane Jonte-Pace (2001) note that the multiple and diverse approaches now utilized within this area have replaced its identity as a single field, traditionally known as the psychology “of” religion, with the more inclusive “religion and psychological studies,” within which reside the subsets of “psychology of religion,” and “psychology in dialogue with religion.” What distinguishes the dialogical approach is that it moves beyond using psychology as a method of analysis to interpret religious phenomena to employ psychology as a tool to extend, through conversation, the aims of religion.

An additional subset appearing within, although arguably threatening to undermine, the dialogical enterprise is an approach that seeks less to relate psychology to religion than to offer psychology *as* a religion. Despite eliciting

controversy for blurring the boundaries between the two fields, psychology as religion cannot be dismissed as there is little doubt that the functioning of psychology in ways comparable to religion is widespread within contemporary western culture. This is attested to by the popularity of best-selling texts offering a mix of therapeutic and spiritual advice such as Scott M. Peck's *The Road Less Traveled* (1978) and Thomas Moore's *Care of the Soul* (1994). Presenting itself as a modern unchurched way to experience one's religiosity, psychology as religion has flourished within a wider therapeutic climate as an alternative method to guide an individual's quest for meaning and the sacred.

Before proceeding to the sociohistoric development of psychology as religion and notable cultural commentaries and critiques, further clarification of terms is useful. As William G. Barnard (2001) notes, the type of psychology utilized here is a humanistically oriented psychotherapy that is harnessed in service of psychospiritual wholeness and replaces religion as a way to develop existential meaning and enable a direct experience of the sacred. Similarly, religion is interchangeable with spirituality referring to a personal transformative experience of the essential core of religion, often rendered as a divine force, energy, or consciousness, that is distinct from traditional religious institutions, creeds, and praxis. When these two particular strands of psychology and religion overlap to such a degree that they fulfill the same purposes, we have psychology as religion.

This merging occurs at a variety of intersections as a multitude of cultural strands converge, intertwine, and trail off. Such interlacing complicates a tracing of the history of psychology as religion, but one can certainly identify significant junctures and key figures. William Parsons (2008) has teased out one dominant strand, which he labels as the *psychologia perennis*, an unchurched, psychological form of spirituality whose origins can be seen as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the appearance of mysticism as a subjective "experience" divorced from church and tradition. The

emergence of a universal, sacred inner dimension of human beings allowed for the psychologization of mysticism and links the figures of William James, Carl Jung, Romain Rolland, and Richard Maurice Bucke and humanistic and transpersonal psychologists such as Abraham Maslow, Roberto Assagioli, and Ken Wilber. While recognizing differences in metapsychology and therapeutic techniques among these thinkers, Parsons offers a list of shared characteristics that unite them as perennial psychologists: the championing of the individual as an unchurched site of religiosity; the search for the origin of mysticism in the unconscious; a valorization of personal unchurched mystical experiences; an advocacy of perennialism; the discernment of innate, intuitive, mystical capacities; the development of psycho-mystical therapeutic regimens; and a social vision grounded in the rise of *homo mysticus*.

As Parson notes, such characteristics are similar to those identified as definitive of the New Age. Indeed, Wouter Hanegraaff (1998) has described one of the major trends of the New Age as "healing and personal growth," in which psychological development and religious salvation merge to such an unprecedented extent that it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Setting it within the wider context of the secularization of traditional esotericism as it adapted to the emerging scientific worldview, he argues that one of the defining marks of the New Age is "the psychologization of religion and the sacralization of psychology" and delineates two major lineages for this occurrence: American metaphysical movements and Carl Gustav Jung. Regarding the first, drawing heavily on a series of works by Robert Fuller (1982, 1986, 1989) which traces the emergence of a distinctively American religious psychology, Hanegraaff divides the American lineage into two separate but related streams. The first, the metaphysical movements, includes Mesmerism, Phineas Parkhurst Quimby's Mind-Cure, the New Thought movement, and positive thinking/self-help popular psychology. The second, functionalist psychology, has its roots in the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson, embraces William James, Carl Rogers, and

humanistic psychology, and is best represented by James's classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience*.

Common to the American lineage are the following themes: an understanding of the unconscious as a site of harmony, reparation, and revitalization; the casting of the unconscious as the locus of or a doorway to the sacred; a concept of a spectrum of consciousness in which different layers of consciousness correspond to different psychic capacities, mystical experiences, and metaphysical realms; and the development of a pragmatic attitude and scientific techniques to access the resources of the sacralized unconscious.

The second major source for the psychologization of religion is Jung who Hanegraaff sees as the link between traditional European esotericism, Naturphilosophie, Romanticism, and the New Age. According to Hanegraaff, Jung united science and religion by presenting an esoteric worldview in psychological term and providing a scientific alternative to occultism. Not only did Jung psychologize esotericism, he also sacralized psychology by filling it with the contents (e.g., archetypes, the transcendent function, and individuation) of esoteric speculation rather than empirical realities. The result was a theory which allowed people to talk simultaneously about God (the Self) and the psyche, thereby collapsing the categories of religion and psychology and anticipating the rise of New Age self-spirituality.

There have been a number of cultural commentaries on the recent spread of psychology as religion. Attending to the wider contemporary therapeutic culture within which it has flourished, Philip Rieff (1966) posits a radical break between religion and psychology with a discussion of the replacement of early religious "positive communities" by therapeutically orientated "negative communities." Traditional societies were "positive communities" governed by a cultural symbolic which encouraged restraint of behavior and an ethic which favored the group over the individual. The repression of socially destructive instincts was achieved through the acceptance

of an authoritative "language of faith" and the idealization of a cultural superego. The institutions of the "Church" and the "Party" enabled positive communities to prevent anomie and reintegrate neurosis through religious forms of healing in which the unconscious was encountered in a non-direct manner.

In contrast, negative communities encourage a direct engagement with the unconscious and foster a therapeutic mode of self-awareness. They are suspicious of cultural forms like religion and politics which are understood as symbolic representations of unconscious content. The shift from repression to direct engagement with the unconscious leads to the collapse of the cultural superego and the replacement of the "Church" and the "Party" with the "Hospital" and "Theatre" as the new cultural spaces for the working out of previously repressed psychic contents. The individual is privileged over the group and a new character type emerges, namely, "psychological man."

Critiques of psychological man and the psychologization of religion have come from Paul Vitz (1977), Christopher Lasch (1979), and Richard King and Jeremy Carrette (2005) on the grounds of narcissism, individualism, and apoliticism. The charge of narcissism is most notably filed in Lasch's *The Culture of Narcissism*. Echoing Vitz, he laments that the quest for self-realization promoted by the new psychospiritual therapies has encouraged an indulgent self-preoccupation and created a crisis in personal and social relationships. Moreover, in addition to being narcissistic in the self-absorbed colloquial sense, Lasch utilizes Heinz Kohut to argue that psychologized spirituality reflects and exacerbates an actual clinical disorder: a narcissistic personality structure that because of recent sociocultural changes had become the predominant psychopathology of contemporary life. Lasch argues that the deification of the self within psychologized religiosity appeals to and feeds narcissistic grandiosity. Accusing the psychospiritual therapies of contributing to an amoral society, he calls for the creation of new communities of competence

which foster civil commitment and draw out the moral energies of the Protestant work ethic.

A more recent critique by Jeremy Carrette and Richard King (2005) has targeted the twentieth-century assimilation of the religious into the psychological arguing that psychology has diluted the social and ethical aspects of religion to form a privatized religion amenable to the demands of neoliberal ideology. Highlighting the roles of James, humanistic, transpersonal, and popular psychology, Carrette and King argue that the individualism of psychologized spirituality allows for the infiltration of capitalist logic into religious discourse and the wise-scale commodification of spiritual “products.”

However, there have also been a number of more optimistic appraisals of psychology as religion. Peter Homans (1979, 1989) has undermined the opposition between a traditional moral religious community and a contemporary amoral psychologized culture and challenged the charge of narcissism. According to Homans, critiques such as Rieff’s and Lasch’s fail to appreciate how much of a generative force religion was in the formation of the current psychological climate. He argues that due to secularization, the western religious traditions were deidealized and this resulted in a period of mourning: a regressive process involving a direct encounter with the unconscious no-longer externally expressed in the form of religious symbols and ideation. While religious disillusionment may lead to despair or cynicism, there is also the possibility of a more creative response, an opportunity for individuation, and the reintegration of unconscious contents into new meaningful symbols and values. Moreover, these new systems of meaning – such as the analytic psychology of a forefather of psychology as religion, Jung – not only reject but also assimilate religion so that to various degrees it lives on within them.

Homans also critiques Lasch of misreading Kohut, pointing out correctly that for Kohut narcissism was not in itself a pathological condition but rather a normal developmental stage which had the potential not only to transform into

a healthy valuing of the self and empathy for the other but also to reach the higher religio-ethical goal of “cosmic narcissism.” The issue, therefore, is not narcissism per se but whether narcissistic needs are repressed and acted out or positively transformed. For Homans and Kohut, therapeutic culture, with its themes of idealization, self-esteem, and grandiosity, displays a genuine engagement with narcissism and a desire for a more complete and satisfying subjectivity.

Additional defenses have come from sociologists of religion such as Robert Wuthnow (1998), Wade Clarke Roof (1999), and Robert Fuller (2001) who have convincingly attempted to rescue unchurched religion from unfounded generalizations, unfair stereotypes, and pessimistic evaluations. Arguing that contemporary forms of psychologized spirituality generally display a legitimate quest for self-transformation, these works challenge the elevation of traditional religion over unchurched spirituality, the caricatures of its proponents as superficial and self-absorbed, and its proposed inability to foster a social and relational ethic.

Such scholarship shows that many charges against psychology as religion are exaggerated and unsubstantiated. However, while it is necessary to temper unequivocal condemnations, many proponents of psychology as religion have recognized that certain accusations of individualism and narcissism are legitimate and have embarked on self-critiques to correct the elements that threaten to undermine its status as an authentic form of religiosity. Jorge Ferrer’s (2002) postmodern deconstruction and participatory revisioning of transpersonal psychology is a sophisticated example of this. Combining proponents growing self-reflexivity and relational turns, with the increasing academic scholarship on unchurched psychologized spirituality and the proliferation of Mind-Body-Spirit sections in bookstores with their best-selling psychology/spirituality titles, demonstrates that psychology as religion has established itself as a popular and increasingly sophisticated way to frame one’s religiosity in the contemporary cultural climate.

## See Also

- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Psychology of Religion

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## Introduction

Classically defined, the psychology of religion consists of the systematic application of psychology's methods and interpretive frameworks to the broad domain of religion. As strictly a nonsectarian scholarly discipline, it should be carefully distinguished from "religious psychology," which is the psychology that in varying degrees is explicit in the texts and teachings of a religious tradition; from "psychology and religion," a phrase intended to suggest a mutually respectful dialogue between psychological theories and various perspectives in religious studies; "psychology as religion," which designates clinically oriented forms of psychology that are grounded in "spiritual" conceptions of human existence, and "integration of psychology and religion," which constitutes variously conceived (and usually religiously conservative) efforts to critique, recast, and apply psychology within a particular theological framework. The boundaries of the psychology of religion have from the beginning been difficult to draw, especially given the field's long history of providing foundations for religious education and pastoral care.

## Beginnings in America

Of the many specialized areas of psychology, the psychology of religion was among the first to



emerge out of the new empirical science of psychology that established itself late in the nineteenth century in both Europe and the United States. The extraordinary success of the physical sciences in understanding the natural world suggested to various nineteenth-century scholars that scientific methods might be applicable in the human realm as well. Thus arose scientific psychology as well as the *Religionswissenschaften*, the sciences of religion, or what today is called the history of religions.

The American founders of the psychology of religion, including Stanley Hall, William James, Edwin Starbuck, James Leuba, James Pratt, George Coe, Edward Ames, and George Stratton, understood “religion” to encompass both individual piety and the historic religious traditions. Using methods that were both qualitative and quantitative, these scholars were well informed by the burgeoning literatures on religion authored by anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, and historians of religion. Among the field’s early proponents, Pratt stands out for his systematic efforts – including extensive travel in India, Burma, Ceylon, Vietnam, China, Japan, and Korea – to acquaint himself with the major Eastern traditions in both their corporate and their individual embodiments. And more than anyone else, he strove to grasp and sympathetically convey the worldviews and experiences of his informants. But it was William James, Pratt’s thesis advisor and author of the field’s signature classic, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), who brought the field most prominently into view.

A further impetus for the new psychology – and for the psychology of religion in particular – came in no small measure from the spirit of Progressivism. Near the end of the nineteenth century, the increasingly evident deleterious effects on society of the industrial revolution prompted in the United States an assortment of reform efforts that together became known as Progressivism. Among them was the Social Gospel movement, which centered on the conviction of many liberal Protestants that the traditional teachings of Jesus are aimed chiefly at righting the wrongs in this world, not preparing

believers for the next. Hall, Coe, and Ames were themselves involved in this movement, including the social services offered by the various missions and settlement houses. But others, too, shared their conviction that the psychology of religion could help to reconceive or reform religion in such a way that it would more directly address the personal, social, and spiritual needs of the modern world. Thus the early psychologists of religion were by and large active proponents of religion but in liberal versions compatible with the rationalistic worldview shaped by modern science, including the theory of evolution.

## Two Methodological Principles

Fundamental principles for the new psychology of religion were laid out in 1902 by the Swiss psychologist Theodore Flournoy, who was a close friend of William James and, like Coe, a student of theology before he found it problematical. According to Flournoy’s *Principle of the Exclusion of the Transcendent*, psychologists of religion should neither affirm nor reject the independent existence of the object of religious experience and reflection. Restated in contemporary terms, their posture should be one of methodological agnosticism. But the *experience* of the transcendent object is most certainly not to be excluded from their province; indeed, such experience should be observed with the closest attention to its nuances and variations.

The second of Flournoy’s guidelines, the *Principle of Biological Interpretation*, lays out a broadly inclusive framework for the psychological study of religion. Such study, as the principle’s name indicates, should search for the *physiological* conditions of its object of study, conditions that today are naturally far better understood than in Flournoy’s time. But Flournoy had more in mind than biology. The psychology of religion should also incorporate a *developmental* perspective, giving attention to both hereditary and environmental factors that play a role in the human species as a whole and in individual lives. It should be *comparative* in the sense of

being sensitive to and taking into account individual differences. And it should be *dynamic* by recognizing that the religious life is a complex living reality representing the interplay of a great diversity of factors. Flournoy assigns to the field, in sum, a broadly inclusive agenda, according to which its proponents should welcome guidance and insights from many different areas of psychology. It might also hope to reciprocate by sharing insights of its own.

## Two Methodological Traditions

In laying out these principles, Flournoy did not address the difficult question of what specific research methods to use. In his own investigations, he drew on case studies and personal documents, much as did James. He was thus a qualitative researcher in the tradition of the *Geisteswissenschaften*, the human sciences, one of the two main traditions constituting both psychology and the psychology of religion. Hall and his Clark School of Religious Psychology inaugurated the alternate tradition, which cast itself in the empirical model represented by the *Naturwissenschaften*, the natural sciences, most notably by the use of systematic measurement and the quest for causal interpretations. Even though the natural-scientific approach won the day both in psychology and in the psychology of religion, the human-scientific perspective continued to attract proponents, especially among clinical practitioners as well as scholars specializing in the history of religions.

In the United States today, the empirical psychology of religion finds its organizational home mainly in Division 36, Psychology of Religion, of the American Psychological Association (APA) and in the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, even though in both organizations it is distinctly a minority undertaking. Advocates of the human-scientific approach can be found chiefly in the Person, Culture, and Religion Group of the American Academy of Religion. In Europe, the International Society for the Psychology of Religion is inclusive of both traditions.

## Three General Goals

Implicit in Flournoy's methodological principles are three goals that are more explicit in James's *Varieties* and that have characterized the psychology of religion to this day. The first one – the one for which James is most famous – is the descriptive task: identifying and describing the field's object of study. When the aim is a *psychology of religious persons*, as it was for James and Flournoy, the object is religious experience or – more broadly – religious attitudes, sentiments, and other such terms intended to encompass religion as it becomes embodied over time in individual lives. When, on the other hand, the aim is a *psychology of religious content or tradition*, as it was for Sigmund Freud and C. G. Jung, the object becomes particular religious content that is shared by adherents of a specific tradition or that is found in a variety of traditions: images, symbols, stories, doctrines, scriptures, rituals, and so forth. Such shared religious content typically serves as the focus of individual religious experience and hence contributes to the shaping of it.

With the object of study well delineated, the psychologist of religion may then pursue either of two further goals: (1) accounting for the object's causal origins – what James called existential judgments – and (2) evaluating the fruits, or correlates, of the religious life, James's so-called spiritual judgments. The first of these goals, uncovering religion's causal origins, naturally requires some reconstruction of the past, whether it be an individual's past or a tradition's. This demand is particularly problematic for empirical researchers, who are by and large limited to measures obtained in the present. But retrospective measures – say, of parental religiosity when the respondent was a child or of family religious practices – along with contemporary assessment of a great variety of other psychological variables (e.g., attachment style) does allow for some meaningful inferences regarding causal associations in individual lives. Interpretive psychologists, on the other hand, may freely draw on a variety of resources for reconstructing the past of both individuals and traditions.

As a self-acknowledged defender of the religious outlook if not its popular forms, James was most interested in revealing the fruits of the religious life. That goal today dominates the work of empirical researchers. Having constructed a variety of measures for assessing individual differences in religiosity, such investigators have for more than half a century sought to identify its correlates in a diversity of realms. Initially, in an effort to understand the impulses underlying the appalling inhumanity of World War II, the focus was mainly on negative social attitudes, including authoritarianism, ethnocentrism, dogmatism, and prejudice. Religious persons, it was found, tended to score higher than nonreligious persons on measures of these attitudes. Subtler measures of religiousness were subsequently developed, mainly of “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” religious orientations, to demonstrate that it is not religiousness per se that is associated with such negative social attitudes, but superficial or inauthentic forms of it. In time, attention shifted from social attitudes to mental and physical health, once again anticipating that intrinsic, or sincere, religiosity would be associated with more positive outcomes. Today, especially with the encouragement of munificent Templeton Foundation grants, there is increasing interest in demonstrating religion’s positive association with certain classic virtues, including forgiveness, gratitude, and humility.

### **Challenges to the Psychology of Religion**

From its beginnings, the psychology of religion has faced a number of critics. Psychologists, who tend in general to be less religious than many other academic and professional groups, have long been suspicious of any interest in religion on the part of their colleagues. Scholars of religion, on the other side, are often critical of what seem to them to be reductionistic if not also hostile views of religion among its psychological interpreters. Thus the psychology of religion has been an academic stepchild from its beginnings. Graduate programs and academic positions in the

field have always been scarce, and where they appear they are usually subordinated to theological or pastoral training. Undergraduate courses on the psychology of religion are most often taught in departments of religion at church-related schools; otherwise they are likely offered only because some faculty member has a personal interest in the subject matter. Nonsectarian programs in the psychology of religion have been more common in England and Europe, where chairs in the field were founded beginning early in the twentieth century. Yet even there the field has never been widely pursued, and recent changes in economic conditions, in conjunction with the traditional priorities of theological faculties, have brought reductions in both chairs and programs, most notably in the Scandinavian countries.

Such external difficulties are complicated by challenges that are intrinsic to the field. Most apparent is the debate between empirical and interpretive approaches, between quantitative and qualitative methodologies, which, beyond determining the research methods used, have broad implications for how religion is constructed and what questions are posed. Less obvious and more difficult is the conundrum of addressing a phenomenon that interprets itself in relationship to a transcendent dimension that by definition lies beyond the conceptual tools and understanding of psychology. Flournoy’s exclusion principle suggests the possibility of bracketing such interpretations, but in reality all researchers come to the field with personal religious views that inevitably shape the questions they address. If one takes a religious outlook to be fundamentally mistaken, as it was by Freud, one will naturally ask how it may have arisen, either in human history or in an individual life. If one has oneself a sense of the transcendent, on the other hand, one will naturally be inclined to ask why it eludes other persons. Given the obvious diversity of religious constructions of reality, the latter question would likely be posed from within a particular theological or religious framework, inevitably threatening to transform the psychology of religion into a sectarian enterprise.

One solution would be to pursue a purely descriptive psychology of religion. But that, the German philosopher Max Scheler once argued, would require a separate psychology of religion for every tradition. Another seeming solution would be the strategy of setting aside any questions about the nature or origins of religion and merely examining its fruits instead. Although widely embraced, this strategy has long been recognized as likewise shaped by religious agendas, which affect the religiosity scales one adopts or devises, the variables one investigates, and the conclusions one draws. Of the respondents to a 1998 survey of the members of Division 36 of APA, the majority of whom are clinical practitioners, nearly all reported themselves to be moderately or highly religious or spiritual. Thus it is not surprising that most research is aimed, subtly or not, at demonstrating the value of religion and that there is a parallel burgeoning of works on the integration of spirituality into psychotherapy, some published by the APA.

Most of the religiously liberal founders of the psychology of religion sought to reinterpret or even transform religion to make it serviceable in the modern world. Today, the psychology of religion serves as a rubric under which more religiously conservative psychologists act as caretakers and promoters of traditional religious convictions. The ideal, most fully realized by James Pratt, of a truly disinterested discipline that investigates a broad range of phenomena drawn from a diversity of religious traditions thus seems today evermore elusive.

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Authoritarian Personality](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Genetics of Religiosity](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)

- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Pruyser, Paul](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religion and Mental and Physical Health](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Psychology of Religion in China

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Psychological reflections on spirituality and religion in China have a 2,500-year history, and the scientific study thereof over the past century has both languished during the Cultural Revolution and flourished in the last three decades (Dueck and Han 2012). However, religions as we know them in the West as institutionalized with a professional clergy, set of doctrines, and specified practices is a mere century old (Yang 2008). The official religions include Taoism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, and Islam, but there are a host of folk religions and variations of the five sanctioned religions among China's 55 ethnic minorities. Recent research by Tong and Liu (2005) indicates that there are some 300 million Chinese who identify themselves as religious/spiritual, the highest estimate to be published to date.

As a science, Chinese psychology emerged concurrently with American psychology (Han and Zhang 2007). Yuanpei Cai, who studied with Wilhelm Wundt (1908–1911), returned to China to be the President of Peking University (1916) and later became the President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (1927) where

he established the Institute of Psychology. Daqi Chen established the first experimental laboratory in China at Peking University (1917). In 1940, Chen Wenyuan wrote a text integrating religion and psychology in China, entitled *Religion and Personality*. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), the discipline of psychology was considered bourgeois, and teaching of and research in psychology was stopped entirely.

Then in the late 1980s, Chinese scholars wrote texts describing Soviet and Western approaches to psychology and religion. The remarkable progress that followed included translation of classic Western texts in psychology of religion and theoretical analyses of James, Erickson, Wundt, and Allport. New measurement tools were developed and empirical social analyses of religion and mental health, religious cognition, and religious emotions were conducted. Chen Biao (2003) examined Erickson's religious psychology and is currently writing a history of Western approaches of psychology to religion. Liang Liping (2003) has conducted a comparative study of conversion among Buddhists and Christians in terms of gender, psychological factors, educational level, and cultural background. Nonetheless, Chen Yongsheng, Liang Henghao, and Lu Liqing describe the state of psychology of religion research in 2006 as follows: "On building the discipline of psychology of religion, Chinese scholars have not discovered the central stream so far, and therefore it seems that the achievements are scattered and lack a solid foundation" (2006, p. 156).

Chen et al. (2006) reported that between 1994 and 2004 only 12 articles on psychology and religion had been published and that none were empirical studies. There had been little dialogue between Chinese psychologists of religion, other Chinese psychologists with similar interests, and Western psychologists of religion until they attended the psychology of religion conferences begun in 2007. Since September 2007, six psychology of religion conferences have been held. The first took place at Zhejiang Normal University with some 17 psychologists in attendance and several students. However, by third conference in March 2009 sponsored by



Sichuan University in conjunction with the West China Hospital, attendance reached 120. The focus of the conference was on psychology of religion in service of Chinese society traumatized by the 5/12 earthquake. Dr. Yanchun Yang opened the conferees with a presentation that encouraged psychologists of religion to be more sensitive to the Chinese context as they researched earthquake survivors and to include spirituality as part of the assessment and treatment of trauma.

The Fourth Conference of Psychology of Religion (2010) was held at Qufu Normal University in the city of Confucius' birth and in a local culture highly supportive of research in psychology of religion. Forty-five Chinese psychologists and students and eight Western psychologists gave papers on topics including attachment theory and modes of spirituality, neurophysiology and religious experience, indigenous forms of spiritual therapy, religious coping research, and spiritual themes among Sichuan earthquake survivors.

The most recent conference was held at East China Normal University in Shanghai in March 2012. It was a unique experience in that more scholars of religion were present at the conference. The concern was raised that too much psychology of religion is focused on Christianity, a problem echoed by Western psychologists as well (Belzen 2009; Nelson 2009). There were Chinese presenters who argued passionately for the treatment of spirituality with seriousness in mental health services. More than in previous conferences, cross-cultural and ethnic perspectives were evident.

A major project undertaken by scholars at these conferences was to write an edited collection of essays on the state of the art and future projections for psychology of religion. The essays were the fruit of a 2-year grant from the John Templeton Foundation and published in the journal *Pastoral Psychology* (Vol. 61(5–6)) and a select number are being published in Chinese by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Han and Dueck forthcoming). The goals for the book of essays were to (a) provide an overview of the history of psychology of

religion in the West and in China, (b) explore future directions for the field, and (c) encourage rigorous, scholarly research in the psychology of religion. What follows is a brief summary of a sample of chapters so as to give the reader a flavor of Chinese research in psychology of religion and is adapted from Dueck and Han (2012). This review will focus on several themes: the spirituality of ancient traditions, the emphasis on indigeneity, spirituality within healing and psychotherapy, innovative empirical research, and the influence of national objectives.

Evident in these publications is the fact that Chinese psychologists of religion are rewriting the understanding of the ancient traditions as spiritual rather than secular in nature. Religion, folk culture, medicine, ethics, and religious anthropology seem to interpenetrate each other. Lu and Ke (2012) point out that during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770 BCE to 221 BCE), debates about "human nature" were central to the development of a future psychology of religion. They show how Confucius' ethical teachings are connected to psychological assumptions about human transformation and the possibility of change by effort. Their analysis of Mencius, Xunzi, Mozi, and Taoism all point to the intimate relationship between religion, spirits, and ethics with human nature, whether good or evil, innocent, or neutral. With regard to ancient folk religions of the lower social classes, their implicit psychology of religion was utilitarian in nature: religion was sought for worldly benefits and spiritual solace (for another perspective on Chinese folk religions, see He 2012).

Shi and Zhang (2012) focus on themes of spirituality in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and argue that its longevity is a consequence of its spiritual roots. TCM focuses not only on the illness of a person but the person as a whole; it cares for the body and nourishes the spirit. They maintain that notions of Yin-Yang and Qi have spiritual origins because they are related to heaven, earth, and life. They point out that in the book *Shang Shu* we were told: "Zhu, is the one who contacts gods" and "Mr. Zhou prayed for King Wu's illness, and then he recovered." TCM borrowed from Taoism, Confucianism,



and Buddhism the importance of cultivating the mind, nourishing the heart, and developing wise character. Master doctors of TCM were similar to religious leaders in their effort to help people recover from bitterness, illness, and loss. So TCM is not simply a collection of techniques but is deeply concerned about human person as a whole, including spiritual suffering.

Indigeneity is a second major theme emerging in Chinese psychology of religion. Wang (2012) states that contemporary Chinese psychology is simply Western psychology transplanted to China and that Chinese healers have turned a deaf ear to their own rich heritage of psychological thought. He quotes a Chinese proverb, "Unaware of the inexhaustible wealth of his family heritage, he begs from door to door to stay alive." Wang, however, is concerned to develop a psychological approach that is sensitive to the Chinese context, and so he cites proverbs and tells stories in therapy. He hails Confucianism as a teaching therapy and Taoism as capable of addressing compulsiveness. From "Ah Q," personality described by the Chinese poet and essayist LuXun, Wang develops the diagnosis of passivity and escapism in Chinese society, a consequence of national and international oppression. The opposite is the willingness to face life directly rather than creating excuses for one's escapism. Wang finds here the cultural roots of many psychological symptoms.

Henghao Liang (2012) refers to Jung as a Chinese philosopher living in the West. He examined the relationship between Jung's psychological theories and Chinese religions and discovered significant similarities between Jung's concepts of synchronicity, Self, and his principles of the psyche, the mandala, with concepts in Chinese Taoism. Jung absorbed the wisdom of the East, the meaning of the I Ching, the theory of Taoist inner alchemy, and the technique of active imagination. Jung's notion of unity of opposites has its roots in both Taoism and Buddhism. Liang wonders whether Jung's idea of the "collective unconsciousness" is equivalent to the eighth consciousness in Buddhism, Alaya Consciousness.

Ting (2012) compares two regions of the world in terms of mind-body dualism, views of the self, the nature of mental health, the value of relationships, the role of community, and the relationship between healing and spirituality. Appropriately, she begins with reflections on the nature of culture. Culture for her is not static but fluid, improvisational, transformational, and political. Fundamentally, Western culture privileges the individual, while Eastern cultures privilege relationships and the common good. It is her hope that a cultural psychology of religion would be sensitive to differing worldviews and that each culture would avoid imposing its definition of mental health or healing on the other. She maintains that if spirituality or religions were to nurture the well-being of local people, then local persons would need to be shapers of their own religious tradition and express their faith in their local dialects. She finds herself attracted to indigenous forms of psychology as they have emerged in the Philippines and New Zealand. She is concerned about uncritical importation of foreign approaches to mental health into China.

A third theme is the recovery of religion in healing and psychotherapy. This concern is raised by Ren Zhengjia (2012) who asks whether spirituality and community play a significant role in times of crisis. He reflects on his own involvement in providing care after the Sichuan earthquake and believes crisis workers need to appreciate deeply the personal, cultural, and spiritual resources that victims bring to the crisis events. He believes that Chinese spirituality can be involved in the process of psychological rehabilitation and wrestles with the definition of spirituality in China. After reviewing some of the fundamental tenets of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and folk religions, Ren cites anecdotal evidence in which a survivors' spirituality enabled them to cope. His crisis intervention team honored and encouraged indigenous forms of spirituality.

Ting and Ng (2012) focus on the integration of spiritual and religious themes in the three major religions of Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity with psychotherapy. The unique practices of

these religions include the blending of religion, folklore, traditional practices, and loyalty to the religious tradition of one's family. It is still a fundamental belief that disturbance in the spiritual realm results in mental illness and demon possession. Hence, Ting and Ng call for a therapeutic approach that is tradition-sensitive in which the client's religious beliefs are explored, religious duties are affirmed, their basic religious teachings and rituals are built on, and religious support from the family and community are accessed.

A fourth concentration of Chinese psychology of religion is empirical in nature and focuses on the role of religion in mental health and the changing nature of belief in contemporary China. Chen et al. (2012) propose several unsolved problems in China's psychology of religion: lack of in-depth studies on the history of Western psychology of religion, diversity in research methods, and the disconnect between theoretical study and practical application. Nonetheless, there are a number of very creative research projects.

While most Western researchers have found a positive relationship between religion and mental health, at least one Chinese study nuances this relationship. Wang et al. (2012) examine the mental health of older Buddhists and a matched sample of nonreligious individuals after the Wenchuan earthquake. Using a mental health inventory for the elderly, they found that the older Buddhists in the more severely damaged area of Beichuan, 4 months after the disaster scored significantly lower than nonreligious participants. After 10 months their scores were significantly better. The authors conclude that religious faith helped Buddhists recover from trauma. However, the lower level of mental health scores initially were interpreted to mean that those with religious sensitivities were more deeply affected by the trauma of the earthquake. The authors comment that since Buddhists accept stress as a part of their daily lives and also emphasize the fundamental goodness of the world, they experienced a greater discrepancy between the reality of the earthquake and this positive conception of the world. Hence, there is the

greater negative effect on Buddhist behavior and mental health.

A number of studies focus specifically on religious belief and radical religious change in China. Song and Fu (2012) report on the religious beliefs of college students that are closely followed by the Chinese government. In the last decade, considerable research has been conducted on college students' beliefs from the perspective of psychology of religion that included the spirituality of college students, the relationship between belief and mental health, and cross-cultural research on the beliefs of college students. The results of Song's research revealed that social beliefs (such as loyalty to the nation and political beliefs) took priority over pragmatic beliefs (loyalty to family, desiring money) with religious belief in last place (worship, supernatural being, personal soul). Women scored higher on religion than men and, overall, the authors estimated that 13 % of college students hold religious beliefs. However, the number of college students who hold religious belief is increased from their first to their senior year.

Based on her qualitative and quantitative analysis, Liping Liang (2012) sought to uncover the meaning of religious experience and to explain how sacredness and earthliness, utility and truth resonate in the spiritual world of Christian and Buddhist believers. She found that the initial motivations for making contact with religion were seeking spiritual relief, physical health, and truth or wisdom. The more educated converts (whether Buddhist or Christian) sought for truth, while lower educated persons wanted physical health. More persons who converted to Christianity (66 %) than to Buddhism (46 %) did so because of the persuasiveness of the doctrine. For others, it was belonging to a religious community or because of the perceived benefits from a spiritual life and practice. The main factor that enabled converts to maintain their religious beliefs and practices was the change they experienced as they continued their journey of transformation.

A fifth theme in Chinese psychology of religion is that the Chinese psychologist assumes that the discipline fosters national goals. Chen and

Chen 2012) have championed this belief. They point out astutely in regard to nationalism that Wundt's cultural analyses of religion seemed to have received much greater attention in China than in the West. Consistent with a cultural point of view, they are concerned that in the future greater emphasis be placed on practical application of psychology of religion for the sake of a harmonious society. Chen and Chen believe that the goal of a harmonious society must shape the development of a psychology of religion. This quote from Chen et al. (2006) captures the spirit of Chinese psychologists of religion:

...the importance of psychology of religion never can be underestimated in vindicating the human rights. China is multinational country with 56 nations, and every minority almost has its own particular customs and religion. We must fully respect the religion of each minority and make use of the knowledge of psychology of religion to promote the conversation and communication between various religions. This will help to strengthen the solidarity of the Chinese nation, to improve the level of human rights, and to safeguard world peace and development (p. 159).

## See Also

- ▶ [Chinese Popular Religions](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Women in Chinese Religions](#)

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## Psychosis

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What is psychosis? How is it related to religion and religious factors?

Psychoses are psychiatric illnesses, normally distinguished from neuroses, the other main group of psychiatric disorders. In psychosis the degree of impairment and lack of insight are said to be more severe than in neurosis. Psychotic illnesses have been categorized into two broad groups, the schizophrenic disorders and the bipolar disorders. There are significant concerns about the use of these diagnostic categories, but they are likely to remain in use for the foreseeable future. In schizophrenia, the individual normally shows a marked deterioration in self-care, work functioning, and/or social relations, and moods may be inappropriate. There may be genetic susceptibility to stress and cannabis use, making the appearance of schizophrenia more likely. Symptoms normally include two or more of delusions, hallucinations, incoherent speech, catatonic behavior (rigid, frozen posture), and flat or very inappropriate mood (Butcher et al. 2010, pp. 458–489). The DSM-IV-TR classification lists a large number of related disorders in the schizophrenia group, such as the paranoid or catatonic types, but here we will consider schizophrenia as an overall diagnostic category. The other general form of psychosis is considered to be bipolar (manic-depressive, cyclothymic) mood disorder, swinging from high to low moods, sometimes with intervening periods of

“normal” mood. The most striking feature of bipolar disorders is mania, euphoric joy out of proportion to circumstances, plus at least some of the following: irritability and anger especially if plans are frustrated, hyperactivity, going without sleep, poor judgment, following one’s own grandiose ideas and plans and feeling others are too slow, self-esteem approaching grandiosity, flamboyance, delusions, or hallucinations (Butcher et al. 2010, pp. 247–255). About one person in a hundred may be affected by a psychotic disorder at some time in their lives. It may pass, or respond to medication or other treatment, or the person may continue significantly disturbed.

How do psychoses relate to religion? There are several important questions for discussion.

### Do Religious Factors Correlate with or Cause Psychosis?

The short answer is that there are no clear associations between schizophrenia – or possibly predisposing personality traits – and religious factors. There is some tentative evidence that psychotic episodes may be precipitated in those already prone to disturbance, by some religious practices such as meditation, but this evidence is currently very thin.

The associations between religious factors and psychotic illness have been difficult to disentangle. This is partly because some religious behaviors and beliefs – especially if they stem from a tradition alien to clinicians – may be seen as symptoms of illness, and a misdiagnosis may be made. For example, a devout woman who had been sexually abused began to pray and bible study frequently and eat moderately in an attempt to purify herself. This was interpreted as symptomatic of schizophrenia (Loewenthal 2007, p. 37). Beliefs that the evil eye, spells, or spirits are causing somatic symptoms may be seen as delusory, even though in contemporary transcultural psychiatry, good clinical outcomes have been reported when clinicians treat these beliefs respectfully. A further set of factors

complicating the picture is that stress may well induce mood disturbances and other psychiatric symptoms, and in an attempt to cope, individuals may resort to prayer and other religious practices (Bhugra 2002; Siddle et al. 2002). Indeed, there is considerable evidence that prayer and other religious practices may relieve distress (Loewenthal 2007, pp. 59–67; Maltby et al. 1999; Pargament 1997). Thus, there may be the appearance of an association between mental illness and religiosity, but religiosity is an effect, not a cause. Furthermore, if and when stress is reduced and symptoms alleviate, religious coping is reduced – again, giving the appearance of an association between better mental health and lower religiosity. Only longitudinal studies, in which individuals are followed up over time, can tell us more about whether religion plays a causal role in psychosis and other mental illnesses. At the moment, this does not seem likely for schizophrenia.

There are a number of personality traits which have been suggested to relate to the tendency to schizophrenia and psychotic illness. The most heavily researched of these is the so-called Psychoticism (P) measure in the Eysenck Personality Inventory. This is negatively associated with religiosity (Eysenck 1998). A more complex set of traits fall under the head of schizotypy, which involves personality traits which might indicate prodromal schizophrenia, including discomfort in close relationships, and odd forms of thinking and perceiving. The different aspects of schizotypy relate in complex ways to different styles of religiosity (Joseph et al. 2002), with no substantial evidence to support the idea that religious factors are related to schizophrenia or possible predisposing personality factors.

It has been suggested that meditation and possibly other religious practices and experiences may precede episodes of manic disorder in individuals who are susceptible (Kalian and Witztum 2002; Wilson 1998; Yorston 2001). However, this suggestion is based on clinical case histories, and there is insufficient quantitative evidence in further support of this suggestion.

## **Can We Distinguish Between Pathological and Benign Visions and Voices?**

This has been a long-standing problem for well-intentioned and culturally sensitive psychiatrists, given that visions and voices are supposed to be symptoms of schizophrenia. Littlewood and Lipsedge (1997) and Greenberg and Witztum (2001) offer fascinating and often tragic examples of diagnostic and therapeutic difficulties. It has now been well documented that visions and voices are commonly experienced by healthy individuals and cannot be regarded in themselves as symptoms of psychosis (see Loewenthal 2007, pp. 17–21). Some religious groups encourage or praise the experiencing of visions, or the hearing of voices, and these can be valued aspects of spirituality. Recent work examining and comparing the experiences of members of religious groups and of others without psychiatric illness with experiences of psychotic individuals indicates that the visions and voices experienced by the psychotically ill are significantly more unpleasant and uncontrollable than those experienced by others (Davies et al. 2001; Peters et al. 1999). This work does give clues as to how psychotic visions and voices might be identified. Importantly, we can conclude that the experiencing of visions and voices should no longer in itself be treated as symptomatic of psychosis. Dein (2010) offers further discussion of these and related issues.

## **What Is the Significance of Belief in Demons, Evil Spirits, and the Like in Relation to Psychotic Illness?**

Belief in evil spirits, demons, and other malignant spiritual forces is surprisingly widespread, including highly developed, urbanized countries. A striking example involves sleep paralysis, which is as often reported in highly developed countries in which belief in evil spirits is not well supported, as in less developed countries. The individual feels wakeful but unable to move and is

conscious of a shadowy presence (Hufford 2005). The experience is usually unpleasant, interpreted as involving evil forces, and seldom mentioned for fear of being thought insane. In fact this condition is not a psychiatric problem at all, in spite of the fears and beliefs of those who have experienced it. This example highlights the existence of a widespread and popular idea that the experience of malign spiritual forces is closely related to insanity. Lipsedge (1996) and Kroll et al. (2002) have shown that in medieval times demons and other malign spiritual forces were only occasionally seen as possible causes of psychiatric illness. Contemporary studies have examined beliefs that malign spiritual forces can be causes of insanity. Such beliefs have been reported in many countries, for example, Egypt (Coker 2004), Israel (Heilman and Witztum 2000), South Africa (Ensink and Robertson 1999), and Switzerland (Pfeifer 1994), and there has been some success reported in deploying healing methods which are believed by patients to dispel evil spiritual forces. It has been suggested that the experience of demons and the like may be regarded as an “idiom of distress” (Heilman and Witztum 2000). Contemporary clinical practitioners with experience in different cultural settings would advocate incorporating beliefs about spiritual forces as causes of disturbance into treatment plans, wherever possible.

### What Is the Current Status of the Concept of Religious Mania?

Religious monomania is a now-discarded diagnostic category. At one time it was popular and used to denote intense religious excitement and enthusiasm, to the extent that the individual had gone beyond the bounds of the acceptable and containable. For example, Jonathan Martin, a fundamentalist preacher, who thought the clergy of his time (early nineteenth century) were too lax. He had some dreams which seemed to him significant, for example, in one he saw a black cloud over York Minster. These dreams inspired him to set fire to York Minster (Lipsedge 2003). At the time this act was a capital offence,

but the diagnosis of monomania helped to get the death sentence commuted to imprisonment. With religious and other monomanias, there were difficulties in distinguishing between acceptable and pathological levels of behavior – one group’s terrorist is another group’s martyr, for example.

### Conclusions

There is little to support the idea that religious factors play a role in causing psychotic illnesses. It is likely that religious coping may be helpful in relieving the distress associated with psychotic illness, and the appearance of “religious symptoms” may indicate attempts to cope with distress, rather than as symptoms as such. However, as with other psychiatric illnesses, the religious context may shape the occurrence of stress, often a factor in psychiatric breakdown. The religious context may also shape expressions of distress.

### See Also

- ▶ Demons
- ▶ Psychiatry
- ▶ Religious Coping
- ▶ Visions

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## Psychospiritual

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The term psychospiritual has entered psychological and religious discourse as a loose designation for the integration of the psychological and the spiritual. As a broad term it can denote a variety of positions between psychology and spirituality: a supplementation, integration, identification, or conflation of the two fields. It is commonly used to describe a wide range of therapeutic systems which embrace a spiritual dimension of the human being as fundamental to psychic health and full human development and which utilize both psychological and spiritual methods (such as meditation, yoga, dreamwork, breathwork) in a holistic, integrated approach to healing and inner growth. Included here are Jungian psychology; Roberto Assagioli's psychosynthesis; the post-Jungian archetypal psychology of James Hillman; transpersonal psychology, such as the work of Abraham Maslow, Stanislav Grof, Ken Wilber, Michael Washburn, and Charles Tart; the spiritual psychology of Robert Sardello; and a plethora of contemporary spiritual therapies which are being developed within an East-west framework.

William Parsons (2008) offers some useful historical contextualization for the Western lineage of the psychospiritual through his discussion of the “*psychologia perennis*,” an unchurched, psychological form of spirituality whose origins can be seen as early as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the appearance of

mysticism as a subjective experience divorced from church and tradition. The emergence of a generic “Absolute” framed as an inner universal, sacred dimension of man allowed for the psychologization of mysticism and links the figures of Romain Rolland, William James, Carl Jung, and Richard Maurice Bucke with humanistic and transpersonal psychology. While recognizing significant differences in metapsychology and therapeutic techniques among these thinkers, Parsons identifies a number of common characteristics: a championing of the individual as an unchurched site of religiosity; the search for the origin of mysticism in the unconscious; a valorization of personal unchurched mystical experiences; an advocacy of perennialism; the discernment of innate, intuitive, mystical capacities; the development of a technology of altered states; the institutionalization of psychospiritual therapeutic regimens; and a vision of social transformation grounded in the psychospiritual transformation of the individual.

Psychospiritual therapies explicitly protest against the reductive and materialist assumptions of mainstream behavioral and cognitive psychology and seek to return the soul or psyche to psychology. While traditionally associated with the humanistic-existential strands within depth psychology, as Parsons (2007) points out there has also been a recent wave of interest in spirituality within the psychoanalytic field. Much of contemporary psychoanalytic literature suggests that spirituality has seeped into many aspects of the practice of analysts and of the therapeutic expectations of analysands. For example, the analyst Michael Eigen, who is particularly influenced by Jewish mysticism and Zen, describes psychoanalytic therapy as “a psychospiritual journey” and argues that meditative practices and psychoanalysis are not separate but rather integral parts of the growth process (Molino 1998). Similarly, analyst Paul Cooper claims that spiritual practices have influenced many dimensions of psychoanalytic therapy, such as theory, technique, training, and supervision, and draws attention to the important empirical fact that many of his analysands

understand psychoanalytic therapy as part of their spiritual growth. Furthermore, Cooper argues that there is undeniable cultural drift in this direction (Molino 1998).

In a similar vein, concerns with the psychospiritual have entered into mainstream psychotherapy. This is reflected in both the professional psychotherapeutic accrediting of spiritual therapies and the establishment of a number of associations that seek to integrate the two fields of spirituality and psychotherapy, for example, the Institute for Psychotherapy, Science and Spirituality, formerly the Center for Spirituality and Psychotherapy, established in 1997 to study how psychotherapy can foster the emergence of the spiritual dimension in life and how spiritual practice may enhance the psychotherapeutic encounter.

The term psychospiritual has also been applied to mystical traditions, particularly Asian, which include psychological development as an indispensable component of spiritual growth or see psychological and spiritual development as inseparable. Some of these traditions are seen as inherently containing a psychospiritual approach. A notable example, here, is Sufism which aims for a psychospiritual transformation of the human being from a state of ego centeredness to a state of purity and submission to the will of God (Frager 1999). Other spiritual traditions have incorporated Western psychology into traditional mysticism to create new psychospiritual integrations. An influential example of this is integral psychology, a synthesis of the Indian mystic Sri Aurobindo’s teachings with the findings of depth psychology as developed by his disciple, Haridas Chaudhuri (Cortright 2007). Another contemporary psychospiritual tradition which incorporates the insights of psychoanalytic theory to aid spiritual realization is A. H. Almaas’s Diamond Approach (2004).

Finally, the psychospiritual is a term often used interchangeably with the cultural phenomena referred to as psychology *as* religion and to signify the psychologization of religion and the

sacralization of psychology that is a defining mark of the New Age. Hence, commentaries on, critiques of, and predications for these two related, if not identical, strands are indispensable in illuminating different aspects of the psychospiritual.

## See Also

- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Transpersonal Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Psychosynthesis (Assagioli)

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## Psychosynthesis: An Integration of Personality and Spirit

Psychosynthesis, for the greater part, is a synthesis or integration of Psychology (depth psychotherapy) and religion (spiritual process and growth). Psychosynthesis uses a combination of a multiplicity of techniques and modalities, e.g., the empty-chair technique, empathy, abreaction and catharsis, nonjudgmental acceptance and holding environment, creativity, play and drama, dream analysis, meditation and guided imagery, family reconstitution, primal wound healing, subpersonality analysis and dialogue, and self-unfoldment. It draws from many schools and traditions: Depth Psychology, Analytical Psychology, Gestalt, Family Systems, Insight Meditation, and Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology, to name a few.

Psychosynthesis originated from the work of Roberto Assagioli, M.D. He was a contemporary of Jung and Freud and belonged to the Zurich Freud Society. However, he was not totally satisfied with the narrow approach of Psychoanalysis and was drawn to the more positive and spiritual side of human nature. As a consequence, he explored a number of Eastern as well as Western philosophies and new theories and therapeutic techniques which were being developed at the time. Over a number of years, he compiled and combined all of these techniques (see Assagioli 1965) into what eventually became Psychosynthesis. In the process he explored many modalities which utilized methods promoting the positive or spiritual side of human potential including the Self-Actualization model (see Maslow). He still utilized the methods of Depth Psychology and insisted that he used the scientific method to examine, assess, and test out all of these methods.

He also developed his own model of the psyche which expanded on the fourfold model of personality of Jung and added a fifth function, the Will. Dr. Assagioli felt that the Will was a very important and neglected function and, in order to promote and explore the understanding of the Will, he started what became the Will Project.

## History and Biography

Dr. Assagioli started out in Psychoanalysis and agreed, with Freud, that many of us have primal wounds from our early childhoods which need healing. These can also lead to subpersonalities which need further healing. However, he believed that, in the process of personal growth, we have access to help from our Higher Selves. Assagioli developed his own map or “Egg-Shaped Diagram” of the person, in which he delineated a Higher Unconscious in addition to a Lower Unconscious and a Middle Unconscious. He also postulated a place for a “Soul” or Higher Self in addition to an “I” or Conscious Self. Along with Carl Jung, he believed in a process of lifelong personal growth or Individuation toward an integration or synthesis of our personality self with our higher or spiritual self. In addition to healing childhood trauma and developing a healthy ego, he felt the human spirit was drawn toward a higher level of personal integration and self-actualization. He studied the philosophical and spiritual traditions of both the East and the West. He envisioned a process of transpersonal development and the cultivation of what Maslow called peak experiences, e.g., spiritual insight, inspired creativity, and unitive or mystical states of consciousness.

Dr. Assagioli had a classical education in Greek and Latin and was fluent in several languages. He started medical school in 1906 in Florence and wrote his doctoral dissertation in 1910 as a critical study of Psychoanalysis. He trained under Eugen Bleuler in Switzerland. After his training he worked as a psychiatrist in Italy, but corresponded with Jung and Freud, and was a member of the Zurich Freud Society. After WWI he continued to work as a doctor and psychiatrist and continued his studies

and writing in Depth Psychology. In 1927 he founded an Institute in Rome and published a book called *A New Method of Treatment – Psychosynthesis*. In the 1920s he also met his wife, Nella, a Roman Catholic and Theosophist (like his mother). They were married in 1922, were married for 40 years, and had a son – Ilario.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Assagioli rubbed shoulders with many of the intellectual thinkers and innovators of his day, e.g., Croce, Inayat Khan, Tagore, Keyserling, Jung, and Buber. He wrote numerous journal articles, contributed to the *Hibbert Journal*, did a yearly lecture series, and sponsored conferences. In the latter 1930s he experienced some persecution by Mussolini. He was sent to prison for about a year, where he was in solitary confinement for over a month. It was during this time that he meditated and worked on his inner self and received many of the insights that became incorporated into Psychosynthesis. After being released from prison, he had to close his Institute and go into hiding in the country for several years.

After WWII, Dr. Assagioli’s work became internationally known. His Istituto di Psicointesi reopened in Florence, and in 1958 the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation opened in the USA. In 1960 the Greek Centre for Psychosynthesis was founded. In the 1960s and 1970s, Assagioli contributed to the development of Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology. He published two main works, *Psychosynthesis* in 1965 and *The Act of Will* in 1974. He died later that year at the age of 86. There are now Psychosynthesis Centers and Training programs in the USA, Canada, Argentina, Australia, and throughout Europe, including a major center in London. There is no single overarching organization, as Dr. Assagioli did not want to limit or stereotype the development of Psychosynthesis, which he saw as continually open to further development and evolution.

## Theory and Practice

Psychosynthesis is not as well known as many other approaches to psychotherapy, but it has

become more popular over time and draws on a multitude of techniques and methods that are in current usage in other venues today. Dr. Assagioli was not afraid of experimenting with new therapeutic modalities and he combined them and modified them to meet his needs to create a grand synthesis of treatment leading to a spiritually healthy and actualized human personality. Assagioli drew from the insights of Psychoanalysis regarding subconscious traumas and memories affecting our personalities and functioning. However, he developed his own map or model of the psyche which included higher levels of awareness, creativity, and inspiration. He agreed with Jung on there being a Collective Unconscious which, among other things, carried a repository of past knowledge and human experience. He postulated a Higher Self or “Soul” in addition to our personal Ego or “I.” He focused on positive human traits and encouraged group and cultural action, which he saw as essential to the growth and evolution of the human species.

Assagioli imagined psychotherapy as an ongoing collaboration between the therapist and the client in which the therapist acted as an empathic mirror and holding field for the client. He would nonjudgmentally encourage the client to feel, express, and work through his or her wounds and to develop a more healthy understanding of them. Then he would encourage greater maturity and development of the personality into expanded areas of abilities, creativity, and giving back to others and humanity.

Today, Psychosynthesis is often done through a process of “guiding” (Brown 1983) where a therapist or “guide” helps the client to negotiate a series of barriers on the road to self-growth. The guide acts as an equal, though more experienced, traveler on life’s journey. This encourages the client to take responsibility for their own progress and direction. Sessions often last for an hour or two, during which the guide sits with the client and encourages them to focus on feelings, sensations, thoughts, and images in the present moment. The guide nonjudgmentally accepts the productions of the client and suggests exercises to enhance or modify the experience toward a catharsis or resolution of the feelings. These

exercises could include things such as free association, visualization, primal scream, empty-chair dialogue, meditation, focus on the breath, and self-soothing.

As a result of Dr. Assagioli’s work and process, many people have been helped to find a more satisfying approach to life and growth. Psychosynthesis has expanded all over the world, and the process and philosophy is being applied to ever-expanding areas of group, family, and cultural developments. I would expect that the Life Coaching approach has been influenced by many of the ideas of Psychosynthesis. A number of therapists and professionals have developed and expanded on the techniques and ideas of Assagioli, as evidenced by the sampling of books listed in the Bibliography.

### See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Transpersonal Psychology
- ▶ Wilber, Ken

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## Psychotherapy

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### On Caring Rather than Curing

Psychotherapy is an art and a science of caring for those in distress with the goal of helping others toward more fulfilling and meaningful experiences in their everyday existence. The ways in which this project is done is extremely diverse, and in fact, there are hundreds of practices in our contemporary situation that would claim the name “therapy.” Although various kinds of histories have been written, I would like to offer a read of this history that highlights its inherent religiosity.

Discerning the beginnings of psychotherapy depends on how one defines this process and whether or not one understands psychotherapy as a science, an art, or both. I argue that its foundation rests both in the history of the *cura animarum*, or the care of souls, and in the history of consolation literature and practices across a variety of religious traditions, “*cura*” originally meant “care” rather than “cure” (McNiell 1977; Jalland 2000). The psychotherapist was an *iatros tes psuche*, or physician of the soul. Much has changed since these originations. Thomas Szasz (1988) notes that psychotherapy as a talk therapy originated in ancient rhetorical traditions, but, over time, psychotherapy has become a medical treatment. Szasz has argued, and I think correctly, that psychotherapy is not a medical treatment, evoking Aristotle’s warning against the confluence of science and rhetoric.

Although aligned with Szasz’s general project as a clarification and differentiation of psychotherapy from medical modeled practices, I nonetheless agree with Ernesto Spinelli’s (2007) proposal that psychotherapy, or therapeia, should be understood in light of its true etiological foundation as less an art of persuasion and more a process of “walking with” another who suffers and is in distress. If *cura* is care and therapy is more a “walking with” rather than a “doing to,” then contemporary practices of psychotherapy as problem solving and repairing brokenness are practices far from their origins. The conceptualizations of Spinelli, Szasz, and other like-minded theorists and clinicians are much closer to the tradition of pastoral counseling as a companionship with another through existential transitions in life.

Another important distinction to be made about psychotherapy as seen from the field of psychology and religion concerns what is meant by the “psyche.” Early Greek formation of this concept did not start with the psyche as a self-encapsulated thing or ego. Psyche was more closely aligned with *nous*, or mind (Louth 1981). Mind, however, did not mean “brain,” which is another confluence of irreconcilable differences based on a categorical mistake of fusing mind and brain (Brothers 2001). *Nous* was “soul” and specifically the experiencer of meaning, significance, and purpose, or *telos* (Louth 1981). Hence, Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) developed his existential approach to psychotherapy and called it logotherapy, basing logos on a nosological discernment of how meaning motivates our existential comportment in our lives (1946/1959). Bruno Bettelheim (1903–1990) has further pointed out that Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) position on the psyche has been grossly misunderstood, often due to Freud’s mechanistic conceptualizations of the psyche (Bettelheim 1983). Freud’s understanding of psyche, as Bettelheim argues, is the German word, *Seele*, or soul. This conceptualization is aligned with Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and the psychiatrists with whom he dialogued regarding the implications of his



philosophy for psychotherapy, Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966) and Medard Boss (1903–1990). Whereas Binswanger (1967) understood the goal of therapy to be soul-oriented goals, such as the ability to love and trust again, Boss and Heidegger described psychotherapy as a process of *Seelsorgen*, or soul care (Boss 1963; Heidegger 1987/2001). Heidegger (1962) still wanted to destruct any conception of the psyche or soul as a substantial entity and so shift the focus from psyche as thing to human existence as *Dasein*. *Dasein*, or, literally, “being there,” is the unfolding of being amid the clearing and unburdening of human existence. Psychotherapy, or *Daseinsanalysis*, allows for the particular kinds of disclosure of one’s existence and relationship to existential givens that give rise to symptomatic constrictions of one’s freedom in the world.

### Therapy as “Being-With”

This genealogical interlude shows how current practices of psychotherapy have been consistent with its origins, the origins in some cases, and in other practices have diverged from its foundations. Therapy can be a fixing of broken psyches, a walking with persons, a “being with” and description of ways of being-in-the-world, an interpretation of relational patterning, or the regulation of unbalanced chemical processes, among other possibilities. Heidegger and Medard Boss considered this process more one of analysis than therapy, in which one loosens constrictions of *Dasein*’s ways of being-in-the-world (Boss 1979; Heidegger 1962, 1987/2001). Regarding the psychology and religion field, at first glance “loosening throughout” seems at odds with the definition of religion as a “binding back.” Nevertheless, with transcendent liberation as the goal of both processes, we can see how psychotherapy is itself a spiritual discipline.

An understanding of the spirituality of psychotherapy, then, depends on how one understands psyche and therapy or analysis. Although distinctions have been made between counseling, therapy, and spiritual direction, I believe these

distinctions presuppose functional and content differences that are secondary to what is shared by all of these practices: therapeutic presence. The current consensus among meta-analysts of successful psychotherapeutic practice is that the therapeutic relationship is the key factor in therapeutic change and positive outcome. Training programs, therefore, should focus most of its emphasis on teaching trainees how to establish and foster therapeutic relationships. With this focus, intangibles arise that are nonetheless significant factors in therapeutic outcome: empathic presence, depth of compassion, degrees of self- and other acceptance, risks of transparency and disclosure, the quality of discernment, the felt sense of being understood, and so forth. These qualities of therapeutic presence are well grounded in all traditions of religious care of however the soul is conceived.

The therapeutic intangibles mentioned above require discipline to achieve that necessitates risk, sacrifice, and patience – again, familiar words to all spiritual traditions. Participation in these intangibles transforms all participants in the therapeutic process, including the therapist. Both participants are on a journey toward liberation and transformation, which is the lived experience of transcendence.

### Commentary

One point for discussion in this commentary is how one adjudicates between the current insistence on providing evidence-based practices with this history of psychotherapy as spiritually informed by invisible, incommensurate, immeasurable phenomena that make up what is considered the *sine qua non* aspects of therapeutic change: therapeutic presence. Mere assessment from an outside position belies the history of concerned involvement and thousands of years of care and consolation. People do come to treatment in order to experience transcendence-as-transformation in their lives. Yet, being prescriptive about how one should live one’s life can be intrusive at least and downright controlling at best, thus disempowering another’s journey. An

alternative is available and one that is understood in light of its inherent religiosity: therapy as the clearing of space and lightening of burdens so being can unfold toward its ownmost potential in light of its embrace limitations. This is neither analysis alone, nor psychotherapy, but a type of therapy nonetheless. One does not direct the future, but open possibilities toward it. Doing psychotherapy this way necessitates a less than controlling experimental approach to discerning therapeutic quality.

At the forefront of the edification debates is a competition around which style of psychotherapy should be considered the most successful. Again, success depends on what counts as data and outcome, and, in fact, meta-analyses consistently suggest that all styles are more or less equally successful – depending, again, on the quality of the therapeutic relationship, which in turn depends on the quality of the therapeutic presence. Questions about therapeutic presence should be directed to the ancient spiritual traditions, particularly the ascetic and mystical dimensions of those traditions. What is not discussed as much as it should be is the fact that no one really knows how change occurs, in spite of our obsessive attempts to predict and control change factors. In other words, we should include more discussion about one change factor in the therapeutic process that is as old as the traditions that can inform it: mystery.

Finally, the development and choice of therapeutic modality should also be a consideration in the process of soul care. With the shift of psyche to more than an isolated ego, and/or a growing awareness of systems, relational processes, and like kind phenomena, therapeutic modalities have expanded to include group, family, couple, and play therapy. At the same time, psychotherapy still remains within a medically modeled format as long as those who come for help are seen as compromised and those who help them are seen as experts. Psychotherapy in the future could break this hegemony by focusing more on communities becoming more therapeutic and therapeutic milieus expanding toward more invitation to true *koinonia*, or the experience of freely being oneself as affirmed and affirming otherness.

## See Also

- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Psychotherapy and Religion

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This essay briefly outlines some of the varieties of psychotherapy practiced today and looks at the development of the relationship between psychotherapy and religion under two broad headings: independence and integration.

### The Varieties of Psychotherapy

Freud (e.g., 1933) is usually credited with the discovery of the “talking cure” for psychiatric illness: psychoanalysis. Although in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries psychiatric illness was dealt with by medical practitioners, the chief disturbances are those of behavior, thinking, and feeling, often with no clear organic cause. The era of humane treatments had dawned, and pioneers such as Tuke, Pinel, and Dix had established humane institutions for the care of the insane, in England, France, and the USA, respectively. But effective medical treatments were lacking. Psychoanalysis, the talking cure developed by Freud, was not always totally effective in producing improvements, but it was sufficiently effective to survive, expand, and develop enormously during the twentieth century. Its development still continues and its clinical efficacy has been placed on a firm footing (e.g., Sandell et al. 2000). The theories, aims, and methods of psychoanalysis can only be summarized briefly here. Psychoanalysis aims to enable the client to develop

a conscious awareness of the feelings and ideas that underlie his or her habitual style of living and relating to others. These feelings and ideas have ruled his/her life in a powerful way. The origins of these feelings and ideas are unconscious. Awareness allows the possibility of assuming a level of control. One view of psychoanalysis, therefore, is that it helps make the unconscious conscious. One route by which this is often achieved is via the “transference relationship,” in which the client displays powerful feelings towards the analyst – anger, dependency, and idealization – feelings which are not realistically related to the current context. The analysis of transference – the examination of these feelings and their earlier occurrences and origins – is an important route towards therapeutic improvement.

From its earliest days, psychoanalysis has engendered new theories and methods. Some are regarded as recognizably psychoanalytic – for example, the neo- and post-Freudians (e.g., Horney 1963) and Klein (1955) and her followers. Others, for example, Rogers (1961), have developed schools of counseling in which a primary vehicle of improvement has been the therapist’s support and regard for the client. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) (e.g., Beck 2005) has begun to exert a very important influence in clinical practice, since it has been able to demonstrate effective outcomes in relatively few sessions. CBT functions by enabling the client to examine and evaluate his/her habitual thoughts, behaviors, and feelings in a manner which is focused on the client’s immediate problems and agreed-upon areas of improvement and is therefore less wide-ranging than psychoanalytic therapy. There are many other varieties of psychological therapies, but this brief account has hinted at the range and approach of some of the dominant influences in this very active field.

### Independence

A starting point is to note Freud’s apparent distaste for religion, for instance his view of religion

as a universal obsessional neurosis (e.g., Freud 1907). Spilka (1986), Loewenthal (1995), and others have described as the enormous range of ways in which psychotherapists have seen and described the role of religion: religion may be a socializing and suppressing force, a source of guilt, a haven, a source of abuse, a therapy, and a hazard. Many of the views of religion expressed in the early days of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy were detrimental: religion was seen as damaging to mental health. One response to these views is to attempt to leave religion out of the picture in any attempt to work with mental health issues.

During the twentieth century, the mental health and religious leadership professions were often seen as parallel and largely independent, each offering solutions to human misery that were alternative rather than complementary. There was some antagonism. Some psychotherapeutic writers perceived only damaging effects of religion. Some religious leaders saw psychotherapy as a spiritually damaging venture (Loewenthal 1995).

One reasonable justification for the independence of the psychotherapy and religious professions was advanced by Neeleman and Persaud (1995). While decrying the fact that mental health professionals overlook the often important religious concerns of their patients, they observe that mental health and religion are two largely independent areas of professional expertise. The mental health professional may feel – wisely – that she/he does not have the expertise to tackle religious issues. These, it might be felt, should be left to the chaplaincy. Similarly the religious leader may feel that she/he does not have the expertise to tackle mental health problems.

These concerns gave rise to the development of pastoral counseling among the ministry and to transcultural psychiatry and spiritual counseling among mental health professionals. Both developments aim to give professionals awareness of and training in issues in mental health and religion, including sufficient knowledge of when to cross-refer. Many mental health practitioners and religious leaders/chaplains work now harmoniously with each other, and earlier mistrust and antagonism have generally been laid to rest.

## Integration

The history of peace between psychotherapy and religion is almost as old as the history of war. Carl Gustav Jung was the prominent early exponent of harmony, with his view of spirituality as intrinsic to human nature, suggesting that spiritual growth and psychological growth involved the same processes – an inner journey involving the healing of fragmented aspects of the self and the development of individuation (e.g., Jung 1958). The Jungian influence was almost certainly the strongest in the early development of pastoral psychology.

Other prominent exponents of harmony include Rizzutto (1974) and Spero (1992). Both these authors use objects-relations theory (a development of Kleinian thinking), which deals with how from infancy onwards, the individual internalizes, splits, and harmonizes “objects” from his/her social world. G-d is an internal “object” and the relationship with G-d may be examined, developed, and healed in the course of psychotherapy.

There has been a strong growth of interest in psychotherapy and religion, as seen for instance in the psychoanalytic explorations in Stein’s (1999) *Beyond Belief: Psychotherapy and Religion*. David Black (2000, p. 25) explores recent thinking involving a neuroscientific model. In Black’s view, some of the values of psychotherapy and religion are remarkably similar, for example, love, mourning, and reparation. Nevertheless, their goals are different – psychoanalytic therapy proceeds by the analysis of transference to allow the ego to achieve optimal functioning in the individual’s social world. The goal of religion is to achieve “a true view of the universe and our relations to it.” Black believes that mature religions aim to give access to positions which differ from what can be established and worked through in psychoanalysis. “A religious vision opens up the possibility of other sorts of development which go beyond the world of human object relations” (2000, p. 22). Thus, interestingly, Black appears to suggest that in object-relations terms, the potential for spiritual and personal development may differ in the religious life, from what can be achieved in psychoanalysis.

In a different vein, Viktor Frankl (1986) has explored the importance of the will to meaning and the role of purpose in life in psychological health. His introduction of these concepts into the practice of psychotherapy has enabled a positive approach in working with troubled individuals.

Attending to the client's spiritual problems has become a strong focus of attention in the twenty-first century (Cook et al. 2009; Pargament 2007; Pargament and Tarakeshwar 2005). One noteworthy point is that the term *spirituality* has become increasingly popular as an alternative and substitute for the term *religion* – the implications of this shift are reviewed by Pargament, also Loewenthal (2007) and others. In *Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy*, Pargament defines spirituality as *the search for the sacred*. He argues that spiritual concerns are often salient for many clients and therapists need to be equipped to deal with them. Therapists need to be able to recognize spirituality which can lead to growth and spirituality which can lead to a decline, also spirituality which is part of the problem, and spirituality which is part of the solution. The forthcoming American Psychological Association's *APA Handbook of the Psychology, Religion and Spirituality* (Pargament 2013) promises in-depth study of further aspects of the integration of spirituality into psychotherapeutic practice.

Another development has been the question of examining different cultural-religious traditions. In what ways do different traditions differ in the extent and manner of their integration into psychotherapeutic practice? Such issues are explored in Richards and Bergin (2000), in their *Handbook of Psychotherapy and Religious Diversity*, and Dowd and Nielsen (2006), in their *Exploration of the Psychologies in Religion*.

## Conclusions

The early development of psychotherapy featured some mistrust as the proponents of psychotherapy and religion viewed each others' ideas. Nevertheless, from the early stages there were noteworthy attempts to integrate the practice of psychotherapy with the religious and spiritual concerns of clients, and such attempts are now

flourishing. On the whole, it is the psychoanalytic and counseling schools of psychotherapy, rather than the cognitive-behavioral school, that have been responsible for these developments.

## See Also

- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Psychology as Religion
- ▶ Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Psychotherapy

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## Puer Aeternus

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“*Puer Aeternus*” is a Latin phrase for “eternal child.” It is an archetypal complex, that is, a psychological and mythical amalgam of symbols and images of eternal youth. It is embodied in the literary work *Peter Pan* by the British author James Barry (1860–1937), which has been adapted numerous times in plays, movies, and television. It is often used as a pejorative phrase to denote a young man who will not make the emotional commitments of adulthood and prefers to continually “play the field.”

Pushing the archetypal image backward in time from Victorian literature, Pan was the proverbial “naughty boy” in Greek mythology. Like the lost boys in Barry’s work, Pan lived out in the wild woods and was notorious for unrestrained sexuality. Other creatures fill this role; centaurs,

half-man and half-horse, and were notorious not only for their unrestrained sexual appetites but for their aggression as well. Satyrs, half-man, half-goat, were Pan’s species, and he was their chief. Barry’s Peter Pan was prepubescent and sexually neuter, boyish with charm but without the threat of rising sexuality. But Pan as the archetype of an animalistic approach to sexual relations informs the use of the Peter Pan complex today.

In the gay male imago, *Puer Aeternus* can be seen as the continuation of the mythic image of same-sex attraction that begun with the “erastes/eromenos” relationship as exemplified by the story of Zeus and Ganymede. The archetype continued through the real historical characters of the Roman emperor Hadrian (76–138 CE) and his adolescent companion, Antinous, a youth from Bithynia in modern-day Turkey. After his tragic death by drowning in the Nile river while the two visited that province of Rome, Hadrian had him deified. The godling ephebe, Antinous, became a late Roman polytheistic cult with particular support from men who sought erotic connection and love with other men. The Antinoan temples lasted until Theodosius closed all pagan temples between 388 and 381 CE.

In Jungian archetypal psychology, the *Puer Aeternus*, or eternal child, represents a regressive romanticization of childhood and can be unhealthy, preventing normal adult development, or it can be transformed into an appreciation of one’s remaining childlike qualities as one ages. Woman can have “puella eternis” issues as easily as men struggle with the puer. All people struggle with the eternal child as a reaction to aging. The dialectic polarity in the psyche is that of puer and senex. The emulation of youth is a strong tug in the mind fed by our consumer culture. We struggle to hold on to the seemingly unbounded energy, enthusiasm, and vitality as the “eternal child” continues to influence our choices and feelings. The process of self-exploration allows us to confront this archetypal force and through dialectic to transform the energies into an age-appropriate blend of *Puer Aeternus* and the elder, sage, and wise one. We start as the former and, should we live so long, embody the other.



## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Purgatory

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There are diverse beliefs about the existence of purgatory. There is little evidence for purgatory in the Scriptures. The notion of purgatory began in the Patristic period. Purgatory is a time, place, and/or moment in the afterlife between God's judgment at death and the final beatific vision. Eastern mystical theology sees purgatory as a time of purification. Humans need to be purged of their sins before seeing God face-to-face. Purgatory is the final step in human growth and divination. In Western theology, purgatory contains the notion of reparation (satisfaction) for one's sins through penance. Sinners take responsibility for the sins and accept the consequences (justice). In the medieval time, Popes and church councils addressed this doctrine. The Council of Florence (1439) in the *Decree to the Greeks* sought to balance the Western and Eastern notions. The reformers (Luther and Melancton, Calvin and Zwingli) threw out the notion of purgatory. They believed that God's grace in Christ was more than sufficient and that human purification and satisfaction were part of a salvation-by-works mentality. The reformers were particularly incensed by the selling of

indulgences which Tetzel argued helped release souls from purgatory. The Roman Catholic church in the Council of Trent (1563) reaffirmed the teaching on purgatory while eliminating the excesses like the sale of indulgences. In the twentieth century, Vatican II and Paul VI reaffirmed the doctrine of purgatory.

Praying for the dead (those in purgatory) has been part of Roman Catholic piety since the beginning. Some other denominations share this spiritual practice. The fourteenth-century poet Dante devoted one book (*Purgatorio*) of *The Divine Comedy* (translated Sayers 1955) to the journey up Mount Purgatory. His artistic depiction has had an enduring effect. Based on the theology of Thomas Aquinas, Dante portrays purgatory as both purification and reparation for sin. Purgation is God's work and not the result of a human effort. Humans however must cooperate with grace. Unlike hell, penitents in purgatory gladly take responsibility for their sins, accept the just consequences, are purified, and make reparation that is healing.

Some contemporary thinkers believe that purgatory or aspects of purgatory can be helpful today. In family therapy, O'Connor (1999) relates Dante's notion of purgatory to narrative therapy developed by White and Epston (1991). Taking responsibility for self, accepting the consequences for one's actions, and developing personal agency are similar to both narrative therapy and purgatory. Narrative therapy externalizes the problem much in the same way that Dante externalizes the seven deadly sins. Both approaches lead to transformation. Theologian Richard McBrien (1981) believes that purgatory is the shedding of the selfishness of the ego so that humans become more like God who serves others. Similarly, Boszormenyi-Nagy and Krasner (1984) argue that family therapy should be modeled on Martin Buber's (1970) I-Thou that purifies self-centeredness in developing a deep respect and care for others. Hargrave (1994) in his research on forgiveness maintains that reparation of wrongdoing is an important aspect of forgiveness and healing. Purgatory in this post-modern era has experienced resurgence while still being disputed.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)

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## Purpose in Life

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Purpose in life is the prime motivator for meaningful and fulfilling relationships and projects in existence, without which we can find ourselves in abject despair. Hence, discernment about the nature and edification of the purposeful life is vital to every area of therapeutic care and spiritual well-being. In fact, one could say that the partnership between psychology and religion is found in the understanding and perpetuation of the purposeful life. The purposeful life has been described by such diverse writers as the existential logotherapist Viktor Frankl (1905–1997) to the current, American, popular culture writers (Tolle 2008; Warren 2007).

Originally, “purpose” meant “aim,” “intention,” “to put forth,” or “by design.” Inherent to purpose is some type of directionality that is transfused with significance. A thorough understanding of purpose in life, therefore, entails an investigation of two primary aspects of its character, namely, intentionality and teleology.

Intentionality is our “aboutness” or “oughtness” in any given circumstance and comportment in the world. Beginning with Franz Brentano (1838–1917) in the late nineteenth century and furthered by the founder of transcendental phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), intentionality was defined as a focus on or toward something that is a part of any experience. Experience is always an experience of something, or an experience that is pointed, about which we are attuned or concerned. We are always heading somewhere, in some direction, searching, not only with our consciousness but also with our entire comportment. Brentano's and Husserl's positions were altered yet again by Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) who saw intentionality as an every moment experience of “care” or “Sorge” (Heidegger 1962). We find ourselves invested in how we are in the world, to what ends, and with what constitutes our ownmost possibilities.

Unlike Husserl, Heidegger did not believe we could shed or escape finitude and pre-understanding to achieve a pure phenomenological clarity. Rather, Heidegger believed that our very intentions are called forth by the already and always world of meaning in which we are “thrown” or find ourselves by happenstance. Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980) furthered Heidegger's work by equating consciousness with intentionality, including an emphasis on deconstructing any assumptions of an unconscious. For Sartre, the unconscious is merely disowned consciousness and an example of bad faith (Sartre 1956). In short, we are living out a purpose while searching for a purpose, as it the direction in which we are proceeding either has a design to it or, with each step, gives clues to the construction of a purposeful life. As the debate continues, what is indisputable is that there is teleology to how we experience and for what purposes.

Teleology can mean either “end” or “purpose” but an end or purpose that either is a part of or completes a particular design or another. The existence of something in a purpose-as-plan leaves us with the question of whether the circumstance creates space for something to exist or if our purposeful comportment would exist no matter what provisions were provided for it. Do we develop certain strengths or illnesses because it fits our culture’s needs, or would we have such strengths and/or illnesses regardless of the cultural prescriptions? Contemporary perspectives on this matter, also called a nurture or nature debate, consider our designs as a product of both natural and nurturing processes. The same issue contains another dilemma: are our designs, even if a combination of nature and nurture, a part of hard determined fate or providence, or are we free to create our designs as we choose? Finally, is our purpose serving a means for the ends of a larger purpose, or is our purpose an end in itself that uses the larger context as a means to our own ends? Do we become sensual creatures because we have senses, or do we evolve senses because we need to become sensual creatures? At the same time, much like air shifting toward the most vacuous space, does our direction in life take the shape it does because of opportunity for it to do so? The answers to these and other similar questions are predicated on whether or not one sees teleology as extrinsic, intrinsic, or a combination thereof. Nevertheless, all purpose in life is an intertwining of calling and commitment, of oughtness and response, and, most importantly, of an inviting niche matched with a matching fit.

The importance of purpose in life within the field of psychology and religion is probably best known in the work of the logotherapist, Viktor Frankl (1905–1997). Frankl’s development of logotherapy evolved from his lived experiences within a concentration camp during World War II. Frankl’s now famous book, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1946/1959), showed what human beings could endure, anything as long as the purpose and meaning to stay alive is strong enough to overcome one’s psychic, physical, and spiritual pain. For Frankl, his purpose to

live was twofold: he had someone who loved him and whom he loved, and he had projects to complete before his death. Frankl’s convictions integrate both teleology and intentionality in the will to meaning. Spirituality, contrary to an otherworldly phenomenon, is viewed from this perspective as the meaningful and fulfilling experience of discovering, following, being sustained by, and living out our purposeful existence.

Contemporary articulations of purpose in life continue with strong following. Rick Warren’s (2007) *The Purpose Driven Life* is a very popular text, at least among conservative to moderate Christians, and focuses on the discernment and synchronization of one’s life calling and direction with God’s providential plan for each person. Eckhart Tolle (2008) advises us that attachment to ego-based consciousness creates our conflicts and suffering, mirroring Buddhist noble truths, and invites us to a new consciousness that moves purpose beyond our egoism toward a deeper connection with that, which is more than us all, which is experienced in the fullness of the present moment. So whether in a popular or more formally academic way, discerning and following our purpose in life spotlights what matters in assessing and committing to live.

## Commentary

Several questions remain for consideration in discerning the purposeful life. First of all, one significant concern is clarifying who gets to define what is purposeful. Social construction has shown how powerful the voices of others are in shaping our life direction. Our purposes in life may actually be handed to us by the group, herd, crowd, or status quo. Yet, even though agency is shaped by our environmental and ideological contexts, agency still remains. One still assents or not, interprets or is interpreted, and decides or is handed decisions. Merely to fit with the needs of the group’s purpose has led to fascist and totalitarian horrors as much as the dictatorship-like apathy regarding how one’s intentions impact others. Caution should be

exercised in both directions, but all said and done, we are still left with the accountability of our own personal decisions and commitments toward a direction in life. What is purposeful depends on what is valued, be it survivability, safety, or otherwise. But inspiration and motivation seem to entail more than mere self-preservation. Thriving, as the old adage goes, is more than merely existing.

Another issue for consideration is whether purpose is found, discovered, or, as I argue, in line with the tradition of existential phenomenology, that purpose is already and always lived out in the world long before it becomes an object for reflection. Even in the very Sartrean act of creating meaning and purpose out of nothing overrides the obvious meaningful place from which the creation of meaning out of nothing can occur. Our enactments of significance fold in teleology and intentionality, while simultaneously incorporating finitude and freedom. One intends and complies with design based on what is meaningful to us, which at times does not show itself until times of great intimacy or crisis. As Will Barrett (1913–1992) noted, we often quibble about free will and determinism until our lives are at stake and our choices become quite pronounced (1979). Our lived purposes are so much a part of our moment-to-moment existence that Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) demonstrated that intentionality (and the reception of the intended response) is even in our reflexology (Merleau-Ponty 1963).

It should also be kept in mind that intentionality occurs within a context and clearing in which the intention is summoned and recognized. Jan van den Berg (1914–), the Dutch phenomenologist, argued that the metabletic moment, or the moment in which change occurs, is a convergence of many vectors that come together (van den Berg 1983). A space is created for purpose to become itself, much like the unfolding of Heidegger's *Dasein*.

Finally, we must address the relationship of the purposeful like to nihilism. Albert Camus (1913–1960) knew this relationship well and perhaps put it most succinctly when we argued that the only question worth asking is whether life is

worth living in spite of its absurd constitution (Camus 1955). His answer was a courageous “yes.” It behooves us to be honest about how random and seemingly impersonal tragedy can be in its savagery, often leaving powerful undertows of posttraumatic reactions and/or invitations to suicidal despair. But even suicidal despair is purposeful. One seeks to transcend one state of existence for another, which is driven by the pain of what is and what could be, albeit from a narrowed place of attunement. Each moment, though, we inescapably enact significance, whether or not we are attuned to it or whether or not we find it pleasing. Each moment is nonetheless a leap of enacted significance and lived out long before analyzed (Kierkegaard 1843/1941; Henry 2002). Hence, if we are always and already enacting significance, there can be no purposeless existence. Knowing this about the purposeful life frees us to embrace the “call of the wild,” where the “freedom to be” may actually be the heart of purpose in a life fully lived.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Doubt](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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# Q

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## Quaternity

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A concept in Jungian analytical psychology which refers broadly to images of totality and wholeness – such as the mandala – that appear in dreams or other spontaneous expressions of the unconscious. Jung believed that the quaternity should serve as the primary image of the God archetype, replacing the Christian trinity which he viewed as psychically obsolescent. The Christian trinity was an inadequate symbol to denote psychic wholeness, Jung contended, as it failed to encompass the shadow and feminine aspects of the psyche. Jung was not clear on which of these two should be accorded priority, arguing for the inclusion of Mephistopheles in the quaternity, as the shadow cast by Christ, while also expressing great enthusiasm for the Catholic Church's adoption of the doctrine of the *Assumption* of Mary. This, he maintained, established a quaternity relation as Mary, representative of the eternal feminine, functioned as counterpart to the bridegroom of Christ.

### See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)

- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Transcendent Function](#)

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## Quest

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In the cultural dreams that are our myths, heroes serve as our personae, representatives of our collective psyches – first as cultures and then as a species. Gilgamesh reflects a Mesopotamian physical and psychological experience, and Odysseus could not be anything else but Archaic Greek. But when we compare the heroes of these various cultures, Joseph Campbell's heroic monomyth pattern emerges, and we discover a hero who belongs to all of humanity. "The Hero," writes Campbell, "is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms" (1949/1973 Hero, p. 19–20).

The central event in the universal hero myth, the heroic monomyth, is the quest, in which



a hero – the representative of a culture – seeks some significant goal or boon for his or her people. Often the voyage involves archetypal stages such as the search for truth or riches or a lost loved one, a struggle with monsters, and the descent to the underworld. Jason goes in search of the Golden Fleece, Parsifal the Holy Grail, and the Buddha Enlightenment.

Interpreted psychologically, the questing hero is our cultural and collective psyche out in search of identity – that is, Self, the point of self-knowledge at which the conscious and unconscious come together as a unity.

As we see in the overall heroic monomyth, the archetypal pattern that emerges from a comparison of hero myths, the quest involves several almost ritualistic stages. There is the initial unwillingness to begin the journey – the refusal of the call – reflecting the natural unwillingness of most of us to give up the status quo for a difficult exploration of our inner worlds. But the hero must leave home precisely because he or she must break new ground in the overall human journey, as we must on the psychological journey towards fulfillment or self-identity. The old ways must be constantly renewed and new understandings developed. The knights of the Round Table must give up the comforts of Camelot to achieve renewal through adventure, and Gilgamesh must leave home to seek eternal life.

The questing hero looks for something lost – a father, a sacred icon of the tribe, something that will save the people, the plant of immortality, and the Holy Grail. “Religious” or philosophical heroes such as the Buddha or Jesus look to less tangible goals: Enlightenment, Nirvana, and the Kingdom of God.

The quest always involves frightening and dangerous thresholds to be crossed – giants, dragons, evil kings, and seemingly impossible labors such as those of Herakles. These all reflect the monsters within our own psyches and the thresholds we must cross on the way to wholeness. When the hero confronts the ultimate threshold and dies, and when he returns to the world after his descent into death, he is an image of our descent into the very

depths of the unconscious world in preparation for a new “birth” of the psyche.

### See Also

- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Quetzalcoatl

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Quetzalcoatl is a ubiquitous Mesoamerican figure who, like Jesus and Osiris, for example, was at once a god and a human king. As such he had immense power tempered by the inevitability of suffering and death. Quetzalcoatl was the “Feathered Serpent” of the Toltec city of Tula. He was the culture hero who taught the people how to live, how to create a calendar, and how to grow maize. His divinity is indicated clearly by the story of his virgin birth. His mother, Chimalman, was breathed upon by the supreme god in his form as the morning. In the process of giving birth to Quetzalcoatl, she died, much as Queen Maya, in one story, died after giving birth to the Buddha. Quetzalcoatl had a single significant enemy, his brother and fellow world creator, Tezcatlipoca, the god of the Smoking Mirror. Tezcatlipoca was primarily an Aztec god, and, since the Aztecs overcame the Toltecs in Mesoamerica, it was logical that Tezcatlipoca should trick and defeat

Quetzalcoatl before the Aztecs assimilated him into their pantheon.

Myths are cultural dreams, and as in the case of any dream, the characters in the dream reflect the dreamer. The culture that dreamed of Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca contained both beings and their qualities in its collective psyche. And given that we have been fascinated and struck by the lives of these beings – as we are fascinated by the lives of Jesus, the Buddha, or Osiris, for instance – whatever they represent might be said to be alive in the collective psyche of the human species.

Quetzalcoatl, the culture hero and king of the golden age of the Toltecs, knew that one day he would have to confront the side of his being represented by his brother. In the same way the Mesopotamian Inanna knew she would have to confront her dark sister of the underworld, Ereshkigal, or Jesus knew that he would have to descend to the death world of Satan before he could return to the world above. It is psychologically telling that when Tezcatlipoca arrives to confront Quetzalcoatl, he, the lord of the Smoking Mirror, holds up a mirror to his brother “so that you can see what you look like to others.” Horrified by his own physical identity and having been given a drug by Tezcatlipoca, Quetzalcoatl commits the sin of incest with his sister, thus experiencing the darkness within himself. He has a tomb built in which he can hide so that his people can no longer see him and after 4 days in the tomb leaves Tula in search of some place called the Red Land or the Dark Land or the Land of Fire. Along the way he is gradually stripped of his retinue and his powers, the ultimate humility coming when he is defeated by Tezcatlipoca in a game of ball. Like Inanna, he arrives at his destination having given up all former masks of his identity. His heart rises to the heavens from the funeral pyre on which his body is burned, and his soul lives in the place from which he had originally come and from which he will be resurrected.

In terms of his relation to the psyche of the human species, then, Quetzalcoatl represents any of us who make the heroic journey into the

unconscious world of our inner selves in order to relate to the shadow aspect of the personality. The process involves the stripping away of the masks that we wear and the confrontation with the elements of the unconscious that need to be brought into the conscious world. In this process the dark energy of these elements may be transferred into positive creativity. The final goal is the achievement of Self, represented by the hoped for resurrection in the myth.

### See Also

- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)
- ▶ [Inanna/Ishtar](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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### Qur'an

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The Qur'an is the sacred book of Muslims who believe its complete text came through revelation. Each word of it was revealed in Arabic by Allah (God) to Prophet Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel over a span of 23 years in the seventh century. The revelation of the Qur'an

began when the Prophet was 40 years old. It consists of around 600 pages, 114 chapters, and over 6,000 verses. The length of chapters varies with the longest chapter having 286 verses, while the shortest one has only three. The word "Qur'an" means recitation, and the first verse of the Qur'an to be revealed to Prophet Muhammad was a command to "read in the name of your Lord, the Creator. . ." (Ibn Hanbal 1895, p. 232).

Given that the Prophet was an unlettered man, his early followers eagerly memorized and recorded each new revelation as it was revealed. By the time the Prophet passed away, the Qur'an had been completed and many had memorized its entirety. Within 2 years after the death of the Prophet, the first caliph, Abu Bakr, compiled the Qur'an into a manuscript which became the basis for the authorized editions that were distributed to each Muslim province during the rule of Uthman, the third caliph. A few of those early manuscripts have been preserved and can still be viewed in museums today. Thus, there is only one authorized version in Arabic.

Muslims believe in the original form of all the revealed books which are mentioned in the Qur'an: the Torah of Moses, Psalms of David, and the Gospels of Jesus. The Qur'an also mentions the Scrolls of Abraham. Moses' contemporaries were excellent in magic, so his major miracle was to defeat the best magicians of Egypt in his day. Jesus' contemporaries were recognized as skillful physicians; therefore, his miracle was to cure incurable diseases. The Arabs, the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad, were known for their eloquence and magnificent poetry. Accordingly, Prophet Muhammad's major miracle to prove that he is a messenger of God is believed to be the Qur'an.

## Final Scripture

The Qur'an is revered by Muslims as being God's final Scripture. Its verses are and have been recited and memorized by Muslims of every nationality. It is the verses of the Qur'an that Muslims read during their five daily prayers.

The faithful ones are inspired, consoled, and often moved to tears by its poetic imagery.

For the past fourteen centuries, Muslims from all over the world have written the Qur'anic verses in various calligraphic forms, which were mainly produced and perfected by the Ottoman Turks. In fact, it was in Istanbul that the finest calligraphic scripts were produced. A famous saying, therefore, goes: "The Qur'an was revealed in Mecca, read in Egypt, and written in Istanbul."

The Qur'an contains many verses which describe natural phenomenon in various fields such as astronomy, geology, and embryology. It is also a law book to provide some basic principles for both individual and social life. Its main message is to call people to turn to the Source of all being and the Giver of life and to serve Him with a pure heart, free of idolatry or superstition. It rejects the concept of salvation or special privilege based on ethnicity, race, or color. Spiritual salvation is to be achieved by an attempt to make amends for one's sins and a sincere intention not to repeat one's mistakes in the future. There is no official priesthood in Islam, and the "imam" is no more than a knowledgeable prayer leader; one's sins need only be confessed directly to the Creator. The Qur'an presents itself as guidance for mankind as a whole. It is not for any particular people, place, or period in time.

## The Qur'an as Source of Culture

Islamic culture is founded on the Qur'an. It is recited on special occasions like wedding ceremonies and at certain times such as going to sleep or setting forth on a journey. In this sense, it serves the purpose of a prayer book. Muslims also utilize the Qur'an as a psychotherapeutic book. For example, they read some certain verses and gently blow them upon the sick as well as for the soul of the deceased. Additionally, verses like the eleven in the last two chapters are read to protect against evil temptations or when one fears of possession by a devil. People hang up amulets which have chapters from the Qur'an

around their neck, on the main door of houses, and on the rear mirror of automobiles to protect themselves and their belongings from accidents, evil eyes, burglars, etc. The Qur'an is also popularly used as an oath book; people swear by the Qur'an to take an oath.

- ▶ [Hajj](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Sharia](#)

### See Also

- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Hafiz](#)

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## Ramakrishna Paramahansa

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One of the most recognized and beloved of the great saints of India, Ramakrishna (1836–1886) is best known for his devotion to the Divine Mother, the Goddess Kali. He was also the founder of the Vedanta Society that now has branches in many major cities throughout the world. The doctrine of Vedanta is based on Hindu tradition, but Ramakrishna was also versed in comparative religious traditions. It is a characteristic of Hindu tradition to honor and respect all religions.

Ramakrishna's life was marked by many unusual spiritual phenomena. His birth was predicted to both his parents individually as being especially devoted to both Vishnu and Shiva, two of the Hindu Trinity. Early in life Ramakrishna was a nature mystic, occasionally falling into rapturous unconsciousness at the sight of great beauty or, on one occasion, when playing the role of Shiva in a play. He was the youngest son of a poor family that was of the *Brahmin* (priestly) caste. When his oldest brother went to Calcutta to teach Sanskrit and serve as a priest in the temple consecrated to the Goddess Kali, he invited his youngest brother, then 17, to assist him in his priestly duties. When this brother died just 1 year later, Ramakrishna took over as

priest in the temple. It was at that point that he underwent a profound change, dedicating himself entirely to the service of the Divine Mother. He became so engrossed in religious life that he sometimes lost track of time. Nonetheless, this was a period of dark yearning for the young Ramakrishna. His ardent spiritual thirst was for *darshan* – a vision and teaching of the Divine Mother. At one point, he almost committed suicide, and it was then that the Divine Mother first appeared to him. As he taught later, when yearning is as strong as that of a drowning man gasping for breath, then we will be given the gift of knowing God (cited in Kakar 1991, p. 16f).

After this first powerful mystical experience, his appetite was whetted for more. Whenever he received visions of the Goddess, he would beam with joy and enter into *samadhi*, which is a deep and intense meditative state wherein the ego enters into unspecified, formless, featureless consciousness, and then he would frequently become unconscious. When there was any diminution in the sense of Her presence, he would loudly wail and become breathless. His family worried about him; they took him to an *Ayurvedic* doctor for treatment and even tried an exorcist. He gradually passed through this initial intense spiritual phase. Subsequently his family arranged a marriage for him with the 6-year-old Sarada Devi. He complied with their wishes but never had any intention of consummating the marriage. In later life he envisioned his wife as the Divine Mother herself and worshiped her.

## Teachings

Ramakrishna taught that *Bhakti yoga*, or the life of devotion, is the quickest, surest path toward the union with the Divine. From this perspective, all desire can lead one to God. The passions of life are all redirected toward God rather than toward the objects of the world. Devotional mysticism, rather than eliminating the sense of individuality of the aspirant, seeks to use that sense of ego-identity by recapturing the feelings of childlike innocence and fresh vision. It was in feeling as a child, aware of his total humanity and complete dependence on the Divine, that Ramakrishna prayed:

To my Mother I prayed only for pure devotion. I said, "Mother, here is your virtue, here is your vice. Take them both and grant me only pure devotion to you. Here is your knowledge and here is your ignorance. Take them both and grant me only pure love for you. Here is your purity, and here is your impurity. Take them both, Mother, and grant me only pure devotion for you" (Kakar 1991, p. 16).

As a priest in the Kali Temple, Ramakrishna became known as a mystical genius and he was greatly sought after for teachings. He frequently taught that one can certainly worship God with form – any form – or one can worship God without form. What matters, he said, is simply the longing and the intensity of devotion. Not awe, but devotion. He was known to have many occult powers or *siddhis*, but he always made light of them. Ramakrishna conveyed his experiences through devotional songs, myths, analogues, metaphors, and parables. He generally transmitted his teachings orally, but also gave special mystical energy transmissions to his close disciples.

## Vedanta Society

His key disciples were originally 16 in number. After Ramakrishna's death, which occurred at age 50 due to throat cancer, Swami Vivekananda took over the leadership of the spiritual community. Starting in 1893 at the Chicago World Parliament of Religions, the Vedanta Society grew into a worldwide movement. Today the spiritual traditions of India are easily accessible

through this group; and in particular, when feminists are searching for female god images, the teachings of Ramakrishna make these ideas more plausible and available to spiritual aspirants.

## See Also

- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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## Ramana Maharshi

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Sri Ramana Maharshi (December 30, 1879 to April 14, 1950) was born into a Tamil Brahmin family, though freed himself of any caste restrictions at the age of 16 upon achieving liberation. His initial experience of *moksha* was famously precipitated by an acute psycho-spiritual crisis which manifested in an all-consuming fear of death. His emergence as an *Atiasrami* was complete with the realization that Spirit is deathless and that it transcends the body and endures after physical expiration. Although he highly recommended Bhakti as a path to the Absolute, he favored the non-dual system of Advaita Vedanta far more, his primary method of instruction (aside from the knowing radiance of his silence) to encourage seekers to ask of themselves the following all-important query: Who am I?



For he understood that this question, if honestly explored with both passion and intensity would lead those seeking answers through the tempestuous fog of samsaric confusion to the shining realization of *Tat Tvam Asi* – Thou Art That – the apex of the Vedantic path.

His uniquely Maharshian blend of Advaita Vedanta has influenced untold numbers both East and West. His teachings prefigured and informed in a multitude of ways the kinds of existential inquiry that would later be integrated into the humanistic and transpersonal theories that would dethrone the despots of psychodynamism and behaviorism. But these are modern distinctions; for, in Vedantic understanding, the domains of what we perceive to be those of “psychology” and “religion” overlap to the point of indistinctiveness.

Many modern interpreters of Asian religious traditions to the West have embraced the figure of Ramana Maharshi as the exemplar of perfected understanding incarnate in the flesh – most famously Ken Wilber, who in his mapping of the Kosmos, privileges Maharshi beyond all other sages. Subsequent authors critical of Wilberian spiritual politics see Maharshi’s complete disregard for his own health and survival not as evidence of spiritual profundity but of severe psychopathology. In the final analysis, perhaps the answer lies not so much in either extreme but in the meeting of the two.

## See Also

- ▶ [Death Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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One of Freud’s closest colleagues for 20 years, Rank (1884–1939) was an early and influential member of the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society, serving as its secretary and the editor of two journals, the *Zeitschrift* and *Imago*. He was also a member of Freud’s innermost circle, the “Ring” committee. Rank was one of the first lay analysts, a point of contention in the early days of psychoanalysis, receiving his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Vienna.

Rank’s eventual break with Freud accompanied the publication of his book *The Trauma of Birth*, where he traced the genesis of anxiety neurosis to the birth experience. Rank’s claims in this text threatened to subvert Freudian orthodoxy, with suspicious Freudians like Ernest Jones suspecting that Rank was seeking to replace the Oedipal drama with the experience of birth trauma as the central interpretive principle of psychoanalysis. Rank did, at places, call for a reevaluation of the importance of the maternal in psychoanalytic theory, recognizing the overestimation of the role accorded to the paternal in Freud’s system. In this sense, Rank’s work anticipated the criticisms and constructions of later feminist psychoanalysts like Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva.

Rank’s subsequent work retained this sense of the importance of birth as a paradigmatic experience in psychic development, arguing that this painful severance from the maternal was to some extent recapitulated in all later relationships as well as the countless “deaths” and “rebirths” the subject undergoes in the process of self-development, described in *Truth and Reality* as the “never completed birth of individuality.”

Rank became increasingly critical of the deterministic elements of Freud’s thought, arguing that Freud reduced the role of the ego to a mere “showplace” in the war between the biologically

driven id and the socially imposed superego. Dissatisfied with Freud's rejection of ego psychology, Rank turned to his early philosophical influences, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, in developing his own psychotherapeutic system of "will therapy."

The goal for the subject, in the Rankian view, is to marshal his creative powers for the development and pursuit of his own projected ego ideal. Following Schopenhauer, Rank claimed that self-consciousness had developed evolutionarily as an instrument of the will, eventually becoming capable of autonomous determination. Based on this view, Rank developed a triadic psychological typology. The majority of people, he believed, simply languish in unconsciousness, not nearly self-aware enough to labor under the burden and alienation that self-consciousness imposes. The last two types are the neurotic and the artist. Both the artist and neurotic are akin to Schopenhauer's genius, individuals who are gifted with a kind of surfeit of will that grants them prospects for liberation and self-determination that few can enjoy. The neurotic, however, refuses to embrace his creative powers as this involves conscious acceptance of the conditions of life, namely, the isolation and mortality imposed on him by the act of birth. The neurotic is thus, in Rank's term, a failed artist (*artiste manqué*) who turns his tremendous energies in upon himself in constituting his own suffering. The artist, by contrast, embraces life's transience and directs himself toward the formation and establishment of his own considered ego ideal, which often proves at variance with the ideal foisted upon him by parents and society. In this sense, Rank's conception of the artist type has clear resonance with Nietzsche's notion of the "overman" (*Übermensch*) and the "transvaluation of values."

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Kristeva, Julia
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Rank, Otto, as Mystic
- ▶ Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Atheism

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## Rank, Otto, as Mystic

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In *Psychology and the Soul*, Rank declares himself thus: "I believe that we have entered a new phase of spiritual development, one that affects both physics and psychology" (Rank 1998, p. 113). How telling that Rank is interested in our "spiritual development" and how this evolutionary step for our species will occur in the coming together of physics and psychology. It is our "spiritual development" that provides the larger context for our "physics" and of "psychology" – and not the other way around. It is Rank's own "belief" and conviction that history is awaiting a new chapter in humanity's evolution. Indeed, a "new phase" is being born.

Rank, writing these words in 1930, was so prescient and so profound in his grasp of the depth of history and of human nature that even today, some 82 years later, the new era or "phase" of which he speaks is still struggling to be born, still being unpacked. It is still *new*.

Yet, as Rank would be the first to testify, this "new phase" is born of the wisdom of the ancestors of whom he declares: "Primitives disclose to us the deeper sources" (Rank 1941, p. 245). If we are looking for *depth* (which I consider as good a definition of "spiritual" as we can find), Rank says we ought to consider the ancients because they reveal the "deeper sources."

Rank, so deeply postmodern, admires the wisdom of the premoderns and goes hunting for it. In doing so he sets himself up against the modern mentality that saw truth only in scientific cognition and ridiculed the consciousness and mysticism of premodern peoples. (Theodore Roszak points out that the Enlightenment “ridiculed” mysticism as the worst offense against science and reason, see Roszak 1992, p. 80; see also Freud 1967, pp. 68f, 100, 112, 172 and Freud 1957, p. 72). Freud ridiculed mysticism, reducing it to infantile regression and a yearning to return to the womb. Rank respects mysticism and includes it in any view of a whole and healed personality.

Let us consider seven areas in which Rank emerges as a bona fide mystic.

## Unio Mystica

Premodern and ancient peoples, like Rank, saw physics (i.e., nature and macrocosm) and psychology (human nature and microcosm) as one. All of life was a celebration of this union of psyche and cosmos. For Rank, people still seek “an identity with the cosmic process” and this rediscovery of cosmology will provide the surest healing for our deepest woes which stem from our separation from the cosmos. This *unio mystica*, our “being one with the All” and our being “in tune with” the cosmos, the earliest humans knew intimately. “This identification is the echo of an original identity, not merely of child and mother, but of everything living – witness the reverence of the primitive for animals. In man, identification aims at re-establishing a *lost identity with the cosmic process*, which has to be surrendered and continuously re-established in the course of self-development” (Rank 1932b, p. 376). Rank instructs us to look to indigenous peoples – in this instance for the wisdom of animal relationships, indeed the “reverence” that primitives have for animals. Are we capable of recovering reverence?

Here Rank reveals a profound ecological consciousness, one that is about “all our relations” as the Lakota people pray in their most sacred

ceremonies. This should come as no great surprise since, as Thomas Berry has observed, “ecology is functional cosmology.” To bring cosmology back, as Rank insists on, is to bring ecology alive. A new, “ecozoic,” age (Berry) will be marked by new (and ancient) relationships of intimacy with nature both micro and macro.

## Language

William James, whose work Rank studied, identifies one of the marks of mysticism as being “ineffability” (James 1958, p. 292). And Meister Eckhart, whom Rank also read, tells us that we “have to stammer when we speak of divine things” (Fox 1991a, p. 108). Anyone who has read Rank is familiar with his stammering and his dances with ineffability. Rank praises religion “because it admits *the Unknown*, indeed recognizes it as the chief factor instead of pretending an omniscience that we do not possess” (Rank 1932b, p. 44).

Rank is not the succinct poet that mystical writers like Eckhart or Rumi are. Yet, in reading Rank, sometimes plodding along with his convoluted sentences and mixed images, there are moments of epiphany, breakthrough images, and phrases that arrest the mind and move the heart.

## The Irrational

One great effort Rank makes to name the mystical is his much used term, the “irrational.” In invoking the “irrational,” Rank is standing up to and calling our attention to the *excessive rationality* of the modern era and its science of mechanism and reductionism, of Freud, of Newtonian causality, indeed of patriarchy itself.

Animals are irrational and the winds and the sea and the tigers and the stars and the planets and the rocks. Yet they all speak to us. And often of the Unknown and the mystery behind all things. As Eckhart says: “All creatures are gladly doing their best to speak of God” (Fox 1991a, p. 59).

All kinds of beings – beings that an anthropocentric civilization *chooses* to ignore – live their wonderful lives with little or no rationality. Furthermore, humans too live our lives far more irrationally than modern science and modern education would have us believe. Rank actually believes that values count. But values are not born of rationality – nothing deep is in Rank's view. Values are born of the "irrational." Einstein also says values come from intuition and from feeling and not from the intellect. They are born of love.

Rank declares that "the epitome of the irrational is the marvel of creation itself" (Rank 1941, p. 250). Here Rank, in his own poetic way, has named the unnamable for he has pointed to *where* we will find experience that is worthy of being named "spiritual" experience. It is in nature. The wilder and freer the better. Wonder is irrational, not rational. And marveling is everything. This Jewish spiritual consciousness is echoed in Heschel when he speaks of "radical amazement" and reminds us that "awe is the beginning of wisdom" (Heschel 1955, pp. 30f, 74). The rational gives us knowledge, but wonder gives us wisdom. Rank sought wisdom, he had seen enough of knowledge (body counts are rational as are "bottom lines" in business). Wisdom might be defined as the bringing together of the rational (knowledge) and the irrational (awe and love). Whole civilizations fall, Rank felt, such as the Roman Empire, because they chased after the rational at the expense of the irrational and after a patriarchal agenda (the masculine preference for the rational) at the expense of the feminine (for women are "carriers of the irrational").

Are the beasts rational? Is the sea rational? The sky? The fog that enveloped the distant sea this morning? The warmth I feel with the gas heater lit up? No, the rational – the making of a gas heater and the engineering that made this warm cottage possible – is good and fine *but it serves the irrational*. If it does not, if the irrational serves the rational, then ideology trumps reality and we are lost souls indeed.

For Rank ideology represents the shadow side to irrationality, a wolf in sheep's clothing; it comes pretending to be scientific, objective, and

rational. But scratch the surface and you find what often drives it is unconscious fear, dread, guilt, and the compulsion to control. This demonstrates the power of the irrational: Repress it, forget it, and deny it and it will come up in other forms to sting us with its poison.

"Vital human values" – ethics itself – derive from the irrational, from our experience of what matters, of what is truly vast and vulnerable and worthy of our attention and protection (Rank 1941, p. 14). In other words, what is truly *marvelous*. The irrational is that which "does not fit into our scheme of things" – it takes us beyond our personal, private, tribal, anthropocentric agendas into a vaster world, a cosmic place, whence we derive our truest values.

Rank observes that life would not be life without the irrational. "Rationalistic psychology was only an outgrowth of the mentality of our age which is, or rather, was up to recently, so highly rationalized that the irrational had only the neurotic form of expression." Repress the healthy irrational and neurosis will sting you – and sting all of a culture. What is the cure to excessive rationality? "To attempt to cure this result of rationalism by more rationality is just as contradictory as a war to end wars, or an effort to strengthen a weakening democracy by more democracy" (Rank 1941, p. 289).

The cure is to step out of excessive rationality and make room for the power of life itself. "The only remedy is an acceptance of the fundamental irrationality of the human being and life in general, an acceptance which means not merely a recognition or even admittance of our basic 'primitivity,' in the sophisticated vein of our typical intellects, but a real allowance of its dynamic functioning in human behavior, which would not be lifelike without it" (Rank 1941, p. 289). What is lifelike *is* irrational and we ought to be paying attention to this first and foremost. This may mean getting off our intellectual high horses and making room for its dynamic functioning in our lives.

What are the negative consequences if we ignore the irrational? "When such a constructive and dynamic expression of the irrational together with the rational life is not permitted, it breaks

through in violent distortions which manifest themselves individually as neurosis and culturally as various forms of revolutionary movements which succeed *because* they are irrational and not in spite of it” (Rank 1941, p. 289). Notice that Rank is not abandoning the rational – he says here that the rational and irrational life are compatible – but there must be a balance and our culture, lacking appreciation of the irrational, is far from balanced, to its peril. Ideology will take over in its stead, *anything to bring alive the irrational*. Rank believes that Karl Marx succeeded so amazingly because he offered *hope* to the poor. Hope is an irrational thing. It keeps people in dire straits alive.

What else is irrational? How about the following: dreams, music, dance, art, ritual, sex, love-making, babies, laughter, play, massage, drumming, singing, the smells of newly cut grasses, tastes of spicy foods, silence, grief, color, creativity, peace, clowning, nature, wilderness, prayer, fear, animals, angels or spirits, children, beauty, paradox, myth, stories, games, sport (that is not rational or business driven), campfires, chant, darkness, tenderness, forgiveness, meditation, God, birds, trees, plants, flowers, and food. And “legitimate foolishness,” the folly that accompanies wisdom. Holy folly.

What would life be without these? Where would we derive our values, our reasons for living, our zest for carrying on? The irrational includes the “dynamic forces governing life and human behavior” (Rank 1941, p. 23). In our culture these forces are stigmatized as “irrational.”

We need, says Rank, a whole new civilization – one that includes the irrational – because “human nature is at bottom irrational.” Rank is interested in the *ground* (Eckhart’s word) of our souls, the truth about what is at the “bottom” (Rank’s word) of our beings. Because society is rational (or pretends to be), we suffer from its “rational ideology” which is in fact born of an “inhibited negation of life” (Rank 1941, p. 278). Instead of an inhibited negation of life, why not a community celebration of life? This celebration of life, this optimism, begins with awe and wonder, with marveling at creation itself.

Rank is a creation-centered mystic of the highest order. The *Via Positiva*, a rediscovery of the awe and wonder, the delight and joy of existence itself, is the basic cure for self and society’s tiredness and pessimism. A new falling in love with life is the medicine prescribed by Rank and other creation-centered mystics. Consider, for example, Aquinas: “Joy is the human’s noblest act” and “God is supremely joyful and therefore supremely conscious” (Fox 1991b, p. 119f).

## The Beyond

Another favorite concept of Rank’s is that of the “beyond.” Says Rank: “The individual is not just striving for survival but is reaching for some kind of ‘beyond.’” Beyond is something we reach for. It is not there yet. One might say it is “eschatological” or in the future. Yet it beckons us, reaches out to us. The word “beyond” implies *being yonder*, being at a frontier, being at an edge, stretching, growing. Eckhart says: “God is delighted to watch our souls enlarge.” An enlarging of our souls takes us “beyond.” Beyond implies distance. Being at the horizon. Adventure. Something great to strive for, something great to welcome us in, to welcome us home. A homecoming. A return to our origins.

In *Art and Artist*, Rank insists that the ancients’ passion for developing our *relationships* to the macrocosm, so fully experienced by way of ritual, can be our passion today. Humanity’s will, that is, its power of choice to create, is called forth by struggle and survival issues. Our species, which is so deeply troubled by its own mortality, seeks still “to reach for some kind of beyond.” It is, in Rank’s view, that very reaching that characterizes us as a species. Call it immortality; call it going beyond death. In our children, our monuments, our creativity, and our art, it beckons us, reaches to us, and pulls us to some kind of beyond. We cannot escape it.

Rank speaks of the need to move *beyond psychology*. How is this done? “Man is born beyond the psychological era only through vital experience of his own – in religious terms, through revelation, conversions, or rebirth”

(Rank 1941, p. 16). Vital experiences take us beyond, wake us up, and feed us with revelation and rebirth. Vital experiences include the experiences of ecstasy and union, joy, and beauty that no one can take from us. They are, reports Dr. Kubla Ross, those moments people remember on their deathbeds when they die peacefully. They are grace. Grace breaks through. These are mystical moments. Mysticism is our breakthrough moments of union, of ecstasy, sometimes hot or orange ecstasies, and sometimes cool or green, green/blue ecstasies. They are what nourish the soul for soul is, says Rank, our “power of rebirth” (Rank 1932a, p. 128). They make us young again, new again. Eckhart says the first gift of the Spirit is *newness* (Fox 1991a, pp. 111–113).

What are some other synonyms for “beyond?” How about the following: Transcendence, infinity, spirituality, cosmos, grandeur, immensity, mysticism, God, magnanimity, creativity, surprise, Spirit, and eternal life.

Rank believed that we “negotiate with the problem of the Beyond” in at least two deep instances: art and love. Our experiences of union overcome separateness. As Kramer puts it, “in the jointly created – and endlessly recreated – ‘moment’ of empathy between artist and enjoyer, lover and beloved, I and Thou, client and therapist, separateness is dissolved only to be rediscovered, enriched, and renewed by the dissolution of the individual into the void. ‘Love abolishes egoism,’ said Rank, ‘it merges the self in the other only to find it again enriched in one’s own ego’” (Kramer 1995, p. 95). We have “beyond experiences” which results in a “dissolution of . . . individuality in a greater whole” (Rank 1932a, p. 110). Beauty does this to us and the experience of truth and art do the same.

What is this “greater whole?” Rank dares to cite the mystics in *The Trauma of Birth* published in 1924, the book that got him expelled from Freud’s circle. Rank says the mystic “cries out in beloved ecstasy: ‘The I and the You have ceased to exist between us, I am not I, You are not You, also You are not I; I am at the same time I and You, You are at the same time You and I’”

(Rank 1924, p. 177). Rank saw separation from the cosmos as the greatest issue besetting our species. This cosmic separation is temporarily healed by our experiences of mystical union, the return to an original identity of union with the cosmic process which “has to be surrendered and continuously re-established in the course of self-development.” When we surrender ourselves in art or in love, we are undergoing a “potential restoration of a union with the Cosmos, which once existed and was then lost. The individual psychological root of this sense of unity I discovered (at the time of writing *The Trauma of Birth*, 1924) in the prenatal condition which the individual in his yearning for immortality strives to restore. Already, in that earliest stage of individualization, the child is not only factually one with the mother but beyond that, one with the world, with a Cosmos floating in mystic vapors in which present, past, and future are dissolved” (Rank 1932a, p. 113).

This passage echoes Eckhart when he talks about our pre-origins in the Godhead where the unity is so great that no one will have missed us when we return. We return at death but before that in encountering our “unborn self” in meditation and in other unitive experiences (Fox 1991a, pp. 77, 214–218).

For Rank, because he is at home *in the cosmos*, the world “bears the mark of infinity.” Rank’s world is not a rational world that humans make but the *whole world* that constitutes the very meaning of the Greek word “cosmos.” French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, in his moving book, *The Poetics of Space*, describes what living in a cosmos is like. There the soul experiences *immensity* and *grandeur*. We are at home with solitude for great things well up in the soul because of solitude. “Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts up again when we are alone. . . . we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense.” Our soul is a *vast* place full of hidden grandeur and in our experiences of unity or grace “we discover that immensity in the intimate domain is intensity, an intensity of being, the



intensity of a being evolving in a vast perspective of intimate immensity.” Intensity, immensity, and intimacy – in the human they all occur at once. There follows a new level of self-appreciation and gratitude for being here. “Slowly, immensity becomes a primal value, a primal, intimate value. When the dreamer really experiences the word immense, he sees himself liberated from his cares and thoughts, even from his dreams. He is no longer shut up in his weight, the prisoner of his own being” (Bachelard 1994, pp. 184, 193, 195). The feeling of ecstasy results in a taste of profound *voluptuousness*. (Eckhart says “God is voluptuous and delicious,” Fox 1983, p. 33). Liberation and healing follow. I believe Rank saw all this. This is why he champions so fiercely the reunion of microcosm and macrocosm.

### The Now

For Rank the experience of union with the cosmos includes the suspension of time – “present, past, and future are dissolved” at that moment. He further elaborates on the “Now” experience at the end of *Psychology and the Soul*: “In the psychic realm, the only reality is the *Now*. (italics his), the same Now that physicists find so incomprehensible, useless, and even unthinkable” (Rank 1998, p. 127). Rank criticizes Freud for dwelling in the past for “in so doing, he neglects the truly psychic element – the present, active self, and its corresponding Now.” For Rank the creative process, the choice to give birth that is the basis of all ethics, happens *only in the Now*. Creativity is not of the past; therefore, our healing will not come from knowledge of the past but from current choices, choices made by the “present, active self, and its corresponding Now.” Rank applies his philosophy of the Now and practices what he preaches (or is he preaching what he practices?) when he tells us that his “dynamic therapy” is based first and foremost on an emphasis that shifts “from the past to the *present*, in which *all* emotional experience takes place” (Rank 1996, p. 268). The Eternal Now is reenacted in the healing paradigm Rank presents. The emphasis

on the Now is not speculative; it dictates a trust of what is really going on. This sounds very zen-like.

Meister Eckhart talks similarly when he says that God is creating everything of the past and everything of the present and everything of the future in the depths of your soul now. He adds: “God is in this power as in the eternal now. Were the spirit at every moment united with God in this power, people could never grow old. . . . There everything is present and new, everything which is there. And there you have in a present vision everything which ever happened or ever will happen. . . everything is present and in this ever-present vision I possess everything” (Fox 1991a, p. 113).

Another creation mystic, the historical Jesus, also speaks of the importance of the Now when he says: “The kingdom and queendom of God *is* among you.” It is from these experiences of the Eternal Now that our memories are stamped forever with what we truly cherish. Therefore, it is from these glimpses of a restoration of a primal unity (Eckhart talks about our return to our “unborn self,” Fox 1991a, p. 217) that our truest values emerge. Without honoring these Now experiences, we do not share values in common. We have no shared ethic.

### Letting Go

Like the mystics of old such as Eckhart, who says “we sink eternally from letting go to letting go into the One” (Fox 1983, p. 49), Rank talks about the constant separations that life asks of us. “I have learned that the capacity to separate is one of life’s major functions. Life in itself is a mere succession of separations, beginning with birth, going on through several weaning periods and the development of the individual personality, and finally culminating in death – which represents the final separation. At birth, the individual experiences the first shock of separation, which throughout his life he strives to overcome. In the process of adaptation, man persistently separates from his old self, or at least from those segments of his old self that

are now outlived. Like a child who has outgrown a toy, he discards the old parts of himself of which he has no further use” (Rank 1996, p. 270).

If we fail to learn to let go, the result is neurosis. The neurotic “is unable to accomplish this normal detachment process. He cannot live through and emancipate himself from the various fundamental separation stages in life. Owing to fear or guilt generated in the assertion of his own autonomy, he is unable to free himself, and instead remains suspended upon some primitive level of his evolution. He stays fixated, so to speak, upon a particular worn-out part of his past that he cannot sever himself, and his whole present behavior is directed and symbolized in terms of this *unaccomplished* separation” (Rank 1996, p. 270). Thus, the neurotic never tastes the Now. He is too busy living in the past and bracing himself for an imagined angst-ridden future. *The neurotic is not just the artiste manque; he is also the mystique manque.* Rank is not only a mystic himself – he calls us all to the *unio mystica* and to the “marvel of creation,” to the irrational and the beyond, and to the Now and to deep and constant letting go. To fail to respond is to invite loss of soul.

Mysticism is our “Yes” to life (see Fox 2001). Rank proposes that neurosis is by definition a refusal to say Yes; thus, it is a refusal to be a mystic: “*All neurotic reactions can be thus reduced to one Big No that men hurl at life*” (Rank 1996, p. 258, italics and caps his).

## Recovering the Child

In a lecture delivered in 1938 at the University of Minnesota, Rank repeats his call for a feminine psychology and a children’s psychology. “We do not possess a real psychology of the *woman* nor do we understand the *child* psychologically.” What we have in psychology “is in essence *man-made*: that is to say, man has projected his own psychology into the woman and into the child” (Rank 1996, p. 271). How ahead of his time Rank was in pointing to what we can call today Adultism – the projection of adult attitudes into children. Rank suggests that adults ought to

learn from the children (Jesus offered the same subversive advice). The child is more mystical, more at home with the irrational. “The child lives mentally and emotionally on an entirely different plane: his world is not a world of logic, causality, and rationalism. *It is a world of magic*, a world in which imagination and creative will reign – *internal* forces that cannot be explained in terms of scientific psychology.” To honor the child’s wisdom is to recover a respect for nature itself. “The child lives in a world of magic, where no logical or rational – that is, man-made – laws govern, but where the irrationality of nature herself, of which the woman is still so much a part, predominates” (Rank 1996, p. 272). Instead of projection of adult ideologies into children, Rank proposes a radical alternative: The way of love, of a love that is more than sentimental and anthropocentric. We cannot remove the child’s fear or insecurity, but we can “alleviate [them] by love, *a love that connects the tragically separated individual again with cosmic life*” (italics his). Of course, for this to happen, adults must themselves possess a relationship to the cosmos. Rank continues: “Instead of psychologizing the child, we should respect his irrational nature and learn from him to accept it humbly in ourselves as well. We are not in the least more secure than he is, we are not less irrational at bottom. All we do is pretend to be; that’s our tragedy, our false heroism” (Rank 1996, p. 273).

Rank is not only a mystic; he is also a prophet who dared to interfere with the modern era’s biases against mysticism. And, like most prophets, he has paid the price of being vilified by his Freudian brethren and being forgotten by many who study psychology. In Rank’s view, the “new hero” will be one who carries on an authentic love of life: “The new hero, still unknown, is the one who can live and love in spite of our *mal du siecle*” (Anaïs Nin citing Rank in Lieberman 1985, p. 336). Rank observed that “new personality types are created during social and spiritual crises of religious, political or economic origin” (Rank 1941, p. 163). I believe Rank was such a type; he was a hero. He beckons the rest of us to go beyond.

## See Also

- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Rank, Otto](#)

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## Rebirth

- ▶ [Reincarnation](#)
- ▶ [Resurrection](#)

## Redemption, The Problem with

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## Humanity Redeemed!

The myth of redemption is so pervasive that it permeates global politics, education, ecology, feminism, etc. Depth psychology is not exempted. Ostensibly a depth psychological analysis starts with a pursuit of consciousness, but covertly the process often conceals a quest for redemption, masquerading as individuation, actualization, psychological health, wholeness, centeredness, mindfulness, or whatever new jargon that accommodates the Christian myth of redemption. The confusion between those two concepts leads to a belief that analyzing the unconscious will lead to a clean, pure, healthy psyche and that one will evolve into a luminous, loving, dignified, pacified soul. Such a utopian dream would be nice were it not for the fact that it produces an odious, sanctimonious persona. To break the trance, one needs to differentiate redemption from individuation and salvation from wisdom. The time allotted for our life is finite, but the quest for perfection is not, and when the pursuit of perfection is ego driven, it causes psychological exhaustion. The quest for redemption turns the person into a depressed pilgrim, out of spiritual wind from the long ascension towards an impossible apotheosis of individuation. Despite every guru's teaching and Jung's warnings that individuation can never be complete, sparks from the ego are often taken for an "illumination." Because the spiritual need is real, so is the danger of inflation.

For depth psychology to emerge as a force of renewal of the sense of the sacred, it needs to escape from inflation about the quasi-divine principle of the Jungian "Self." Escape from ego fixations includes theoretical fixations upon the masters that have trained us. Deification of the masters and their theories is, in itself, a sign that

the myth of redemption is active. The masters, gurus, and leaders who ask to be “adored” by their disciples are usually in the business of selling redemption (“Think like me and you’ll be saved!”). When adoring disciples notice that their idols have feet of clay, their critique becomes vicious, fueled by a sense of betrayal and disillusionment. However, such decanonization would not have been necessary had they not deified their master in the first place.

Neither Voltaire nor Nietzsche nor Freud nor Jung nor any of the modern philosophers of atheism were completely free of the redemption myth. The Christian God may have been declared dead, but the mourning is not finished; it is too big a loss to be completed in just a few generations. Jung’s nostalgia for the Christian God resurfaces at times in his theory about the Self (capital S); I have met many who *believe* in Jungian theory as one believes in a Savior, because they miss the certainties of faith. Until our mourning of God is done, the fantasy of redemption will grow out of all sorts of grounds.

Zarathustra’s rallying cry of “God is dead” provided me with an enduring motivation to practice psychotherapy: I felt then – and still do today – that a world without the Christian God need not be a desperate world”. Psychotherapy is a daily battle against despair. Nevertheless, the deconstruction of conventional religions does not alleviate the need for a sense of the sacred; but where is it? The desire for redemption resurfaces in every cause that is dear to one’s heart: ecofeminist redemption (when women rule, all will be fine on this planet), political redemption (this party will change everything), financial redemption (as soon as I have enough, I’ll follow my bliss), romantic redemption (one day, my prince/princess will come), and psychological redemption (one day, I’ll be individuated, one of the Illuminati). Each of these fantasies stems from the monotheistic mythology. Even the ideal of Buddhist detachment can conceal a typical Christian fantasy where the guru replaces God and an all-encompassing philosophical system serves as faith.

To make sense of my small life, I need the amplification of my ordinary life-journey into

something I can call an Odyssey; I want the magnification of my battles at the office into an Iliad; I know my house is not a castle, but in a way it is. This aggrandizement of our story, which is not at all an aggrandizement of the ego, is a valid protection against feelings of absurdity. In times of great difficulty, the narrative logic breaks down and the transformation of facts into a narrative fails. One tries to tell the events this way and that way, from this or that perspective, but the collection of facts remains absurd. The trajectory of one’s life appears seemingly random – what was *THAT* all about? The breakdown in the narrative capacity is usually interpreted as a form of despair, similar to the despair of losing one’s faith. Yet, it can also signal a very different kind of breakdown: that of the redemptive myth. Only then can the loss of the redemptive hope appear as a necessary loss.

### **Life Is Absurdly, Awesomely Ugly and Beautiful**

Christians come from a culture that has millennia of religious indoctrination in which the meaning was defined by hope of salvation in the afterlife. Nietzsche and many others bulldozed the field, but the efforts of many more generations may be necessary to change not only our religious attitudes but our psychological makeup as well. We have only begun to expose the racist, sexist, oppressive, violent, hypocritical, parasitic, and exploitative cowardice present in the cement of actual institutionalized religions. The need to explore the destructiveness of our pervasive redemption myth is as necessary as a good look at the shadow. We could begin with examining how it is very possible and feasible to live outside the redemptive myth, without falling into despair. For example, if one looks at the usual promises of human love – “I’ll love you forever” or “I’ll never abandon you” – one sees the *absurdity* of it. These promises may be sincere, but are *absurd* if one considers that mortality is an absolute limitation to the infinite depth of the experience of love. Nevertheless, this limitation, with all the sweet lies around love, is not reason enough to

waste the spiritual value of love. We bring children into this world, and we love them madly, even if we know they will suffer and die. We love them with an intensity that is almost painful, even though we know, despite all our efforts, that they, like ourselves, will suffer and die. It doesn't make much sense, but not loving makes even less sense. The sense of the absurd, which is a consequence of the loss of a religious faith in a literal god, may come to be experienced as something as natural as the limitations of human love, a reality that simply is like other realities that cannot be logically explicated.

The core idea of early-twentieth-century existentialists with respect to the experience of the absurd was to suggest the necessary dissolution of all the meanings that have been taken for granted. Their sense of the "absurd" is often interpreted as meaning "nonsensical," but it does not; I am suggesting it means "mysterious." The notion that existential angst is the unavoidable consequence of the loss of faith in a redemptive god may very well be simply a consequence of a very long domination by the monotheistic God. Religious sentiment, like the sentiment of love, has a history. Building cathedrals was a task carried on by many generations; deconstructing the redemptive obsession may take at least that long. Postmodernism, with its unrelenting attack on ideologies and single meanings, has acted as a sort of collective therapy. It took us to a place in our consciousness where the loss of the redemptive myth is simply equal to the major absurdity of most of life's trajectories.

It is a fact that an acute sense of the death of God can stir up feelings as painful as when experiencing the death of a child or the loss of a loved one in a car accident. It seems so absurd, so meaningless, that the anguish is so acute. The danger is then to invest all of one's psychic energy in *explaining* the absurd, to redeem the tragic event (Why? why? why?). The suffering soul becomes obsessed with a search for meaning; and because the tragic cannot be redeemed, that search itself becomes tragic. This is where I find that a depth psychological approach can be of immense help, because it moves away from explanations and remains in the territory of the

tragic. It leads into the deepest layers of the imagination, where psychic regeneration can occur. It does not offer redemption but a map of the journey through psychic devastation.

Augustine asked himself the age-old question that historians have in common with depth psychologists: can one find meaning in history? (And the corollary: can I find meaning in my story?) Augustine's answer constituted a dogma for a very long time. Yes, history has meaning, says Augustine. It is the meaning given by faith. If one loses faith, one also loses meaning. Problem solved! By remaining unconscious of our Christianity, we tend to apply that same logic and replace one bible with another, falling right back into Augustinian dogma. One of the current tasks of depth psychology, as I understand it, involves dumping the last residue of that Augustinian style of consciousness, based in faith. Not that there is a need to bring up Augustine's case again. He has been tried and found guilty over and over. Nevertheless, Augustinian debris is blocking new construction. Depth psychology is experimenting with a next style of consciousness, one that allows a person to endure the absurd, to cope with the insufferable, to lose one's innocence, and, instead of turning to Augustinian redemption, to learn to swim in the Styx and imagine life differently, making room for its tragic element. Depth psychology suggests, for example, that you are absolutely free to jump off a bridge, if suicide is what your soul ultimately wants, but before you literalize death into physical death of the body, try a metaphorical death. Try an imaginal trip to the Underworld. Try a form of loving through pain, living with loss, and aging in character. Try imagining another self, inventing another myth, and writing another chapter in your story. Travel first, see the inner world, and then decide if it is literal or metaphorical death you want.

The desire to find meaning is a human one and is given expression in the creation of a narrative, but there is too often a contamination with the belief in a redemptive principle which wants to turn bad into good. "My baby is dead, but she is now an angel in God's paradise" is a frequent defense against despair, a direct consequence of

not having completed the mourning for one particular long-lived God. The almost irresistible reflex of turning everything into morality of good and evil belongs to faith, belongs to a God that defines right and wrong. The adventure of a depth psychological analysis is a move away from this kind of religious conditioning. The need for redemptive ideals is replaced by another style of consciousness: the capacity to value the awe-inspiring mysteries of the psyche and of the beauty of the sensate world. As one opens up to the possibility of living a full and generous life, the thirst for redemption diminishes, and the need to be of service to others, to culture, and to nature increases.

Human glory, health, and fortune do not suffice to fill the vast inner space. We need to imagine a wider world, one of archetypal dimension. All humans, once they take care of survival needs, feel that there is a beyond-the-ego-realm. Many still choose to call “it” God or Goddess or Love or First Principle or “any other term of your choice,” as they say in Alcoholics Anonymous, with impressive success. Transcendence means a sense of value above, beyond, and apart from the material world. Depth psychology has helped many understand and feel that life lived in the service of justice, truth, love, and compassion has enough transcendental value without any imposition of prefixed meanings and predefined values. This is why the search of a junction between psychology and the various religious traditions feels like a precious alternative to institutionalized religions; it recognizes the human need for something bigger than ego, but refuses to let religious orthodoxies manipulate that need.

**Acknowledgment** This entry is an adaptation of a part of a chapter from the book *The Wisdom of the Psyche: Depth Psychology after Neuroscience*, Routledge 2007, by GINETTE PARIS.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Reductionism

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## Introduction

Reductionism is the process of breaking complex entities, concepts, or phenomena down into their smallest constituent parts or processes in order to more fully understand them. While essential to scientific study, reductionism generates difficulties when dealing with higher level phenomena like those related to human religious experience. The problem is especially difficult for the psychology of religion because of the tendency among many researchers to assume that description is explanation.

## Historical Trends

Reductionist tendencies in the psychology of religion have historically led researchers and analysts to commit the fallacy of “nothing buttery” (Paloutzian 1996). The discovery that certain areas of the brain are active during meditation, for example, has led some to claim that experiences of the one who meditates are *nothing but* by-products of neurochemistry. From the standpoint of religion, this is obviously problematic. From the standpoint of psychology, it is also, if less obviously, problematic since



reductionism of this sort ends in loss of important information about the object of study (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005). Prior to the advent of neurological and cognitive sciences, the most reductionist approaches were perhaps the Freudian and behaviorist schools of thought. In Freud's framework, the "personal God is, psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father" (Freud 1910/1957, p. 123), and religion is illusion, "fulfillments of the oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes" (1927/1961, p. 30). For the strictly behaviorist school of thought, religion is reduced to publicly observable behaviors, which are nothing more than operantly conditioned actions. For B. F. Skinner, the father of behaviorism, a god is nothing more than the "archetypal pattern of an explanatory fiction" (1971, p. 201).

The problematic nature of reductionism was recognized by some from the start. William James wrote against what he called medical materialism and advocated a descriptive approach to the study of religion. Although it is debatable how well he succeeded in avoiding explanation, James' seminal *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) remains the standard for approaching religion from a phenomenological point of view. Theodore Flournoy (1903) identified two fundamental principles for a psychological approach to religion, the first of which is the "exclusion of the transcendent." By this he meant that psychologists should always strive to avoid making claims about the actual existence/nonexistence of God or other aspects of transcendent experience. One can learn a great deal about human psychology by studying the ways people conceive of God without making claims that these ways of conceiving prove anything about the reality of God. Carl Jung also repeatedly attempted to make this distinction clear: "the image [of God] and the statement [about God] are psychic processes which are different from their transcendental object; they do not posit it, they merely point to it" (1976, p. 556).

## Current Thought

Over the course of the twentieth century, the majority of psychologists who studied religious

experience tended toward the reductionist explanatory approach. This may in part be accounted for by the apparent "genuine antagonism toward religion among typical psychologists" and may itself account for the fact that this is an underdeveloped field of study (Wulff 1997, pp. 16–18). But it seems the psychology of religion is in the midst of a paradigm shift. It is now seen as an area rich in research possibilities that overlaps with research on neuroscience, philosophy, anthropology, evolutionary biology, and cognitive science. Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) have shown that religion and spirituality are complex, multifaceted phenomena that cannot be understood from the vantage point of a single discipline. The only viable approach today is one like their "*multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm*" which "recognizes the value of data at multiple levels of analysis while making nonreductive assumptions concerning the value of spiritual and religious phenomena" (2003, p. 395). Approaching religion in this way is to presuppose different and interrelated "planes of information" wherein the most fundamental are "necessary but not sufficient" for explanation of higher-order phenomena (Zinnbauer and Pargament 2005, p. 31).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ James, William
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Psychology of Religion

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## Re-Enchantment

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The term “re-enchantment” describes a reawakening to the depth of soul that embraces us and the world, as is well described by Thomas Moore in *The Re-Enchantment of Everyday Life* (1996). But first we have to extract ourselves from the old industrial worldview that believes it has abolished the credibility of enchantment and depends only on constructs such as subject and object. Moore says:

Science and technology have their underlying mythology, rituals, and eschatology – an interpretation of the future... They are both full of magic (Moore 1996, p. xiv).

To reawaken awareness of enchantment in all of life, we must return to our Beginner’s Mind, to our Original Mind.

## Subject-Object

The theoretical divide between subject and object is a modern cultural construct useful for scientific investigation. It strives to separate the “internal” thinking ego-consciousness from the “external” physical world and applies mathematical, logical

methods to analyzing the world. But the proposed divide is superficial, because the unrecognized “subjective feelings” constantly cross the supposed boundary into “objective facts.” Psychological factors saturate what we call “objectivity.” For example, the facts and objects that go into making our blizzard of weapons suppress the psychologies of fear and aggressive domination that drive people to fund, buy, and build explosives in the first place. It’s not just a gun or a bomb; it is a powerful extension of aggression and domination dynamics. As Henryk Skolimowski said: “Objective evidence as such does not exist, for in every bit of the ‘objective’ evidence a part of our psyche is built” (Skolimowski 1994, p. 72).

So these theoretical constructs do not “go all the way down.” Objects and subjects are not self-evident metaphysical realities. Nor are facts and values self-evident epistemological realities. Both are superficial creations of ego-consciousness, with grand mythic pretensions. Useful as these schemes are for science and technology, they fruitlessly attempt to strip the world of enchantment and imagine the world as soulless that can be exploited for technological conquest without feeling. The problem is that the feelings remain there, largely unconscious, unacknowledged, ignored, or denied. So we end up with unexpected consequences such as global warming and massive pollution. Why does each nation have its own enchanted version of “God Bless America” or “God Save the Queen”? The enchantment known as “patriotism” is a thin veil over many unconscious dynamics that drive ego-consciousness and its tools and repress our holistic being-in-the-world.

## Enchantment

What is enchantment? It means “being in song” and this song pervades the world that we are part of and cannot do without. It is like the song in the background of a film, the fascinations we have with beauty, love, eros, sports, war, religion, and endless other charms, positive and negative, that

demand ethical decisions and actions. Like all archetypal phenomena, enchantments have shadows. There are positive and then there are negative sides of enchantments, such as nationalism, racism, or greed. The problem is that negativities are not stopped by rationalism alone. You cannot argue with them very successfully. They need personal relations, compassion, equality, and other such positive enchantments.

Life would feel sterile and barren without enchantment. Actually life on this planet could not continue without enchantment, because it is a basic part of our foundations, such as reproduction. “Falling in love” and mating are beautiful enchantments, because the lifeworld needs to get hormonally stimulated lovers together to mate and keep life going. Of course enchantments need logic to keep it from extremes. Enchantments and logic need to cooperate, not dominate each other. Our industrial world strives to make logical ego-fact-rationality and prosperity-productivity dominate, but enchantment keeps slipping into the equation (except, of course, in politics). And since it is largely unconscious, it needs a new attention to its feelings, intuitions, and symbols to bring it into consciousness. This is the postmodern task of “re-enchantment,” a major shift in consciousness that embraces many fields, notably psychology and spirituality.

I used to wonder whether beauty is in a deer or in the mind of the beholder. It took a few years for me to realize that beauty is not an either/or. It is both. We inhabit a world full of beauty, including deer, and our minds are part of the deep enchantment of beauty. Beauty cannot be trivialized by ego-consciousness into being only “in us” or only “out there.” We are both unconsciously embraced in it. When we feel the beauty of a garden, a flower, a baby, a waterfall, a poem, or a starlit sky, we are not “projecting our subjective feelings onto a dead objective world.” This is sometimes important to distinguish one’s own erroneous “projections” from another person’s actual situation. But psychologically we still participate in the greater wholeness that ego casually separates into convenient dualities that simplify the vast mysteries of this world. Re-enchantment

is not putting anything “out there.” It is awakening to what always is, the phenomena, the soul in the world, the implications behind symbols, and the presence of being-in-the-world, as depth psychology and meditation show. Like the glow of a sunrise, enchantment is the glow of Being, the deepest reality we can experience in this life. Psyche expands as we dive deeper into the world. We swim in the endless presence and symbolism of enchantment, in puppets, “relationships,” nature, and the gods and goddesses. But being usually unconscious, like the fish that does not know what water is, we do not know what enchantment is without more empathy.

## Empathy

The recent study of empathy has expanded in several ways. The Jungian therapist Andrew Samuels said:

The Self is the primary source of phenomena known as empathy. . . . Empathy is a form of psychological interpenetration, a deep link between people; the mother-infant relationship is both a special example of this and a model of empathy throughout life (1985, p. 99).

Seeing Jung’s archetypal divinity (Self) behind empathy accounts for the sense of sacredness one can feel in empathetic experiences, such as beauty, sensuality, compassion, love, eros, sympathy, awe, and wonder. The starlit sky is awesome, but so is light itself, and our animal eyes made to see it; these participate in the enchanted empathy, even sacredness of stargazing. The awe in viewing a majestic mountain or a grand canyon is an enchantment. In empathetic participation, enchanted soul emerges from the depths.

In *The Empathic Civilization*, Jeremy Rifkin (2009) sees the increase in empathetic awareness as a newly reemerging philosophy of human nature, shifting away from the materialistic view of humans as basically self-interested, aggressive, and utilitarian. Empathy has always been a part of religions, and twentieth-century depth psychology has refined our empathetic

skills in new ways by opening up the usually unconscious dynamics of the soul. Undergoing psychoanalysis and dream analysis is an initiation into this new era.

## Technological Enchantments

Technologies are not a just set of tools created by the conscious ego alone. They are full of enchantments. Their usefulness is driven by partly unconscious dynamics. Some are as sexy birth control devices, speedy automobiles, lofty airplanes, concealed submarines, and soaring space travel. Many fit into the enchanted modernist dream of utopian progress. But one that particularly enchants unconsciously is the android robot. Many machines we call “robots” are really remotely controlled machines, such as microsurgery, which are operated by humans. Others may seem autonomous but are limited by their programming. No matter how many chess games Big Blue wins, in this program it is limited to this cognitive game.

## Android Robots: Enchanted Puppets

Many robots are useful, such as for bomb defusing and factory welding. But these do not try to look or act human. The most enchanting machines are the ones that are intended to look and act like humans. Robotics engineers strive to make them seem deceptively human. This engineering effort is partly driven by the advance imagining of artists of utopian machine culture, as in films such as “A. I.” (Artificial Intelligence). This assumes that intelligence can be duplicated by machines artificially. It is so thoroughly materialistic that it does not imagine that all intelligence involves nonprogrammable elements such as sincerity, honesty, imagination, morality, or free will.

Android robots are even commonly imagined as gods, which is a grand enchanted projection of the robot engineers and utopian dreamers of their own inflated egos. One robot maker

said: “It’s tough being a god” (Bailey 2005, p. 156). This enchantment is an effort to show that making androids imitate humans would prove the universal validity of the mechanistic worldview. I call this enchantment the “Pinocchio Project,” since its subtext is about making high-tech but limited puppets that we naively fantasize to be godlike and will someday exceed humanity and become eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient.

Instead of this utopian dream, real robots are being dystopian – causing social and economic disruption by taking away employment for humans (Brain 2013).

But my favorite question is: “Would you marry a robot?” This helps bring up questions such as genuine feeling. Would a robotic lover programmed to slavishly please a man or woman be possible, or if so, would it be genuinely convincing and satisfying by saying “that feels good” or “I love you”? Would it even provide a “relationship”? Or would it be seen as just a high-tech mechanical puppet? Machine enchantments can be useful, fun, or destructive, but they are full of enchantments, like kids’ puppets. Re-enchantment would raise new questions about the entire expensive, utopian project of imagining and making android robots (Bailey 2005).

## Indigenous Cultures

Indigenous, preindustrial peoples’ traditional cultures retain a feeling for enchantment that can be brought to wider understanding. After centuries of oppression by European invaders, their culture is increasingly being studied as a valuable source of re-enchantment. Southwestern North American natives say:

You look at that mountain, that mountain has spirit, that mountain has holiness. There’s a quiet there and yet there’s a fervor there. . . . There’s life up there. That’s why it is sacred. . . . We must try and worship the land, the ground and the stars and the skies, for they are the ones that have spirit. They are the mighty spirits which guide and direct us, which help us to survive (Trimble 1986, pp. 24–47).

Indigenous traditional people live in a world enchanted with sacred spirits in the land, the animals, and the skies, which leads them to have great respect for nature.

### Participation Mystique

Many indigenous totems or clans identify member peoples with animals. Lucien Levy-Bruhl called this “*participation mystique*”:

The Trumai (a tribe of northern Brazil) say that they are aquatic animals. – The bororo (a neighboring tribe) boast that they are red araras (parakeets) . . . . It is not a name they give themselves, nor a relationship that they claim. What they desire to express by it is actual identity . . . [so that] they can be both the human beings they are and the birds of scarlet plumage at the same time (1926, p. 77).

Such symbolic paradoxes are a clue that we have left the logical world of ego-consciousness and entered enchantment land. Levy-Bruhl at first imagined this in now-outdated language to be a “prelogical, primitive mentality.” But in his final *Notebooks*, he renounced this “prelogical” notion and acknowledged participation mystique to be present in the most rational, modern humanity as well. Participation is not a joining together of prior separate entities. Rather participation is a prior state of existence, where some oppositions are not very important: “To be, to exist, is to participate” (Levy-Bruhl 1926, p. 16). Our mentality, like the “primitive,” is both conceptual and affective. “. . . it is something human and which is not met exclusively in societies called primitive . . . it is also met in other societies” (Levy-Bruhl 1975, pp. 126–127). Today we still value feelings of belonging and other kinds of *participation mystique*, no matter how hard industrial societies try to repress them.

### Eco-Spirituality

Re-enchantment of the world leads to the ecological consciousness that is so urgently needed in our era. Ecology is a re-enchantment, a way of

living in respectful harmony with nature. *This Sacred Earth*, edited by Roger Gottlieb, is one of the growing number of books on reawakening enchantment with the world so that we will live in harmony in it, not recklessly destroying its resources and polluting the world to the level that global warming has become such a dangerous threat. As Bron Taylor, editor of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, says, the ecological activist group called Earth First! has religious elements: “Earth First!ers often speak of the need to ‘resacralize our perceptions of nature’” (Gottlieb 1996, p. 547). Matthew Fox (1991) also awakens this resacralization in his *Creation Spirituality*. Even in cities, he says, we can be attuned to ecological consciousness by diving into the depths of cities: the steel, the glass, cement, and all the products that make a city are from nature. “A city – as awesome a place as it is – is also earth, earth recycled by humans who themselves are earth standing on two legs with movable thumbs and immense imaginations” (Fox 1991, p. 7). This is re-enchantment.

### Meditation

One of the most helpful practices that has come out of the expansion of world religions around the globe is meditation, stillness with legs crossed in silence, constantly sinking into the “Beginner’s Mind.” It requires no institution, no dogma, and no mythologies of anthropomorphic gods or goddesses. It is like ground zero of newly developing spiritual consciousness, because it simply quiets the body and mind so the soul can open up to the presence of being-in-the-world, to the sacred enchantments in the world, the wonders and caring that the Self sends up to consciousness in stillness. Leaders of meditation are many, such as Thich Nhat Hanh, who teaches mindfulness meditation and writes about “Interbeing” and opens the heart and mind to awareness of enchantment in the world that leads to the essential ethics of re-enchantment: *care* – care for the suffering, care for each other, and care for the world that embraces us all. This is re-enchantment.

## See Also

- ▶ Animism
- ▶ Buddha-Nature of Insentient Beings
- ▶ Buddhism and Ecology
- ▶ Collective Unconscious
- ▶ Creation Spirituality
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Existentialism
- ▶ Fox, Matthew
- ▶ Gnosticism and Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Heidegger, Martin
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ Jungian Self
- ▶ Meditation
- ▶ Participation Mystique
- ▶ Participatory Spirituality
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Projection and Han Fortmann
- ▶ Reductionism
- ▶ Sacred Mountains
- ▶ Soul in the World
- ▶ Synchronicity

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## Reform Judaism

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Reform Judaism (also known as Liberal or Progressive Judaism) emerged in eighteenth-century Germany, as an adaptation of Jewish beliefs and traditions to accommodate participation in the surrounding culture. On the spectrum of Jewish denominations, Reform is considered among the most liberal and has come under criticism by other sects for deviating from Jewish traditions. For example, while Orthodox Jews believe *halacha* (Jewish law) to be the very essence of Jewish life, dictating every aspect of day-to-day experience, so as to bring the Jewish people closer to G-d, Reform Jews reject the concept of *halacha* as binding. Rather, they hold it as utilitarian in its presentation of moral values and insights. Similarly, while Orthodox Jews hold the oral and written Torah as of divine origin, Reform Jews perceive it as a document of human interpretation of the divine, which unifies and preserves Jewish culture and history. As such, its interpretation is subject to variations with the changes of society and interpretations by the individual. A woman's entitlement to hold Torah scrolls, although common practice within the Reform movement, is an issue of controversy among Orthodox Jews (Fig. 1).

Like Orthodox Judaism, Reform theorists advocate that Jews study Torah but sharply diverge in their prompting to the individual to make sense of the tradition in their own way. Reform Judaism embraced the equal rights movement, allowing women to participate side by side with men in all parts of religious services, and was soon to follow suit after the Reconstructivists initiated the ritual of a Bat Mitzvah to mark a young woman's coming-of-age in parallel to the traditional Bar Mitzvah ritual signifying a 13-year-old boys' transition into manhood. Reform congregations accept gay and lesbian lifestyles and mixed marriages and believe that Judaism may be passed on patrilineally, that is, a child whose father is Jewish who is raised as





**Reform Judaism, Fig. 1** Woman holding Torah. Tikun v'Or Reform Congregation in Ithaca, NY. Part of "Women of the Wall" photo campaign. See <http://womenofthewall.org.il> (Courtesy of the photographer Cantor Abbe Lyons)

a Jew may be accepted as Jewish regardless of the status of the mother. This supplements the traditional requirement for being a Jew that the mother be Jewish.

For many years Reform theorists rejected anything indicative of rigid conformity to practices handed down; until recent years it was forbidden for men to wear yarmulkes in classical Reform congregations, and Hebrew in services was kept to a bare minimum. Presently, however, the wearing of yarmulkes in Reform services is almost commonplace, and congregations are integrating more Hebrew into prayers.

It may be contended that the Reform movement's greatest strength historically has remained at the same its greatest weakness. While the absence of strict adherence to rituals allows a sense of freedom and acceptance for more secular Jews, its looseness leaves abstract the definition of what it means to be a Reform Jew, in the standards and guidance as to how one

should live. Mental health professionals need to foster an awareness that these ambiguities contribute to the complexities of Reform Jewish identity and enhance the status of the Reform Jewish person as a member of a minority group.

*Halacha* regulates all aspects of life for Orthodox Jews, and just as its authority impacts their identity in both conscious and unconscious ways, divergence from these edicts which have stood for millennia has loosened the identities and self-concepts of Reform Jews. The manner of relating with long-standing Jewish traditions for Reform Jews is rife with negotiations. Self-concepts may be further complicated by a sense of alienation from other sects of Judaism. Indeed, the views typically held by those of more traditional Jewish denominations, that Reform Judaism "isn't real Judaism" and that practices accepted such as intermarriage or homosexuality are abominations, prompt further marginalization of this minority group. But Reform Jews would respond that they cling less to outdated traditions and encourage people to think for themselves about sincere faith in a contemporary context, not just traditionally prescribed behavior.

As a result of the higher level of assimilation, Reform Jews are most subject to the status of an invisible minority, their Jewish identity being less overt and tangible to majority groups. The matters of identity, anti-Semitism, Christian privilege, and a history of oppression are equally pertinent issues for Reform Jews and more traditional denominations. In working with Reform Jews, it is important for mental health professionals to understand the within-group variability of the client population and to inquire as to the client's experience of Jewishness and Jewish issues in light of their presenting problem when appropriate.

### See Also

- ▶ [Conservative Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Care and Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Reconstructionism](#)
- ▶ [Orthodox Judaism](#)

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## Refusal of the Call

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In Joseph Campbell's monomyth model of the hero quest, the hero may not immediately agree to undertake the quest on receiving the call to adventure. Refusals of the call are quite common in fairy tales, myths, and other sacred tales. The hero does eventually consent to undertake the quest, but there are plenty of examples of people never undertaking the quest to which they have been summoned. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell cites an example of a reluctant hero and heroine from the Arabian Nights story cycle and examples of those who altogether refuse from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *The Bible*. Refusal in these cases has a calamitous outcome: the nymph is transformed into a tree; God refuses to help those who have refused his call.

For the Christian, human life can be considered a quest to which all are called by the fact of their birth into this world. St. Augustine conceptualizes each Christian as a warrior engaged in spiritual warfare against the devil (though in Augustinian theology, salvation is only possible through the grace of God, not by individual effort alone). Those who refuse the call to champion the Christian cause are damned, just as much as those who actively fight on the side of the devil. According to Jesus, God hates those who are

lukewarm even more than those who are either hot or cold. Those who refuse the call must face the consequences; opting out of the spiritual war is not ultimately possible.

Freudian theory does not consistently recommend one response to the call to adventure, understood as an internal process within the psyche. In his earlier writings, Freud considers that the healthy psyche accommodates the desires of the id rather than repressing them. In his later works, however, such as *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he argues that the id's appetites must be repressed in order for civilization to continue. In terms of this later Freudian theorization, Campbell's monomyth call would be understood as the id's call to act out its sexual or aggressive impulses with a danger of complete loss of self-control; this call must be refused in order for the social order to be preserved. In Jungian terms, however, the call should in general be accepted, and refusing the call to adventure has deeply undesirable consequences. In the context of the healthy psyche with appropriate inner boundaries, a Jungian would understand the call to come in the first instance from the shadow, signaling its readiness to become gradually more integrated in the process of individuation. The hero's quest is then an internal effort to explore, acknowledge, and accept the psyche's unconscious contents. Refusing this call means robbing consciousness of its potential richness and depth. Living thus becomes more like a mere struggle to exist; purpose and happiness are drained away. The repressed will return with increasingly peremptory calls for attention. If the call is refused, the person runs the risk of becoming possessed by unconscious contents in psychosis or of suffering severe psychosomatic illness as the body protests. Ultimately, refusing the call is psychological suicide.

## See Also

- ▶ [Augustine](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Hero](#)

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Quest](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Reich, Wilhelm

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Wilhelm Reich was the controversial psychoanalytic theorist and protégé of Sigmund Freud, known for his sexual, political, and cosmic energy theories. Given the controversial nature of his work, he faced opposition from the psychoanalytic community, the Communist Party, and the Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, and United States governments. He died at the age of 60 in a US federal prison.

Reich's early work is commonly applauded as brilliant and widely accepted in and credited with shaping the psychoanalytic community. His work on character (*Character Analysis* 1933, 1945) was particularly influential wherein he discussed the development of "character armor" and "defense mechanisms" of the personality. Additionally, Reich introduced theories of the latent negative transference, stasis anxiety, and somatic or body psychology, as well as incorporating Marxist critical social-political theory into his work.

However, later in his work Reich moved away from his psychoanalytic roots, and the support of the psychoanalytic community, towards the

(pseudo)scientific "cosmic" enterprise of "bions," "particles," and "orgone therapy." This theory postulated that good health occurred through a proper balance of biological energy, which was atmospheric or cosmic and ran throughout the entire universe (Klee 2005). Moreover, that each living cell was made up of microscopic bions which are charged with orgone energy. Orgone energy is thus the basis for life. However, in excess this energy can become toxic; therefore, one must eliminate an unhealthy buildup of orgone energy in one's body through orgasm. Reich referred to this as "orgastic potency" but was clear to point out that he meant more than simple orgasm; he meant a complete and uninhibited sexual surrender in which the body would convulse involuntarily in pleasure (Boyd Higgins 1994). Such orgastic potency was vital for Reich because he believed that imbalanced orgone energy led to problems in all the systems of life – biological, emotional, social, cultural, and so on – and that balanced orgone energy could cure such ailments as cancer, mental illness, war, and totalitarianism.

Religiously, Reich was certainly outside the bounds of traditional religion, and yet he could be considered in the prophetic school of thought as he challenged the "emotional plague of humankind," calling for high moral societal standards and values and spreading his liberative message of the welfare for all people (Salzman 1955). However, his message was unorthodox as his teleological vision focused on a sexually-politically liberated life for persons rather than the teachings of a particular religion. Additionally, Reich held up Jesus as the epitome of the human condition – representing life and goodness yet also necessitating continual murder/denial because Jesus Christ confronts humanity with their personal responsibility for evil and death (Vande Kemp 1990). Reich also identified himself with Christ and developed a Christology of a "fully emancipated, sexually complete human being" and believed that he, like Jesus, bore the burdens of the world (Corrington 2003; Reich 1966). However, for Reich it was not the burdens of sin and systemic evil traditionally seen in Christian teachings, but the burdens of

the sexually repressed and sadistic human race. In light of this, Reich believed that he could point the way to a new humanity and new way of living if only his liberative message was embraced (Corrington 2003).

Recently, there has been a resurgence of Reich's theories in the areas of alternative medicine and nontraditional healing methods. In such methods, orgone therapy is offered as a typical technique of treatment along with others, such as therapeutic touch, Reiki, acupuncture, herbal therapy, pyramid therapy, naturopathy, and colonic cleansing (Klee 2005).

## See Also

- ▶ [Countertransference](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Reincarnation

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Beliefs about life after death are metaphysical speculations, with some experiential hints, about a vast unknown mystery. But, as Jung said, “Metaphysical assertions, however, are *statements of the psyche*, and are therefore psychological” (Jung 1954, para. 835). Psychologically, some such belief about the afterlife is needed to give life meaning, as we see others die and as we approach our own death. If, as in materialistic philosophy, the universe is meaningless, we might as well grab all the power and pleasure we can here, then at death our consciousness disappears – poof! Life does not matter, ultimately. But one believes that in the afterlife, one's life is judged and leads to a reward or punishment, our behavior does have meaning in view of that. Or if life is interpreted as a chance to learn and improve, that gives life a purpose and eases death's pain. So psychologically and spiritually, one of life's most important tasks is to come to terms with the question of life after death.

Two major theories on afterlife have developed over time. In the West, in the monotheistic religions, *resurrection* is belief in return after death to the same body. This implies the importance of the body and typically leads to rituals of burial or preservation of the body, in expectation of resurrection at the end of time. In the East, *reincarnation* means return after death as a newborn in a new body, in a repeated cycle of rebirths, that gives little value to the body, so cremation is common.

Reincarnation, or rebirth, is the enduring Asian belief about afterlife in Eastern religions. This is rooted in archaic beliefs that immortal powers filled nature, especially in the form of reborn ancestors. So a relative, now a bear, could be your reborn father. What determines *how* one is reborn? The belief in *karma* (moral cause and effect) says that one's behavior in this

life determines whether you are born in the social and natural “caste” hierarchy above or below your latest life. Hindus believe that the soul, or *atman*, is carried from life to life and determines one’s fate, mainly what social caste one is reborn into. There are thousands of castes in India, clearly differentiating the wealthy from the poor. It seems to be rooted in the ancient invasion of the Aryans who subdued the darker-skinned natives and pressed them southward. High-caste people are believed to deserve their social rank and wealth, due to their good behavior in previous lives. On the contrary, low-caste people, outcastes, and animals are traditionally believed to deserve their suffering, due to past-life misbehavior. Castes have rules against touching, eating with, or marrying people of a lower rank. This ancient belief ties Hindu religions to the social system that has been illegal since 1950 in India, but is still practiced, despite government efforts to aid the poor and outcastes. Since the old body is irrelevant after death, cremation at holy sites, such as Benares, is common. The goal of Hinduism is to escape reincarnation by pious behavior and after death stay in everlasting bliss of Nirvana, beyond this world’s illusions. “Behind the manifest and the unmanifest there is another Existence, which is Eternal and Changeless . . . . Those who reach it are not reborn” (*Bhagavad Gita*, Chap. 8, p. 77).

The Buddha denied any knowledge of an afterlife, since he rejected metaphysical speculations in favor of here-and-now focus on overcoming suffering through enlightenment (*Middle*). Yet belief in reincarnation or rebirth continues in Buddhism. Buddhists reject the belief in an essence or substance that is reincarnated, such as the Hindu *atman*. They emphasize moral responsibility and the spiritual life leading to enlightenment, but not reincarnation as transmigration of an essential soul substance. Rather, the shift from one life to another after death is seen as like a candle’s flame transmitted to a second candle. Belief in *karma* is still strong across Asia, but rejecting the essential self behind *karma* and the rigidity of the caste system, Buddhists speak of the nonself and emphasize that anyone can be enlightened and escape rebirth at any time.

Escaping *karma*’s effect depends upon one’s enlightenment.

The most dramatic and psychological Buddhist text on reincarnation is *The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thodol)* (1975). This is a blend of ancient indigenous Bon Tibetan religion and imported Buddhism. It is a manual for the preparation for death, or the days approaching death, when it is read to the dying one. It is said that it was the product of the Guru Padmasambhava, who in the eighth century CE took Vajrayana Buddhism from India to Bhutan and Tibet. Tibet had a long tradition of Bonpa shamans such as Milarepa (1052–1135 CE), who originally practiced black magic but was converted to Buddhism. He rejected the ancient shamanic world of revenge, powerful demons, deities, and goddesses of both horrible and beautiful forces. Into this world Padmasambhava brought Buddhist institutions such as monasteries and Tantric traditions. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* seems to be a reworking of the people’s ancient beliefs in demons, “hungry ghosts,” and all sorts of deities, into visions that the dead encounter. If they have learned good Buddhist meditative practices, they will be able to see the illusory nature of these deities and hungry ghosts. They will see them as what Western psychology calls “projections” of their own inner natural archetypal images. If they recognized these as simply part of their own inner psychic dynamics and see through them to the teachings of the Buddha, the Dharmakaya, they will see each one as an empty illusion of earthly minds and will be liberated a step further along to enlightenment. If we are enlightened, the first appearance of the brilliant light of the Dharmata (“the essence of things as they are”) (*Tibetan Book of the Dead* 1975, p. 11) will free one from reincarnation and return one to the pure luminosity:

Now the pure luminosity of the dharmata is shining before you; recognize it . . . . This mind of yours is inseparable luminosity and emptiness in the form of a great mass of light, it has no birth or death, therefore it is the buddha of Immortal Light. To recognize this is all that is necessary. When you recognise this pure nature of your mind as the buddha, looking into your own mind is resting in the buddha-mind (*Tibetan Book of the Dead* 1975, p. 37).



But, being frail humans, if we fail to recognize this pure Immortal Light as the Buddha, the “awakened one” in our own mind, unable to see through the illusions to the Dharmata, we move downward on the scale of reincarnation, to be born at a lower level, even as a lowly worm. But if we succeed in recalling our insights into the Dharmakaya at any point, we will get off the descending ladder and be reborn higher, as a deity or a human.

So each *bardo* (stage between death and rebirth) of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is a dramatic encounter with an ancient religious image, probably having Bonpo roots. Each is a challenge to your consciousness to recognize it as an illusion, to see that it is a projection of your own, and see through it to the thundering light of the Dharmata. When you see through your projected divinity or demon, you will be reborn at the corresponding level of earthly life. If you fail to recognize this vision as a projection and, due to your karmic illusions, you think it is real, you will be confronted with the next demon, lower on the scale toward rebirth. The first *bardo* is the pure light of the void, the empty Dharmata of liberation. If you recognized it as such, this frees you from rebirth altogether, which is the goal of all Buddhism. If not, you go on to the second *bardo*, the deities, first, the peaceful deities, such as Vairocana, the blue light of supreme wisdom of the Buddha. These would be an exalted group to join but still on the path to later rebirth. If you miss liberation here, you will hear:

If you had recognized the natural radiance of the wisdoms of those five families as your own projections, you would have dissolved into rainbow light . . . and become a sambhogakaya buddha, but because you did not recognise you have gone on wandering (*Tibetan Book of the Dead* 1975, p. 50).

After that you see the wrathful deities, whom the unfortunate might end up joining. Then finally in the third *bardo* of rebirth, one envisions the form of rebirth coming: human, dog, goat, ant, and worm. If you are going to be a boy, you will feel hatred toward your father and love for your mother (a pre-visioning of Freud’s Oedipus Complex) (*Tibetan Book of the Dead* 1975,

pp. 84–85). Thus, Buddhism took popular Bonpo traditions and turned them into a Buddhist ritual trial of recognizing one’s projections as illusions and seeking to help believers see through their projections to the enlightening great illumination of the Buddha mind beyond life and death. This ritual is a powerful example of a strong psychological awareness in an ancient religion.

Carl Jung’s commentary on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* sees its many metaphysical deities and ghosts psychologically: “the whole book is created out of the archetypal contents of the unconscious” (Jung 1954, para. 857). Buddhists would agree that the mass of our *samsara* earthly existence is psychological and illusory, although it seems real, but that the thundering light of the Dharmata is truly ultimate reality; it is not an internal psychic image of divinity, like Jung’s Self. Jung sees this ritual text as an “initiation in reverse, which, unlike the eschatological expectations of Christianity, prepares the soul for a descent into physical being” (Jung 1954, para. 854). This is so, since the first *bardo* is of the Clear Light, presenting the dying person with the opportunity to avoid reincarnation and ascend directly to the Infinite Buddha mind. This is roughly parallel to the Christian Heaven, about which Christians will have been taught. But, unfortunately, this high goal is out of reach of most ordinary believers. So the initiation proceeds from the highest level down through numerous opportunities to be freed from lower rebirth to the lowest levels. Jung is saying that the one-life-only Christianity starts from the low level of the earthly ego and seeks to reach the higher Heaven (or Self) as a result of one life’s moral and spiritual level. Thus, it is an initiation into the Infinite, but in reverse of the Tibetan starting point.

Belief in reincarnation explains to believers that this life’s rewards or suffering are the results of past lives. Certain memories may be seen as past-life memories. Tendencies such as fear of swimming may be interpreted as having drowned in a past life. Feelings of “*déjà vu*” or having “already seen” something may be interpreted as



due to a past life event. Talented child prodigies are interpreted as bringing gifts from a past life. Thus, psychologically, rebirth gives deeper meaning to life. Speculation about certain numbers of levels of heavens or hells is common in varieties of both Hinduism and Buddhism, and at death one may be seen as reborn in one of those as a reward or punishment where negative karma is burned away, so that one may be reborn in a higher, less miserable plane. Hells can include criminals boiling in oil, ghosts, animals, or demons. Heavens can include demigods and gods. Humans have the opportunities to learn the spiritual life, be purified, and improve their *karma* before rebirth. Heaven and hell in Western religions are also pictured as paradises and places of torment, eternal or temporary, as Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1946) illustrates (Alighieri). Psychologically, hope for paradise encourages and fear of hell deters believers.

The American psychiatrist Ian Stevenson (1934–2000) studied over 2,000 cases of spontaneous past-life memories scientifically. He documented many times that the children's memories were accurate. He found that a child could recall an ability to speak an unlearned foreign language, a home, and names of deceased relatives, from a distant town where he had never been in this life. Although he found hypnosis unreliable as a source of reincarnation evidence, Stevenson did believe in the case of a Colorado woman who in 1952 claimed to have recalled under hypnosis the details of an Irish girl named Bridey Murphy who lived in 1906 (Bernstein 1956). Psychologists have reported success with hypnosis, especially in psychosomatic disturbances, such as addiction or anxiety (Brody 2008). In India Stevenson found a girl named Swarnlata Mishra, born in Pradesh in 1948. At the age of three, she began to recall memories of a past life in a village of Katni, over 100 miles away. When she was 10, her family took her there and she was able to discuss an apparent past life when she was Biya Pathak; she could recall over 50 verifiable facts from years before her birth (Stevenson 1980, pp. 69–71). Cases like this made Stevenson believe in reincarnation but he

remained very skeptical of accounts until scientifically proven.

Thus, Eastern and Western cultures have both found reincarnation spiritually fascinating and psychologically instructive.

## See Also

- ▶ [Avalokiteshvara](#)
- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Buddhist Death Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Death Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Near-Death Experiences](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Resurrection](#)

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## Relational Psychoanalysis

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### Introduction to Relational Theory

In addition to other principles that will be discussed below, relational psychoanalysis assumes that psychic structure develops in response to interactions and relations with primary caretakers and is therefore accessible in psychotherapy or psychoanalysis through an examination of the transference-countertransference relationship. Stephen Mitchell was the primary founder and passionate voice at the center of this new way of thinking. With his large body of written work, founding of the journal *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, and central role in the formation of relational programs in New York and then internationally, Mitchell had a crucial influence on the first generation of relational analysts.

The term relational first appeared in the psychoanalytic literature in 1983, when Mitchell and Jay Greenberg proposed a synthesis of Fairbairn's object relations and Sullivan's interpersonal theories. Object relations theory (especially as developed and influenced by Klein, Fairbairn, Guntrip, and Winnicott) offered an alternative to Freudian theory based not on drives pressing for discharge but rather on connections with others as the main motivation in development and later life and the resulting internalization of objects and self-other relationships. Different theorists emphasize different aspects of this process, and while seen as a useful model of development, it nonetheless offers a somewhat disparate set of concepts that are sometimes difficult to apply to clinical practice. Similarly, Sullivan and his followers also emphasized the centrality of relationships to the development of psychic structure. Interpersonal theorists, in an effort to distance from classical, intrapsychic theory, de-emphasized internal process in favor of here and now relating as the most accessible and therefore most

important unit of study for the psychoanalyst. Originally employing a firm, authoritative style characteristic of its main founder's personality, contemporary interpersonal theory is often indistinguishable from relational psychoanalysis, though there are still sometimes subtle differences in emphasis and technique.

### Key Concepts in Relational Thinking

The heart of relational psychoanalysis involves a focus on and mutual understanding with patients that therapist-patient interactions will always reflect the ways in which patients interact with others and as children were interacted with by their primary objects. Often though not always made explicit, there is an additional assumption that the analyst's particular history and internal world will also come to bear on the therapeutic relationship and may in fact influence or even pull for particular transference responses. In this way, relational psychoanalysis is a two-person psychology that, while engaged in for the growth and benefit of the patient, must nonetheless take into account the mind of the analyst as well. Selective self-disclosure, once thought to be taboo, is now seen as an important tool that when used with discretion can both enable the analyst to acknowledge his or her contribution to the current relational dynamics and also enables the patient to recognize otherwise dissociated material through its impact on the analyst and others.

### Departing from the Classical

This shift from a one- to two-person psychology and an emphasis on the primacy of relating rather than drives are two of the major differences between relational psychoanalysis and the classical Freudian theory that preceded it. While still asymmetrical – the analyst sets the parameters and tone of the treatment – relational analysis is co-constructed rather than dictated by an “all knowing” analyst and is therefore a more mutual endeavor. In this way of thinking, the therapeutic relationship itself serves as the main vehicle for

therapeutic action and change. Concepts of intersubjectivity, wherein the interaction between and mutual influence of analyst and patient subjectivities are understood as central to understanding and working through the patient's psychic conflicts and, related to this, the analytic third: the ideas and affects that belong not to analyst or patient alone but rather in the middle, co-constructed space between the two, multiple, shifting self states: there is no singular personality constellation, and enactment as co-determined, inevitable, and crucial to deepening the therapeutic relationship, are just some of the more important hallmarks of relational thinking. Relational psychoanalysis maintains a hermeneutic and also a dialectical approach; an attempt is made to maintain tension between seemingly opposite or opposing principles rather than either or thinking or complementarity, which can result in a limiting dichotomy of doer-done to thinking.

## Postmodernism

Relational psychoanalysis exemplifies the postmodern tradition in which it evolved. It transcends the notion that one theory or hierarchical, fixed, rigid set of rules and ways of thinking can explain the vast complexity of human behavior. Standing less in opposition to than inclusive of, it is an offshoot of and/or includes aspects of classical theory, self-psychology (especially the current thread of intersubjectivity theory as developed by Stolorow and associates), object relations, and interpersonal and attachment theories. There has also been an active dialogue with and feed from gender and queer theory, feminism, culture, race, class, and political activism. An attempt is made to understand and include many groups that were and felt themselves to be powerless, pathologized, and excluded from more traditional psychoanalytic thought (referred to in the relational literature as "the other") – women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered, people of color, and others previously underrepresented in society and mainstream psychoanalytic teaching and practice.

## Believing

Religion was seen by Freud and many of his followers to be the result of regressive fantasy and infantile neurosis. One goal of psychoanalysis then was to free the patient from the illusion of religion. In light of this, we might add people who believe in God or maintain other religious and spiritual attachments to the above-mentioned list of those disenfranchised from classical psychoanalysis. As mentioned, postmodernism and contemporary schools of psychoanalytic thought such as relational psychoanalysis are critical of dichotomies. While the ability to reality test is of course still a necessary consideration, automatic, rigid distinctions between fantasy and reality, illusion and "truth," and science and religion are no longer tolerated. Patient and analyst subjectivity and personal beliefs are given equal weight to or privileged over objective "facts" such as whether or not god exists. In large part as a result of relational psychoanalysis, religion is coming out of the closet. Prominent relational writers such as Lew Aron, Charles Spezzano, and Michael Eigen write about religion and the influence of their and patients' religious beliefs and practices on the transference-countertransference field. Relational psychoanalysts have committed themselves to welcoming and examining all aspects of the patient's and clinician's subjectivity. In this respect, religion – either the presence or absence of spiritual belief and practice, associated thoughts, feelings, and fantasies – can come to be an important part of the relational psychoanalytic dialogue.

## See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Dissociation](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)

- ▶ [Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism](#)
- ▶ [Power](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religious](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Sullivan, Harry Stack](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Relativism

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Relativism refers to the contention that moral values and/or factual beliefs are not good or

correct in themselves but are good or correct only in reference to other values or beliefs. The term relativism is often used with a negative connotation, and many relativists prefer the term *relativity* to express the idea that moral values and factual beliefs are *relative to* the context in which they are adopted. The relativist posture is often contrasted with the absolutist posture – that is, the contention that at least some moral values and factual beliefs are *absolute* (i.e., good or correct in themselves).

## History

Records of relativistic thought are available since the beginning of written history. Among the pre-Socratic thinkers in Ancient Greece, Heraclitus and Protagoras are often cited for their relativistic pronouncements. Heraclitus' famous metaphor asserting that a person cannot bathe twice in the same river (because the water is constantly moving and the river does not remain the same) implied that everything is in constant change and, consequently, that what is true today may not be true tomorrow. Likewise, Protagoras' relativistic thought is encapsulated in the sentence "Man is the measure of all things," meaning that truth and virtue are not absolute concepts but are rather dependent on who experiences them.

In the middle ages, René Descartes sought certainty and absolute truths but learned in his travels that "those who have views very different from our own are not therefore barbarians or savages, but several use as much reason as we do, or more" (Descartes 1637/1947). Later on, the 1800s brought to light much relativist activity, including Freud's relativization of the conscious mind, Marx's relativization of the free market economy, and Darwin's relativization of man's place in the animal kingdom.

In the twentieth century, Thomas Kuhn did much for the cause of relativity. Kuhn never saw himself as a relativist, but his analysis of how progress is attained in science led him to question the absolute nature of scientific knowledge. In his classic book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, he asserted that scientific



**Relativism, Fig. 1** Musical staves showing the same quarter note as either an indeterminate note, an E, or a G, depending on the chosen clef (or absence thereof)

knowledge is always part of a transitory paradigm that, by necessity, must eventually be discarded in order for scientific progress to take place (Kuhn 1962). Quite more explicitly, Willard Quine used the expression *ontological relativity* to describe the fact that the objects of a science cannot exist in themselves and must instead be interpreted or reinterpreted by one theory or another (Quine 1969).

## Logical Coherence

Relativity might at first seem intrinsically contradictory, as an absolute proof of relativity would directly contradict the relativist cause. Relativists, however, readily recognize that to say that “everything is relative” is the same as to say that “everything is absolute.” That is, when one says that statement  $x$  is relative to context  $y$ , one says not only that it is possible that statement  $x$  will not be true in context  $z$  but also that it is actually absolute in context  $y$ . This so-called arbitrary absolute is just as absolute as it is arbitrary (relative). Thus, the obvious fact that there is a world around us is not denied, but the absolute character of this world is put in question.

The notion of an arbitrary absolute is clearly illustrated by a musical staff with and without a clef. Notes on the staff are musically nonexistent if there is no clef (see Fig. 1a). If a treble clef is placed on the staff, such as to provide a frame of reference, then the indeterminate note assumes the absolute ontological identity of an E above middle C (Fig. 1b). This absolute E is arbitrary, however, as it becomes a G when a bass clef replaces the treble clef (Fig. 1c).

It should be noted that, because absolute relativity is indeed nonsensical, relativists do not fret about exhausting the relativization of the universe. Rather than demonstrating that nothing is absolute, relativists enjoy pointing out instances of relativity. Expunging alleged absolutes – or “questioning authority” – is the true impetus. This relativistic impetus is pervasive among intellectuals in contemporary Western culture and is reflected in the emphasis on “critical thinking” in education.

## Antagonism to Science

Relativists are often maligned by scientists. This is not surprising, as science is commonly thought of as an absolutist institution. Many – possibly most – scientists share a positivist view of science, according to which a real world exists independently of science and has structural and functional properties of its own that can be objectively known and understood by scientists. Against this, relativists such as Michel Foucault argued that the language of science is part of the language of a culture and, therefore, it establishes beforehand what can and cannot be discovered by scientific research (Foucault 1969). Similarly, David Bloor claimed that pieces of scientific knowledge are nothing more than symbols standing for social struggles among scientists (Bloor 1976), and Helen Longino stressed that the logical and cognitive structures of scientific inquiry cannot even develop without a dynamic interaction between scientific practice and social values (Longino 1990). This relativization of science was not well received by a number of scientists and philosophers, as is clear in an

edited volume entitled *A House Built on Sand: Exposing Postmodernist Myths about Science* (Koertge 1998). The criticism expressed in this volume was partially justified because quite a few “postmodernists” (relativists) were simply ignorant of science and scientific methods. It is also true, however, that many of the self-appointed defenders of science were ignorant of philosophical relativity and made unjustifiable absolutist claims.

## Antagonism to Religion

Relativists are equally apt at enraging religious leaders. After all, *faith* (belief in authority) is central to most religions. By doubting religious dogma, relativists act as heretics. That religious leaders despise relativity is exemplified by Pope John Paul II’s thoughts as expressed in his encyclical letter *Faith and Reason*. There, he posited that faith and reason are essential human attributes and that reason without faith leads to nihilism and relativism. He explicitly condemned relativism and asserted that the rejection of relativism is prescribed by the Bible (John Paul II 1998).

## See Also

- ▶ [Doubt](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Postmodernism](#)
- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)

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## Religion

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## Introduction

The word religion is derived from the Latin *religare*, to bind, restrain, or tie back, and was first recorded in English in the eleventh century. Religion is defined as a system of faith and worship or faithfulness or devotion to a principle.

Agreement about the definition of religion has been lacking. The West generally views religion as a system of practices and belief towards a sacred or supreme being. Worship in the East has emphasized transcendence or liberation, as opposed to systematic belief. Many definitions of religion have been suggested, but one approach that avoids cultural bias and secular ideologies of human origin has suggested that religion includes doctrine (a creed of belief), myth (an historical sacred narrative), ethics (moral code of sacred origins), ritual (use of sacred objects/ceremony including the historical sacrifice), experience (devotional, mystical, experiential), and social institutions (educational, social gatherings, social service, pastoral care), all of which are interrelated.

Researchers are trying to understand the relationship between religion and health, psychological functioning, and decision making. Methods of studying religion are becoming increasingly formal and rigorous. Researchers use multidimensional assessments to evaluate religious affiliation, belief systems, and practices. A few of the more commonly used instruments are described below, but for a more



thorough review, please refer to the work of Koenig et al. (2001).

## Assessments Used in Religion

### Affiliation

Roof and McKinney (1987) have developed the most common form of measuring religious affiliation. Duke University has expanded the primarily Western denominational scale to include Muslims, Greek Orthodox, Agnostics, and Atheists.

### Belief

Glock and Stark (1966) Orthodoxy Index identifies beliefs about God, Jesus, miracles, and the devil. Beliefs of orthodoxy, fanaticism, importance, and ambivalence have been measured by Putney and Middleton's (1961) dimensions of religious ideology scale. Belief, religious affiliation and coping have been associated with increases in well being and reductions in anxiety, depression, and suicidal behavior in depressed patients (Rosmarin et al. 2013; Dervic et al. 2004; Dervic et al. 2011).

### Religious Practice

King and Hunt (1967) have assessed participation in church attendance, organizational activities, and related church work. Considering that church attendance may be influenced by relationships (Fetzer Institute 1999) evaluates the emotional support provided by a congregation. Murphy et al. (2000) demonstrate how religious and spiritual practices influence decision making in long-term illness. Both long-term and short-term health care decisions can impact quality of life. Medical researchers used the Spiritual Needs Assessment for Patients (SNAP) to evaluate the unmet needs of ambulatory cancer patients seeking to enhance patient quality of care (Sharma et al. 2012).

### Practices of Piety

Stark and Glock (1968) evaluate private prayer; and Lenski (1963) assesses the extent to which one consults God when making everyday decisions.

## Background and Theorists

Early relationships between psychological attitudes and religious belief can be found in the pre-patriarchal rites of the southeastern pre-Indo-European peoples during the Paleolithic era. The religious belief system featured a monotheistic female deity as center and possibly reflected the mother-kinship societal structure. This belief system may have developed to counter fears arising in response to the natural elements, which were beyond their control (ca. 6500–3500 BCE). Within the Greco-Roman culture, the monotheistic God was preferred by Plato to the polytheistic gods that were vulnerable to vice, ignorance, and imperfection. An early source of Christian doctrine was the *Didache* (ca. 140). Here, peace is promoted with singularity of thought and avoidance of debate. St. Augustine in *Confessions* describes the emotionally charged psychological turmoil as difficulty with singleness of belief: "My desire was not to be more certain of you but to be more stable in you" (St. Augustine, p. 133).

William James (1958) explains that there are two aspects to religion: institutional and personal. Institutional religion includes worship, theology, ceremony, and ecclesiastical organization. Personal religion reflects the inner dispositions, which prompts personal prayer outside of ritual. James believes that religion is the "...feelings, acts and experiences of the individual. . .in their solitude, as they stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine." Freud (1856–1939) offered the first of the many psychoanalytic interpretations of religion. He observed the rituals of indigenous people and concluded that religion developed from the guilt experienced by the son when he tries to replace the father. In the *Future of an Illusion*, Freud stated that human beings are essentially unhappy and try to escape their unhappiness by engaging in religious ritual. He believed that religion enabled individuals to externalize religion's precepts while disguising possibly incompatible internal intentions. Jung felt that religion provided something that the external world did not. However, over time

he believed that individuals saw that religious truths were sometimes empty and not integrated. Neurosis was the state of being at war with oneself, which he saw could be cured by the Christian virtue of forgiveness. Healing occurred as the representation of religion and the self evolved in the psyche.

More recently, object relations theorists (Rizzuto 1974, 1979) integrate the representation of the mother (or caretaker) as a central figure in religion. Drawing from the writing of Winnicott (1953, 1975) where he suggests that religion was synonymous with an object that the infant used to help with transitions, this illusory experience provides a bridge from the inner world to the outward reality. The child's representation of God evolves from the child's relationship with his/her caretakers. This representation of God is shaped by all of the emotional factors that are dominant in the child at the time of formation and evolves with the changing representation of the parents and the inner view of the child's sense of self. Theorists (Rizzuto 1974, 1979) believe that it is possible that one can hold a representation of God while not believing, but when one believes in the representation of God, one expresses loyalty to the inner representation of the self and to the ones who nurtured the self into existence.

## See Also

- ▶ [Conscience](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [New Testament](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)

- ▶ [Psychology as Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)
- ▶ [Wisdom](#)

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## Religion and Erik Erikson's Life Cycle Theory

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Religion and the life cycle is an area of scholarship in psychology and religion, built upon the work of

Erik H. Erikson. Erikson, who studied under Anna Freud, developed life cycle theory in his first major book, *Childhood and Society* (1950). Erikson's interests in the human life cycle always coexisted with his interests in religion and human values because Erikson assigned attending virtues to each psychosocial stage of development. Erikson's understanding of the way in which individuals managed to acquire these virtues factored into his understanding of how social values are transformed and how leaders rise to prominence out of strenuous psychological conflict and struggle. In this sense, Erikson makes it very difficult to talk of the human life cycle without also critically analyzing the role of religion in the stages of psychosocial development. Religion becomes a critical term of analysis in life cycle theory at each epigenetic stage, beginning with the first.

For Erikson, the child's basic trust is formed in the maternal presence, though the formation of basic trust does not depend upon a total absence of frustration. Erikson describes the child's interactions with the mother as ritualized and the infant's first experience of a numinous presence. The infant has, thus, a need to be seen, to see and respond, and then to be responded to. This process, for Erikson, is saturated with religious connotations and forms the basis for future religious and psychological development. Idealization or positive projection is therefore a critical component to Erikson's psychology of religion and his understanding of religion in the human life cycle. Positive projection (along with Erikson's psychosocial stages) differentiates Erikson's emphasis and understanding of religion from Sigmund Freud. Religion at its best is, for Erikson, a sense of basic trust.

The development of basic trust undergirds the acquisition of the first life cycle virtue that Erikson assigns that of hope. In later writings, such as Erikson's (1959) *Young Man Luther*, a psychological biography of the German Roman Catholic monk Martin Luther, Erikson would discuss the role of the virtues such as hope in Luther's developing religious and psychological life. Biography and historical study would, therefore, become a means for Erikson to analyze how the epigenetic life cycle interacted with religious beliefs and behaviors

over the course of a lifetime. Erikson would typically choose famous religious leaders for such studies (e.g., Luther and Gandhi), though he would also use other less well-known and less ostensibly religious figures as well, such as George Bernard Shaw and William James.

As the child's sphere of interest and influence grows, the psychosocial or life cycle crises expand to include a broader set of peers and social goals to be accomplished. In the second stage, for example, the radius of significant persons is both parents or any kind of parental guide. At this stage, the virtue to be acquired is will. While hope provides the individual with the belief that one's wishes are attainable (sometimes religiously articulated as believing God will provide), will provides the individual with added strength to assert one's own wishes in spite of the control exercised by authority. Will is, in this sense, built off of hope.

In the third and fourth stages, the virtues of purpose and competence are ideally acquired. These virtues, as with hope and will, have religious connotations to them. While hope and will are tied to the strength and discretion one acquires in idealizing and action, purpose and competence are tightly aligned with beginning to experience meaning in one's actions and decisions. These begin at play age but extend throughout adulthood. Play is, in this sense, the precursor to adult forms of work. Thus, work is – for Erikson – an intrinsically religious activity so long as the virtues are what support it, even if it is done in an ostensibly secular setting. An airplane pilot, for example, who never prays and self-identifies as an atheist, but who finds her or his work deeply meaningful and has gone through a long process of training and discernment of why such action is meaningful for him or her, is living out a deeply religious action in their style of work. While it would be important, in this and all cases, to respect the unique religious designation (in this case, atheist), religious behavior in life cycle theory connotes not only idealizing behaviors but also intentional patterns, moods of reverence and awe, and the unique meaning an individual assigns to actions taken or interpreted.

As the individual moves through the stages, the adolescent period is a particularly significant one for understanding religion and the life cycle.

While the adolescent is initiated into various social clubs and groups, the adolescent is in desperate need of acquiring a worldview or guiding ideology. The adolescent sometimes looks to religion for this, as in the case of Luther, but might also look to more secular behaviors or teachings, as described by someone like William James. This successful acquisition of an ideology provides the basis for the adolescent's success at the life cycle crisis of identity versus identity confusion and determines their transition into a social and working role in society. This stage is particularly important for understanding the role of religion in the life cycle because the adolescent may find a way to use religion in order to critique the social roles prepared for the adolescent to accept. Such countercultural behavior deeply interested Erikson and formed the basis of his psychohistorical methodology, which he applied in his studies on Luther (Erikson 1959) and Gandhi (Erikson 1969). For Erikson, such struggling adolescents have particularly unique psychosocial crises that, when the individual articulates them, their crises become commonly understood by large groups of people and they therefore form the basis of social reform movements, such as the Protestant Reformation.

Such adolescents also can take the better part of a lifetime to find their work role in society and resolve the intimacy vs. isolation crisis, as well as other life cycle crises. As a result, Erikson understands adolescence in terms of life cycle development. Adulthood is only reached when the individual assumes a personally meaningful social role, informed by successful completion of the early stages where meaning and action are aligned. Writings on religion and the life cycle, when focused on an individual, are therefore often revealing of an ersatz adulthood, falsely simulated by an aging population who have failed in the critical life cycle stages leading up to adulthood and therefore mocks the weighty and significant role that adults play in the life cycle schema. Such significance attached to adult responsibility reveals the religious sensibilities and commitments Erikson linked to life cycle stages.

Love, care, and wisdom form the last three virtues Erikson assigned to the latter life cycle stages. Such virtues form the basis of social cohesion and empathy, which Erikson believed was what provided an answer to cultural relativism, individual uniqueness, and oppressive social forces. Integrity of one's identity is, therefore, the ultimate aim of the life cycle in the midst of a complex and pluralistic social environment. Integrity of identity is an aim guided at each stage by acquisition of religious virtue in conjunction with psychosocial experience.

### See Also

- ▶ [Doubt](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Hope](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)

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## Religion and Mental and Physical Health

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Since the earliest antiquity, humans have theorized and speculated about the relationship of religion and mental and physical health. Early writings, including those contained in Jewish scriptures, demonstrate a belief that mental or physical illness was understood as sometimes

resulting from uncleanness and sinfulness or as a result of a separation between the individual and God. A period of emotional turmoil in the life of King Saul in 1 Samuel, for example, is attributed to the Spirit of God departing from Saul and an evil spirit tormenting him. These writings are evidence of a belief within the earliest cultures of a relationship between religion, spiritual healing, and mental and physical health.

### Religious Practices and Healing

In many religions the concept of health refers to a sense of spiritual, mental, and physical wholeness, and in many ancient cultures the healing arts were closely related to religious practices. As early as the fifth century BCE, followers of Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing, sought services and advice of priests of the cult of Asclepius to find cures to their ailments through, among other things, the interpretation of divinely inspired dreams. There are accounts in the Christian New Testament of Jesus providing healing of physical infirmities such as paralysis, blindness, and leprosy as well as casting out demons from individuals feared by others because of their aberrant mannerisms and behavior. The cult of Asclepius and the accounts of the miracles of Jesus illustrate how religious leaders, because of their close relationship with the gods, God, or a higher spiritual power, have historically been viewed as healers and sought out by the lame who believed that a religious or spiritual act could restore physical health. Various religious practices ranging from prayer, scripture reading, anointment with oil or perfume, laying on of hands, interpretation of visions, casting out demons, and even sacrifice have been included in healing ceremonies across the ages.

As a result of advances in biology, physiology, and psychology across the millennia and specifically during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, a more complete understanding of the causes of physical and mental illness has developed. Presently, within contemporary cultures, treatment of physical and mental illness



is predominately based on scientific knowledge or assumptions from previous scientific research. Within Western cultures, medicine and psychology's emphasis on applying scientifically based treatments for physical and mental illnesses, while de-emphasizing spiritual matters, resulted in segmented treatment of the individual's concern: Physicians are sought for physical concerns, psychiatrists or psychologists treat mental concerns, and religious leaders tend to the spiritual needs of the individual. However, since the later part of the twentieth century, there has been a trend within Western medicine and behavioral healthcare toward increased awareness of the relationship between religion/spirituality and mental and physical health. The segmented treatment of the person has been less pervasive in Eastern cultures where a mind-body-spirit approach to healthcare has remained popular and the distinction between religion, medicine, and psychotherapy are less pronounced; for example, the Chinese medical practice of acupuncture which emphasizes restoring balance and correct flow to the body's Qi, an immaterial substance of vital energy, and the Buddhism emphasis on mindfulness, a concept now gaining popularity in current Western psychotherapy. Indigenous and tribal cultures, even in the West, have tended to maintain a holistic view of the person. Present-day Native Americans while heavily influenced by Western culture may include traditional spiritual ceremonies and interventions alongside interventions informed by modern scientific research. Religious groups who subscribe to only spiritual interventions for physical or mental illness exist as a small minority.

### **Religion and Well-Being**

Contemporary research has consistently found a relationship between religion and mental and physical health. Generally, researchers have found that individuals who practice mainstream religions have fewer physical illnesses and tend to live longer than their nonreligious counterparts (Koenig 1999; McCullough et al. 2000).

George et al. (2002) propose that there are multiple factors that account for these findings. Relevant to physical health, most religions explicitly prescribed good health habits while recommending moderation or abstinence of behaviors that are known to be detrimental. Relative to mental health, individuals who belong to a religious group benefit from social support and gain psychosocial resources as a result of their membership. Religion, especially organized religion, offers adherents' coping resources. In times of stress, upheaval, and suffering, individuals often turn to their religious beliefs and/or a religious community to provide comfort, hope, and a sense of belonging and being loved. Generally, religiosity is associated with positive coping in times of distress (Larson and Larson 2003). Regular attendance and participation in religious services offer members the opportunity to connect with a group of concerned individuals who support one another when there is a need. Religious communities not only care for the spiritual need of their members but also provide help for those who are ill or in distress. Religion also provides a systematized faith and value system that helps the believer organize and makes sense out of his/her existence and relationships with fellow humans and the natural world.

However, not all forms of religion are equally beneficial to the individuals' overall well-being. Larson and Larson (2003) have noted that some individual's religious beliefs lead to a sense of guilt, condemnation, and/or abandonment that can result in poorer coping and increased distress. While there has been relatively consistent support for a positive relationship between well-being and internalized intrinsically motivated religion based on a secure relationship with God, the opposite is true for religion that is imposed, unexamined, and reflective of a tenuous relationship with God; this type of religious belief has consistently been negatively related to well-being (Pargament 2002).

Current research on the relationship between religiosity and mental and physical health suggests a complicated multidimensional relationship. Through a review of the literature on religion/spirituality, health, and well-being,



Erwin-Cox et al. (2007) revealed four models implicit in the current literature to explain this relationship. One model found in the literature suggests that religiosity has a positive impact on physical health as mediated by mental well-being. A second model suggests that religiosity has a positive impact on mental well-being as mediated by physical health. A third model suggests religiosity as that impacts both physical health and mental well-being while at the same time physical health and mental well-being influence each other. Erwin-Cox et al., however, settle on a fourth model that suggests that religion has effects on both physical health and mental well-being, physical health and mental well-being effect each other, and physical health and mental well-being impact religiosity. Erwin-Cox et al.'s model emphasizes the bidirectional and interactional nature of the relationship between religion, physical health, and mental well-being revealed in the current literature.

In conclusion, that there is a relationship between religion and physical and mental health is not in doubt. The relationship between religion and physical and mental health is generally positive, although this is not always the case. Future research will hopefully clarify the multidimensional relationship between religion and mental and physical health allowing for the best possible holistic and integrated care of the individual.

## See Also

- ▶ [American Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Mindfulness](#)

- ▶ [Miracles](#)
- ▶ [New Testament](#)
- ▶ [Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religiosity](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)

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## Religion, Sexuality, and Psychoanalysis

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Most discussions of religion and psychoanalysis begin with Sigmund Freud's *Future of an Illusion*. Written in the last phase of Freud's

career, when he was turning his attention more frequently to the social implications of psychoanalytic thought, *Future* famously characterizes “religious ideas . . . [as] illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of [hu]mankind” (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, p. 30). According to Freud, religion is borne of a fundamental sense of helplessness – based initially in our infantile experience of weakness and powerlessness, and fostered by our adult encounter with an uncertain, chaotic world. Religion promises protection. For the child, the father represents an ideal of safety from life’s vulnerabilities and vicissitudes; for the faithful, safety comes from “the benevolent rule of a divine Providence” or cosmic order or karmic justice (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, p. 30). Freud clarifies that his characterization of religion as an “illusion” is meant only to draw attention to its derivation. Unlike a psychiatric delusion, the illusion that is religion is not necessarily false or contrary to reality; an illusion is defined by its source – fantasy, rather than experience – not its veracity (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, pp. 30–31). Moreover, Freud’s discussion of the *wish* for paternal protection implicitly recognizes it as an illusion: whether a child’s father – or other caregiver(s) – provide(s) protection in fact, the child still longs for safety.

Because most discussions of religion and psychoanalysis also end with *Future of an Illusion*, Freud’s views are often dismissed as reductive. But Freud unwittingly allows for a more complicated perspective on the “father complex” at the heart of religion. When describing the longed-for protection, Freud notes that it is provided “through love” (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, p. 30). *Future* characterizes the father’s role almost exclusively as protector; although protection is one demonstration of love, Freud does not emphasize the father as a source – or an object – of love. Similarly, in *Totem and Taboo*, written almost a decade prior to *Future of an Illusion*, when trying to explain the origin of religion, Freud describes the father-son relationship as typified by rivalry and hostility (Freud 1968, Vol. 13, pp. 141–145). Not only is *Totem* silent on the protection that the father can provide,

there is also no acknowledgment that conflict is only one dimension of the father-son relational dynamic.

For Freudian psychoanalysis, the most significant features of psychic development are described by the Oedipus complex. The “positive” complex, in which the male child experiences desire for the mother and rivalry with the father, is the most widely disseminated, and thus well-known, portion of Freud’s thought. While the positive Oedipus complex is central to the discussion in *Totem and Taboo*, and implicit in the account of religion found in *Moses and Monotheism* (Freud 1968, Vol. 23, pp. 7–137), it is virtually absent from *Future of an Illusion*. (This alone should make us wary of reading *Future* as a definitive, psychoanalytic statement on religion.) Absent from all three texts, although hinted at in *Future*, is the “negative” Oedipus complex, in which the male child experiences desire for the father and, hence, identification with the mother. (Freud’s reluctance to use the language of rivalry when discussing the negative Oedipus complex betrays his overarching gender conceptions.) What if the longing that founded religion, the wish for “protection through love,” was, in the final analysis, a wish for love itself – in the form of erotic attention? Turning, for example, to the Wolf-Man case study (Freud 1968, Vol. 17, pp. 7–122), and thinking about the patient’s fascination with the existence of Christ’s anus and how it makes him available for His Father’s erotic attention, we might arrive at a very different understanding of the wishes that religion fulfills. Similarly, Freud’s reading of Daniel Paul Schreber’s memoir (Freud 1968, Vol. 12, pp. 3–82) and Schreber’s sense that God desired him sexually might also cast a very different light on the longings that religion answers (see Brintnall 2011, pp. 84–89). (Freud admits to having a better understanding of the male child’s Oedipus complex. Although the female also moves through a positive and negative Oedipus complex, entailing both love for and rivalry with the father, there is no hint in Freud’s writings on how the female might relate to religion differently in light of her unique developmental path.)

Having seen that *Future of an Illusion*, because it contains a truncated version of the father-son complex, might also contain a truncated understanding of religion, what if we seek to understand Freud's take on religion starting with a different text? Written in 1907, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices" represents "Freud's introductory excursion into the psychology of religion" (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, p. 116). In this essay, Freud compares "neurotic ceremonials" to pious rituals (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, p. 117). While noting that the neurotic's phobic avoidance can be meaningfully compared to the cult expert's awareness of taboo, Freud distinguishes obsessive actions and religious rituals by noting that neurotic ceremonials are private, whereas religious rituals are public, and neurotic ceremonials are seemingly meaningless, whereas religious rituals are symbolically meaningful (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, p. 119). While some religious rituals are performed in private, they derive their meaning from communal membership. Even though there are regional, historical, and individual variations in religious practice, it would be hard to understand a ritual *as religious* if it were wholly idiosyncratic in the manner of a neurotic symptom. Assuming this private/public distinction holds, Freud notes that the second distinction does not: neurotic ceremonials only *appear* to be senseless, because their meaning is known only to the unconscious, given that they satisfy repressed instinctual impulses. Similarly, the symbolic meaning of religious rituals is often unknown to practitioners (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, pp. 120–122). There are, of course, two ways to understand this lack of understanding. First, a practitioner may not understand a ritual's religious meaning behind a specific action. I genuflect before a cross; I dip my fingers in a bowl of water; I carefully avoid eating certain foods – I do these things without knowing the reason why, but the reason could be articulated by an "expert" from the tradition of which I am a part. Second, a practitioner may understand a ritual's *religious* meaning without comprehending other motivations for which that explanation is an alibi. At the conclusion of "Obsessive Actions," Freud gestures toward this second kind of meaningfulness when he

notes that both neurosis and religion involve the unacknowledged renunciation of instincts. But they renounce different kinds of instinct: "in neurosis [they] are exclusively sexual in their origin, while in religion they spring from egoistic sources" (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, p. 127). While Freud thus distinguishes religion and neurosis, he suggests that one could "regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of a religion ... and ... describe ... neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis" (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, pp. 126–127).

To distinguish religion from neurosis, then, we must be able to distinguish sexual and egoistic instincts. This distinction is far from stable in Freud's writings. When characterizing ego instincts as "self-seeking, socially harmful instincts" related to a desire for mastery over the world, Freud writes that they "are usually not without a sexual component" (Freud 1968, Vol. 9, p. 125). In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, the first edition of which was written just a few years before "Obsessive Actions," Freud notes that sadism, so often linked to cruelty, finds its "roots ... in the normal." Sexuality, after all, "contains an element of *aggressiveness* – a desire to subjugate" (Freud 1968, Vol. 8, p. 157).

This desire to subjugate, to enact perfectly one's desires, and to impose one's will on the world is the instinctual impulse that civilization – in large part, through religion – seeks to curb. This is the famous conclusion of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud 1968, Vol. 11, pp. 86–89). But *Civilization* also concludes – in reliance on Freud's conception of the superego, first suggested in "On Narcissism" (Freud 1968, Vol. 14, pp. 73–107) and later confirmed in *The Ego and the Id* (Freud 1968, Vol. 19, pp. 12–66) – that the aggressive impulse that characterizes sadistic violence toward the world founds and fuels the power of conscience (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, pp. 123–124). Submission to this critical voice is based, in part, on fear – on the sense of helplessness one experiences in the face of those who have the power to enforce their understanding of "good" and "bad" (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, p. 124). But as Freud explains

when discussing metapsychology, rather than religion, this critical agency is also an object of desire. To simplify Freud's account, spread across several essays and books, I want to obey the dictates of my conscience, because my conscience is developed, in part, out of repressed erotic longing for those figures – my parents – who initially taught me right from wrong (see Brintnall 2011, pp. 89–93). In other words, both the ego's operation that fuels my aggression toward the world and the superego's activity that fuels aggression toward my instincts have their basis in—and may be indistinguishable from—sexual instincts. As importantly, the attitudes that fund religious practices – the care demonstrated so as not to incur the wrath of the divine or disturb the cosmic order – may, in the final analysis, have a sexual dimension.

But what is “the sexual” for Freud? If it is a dimension of conscience, then it is clearly something beyond genital pleasure. As Leo Bersani famously concludes, after a close reading of *Three Essays*, “sexuality . . . could be thought of as a tautology for masochism” (Bersani 1986, p. 39). Although Freud never stated the matter so baldly, his recognition of a primary masochism and his surmising about a death instinct makes Bersani's claim plausible. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud admits that the erotic and death instincts can both be pressed into service of aggression and destructiveness and that, perhaps, the two instincts “seldom – perhaps never – appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions” (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, p. 119). For precisely this reason, civilization not only secures our survival by curbing our aggressive and self-destructive instincts but also is a source of our suffering, insofar as “we” become the target of the internalized aggression of a moral censor. While Freud ruminates on the ambivalent status of civilization, he fails to note that this feature of civilization means that religion is no longer simply palliative (Freud 1968, Vol. 21, p. 75). Insofar as religion energizes the death instinct through the voice of conscience, it does not give us protection from morality's sadism, but is, in fact, a psychic force *from which we need protecting*.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where he first discusses the death instinct, Freud insists that psychoanalysis must “lay stress upon the libidinal character of the self-preservative instincts,” thus abandoning the distinction between sexual and ego instincts. He then recognizes that he may “be driven to agree with the critics who suspected from the first that psychoanalysis explains *everything* by sexuality” (Freud 1968, Vol. 18, p. 52). Although he muses that the erotic and death instincts may still allow for something beyond sexuality, his discussion of sadism and masochism shows that even the death instinct may be a sexual instinct in the final analysis (Freud 1968, Vol. 18, pp. 53–55). If the distinction between neurosis and religion collapses under the weight of Freud's mature metapsychological speculations, then how can his views on religion be rescued from the charge of reductionism?

The strong relation between religion and sexuality in psychoanalysis is not reductive precisely because the psychoanalytic conception of sexuality is not singular. The Oedipus complex, which maps the child's sexual relation to the father and the mother, includes both desire and hostility, love and hatred, and longing and identification. Similarly, sexuality fosters life, relation, and union as well as death, destruction, and isolation: sadism *and* masochism are part of sexuality. Whether or not Freud's claims – his claims about the structure of the psyche or his claims about the historical origins of religion – are true, the ways in which his complex account of sexuality interacts with his (much less complex) account of religion gives us a rich conceptual grid through which to view, interrogate, map, and organize religious practices, texts, and phenomena.

### See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQI and Queer Studies](#)

- ▶ [Libido](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and American Religions](#)
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## Religion, Sexuality, and Violence

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Violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) persons became a prominent national concern after the murder of gay City Supervisor Harvey Milk of San Francisco in 1979, leading to a public hearing on antigay/anti-lesbian violence in the US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Criminal Justice in 1986 (Comstock 1991). Increased media attention to the prevalence of hate crime violence against LGBTQ persons followed the hate crime murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998 in Wyoming

and has continued as a topic of interest in the popular media until the more recent signing into US law of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act in 2009. While there exists a plethora of literature from psychological and religious studies perspectives on the relation of violence and religion and the intersections of religion and sexuality, there is a dearth of psychological and religious studies literature addressing the connections between religion, sexuality (specifically, sexual orientation/identity), and violence.

Comstock (1991) and Herek and Berrill (1992) published early texts on phenomena of violence against lesbians and gay men. Comstock's was the first comprehensive national study of violence against gay and lesbian persons that addresses historical, biblical, and theological undercurrents of violence, as well as psychological and sociological analyses of victims and perpetrators of violence. This early literature on the convergence of religion, sexuality, and violence recognizes the primary place occupied by cultural ideology, including religious belief systems, in understanding phenomena of violence against LGBTQ persons. Cultural ideology and religious institutions not only play a large part in the stigmatization of LGBTQ persons in society through theological discourses of "sin" and "sexual deviance" but also serve the function of privileging and theologically legitimating heterosexuality through religious institutions like marriage. While it is not always possible to arrive upon a direct correlation between religious beliefs about sexuality and practices of violence against LGBTQ persons, attention to the intersections of religion, sexuality, and violence focuses primarily upon the ways that religion as a sociocultural force legitimates LGBTQ persons as appropriate targets of violence.

The earliest attention to violence against LGBTQ persons focused on expressions of *physical* violence against LGBTQ persons (Comstock 1991, p. 2). The literature, however, continues to expand to treat the subject of violence beyond what is manifested in interpersonal physical attack. Aside from the instances of hate crime violence that catch occasional media attention,



myriad instances of violence operate at institutional and systemic levels that have profound effects upon the lives of LGBTQ persons but that often go unnoticed and under-theorized. The institutional and systemic operations of violence against LGBTQ persons push beyond what can be addressed at interpersonal levels and call for an enlarged framework for approaching the intersection of religion, sexuality, and violence, thus engaging multidisciplinary lenses such as social psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology, and political theory alongside religious studies.

Beyond the level of interpersonal attack, the subject of violence against LGBTQ persons can be seen as a particular facet of oppression. Young's (1990) treatment of "systemic violence" helps to put overt manifestations of interpersonal, physical violence into the larger framework of institutional structures and the ideological foundations that undergird practices of violence. As it applies to LGBTQ persons, this framework points to the ways in which members of minority (sexual) groups live with the knowledge that they may become victims of random and unprovoked attack, "which have no motive but to damage, humiliate, or destroy the person" (Young 1990, p. 61). This speaks to the psychic terror that may be inflicted upon members of minority groups precluding any necessary personal victimization of physical attack. This violence is a facet of oppression due to the larger institutional and sociocultural context that makes such attacks possible and acceptable, pointing toward certain persons as appropriate targets of violence simply because they are members of a particular group (e.g., LGBTQ persons). Religious teachings regarding sexual minorities and those who breach stringent gender norms are a part of the sociocultural force undergirding such systemic violence. In order to address the institutional legitimization for such violence, "a change in cultural images, stereotypes, and the mundane reproduction of relations of dominance and aversion" is called for (Young 1990, p. 63).

Connected to the macro-level of sociocultural discourse legitimating practices of violence, one of the growing topics of study in the clinical literature

is the phenomenon of microaggressions. Psychologist Derald Wing Sue (2010) has produced extensive treatments of microaggressions in the clinical literature and defines microaggressions as "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership" (p. xvi). The subtle messages of insult, invalidation, or aggression toward LGBTQ persons and members of other minority groups may be carried forth in common speech, often outside the conscious awareness of the perpetrators of microaggressions. The "attributional ambiguity" (Sue 2010, p. 54) inherent in the workings of microaggressions makes great demands on the psychological energy of targeted persons who must interpret the motives, meanings, and intentions behind the microaggression that are often occluded by the subtlety and brevity of the exchange. Microaggressions are subtle instances of nonphysical violence that are linked to larger sociocultural and religious contexts that attempt to define reality in ways that subjugate, exclude, and stigmatize LGBTQ persons in contrast to a culturally, politically, and religiously legitimated heterosexual norm.

Clinical questions must include addressing realities of violence (physical and nonphysical) with persons who identify as LGBTQ. There is a connection in this regard to the psychological literature on trauma, though the issues with LGBTQ victims of violence are more expansive than those typically covered in traditional trauma literature. It is often the case that LGBTQ persons who are victims of religiously legitimated anti-LGBTQ violence are also, themselves, devoted to similar religious traditions. This raises clinical questions regarding the synchronicity of religious and sexual identity development. There is also a need for clinicians to develop an understanding of the psychological strain imposed by the presence of microaggressions, as well as institutional, and systemic violence experienced by LGBTQ persons. While an LGBTQ person may not have experienced the powerlessness and psychological trauma of physical attack, there is still need for clinicians to attend to the experience of powerlessness and psychological trauma experienced by the overwhelming anti-LGBTQ force of



institutions (e.g., religious groups, governments) and larger sociocultural and religious discourses about LGBTQ persons that are carried forth in the ambiguity of microaggressions, as well as overt physical attack (see Tigert 1999). Finally, clinicians must develop ways of viewing LGBTQ individuals as persons with complex identities, taking into account the intersection of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability/ability, ethnicity, religion, etc. This enlarges considerations of violence, as the inherent multiplicity of socially constructed identities in every person provides for no simple understandings of, or simple solutions for, the complexities that surround questions of religion, sexuality, and violence.

A prevalent lacuna in the psychological and religious studies literature is a psychologically informed examination of religiously inspired violence against LGBTQ persons outside of the USA. Within the USA, documentation of violence motivated by sexual orientation bias has only been required by the federal government since 1990 (Comstock 1991), and in many other parts of the world, this documentation has not been as systematic. With the rising profile of brutality and violence against LGBTQ persons in places like Uganda, however, attention must shift toward global contexts of violence against LGBTQ persons, noting the influence of religious bias often exported from a US religious context. A second gap in the literature is serious attention to the articulation between practices of violence toward LGBTQ persons and religious traditions other than Christian.

It is important to note that while the connection between religion, sexuality, and violence is often treated as patently obvious in the popular imagination – namely, seeing religious beliefs about sexuality as a direct cause of violence against LGBTQ persons – some scholars of religion and violence provide a critique of the prevalent discourse that complexifies the issue considerably (see Cavanaugh 2009). These perspectives on the complexities of religion and violence point to the difficulty of functionally defining “religion” in such a way that religious beliefs can be teased apart from larger cultural ideologies that influence practices of violence.

For discussions of religion, sexuality, and violence, this raises important questions regarding the intermingling of religious teachings on sexuality with cultural ideologies of sexuality and gender as they relate to practices of violence against LGBTQ persons in society.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity and Sexuality](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQI and Queer Studies](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQI Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Violence and Religion](#)

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## Religiosity

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### Introduction

The word religiosity derives from the Latin *religiōsitās*, which is commonly viewed as excessive devotion to religion.

Religious, religiousness, and religiosity are used interchangeably within medical literature. This flexibility in nomenclature is confusing; it is not clear whether the religious behaviors described are excessive, pathological, or customary. Emotional and behavioral expressions of faith span a wide breadth depending upon religion and culture. The rousing and participatory nature of Gospel Music can be quite expressive emotionally, but it is also customary (Stearns and Lewis 1998). In contrast, excessive religious feelings or sentiments that extend beyond customary expression to dogmatism, ritualistic, and self-recriminatory behaviors can be pathological. Religiosity, in this sense, is often manifested as guilt, worry, extreme scrupulosity, ritualistic compulsivity, delusions, distortions of belief, and desires of persecution or martyrdom.

Scientific research on the relationship between religiosity and psychological functioning has contributed to a greater understanding of the field, but one must exercise caution in generalizing assumptions about religiosity across religious groups and cultures. Research findings have demonstrated positive, negative, or nonexistent relationships. Results may be obtained through correlation (how the variables vary together); and it may be difficult to determine whether religiosity affects psychological adjustment or whether psychological adjustment manifests religiosity.

## Background and Theorists

Hebrew and Christian Scripture describe differences in the expression of religious sentiment: Ecclesiastes (1.16-17) it is the "... mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly ..." James (1.26-17) "If any think that are religious, and do not bridle their tongues ... their religion is worthless." Excessive demonstrations of faith are observed in the religious reformers as well as the mystics. Erik Erikson (1993) describes the young Martin Luther as suffering from obsessive scrupulosity and a preoccupation with "dirty" thoughts (p. 61). Ignatius of Loyola (1495–1556)

evaluated his scruples for incorrect assumptions: "... after I have thought or said or done some other thing, there comes to me a thought from without that I have sinned, and on the other hand it appears to me that I have not sinned; still I feel disturbance in this; that is to say, in as much as I doubt and in as much as I do not doubt." (p. 138). In this expression of excessive religiosity, excessive scrutiny of perceived faults and offenses does not bring relief. Robert Burton describes the process: "the main matter which terrifies and torments most ... is the enormity of their offences, the intolerable burthen of their sins ... [that they are] "past all hope of grace ... their offences so great they cannot be forgiven" (p. 410). Martin Luther, Ignatius of Loyola, and St Therese among others struggled in balancing the delicate examination of consciousness and extreme scrupulosity (Osborn 2008). Historically, the boundary between religion and psychiatry or psychology was often blurred leaving both physicians and priests confused as to which to treat first "infirmity of body and soul" (Erickson 1993, p. 47). Excessive scrupulosity may at first appear to be enlightened religious self-examination but it is actually Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, a mental condition arising from specific cultural, psychological and medical conditions that prevent the faithful from living lives of grace (Ciarrocchi 1995). Physicians in the nineteenth century were intrigued with manifestations of religiosity. One of the more significant neurologists of the time, Jean Martin Charcot appeared reluctant to accept the religious claims of mystics and demonstrated that professed demonic possession was a form of hysteria. Pierre Janet, a student of Charcot's, described a patient, Madeleine, whose religious behaviors reflected a number of mystic stances, including the stigmata.

This crippling association between scrupulosity and religiosity has been observed in ultra Orthodox Jews. Determining when customary religious ritual transcends to pathological religiosity has sometimes, been challenging for clinical practitioners who are unfamiliar with Orthodox Judaism. One way of evaluating the pathology has been to observe the degree of

distress the individual is experiencing and his/her resistance to change.

Some religious experiences, which initially presented as ritualistic obsessions in mysticism have been deemed meaningful. Delacroix studied the mystics for signs of psychopathology/religiosity. After observing fervent signs of religious behavior, Delacroix concluded that some mystics were not pathological. He believed that the mystics were evolving to new and creative forms of existence, transforming their personalities to achieve selfless unification with God. Mystics, through prayer, attempt to unite with God, Delacroix felt that this process was not a form of disassociation (the sense of being split off from normal awareness). Extreme and lengthy presentations of dissociation can be manifestations of religiosity, however, some researchers believe moments of disassociation may occur during religious rituals and may not include aspects of psychopathology or religiosity. Many people experience during prayer or meditation a sense of being in communion with a holy other (numinous). Otto (1950) described these experiences in *The Idea of the Holy* as transcending to the presence of the sacred.

The religious groups that use extreme ritual, dogma, indoctrination, and alienation from the larger community promote fear and a form of religiosity that is deleterious to physical and mental health. The Rev. Jim Jones instructed the 900 members of the People's Temple to commit mass suicide in Jonestown, Guyana, on November 18, 1978. Perceptions of God, experiences of faith, and expressions of religious behavior can influence how one perceives the external world. When one perceives God as merciful, kind, and forgiving, one is more likely to experience positive effects in relation to mental and physical health than when one believes that God is distant, punishing, or vindictive.

Our understanding of religious beliefs has developed from research involving attachment theory. Attachment theory holds that individuals form cognitive representations of the self and others in relationship, which evolve from the child's interactions with their caregivers. Researchers observed children as they were

separated and then reunited with their caregiver. Children who minimized contact with their caregiver (which was understood to be a defense against rejection) were classified as insecure/avoidant. The children's behavior as they were separated and then reunited with their caretaker they needed comforting. Children who demonstrated considerable distress upon separating from their caregiver, and sought maximum contact reflected inconsistent caretaking or insecure/ambivalent attachment. Children who did not show distress upon separating and sought closeness when needing comforting demonstrated secure attachment. Rizzuto (1979) investigated the effects of attachment on how people perceived God. They found that individuals who described their experience with God as *anxious* were more likely to express signs of psychopathology, scrupulosity, neurotic behavior and a propensity towards negativity. Religious behavior and belief were similar in that when *insecurely* attached people were in adult relationships that were described as *insecure*, they compensated by increasing their involvement in religious activities. People who described *insecure* childhood experiences displayed signs of religiosity, which were more often than not highly emotional experiences. These individuals also tended to experience sudden changes in their religious beliefs and were more prone to acts of conversion. Individuals who described themselves as *securely* attached tended to demonstrate stable religious behaviors. *Securely* attached people adopted religious beliefs that were similar to those of their caretaker's and changed their religious beliefs or activities slowly over time.

### See Also

- ▶ [Altered States of Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Conscience](#)
- ▶ [Delusion](#)
- ▶ [Discernment](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [Glossolalia](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)

- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Religion and Mental and Physical Health
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Religious Identity
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Religious

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### Introduction

The word religious is first recorded in the twelfth century in Old French and derives from the Latin *religiōs-us* (the suffix, *us*, means full of). Religious is commonly defined as demonstrating the full practical or spiritual (human spirit, soul, or higher moral qualities) effects of religion. The word also refers to a person belonging to or bound by holy orders.

How one demonstrates the full practical or spiritual effects of religion varies. Variables influencing religious behaviors are multidimensional and measurable. A measure of religiousness and spirituality was included in the 1997–1998 General Social Survey (GSS) a random national survey of the National Data Program for the Social Sciences. The Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging Working Group wanted to understand the religious and spiritual trends in contemporary American society. The variables canvassed a wide breadth: whether one is considered religious or spiritual, religious and spiritual development or history over the lifespan, religious or spiritual preferences, the perception of the transcendent (God, the Divine) in daily life, the meaning that is derived from the events of life, the value that the individual places on religion, the importance of and commitment to one's religious and spiritual beliefs, the cognitive dimensions of belief, forgiveness, private religious and spiritual practices, corporate religious life, and corporate religious relationships, religious or spiritual coping. When people who claim to be religious are queried, there are aspects of religion that weigh in more heavily over others. The body of assessments measuring religious attitudes and behaviors has grown over the past decade (Hill and Pargament 2003). Similarly, to other topic areas of social scientific study investigators seek measures of assessment

that are both valid and reliable (Koenig et al. 2001; Meezenbroek et al. 2012).

### Assessment of Religious Behaviors

#### Religiousness

The Fetzer Institute sponsored the development of multidimensional scale, which can be used across populations (Fetzer 2003). Among other investigations, the scale has been used to measure the impact of religious behaviors on health outcomes (Murphy et al. 2000).

#### Orientation

The Allport and Ross (1967) Religious Orientation Scale determines whether individuals are *intrinsically* motivated and live as though personal and religious beliefs are aligned or *extrinsically* motivated and use religion to provide security, status, and self-justification. *Indiscriminately pro-religious* individuals produce responses falling in both scales. And individuals who are neither *intrinsic* nor *extrinsic* are considered *indiscriminately antireligious/nonreligious*. Intrinsic religious orientation has been significantly associated with many factors, one of which is *absorption*, openness to experience and the ability to alter one's emotional and belief systems across a variety of situations.

### Background

Some researchers, despite the questionnaires' wide use, have questioned whether religious orientations such as intrinsic and extrinsic are distinctive. Drawing from the Allport & Ross model, Batson and Ventis (1982) correlated categories of *internal* and *external* with intrinsic and extrinsic. Findings from this study revealed three independent categories: religion as means (extrinsic); religion as an end (intrinsic); and individuals who are in the midst of evaluating their religious or spiritual process (quest). Addressing issues associated with reliability and validity Francis (2007) evaluates the conceptual and empirical strengths and



limitations of both models. The New Indices of Religious Orientation (NICO), a resultant measure of that study, confirmed: that each orientation (intrinsic, extrinsic and quest) is distinct and defensible; aspects of religiousness are measured and not an associated emotional affect; that the terms were re-operationalized in order to equalize the constituent parts within each religious orientation; and that the measure functions distinctly when evaluating different individuals across different situations (Francis 2007).

### See Also

- ▶ [Quest](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religiosity](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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### Religious Conversion and Personal Transformation

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William James (1902/1958, p. 157) defined conversion as, “a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.” Rambo (1993, p. 5) defines conversion as “a process of religious change that takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations.”

Several studies on conversion recognize personal transformation as the central effect of



religious conversion (Heirich 1977; James 1902/1958; Rambo 1993; Snow and Machalek 1984; Ullman 1989; Zinnbauer and Pargament 1998). Scholars define personal transformation associated with religious conversion as “cognitive restructuring” (Batson et al. 1993) and change in “root reality” (Heirich 1977). Mahoney and Pargament (2004, p. 483) observe that conversion “radically alters a person’s understanding of the sacred, the self, relationships, and one’s place in the universe.” William James argued that the divided self is unified in conversion, resulting in positive emotions. Heirich (1977) suggests, “Conversion . . . involves a conscious shift in one’s sense of grounding.” Snow and Machalek (1984) talk about change in the “universe of discourse.” The change is not limited to identities, beliefs, and values, but the previous universe of discourse is replaced by a new one or by one that was in the periphery until now.

Zinnbauer and Pargament (1998) find that the converts experienced “significant improvements in their sense of self, self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-identity,” without altering the personality structure (Paloutzian et al. 1999). In a similar vein, Gillespie (1991) argues that conversion gives a new identity, a new direction, aim, meaning, and purpose. He claims that it affects all areas of life. In short, personal transformation is acknowledged as the central effect of religious conversion.

How does one get the power to bring about such a drastic change? Theologians would ascribe the power to God, while psychologists explain it as a psychological process. One such explanation is the suggestion that when the struggling self is surrendered, the energy spent for struggling over sin is channelized for positive changes. However, some scholars (Gordon 1967; Ullman 1989) point out the absence of struggle over sin before conversion where there is no direction of energy towards personal transformation.

Social psychologists explain that through socialization a person experiences transformation. The affective bonds between the potential converts and the agent or the group play a vital role in transformation. Once a person is part of a group, the group dynamics of social influence

and social learning activate the transformation in a new member. The social influence theory explains how one experiences gradual transformation through influencing relationships when a person is under stress.

Lofland and Stark (1965) first suggested this idea of social relationship in their “world-saver” model at the stage of a cult affective bond. They observed, “conversion frequently moved through preexisting friendship pairs or nets.” This idea has been developed further by other scholars (Bainbridge 1992; Downton 1980; Long and Hadden 1983; Rambo 1993; Richardson 1985). Bainbridge (1992) argues for a combined model of strain theory and social influence theory. A deprived person looks for an alternative option where the social network plays a role in bringing this person to encounter the group. Such social contact facilitates the conversion of a person who is under strain.

Heirich (1977) basing himself on the study of Catholic-Pentecostals concludes that his findings do not support the theories that explain conversion in terms of psychological stress and socialization. However, he acknowledges that socialization could work with a person who is a seeker. “If one is not already a religious seeker, such [social] contact is insufficient in most cases to produce a ‘change of heart.’” Malony (1998) is of the opinion that the friendship should “result in some transempirical answers to the imponderable questions of mystery, tragedy, and circumstance.” A social association alone is not a sufficient cause for transformation, and it is much more than friendship. Moreover, the social influence theory only explains partially the conversion that takes place in a group context. However, this does not explain the sudden conversion or conversion in isolation where people experience personal transformation but have never been part of a religious community.

Converts in general, however, attribute great significance to the divine-human encounter in conversion. They place the religious experience at the center of the conversion process. The realization that one is sinful occurs at the meeting between the divine and human. The convert begins to see himself/herself and the world

differently through the lens of this encounter. Studies (James 1902/1958; Mahoney and Pargament 2004; Rambo 1993; Ullman 1989; Zinnbauer and Pargament 1998) have acknowledged the presence of the divine in conversion and personal transformation.

Dufault-Hunter (2012) argues that the power of faith contributes to dramatic changes in the lives of the converted who were once drug addicts, gang members, and antisocial individuals. Batson et al. (1993) point out that a new vision – cognitive restructuring – arises from the transcendental realm. Similarly, Bulkeley (1999, p. 16), based on the study of dream experiences, claims that “*dreams can bring a dreamer closer to the sacred*” [italics as in original]. He further argues that “religious and psychological approaches to dreams are logically compatible; both approaches agree that dreams connect us with realms that extend beyond—and, in some cases, *far* beyond—the reach of ordinary waking consciousness” [italics as in original] (p. 28). James (1902/1958), Batson et al. (1993), and Bulkeley (1999) point out the existence of a realm beyond the conscious mind. They also spell out the possibility of interaction between the conscious and the beyond through the mystical states of consciousness.

James (1902/1958) explained the entry of the spiritual power only in mystical experiences or sudden conversions. However, even in gradual conversions, the moment of realization and personalization of the religious concepts can be seen as the result of the divine-human encounter. This realization is not simply an intellectual awareness. No matter the type of conversion experience, sudden or gradual, the divine-human encounter through the mystical states of consciousness triggers personal transformation (Iyadurai forthcoming). However, socialization and religious practices sustain the transformation which is an ongoing process.

## See Also

- [Religious Conversion and Social Transformation](#)

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## Religious Conversion and Social Transformation

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Psychological studies on conversion mainly deal with individual conversion and its effects on the individual. However, religious conversion results not only in personal transformation but social transformation as well. Rambo (1993) points out that the effects of conversion are not merely personal but sociocultural. Rowena Robinson (2003, p. 314) observes, “conversion as a sociological phenomenon is rarely limited only to a transformation in religious beliefs. Social and cultural changes always accompany it.” Based on limited literature, we find that group or community conversion lead to social transformation. Studies show that conversion alters one’s identity.

Conversion is a major change of situation in one’s life that creates an identity crisis where the convert forms a new identity based on one’s conversion experience. Bailey Gillespie (1991) draws a parallel between identity experience and conversion experience. He observes that both identity experience and conversion experience have behavioral changes due to “changed frame of reference,” change of ethical values, and the core of a person affected as the common factors. In conversion, a new identity is formed based on a newfound relationship with God and the faith community. He asserted, “Knowing God through religious conversion is identity producing” (Gillespie 1991, p. 191). Converts acquire a new spiritual identity and social identity in conversion.

Buckser (2003, p. 69) claims that “Conversion to a religion is an irreducibly social act; one does

not merely join a faith, but one enters into a set of new relationships with members of a religious community. Conversion, therefore, changes not only the individual, but also the groups that must assimilate or give up the convert.” The context of community is vital in conversion. Webster (2003, p. 373) claims, “Conversion is a process leading to a new identity, but the identity is going to be both personal and social (caste/religious community) as the two are inexorably linked together [in India]”. Social dimension in the conversion process plays a significant role in constructing a new identity.

According to the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner, a disadvantaged group adopts three strategies to construct positive social identity. (1) Social Mobility Strategies in which individuals disassociate themselves from the disadvantaged group. (2) Social Creativity Strategies in which members modify the comparative elements to make it favorable to the in-group. (3) Social Change Strategies in which members confront the out-group to change the status. Among the three, social mobility is an individual strategy to enhance positive social identity of an individual and the other two are collective strategies to enhance the status of the in-group (as quoted in Jackson et al. 1996). Jackson et al. explain further:

We find collective strategies include both actual and psychological attempts to enhance in-group status. For example, social creativity strategies include changing the valence of a negatively distinguishing dimension to make it less disparaging to the in-group, enhancing perceptions of the in-group on dimensions other than the distinguishing dimension, or changing other elements of the comparative situation so as to favor the in-group (e.g., engaging in downward social comparisons). Social change strategies focus on producing actual changes in the relative status of the in-group and out-group. Typically, they involve mobilizing members of the in-group to confront out-group members to change the status quo.

We find that all the three strategies are adopted to enhance social identity in the conversion process.

Howard (2000, pp. 385–386) observes that identity crisis can give birth to social movements. She argues, “When identity struggles arise, they

generally take the form of redefining negative images as positive, or of deciphering the “authentic” identity.” Jayakumar (1999/2004) in his study of Dalit (the untouchables in the Indian caste system) conversion movements in South India, based on historical records, argues that conversion to Christianity led to their social transformation. The identity crisis of the Dalits was the context in which they acted as a group to redefine their identity through religious conversion. Jayakumar (1999/2004, p. 229) asserts, “The identity crisis and the aspiration for new identity were obvious when the Dalits fully or partially revealed their motives at the time of their conversion.” Clarke (2003) calls it a movement to change the worldview. Webster (2003, p. 372) observed that the primary motive of Dalit conversion in the Punjab in North India was to obtain human dignity and that it was essentially a liberation movement. It was a movement to discard the “psychological conditioning of the oppressive past.” Farhadian (2003, p. 63) based on his study of conversion among Dani of Irian Jaya observes, “conversion to Christianity led to a reconfiguring of Papuan identity” and further claims, “Christianity as force for social change and a new vision of hope ... became real.” Conversion movements among the tribal communities either give them a new identity and dignity or reinforce their cultural identity which gives them positive self-image about themselves and their communities. Religious conversion gives new identity to the communities converted which in turn leads to social mobility. The new identity obtained in conversion enabled converts to see themselves and others as equals or sometimes superior to others. Through conversion they discard the psychological conditioning that they are inferior.

The effect of religious conversion is not only personal transformation but also social transformation. The core of the transformation is the new identity obtained in conversion. The new identity enables the community to have a positive self-image in light of the conversion experience. Conversion is an ongoing process both for individual and community. “While the conversion of an individual can only last for their lifetime, the

conversion of the community is a much longer, inter-generational process” (Webster 2003, p. 374). The degree of transformation may vary due to various factors both for individuals and communities.

## See Also

- ▶ [Religious Conversion and Personal Transformation](#)

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## Religious Coping

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Tix and Frazier (1998) defined religious coping as the “use of cognitive or behavioral techniques, in the face of stressful life events, that arise out of one’s religion or spirituality” (p. 411). Religious coping strategies often stem directly from an individual’s religious beliefs system and help them to construct meaning and form interpretations (both positive and negative) of stressful situations and events (Gall and Cornblat 2002). Moreover, religious coping has been found to be a distinct form of coping separate from secular forms of coping (e.g., cognitive restructuring) (Tarakeshwar and Pargament 2001). It has been hypothesized that the incorporation of religion into the process of coping provides a source of meaning that may not be as salient or readily accessed during times of distress with secular forms of coping (Krause 1998).

### Religion and Coping with Trauma

When faced with stressful life events, many people turn to their faith for comfort, support, and a sense of meaning and control (Pargament and Ano 2006). Most commonly, researchers have found that people use prayer, worship, and social support from a faith community to cope with suffering (Pargament 2005; Tatsumura et al. 2003). A study of 586 members of mainline Christian churches in America revealed that 78 % of church members utilized religion in their coping with difficult life circumstances (Pargament et al. 1990). A study of 1,000 battered wives revealed that one-third sought help from clergy (Bowker 1988). Of 1,299 African Americans responding to an interview concerning prayer, 80 % reported using prayer to cope (Ellison and Taylor 1996). Similarly, Kesselring et al. (1986) reported that 37 % of Swiss respondents and 92 % of Egyptian

respondents believe that God will help them through their cancer-related illness. Koenig et al. (1988) also reported that 45 % of older, Protestant adults believed religion to be an important part of coping. In short, many people turn to religious leaders and practices to cope with traumatic or stressful circumstances.

There are other factors and personal predictors that serve to influence the probability religious coping strategies will be utilized (Pargament 1997). Overall, gender, religious affiliation, level of education, and ethnicity tend to be the most important determining factors in the use of religion to cope with major life stress or trauma (Pargament 2002). For example, minority status has also been correlated with predictors of religious coping (Bearon and Koenig 1990; Bjorck and Cohen 1993; Ellison and Taylor 1996). Furthermore, the fewer resources available to a person, the more likely religious coping strategies will be utilized. Research has also found that the more serious and potentially threatening the stressor, the more likely people are to rely upon religious coping strategies (Pargament 1997).

### Primary Approaches to Religious Coping

Five primary approaches to religious coping have been identified (Pargament et al. 1988; Pargament 2002). The self-directed approach refers to people relying on their own internal resources to cope, believing they are God-given. The deferring approach occurs when people passively transfer responsibility for problem solution to God. In the collaborative approach, people view themselves as partner with God to solve problems. Pargament et al. (1988) and Pargament (2002) also describe several correlates of these approaches, with the self-directed approach to coping being linked to higher self-esteem and an increased sense of control. The deferring approach has been connected to lower self-esteem, external locus of control, poorer problem-solving skills, and increased intolerance for human diversity. Collaborative religious coping, which involves reciprocation of



responsibility between the person and God, has been associated with higher self-esteem, and internal locus of control, and has been described by several researchers as the most psychologically healthy method of religious coping.

### Positive and Negative Coping Strategies

Religious coping strategies have also been divided into positive and negative categories (Pargament 1997). Positive religious coping occurs when people believe that God is guiding and supporting them through their times of trouble. Researchers have shown that those who experience spiritual support often report more positive outcomes (Pargament 2005; Tatsumura et al. 2003). Churches and synagogues are used more than any other social support system as a source of social support in times of distress. People sometimes describe their faith communities as “second families” as they rely on the financial, emotional, and spiritual support of members and clergy. This is an especially salient point in light of the cogent empirical evidence that social support is positively related to healthy coping. Additionally, positive religious reframing has been linked to better outcomes, as persons who attribute death, illness, or other major losses to the will of God or to a benevolent God are more likely to experience positive coping, as are persons who frame their experience as an opportunity to grow spiritually (Pargament and Ano 2006). For instance, cancer patients who attributed more control of their illness to God have reported higher self-esteem and better adjustment (Jenkins and Pargament 1988). Tarakeshwar et al. (2006) also found that positive religious coping was related to better overall quality of life in persons with advanced cancer.

Negative religious coping mechanisms, which occur when religion and spirituality play a role in coping that is not health promoting (e.g., feeling abandoned by God), have also been identified. Pargament (2005) found that people who frequently use negative religious coping strategies also tend to report an increase in negative

physical and psychological experiences such as depressed mood and a lower quality of life.

Major medical illness, for example, may lead to more distress and even physical symptoms because the illness itself represents a threat to one’s foundation of faith (Pargament and Ano 2006). McConnell et al. (2006) found that negative religious coping was significantly linked to various forms of psychopathology, including general anxiety, phobic anxiety, depression, paranoid ideation, obsessive-compulsiveness, and somatization. Also, the relationship between negative religious coping and various forms of anxiety was more pronounced for persons who had recently experienced a serious illness such as cancer (McConnell et al. 2006). Faith communities while often a source of support can also be a source of psychosocial anxiety (Pargament 1997). Sometimes distressed persons report feeling abandoned by church members and leaders, or they feel they have been a disappointment to their faith community. This can have a negative impact on coping, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness, despair, and resentment. Just as there is positive religious reframing, there can be also negative reframing. Seeing one’s trauma as a deserved punishment from God is one of the most common negative religious reframes reported in the literature, the effect of which is often to stifle adaptive coping (Pargament 1997). Overall, religious coping is a multifaceted construct that has been found to affect how people understand, interpret, experience, and respond to stressful events.

### See Also

- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Religious Experience

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Insofar as one defines religious experience as an experience of the transcendent or the supernatural (or some equivalent term), religious experience has been around in some form since humans developed symbols and language. We may look at the full range of religious experience in either of at least four ways: (1) how the experiences of the transcendent are viewed from within the religion itself, or (2) how the experiences may be evaluated and understood from a discipline outside any particular religion, (3) the unique approach to religious experience in a religion based on mind, and (4) the use of various drugs to induce transcendental states of mind.

### Religious Experience as Viewed from Within the Particular Religion

Each religion usually begins with a profound experience of the transcendent on the part of the founder. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as

Moses, all had profound experiences of God that were the basis for Judaism. Jesus had direct experiences of God and his followers had direct experiences of him for the founding of Christianity. Many Christians emphasize the importance of having a personal experience of Christ, called "being born again." Islam was founded on the experience of Allah by Mohammed. Buddhism began with the enlightenment experience of Shakyamuni Buddha and continued, particularly in Zen, to emphasize the importance of one's own direct experience of enlightenment, which would be verified by one's teacher. The value of direct personal experience in religion is in its transformational possibilities: those who have them often claim to have a clearer purpose for living, a shift away from egocentrism in the direction of altruism and identification with the existential plight of all living things, and a sense of time that transcends human chronology. Within each religion there are often criteria by which particular religious experiences are evaluated as to their authenticity.

Within each of the world religions, where the direct experience of the transcendent is not emphasized, emphasis usually falls on correct doctrine, belief or ritual, and practice for approval of one's status within the religion. Thus, Judaism has its requirement of circumcision, the Mosaic Laws, the Torah, and Talmud; Christianity has its gospels and New Testament canon, its belief in Christ as formulated by one of the ancient creeds (Nicene, Apostles, etc.) and allegiance to the church; Islam has its daily prayers and weekly gatherings and reliance on the Koran; Buddhism has its precepts for monks and laity and the teachings of the Buddha as written in the Dhammapada and the many sutras that followed.

### **Religious Experience Viewed from Disciplines Outside Religion**

As an object or field of study capable of being investigated and understood by someone outside any particular religion, however, the very concept of religious experience is a relatively new idea in

the history of civilizations. It requires the conceptual possibility of a secular consciousness, i.e., a consciousness that reflects on itself and on all human phenomena without presuming a priori any particular religious truth. It requires someone to look at religious experience from outside the religion.

In this sense, religious experience is impossible to consider without at least the theoretical possibility of atheism or at least secularization, which is to say, it is impossible without the capacity to stand back from all religions and observe religious activity as an outsider. Such a stance aims to observe, evaluate, categorize, and understand religious experience on phenomenological grounds alone, without any reference to the truth claims of any particular religion.

As such, religious experience as a field of study never appeared in the world before the nineteenth century CE, that era in which God was declared dead by Nietzsche, religion was declared an opiate of the masses by Marx, God was seen as a projection of the immature human psyche by Freud, and the entire origin of species was theorized by Darwin without any assumptions of theistic causation.

One might say that the roots of an entirely secular, nontheistic *weltanschauung* were laid by the Protestant Reformation's break from the Roman Catholic Church (1517–1648), for without the concept of a legitimate consciousness separate from ecclesiastical control, all observations and truth claims were captive to the church, as attested by the church's condemnation of Galileo (1564–1642) and Spinoza (1632–1677), among others. Although the grounds for separating from the Roman Catholic Church were *intra-religious*, based on the interpretation of the Biblical text itself, the revolutionary and groundbreaking departure was the concept of the individual conscience and the personal direct access to God as superseding ecclesiastical authority. The conception of the possible validity of an individual's conscience being greater than the *consensus ecclesiae* was the first step toward the development of a secular consciousness, a consciousness not constricted by and defined by the church's authority. In this sense, the

Protestant Reformation was a necessary precursor to the Age of Enlightenment, which provided the humanistic philosophical and political framework from which the natural and social sciences of the nineteenth century sprang. Only after Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, and Darwin could the idea of a study of religious experience per se be considered.

William James may easily be called the father of secular studies of religious experience. His book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (James 2004), published in 1902, remains the classic work in the field. In it he outlined the four characteristics of religious experience as being (1) transient, (2) ineffable, (3) noetic, and (4) passive. The experience is transient in that it occurs in a limited frame of time, after which the person returns to ordinary life. The experience is ineffable in that it is hard for the person to put it into words. It is noetic insofar as the person usually feels that she/he has learned something of deep and lasting value, on the basis of which her/his life is altered significantly for the better. The experience is passive in the sense that it was not created by conscious control but “just happened.” Even if one engaged in deliberate activities to increase the possibility of the experience, the actual experience was not under the person’s willpower or control.

It was in this book that James distinguished between the “once born” and the “twice born”: the once born are people who go through life without having any powerful religious experience that significantly changes them; the twice born are those who do have such a powerful religious experience that they see it as the basis for an entirely new (and improved, from their point of view) way of living.

It was also in this book that James distinguished between the religion of “healthy-minded” people and that of those of a very disagreeable temperament. In James’ view, healthy-minded people choose a form of religion that is basically positive in its outlook on people and the world, whereas less healthy-minded people choose a religion fraught with the dynamics of judgment, anger, and wrath. This distinction was invaluable for future studies on the particular

characteristics of healthy/unhealthy people and, by extension, healthy/unhealthy religion.

The value of James’ book far exceeded the numerous brilliant insights he offered: it laid the groundwork for the entire field of psychology of religion and psychology and religion. Moreover, it suggested how religion might be a proper field of study for other sciences. Thus, since James, the many dimensions of religious experience continue to be mapped by the fields of philosophy of religion, phenomenology of religion, sociology of religion, comparative studies in religion, history of religions, neurotheology, transpersonal psychology, and genetics.

Meanwhile, as society has become increasingly secularized and mainstream religion has suffered loss of favor, many people identify themselves as being “spiritual” without being “religious,” indicating an interest in experiences of the transcendent but a decidedly negative valuation of both institutionalized religion and monotheism. Such people tend to gravitate toward Eastern, nontheistic religions or to personally constructed amalgams of religious and spiritual truths and practice. The result is the expansion of the meaning of “religious experience” to include “spiritual experience,” in order to include those who intentionally don’t want to be identified with institutional or theistic religion.

### Religious Experience as Viewed from Within a Religion Based on Mind

More than 2,000 years before Freud, a religion arose in India that was based on the intentional exploration of the nature of mind itself. Standing midway between religions that evaluate religious experience on the basis of his or her own internal standards and scientific disciplines that evaluate religious experience from an outside observer standpoint, Buddhism is entirely based on realizing the nature of mind and what is its ground or source through intensive meditation. Fully aware of the mind’s tendency to distort, project, deny, and engage in whatever activities may confirm a sense of a permanent self; Buddhism trains adherents in awareness of the mind’s dynamics

in order to break through the delusion of a fixed, separate, and immutable self to ultimate reality, the emptiness of all things. Such a breakthrough is what is called enlightenment in Buddhism. From that experience one realizes in a total (whole body and mind), nonconceptual way the basic tenets of Buddhism: the interdependence of all things, the impermanence of all things, wisdom, and compassion.

### Religious Experience Initiated by the Use of Drugs

The last category of religious experience to be considered is unique in that it is based on the ingestion of some form of chemical, whether found in nature, such as peyote, or manufactured, such as LSD, psilocybin, cocaine, or nitrous oxide, among others. Taking one of these drugs induces an experience with many of the characteristics identified by William James as marks of traditional mysticism: a transient and ineffable feeling of ecstasy and of loss of boundaries, an oceanic feeling of oneness with all, and the noetic conviction that one has experienced some profound existential truth about the nature of ultimate reality. On the other hand, since it is prompted by the ingestion of drugs, such experiences do not have the fourth trait of passivity James listed. The significance of the passivity in traditional religious experience is in understanding it as an experience of grace, beyond one's control. This element may be missing for those who use a drug to trigger the experience. For some people, nevertheless, drug-induced experiences of transcendence do become transformative in their day-to-day life. Such a life change is usually made possible by the person's continual reflection on the experience and construction of a method for integrating the experience into their common life. On the other hand, as those religions that have made use of drugs in their rituals (most notably, Native American tribes), certain precautions (such as the presence of a trust other person or community, or the context of a ritual) need to be taken so that the drug functions in a constructive way.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)

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## Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism

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The term "fundamentalism" has recently gained more attention and publicity in mass media and

professional literature, yet it is still viewed in a negative way, especially after the rise of extreme groups around the world and the traumatic events of 9/11.

### Reactionary Fanaticism

Virtually any type of fundamentalism can be defined as a strict adherence to the basic principle or belief system. Fundamentalism is reactionary; it develops as a normal reaction to social modernism, moral pluralism, and religious liberalism. It is any attempt to protect the self or the community from any potential threat or deviation in matters of doctrine and conduct. It is part of a cultural and emotional apparatus, stemming from ancient, deep universal desires for psychological security. Religious fundamentalism strives to cling to ancient traditions and persistently calls for an unwavering return to foundational beliefs that becomes fanatical. It is a spiritual and an ideological attempt to reemphasize the literal interpretation of any sacred literature considered to be holy.

Fundamentalism is not only found in religious circles but in other areas of public life such as in politics, businesses, science and academia, sports, and military doctrines. Extreme secular humanism and fanatic atheism have their own versions of fundamentalism as well. However, to be a *fundamentalist* is not identical to being *cultic*, in the literal sense, but such a group can easily become *sectarian*. When a movement employs some type of brainwashing and indoctrination, in an excessive manner, then it will lead to a *cultic* formation (Abi-Hashem 2012a).

Generally speaking, most people, lay and professional alike, possess certain tender spots (“push buttons”) that can elicit intense reactions. Even though these individuals seem to be reasonable and functioning properly in most domains of society, in such protective areas they seem to be totally unrealistic. Obviously, we all have certain strong passions and values. However, for fundamentalists, there seem to be defensive mental blocks. When these are challenged, they will react fiercely, almost ready for combat.

For people to have *fundamentals* or *focused passions* is very normal and necessary to maintain a balanced worldview and a clear value system. But when these convictions or passions become markedly skewed, narrow, or acute, then they will lead to a rigid and dysfunctional mentality (Abi-Hashem 2012c, 2013).

Fundamentalism is not simply a cognitive ideology, but rather an *attitude*, rooted in unconscious dynamics. Such attitudes show a dedication to a subject or a doctrine of utmost importance to the individual or to the group, leading to varying degrees of rigidity, legalism, fanaticism, and intolerance. However, fundamentalist people are different from each other in their type of belief, degree of inflexibility, and level of emotional reactivity. Fundamentalism can flourish when a community feels its core values to be threatened. Obviously, this process reflects the group’s understanding of their mission, level of inner (in)security, emotional (im)maturity, stage of moral development, cognitive reasoning, and sense of their projected destiny (Abi-Hashem 2012c, 2013).

### Religious Fundamentalism

Religious fundamentalism is mainly an excessive tendency to preserve the principles of faith and their strict applications without compromise. It is a concentrated effort to dwell on the truths, as purely as possible, and avoid potential errors and inaccuracies, in matters of beliefs and conduct. Invariably, legalistic movements do not encourage openness, tolerance, or diversity. Tightly knit groups normally view exposure to the outside world as threatening to the group’s safety and cohesiveness. Therefore, conformity to inner-group norms, loyalty to the leaders, and fidelity to the core principles are seen as absolutely critical (Caplan 1987; Hood et al. 2005).

Every community typically feels an innate need to hold on to a past heritage and to revive parts of history that bestow glory, security, and pride. In that process, however, some tend to lock themselves so blindly into the past that they fail to fully accommodate the present or prepare for the

future. They cling rigidly to practices, doctrines, or legacies without being able to modify any contemporary stance. They cannot reconcile the differences or face the challenges. To compensate for that feeling of being unable to integrate polarities, people frequently have to convince themselves that they have ultimate answers to the hard questions of life. They claim a monopoly on *truth* and pride themselves as *purists*, unaware of their psychosocial splitting, mental inflexibility, antagonistic behavior, and their sense of arrogance and superiority.

Religious fundamentalism is primarily concerned about protecting its spiritual dogmas and moral values, even at the cost of isolating themselves or alienating others. It is found in every ethno-cultural or religious community, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism (Abi-Hashem 2012c, 2013). According to Mercer (2009), the structure of the fundamentalist worldview and the psychology beneath its framework are almost the same across all faiths and religions. Currently, as the world is getting closer and cultures are mixing more than ever, it seems that in reaction, separation walls are also rising and new religious movements (NRM) are growing (Lewis 2004). Therefore, the world is witnessing two major and opposing movements: one driving toward modernism, secularism, pluralism, hedonism, and materialism and the other reacting by striving toward traditionalism, legalism, fundamentalism, isolationism, and fanaticism.

## Motives for Fundamentalism

Why do some people tend to become fundamentalists in their views and attitudes or even join an extremist group? There are a number of determining factors, including people's emotional stability, cultural background, moral values and beliefs, life experience, and existential aspirations and fears. Wiviott (2007, pp. 2–3) proposed several root causes of fundamentalism, based upon his analytical perspective:

(a) People hold beliefs that unite them together as a group. This eventually provides a secure

identity for those whose sense of self is shaky. Also, rituals – such as group prayers, fasting, chanting, sacrifices, pilgrimage, and feasting together – help solidify group cohesiveness, even on the expense of individual identity.

- (b) In order not to feel threatened, people employ the psychological dynamic of splitting, creating a scenario of “us versus them,” so they will feel much better about themselves compared to others.
- (c) Inner and intersexual tensions can also account for some fundamentalist thinking. There is a need to govern sexual behavior and impulses so they will not become uncontrollable, so men feel the need to protect “their” women. Perhaps also men unconsciously fear the feminine and its potential to dominate the masculine. So fundamentalists come up with rigid rules and regulations to restrain sensuality, beyond average modesty or social norms.
- (d) Human beings live with the awareness of their own mortality and death. This reality can create substantial anxiety causing people to seek comfort in images, symbols, myths, or hope in the afterlife.
- (e) Humans basically sense their insignificance in the vast scope of life and, therefore, seek guidance and meaning for existence from the transcendent universe. Literal interpretation of sacred texts can provide needed answers and comfort, since questions and doubts will only increase existential anxieties.

## Polarity of Morality

Ironically, there is an innate desire among the great variety of humans to construct a basic morality, fundamental convictions, and clear-cut values. It seems that a strict tendency helps them face mental ambiguity, material secularity, and moral relativity. On the other hand, there are differing calls from those who advocate constant change, open mentality, fast mobility, unrestricted modernity, strong individuality, and custom-tailored spirituality. These polarities can



be found in every social group and every personality, stimulating intrapsychic tension, interpersonal anxiety, intragroup frustration, and intercultural miscommunication (Abi-Hashem 2004, 2011; Caplan 1987; Friedman and Rholes 2008; Wiviott 2007). Those who are able to reconcile some of the existing polarities usually find a comfortable medium to maintain. This balance may serve them well for a while, but not for long, until the dynamic forces of change unsettle them again. Other groups (even nations), unable or unwilling to compromise the conflicting forces, find themselves gravitating toward one of the two extremes: they either become too intolerant or too accommodating. Consequently, they spend a substantial amount of energy trying to defend their newly found attitude and position. However, if the ideological differences are not adequately resolved, then the tension can easily escalate into hostile or violent social turmoil and *religious militancy*.

When fundamentalism is mentioned in the mass media or in public discourse, it appears to be used interchangeably with *fanaticism*, *extremism*, *radicalism*, and *terrorism*. Although these conceptions have many traits in common, they differ in nature. It seems that they form a continuum, progressing from the mild to the severe and from a low level of dysfunction to an acute level of destruction.

## Understanding Terrorism

What is terrorism? Is it random violence against civilians to inflict social pain and score political gain? Is it an effort to arouse general fear of another hazardous attack? There is no single agreed-upon definition of terrorism. There are some guidelines of what constitutes a terrorist attack, but labeling an individual or a movement as *terrorist* remains debatable. Perhaps it is easier to define a certain behavior or a specific act as terrorist, rather than to ascribe the label of terrorism unto a whole personality or community (Abi-Hashem 2003, 2004; Council of Foreign Relations 2004; Gayraud 1988; Lee 2011).

Extremism and radicalism are usually born out of ethno-political and religio-cultural situations and can be the result of some form of injustices, oppressions, or threats (real or perceived). Often, it is very hard to differentiate between what is purely sociocultural, theological, or political, since these are intertwined (Abi-Hashem 2010, 2011; Abi-Hashem and Driscoll 2013; Santosh 2004; Shapiro 2012). Religious militancy can be born out of these conditions. But political motives can also add a theological cover or a doctrinal justification as a front in order to appeal to faithful believers and religious zealous among its followers. In recent years, extremist, fanatic, and radical groups, seemingly reacting against modernism, have been quite willing to use new aggressive strategies and electronic technologies to promote their ideas, raise funds, recruit members, or launch their assaults. Many observers predict that the next confrontational war may very well take place in cyberspace (Abi-Hashem 2012b; Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005).

Are the so-called terrorists born overnight or made over time? Many scholars see an unfolding progression, similar to the stages of development, advancing an individual, a group, or an agency from one level to the next, until they reach a dangerous point of magnitude: *traditionalism*, *legalism*, *fundamentalism*, *extremism*, *radicalism*, *militantism*, and *terrorism*. Cumulatively, each phase becomes more explicit and intense, providing building blocks for the next level. The passions and behaviors will rapidly grow and increase to become more skewed and hostile. At this stage, people can utilize severe aggression and violence in their perceived duty to defend their treasured dogma.

Finally, and at the end of the chart, the condition of irrationality, rigidity, and obstinacy becomes painfully irreversible. Severe mental fixation and absolute indoctrination engulf the personality or the group in a strange mind-set, like a totally different universe. This is a journey of no return, when those involved are willing to die for their cause, even if they commit massive atrocities in the process.

## Mystery of Martyrdom

Sacrificing the *self* in the act is part of *martyrdom operations* or *suicide bombing* (depending on who is describing the act). At this acute and climactic stage, the individual or group executes all activity in good faith, in peace of mind, and in clear conscience. They have committed themselves, in blind obedience, to a divine commission, as they best understood it, and therefore are willing to accomplish any task for the sake of their supreme cause and cherished ideology (cf. Abi-Hashem 2003, 2004, 2007, 2012b; Armstrong 2005; Berman 2009; Council of Foreign Relations 2004; Cronin 2007; Gallagher 2005–2006; Lee 2011; Metz 2006; Shapiro 2012).

There is a deep, unconscious element about terrorism that is still unclear and confusing. Evidently, scholars have a task ahead of them: to dig into the deeper, multiple layers and uncover the mysteries of this complex and ambiguous phenomenon called terrorism.

## See Also

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Compulsion
- ▶ Conscience
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Defenses
- ▶ Faith Development Theory
- ▶ Fundamentalism
- ▶ God Image
- ▶ Jihad
- ▶ Liberation Theology
- ▶ Prejudice
- ▶ Psychospiritual
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Religious Identity
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Superego
- ▶ Traditionalism
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Unconscious

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## Religious Identity

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### Introduction

Most scholars in religious studies and the humanities understand religious identity to be a simple matter of self-identification with a religious tradition. The term is popular in these fields, but such an approach offers little in the way of conceptual clarity or insight into the formation or functioning of religious identity. When approached from a psychological perspective, religious identity reveals significant insight into

the cognitive role of religion; new research may influence the basic questions asked about the psychology of religious beliefs and practices.

### The Psychology of Identity

Erik Erikson (1902–1994), a theorist who essentially began the psychological study of identity, originally spoke of identity as a central ego achievement to be reached in adolescence (1950). One's *ego identity* ("ego" comes from the Latin nominative pronoun "I") is formed from simpler identifications made in childhood and then integrated into a coherent sense of self in adolescence. Through evolution, Erikson theorized that the adolescent is biologically wired to necessarily seek social resources for this identity process during this time of life. This illustrates the interdisciplinary quality of Erikson's *psychosocial model* as being both psychological and sociological. The psychological person is designed to pull identity content from the relative and always changing cultural resources. Observing that identity is often formed and integrated in adolescence only to be later unraveled, Erikson later expanded this stage of human development to also be a constant psychosocial element in adult life as aging individuals encounter other identity crises throughout adulthood.

The current psychological study of identity can be divided into two primary areas. One area of research looks at the cognitive mechanisms and neural structures that are utilized to construct autobiographical memory. There are three primary findings in this relatively new area. First, the field of autobiographical memory emphasizes that identity is more than a mere sociological identification. One's identity is a neurological component of the brain that is formed through memory encoding, selective retrieval, implicit memory schemas, and many factors of psychosocial selective biases. New research in functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has shown specific modular patterns of long-term memory encoding in which particular regions of the brain are utilized in different types of memory which

are complexified by variants in the content of the remembered experiences. Secondly, this research has shown that memories of experiences are reconstructed and that individuals typically overestimate the correctness of their memories. Humans naturally recreate their event memories to fit patterns of belief expectations. As part of this constructive process, implicit memories (subconscious) are formed from a collection of various experiences that then function as a filter through which to interpret later experiences. Finally, researchers in autobiographical memory have demonstrated a psychosocial quality in the cognitive formation of identity. Through developmental studies of autobiographical memory, Fivush and Haden (2003) have shown that children form a coherent sense of identity primarily through learned patterns of adult and peer interaction.

Another area of identity research uses psychometric measures of identity to determine levels of identity status formation. Marcia (1966) took Erikson's concept of identity development and sought to break it down into four identity statuses that could be measured. He distinguishes two factors that are relatively independent of each other in identity formation. The crisis axis measures whether a person had ever had an identity crisis and whether they are currently in an identity crisis. The commitment axis determines whether or not someone has made a commitment to a certain identity. Identity diffusion (no crisis, no commitment), identity foreclosure (no crisis, commitment), identity moratorium (present crisis, no commitment), and identity integration (past crisis, commitment) make up the four identity statuses. The content of the qualitative interview and the psychometric measure of identity neatly divides the questions into primary areas of vocation, gender, politics and religion. Marcia's popular paradigm has been used in hundreds of published articles. The preponderance of research in identity and the psychology of religion has used variations of Marcia's measure with other established psychological measures of religiosity to reveal interesting connections in which religion is often shown to be a positive

resource in overall identity achievement (see review by Spilka et al. 2003, pp. 143–146). Such studies have shown a connection between identity achievement and increased intrinsic religiosity, belief-threatening consultation, and the level of religious commitment. Identity moratorium is positively associated with higher levels of quest, belief threatening consultation, lower levels of religious commitment, and religious doubting. Identity foreclosure is correlated with extrinsic religiosity, religious commitment, and belief-confirming consultation. Overall identity diffusion is generally related to lower levels of overall religiosity.

There are two caveats to this work. First, these findings are limited due to biased sampling with subjects who are primarily in the United States, primarily adolescents, primarily Christians, and primarily more religious than the norm of American society. More importantly, another limitation lies in the basic theoretical conception of the studies. Using a basic identity status measure (which includes religious content) and a basic measure of religiosity, the researchers end up confounding their results by partly measuring the same factor – religiosity. To show a relationship between religiosity and identity development, one would either have to remove the religious content from the identity measure or design an entirely new measure of religious identity. This also reveals a problem for identity research in which the primary measure of identity is biased towards more religious people.

### **Religious Identity Formation and Functioning**

In the last decade, researchers in identity studies have begun to focus on specific cognitive domains of identity, which may be neurologically unique from other domains, and may be formed independently of other domains. This finding of *domain specificity* has shown that identity statuses may be entirely different in one identity domain than in another domain. Several recent studies have looked at unique patterns of identity

formation in the specific areas of ethnicity, gender, vocation, and politics. But few have considered the unique formation and function of the domain of religious identity. Until recently, there has been no conceptual work in a psychology of religious identity, and no tool with which to measure or establish uniqueness of religious identity. A recently proposed psychometric measure of religious identity seeks to look at identity formation through the lens of religiosity separated from overall global identity (see direction of this research in Bell 2008). In one study of 650 subjects, four statuses of religious identity were defined and measured in ways that revealed clear patterns of cultural resources (i.e., particular religious backgrounds) predicting but not determining overall identity formation. The conceptual bases of the four statuses were also reconsidered to avoid simple assumptions by Marcia about identity achievement in the specific content of religion. A fourth status of “religious identity integration” is being proposed that better reflects a more fluid commitment instead of a rigid commitment to a particular form of religion.

Likewise, this conceptual work considers the functioning of religious identity as potentially the most unique domain of identity in which the focus of religious identity is often away from the self/ego (transcendence to other), much more capable of imagination, and more prone to implicit belief patterns of narrative construction. In the same study of 650 participants, it was demonstrated that people use religious identity in both implicit and explicit ways. In conjunction with the cognitive research in implicit memories, individuals use religious identity in ways in which they may be largely unaware. The importance of one’s religious identity often increases in importance due to levels of social approval bias. For example, the explicit functioning of religious identity is often presented as much more important than when measured implicitly. For the researcher, getting at such a disclosure of religious identity is difficult not only due to social approval bias but also due to “deity approval bias.” People may want to say that religion is

more important to their identity than it really is not only because of social approval concerns, but also because the deities of their belief system may not approve if it is not important enough.

One goal of this research in religious identity is to discover why it is that for many individuals religious identity lingers in the mind much longer than religious beliefs or the desire to do religious practices. For those who change or lose their religious practices and even their religious beliefs, individuals may find that their religious identity is still present and continues to keep them somewhat oriented around religion. This illustrates how religious identity, for many individuals, may be a core psychological mechanism that takes on more permanence than beliefs and practices. Such a proposal may significantly influence how researchers in psychology and religion approach and ask the most basic questions about the role of religion in the mind. Another consideration includes the reframing of the notion of religious orientation. Allport and Ross’s (1967) measures of extrinsic and intrinsic orientation were efforts to distinguish different motivations in individuals’ religiosity as explicitly reported by the participants. By looking at the levels of social approval bias, a psychological understanding of implicit and explicit religious identities takes the question of motivation to a different level in which self-reported motivation is only one consideration.

The work should also extend beyond the measures of such factors. With adequate funding, fMRI studies could investigate whether there are unique modular areas of religious identity. To date, studies have shown how general autobiographical memories are retrieved and constructed, but this research has not considered how the content of the identity may affect the retrieval process.

In short, the psychological study of religious identity is fundamentally a psychosocial investigation in which religious content is often a rich identity resource for individuals in most societies. Certainly one does not need to be religious to be able to form an overall, integrated, and healthy global identity. Religion is part of the many

cultural resources that are highly relative and prone to changing over time. Yet, the ways in which the individual needs to form a notion of self through adulthood are uniquely affected by the amount of religious resources by which that individual is surrounded with. Further, religious identity content, as a cognitive domain, operates differently than other domains, including gender identity, racial identity, and political identity. Finally, it is proposed that the psychological study of religious identity is relatively unexplored and yet foundational to much of the research in the field of psychology of religion. As a new theoretical paradigm, it offers several explanatory insights into the role of religion in the mind.

### See Also

- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Religiosity](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Self Psychology](#)

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## Religious, Role of

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Carl Jung defines his understanding of religion in terms that make it apparent that he regards religion as a certain attitude of mind taken towards particular factors of experience that are seen as powerful, dangerous, grand, beautiful, or meaningful (Jung 1938, para. 8). These factors of experience are factors of psychic experience and especially those psychic experiences that arise from the collective unconscious. From Jung's perspective, religious ideas originate with the archetypes and careful consideration of the archetypal symbols and image constitutes the essence of religion.

### The Transcendent Quality of Religious Experience

Religion has a transcendent quality because these unconscious processes transcend the realm of the conscious ego, the observing subject, and the ideas and motifs of religion appear to the ego to come from beyond and revelations. But psychologically speaking, this beyond is also within although not restricted to the individuality of the experiencing person. Jung considers that the realm of the unconscious from whence these revelations derive may possess an insight superior to that of the conscious mind. Religious experience is grounded in what is both absolute subjectivity and universal truth; it partakes of the accumulated wisdom of the ages and is not lightly influenced by either the caprices of consciousness or with transcentary cultural trends (Jung 1952, para. 355).

The images enshrined in such Christian doctrine as the God-man, the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, or the Cross are not peculiarly or exclusively Christian. Not only can they be found in many pagan religions, but they may



also appear or reappear spontaneously with all sorts of variations as psychic phenomenon. In Christianity, they have been refined and are highly developed, but their remote origins are neither faith nor tradition but primitive dreams, visions, or trances. They are certainly not conscious interventions, but Jung considers that they came into being at that stage of human development in which humans did not so much think as we do today but rather were aware of thoughts coming into them. These dogmas may last for untold centuries: the suffering God-man may be at least 5,000 years old and the trinity is probably even older. Jung claimed that the doctrines of a particular religion are expressions of unconscious psychic activity with their roots in humanity's primitive past. The particular religion merely shapes and refines these ancient symbolizations.

In consequence to this common reference of symbols of all religions to the fundamental archetypes, there can be no exclusive claim made by the disciples of any particular religion on behalf of its own God. These claims must rather be regarded as an index of the intensity of the conviction aroused in believers by their experience of the overwhelming numinosity that they call God. The experience is certainly valid, but the interpretation of it may not be. Anything or anyone, any figure or any symbol which can produce this overwhelming effect is entitled to the name "God" from the point of the believer, but he can also say that "every idea of the ultimate, of the first or last, of the highest or lowest. The name makes no difference" (Jung 1952, para. 739 note 1).

As a psychologist then, Carl Jung agrees neither with those who see God as absolute that is existing in Himself nor yet with those who adopt the relative view of God which recognizes at least in an elementary way that there is some personal involvement in the process which produces conception of God (personal here relating to the personal psyche). Within its self-imposed empirical limits, analytical psychology recognizes God as a function of the unconscious and particularly of the collective unconscious. The image

of god is then the symbolic expression of a certain psychological state, or function, which has all the character of absolute superiority to the conscious will of the subject; hence, it can enforce or bring about a standard of accomplishment that would be unattainable to conscious effort.

### **The Impact of the Development of Consciousness on Religious Experience**

In the process of the development of consciousness by humanity, Jung argues that two unfortunate but probable unavoidable errors arose in relation to the concept of God. The first of these was materialism that declared in effect that since God could not be found in the galaxies, he had never existed. The second error was to psychologize God as an illusion based on the will to power or repressed sexuality. But Jung believes that humanity cannot thus easily dispose of God or of the instinctually or archetypally based religious impulse. From time immemorial human beings have recognized the existence of gods or a God in one form or another and have been unable to do without them. Consciously or unconsciously, the idea of an all-powerful divine Being is everywhere present. He who says with Nietzsche that "God is dead" does not thereby rid himself of God but rather faces the fatal inflation of becoming his own god – and such gods are but tin gods with thick skulls and cold hearts (Jung 1917, para. 113).

The alternative, which Carl Jung propounds to these two errors, is based upon the conviction that the God images in the psyche have not only numinosity and power but also an essential autonomy. They exist, and they are not dependent for their existence on any other need, motive, desire, or attribute of human beings. For the empiricist, the unanswerable question concerning the metaphysical reality of God in Himself is irrelevant beside the fact that the "idea of God is an absolutely necessary psychological function of an irrational nature." The idea is archetypal and thus there is that within the human psyche which will behave as a god and which caution,

if nothing also, dictates should be consciously acknowledged as God (Jung 1917, para. 113). Human beings do not create gods for themselves, but there is a sense in which they choose the master they wish to serve. In choosing their god, humanity necessarily denies their services to other masters and attempts to secure themselves against them. Such choices do define one's God, but they do not make intelligible that unknown psychic quantity which implies the choice. For true wholeness and genuine health, or salvation, it is important that the human individual chooses wisely. In other words, humanity can become a Self only by choosing the right God. The live issue for modern humanity is between the archetypal image with its authenticity and its immediacy, on the one hand, and the intellectual constructs of the so-called enlightened mind, on the other. In the final analysis, these constructs represent the abortive attempt on the part of the enlightened to deny the reality of both the God image and the realm from which the image derived (Jung 1933, para. 429).

### God as Dangerous

Christianity and Judaism and others of the world religions recognize God as being not only redemptive but also dangerous. In Judaism, for example, the holiness of God is seen as something unapproachable: no man can see God and live. (Compare the elaborate precautions taken to protect the unwary from the Holy Mountain, from the ark, etc.) God must be mediated to humanity, and this mediatory function finds its highest expression in the figure of Christ. This concept of the danger of the nearness of God, according to Carl Jung, is a well-established psychological fact (Jung). The concentration of psychic energy in the unconscious can have catastrophic effects upon consciousness, and the saving factor is the symbol, "which is able to reconcile the conscious with the unconscious and embrace them both" (Jung 1921, para. 178). God images are practically indistinguishable

from the symbols of the self; this means that these symbols and images serve the very real purpose of putting the human individual in touch with his/her own depths in such a way that the contact does not destroy him/her but immeasurably enriches his/her life and increases the boundaries of his/her awareness.

Jung is convinced not only that religious dogma and doctrines always express and formulate essential psychological attitudes but also that they are a more satisfactory medium of expression than scientific theories for irrational facts like the psyche. A theory is necessarily highly abstract and exclusively rational, whereas the imagery of dogma can encompass psychic totality and can express the living processes of the psyche in suitable dramatic forms, like the drama of creation, sacrifice, and redemption.

Thus, Jung argues strongly for the positive value of myth and claims that to divest the gospels of myth would be to sacrifice that very quality in them which conveys wholeness and health. Myth becomes suspect only when one attempts to take the mythological contents literally and concretely, in which case they come into conflict with the objective knowledge of the external world. Treated symbolically, they have tremendous force and power.

Myth is not to be confused with fiction but should be recognized as the dramatic expression of psychic experience that has been constantly repeated in individual lives and in whole cultures. Since they relate back to the archetypes, their content cannot be exhausted in rational explanation and to dismiss them as primitive is to overlook the fact that humanity still has its primitive nature.

Much unnecessary confusion arises from the failure to distinguish between what Jung calls religion as immediate experience (or, more usually, just religion) and religion as creed. Once again Jung himself is partly responsible for the confusion since he is not always consistent in making it unambiguously clear whether his praise or polemic against religion is directed

towards the experience or the creedal variety. Jung writes that

the creeds have accordingly seen themselves obliged to undertake a progressive codification of their views, doctrines, and customs, and in doing so have externalized themselves to such an extent that the authentic religious element in them - the living relationship to an and direct confrontation with their extramundane point of reference has been trust into the background (1957, para. 508).

Religion as immediate experience is grounded in the experience of the numinous, the extramundane, which is manifested through the unconscious. Essentially it is personal and individual experience of the collective depths, and as such it is superior to even the best traditions, at least with respect to the intensity of the conviction that it imparts. His reflection on his experience may or may not accord with the orthodox conceptions or formulations of particular religious confessions, but official pronouncements of the church, synagogue, mosque, or temple are comparatively meaningless unless the individuals to whom they are addressed can themselves authenticate them by personal experience.

This experience may well be mediated through the historic religions with their wealth of symbols and images expressive of wholeness and salvation but only if those symbols and images are consciously recognized and valued for what they are. The whole meaning and purpose of religious experience can be expressed in language more congenial to the great religions of the world by saying that the purpose lies “in the relationship of the individual to God (Christianity, Judaism, Islam) or to the path of salvation and liberation (Buddhism)” (Jung 1957, para. 507). Psychologically, the meaning and purpose lies in the relationship of the person to his own Self, or to the path of wholeness and health.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)

- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Repression

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## Definition

Repression: (1) The defensive process by which an idea or memory is expelled from the conscious mind. (2) A defense mechanism used to protect the self from unwanted affects associated with instinctual impulses.

## Discussion

According to Freud’s original childhood seduction theory, an individual repressed unwanted or painful memories associated with childhood sexual experiences which were subsequently reawakened in adult sexuality. As Freud’s theory

moved away from the actuality of childhood abuse and towards instinctual sexuality, repression played a prominent role as a generic psychological defensive phenomenon in which an individual excluded painful affects and perceptions from consciousness. Repression was one of Freud's earliest discoveries in working with hysterical patients. Freud felt that such patients experienced impulses that were stricken from consciousness and converted into somatic complaints and hysterical symptoms, such as blindness and paralysis. Thus, while the memory may have been expelled from conscious awareness, the event, affect, or impulse remained present through a compromise formation within the symptomatic sphere.

Originally, Freud argued that the repression of drives and affect as experienced by hysterical patients resulted in anxiety. As the affects and drives were pressing for release and subsequently repressed, the individual experienced anxious tension. Freud later amended this theory to suggest that repression was a result rather than a cause of anxiety. Accordingly, a preexisting fear, impulse, or anxious tension caused the need to forget. Freud suggested that repression occurred in two separate phases, primary repression and secondary repression or repression proper. In primary repression a child learns that some aspects of reality are pleasant, while others are unpleasant. The child, on an unconscious level, keeps unpleasant experiences and affects out of conscious awareness. According to Freud, primary repression is thought to be the cause of infantile amnesia. In accordance with the development of the superego and the maturing of the psychic apparatus, the child is able to actively defend the conscious from unwanted perceptions. Thus, in secondary repression the child formally and consciously excludes from consciousness, desires, affects, or perceptions that may cause tension or anxiety.

At its core, repression is motivated forgetting or ignoring. Freud's early drive model suggested that impulses and affects press for release and have to be held in check by a dynamic defensive force. It is important to note that not all forgetting is an example of repression. Repression is primarily defensive, in that it protects the conscious

from an overwhelming affect or perception. Classical analytic theory regards repression as a higher-level neurotic defense.

Regarding matters of religion, Freud persuasively argued that repression and obsessional neurosis were at the core of religious traditions and practices. Freud suggested that as instinctual impulses, primarily sexual ones, are repressed, the lurking remnants of the impulses are felt as temptation. Religious practices and traditions are used as a means of defending against the lurking temptation. Additionally, Freud suggested that the anxiety that is defended against in the process of repression is similar to one's fearful experience of an omnipotent God's retribution. Thus, the pious believer will repress the sinful impulse in fear of divine punishment and seek penance or repentance for any temptation. The martial ceremony is an example of this defense in religious life. The church formally prohibits sexual relations outside of marriage though after the ceremony sexual enjoyment is sanctioned. Prior to marriage, any gratification of the sexual impulse is due to temptation and in need of forgiveness or penance.

### See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)

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## R sentiement and Religion

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### Nietzsche, Freud, and Christianity

The concept of r sentiement and its role in religious life emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and was harnessed in the service of a critique of modernity which often had elitist and antidemocratic overtones. For example, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was a classicist who was deeply versed in Greek religion and art but highly selective in his preferences. Nietzsche admired Homer, who extolled the warrior virtues, but detested Plato’s otherworldliness, asceticism, and denigration of the body and its passions. According to Nietzsche, the Homeric warrior was uniquely capable of the resounding self-affirmation that also says “Yes!” to life, while Plato presages a “priestly” mentality that is (1) life negating and which (2) inverts or falsifies the natural scale of values and is rooted in self-deception.

In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1888), Nietzsche argued that Judaism and Christianity also share a pathos that inverts the noble values of the older pagan aristocracy, one rooted in a subaltern mentality or “slave morality” that results from a frustrated will to power. It is rooted in envy and rancor, traits common among the weak and dispossessed. Those afflicted with r sentiement habitually envy and devalue the attitudes and attributes of their aristocratic masters, who are more prosperous, powerful, and favored by fortune. Unlike aristocrats and warriors, who are men of action, slaves and their “priestly” leaders wage a war of words. They rationalize their cowardice and impotent hatred by attacking the good, old-fashioned warrior virtues – courage, individualism, and the unfettered expression of instinctual drives – rather than the warriors themselves. They make virtues out of necessities and their own apparent defects, i.e., their meekness,

poverty, selflessness, reliance on others, and so on. Lacking the strength or resolve to throw off their oppressors’ individually, slaves slowly band together (with the help of ascetic priests) to subdue and subvert the individualism and ferocity of the ruling caste through an increasingly peace-loving, collectivistic, and otherworldly ethos.

Nevertheless, said Nietzsche, the newer Christian virtues of meekness, poverty, selflessness, charity, and so on do not alter human nature. They merely distort it, because the Platonic/Christian tendency to mortify the flesh is unnatural and a source of suffering to all who embrace it. So underneath the pious surface of Christendom, all the aggression that formerly found a “healthy” expression in individual acts of courage and self-affirmation become distorted and displaced into different forms of institutionalized sadism and revenge fantasies that pass for genuine justice.

Nietzsche’s critique of Christendom vividly presages Freud’s reflections on the ubiquity of repressed aggression in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (Freud 1930). But Freud said that Christianity promoted group cohesion through sublimation and aim inhibited love, but being unable to totally transform human nature, deflected the repressed aggression of believers onto external groups, and above all, onto the Jews. In Freud’s scenario, then, the containment of collective aggression is a necessary step toward progress, though Jews are but the victims or casualties of progress. By contrast, Nietzsche argued that the triumph of Christianity paved the way for modern socialist and communist movements, which promote leveling, mediocrity, and “degeneracy.” In Nietzsche’s view, Jews are not merely the target of Christian aggression; they are also its secret source. In his own words:

Jesus of Nazareth, the gospel of love made flesh, the “redeemer,” who brought blessings and victory to the poor, the sick the sinners - what was he but temptation in its most sinister form, bringing men by a roundabout way to precisely those Jewish values and renovations of the ideal? Has not Israel, precisely by the detour of this “redeemer,” this seeming antagonist and destroyer of Israel, reached the final goal of its sublime vindictiveness? Was it not a necessary feature of the a truly brilliant politics

of vengeance, a far sighted, subterranean, slowly and carefully planned vengeance, that Israel had to deny its true instrument publicly and nail him to the cross like a mortal enemy, so that “the whole world” (meaning the enemies of Israel) might naively swallow the bait (Nietzsche 1956, pp. 168–169).

There are problems with Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity, one being that despite the Platonicizing Judaism of Philo of Alexandria (and Jewish mystics who followed in his footsteps), normative Judaism emphatically does *not* devalue the body and its appetites or treat self-affirmation as inherently sinful. Furthermore, Nietzsche’s monstrous (and transparently paranoid) conjecture that the Jews plotted the overthrow of Rome by denying and crucifying one of their own out of “a politics of vengeance” is sheer nonsense and completely unsupported by any historical evidence. But though nonsense, it is extremely *interesting* nonsense, because most of Nietzsche’s Christian readers were anti-Semitic to varying degrees. Many, like Adolf Harnack, the famous Church historian, claimed that the essence of Christianity has nothing to do with Judaism and chastised Christians who acknowledged any sense of kinship with the Jews (Harnack 1900). By blaming Christianity on the Jews, and emphasizing the Jewish roots of Christianity, Nietzsche sought to baffle and disconcert pious Christian anti-Semites, including his erstwhile friend Richard Wagner and others who, like Houston Stewart Chamberlain, fantasized about an “Aryan” Jesus.

### Scheler’s Critique of Nietzsche

While most Christian scholars simply tuned him out, Max Scheler (1874–1926), a Catholic spokesman, finally grappled with Nietzsche’s critique of Christianity in a book called *R ssentiment* published in 1915. Like Nietzsche, Scheler acknowledged the presence of malice, vindictiveness, and a thirst for revenge in religious ideation and regarded these passions as abiding character traits that warp our judgment, engendering a tendency to disparage or devalue others which is generally rationalized as righteous indignation.

But unlike Nietzsche, Scheler insisted that *r ssentiment* is not a specifically Jewish or Christian trait but a universal social phenomenon, involving (1) the process of comparing oneself unfavorably to other individuals in one’s own reference group or (2) the process of comparing one’s actual power and status with the status one feels one *should* possess, for whatever reason.

With respect to the former, Scheler noted that the process of comparing oneself to others *within one’s own reference group* is ubiquitous and by no means necessarily harmful. After all, unless we know how others differ we cannot appreciate or understand them as individuals or to improve oneself. More importantly, those whose self-esteem is intact can compare themselves to others endowed with greater gifts or material wealth without feeling that their dignity or personal worth is diminished or impugned by the competence, intelligence, vitality, or good fortune of the other(s). A person who possesses a calm sense of self-worth weathers such comparisons without repressing his or her feelings or allowing them to warp their judgment. Rather than responding to the presence of a prodigy, or someone favored by fortune, through a tendency to deprecate, the healthy person sees superior gifts in another person as cause for celebration or, indeed, for love and esteem. Following Nietzsche and Georg Simmel, Scheler called this the “noble” mentality and fancifully attributed it to aristocrats in bygone days. By contrast, said Scheler, the envious, vindictive person has a “slavish” cast of mind that was presumably more characteristic of the lower orders. He suffers from (unconscious) feelings of impotence, inferiority, and worthlessness and uses the hostile devaluation of others and copious self-deception to compensate for hidden injuries.

With respect to the latter, Scheler points out that in medieval society, people seldom cherished fantasies of upward mobility. Power and status were hereditary and deemed natural and necessary in the scheme of salvation. Industrial democracies, by contrast, replace the traditional yearning for salvation in the afterlife with the promise of equality, breeding extravagant needs and expectations, and upending traditional class and caste divisions,



fostering envy and rancor among those who remained relatively disadvantaged in the struggle to “get ahead” and those whose hereditary status was dwindling or plummeting downwards in the face of new market pressures.

By Scheler’s reckoning then, r s siment did exist in ancient times but was not the real basis of the Christian faith which, by Scheler’s reckoning, is neither democratic nor pacifist in character, but explicitly hierarchical, leaving ample room for the warrior virtues Nietzsche praised so highly. So the prevalence of r s siment among all social classes today is not the fault of Christianity *per se* but of capitalism, which Scheler, echoing Werner Sombart, likened to “the Jewish spirit.” So Scheler had it both ways – declaring r s siment to be a universal phenomenon, while describing it as being particularly intense in Judaism and capitalism, which he took to be related kindred phenomena. Quite apart from the high-brow, low-intensity anti-Semitism on display here, Scheler’s spirited defense of Christianity stood in the starkest possible contrast to the ideas of contemporaries better known contemporaries like Leo Tolstoy and Romain Rolland. Unlike these egalitarian pacifists, he was an ardent German nationalist during World War I and was admired by many Nazis after his death, despite the fact that his mother was Jewish. But whereas Nietzsche, a more prominent fascist icon, flirted with neo-paganism, Scheler’s discourse was romantic and neo-feudal, prompting him to dissociate “true” Christianity from socialism or collectivism, on the one hand, and from Judaism on the other.

### **R s siment and “Penis Envy”**

Thus far, we have noted antidemocratic and anti-Semitic strains in the literature on r s siment. But there are notable instances when Jewish theorists used the idea of r s siment – albeit seldom labeling it as such. For example, Freud deemed women to be notably inferior to the average male, and psychologically akin to children or “savages” cannot reason properly. By Freud’s account, women and girls harbor feelings of envy and inferiority vis a vis their husbands,

sons, and brothers because their male kin possess a penis; a fact that gives rise to an even more intense enmity to the requirements of civilization among women than in the average man.

The idea that women are anatomically predestined to be the “losers” in the unfolding drama of civilization strikes us as odious or hilarious nowadays. Nevertheless, Freud and his followers maintained that the normal (albeit usually unconscious) experience of a woman is of herself as a castrated (i.e., defective) male and that the feelings of envy, inferiority, and resentment that they harbor unconsciously prompt them to distort reality and will plague them perpetually, regardless of any efforts to alter their inferior social status. The idea that one half of humanity is doomed to have their self-esteem and judgment diminished by (anatomically preordained) r s siment regardless of their faith or their moment in history is also quite elitist, and manifestly sexist, but constitutes a considerable shift in emphasis from Nietzsche and Scheler.

Finally, in a series of best-selling books on Arab civilization and the Muslim world today, historian Bernard Lewis invokes a version of the theory of r s siment to explain the widespread fear and antipathy to the West, with its emphasis on democracy, gender equality, freedom of inquiry and expression, and so on. This is another dramatic reversal of emphasis, one laced with considerable irony. Nietzsche and Scheler saw modernity as the problem and implicated the Jews in the genesis of this problem to an unusual degree. Lewis, who is Jewish, sees modernity as a good thing but uses r s siment to explain the roots of Islamic extremism. And while his thesis has some merit, no doubt, it has been used to justify some disastrous foreign policy initiatives, i.e., the second Gulf War.

Reviewing these diverse contributions in chronological order reminds us that the literature on r s siment and religion contains many worthwhile insights but is also fraught with bias. The passions that give rise to r s siment – feelings of powerlessness, envy, the thirst for revenge, the tendency to disparage, or devalue others unreasonably – are ever present possibilities of human experience and only harden into

character traits that routinely impair our judgment in adverse social and historical circumstances. Members of both sexes and all faiths are susceptible to it, and any effort to depict one faith (or one gender) as uniquely susceptible to (or representative of) this character deformity should be greeted with considerable skepticism.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Atheism](#)

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## Resurrection

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The word “resurrection” refers to the return of a dead person to life and is most commonly used in connection with the Christian story of Jesus. The four writers of the biography of Jesus in the Christian section of the Bible (*New Testament*) report the mysterious disappearance of Jesus’s body from his tomb after his death by crucifixion and his subsequent appearance to various followers as a living person. This story is central to the Christian belief system.

The story of Jesus’s resurrection was by no means the first in the history of world religion and mythology. In some versions of a Greek myth, the god Dionysus rises from the dead, as do the Middle Eastern deities Attis and Tammuz and, most especially, the Egyptian Osiris. Sir James Frazer (1922) in his *Golden Bough* had much to say about these resurrected man-gods. Many resurrection stories, such as that of the Canaanite Baal, were associated with agriculture, particularly with periods of drought followed by periods of fertility. In Egypt, the resurrection myth of Osiris was associated with the devastating but land renewal process involved in the annual flooding of the Nile.

For non-Christians and some non-fundamentalist Christians, the story of Jesus’s resurrection might be said to become more significant when it is treated psychologically. The same can be said of the earlier resurrection stories. When one applies the approach taken by Jung in his “Christ, a Symbol of Self,” the resurrection heroes are freed from the restrictions of the merely local or the merely sectarian, and we are able to see that perhaps the real importance of the resurrection myth, whether or not it is based in some sort of historical fact, lies in resurrection and not in the individuals who are resurrected. As Zen masters say, “The first step of Zen is to kill the Buddha.”

For Jung, the archetypal or symbolic Christ as opposed to the historical Jesus is present in the unconscious of each of us as what might be called the “God within” or the “Self” waiting to be realized in our individual egos – our conscious lives. The process of the rising of the Self from our unconscious into our conscious psyche is the process of what Jung called “individuation.” The psychological or archetypal meaning of the resurrection, then, is the awakening of the Self and its emergence through the psychological growth process into our psychic lives.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christ as Symbol of the Self](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)

- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Revelation

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## Introduction

Revelation is derived from the Greek, *apokalypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις), *uncovering of the head, disclosure of hidden springs, revelation/uncovering of divine mysteries, and manifestation of persons*. *Apokalypsis* itself is a derivative of *apokalymma* (ἀποκαλύμμα), a revelation, a combination of ἀπό, *away from* + κάλυμμα, *head covering, hood, veil, dura mater* (lit., “hard [or coarse] mother”), and *grave*. *Kalymma* is related to Calypso (καλύψω), *she that conceals*. *Apokalyptō* is a *bon mot* (Derrida 1982, p. 64) for the Hebrew *galah* (גלה), meaning *to uncover, remove, reveal, emigrate, disclose, discover, and display*. Cognates of *galah* include *ger* (גר), *sojourner*, which in the Aramaic sense indicates one who has been accepted from the outside into the YHWH faith; *golah* (גולה), the feminine form of exile (both as a collective and in its abstract sense, to go into exile); and *gilaion* (גליון), a table or tablet – the Talmud uses *gilyōn* (גליון), the empty margin of a page or scroll (Killinger 2006, p. 359, 2007, p. 545). Subsidiary Hebrew words that express the divine act of revelation include *yada’* (יָדָע), “indicate,

announce”; *nagad* (נָגַד), “publish, declare”; and *dabar* (דָּבַר), “speech, word,” and in Greek, *phaneroō* (φανερόω), “I reveal, make known.”

## Sources of Apocalyptic

Persian religious sources, such as the Zoroastrian *Zand-i Vohuman Yasht*, antedate both the Greek and Jewish forms of apocalyptic genre. Such traditions were carried over into the early Christian church. Apart from *revelatio*, Latin terms for revelation include *visio*, “vision, inspection”; *horama*, “vision in a dream”; and *autopsia*, “direct observation, supernatural vision.” In Islam, *Wahy*, “instruction” or “what ought to be read,” comes from God, usually through the archangel Gabriel, given to the prophets, but in its definitive form to Muhammad. Content of revelation in the Qur’ān is wisdom and guidance for the living and warnings and the announcement of final judgment. Because it is divine, it is revelation and may not be altered. In Hinduism, the Vedas have the status of sacred revelation: *sruti* (“heard,” i.e., revealed directly by the gods to the seers) as distinguished from *smṛti* (“remembered,” i.e., composed by humans).

In the Judeo-Christian traditions, there are two forms of apocalyptic: historical and the other-worldly journey. The latter form is influenced by Greek sources, such as Book 11 of Homer’s *Odyssey* (Homer 1956) and the myth of Er in Book X of Plato’s *Republic* (Plato 1961). Historical apocalypticism with its insistence on a coming utopian age merges well with millenarianism, connecting it with more structured forms of normative *communitas*. As event or happening, revelation can be said to be spontaneous or existential *communitas*, especially when it is the communal nature of the community or nations at stake. Numerous apocalypses occur throughout the gnostic texts of the Nag Hammadi writings, the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea scrolls, and a small but significant number of New Testament apocryphal documents.

Apocalyptic writers were the heirs of the sages, concerned with purity within. As heirs of the prophets, they were concerned with both

cleanliness and social justice. As heirs of the priestly tradition, they made use of doxology and concern with defilement/purification of the land, as well as concern for restoration of worship and an understanding of *who* could participate in such worship, thus demonstrating the alignment of their views with the sacerdotal praxes of the priestly and cultic. A paraprophetic phenomenon, apocalypses differ from biblical prophecy in their notions of radical transformations of human relation and in the manner of judgment. Akin to wisdom literature, apocalyptic writings possess a supernatural wisdom dependent on revelation rather than empirical wisdom as in, for example, the Book of Proverbs.

### Features of Revelation

Judgment upon the nations, a recurring feature, does not come because of failure of nerve and/or pessimism; rather, what is pointed to is the dynamic of an “interim ethics of active waiting and faithfulness to God in all things” (Gammie 1989, p. 181). This is, of course, a radical move, for as with the suspension aspect of the Hanging God or Hanged Man of the Tarot, it is the sacrifice of all that to which we cling and hold dear, from our defenses and preconceptions to our interpretations. This not only happens communally among all the nations but also to each individual. For the faithful – those who undergo the ruptures caused by suffering whether in liminal suspension or at the hands of the cruel and ruthless (the unjust) – there is a share in the divine majesty.

A prominent feature in revelation is the holy mountain. Bearing the characteristics and potencies of the cosmos, it is the conclave of the gods like those who gather on Olympus, the battleground of opposing natural forces, and the conjunction of heaven and earth. Because of this last attribute, it is the place from which effective decrees are issued. The holy mountain is a place set apart, a margin sanctified by God, aligning it with the feature set of *galah* and its cognates. In other words, sojourners, exiles, and exilic communities go to the mountain to receive the revelation of God on tables or tablets (of stone).

The idea of the Kingdom of God has as its focus the sovereignty of the godhead, as well as its majesty and mystery – its establishment in the heavens is matched by an equivalent establishment on earth (cf. Mt. 16:19 Aland, et al. 1998, p. 44) – as above, so below, as the alchemists say. The apocalyptic is a true dialectic of power. Even the Lord’s Prayer depicts this: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Natural revelation, expressed in the formula *Deus absconditus/deus revelatus*, is not unlike Bion’s epistemological move from knowledge (curiosity) to ultimate reality,  $K \rightarrow O$ .

Christian theologians in the main reject the broad usage of *revelation* (any inspiration or new knowledge), preferring instead the narrower definition of revelation as the manifestation of something hidden that cannot be discovered through ordinary and usual means of acquiring knowledge. The neoorthodox Christian theologian Karl Barth, for example, argued that the only true revelation is through the Word of God incarnate, Jesus Christ. Whereas this might be quite valid in a purely Christian religious milieu, in postmodern religious plurality in which the dialogue between the major monotheistic religions is paramount, the Word of God must be accepted alongside the words of God, as in the *Wahy* of the Qur’ān, which are also manifestations of the divine transcendence. In Kabbalah, the letters themselves are important sources of revelation; that is, “intentional speech is an ascending human creation complementing the descending divine speech” (Idel 2002, p. 182). Jewish tradition realizes that such revelations or apocalypses of the divine add spice – as presentations of a certain point of view, they possess a marked exegetical character in that they enlarge scriptural scenes. The theme of apocalypse is primarily the glory or arm of YHWH, and it can be disclosed in one’s gaze or ear. Nowhere does it have the sense of fearsome catastrophe with which apocalypse has come to be associated. It is, as André Chouraqui notes, essentially “a contemplation... or an inspiration at the sight, the uncovering or disclosure of YHWH” (Chouraqui, cited in Derrida 1982, p. 64).

The narrowness of definition by modern theologians has been called into question in the post-modern era. Thomas J. J. Altizer's apocalyptic is an inversion of "what had heretofore been named and valued as God but is now manifested in emptiness or abyss" (Wyschogrod 1987, p. 377), leaving creation and apocalypse in a state of nondifference. In literary theory, Tzvetan Todorov (1973) locates the fantastic narrative (which apocalypses can be) on the frontiers of two genres, the uncanny – *unheimlich* – (supernatural explained) and the marvelous (supernatural accepted).

Taylor (1987) has advanced the Derridean notion of erasure by arguing that words re-veil rather than reveal. The idea of erasure is that when something is written down, when marks are made on paper – inscribed – something (whether or not we know what that something is) is written out, erased; an exscription has to occur, relating again to *galah, ger, gilyon, and gilaion*. This is in opposition to traditional theological thinking that revelation occurs linguistically. Taylor argues therefore that there is no revelation of divine truth but only the endless re-veiling or covering of truth. Truth and meaning: if the search is for ultimate truth such as Bion's O, then we might find ourselves crossing the threshold into the creation of a fallacy. "Is the fallacy meaningful or meaning-making?" is the line of questioning one might well take. It is the narrative that provides the raw material. Truth may then be irrelevant, for a good lie can be the enantiomorphic end of truth (and vice versa) as in a uroboros or topology of the torus as in early delineations of the Lacanian Real. A hermeneutic approach, interpreting with symbols that still possess cultural validity, may be warranted for bringing out the hidden aspects of the narratives developing both in the consulting room and in the world outside its doors.

Drawing significantly on the work of Blanchot (1955/1982, 1969/1993, and 1971/1997a), Taylor (1987) reminds us of the fact that revelation is also tear, interstice, rent, fissure, and cleft in not only the language but also the narrative structure as well. Blanchot reports that image is what veils by revealing. If, as Jung argues, image is psyche, then psyche veils by revealing, re-veils through

fissure, cleft, interstice, and abyss. Blanchot (1971/1997a) observes how image is capable of negating nothingness as in the Hegelian *Aufhebung* paradigm, and as in the Nietzschean Dionysian dithyrambic view of the abyss, image is also "the gaze of nothingness upon us" (p. 40). This is perhaps why current work on void states (Ashton 2007) is becoming important in an era when the unreality of dissolution into nothingness seems more real than ever in human history, whether linearly or spatially.

With regard to the apocalypse, the theme is that we must change. Despite concerning himself with the apocalypse as a choice between annihilation via atomic bomb and totalitarianism, Blanchot (1971/1997c) suggests that the apocalypse can be demystified by understanding. All or nothing is therefore far from being our only truth; however, the caveat to removing the projection of mystique is that "it exposes us to a loss of fear...that misleads but also warns" (p. 108). It is an apocalypse without an apocalypse!

Connected with the themes of erasure mentioned above, involvement of the "hard mother" aspect indicates that the word "apocalypse" can mean *away from the hard* (coarse) *mother*. As the tough fibrous outermost membrane enveloping the brain and spinal cord, the *dura mater* is composed of a series of adjacent laminations. Of interest here is not so much the structure but two metaphoric resonances. The first of these is in tandem with the *pia mater* and involves the concepts William James (1907/1987) identified as "tough minded" and "tender minded." Whereas tough-minded folk tend toward facts, empiricism, fatalism, and materialism, tender-minded folk tend toward principles, rationalism, free will, and idealism. Such a dichotomy might even relate to Sheldon's (1936) epimethean/promethean understanding of the animectomy complex.

The other metaphoric resonance of the *dura mater* is with Grotstein's (1979/2000) laminations of awareness in consciousness. It is tantamount to living a palimpsest self. In other words, it is a kind of development in which what occurs is the smudging of one life script – or a portion or portions thereof – in order to write over and/or rewrite the narrative by and through which one lives.

But it is not a complete erasure, for the past essence remains, feint (faint) as it is. Its counterpart is the *pia mater* (tender mother), a soft inner membrane enveloping the brain. The brain is thus aligned with Bion's container contained (♀♂) or it suffers the ontic psychological dualism of good breast/bad breast.

The revelatory manifestation of the divine life comes from the supramental realm. If any of the following three aspects is neglected, we slip back into mental life, knowledge about rather than becoming being or growing into aesthetic consciousness. For example, neglecting the abysmal aspect (the inexhaustible, ineffable depth characteristic) leads to the transformation of revelation into information via rationalistic deism. Neglecting the logical character of divine life transforms revelation into heteronomous subjection via irrationalistic theism. Finally, neglecting the spiritual character makes a history of revelation impossible. Maurice Blanchot reminds us that the nameless navigator, who first crossed the zero parallel, "was under the impression that he found himself at an exceptional moment and at a unique point, a sacred zone, the passage over which symbolized a crucial initiation" (Blanchot 1971/1997b, p. 79).

## See Also

- ▶ [Animectomy Complex](#)
- ▶ [Apocalypse](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Bion, Wilfred Ruprecht, and "O"](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Hanging and Hanging God](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)
- ▶ [Uroboros](#)

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## Rinpoche

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The Tibetan word “rinpoche,” is derived from Sanskrit term “ratna,” which means “precious,” “valuable,” and “rare.” In general, it is applied for anything that is considered valuable, such as gold and jewel and is also applied to the respected teachers and reincarnated lamas as a veneration.

In Jungian theory, the title may be understood as a projection of the Self onto a person. Thus, the one who has been given the title “Rinpoche” would symbolically carry the projection of a deeply individuated person who has reached his fullest potential of wholeness. In western psychology, this person would carry the projection of the Self for his/her students much like a western psychotherapist does for his/her patients.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Tulku](#)

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## Rites of Passage

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The phrase “rite of passage” was coined by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) in his 1909 book of that title (Fr. “Les rites du passage”). The phrase has become widely known and used to describe those rituals which mark significant life transitions of individuals in a community. Victor Turner (1920–1983) continued the focus on the study of the psychology of rituals and elaborated on the ways in which these rites of passage function to move people from one social status to another (Turner 1969/1995, 1974).

Many of the life passages which are marked by special rituals are age related, though not all. There is often a ritual at or close to the birth in which the child is named and given a place in the family and community. Another period of transition comes at puberty when boys become men and girls become women. In many preindustrial societies, the arrival of puberty shortly follows with marriage, when the individual chooses or is given a mate. This is another major transition, though in most modern industrialized societies, there is a significant time lag between physical sexual maturation and the assumption of the responsibilities of marriage. Especially in modern societies, there are special occasions to mark the completion of educational preparation and entry into the world of adult occupations and work. The commencement ceremonies at graduation use the pomp of academic regalia to celebrate the accomplishments of the new graduates. Likewise, retirement from the workforce sometimes is celebrated with at least a social occasion if not a formal ritual. Entrance into an esoteric tradition through initiation is an example of non-age related rites of passage. Ordination of clergy and the inauguration of civil or government officials are other examples of rites where social roles change by some other circumstance than age. Finally, at death, the body is interred or

buried and a memorial service is held to honor the memory of the deceased and ease the loss to those who survive the individual.

In each case, the ritual serves to mark the change in how an individual is to be regarded by the community. Turner elaborated on van Gennep's concept of liminality that transitional state where one is neither the former status nor the new status but is in the process of passage. In general, liminality refers to this transitional space and time "in between." There is often a period of time over which the ritual takes place or a period of preparation for it. This allows both the individual or individuals undergoing the transition and the rest of the community to psychologically work through the hopes, fears, and expectations for the new role which the participants will assume with each other. During the "in between" phase, the participants are linked by what Turner calls "communitas," the equality shared by all who are undergoing the transition.

Roles, of course, are not only born by an individual but are relational. When a person marries, for example, they are treated differently not only by their spouse and family but other members of the community. Likewise, when an individual is ordained to a sacred role in a community, everyone now relates to them differently. Making these transitions more manageable is the great psychological function of rites of passage. The markers are not only celebratory for the individual but important for the social group as a whole. Our entrances, or shifts in role, and our exits are all marked by rituals that serve our needs as well as those who participate with us in our community lives. Thus, the rites of passage serve as one of the most important functions in a community of the spirit; they guide us through the transitions that inevitably mark our human life trajectory and serve as a means of transmittal of cultural values and meanings.

## See Also

- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Initiation](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Rites of Passage for Boys

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Anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep first coined the term and concept of a rite of passage (ROP) in his 1909 book *Les Rites de Passage (The Rites of Passage)*. Van Gennep's basic premise was that there are universal, seminal points in peoples' lives that mark significant transitions in life and are celebrated through ceremonies and rituals that cement these processes and growth within the initiate's community. He was the first scholar to see the overlap between the religious rituals involved and psychological aspects affected.

Van Gennep believed that major life events such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death are historically and cross-culturally celebrated as turning points in a person's life and have a major impact and meaning within the culture and community that support them. Although volumes could be and have been written on ROPs, Van Gennep reduced these life-changing events down into three necessary components: *separation, transition, and incorporation*.

An important distinction in rites of passage is that an ROP can actually represent a relatively small personal challenge, like getting a driver's license or graduating high school. Not to detract from these personal accomplishments, but for this discussion, we will focus on the larger rites of passage that Van Gennep noted, the major life transitions boys go through that also affect the

community as well as the individual. Probably the most studied rite of passage is that of turning a boy into a man, which is considered by most cultures a bigger goal or accomplishment than just becoming an adult, which is what modern countries have evolved into with age-arbitrary rewards that are determined by one's chronological age, not maturity or accomplishments.

Similarly, mythology expert Joseph Campbell described the rite of passage process in *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* in 1949, developing his 17-stage Monomyth Model, which he also synthesized down to three main elements: *separation*, *initiation*, and *return*. Both scholars realized that a rite of passage required the boy to be separated from their safety and comfort of community for a time, transitioned or initiated into a larger version of themselves, then incorporated or returned to the original community with their new identity and role within that community as a man.

Whether we look at ROPs from Van Gennep's anthropological viewpoint or Campbell's mythological perspective, it is the universal discovery and use of ROPs that add credence to their value within a culture. Van Gennep noticed the pattern of growth in countless ceremonies and rituals across the globe, while Campbell noticed the model, or sequence of growth, in the thousands of myths he studied. Campbell immortalized the process by simplifying his Monomyth Model into what he called The Hero's Journey, which can be found woven into basically every plot-based story where a boy is challenged to accomplish something difficult.

This dynamic is also seen through most religious doctrines via the birth-death-rebirth concept incorporated into so many belief systems. Before Van Gennep, most anthropologists looked at rites of passage as purely religious ceremonies, rather than the larger rite of change supported by a spiritual ritual or ceremony to celebrate the event. At this point, it is important to distinguish between the term "rite of passage" and "initiation."

Many people inadvertently confuse the terms "ceremony" and "ritual." They are closely related, but a *ritual* is the overall celebration of

something, such as the yearly fall harvest. A *ceremony* is the actual event within the ritual that people engage in, such as a feasting celebration or harvest ceremony. Similarly, an "initiation" is the larger picture of a culture's need or desire to acknowledge a transitory process, such as celebrating puberty in youth. The "rite of passage" is the specific challenge, ceremony, event, or other behavior within the initiation process that creates the transition.

Similarly, the study of girls' rites into women have been just as important, and many rite of passage scholars and practitioners ironically believe that boys' rites of passages were actually developed after older cultures observed the growth and developmental shifts in the girl's path to womanhood. Girls typically begin their journey with the onset of puberty and/or menstruation. The community celebrates another fertile member and thus the continuation of the culture through future babies. A girl's actual rite of passage is typically going through childbirth, which is dangerous, painful, and bloody. But particularly with the birth process, cultures noted that a girl began labor and a day or two later a woman and mother appeared in the girl's place.

The problem for boys is not having a physiological process to go through like menstruation and childbirth. Thus, most cultures realized that boys need a rite of passage process as well to move them developmentally forward, but they had to be created and thus an almost infinite number of similar but different rituals and challenges were developed. They had to typically include the same dynamics as the girls' challenges: pain, danger, and often bloodletting. It has been the wide variety of these rituals for boys trying to become men that have come to represent what many consider the ultimate rite of passage in life, paving the way for future challenges like marriage, parenting, middle age, and death.

One of the most popular descriptions for the overall process, or meaning of adolescence, is the search for identity. The goal, and struggle, of adolescence is for the youth to figure out who they are, what their purpose is, and find out other aspects about themselves. Watching girls

naturally complete much of this process, then boys with the created rites, taught older cultures that from a psychological view, a rite of passage helps a youth quickly find these aspects out about themselves. Nowadays, with the path to manhood blurred or gone altogether, many youth workers believe this is why Western and particularly American boys have such high incidents of violence, gangs, suicide, drug use, and so on.

Famed Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1958) explained the psychological workings within a rite of passage as an *ego death*, a symbolic death of, for example, the boy, so the man may be born. Many traditional ROPs included components where boys were taken from their villages (separation), symbolically killed in a ritualistic way (initiation or transition), then reintroduced to their old community with their new ego or identity as a man. Put simply, a boy is put into a situation that requires a man to complete it. The boy must step aside, or symbolically die, so that the man can be born. Once again, we see the birth-death-rebirth element at work. In modern times, boys have mistakenly replaced high risk and too often actual death with symbolic death because there are no elders or set practices to follow.

Many boys would get their life purpose or choose their name during the intense ROP process. Modern ROP scholars such as community psychologist David Blumenkrantz believe this process also helped youth quickly work through developmental challenges in a quick and healthy way rather than the modern path of no ROPs or paths to manhood and womanhood. Thus, the loss of initiations has led to the modern phenomenon of uninitiated youth, young adults who don't know if they are men, and terms like *adultolescent* to describe those former teens who have not yet left the familial nest.

Malidoma Somé (1994), who wrote *Of Water and the Spirit* and is one of the few modern men actually initiated in a native culture to write about it, feels that ROPs must be conducted outdoors to connect the initiate with nature. Next he describes the two main components of a rite of passage as "risk" and "community acceptance." Risk is the ingredient that creates the change, the challenge to be overcome, and the test that makes

a boy grow bigger and stronger. Next, what the boy goes through must be accepted and acknowledged by his community. This provides continuity from generation to generation and no question if what the boy experienced "counts" or not. Each successful transition from boy to man, and girl to woman and mother, served to synthesize the community and ensure healthy individual growth and participation in the community.

With the modernization and urbanization of life, many people have been struggling with whether there is a need for ROPs in modern times and, if so, how to effectively implement them. Those who believe ROPs are archaic, brutal, or harmful to boys have largely been successful in First World countries at eliminating ROPs as outdated and dangerous. These people have effectively taken the "risk" out of the lives of modern teens in an effort to protect them, but the inherent, ingrained propensity for teen boys to take risks suggests that this has only backfired as gangs, teen violence, hazing, drug use, and other risky behaviors bubble to the surface.

In regard to the perception by many that initiations are outdated or unnecessary in modern times, "Even if a culture has decided that initiations are no longer necessary, that does not mean the mental, emotional, and psychological processes of the boy will change. His inherent drives and cravings cannot be eliminated by culture, laws, and psychology. Denying these ingrained, innate desires and needs has an effect similar to taking away an addict's drug—we have actually created more of a craving for some kind of initiation" (Stephenson 2006, p. 73). Rather than reducing teen risk, the unfulfilled need to be challenged prompts boys to take unhealthy risks, and they try to self-initiate, or what Joseph Campbell called "self-rendered initiation" in *The Power of Myth* (Campbell and Moyers 1988, p. 82). Elders were the guides and tutors for these journeys of self-discovery, and by eliminating their roles, we have banished them to retirement communities and lives with little real purpose. David Oldfield (1987) believes that adolescence is a "necessary crises" and that not allowing youth to learn and grow from their challenges limits and stagnates them.

*Crossroads: The Quest for Contemporary Rites of Passage* by Louise Mahdi (1996) is a collection of articles and essays by top ROP thinkers and practitioners on how to restore rites of passage to modern youth. Besides the risk issue described above, modern ROP workers are struggling with how to create a supportive “community” for modern youth, particularly in America where there were ROPs in Native America, but the melting pot/tossed salad dynamic of mixed cultures in modern America leaves no one community model to follow.

Some initiations survive modern times, like the religious-based Bar Mitzvah within the Jewish culture. Although a religious ritual, once initiated, the boys are welcomed into the adult world and expected to participate maturely. However, the Bar Mitzvah do not work for America overall, but just one subsection. Informal rites of passage existed and worked to a large extent in rural America until the Industrial Revolution. The inherent risks and challenges of farm and ranch life made informal rites of passage for boys, but as society became more urban, these opportunities fell by the wayside and boys have now been struggling with multiple generations of no initiation rituals.

Some modern therapeutic approaches mimic rite of passage dynamics, such as wilderness therapy or boot camps for teens. Within the confines of an insurance-based culture actually trying to eliminate risk, they try to create a healthy risk and challenge for boys, but cannot create the community acceptance element. Many boys have successfully been put into situations requiring them to create their own ego death and step into a sense of manhood, but when returned to their communities which were not involved or in agreement with the process the boy went through, the rite of passage falls apart from lack of community support. A boy cannot become a community of one.

David Blumenkrantz (2012) puts it this way: “What’s an initiation? It is the way a person gains a sense of belonging to a particular group or place. A person’s sense of belonging—being *included*—is central to any group or community’s survival. It also helps a person

achieve a sense of identity, meaning and purpose in life. Throughout human history the sense of inclusion was intentionally promoted through formal *initiation* called *rites of passage*. Through rites of passage people learn and commit to common values that guide behaviors beneficial for the group as a whole and each individual. The absence of initiation (rites of passage) leads to a person’s sense of disconnection and exclusion from a group, a community and even from themselves.” In other words, a lack of initiation not only prohibits individual growth for an individual but the community he or she lives in.

### See Also

- ▶ Black Elk
- ▶ Campbell, Joseph
- ▶ Conversion (Islam)
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Descent to the Underworld
- ▶ Eliade, Mircea
- ▶ Enlightenment Initiation
- ▶ Fall, The
- ▶ Hajj
- ▶ Night Journey
- ▶ Nirvana
- ▶ Peyote Ceremony
- ▶ Quest
- ▶ Rebirth
- ▶ Religion and Erik Erikson’s Life Cycle Theory
- ▶ Rites of Passage for Girls
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Twice Born
- ▶ Vision Quest

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## Rites of Passage for Girls

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### Introduction

Female adolescent rites of passage provide communities with a group process for initiating girls into womanhood. These rituals are rooted in ancient traditions and support girls' psychological and spiritual development. Western society has no such widely practiced rituals. Girls' circles are beginning to fill this void. As a rite of passage program, girls groups address the critical themes of female identity development, personal values, and healthy relationships so pertinent to girls' concerns. Trained facilitators can provide a program where girls share, explore, think critically, and develop confidence.

### Female Initiation and Western Culture

How does a young woman know she is no longer a girl? Menarche? A driver's license? A sexual

encounter? First job? Prom? Body piercing? Graduation? A religious ceremony? Modern culture offers markers but no definitive ritual to honor girls' transformation into women. Western society's emphasis on individualism has broken down collective structures to guide youth into adulthood (Sullwold 1987). Without such structures, teens too often find themselves adrift in the "betwixt and between" time, without a clear path to discover their purpose in life. This void contributes to epidemic levels of substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, relational aggression, depression, eating disorders, gang involvement, and suicidality in adolescent girls (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2011). Gender-specific groups can help girls navigate their changing identities and counter unhealthy trends. By connecting with a caring community, girls can avoid problems and develop capacities to reach their full potential.

Arnold Van Gennep coined the term "Rites of Passage," in 1906, identifying three stages to initiate adolescents into adulthood – separation, liminality, and reincorporation (Van Gennep 1906/2010). Yet when female-specific rites of passage are examined, Lincoln (1981) observes a distinctly different pattern, a set of three key aspects of initiation: *enclosure, magnification, and emergence*. "The initiand begins as a person on whom no one depends and through the course of initiation becomes one on whom the welfare of the entire cosmos hinges. . . for the fundamental power of creativity is renewed in her being" (Lincoln 1981, p. 107). Virginia Beane Rutter (2009) addresses women's needs to acknowledge and be acknowledged for the significance of their transitions, as well as for girls: "Girls need ceremony, because the physical initiatory experiences that originate in their bodies require that a girl sacrifice her precious physiological state of being and therefore her previous psychological identity" (Rutter 1996, p. 174). Some ethnic-cultural groups have been practicing female initiations within the Western world, such as:

- Latin Americans celebrate the *Quinceañera* (Quinceañera 2002). Fifteen-year-old girls and their families prepare for months for a Roman Catholic Mass and a party.



Special rituals such as wearing a formal dress, receiving shoes, displaying flowers, and eating certain foods signify the girl's readiness for womanhood.

- The Navajo conduct an elaborate puberty ritual, the *Kinaalda*. The coming-of-age girl reenacts Changing Woman, the Chief Deity of the Navajo people; in front of proud elders, the girl performs various rituals such as dressing beautifully, cooking a corn cake, and running a race (Lincoln 1981, pp. 17–33).
- Judaism's Bat Mitzvah and Christianity's Confirmation offer spiritual initiations involving family, a religious community, and friends to recognize the youth's coming into maturity.

These culturally relevant rites of passage anchor girls within ancestral, familial, and community traditions. Mary Lewis (1988) calls for a fundamental change in how adults nurture Black female teens. She encourages an approach that balances attention to girls' solutions and strengths. Lewis advocates applying the *Nguzo Saba*, or the "Seven Principles of Blackness," commonly associated with *Kwanzaa* (that was created for all African-Americans by Dr. Maulana Karenga), to guide and empower girls through adolescence: *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Works and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith).

Support for identity development is especially important for diverse girls with nontraditional sexual identities (LGBT). These youths have high rates of rejection from the adults they depend upon for guidance and belonging. Andrew Laue (2000) names essential aspects of an LGBT rites of passage program: acceptance by family; intergenerational participation; participation of key figures; acknowledgement of major themes – sexuality, identity, and individuation; and imprinting the values of the wider culture.

Mary Pipher (1994) worries that girls have no cultural compass, asking, "Under what conditions do most girls develop to their fullest?" (pp. 292–293). At adolescence, what motivates girls most is the desire to be loved. Unmet, that desire leaves girls and their development at risk.

Girls' relationships shape their identities (Miller 1976), yet when these are harmful or inconsistent with their own sensibilities, girls disconnect from their authentic selves in order to stay connected (Brown and Gilligan 1992). The unfortunate label "mean girls" highlights relational aggression, in which girls use relationships to find or lose status. In circles, however, girls discover that *sisterhood* is a more sustaining and satisfying use of power. The circle provides a compass by nurturing girls' hunger for needed emotional and spiritual support.

### Girls' Circles as Rites of Passage

Girls' circles are typically support groups for preteen and adolescent girls, which encompass the key aspects of female initiation – *enclosure*, *magnification*, and *emergence*. Focusing on healthy relationships within and outside of the circle helps build safety so girls can develop positive connections with peers and adult women. With safety established, girls gain skills essential to womanhood, including communicating feelings and viewpoints, setting boundaries, and developing healthy coping skills. Facilitators invite girls to share their own views and experiences and to reflect on their behaviors. By doing so, they promote girls' cognitive and spiritual development. Girls' groups are being offered increasingly in education, mental health, child services, juvenile justice, camps, and faith-based and community sectors (Fig. 1).

Circles should first and foremost be a safe emotional environment. Common structures include weekly meetings with 6–8 girls of similar age and development and one or two trained female adult facilitators. Girls can be invited or referred, depending on the program. Except in high transition settings, groups are best if closed to new members for a cycle of 8–12 weeks, to promote safety and bonding. The groups develop guidelines that form the basis for safety, including listening, respect, nonjudgment, inclusivity, confidentiality, honesty, and acceptance. Facilitators use a measure of self-disclosure to help establish trust and authenticity in the group.

**Rites of Passage for Girls, Fig. 1** Being in connection in girls' circle is the key to transformation and growth for adolescent girls (Photo courtesy of the author)



Frequently teen girls express initial apprehension, saying they do not trust other girls. However, once they experience the safety and acceptance in circle, they *want* to be there.

During check-in, girls may pass a *talking piece* around the circle, traditionally practiced by Native Americans to signify a sacred respect for the speaker. They can share something meaningful, such as family concerns, a breakup, grades, hurt feelings amongst friends, or a long-held dream, while the group gives their full attention. Discussions and creative activities promote further opportunities for girls to think critically about their behaviors.

Through the bonds that develop in circles, girls build capacity to risk authenticity. One teen happily said: "I've never before had adults or other girls treat me with respect like this." They become each other's strength while learning to believe in themselves. When one is angry, others listen with acceptance. If self-disparaging, others will speak of times they have treated themselves poorly and how and why they stopped. They become *more themselves, together*, as this story exemplifies:

It's 4:30 pm. Seven high school girls are sitting on pillows in a circle. We're in our sixth week of a semester-long girls circle. Today, we focus on

"Being Real". After each one "checks in" about her high and low points for the week, one girl, J., asks to share more. She describes her distress over the past three days, since having gotten drunk and engaged in sexual acts with a boy she does not respect. She confides,

*"I don't know why I did it; I feel sick about it. I think I was hoping that he would like me, 'cuz he's cute, but he's creepy and could care less about me. Next time, I'm just NOT gonna drink like that because I totally lost my judgment. Thank you for being here everyone, I just really needed to get this out."*

Several group members respond with messages of support:

*Don't be too hard on yourself. We've all made mistakes.*

*I'm sad that happened, J., and I hope you feel better soon. I know how it is to do something you don't really want to do. It took me time to where I can now listen to myself inside.*

*J., you're one of the kindest and coolest people I've ever known. I just want you to remember that whenever you're feeling some doubt.*

One girl hugs J. Everyone inhales, and exhales. The girls move on to an activity. There's a visible shift in J.'s face; she's more relaxed now.

Girls can demonstrate *emergence* in unique ways: at a ceremony, peer-facilitating circles with an adult, redefining their goals, and assuming school leadership. Recently, a high school boy chose as his senior project to study the

girls' circle approach by interviewing a program director at a local organization. He explained that he became convinced of the value of the program when his girlfriend attended a girls' circle and subsequently changed her behavior positively toward him, her family, and friends.

Having inner and outer congruence in mind, body, and spirit is a reflection of girls' growth. Setting interpersonal boundaries, for example, requires that a girl first listen to and value her inner voice and then to verbalize and act upon her preferences. This ability reduces girls' stress, as does the feeling of not being alone, a critical condition for youth as they separate from parents and form identities. This connectedness enables girls to assume their roles as young women with sustaining psychological and spiritual values: self-respect, dignity, pride, and purpose. Two girls reflect on their growth: "I thought I was the only one who felt like this, but Circle made me realize that I am not alone." "I am not so shy and I have learned how to stand up for myself. It made me feel more confident about myself."

Girls' circles are an engaging rite of passage program for adolescent girls. Filling a cultural void, the circle is an experiential way for girls to develop healthy relationships, gain confidence, express themselves genuinely, and set meaningful life goals. Facilitators with an open mind and capacity for relationship support girls' successful transformation, psychologically and spiritually. The consistent format and gender-relevant content help to safely engage circle members. For girls reaching adolescence, a girls' group provides a meaningful female initiation into womanhood.

## See Also

- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Conversion](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)

- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Matriarchy](#)
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- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)
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- ▶ [Religion and Erik Erikson's Life Cycle Theory](#)
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- ▶ [Women in Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Women in Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Women in Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Women in Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Women in Shi'ism](#)

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## Ritual

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Among animals and humans, ritual behavior is essentially universal. This suggests the likelihood of biological, evolutionary, and genetic foundations for such activity (Huxley 1966). Ritual thus has significance beyond the actions that define it. The essence of ritual is therefore functional and adaptive.

Ritual, in general, refers to patterned behavior, possibly repetitive, that is usually fraught with symbolism. Simply put, it is a force for connection, communication, cooperation, coordination, cohesion, control, and influence. All of these roles can and often have been initially demonstrated in animal ritualization which appears to serve language or signaling functions.

## Religious Ritual

This realm is excellent for defining human ritualization. Even though religion per se has not been satisfactorily defined in cross-cultural perspective, disagreements as to its purposes appear to be relatively minor. Religious ritual may, however, be distinguished from nonreligious forms by its assumption of ultimate human dependence upon superhuman agents who are not directly observable. To the best of our knowledge, all societies possess religion and religious ritual is therefore an integral part of all known religious traditions.

The terms rite and ceremony are often used interchangeably with ritual; however, some scholars distinguish them as formal actions while religious ritual is regarded as informal.

The last seems to be premised on the high probability of individuals introducing their own personal rituals. Since this distinction is difficult to maintain, all three words are used here to cover both formal and informal behavior.

## Patterns of Religious Ritual

Religious rituals do not occur randomly. They are traditionally associated with important cultural and individual events. First, they are annually patterned. For example, annual midnight masses have been viewed as celebrating the opening and closing of the year. Rites often accompany the planting and harvesting of crops plus specific holidays that honor major sociocultural happenings like military victories, the establishment of nations, or the lives and accomplishments of great historical figures. Second, ceremonies religiously validate rites of passage such as birth and death, one's coming of age, marriage, graduations from schools, and noteworthy anniversaries that occur in long marriages. A third set of religious rituals is commonly associated with such public events as inaugurations of presidents and other high government and public officials. In like manner, legislative bodies open their daily proceedings with a prayer. On a different level, rituals mark similar activities like the installation of presiding officers in universities and fraternal bodies. Fourth, one finds group rituals that either call upon the Divine to help persons in dire straits or thank superhuman agents when recovery from serious illness occurs or one's actions result in personal success. Note further spiritual references connote gratitude that is offered when a lottery is won or individual efforts result in athletic triumphs, high examination scores, or noteworthy advancements in one's life. Fifth, there are familial religious ceremonies such as saying grace at meals, prayers before facing the rigors of daily life, or upon retiring at night. In addition, people frequently develop practices utilizing household shrines, reading from sacred scriptures, intoning prayers before taking trips, etc. Depending on one's religious heritage, group associations, or place in a social structure, there is the likelihood of other rituals.

## Psychological Approaches to Religious Ritual

Contemporary psychological approaches to ritual usually stress cognition (Boyer 2001; Guthrie 1993; Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002). Motivation is much more implied than explicit, a tendency common to both psychologists and anthropologists who also emphasize cognition. The essential component appears to be a search for meaning. From a subjective perspective, the feeling that one is enlightened by ritual participation is common and may enrich the individual spiritually.

Even though Freud interpreted ritual behavior as obsessional neurosis, thereby affiliating it with pathology, modern Analytic views suggest it may be an avenue to religious experience (Pruyser 1968). Resort to religious ritual is particularly evident under stress that poses cognitive dilemmas. Clarification is sought in ceremonies in which the person attempts to make sense of her or his predicament. People need to understand the causes of events; in other words, attributions are sought that will resolve cognitive difficulties. The intricate matrix of relationships between ritual and myth may speak to this fundamental human desire to make sense out of life and the world.

The leads offered by these scholars need to explicitly include motivation in order to understand religious ritual more fully. Post-Freudians and Jungians claim that ritual behavior controls and directs emotion. It may thus act as means of self-control and function as a spur to control outside influences (Jonte-Pace 1997; Pruyser 1968). Even though these are constructive and adaptive functions, the classical idea of ritual and mental disturbance lurks in the background of many such writings.

Festinger (1957) adds another dimension, namely, when people engage in an activity, it must be justified, hence explained in a manner that makes it proper and desirable to carry out. The more it is practiced, the stronger its legitimization. For example, devout Muslims pray five times daily, a high frequency that contributes to a rather strong commitment.

## Religious Ritual as Connection

The notion of connectivity leads to both humanistic and holistic perspectives and in doing so ties ritual to personal spirituality as opposed to treating it as simple religious activity. Utilizing prayer as representative of religious ritual, connection to the supernatural is intended (Foster 1992; Ladd and Spilka 2002). This includes both personal worship and public prayer. Upward Prayer is an obvious ritual effort to establish this kind of contact. Whether public or private, people introduce their own devices to increase, from their perspective, the efficacy of formal liturgical worship. These regularly encompass changes in body posture such as bowing and kneeling, among other motions. Some settings accept dancing. In the privacy of one's personal life, innovation is frequently present in the prayers addressed to the Divine. Since there are many reasons people desire to connect to super-human agents, prayer is multidimensional. Foster (1992) theorizes 21 different forms. Empirically, research has distinguished over 10 types via Factor Analytic methodology.

The most common form of prayer has been termed petitionary, a term that is very broad since people may seek innumerable things, to wit, material gain or items, divine protection, God's intervention to help others as in intercessory prayer, personal guidance, self-improvement, and religious experience. Prayers of confession, praise, forgiveness, or thanksgiving are frequently offered. Contemplation or meditation may be sought. These are some of the more evident contents possible. Verbal ritual is also clearly patterned and may be supplemented with "speaking-in-tongues," various body movements, eye closing, hand clasping, etc. When describing personal practices, people readily acknowledge that their prayers are made in a regular, orderly sequence based on individually constructed ritual formats.

According to Foster, connectivity via prayer can also be conceptualized as inward or outward. Though the Upward focus remains, Inward Prayer stresses the self. Confession and atonement are usually its chief elements. In contrast, Outward Prayer emphasizes the external world and others.



Prayer, as probably the dominant kind of religious ritual, can be viewed from a number of stances, both theoretically and empirically. As connection, it is not a simple phenomenon.

### The Social Role of Religious Ritual

Ritual in general and specifically religious ritual as connectivity performs a fundamental communicative role. Recognizing this, Lawson and McCauley (1990) analyze religious ritual in terms of linguistic theory. More than simply the intended communicative substance of the act itself is conveyed to the superhuman object of the ritual. Further, as noted, the performing person becomes bound to the religious group within which the act is meaningful plus the larger culture in which the actor's faith has meaning. When people jointly participate in religious ritual, they perceive themselves as unified with their like-behaving peers. They are not only connected to the supernatural but to each other through common symbolic actions.

Particularly within the religious sphere, there is the belief that communal rituals are more apt to influence a deity than isolated individual responses. We see this in joint public expressions of intercessory prayer or calls for collective godly blessings.

Increased social coordination and cohesion are part of this process. Implicitly, an interpersonal consensus is intimated since these acts were learned from and usually concern others. Religious institutions openly avow ceremonial messages of mutual support and harmony in public settings. The hoped-for result is a reduction of conflict and enhancement of help and cooperation. Again, the enrichment of religious ritual behavior that connotes spirituality is implicit in these activities.

The significance of ritual within the individual personality implies a broad range of possibilities. At one end of this continuum, there is an obsessive-compulsive approach that is narrow and protective-restrictive. In the extreme, pathology as in scrupulosity may be present. At the other terminus, the search for meaning in ritualistic actions can

reflect a broadened view as connections to oneself, others, and the sacred come to the fore.

### See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Religion

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### Rogers, Carl

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### Introduction

In most evaluations of psychologists and psychotherapists of the twentieth century, Carl Rogers



(January 8, 1902–February 4, 1987) stands amongst the top five or six whether one speaks of his personal ability as a therapist, a theorist, or a student of personality.

### Person-Centered Therapy

The approach of Carl Rogers, often called “nondirective,” was not nearly as absent direction as both critics and supporters claim. The phrase “client centered” as opposed to “theory centered” or “teacher centered” is a far better statement of his approach and contribution than other terms.

He himself came to focus on the phrase “person centered.”

### Seward Hiltner and Carl Rogers

Most in the field of religion became aware of Rogers through the work of Seward Hiltner. An approach to pastoral care that centered on the perspective of the parishioner rather than the perspective of the pastor or the denomination had several values. The first value lies in awareness that the pastor and the parishioner both stand in need of a context of love and care. That holds true whether or not one speaks of the love and care of another human being or of God. The fact that Rogers came to be identified as a humanist simply defines the perspective from which the client or parishioner was viewed. The starting point was still the person and not the professional.

### The Role of Empathy

The approach of Carl Rogers had special emphasis on empathy or the capacity for empathy. Empathy is a moment in which the brain of one person fully catches what is happening in the brain of another and therefore allows both people to bring that “happening” into full consciousness. The reaction of more than one student of Rogers after an interchange often resulted in the

comment, “My word, he really heard me.” (At least, that was my reaction when I met Dr. Rogers again some 10 years after I completed my graduate work with him).

### The Process and the Dynamic

From a humanist standpoint, Rogers’ view lifted up the capacity of the individual to find healing of mind and self within himself or herself. The process required a context that allowed that healing to work. The task of the therapist, and by extension the pastor, was/is to bring that context into the individual encounter or the group. Contrary to the view that the pastor should have all the answers and give advice, this approach holds that the capacity and strength is within the individual. The role of the counselor or pastor, then, is so to hear what is being said and to lift up what is heard so that the counselee or parishioner can “hear” those strengths within himself or herself.

In his book *Psychotherapy and Personality Change* edited with Rosalind F. Dymond, Rogers drew a picture of two sets of overlapping circles. In one set, he listed many types of experiences in which the experiences were distinct and not in the parts of the circles that overlapped. Those outside of the overlapping section indicated experiences that were in the subconscious and not part of conscious awareness. As, through counseling or pastoral care, experiences became more and more available to one’s conscious awareness, one became healthy-healed.

### From Rogers to Pastoral Care

Although Rogers saw this as a strength of the individual person, it is a simple step for one who believes in God to say that we have not just evidence of the individual at work but of God or of the Holy Spirit at work within an individual. Hence, in the confessional, what happens is that the parishioner brings to the fore events of which he or she feels ashamed.

In Penance, then, it is the task of the priest to find those conscious acts that can bring cleansing to the sin or failure of which one is aware. From a Rogerian standpoint, what happens happens because of a dynamic within the individual and not because of priestly authority.

### Significance for Pastoral Care

The parishioner-centered pastor finds great resource in the work of Carl Rogers for developing a process of pastoral care and counseling.

### A Weakness in Rogers' View

One of the weaknesses of Carl Rogers' approach lay in the area of the reality of sin. Partly in response to that, Carl Menninger wrote a book entitled *Whatever Became of Sin*. The approach of Sigmund Freud, which was basic to Dr. Menninger, resulted in Menninger as a Christian developing a strong sense of the negative forces in human nature even as Carl Rogers looked at the positive. (If one may speak editorially, both are needed).

### Other Applications of Rogers

As Carl Rogers went on in life, he more and more developed applications of his insights to businesses, to educational situations, to practices of management, and to international situations. In line with what is said above, from the religious side, what Rogers would have identified as personality forces within the individual or the group the person of faith may identify as a spiritual dimension – as the work of God.

A major contribution of Carl Rogers lay in establishing means of researching what actually happened in therapy and measuring evidence of movement or change in the therapeutic process. The use of taped interviews, of Q-sorts, and of narrative case studies all became part of the scientific testing that Rogers brought to the measurement of the therapeutic experience.

### The Scope of His Work

Of his many books, two key publications give the essence of Dr. Rogers' theory and his research.

### See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Roman Catholic Women Priests

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During the last two millennia, the Roman Catholic Church has offered many reasons why women should not be ordained to the ministerial priesthood. Until the women's liberation movement of the 1970s, the barrier to women's ordination was the Church's culturally bound adherence to the unscientific biological assertions of Aristotle and later Aquinas' belief that women were "incomplete males," who by definition would be unfit matter for the priesthood. Although Christianity has been touted throughout the ages as something new and different, above and beyond human experience, history indicates that Christians and their leaders regularly succumbed to cultural imperatives such as slavery, the acquisition of great wealth, and colonization, along with the subjugation of women.

### Roman Catholic Women Priests, Fig. 1

Roman Catholic women bishops (ordained by male bishops) ordaining women priests. On a boat on the St. Lawrence Seaway's International Waters, 2005 (Courtesy of the author. [http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org/photo\\_gallery.htm](http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.org/photo_gallery.htm))



The belief in the innate biological inferiority of women, of course, was not relegated solely to the Roman Catholic Church. However, by the 1970s, women were moving into fields previously reserved for men. By the close of the 1970s, Lutheran and Episcopal women were being ordained in their respective denominations.

Many of the pioneers in the Roman Catholic women's ordination movement such as Mary B. Lynch, Judith Heffernan, Andrea M. Johnson, Sister Theresa Kane, and Regina Bannan fully expected that the sign of the times unearthed during Vatican II and the subsequent civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s would lead to women priests in the near future and said so. However, the antiwoman culture of the church led Pope Paul VI to bring a halt to the discussion of women priests in 1976 with the encyclical "*Inter Insigniores*." (Paul VI 1976) Since it became politically incorrect to label women inferior, Paul wrote that only those who "resemble" Christ in his maleness can serve in a sacramental role. This is based upon his literalizing scriptural language in Ephesians 5:22–28 and redefining Jesus as a cosmic bridegroom who gave himself up for the church, a role women could not expect to emulate (Fig. 1).

While acknowledging the misogynistic tendencies of Church fathers such as Jerome, who declared that "Woman is. . . in a word, a perilous

object," and Tertullian who described women as the "gateway of the devil," Paul VI wrote with no basis in fact that such attitudes of these and other Church fathers "had hardly any influence on their pastoral activities and still less in their spiritual direction of women." Paul VI wrote "*Inter Insigniores*" despite the fact that the Pontifical Biblical Commission had declared in the same year that there existed no scriptural reason not to ordain women.

Thus, the pope and by extension the bishops as well as many members of the clergy have been unable to forge a connection between the culturally induced antiwomen statements made repeatedly by Church fathers and their heirs and their own persistent inability to view women as having a call to serve as priests. Rather than acknowledging that St. Catherine of Siena and St. Therese of the Little Flower, both of whom had expressed vocations to the priesthood, Paul VI warned modern women seeking ordination that priesthood is "not a right" or a means of "social advancement." The Church is, Paul VI asserted in spite of his ban on women priests, a place of "real equality" where everyone has a "distinct role," a caveat that undermines his assertion of equality.

Paul VI also wrote that Jesus did not even entrust the priesthood to his own mother, a woman described by 2,000 years of theological

reflection as someone far greater than mere human women and one conceived without sin who committed no sin during her life and who never had sexual relations either before or after the birth of Jesus, miraculously both mother and virgin. Because of the Church's ongoing antipathy towards sexual relations, an attitude forged by Platonic dualism and the adoption of the Augustinian belief in the transmission of original sin via sexual intercourse, a woman who engaged in sexual relations could not possibly be a "*Theotokos*" or God bearer.

Despite Paul's claim that Mary was not ordained, Mary is, par excellence, an object of intense devotion for celibate priests who have eschewed sexual relations for life. John Paul II asserted in a general audience in 1993 that Mary is "the friend, companion, guide, and confidant of priests." "Priests," he said, "accept God's gift in self-giving and follow her example as faithful virgins." Indeed, John Paul II, who completely dedicated himself to Mary as expressed in his motto, "*Totus Tuus*" or "totally yours," Mary's that is, regarded Mary as co-redemptrix with Jesus. John Paul also wrote that Mary represents "the union between mothers and sons" (John Paul II 1988). Modern psychology now sees all these kinds of fantasies in a new way.

Few have discussed the roles that celibacy and its concomitant fixation upon Mary play in the church's ongoing sexism. As seminarians intending to eschew all sexual activity for life, aspiring priests are taught to seek "intimacy with Mary and to be formed by her maternal love" (Cardinal Muench). Several psychological questions should be asked. First of all, do mature men offer themselves "totally," that is, heart, body, mind, and soul to their mothers or consider the gestation process some sort of "union" that lasts for life? Secondly, do grown men have "intimate" relationships with their mothers? Thirdly, how does an intense spiritual devotion to a woman who has no counterpart in the real world affect a priest's relationship with flesh and blood women who cannot possibly emulate the ever Virgin Mother of God?

Carl Jung discusses the pitfalls of using the image of the Virgin Mary as means to spiritualize

erotic tendencies (Jung 1923). According to Jung, the single-minded devotion to Mary served as a "death blow" to the "service of women." While Mary was lifted up as the Queen of Heaven and the Apostles, the Star of the Sea, and Seat of Wisdom, women who walked the earth as mothers, sisters, aunts, cousins, and friends were told by John Paul II that they could not even talk about women's ordination since the case for women priests had been closed for all time (John Paul II 1994).

Jung and the Church, however, share some unproven assumptions about women. Just as Jung asserted with little proof that the unconscious or souls of women and men differ essentially. Similarly, the Church, under the influence of John Paul II's "Theology of the Body," asserts that men and women possess essential characteristics that can be "deformed" by taking a less-gendered defined approach to fulfillment. According to John Paul, women must "not appropriate for themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine originality" lest they not reach "fulfillment" and lose their "essential richness" (John Paul II 1988). These types of pronouncements are made by powerful and admired men about women serve to preserve stereotypes as well as the status quo. In reality, gender is more flexible than hardwired, and there is as much variation among women as there are between men and women. Any type of essentialism must be true of all women in all places at all times. One needs to look at modern woman and her presence on the athletic field, in government, in business, and, indeed, even in the home, and see that these assertions are simply untrue. Human experiences change over the course of time, giving rise to different interpretations and meanings of what was once considered to be a universal human experience (Lauter and Rupprecht 1985).

The Catholic priesthood is comprised of celibate men who believe they must remain undefiled by sexual contact with women if they are to be effective priests. Celibacy is, in fact, regarded as the "crown jewel" of the Catholic priesthood. Giving up a wife and family allegedly frees the male priest to be a "father" to the people even

though Catholic priestly celibacy does not exist within an otherwise ascetic lifestyle and does not, from empirical evidence, necessarily make men good priests. In fact, psychologist A.W. Richard Sipe discovered that in spite of the priesthood's lofty ideals of fatherhood and the iconic imaging Jesus, two-thirds of priests remain psychosexually immature and thus unable to do either adequately (Doyle et al. 2006).

Sipe also observed that the "ideal" to whom all priests aspire is Jesus Christ, who is both male and divine, and presumed celibate, although no evidence exists to prove what is considered to be fact. According to Roman Catholic dogma, this virginal Jesus has a virginal mother, also undefiled by sexual relations, who serves as a perfect woman who will offer unending support and love. According to Sipe, who studied both the healthy and pathological aspects of the priesthood for 30 years, this leads to a devaluation of women (Sipe 1990). Just as there is no room in the Trinity for a female presence, even though the Holy Spirit is described in Genesis by the feminine Hebrew noun, "Ruah," there is no room in ministry for women priests. Woman, a potential source of imagined psychological defilement for male celibates, becomes "the other," about whom various popes have written endless papal letters to cement women's divinely ordained role in the church as something less than man. This puts women in the male clergy's unbalanced, negative collective shadow that is both psychologically unhealthy and unjust for the Church.

In an interview with Terry Gross, host of PBS radio show, "Fresh Air," Sister Patricia Farrell, president of the Leadership Conference of Religious Women, which is being investigated by the Vatican for their "radical feminism," stated that there is an "impoverishment in the church which has not heard the voice of women" (Fresh Air 2012).

This is the marble wall that women face whenever they attempt to discuss their vocation to the Catholic priesthood, although few priests or bishops are willing to talk about this honestly and openly. The papacy of John Paul II asserted repeatedly that an all-male priesthood has been the "constant" tradition of the church in spite of

epigraphic evidence to the contrary. Historian Dorothy Irvin, Ph.D., described artwork in ancient catacombs of women dressed in liturgical dress, holding chalices and lifting their hands up in the traditional praying position of male Catholic priests. (Irvin) Giorgio Otranto, Ph.D., stated that women were ordained priests in southern Italy as late as the fifth century, as proven by an epistle written by Pope Gelasius I condemning such a practice (Otranto 1991).

The seven women ordained on the Danube River in 2002 as part of the Roman Catholic Womenpriest movement reflected both the ancient practice of women in ordained ministry as well as the determination of devoted, educated, modern women to claim their rightful place in the church as the equal of men. Their ordination was also the culmination of 30 years of asking the church hierarchy to consider not only these historical, cultural, and psychological precedents but also the psychological, social, and pastoral need to have women priests in a church comprised of both men and women.

The Vatican response was immediate. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued a warning declaring the ordinations null and void. The CDF added that the ordination of women was a "grave offense" and a "serious attack on the unity of the Church" (Ratzinger 2002). The women refused to repudiate their ordination and received official letters of excommunication on July 22, 2002.

Thus, ordination has not been a risk-free event for the ordained women and their supporters. As poet Adrienne Rich wrote, "Feminism means finally that we renounce our obedience to the fathers and recognize that the world they have described is not the whole world" (Lauter and Rupprecht 1985, p. xx). The valid – if illicit – ordination of women in apostolic succession in the Roman Catholic Church in the face of papal and clerical disapproval is, indeed, a sign that the patriarchal landscape of the Roman Catholic Church has been forever altered. The male, celibate, authoritarian Roman Catholic Church that believes that it can speak without error on issues as diverse as the Trinity and women's ordination because that authority has been given to them by

a male, celibate God has much to lose if it opens its seminary doors to women. Women with vocations have been told repeatedly by the pope, bishops, and seminary rectors that no women need apply.

The Church would have to admit that it was wrong; that it had made a mistake; that it had succumbed to secular and cultural gender constructs, rather than adhering to the gospel message which declared that there was neither male nor female in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28–29). For the Church to be wrong about women, priests opens up the door to the reality that the Church might have been wrong about many other things as well, something the Church is simply unwilling to do lest it undermine its authority.

Consequently, the church has fought back furiously against the now over 100 women who have been ordained worldwide since 2002 in the Roman Catholic Womenpriest movement. Aside from the letters of excommunication received by the original seven women, ordained women in various cities such as St. Louis, Missouri were harassed by their respective bishops, while others were dismissed from teaching, administrative, and parish ministries. By 2008, when members of Roman Catholic Womenpriests had established church communities in various parts of the country and the world, the Vatican newspaper, “L’Osservatore Romano,” declared that ordained women and those who support them had “excommunicated themselves” (Catholic News Agency 2008). Bishops like William Morris of Australia were fired for even mentioning women’s ordination, while ordained members of other religions such as Rabbi Susan Talve of St. Louis, Missouri, were taken to task by the local bishop for allowing an ordination to take place in her synagogue (Palmo 2007).

The Church’s treatment of ordained women stands in stark contrast to the treatment of male, clerical pedophiles, none of whom has been excommunicated. Most of the pedophiles were not removed from the priesthood until their crimes were made public. While ordained women have been barred from the sacraments and denied a Catholic burial, well-known

pedophiles like the notorious Legion of Christ founder Marcial Maciel were transferred to other parishes or sent to monasteries to live a life of prayer and penance (Berry 2012). Yet in 2010, the Vatican went so far as to equate women’s ordination with pedophilia saying that both strike equally at the sacramental heart of the church (Vatican Information Service 2010).

Excommunication has not stopped the progress of the Womenpriest movement. Aside from ordained priests in the United States and Canada, there are ordained women in South America, Austria, Switzerland, France, Germany, and Scotland. Roman Catholic Womenpriests have a vision of a renewed priesthood, minus the sexual and hierarchical baggage of the past. Consequently, members of RCWP take no vow of celibacy and many of the women are both wives and mothers. RCWP bishops, who were validly ordained by male bishops in good standing, are elected and have no administrative power. Priests take no vow of obedience to the bishops and are accountable to the People of God and to each other.

Parishes pastured by RCWP priests exist in many parts of the United States and Canada. As Rabbi Gamaliel said in Acts of the Apostles, “. . .Let them alone; because if this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting God!” (Acts 5:38–39).

As the Roman Catholic Womenpriests website states,

The Catholic people have accepted us as their priests and they continue to support us as we grow from the seven bold women first ordained on the Danube River in 2002. Ordained women are already ministering in over twenty-three states across the country. We are here to stay. We are not going away (Roman Catholic Womenpriests).

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Emotional Intelligence](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)



- ▶ Judaism and Christianity in Freudian Psychology
- ▶ Judaism and Christianity in Jungian Psychology
- ▶ Mary Magdalene
- ▶ Spectrum of Religions
- ▶ Vatican
- ▶ Virgin Mary
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## Rome

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Rome (Ital. *Roma*) in the state of Lazio, Italy, is the capital of the Italian Republic and spiritual center of the Roman Catholic world. The Vatican, which is its own self-governed city-state, is located centrally in Rome, just a few blocks from the Tiber River. Though in most cases Rome indicates the geographical location of the city and its environs, it also refers to a set of ideas ranging from the state functions of the Republic and Empire in antiquity to the centrality of power of the Roman Catholic Church and the seat of the papacy. Rome is often referred to as “The Eternal City” (*la città eterna*), “The City of the Seven Hills” (*la città dei sette colli*), and “Capital of the World” (*caput mundi*).

The centrality of Rome has been recognized for millennia and written about in literature, theology, and histories (including St. Augustine, Edward Gibbon, and Henry James). Psychologically, its spatial and spiritual centrality may be

compared with Jerusalem, which often attracts individuals with the so-called Jerusalem syndrome but to a much lesser extent. A comparable condition might best be described as a “Rome neurosis,” which Freud described as his anxiety about traveling to Rome while in Italy. As Ginsburg writes, “Freud developed what he called his ‘Rome neurosis.’ He, an avid traveler in Italy, could not get to Rome, though the city haunted his dreams. To do so, he had to dig up the Rome in himself, by analyzing his dreams” (Ginsburg and Ginsburg 1999, p. 17). Freud eventually got over this neurosis, enjoying Rome tremendously, with even a consideration of retiring to the Italian capital (Jones 1955, p. 96).

### Rome and the Church

The relationship between Rome and the Catholic Church is inextricable. Since late antiquity and the reign of Constantine, the Church has played a dominant role in forming an identity of the city. Ernest Jones, Freud’s biographer, wrote about Freud’s idea of the “two Romes,” one which embodies classical antiquity, the other, which was the Christian Rome, the Rome which superseded the earlier Rome of the Republic and Empire. Freud had great interest and admiration for the first Rome but conflict with the second. This second or New Rome “could only be an enemy to him, the source of all the persecutions Freud’s people had endured throughout the ages” (Jones 1955, p. 18).

### Rome in Freud’s Analyses

Freud encountered the subject of Rome several times in his work, both in his analyses of individuals and his topical interpretations. One of the first accounts of Rome in Freud’s works is from a patient “Frau Emmy von N.,” whom Freud saw beginning in May 1889. On the morning session of 15 May, the patient asked Freud if he had heard about a “Countess Sch.,” who had been killed in an accident in Rome. The next mention of Rome

was from a patient named “Fräulein Rosalia H.” in the autumn of 1892, who recounted singing at a rehearsal in Rome, at which point she was in a “state of great emotional excitement” and fell ill upon the stage (Freud 1953a, II, p. 169n).

In his “Infantile Materials as a Source of Dreams,” Freud dealt to some extent with the issue of Rome as a topological ideal and the psychological implications of visiting it. When speaking of memories that may have begun in childhood, Freud notes, “what I have in mind is a series of dreams which are based upon a longing to visit Rome. For a long time to come, no doubt, I shall have to continue to satisfy that longing in my dreams: for at the season of the year when it is possible for me to travel, residence in Rome must be avoided for reasons of health” (Freud 1953c, V, pp. 193–194). Freud then recounts the details of a dream about being in a train near the Tiber. Freud did not visit Rome until 1901, at the age of forty-five. And in the footnotes of these discussions on dreams, Freud has successive notes (one added in 1909, another in 1925) which underscore the importance of the city. He writes, “I discovered long since that it only needs a little courage to fulfill wishes which till then have been regarded as unattainable; and thereafter became a constant pilgrim to Rome” (Freud 1953b, IV, p. 194n).

In one of his dreams, Freud described being on a street corner in Rome and “surprised to find so many posters in German stuck up there,” which he then describes as a vision of Prague and a conflation of his early memories of Moravia, where he was born and where German was likely to be more tolerated (Freud 1953b, IV, p. 195).

### Freud, Hannibal, and Rome

Freud’s most notable work on Rome is that which describes (1) parallels between Hannibal and Freud himself and (2) the tensions embodied between Jewry and the Catholic Church. Freud wrote in his “Infantile Material” that “I had actually been following Hannibal’s footsteps. Like him, I had been fated not to see Rome; and he

too had moved into the Campagna when everyone had expected him in Rome. But Hannibal, whom I had come to resemble in these respects, had been the favourite [sic] hero of my later school days” (Freud 1953b, IV, p. 196). More importantly, Freud makes the connection between himself and Hannibal as something akin to a more pressing historical tension, that between the Church and the Jews. He writes, “to my youthful mind Hannibal and Rome symbolized the conflict between the tenacity of Jewry and the organization of the Catholic church. . . . Thus the wish to go to Rome had become in my dream-life a cloak and symbol for a number of other passionate wishes” (Freud 1953b, IV, pp. 196–7).

Rome appears in additional writings about childhood without significant comment (Freud 1953c, V) and a handful of times in Freud’s commentary “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s *Gradiva*” (Freud 1959, IX). In his piece “Der Moses des Michelangelo,” Freud is very interested in the artist’s sculpture, and as the editors of his collected works note, “Freud’s interest in Michelangelo’s statue was of old standing. He went to see it on the fourth day of his very first visit to Rome, . . . as well as on many later occasions” (Freud 1955, XIII, p. 210).

Rome is of some importance to Freud in his work “Civilization and Its Discontents,” of which “the main theme of the book - the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restriction of civilization - may be traced back to some of Freud’s very earliest psychological writings” (Freud 1961, XXI, p. 60). In this work, Freud expresses a comparison between the *past of a city* and the *past of the mind*, which questions the mental imagining of the idea of a city like Rome, as well as the artifacts that create the historical narratives around the location of Rome (Freud 1961, XXI).

## Lacan and Rome

Lacan’s vision of Rome is much different than Freud’s ideas about Rome. Lacan was not

interested in the same historical artifacts or constructions that Freud was. As one scholar has put it, “Lacan’s Rome resembled rather the ceilings of the Galleria Farnese, the archangels of Andrea Pozzo, or the facades of Francesco Borromini. (. . .) Occasionally, antiquity would revive in the form of philosophical references or famous battles, but never ruins. The unconscious discovered by Freud was to be started up anew as a Counter-Reformation, sumptuously draped in the folds of Clérambault. Rome would be his palace, the French language his garden” (Roudinesco 1990, p. 253). For Lacan, the illustriousness of the Baroque Rome was attractive, as were the trappings of the Christian Rome, which seemed to be anathema to Freud’s own vision of what Dr. Jones called his “second Rome” (noted above). Roudinesco writes that “Lacan’s Rome began with Ignatius of Loyola and ended in rococo madness. As founder of a new orthodoxy, the master spawned a flamboyant theory. . . . Rome emigrated to Versailles and the Holy See to the rue de Lille. Lacan’s Rome was that of the Roman Catholic empire, a city in which the Pope was no longer a preacher but a commander in chief. The Rome dreamt of over maps in childhood; the Rome of adolescence and the Collège Stanislas: everything in the realm of religion, nothing accorded to faith” (Roudinesco 1990, p. 253). As for Freud, “Medieval and baroque Rome evoked his hatred of Catholicism once more. . . .” (Ginsburg and Ginsburg 1999, p. 18). Lacan presented his *Rome Discourse* in 1953, which is seen as a “first step toward the elaboration of a theory of therapy, of its conduct, temporality, and punctuation” (Ginsburg and Ginsburg 1999, p. 18). The presentation of this discourse in Rome was symbolic of Lacan’s own feelings about the city and what it meant in his overarching thought and work (Amati 1996).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Lacan, Jacques
- ▶ Vatican

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## Rumi, Celaladin

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## Introduction

Celaladin (Jalal-ud-Din) Rumi, considered by many to be Islam's greatest mystic, was born in or near Balkh (in present-day Afghanistan) on what is generally accepted to be September 30, 1207, and died in Konya, in what is now southern Turkey, on December 17, 1273. A prolific poet and spiritual writer, his work has influenced not only Islamic literature and

thought but the wider Western world. For the first years of his adult life, Rumi was a respected Islamic jurisprudent, teacher, and writer, as was his father before him. With the arrival in Konya of the wandering mystic Shams-i-Tabriz when Rumi was 37 years old, Rumi entered a period of creative and mystic fervor that resulted in an outpouring of poetry and teaching. His physical expressions of mystical experience inspired the founding of the Mevlevi order of whirling dervishes.

## Life

We are dependent for the specifics of Rumi's life on several early hagiographers, including his son, Sultan Walad. This is what has come down to us: Mevlana (Our Master) Jalal-ud-Din Rumi was born into a Sunni Muslim family, either in Vakhsh, outside Balkh, or in Balkh itself, a major cultural center where Muslims, Jews, Hindus, and Christians mingled. It was a period of political unrest; when Rumi was 12, his father, Baha al-Din, left Balkh, perhaps fleeing dynastic quarrels and an impending Mongol threat, perhaps in search of greater scope for his work, which he may have felt was underappreciated in Balkh. The family journeyed for about 10 years and covered about 1,500 miles, and on this long journey, Rumi's mother (one of Baha al-Din's four wives) and a brother died; Rumi married a young woman traveling with the family, and the couple had their two sons. When they arrived in the ancient city of Konya, perhaps at the invitation of the sultan, Konya was still a center of wealth and influence, growing with the influx of those fleeing the Mongols. Baha al-Din died in Konya in 1231, when Rumi was 24.

Rumi was well educated, perhaps in part in Damascus. He studied under leading Sufi mystics and learned large parts of the *Koran* (the holy book of Islam, a record of God's words revealed through the Angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad from 610 to 632 CE) and diverse Hadith (commentaries on the *Koran* and on the sayings of Muhammad), by heart. Upon his return to Konya, Rumi assumed a position in the

madrise, or religious school, teaching sharia law and Sufi practices and lecturing widely.

After the death of his first wife, Rumi remarried, a woman some believe to have been a Christian and with whom he had two more children, a son and a daughter.

In 1244, Rumi's transformative meeting with Shams-i Tabriz occurred. A relatively uneducated wandering dervish, Shams was a man of complex personality, experienced by some as dismissive and demanding. He may have been a member of an Islamic order that purposely incited rejection as a path to spiritual growth. Legends grew up around the meeting of Rumi and Shams; one holds that Shams, entering Rumi's home while he was lecturing, looked at a pile of books and asked, "What is this?" Rumi replied, "You don't know." The books burst into flame. Rumi asked, "What is this?" Shams replied, "You don't know." Shams was the first of three spiritual companions in Rumi's life.

Many of Rumi's followers reacted to Rumi's intense interest in Shams with jealousy. After several months, Shams left Konya, perhaps under pressure from the jealousy of others, perhaps following the call of his own wandering spirit, and perhaps from a desire to further Rumi's spiritual growth through a period of separation. Disconsolate, Rumi sent his son Sultan Walad to bring Shams back. After a period of peace when Shams returned in 1247, the jealousy of Rumi's madrase community members returned, and after less than a year together, Shams disappeared. Some scholars believe he was murdered, perhaps by Rumi's older son Ala al-Din.

In 1250, after a period of deep mourning and of search for Shams, Rumi connected with his second spiritual companion, also a relatively uneducated man, Salah al-Din, a Sufi and a goldsmith in Konya. Upon Salah al-Din's death in 1258, Rumi chose Husam al-Din as his third and last beloved spiritual companion. Husam, a longtime friend and fellow Sufi, became Rumi's amanuensis and inspiration in the writing of the *Masnavi*.

Rumi died in 1273, welcoming death and telling those left behind not to grieve.

## Works

Rumi wrote in Persian, with a few poems of lesser quality in Arabic. He cited a book of poems by a classical tenth-century Arab poet as his favorite work, but influences on his poetry are diverse, from animal stories of Indian origin to classical Sufi works to Persian love stories. He wrote in classical form but with living, variously informed content.

In the *Divan-I Kebir*, Rumi documents his love, union, and longing for Shams-i Tabriz, as representative of mystical union and separation from God, in what are considered to be some of the world's great love poems. Rumi signs many of the poems (ghazals, a traditional Persian love poem of 5–12 rhymed lines) as Shams, indicating that he and Shams have become indistinguishable. Many poems speak of spring, intoxication, and of Shams as the Sun, with a musicality that is often lost in translation. All are an attempt to describe inexpressible experience, suffused with a meaning beyond words. Rumi's work is endlessly associative without being dissociated; it is ultimately organized by its object: Allah. Also in the *Divan* is Rumi's Rubaiyat, a series of rhymed quatrains.

The *Masnavi*, a lengthy book of couplets dictated to his last spiritual companion, Husam al-Din, is a famously difficult book: his teachings took as its subjects everything from ribald tales about cheating Sufi wives to parables from the Judeo-Christian Bible to animal fables, through which he hinted at spiritual implications often without specifying them. He charmingly and at times frighteningly personified abstract concepts and anthropomorphized everything from parts of the body to Sleep.

Rumi was a Neoplatonist; Aristotelian logic held little interest for him, and he was sometimes castigated by more traditional Muslims for taking too many liberties with the interpretation of the Koran. His whirling, which began with the arrival of Shams, was viewed with suspicion by other teachers and by some of his own disciples. Within the Sufi tradition, he was relatively uninterested in the delineation of Gnostic stages by which one approaches union with God: for Rumi, man was perfected in love and suffering.

His discourses were collected under the title *Fihi ma fahi*. Several collections of his poems and a short selection of his sermons are available. His correspondence has also been preserved.

## Influence

Despite the fact that his poetic language is rooted in the conventions of Persian and Sufi literature, informed by a medieval worldview very different from our own, and so infused with the Koran that his *Masnavi* was called by some later Muslims “the Koran in Persian,” Rumi’s poetry quickens the hearts and touches the souls of many today. From providing the text of a Philip Glass/Robert Wilson song cycle to Rumi calendars, cards, and websites, Rumi is threading through the modern Western consciousness. Some trace the common phrase “It is what it is” to the compendium of Rumi’s teachings, *Fihi ma fahi*, “In it is what is in it,” or “It is what it is.” Rumi influenced German and English writers in the nineteenth century and was the UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) International Man of the Year in 2007 (commemorating the 800th anniversary of his birth).

He is widely influential in the Muslim world: in Iran, he is a household name, his mausoleum in Turkey is a place of pilgrimage, and his influence on later Muslim philosophers and poets is pervasive.

## Commentary

Commentary on the intersection of psychology and religion in Rumi is conditioned by the distance from which we view this medieval mystic, who was deeply rooted in the Koran and in the society of his day.

Developmentally, Rumi remained a gifted but unremarkable Sufi scholar until age 37. His flowering as a poet and mystic began at approximately the same age as the prophet Mohammed experienced his spiritual awakening. For Jung, this is the phase of midlife individuation.

For Erikson, it is near the beginning of the middle adulthood stage, generativity versus stagnation.

Rumi’s sense of identification with Shams and his identification of Shams with the Sun could be seen to indicate a fusion transference, in Kohutian terms.

Some modern commentators (e.g., Leslie Wines) have linked Rumi’s mystical flowering to trauma during the long journey from Balkh to Konya and perhaps even earlier to trauma at age 5 as Mongols invaded his hometown. The mirroring connection with Shams allowed Rumi to expand a part of self that had been desiccated and to begin to process the trauma.

Creatively, Shams could be seen as the precipitant, introduced into Rumi’s erudition and talent and yielding an outflow of poetry and teaching.

It is diagnostically interesting to speculate about Rumi’s internal motivations: his whirling and its attendant drumming may have harnessed mild compulsive or anxious features. At times he reported that he was impelled to the poetry. Sleeplessness and fasting were a regular part of Sufi discipline and can be related to psychic states.

Rumi’s poetry explores at length and in great depth the wide range of human emotions. His lack of sentimentality allows the participation of others in his experience; he provides for readers the mirror that he found for himself in Shams and his later two spiritual companions. Many truths that we now recognize as psychological are found in his writing, for example, “Flee not from the suffering We (God) inflict, for wherever you find suffering, there also you find a way to the remedy.’ No one has ever fled from suffering without finding something worse in return” (*Rumi; Divan*, 1995, p. 123).

Rumi’s relationships with Shams, and to a lesser extent with Salah al-Din and Husam al-Din, were deeply engaging at the expense of other relationships and aroused fierce, even murderous jealousy in his community. For Bion, the pairing of Rumi with his spiritual companions, especially his first, Shams, may have been experienced by Rumi’s madrase community as preventing the work stage. The pairing, very fecund, was not able to contain the



heightened anxiety of the group. Some was released in Rumi's poetry, some in Shams's possible murder.

In James Fowler's Stages of Faith, Rumi is in stage 6, a Universalizer. Fowler found those at this stage to be "contagious"; Rumi's influence is still felt after eight centuries.

Psychoanalysts share with Rumi the inability to express in words the experience of the encounter, and theorists from Winnicott to Bollas to Eigen have worked to describe aspects of that experience.

### See Also

- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Julian of Norwich](#)
- ▶ [Meister Eckhart](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Sabeanism

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An ancient religion which should not be mistaken with the Sabaeism of Sabá (or Sheba), nor with the Sabianism (with “i” in English rather than with “e”) originated from the group of followers of John the Baptist who did not accept Jesus as the Christ.

### Term Confusion and History

The confusion of the three is a constant through the literature and it is primarily due to a translation mistake of the Koran by Marmaduke Pickthall – the term mentioned in the Koran refers to the religious group and it is written with the Arabic letter *sad*, and Sabá is written with *sin* and is referred to the people of Sabá, Yemen. Other cause of confusion results from the fact that the Ansar tribe of Sabá adopted the Koranic Sabeanism as a religion. A third cause can be pointed in the fact that the followers of John the Baptist, being persecuted and expelled from Palestine, have settled down in the city of Harran, where Sabeanism was the dominant religion and also, after the conquest of Alexander, the center of religious and intellectual activity. Finally, a historical cause is in the fact that the first commentarists of the Koran, the historians

and the jurists of Islam, not seeing a Sabeian, concluded that all the peoples of the world who were not Christian, Jews, or Muslims, living from India to Spain, were Sabeans.

Only in the tenth century, it was known that there were two different groups: the ones living at the area of the Euphrates – the Mandaeans, followers of John the Baptist – and the descendents of the city of Harran – the Harranians (Mehrabkhání 1995).

In this period, the Mandaeans lived among the Sabeans in Harran, probably, copying some of their cosmology, and later in Babylon, where assimilated local beliefs; posterior to the arrival of Muslims in Iraq (636 CE), they moved to the swampy lands of meridian Iraq (Cárdenas n.d.).

### Sabeanism and Other Religions

According to Mehrabkhání (1995) there are no more living believers of this religion, and the only sources referring to it are the Muslim historians of the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, the explanations presented in Bahá’í texts, their mention in Judaism – e.g., *Yeshayahu/Isaiah* 45:14 and *Iyov/Job* 1:15 – and the existence advocated in the original Islam through quotes that distinguish the followers of the book, by one hand, the Muslims and by the other, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabeans (2:62; 5:69; 22:17).

As mentioned, their geographical origin was attributed to the city of Harran (Mesopotamia), destroyed by the Mongol invasions of the twelfth

century. In the Bible (Genesis 12:4) one can read that Abram “departed out of Haran,” indicating that he could be from there. In letters, the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, by his turn, mentions that “The followers of this religion lived in Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham appeared” (1941 cit. in Research Department 1996) and “Abraham is considered as having been a follower of that Faith” (1939 cit. in Hornby 1994). And the Koran describes some beliefs of the land of Abraham as similar to those of the Sabean.

The founder of Islam Himself is seen as being of Sabeian origin, according to some descriptions of His time. About Muhammad, Ibn Jurayr (767) wrote “He is a Sabian”; ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘ibn Zayd (798) mentioned “The polytheists used to say of the prophet and his companions ‘these are the Sabians’ comparing them to them, because the Sabians who live Jaziart-al-Mawsil would say ‘La ilaha ila Allah’” (a sentence common in Islamic theology); and Rabi’ah ‘ibn ‘Ubbad (contemporaneous of Muhammad) wrote “I saw the prophet when I was a pagan. (...) I noticed a man behind him saying ‘he is a sabi.’ When I asked somebody who he was he told me he was ‘Abu Lahab, his uncle” (Gündüz 1994, pp. 18–19).

## Religious Life

Sabeans believed in the need of demiurges that had all the virtues and perfections of one God unique, incognoscible, incomprehensible and prophets capable of answering any questions and unite humankind in conciliation and peace. From unknown date of foundations and having a founder or a “Prophet (...) Whose name is unrecorded” (Effendi, 1938 cit. in Departamento de Pesquisa da Casa Universal de Justicia 2006), the learned attributed its origin to Seth – son of Adam, or Idris, Enoch – having in account that their pilgrimage was to Giza, Egypt, where the tombs of Idris and Seth would be, or even to Hermes Trismegistus. This absence of a known founder made them “replace their unknown prophet with these spirits” (Mehrabkhání 1995), in a total of seven, that govern the earthly world

and manage the worldly and the spiritual problems. Those spirits assumed a celestial body as their own physical one – Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon – having erected temples for each one of them, in Harran (possibly, in a total amount of 12).

Each of these temples, without images, possessed a different architecture. The ceremonies in these temples were under the absolute control of the sacerdotal individuals, existing a clear dependence towards them. A detailed analysis of the religious phenomenon would show an increase of need of clergy dominion as one would go back in time and a consequent apparent loss of responsibility of the believers’ personal acts. Nevertheless, in the case of Sabeanism, there was a belief that the individual’s spirit is conscious of the punishments and rewards he/she was receiving during life, indicating an individual responsibility, despite the need of constant sacerdotal presence and confirmation on the lives and thoughts of the believers: humans were perfect creations, but in potential, and through the intervention of the spirits and through the clergy, they would have their development. Thus, conscience would become the meaning organ, as defined by Frankl (2002), guiding each human being and permitting the maintaining of his/her own identity, making him/her aware of his/her objective in life. In this way, a Sabeian was someone that, guided, reflected on his attitudes, because “freedom of adopting an attitude (...) is never completed if it is not converted and transformed in freedom to assume responsibility” (Frankl 2001, p. 75). Responsibility is now an essential force in Sabeian psychology, marking as a “distinctive note of man in his humanity” (Guberman and Soto 2005, p. 122).

## Family Life

The concept of family, by its turn, was one of equality, under the law, between men and women, in a monogamist couple, making more likely to have a more congruent child education, in what couple and family therapist could call balanced, or at least, inclination to a more balanced and healthy family system. Divorce was not forbidden, but it was unadvised and only

made possible, once more, through the intervention of a superior and exterior entity: in this case a judge after the analysis of the adultery charges (only acceptable cause of divorce).

### Collective Life and Individual Life

It was a religion that defended an individual role, submissive to an external orientation: from the judge, the clergy, or the spirits. Thábit ibn-i-Qarrah (a devoted Sabean) has written that “some chosen among the people” are those who “have reached all this and have shown the way to heal the badness of the souls and have filled the world with the institutions and centers to fulfill and extend wisdom and piety.” These are the few who led the matters of the community. A first and superficial analysis could attribute the locus of control of the believers to external variables, but if such was true, the cities where they lived, as was the case of Harran, wouldn't have been the centers of cultural enterprises, where difference was accepted. In reality, respecting the guide of those who were hierarchically superior could be compared to the respect a student has towards the teacher or the relationship of a patient with his therapist: at the end, responsibility is of him/her who has, initially, lesser information and knowledge and who wants to learn and develop new capabilities. Thus the ninth and tenth centuries recorded great sages of Sabean origin, like philosophers, astronomers, physicians, and botanicals.

The existence of a class superior in knowledge and wisdom could also prevent a common individual from imposing his opinions to others: as consequence equality, tolerance to difference, and equal opportunities would be as if instituted. The very own diversity of the temples could be seen as an acceptance of difference and diversity. As a consequence, social and moral principles could only result of a social consensus.

### Individual Life

At an individual level, like other religions, there were prayers – in a total of three or five obligatory

ones, depending on the referral source. They took care of their bodies and clothing, as it would be needed for devotional moments. Such act shows a belief in some kind of relationship between the body and the spirit. They fasted three times a year – in a total of 30–46 days – believed that circumcision was against divine creation, and were forbidden to eat some sorts of meats, garlic, onion, lentils, or broad beans.

Scholars assume they believed in life after death, due to their erect and without prostration prayers for the dead during funerals, the archeological findings pointing to their burial with fingernails, and, in a specific record, the figure of a Phoenix on the tomb with the sentence “let there be the joy of a happy ending!”

They were, besides all these, owners of firmness and constancy before hardships, as reported, once more, by Thábit ibn-i-Qarrah: “when everyone was under the influence of the Cross, our parents, with the help of God, showed firmness (...). Blessed those who show constancy and accept all kinds of calamities for the cause of hanputeh, and manifest certitude and confidence.” It was perhaps under this vision that they reached vast corridors of the African world, despite their Asian origins. There are authors who believe that Sabeanism was the precursor of African religions, as the case of the Ngoni people of the Bantu ethnicity of Swaziland, as described by Cárdenas (n.d.), or even Santeria taken to the Americas, centuries later.

### See Also

- ▶ [Abraham and Isaac](#)
- ▶ [Adam and Eve](#)
- ▶ [Bahá'í Faith](#)
- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Circumcision](#)
- ▶ [Conscience](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Locus of Control](#)

- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)

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## Sacraments

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### Sacred Ritual: Public Act

From a religious perspective, a sacrament is a ritual that has been elevated to a special status because it is believed to have been instituted by

a divine figure. For Christians, for example, these sacred rituals or sacraments are believed to have been instituted by Christ. Scholars that study ritual are able to agree (mostly) on at least two points: (1) “ritual consciousness is pre-critical” and (2) “ritual is meaningful and that meaning consists of the words or ideas to which ritual acts refer” (Grimes 1993, p. 7). Moreover, ritual is a collective, or corporate, and public act, as opposed to an individual or personal and private act; ritual is also traditional as opposed to created or invented. On these points, even Freud would be likely to concur since he declared that an obsessional neurosis was a “half comic and half tragic *private* religion” (Freud 1907, p. 119). This is not to say that new rituals are not created or invented and later adopted as sacred, but it is a process that takes place over generations. The generational process points to the need for some kind of ritual authority – especially with regard to sacred rites or sacraments. Authority is ascribed to sacred texts, tradition (the generational process), ecclesiastical hierarchies, and the like. Grimes identifies several other sources of ritual authority: performance according to rules established by sacred or liturgical texts, functions that cohere with the social context and/or work to achieve explicit goals, and moral criteria which ritual subscribes to and ensures that ritual is just (Grimes 1993, p. 50). Thus, as psychologist of religion Paul Pruyser was led to conclude: “in religion, it is folly to ignore the impact of action on belief. Religious belief is embedded in religious practices; creed is grafted onto cult” (Pruyser 1974, p. 205). Though doctrine about such religious practices is in some ways inseparable from the culture and the practice it describes, there is an unavoidable “chicken-egg” question about which is prior. What then does psychoanalytic theory teach us about ritual and the sacraments in particular?

### Obsession: Private Act

Freud had a less than charitable view of religious ritual and declared that all religion was best understood as a universal obsessional neurosis

(Freud 1907/1959, p. 126). What Freud labeled as “neurotic ceremonials” are “small adjustments to particular everyday actions. . . which have always to be carried out in the same, or in a methodically varied, manner” (Freud 1907/1959, pp. 117–118). If these actions are not carried out methodically and repetitively (daily), the individual experiences intolerable anxiety. Thus, one conclusion pertaining to the function of ritual is that ritual serves as a defense mechanism, which assists in reducing an individual’s anxieties about everyday life. Freud attends particularly to the small additions to what would otherwise be “mere formalities” or exaggerations of formal procedures; these additions or exaggerations may have a “rhythmic character” which consists of pauses and repetitions. One could argue that these “neurotic ceremonials” have an almost musical quality about them. Yet even Freud distinguishes between “neurotic ceremonials” and religious rituals as we shall see.

### Neurotic Obsession or Sacred Rite?

The similarities that Freud identified between neurotic obsessions and sacred rites include the conscientiousness with which the practices are observed as well as the attention paid to details, the “qualms of conscience” or guilt that is stimulated by neglecting the rituals, and the observation or performance of such rituals in isolation from other activities in conjunction with a prohibition against the interruption or disruption of the act. The dissimilarities are equally apparent and include the “stereotyped” character of religious ritual (Freud cites prayer as an example), the corporate or communal nature of sacred ritual, and the details or dimensions of religious rituals that are imbued with significance and symbolic meaning consciously by the believer (Freud 1907/1959, p. 119). Here we can note the “pre-critical consciousness” and meaning located in words and ideas that Grimes describes. In contrast, an obsessional neurosis is acted out in private and the meaning (there is always a symbolic meaning) is not known, at least consciously, to the individual who engages in such practices. Finally, Freud contends that if “deeper insight”

into the actual mechanism of the obsession is to be attained, then one needs to examine what is at the bottom or root of the obsession which is “always *the repression of an instinctual impulse* (a component of sexual instinct)” (Freud 1907/1959, p. 124). Here then we see that an obsessional neurotic practice addresses the guilt which is related to the repression of an impulse and by analogy one can see a similarity with the function of sacraments which, at least in part, are rituals performed to cleanse the believer from sin. Thus, as Freud concludes, the origins of religion are located in the renunciation or suppression of “certain instinctual impulses” (Freud 1907/1959, p. 125). Acts of penance or contrition, which are deemed sacraments in some Christian denominations, are ritual acts engaged in to compensate for the believer’s sinful behaviors, and these acts have a pathological counterpart in obsessional neuroses. As Pruyser notes, however, this treatment of religious ritual doesn’t do justice to religious practice which leads him to render a more favorable reading of sacraments and religious rituals building upon the work of Winnicott and Erikson (Pruyser 1974, pp. 205–213). What then does this more favorable understanding of sacred ritual look like?

### Sacraments as Sacred Ritual

Pruyser takes Winnicott’s idea of a transitional object and its transitional sphere (the attention paid to and “goings on” surrounding the transitional object) as his starting place. The transitional object is a ritual or sacred object which, Pruyser argues, is the transcendent. The object is held as sacred; for example, an infant’s mother and the rest of the family realize almost intuitively that a blanket or teddy bear is precious and it acquires a “ceremonial focus” within the family. It isn’t washed with the rest of the laundry, is often carried everywhere, and is treated with awe or reverence. This transitional sphere wherein the object becomes sacred is also the source of illusion in the positive sense of the word. It is the space between “the mental image produced by the mind itself and the objective perceptual image



produced by the real world impinging upon the sensory system. Illusion is neither hallucination nor delusion, nor is it straightforward sense perception. Illusion also includes mystery” (Pruyser 1974, p. 11). Thus, the transitional object has an almost numinous – even if illusory – quality about it, while the transitional sphere is the location for mediation between inner and outer reality and in this way serves as the place from which religion emanates. The first occurrence of ritual takes place when an infant and mother exchange smiles while the infant is nursing (Erikson 1977, p. 87). How then does this lead to the development of sacred ritual and the celebration of sacraments? If we consider the Christian sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist as examples, we can see that they are in some sense religious dramas enacted in a worship context that deal primarily with notions of grace and judgment (or damnation) which invite communal participation. To be sure, the celebration of the sacraments is fraught with symbols, the multivalent meanings of which perhaps only the clergy or ecclesiastical authorities are able to explain fully, but their absence from the drama of human life would signal nothing short of a person with a negative identity (Erikson) or an individual who has never learned to play (Winnicott).

### See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Compulsion](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Instinct](#)
- ▶ [Pruyser, Paul](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)
- ▶ [Transitional Object](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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### Sacred King

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The Sacred King is a unification of the concepts of the innate self-ruler; the human being as a potentiality expressed in competence, command, resourcefulness, and self-control. This is united with the mystical, religious, or psychic self, as the leader of the unearthly aspects of the human. The Sacred King joins the office of the secular King and the holy Priest into a single whole person, one who acts with authority and knowledge in the inner and outer realms of human experience. Sacred King seeks to achieve homeostasis but at an idealized level. He (the Sacred King is a “masculine” aspect – it is understood that archetypes are manifested in both genders and sexes) is the bridge between extremes of human social and personal/religious experience. In Eastern metaphysics, the human is conceived of as a bridge between “heaven” and “earth,” whereas in Western metaphysics, humanity is seen as possessing, or linking, the extremes of the “upper” or celestial worlds and the “lower” or demonic worlds – heaven:hell, human world: faery/other world, and Arcadia: Hades.

Mythic correspondences include, as earthly beings, Gilgamesh, Rama, and The Fisher King. Some deities representing Sacred Kingship are Marduk, Prajapati, and Osiris.

As Gilgamesh, the earliest recorded Sacred King in history, the Sacred King represents the culmination of the journey of the soul, from realization of potential to the limits of the physical self, to the unification of desires, and will to achieve the end of the soul's journey. Gilgamesh is the Sacred Warrior, and the Wanderer, who has achieved success in the quest for selfhood and self-mastery. Gilgamesh also shows the power of the Sacred King as living and ruling in two worlds: the land of the living and the land of the divine, be they ancestors or gods. Working with the high priestess/goddess of the land, the Sacred King is the judge and upholder of sacred law, and by his decree secular and sacred law are joined. The goddess and the land are forces with which the Sacred King must remain in balance with, to stay healthy and potent.

Rama is the lawgiver: he who arbitrates the sacred law and also keeps the land fertile through fairness and justice. Rama is the Sacred King as universal or social conscience, and the self as a social force; both a binder and administrator. As Rama, the Sacred King represents the idea of latent sovereignty within the self, or self-rulership, as well as the ability to empower, and rule, others. This aspect of the Sacred King is the fulfillment of the social contract between the individual and humanity: as a self-realized human being, the Sacred King performs his duties of office and is in turn sustained within the interconnected energy exchange between himself, the land, and society on one hand and between himself, the goddess of the land, and the collective spirit of the people on the other. Thus the Sacred King fulfills the "Divine Mandate" of Eastern metaphysics as a bridge between heaven and earth. By mastering the Shadow within himself, he is also the bridge between the "lower" or demonic and "upper" or angelic realms as well.

The Fisher King is the wounded self, seeking reconciliation and healing: the Sacred King as victim and as self-immobilized. Just as the

empowered Sacred King represents the self-realized self-ruler, the Fisher King represents the powers of the King: healing, union, justice, rulership, and wisdom, all rendered impotent by the innate power of the King turned against the self. In this aspect of the archetype, the illness of the self is a public role, affecting the health of the entire network he is connected to: the land, and its divinity, and the people, and their collective spirit.

For the Fisher King, all relationships that the Sacred King needs to fulfill are out of balance, rendering the King unable to perform his functions and unable to be healed until the imbalances both within and without the self are healed. The Fisher King's illness is reflected in the land, and so the land ceases to nourish the King, or his people. Also, the land no longer nourishes the social network of the people, and so they cannot heal the King: The Fisher King is sick in body, social function, and psyche.

The Sacred King has a strong messianic component: like the Fisher King, Rama and Osiris are embodiments of the Returning King which involves a period away from society and family (through illness, a personal quest or exile, death) and then a return to liberate and rule again.

Sexual potency is an important aspect of the Sacred King; all Sacred Kings excel in combat, and usually possess superlative weapons; when the King's power is lessened, there is a corresponding lessening, or even breakage, of the potent weapon, and vice versa. The libido is a driving force for the Sacred King; the erotic interplay between Gilgamesh and Inanna, the love affair of Rama/Radhi, and the castration and rejuvenation of Osiris by Isis illustrate the necessity of the male/female dynamism not only as a catalyst but also as a means of attainment.

When the role of the Sacred King is fulfilled, he is the idealized ruler of the inner self. For the individual, the Sacred King is a realization of Maslow's self-actualized person. In all his aspects, the Sacred King reflects an integration of the private self and the social self; the King is ruler and hero, healer and warrior. In all instances, the Sacred King is a responsible participant (and even initiator) of social action, for benefit or for ill.

## See Also

- ▶ [Angels](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Conscience](#)
- ▶ [Demons](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Eros](#)
- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Libido](#)
- ▶ [Liminality](#)
- ▶ [Love](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)

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## Sacred Mountains

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I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains  
(Psalm 121).

Mountains with their cloudy, snowy beauty are sacred spaces. Can you feel it? They are Mother Earth in her heaviness reaching toward the sky, dusted with crystals from heaven. We are drawn to their numinous, heavy, ancient magnificence; they lift our souls to the sky. Gods seem to inhabit their caves, peaks, and volcanoes. They are wonderful spectacles to view and challenging

for tiny humans to climb. People revere them so much that they build artificial mountains, like Hindu temples, Babylonian ziggurats, and Egyptian and Mexican pyramids. Spires pointing heavenward on churches, mosques, and temples are like mini-mountains. Skyward mountainous mysteries evoke many feelings – humility, awe, fear, and challenge for the ego – the aura of the Divine Self. Being closer to the sky evokes a transcendent hierophany, the presence of the sacred (Eliade 1958, p. 101).

## Europe

Mount Olympus in Greece was the home of Zeus, who threw down thunder and lightning, frightening Greeks with his cosmic power. Delphi is Apollo's sanctuary high on Mt. Parnassus, with several temples and a cave where the ancient Delphic Oracle gave her treasured mysterious advice. Mount Ida, near the site of the Trojan War, was the home of the Phrygian goddess Cybele, Earth Mother. In Crete, Mt. Ida is the home of the goddess Rhea, who gave birth to Zeus in a cave. The Parthenon, Athena's temple, rises on the Acropolis like a sparkling crown on Athens. These goddesses gave women images of the divine to identify with.

Mt. Athos is a rugged Greek mountain protruding into the Aegean Sea, home of Greek Orthodox monasteries. The celibate monks pray, study, and paint icons (*Mt. Athos*). Mont Saint-Michel off the coast of Normandy, France, was a sacred mountain for Celtic worship of Belenus, Roman worship of Jove. Christian hermits lived there until a bishop had a vision of a shrine atop the rock in 708, and so the great cathedral/castle was built, still busy with pilgrims today.

In Israel, Moses climbed sacred Mt. Sinai, saw and heard God in the burning bush, where he reverently received the sacred Ten Commandments, initiating the holy Hebrew Law. Pilgrims still climb Sinai.

Residents of the snowy Alps are enchanted by its rugged mountains – including 82–4,000-m-high summits popular for hiking and skiing. The Swiss peaks were celebrated by Mary Martin's inspiring songs in the 1965 film *The Sound of Music* such as

**Sacred Mountains,**

**Fig. 1** Khor Virap monastery in Armenia with Mount Ararat in the background. Photograph owner: Andrew Behesnilian. This figure is licensed under the creative commons attribution 2.0 generic license. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kohrvirab.jpg>



“Climb Ev’ry Mountain” and “The hills are alive with the sound of music.” Here mountains symbolize difficult barriers in life to cross to freedom. Archaic Alpine traditions include the legend of the ancient Germanic goddess Perchta (Bertha), “the bright one,” a guardian of the mountain beasts who may appear as beautiful or ugly. She was white robed with a horned mask and one large foot. She was angered if people forgot to feed her and would slit people’s bellies open and stuff them with straw (*Perchta*). She expresses the beauty and danger of the Alpine regions.

Mt. Croagh Patrick in Ireland rises 2,510 ft above County Mayo, with prehistoric shrine foundations. It was the residence of the Celtic deity Crom Dubh. St. Patrick visited the mountain in 441 and banished the ancient religions, symbolized as snakes and dragons. Today believers climb the pilgrimage trail to the peak, perhaps to shed their own such shadowy feelings (Gray 2007). In Turkey, snowy Mt. Ararat, a dormant volcano (16,946 ft.), on whose peak the legendary Noah landed his mythic ark, offers an image of divine power lifting up and saving survivors of disasters (Fig. 1). Similar stories are told by Native Americans about Mt. Rainier in Washington state and Mt. Shasta in California (Bernbaum 1997, pp. 148–150).

**Asia**

In China there are many sacred mountains (*Shan*). The remarkable Zhangjiajie Park in Hunan is where many tall, very narrow mountains rise like pillars in the cloudy mist. (These were an inspiration for the mythic film *Avatar*’s scenes of the indigenous people flying dragons off floating rocks.) The Five Great Mountains are the mythic locations of the creator god Pangu’s body. These have been destinations for emperors to go for worship and sacrifice. Pilgrims climb up and offer incense, chant, and sacrifice imitation money, praying for children. The five are in the east, *Tai Shan* (Tranquil Mountain), which has a grand stairway; the west, *Hua Shan* (Splendid Mountain); the south, *Heng Shan (Hunan)* (Balancing Mountain); the north, *Heng Shan (Shanxi)* (Permanent Mountain); and the center, *Song Shan* (Lofty Mountain).

The four Buddhist sacred mountains are *Wutai Shan* (Five-Platform Mountain), *Emei Shan* (Lofty Mountain), *Jiuhua Shan* (Nine Glories Mountain), and *Putuo Shan*, an island dedicated to the goddess *Guanyin*.

The four Taoist sacred mountains are *Wudang Shan*, *Longhu Shan* (Dragon Tiger Mountain), *Qiyun Shan* (As High as the Clouds),

and *Qingcheng Shan* (Secluded Place) (*Sacred Mountains of China*).

Japan has many sacred mountains. Notable is Mt. Fuji, meaning “everlasting life.” Revered Fuji-san is Japan’s national symbol and highest mountain, rising 12,388 ft. It has several Shinto temples. Fuji is seen as the embodiment of the Earth Spirit. Pilgrimages to the top attract about 40,000 people a year. Ancient myths tell of its divine origins, spiritual powers, and resident deities, such as the Shinto Goddess of Flowering Trees and the Buddha of All-Illuminating Wisdom (Gray 2007).

Hindus and Buddhists feel in the Himalayas the home of gods and immortals. The Himalayas are the huge, magnificent home of Mt. Everest (Chomolungma or Goddess Mother of the World), the highest mountain on the Earth (29,029 ft.) that has severely challenged many climbers. The local clan of Sherpas guides those who dare to climb to the top of the world, as close to the heavens as you can walk. Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the first to reach this highest peak in the world in 1952. It was seen as a great conquest by Westerners. But Asians see more sacred presence, than a place to be conquered, in these highest peaks.

The Buddhist Sherpas envision the protector goddess of Mt. Everest, Miyolangsangma, who guides them (Norgay 2001). But, to those who live nearby, the most sacred Himalayans are not to be climbed. Mt. Kailash in Tibet (22,028 ft.), near the source of major rivers to the south, is seen as a holy mountain, the mythical axis of the universe, the hill where the invisible Mt. Meru (Sumeru to Buddhists) rises above Kailash thousands of miles. It is the glistening crystal pagoda of Brahma (Indra for Buddhists). These high mountains are seen by Asian believers as holy places to experience ultimate reality. Images of the center of the world, the axis mundi, are places for theophanies – presence of the divine (Eliade 1958, p. 373). Pilgrims do prostrations all around Mt. Kailas, like the pagoda of a deity, over boulders, streams, and glaciers, seeking to feel the presence of supreme absolute. Divine Shiva is envisioned sitting serenely on its peak.

When needed below, Shiva married the lovely goddess Parvati and she had Karttikeya, who defeated demons and liberated the world from evil (Bernbaum 1997).

On the island of Bali, Indonesia, are four sacred mountains, the homes of the gods, the largest being Mt. Agung (10,308 ft.), their supreme manifestation of Shiva. The religion of the Balinese is a syncretic blend of Hinduism, Buddhism, Malay ancestor cults, and animistic magic.

In Australia the dramatic *Uluru*, or Ayers Rock, is the beautiful red mountain rising 1,135 ft from a flat plain. It is seen as the solidified remains of the Aborigine Dreamtime Ancestors who roamed the Earth at creation. Aborigines revere this amazing stone greatly, for it connects them psychologically to their archetypal Divine Self (Gray 2007).

In Africa, Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, where the Chagga people live, they call the 17,000-ft-high mountain simply Kibo, which means highly revered, embodying eternity (Bernbaum 1997).

## Americas

The highest mountain in Hawaii is Mauna Kea, 13,796 ft. above sea level. It is about 2 million years old. All of Hawaii’s peaks are sacred, but this is one of the most sacred. In ancient times, only high-ranking tribal chiefs were allowed to ascend its peaks.

Pilgrims climb mountains to see the big picture that provokes spiritual reflections. When you can see over 50 miles away, psychologically you are flying high with feet on the ground. Native Americans such as Black Elk climbed Harney Peak in the sacred Black Hills for vision quests. Devil’s Tower in Wyoming (5,112 ft.) is the white culture’s name for the surviving core of a volcano sacred to Native Americans, who call it “Bear Lodge,” after a legend of girls being chased by bears. They were lifted high to safety when the land raised them high up, and the bears trying to climb up left their claw marks. The spirits of the Earth protect the natives from



attackers. Pieces of these cylindrical volcanic rocks have slowly fallen down to the base. I asked a ranger how long the most recent fallen one had been there, and he said, “Oh, not long, just 10,000 years.” See mountains, think long geological time spans, and feel small. The nearby “other horn of the buffalo” toward the sunrise is Bear Butte, a mountain sacred to the Lakota and Southern Cheyenne, where the Cheyenne received their four sacred arrows and teachings from the Creator (Page 2001).

In northern California is Mt. Shasta, a 14,000-ft. snowy peak sacred to indigenous people as far away as Peru. In southern Montana, the Crazy Mountains are rugged peaks sacred to the Crow nation, for vision quests and fasting. The Blackfeet people revere the Badger and Two Medicine peaks in northern Montana, where a legend tells of Scarface, who was ridiculed by the boys for his scar. So he took a journey across these mountains to the sunrise, in order to marry a chief’s daughter. When, after many trials, he faced the sun, his scar was removed, and he returned to marry the girl and was renamed Young Morning Star. He brought to his people the Sundance and rises daily with the Morning Star. His legend links the psychology of painful soul scars and romance, with the religion of heroic quests and stars. North of Flagstaff, Arizona, rise the 12,000-ft. San Francisco Peaks, where the Hopi people garden in the desert valleys and value every drop of rain channeled to their gardens. In the Hopi villages, the spirit *kachinas* rehearse the rain-making powers of their mountain homes, dancing in Hopi villages (Page 2001).

Yosemite Valley, in California’s Sierra Nevada range, is a magnificent valley surrounded by huge treeless peaks and high waterfalls that inspire awesome wonder. John Muir said “no temple made with hands can compare with Yosemite” (Bernbaum 1997, p. 144). The entire valley feels sacred. Once I hiked to a high bald peak there at dusk to join star watchers and peek toward the infinite through their telescopes; I saw Saturn’s rings – that felt cosmic. Different tribes of indigenous people lived there for thousands of years, such as the Miwok and the Paiutes. The Miwok called the valley the “Ah-wah-nee.”

Their word for grizzly bear was “uzumati,” which became “Yosemite” (Barrett and Gifford 1990).

The ancient Incas felt many spirits in the Andes mountains, the longest continental mountain range in the world, 4,300 miles long. They climbed up the Andes to build Peru’s sacred mountaintop *Machu Picchu* (7,970 ft) during the reign of their ruler Pachacuti (1438–1472). Offerings (*capacocha*) were given at shrines on Incan lands, to mark events in the emperor’s life – illness, war, death, and birth of a son. Special offerings were given to the Sun God Inti to assure plant growth; to Illapa, the weather god, to assure rain; and the Creator Viracocha. But they were terrified by some mountain spirits. Most gruesome, atop Mt. Llullaillaco, a volcano in Chile (22,500 ft), were found the frozen sacrificed mummified bodies of drunken children, left to freeze to death, to pacify the angry mountain gods. This indicates great fear of the stormy mountains, of epidemics, and of natural calamities such as volcanic eruptions. These gods of the Incas were thought to need sacrifices, sometimes the lives of innocent children, to pacify them (Reinhard and Ceruti 2010, pp. 121–22). This horrible practice of sacrifice – we give to you gods so you will give peace to us – unfortunately, has been practiced around the world for similar reasons. But this has been forbidden by the world’s major religions today.

The US Appalachian Mountain range extends from Canada to Alabama. It holds the Appalachian Trail, the Smoky Mountains, and the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Eastern Band of the Cherokee nation lives in North Carolina mountains. Their traditional “Great Spirit” presides over all things and created nourishing Mother Earth and her spirits, Oldest Wind, Lucky Hunter, and Corn Mother, for which they are grateful (*Eastern band of Cherokee*).

Mountains increase self-knowledge, even if partly unconscious, through feelings of massive beauty, snowy awe, vast heights, humility, and connections to mysterious sacredness. “Do you wish to see the transfigured Christ? Ascend that mountain and learn to know yourself” (Jung 1979, Vol. 9, Pt. 1, para 403n).



## See Also

- ▶ Ecotherapy
- ▶ Guanyin
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ María Lionza
- ▶ Participation Mystique
- ▶ Participatory Spirituality
- ▶ Soul in the World
- ▶ Spiritual Ecology

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## Sacred Prostitution

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Religion has had at best an ambivalent attitude toward human sexuality. All religions recognize the value of sexual union between a man and a woman in a mutually committed relationship and recognized through some sort of rite of marriage. Beyond that type of sexuality, most other forms have received more or less harsh condemnations and proscriptions. Thus, sacred prostitution, or providing sexual acts to strangers as a religious act or in exchange for a donation to a religious organization, has had very limited acceptance and much more condemnation.

Where we have record of sacred prostitution, it has occurred in association with the older pagan fertility goddesses of the ancient Near East. Since most of the commentators, especially those found in the Bible, have condemned the practice, the accuracy of their description of the practice should be taken with some skepticism. In the Hebrew Bible (*Tanach*), the term for a servant of a temple who would provide a sexual act to a supplicant of the goddess is “K’desh” (male) or “K’deshah” (female), with the plural being “K’deshim” and “K’deshot” respectively, and the literal root meaning is closer to “holy one” without any sexual connotation. “Hierodule” is the term in English for this role as translated from ancient works in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin. The Greek historian Herodotus (1, 199) noted that in Mesopotamia it was required that a woman offers herself sexually at the temple of Mylitta once in her lifetime.

Budin (2008) has taken the position, based on philological analysis of the evidence, that sacred prostitution did not exist. As noted above some of the terminology does not imply sexual action, but has come to be associated with a sexual meaning only through a tradition she claims is fatally flawed. The strong moralistic tone found in the

Jewish and Christian writers who are the source of much of the evidence lends weight to her criticism. She also rightfully points out that prostitution was well known in most of those civilizations without any religious overtones, and references to sacred prostitutes don't usually use the terms for regular sex workers. Thus, one is left with much doubt as to whether or what extent the practice existed. It is probable that there were some associations of ritual sexual activity with religious institutions. There is evidence for the existence of "hieros gamos" (Gk.), a ritual sex act between a king or high priest and a high priestess in ancient Mesopotamia. But Budin's argument is that the practice was not widespread or institutionalized. Greenberg (1988) focuses more on the male hierodule, particularly the "galli" (Lat.), the temple servants of the Phrygian deity Cybele. The cult of Cybele came to Rome and became an important one during the period of the empire. These men castrated themselves as part of their initiation into their priestly role and donned female garb. There is some evidence that they subsequently were available for sexual liaisons with males, though our most detailed account (Apulius, second century CE/1962) is a satirical work of fiction. Herodotus' note cited earlier is both the earliest reference and the least burdened by judgment as to the practice he describes, so it is harder to dismiss. Nevertheless, the evidence is scanty and imprecise, and the final word should be that controversy surrounding the practice makes firm conclusions difficult.

## See Also

- ▶ [Rites of Passage](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)

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## Sacred Space

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### Classic Views of Sacred Space

Whether a holy city, a marked tree or river, a constructed cathedral or mosque, a cemetery, or a roadside shrine, sacred spaces anchor the structures of most world religions. Conceptually, sacred space entails a break with the rest of space. When people declare a place "sacred," it implicitly becomes separate and different from other spaces, unique unto itself. Yet numerous questions complicate the universally acknowledged, seemingly straightforward concept. Who or what renders a space "sacred"? Through what process? For what duration? Under what terms? And ultimately, what does it mean for a physical space to be "sacred"? The theories of two classic scholars of religion, Mircea Eliade and Gerardus van der Leeuw, are widely referenced in determining answers to these questions.

Gerardus van der Leeuw, an early twentieth-century Dutch historian and philosopher of religion, set forth some of the definitive aspects of sacred space in his book *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (1986). His qualifications of sacred space begin in the specification and ownership of space. He stipulates that a *place* is a part of the more abstract, expansive concept of space. That place becomes a *position* when man selects it, frees it, and declares it powerful. This notion's ambiguity lies in its contradiction: the space emerges as sacred in the same moment that man chooses and empowers it. A *position* becomes sacred "by the effects of power repeating themselves there, or being repeated by man." Man discovers and orients a sacred space and also

maintains its character through ritual acts. Evocative of the *numen* – the sense of awe, fear, and dread of divine power – sacred space involves the continuously active and activating process of man’s ritual in a set place.

Van der Leeuw also suggests that sacred space provides an eternal home for people, albeit not merely as a residence or a locus for communal activity. A model of the universe, sacred space offers people access to the power of the divine. In fact, if a temple becomes only a meeting place, it loses its “cosmic-sacred character”; more emphatically, “it is no longer believed that anything really happens there.” Sacred space, for Van der Leeuw, requires a burgeoning power between the divine and humankind through a *position* in space. And yet, “the real sanctuary is man.” Van der Leeuw conceives of true sacred space as within the self but emerging materially through man’s selection and consecration of *positions* in space.

Eliade echoes and elaborates upon Van der Leeuw’s declarations about sacred space in his renowned work *The Sacred and the Profane* (1987). According to Eliade, religious man experiences space as non-homogenous; he recognizes some locations as distinctive from others, allowing for the transcendence of the profane world. Each sacred space implies a *hierophany*, “an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory for the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different.” Alternately put, the sacred emerges, or erupts, at a specific site, and man’s role in the process is to identify, occupy, and utilize the space and its sacrality. By establishing the space, he found a world, mimicking the divine work of creating the universe. Eliade’s definition regards sacred space as a mirror of the cosmos, with the *axis mundi* at its center. Such a unique position stations sacred space as a bridge between the sacred and the profane, linking man’s everyday actions with the work of the gods and thus transforming them into sacred acts. The sacrality of the emergent space is reiterated through the dynamic interactions between man, place, and man’s rituals in the place. While the substantive value of a space compels man’s sacred experience and

rituals, the rituals continually claim and consecrate the place.

Both concepts of sacred space may be understood as a two-step process of settlement and sanctification. Establishing a sense of order for religious man, the construction of sacred space also signifies individual experiences of personal connections to the divine. Religious man separates himself from others, sets aside a particular space and time for transcendence, and uses the sacred space as a source of closeness and a mode of communication with the gods: “He not only cosmicizes chaos but also sanctifies his little cosmos” (Eliade 1987). Religious man’s sacred space symbolically protects him from the unknown and permits him to live in the universal, not merely intellectually but also experientially. Fundamentally, considerations of sacred space require analysis of living, sensational bodies: space and humans are interwoven and mutually constitutive.

## Modern Views of Sacred Space

Modern perspectives on sacred space continue to emphasize the direct and reciprocal relationship between human beings and sacred places. Most recent scholarship builds on the work of twenty-first-century historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith. He argues against Eliade’s notion that humans discover or recognize sacred spaces introduced into the world by supernatural beings (Smith 1993). Criticizing Eliade’s implicit theologizing of territory, he contends that humans construct “worlds of meaning” and that territory is a tool for this work. He posits that people use map and territory to insert meaning into their lives, and in so doing, “human beings are not placed, . . .(but) bring place into being.” Smith argues that place is the byproduct of active and deliberate intentions, rather than the “passive receptacle” of human thought or the simple terrain for human proceedings. Navigating and reconfiguring myths and rituals about space, people create and utilize these maps to build meaning and create order in sacred spaces.

Other contemporary scholars of sacred space similarly focus on the sacred as the boundary that

structures the relationship between humans and territory (Gill 1998; Knott 2005; Kong 2003). Unquestionably, location and human embodiment are contingent upon one another, meaning that sacred space emerges from human experiences and actions in a particular socio-spatial location. A subsequent academic challenge regarding sacred space is how to examine the intricacies of sacred space as it is *lived*, rather than merely as it is *conceived*. Because people and space interact in specific, localized ways, scholars must ground their studies of sacred space in each individual place to understand the ways in which people experience sacred space on global, national, regional, local, and individual bodily scales. Such a phenomenological and holistic approach will move toward comprehending the varied processes of conquest, appropriation, ownership, boundary making, exclusion, and exile implicit in the creation of sacred space.

### Kinds of Sacred Space

Geographer of religions Chris Park rightly wrote, “Sacred space to most religions means real places on the ground” (Park 1994). For Eliade, any physical place can be a sacred space. Any place possesses the capacity to be a perfect image of the cosmos, if people discover it to be so. “An entire country (e.g. Palestine), a city (Jerusalem), a sanctuary (the Temple in Jerusalem), all equally well present an *imago mundi*” (Eliade 1987). Religious adherents declare as sacred anything from the natural environment to man-made institutions, from large cities to small villages and towns, from historic sites to burial spots, and from international places of worship to the individual home.

Religious ecology brands the natural world as infused with the divinity of the supernatural beings that created it. Eliade offered that the gods manifested modes of the sacred in the structures of the world and in natural phenomena. In Hinduism, for example, water is sacred, and India’s seven rivers – the Ganges, Yamuna, Saraswati, Narmada, Indus, Cauvery, and Godavari – are considered holy. Each is related to a different god, and numerous rites and rituals are performed at their banks (Fig. 1).



**Sacred Space, Fig. 1** Ganges River, India (Photograph by author)

Some traditions deem mountains sacred. Mount Olympus is thought of as the home of the ancient Greek gods, and people revere Mount Tate, Mount Haku, and Mount Fuji as the Three Holy Mountains of Japan. Practitioners of Shinto consider Mount Fuji the embodiment of all nature, possibly even in possession of a soul, while Buddhists venerate it as a gateway to another world. Other natural sacred spaces may encircle a sacred object. For instance, Muslims worldwide perform a *hajj* (pilgrimage) to the Black Stone of the eastern corner of the Ka’bah in Mecca, a city made sacred by the presence of the Grand Mosque, which encloses the Ka’bah and its stone. Other religions invoke practices that organize natural space and imbue it with sacrality. The Chinese practice of *feng shui* arranges the natural and man-made worlds in accordance with heavenly principles to maximize personal *qi*, or power. Similarly, Korean Buddhist geomancy interprets and orchestrates topography to create sacred spaces.

**Sacred Space,**

**Fig. 2** Western Wall,  
Jerusalem, Israel  
(Photograph by author)



Decreasing in scale from the natural to the built environment, entire cities or villages may be considered sacred spaces. As mentioned, Muslims regard the city of Mecca as sacred for its possession of the Ka'bah. Mormons consider sacred the Salt Lake Basin of Utah, with Salt Lake City designated the City of Zion. Like most Mormon villages, Salt Lake City is mapped to promote subsistence agriculture and self-sustainability, in accordance with the Mormon ideal of partnering with God to redeem the earth in daily living. The three Abrahamic traditions acknowledge the entire city of Jerusalem as sacred space, in part due to the numerous religious events that transpired there but also as “the world’s central point,” a typical example of sacred space (van der Leeuw 1986).

The most frequently acknowledged form of sacred space is the man-made institution for prayer. Explicitly constructed places of worship, such as temples, cathedrals, synagogues, and mosques, vary in architecture and are highly culturally dependent. Hindus seek out spaces close to water, which they believe to be holy. Aiming for minimal landscape disruption and maximal landscape mirroring, they construct their temples to resemble mountain peaks and the rooms inside to evoke caverns. Hindu sacred space often encompasses all land surrounding a temple, so that the temple lies at the center of the town

crossroads. Types of Buddhist temples vary according to sect. Mikkyo temples are often found in the hills, surrounded by forests, while Jodokyo temples lie at the center of a pond, as though a separate albeit accessible Paradise of Enlightenment. Zen temples tend to be located on level ground and usually involve a simple garden that implies nothingness and solitude and is meant to prompt meditation. Churches and synagogues tend to be constructed in accordance with population growth and demand, often serving as the nuclei for their communities. Internally, all synagogues are oriented so that people face toward the Holy Ark containing the Torah scrolls and toward the Western Wall in Jerusalem. Similarly, all mosques compel attendees to face Mecca. In these cases, people mentally reside in their sacred cities despite their physical presence elsewhere in the world (Fig. 2).

Finally, sites of personal importance may be recognized as sacred spaces. Cemeteries memorialize individuals and are revered for the sacrality of the lives that were. Alternatively, acts like cremation re-sacralize certain spaces once they contain human remains, as with holy rivers like the Ganges, in India. The Chinese align their graves spatially according to the laws of *feng shui* to ensure the continued balance and harmony of the dead. Yard and road shrines in Catholic and Eastern Orthodox areas craft



everyday spaces evocative of the sacred, while domestic altars found in Hindu or Mexican Catholic homes offer a personal relationship between family and deity. Such examples demonstrate that personal space, in any form, may be sacred space.

## Challenges of Sacred Space

An exploration of sacred spaces would not be complete without a brief acknowledgement of the problems inherent in sacred space. One conflict over sacred space is the question of its shared or exclusive nature. Religious violence has arisen numerous times as a result of disputes over sacred territory; Jerusalem (Israel) and Ayodhya (India) are both sites claimed by at least two religious traditions that clash over their asserted control over the meaning and use of the land (Friedland and Hecht 1998). Another problem of sacred space is the capacity for its appropriation. In the case of the Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming, Native Americans struggle to protect sacred nature from its use as public land by recreational climbers (Freedman 2007). Perhaps most problematically, the sacrality of a space implicitly denotes the distinct possibility of the space's desecration. Often, the importance of a sacred space may also be its downfall; flocks of visitors cause damage to the very places that they come to see and experience. Government and religious leaders express concerns about increasing pollution in the holy city of Varanasi, India, whereas Mecca faces the modern forces of capitalism, which are changing the face of the holiest city of Islam. While the definition of sacred space may remain contestable, variable, and changeable, it is clear that sacred spaces are undeniable sources of conflict, concern, and volatility.

## See Also

- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)
- ▶ [City](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Hierophany](#)

- ▶ [Jerusalem](#)
- ▶ [Ka'bah](#)
- ▶ [Mecca](#)
- ▶ [Mountain, The](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Revelation](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Time](#)
- ▶ [Temenos](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)
- ▶ [Western Wall](#)

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## Sacred Time

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In profane understandings, time appears to be a constant linear sequence of moments, but all



religious and spiritual traditions conceive of a “sacred time” that is outside of or other than this sequence. Commonly, this sacred time is said to be an “eternal now” that is located “between” (or above or beyond) the moments that make up linear time. Time is an agent of death, corruption, and the finite; spiritual traditions seek a realm that is ever living, incorruptible, and infinite and therefore not subject to the flux of time.

The psychological perception of time is inconstant. Time will often seem to either “fly” or “drag,” and it seems to pass slower to children and pass faster as we age. Similarly, there are cultural differences in the perception of time. The nomad, for instance, has more of a spatial than a temporal consciousness. For the nomad the starry sky is a map, while for the sedentary city dweller, it is a clock. The decline of nomadic life and the arrival of sedentary life (recorded in such myths as the Biblical story of Cain and Abel) is therefore the passage from the sacred to the profane experience of time.

One of the most primordial accounts of sacred time comes from the Australian Aborigines who describe a period called the “Dreaming” or the “Dreamtime.” While this is usually conceived of as a time long before memory, it is also understood to be ever-present and can be accessed at any time by way of religious rites. This same convention is a feature of most religious systems; the liturgical or theurgical elements of the system allow a symbolic relocation from profane to sacred time, which is at the same time a return to the formative and creative period or the point of a sacred theophany (intervention of God into time).

The most conspicuous instance of this in the Semitic religions is the Jewish Sabbath which is celebrated every 7 days (Saturday) and is a return to the Divine repose after the 6 days of creation. The reiteration of sacred events is the guiding principle of sacred calendars and calendrical systems. The annual reiteration of events is not merely commemorative; it is a symbolic return to sacred time. Often, intercalary days and festivals are regarded as especially sacred because they represent “time outside of (normal) time.”

In Judeo-Christian mythology, the period that Adam and Eve spend in the Garden of Eden is the paradigmatic instance of sacred time. Sacred time is Edenic and before the Fall. But as historical religions, Judaism and Christianity both propose paradoxical instances of sacred periods that are within the fold of history. In Judaism, the period during which the Israelites wandered in the wilderness in a sacred time is “out of history” even though it is understood to have been a historical event. In Christianity, the Last Supper was a historical event at a definite time and place, but it also dwells in sacred time since it can be accessed by the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Similarly, the crucifixion was a historical event, but in Christian theology, it is also an eternal event; the sacrifice of Christ is now and ongoing. In shamanism and in shamanic practices that persist in later religions – such as fasting, chanting, trances, dancing, autohypnosis, or the sacramental use of drugs – there is an attempt to have direct and immediate experience of “time beyond time” and to induce a psychological state of timelessness that is not merely symbolic. In folktales, popular stories, or the so-called fairy tales, sacred time is signaled by the convention “once upon a time” which refers to a mythical time that is no time in particular.

Sacred time is pristine and archetypal; it is the time when the shape and patterns of life and the world were first established. It is therefore mythological and nonhistorical, history then being defined as a decline, a deviation from, or the passing away of sacred time. Plato, giving a very traditional account of it, says in his *Timaeus* that “time is a moving image of eternity” and that the forms or archetypes of the world reside in eternity, their temporal (and corruptible) manifestations being “images” or copies of the atemporal originals. In his dialog called *The Statesman*, Plato also gives an account of the idea of “eternal return,” namely, the notion that historical time is circular (rather than linear) and that all events in time are repeated endlessly. This idea is surprisingly widespread, as Mircea Eliade has documented, and follows from the idea that, ultimately, the movement of time is an illusion

and that only motionless eternity (sacred time) is real. The myth often takes the form of an era in which the world moves in one direction (with the sun rising in the east and setting in the west) followed by a catastrophic reversal of direction at end of this era (after which the sun rises in the west and sets in the east). Time, so to speak, winds up and then winds down, although in fact both movements cancel each other out and there is really no movement at the level of the principle. The religious mystic or the spiritual seeker aspires to this principle (which is spatially represented as the center or axis of a wheel) and therefore to freedom from the cycles and vicissitudes of time and decay. In the Eastern religions, this idea is expressed in terms of cycles of birth and rebirth, and the timeless realm is attained through liberation from these cycles. In modern thought, the idea of “eternal return” was taken up by the German philosopher Nietzsche who presented it as a nihilistic denial of the liberal ideal of progress.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Nietzsche, Friedrich: Religion and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Plato and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Atheism](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)

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## Sacrifice

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The concept of sacrifice was once so important in the study of religions that whole developmental taxonomies were created to define them from this standpoint (Frazer 1890; Hubert and Mauss 1981). We can still see it as one of the least understood but central ideas in religion, in dynamic psychology, and in common parlance.

Sacrifice, like many words that have crossed from ritual to general usage, can be defined in two general ways. On one hand, it is giving up something for something else, and on the other, it is giving up something precious (anything from grain to animals to goods to humans) to a deity, usually in supplication. For the former, one might wonder how it is different from the concept of simple exchange – and indeed, it seems to be hardly differentiated especially when applying models of social value systems which depend on both cohesion and coercion. For example, a mother is said to sacrifice for her children or a soldier for his or her country, and yet it is hard to see how it was not a matter of job description in the first place. That is, it seems to be more a choice in terms of both having children and parenting style, except that socially the value of parenting is higher than that of self-care. The same goes for military sacrifice (the so-called ultimate sacrifice) and other things that benefit a given social group. Both of these examples show that the dynamic involved is that of giving up something personal for something collective or interpersonal (and something that often needs to remain unexamined to retain its influence).

For all of these examples, critical theory in the style of Slavoj Žižek indicates that a form of ideology is active. That is, a master signifier embedded in the language of a particular social group designates collective goals as more valuable than the pursuit of personal consciousness or desire. In this sense, the master signifier acts to

justify a regrettable life – if one has sacrificed something major for something else of less tangible import, one could hardly be expected to have excelled as a person. Of course, this dynamic can be reversed so that, for example, with sports figures, one might be either negatively or positively assessed in terms of sacrifice made for some great achievement. In either case, we can see the caustic lens of social reprobation at work. To the extent that ideological cultures can express a sentimentality toward sacrifice, we have to remember Jung's words that "sentimentality is the sister of brutality" (Jung, 385).

Before moving to the specifically religious concept of sacrifice, let us notice that the word itself is derived from the Latin words *sacre*, or sacred, and *facere*, the verb meaning to make. So sacrifice is that act which makes something (or someone) sacred. The terrain of the sacred includes a range of experience from sublime experience of union to terrible and destructive acts of the divine. To make sacred then is to approach the meaning of taboo – it is nearing the holy fire, the spark of life, and the dark reaches of the psychoid realm of the psyche. The term "psychoid" refers to a theoretical level of the unconscious which can never be plumbed and yet out of which content emerges. One could think of it as the irreducible biological substrate of the mind (see Jung 1969).

In the realm of religious traditions, sacrifice of some kind is nearly ubiquitous.

It also served a social or economic function in those cultures where the edible portions of the animal were distributed among those attending the sacrifice for consumption. This aspect of sacrifice has recently become the basis of an economic explanatory model (see especially R. Firth, E. E. Evans-Pritchard). Animal sacrifice has turned up in almost all cultures, from the Hebrews to the Greeks and Romans (particularly the purifying ceremony *Lustratio* and from the Aztecs to the Yoruba). The ancient Egyptians, however, forbade the practice as being primitive, although the entombment of both humans and animals in a sacrificial form with the Pharaoh as companions after death was common.

The Hebrew word for sacrifice is *korban*, from the root *karov*, meaning to come close to God.

This is a more spatial aspect of the quality of making sacred. The opening chapters of the book of Leviticus explain in great detail the various methods of sacrifice as well as provide a veritable taxonomy of sacrificial victims. Sacrifices were classified as bloody (animals) or unbloody (grain and wine). Bloody sacrifices were again differentiated into holocausts (whole burnt offerings), guilt offerings (divided into a burnt part and a part kept by the priest), and peace offerings (also partial burning).

A specific set of sacrificial offerings was the scapegoat, particularly instructive psychologically because these were a pair of goats with different functions. As is well known, the scapegoat was adorned with ribbons representing the sins of the village and driven out into the wilderness. The other goat was an unblemished holocaust or wholly burnt offering to God. Psychologically translated this shows an inability to sustain a proximity to the divine while suffering consciousness of sins. Moreover, in the person manifesting the victim mentality, there is a split which both cannot bear responsibility for mistakes and in which there is an unconscious identification with the divine – represented by the wholly burnt and therefore nutritionally unavailable goat. In other words, for this type of split subject, the only path to an experience of value is through suffering.

The practice of human sacrifice is a particularly instructive, if brutal, reminder of the power of the gods however imagined. This translates into a personal possession by a transpersonal structure which results in the destruction of anything human. Examples come from all over the world: In the Greek world, there are many stories of human sacrifice from youths sent to appease the Minotaur to Iphigenia being sacrificed by her father Agamemnon for the sake of favorable war wind. There are many conflicting ancient sources, and in fact, only Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Pindar's *11th Pythian Ode* describe her actual sacrifice and her father's bloodguilt, prompted by his eagerness for war.

In Mesoamerica, human sacrifice was even more widespread from Aztec sacrifice of many (usually enemy) humans in order to assure the rising of the sun to common Mayan and Incan sacrifice for astrological and architectural reasons.

It has been found in Norse culture, Indonesian tribal society, and in some African cultures and persisted until recently in India in the form of immolation of the widow of a Brahmin on his death pyre. The immolation of the widow is called *sati*. Legislation to outlaw it was passed only as recently as 1987.

Frazer and other early theorists of religion established a dubious but very influential hierarchy or development of sacrifice from the human to the animal to the symbolic to, not surprisingly, the Christian (Frazer, *The Golden Bough*). Of course the latter (the Eucharist) is really a form of human sacrifice but with the twist that it is also a sacrifice of God and is self-inflicted. In this model, we come very close to a psychological view in that the most valuable thing one can give up for something higher or greater is an aspect of oneself. The factor which keeps this process from becoming merely an exchange is that of uncertainty. Although some anthropologists have seen sacrifice as a fairly transparent manipulation of the divine, the Catholic and Orthodox churches have gone to great lengths to explain that it is not in fact a manipulation of the Godhead but rather an offering which is then responded to out of grace, albeit suspiciously consistently. The instructive Biblical passage is the moment in the garden of Gethsemane in which Jesus admits that he doesn't want to go through with the crucifixion but then assents, saying "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Gospel of Luke, 41:22–24). This is also found in Paul, Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

We can see that psychologically the dynamic is one of giving up the lesser for a chance at some uncertain greater. This is only viable within depth psychological approaches for which there is a mode of functioning or a psychic structure which is seen as bigger, greater, wiser, or more comprehensive. However, within these systems we can see another sort of sacrificial taxonomy. An image of human sacrifice would indicate a blame of the other, of animal sacrifice indicates a relinquishing of instinct, of agricultural offerings shows a dynamic of cultural sacrifice, and a self/symbolic sacrifice shows that a process of

giving up something highly valuable and personal for the transpersonal is indicated.

In this process the first victim is instinctive certainty, replaced by doubt and concomitant differentiation. This becomes the development of an evaluating consciousness, one that weighs options and consequences. If successful, personal guidelines emerge in the shape of instinct molded by will. This phrase is instructive as it is Jung's very definition of the psyche; it is "instinct modified by will" (Jung 1979, p. 56), which if still successful, pushes the natural impulses into a corner. There is a danger as well as hardship in this, but further sacrifice including spiritual ambition in favor of something still unknown but symbolically indicated reveals the logic of the soul apparent in the present in any given moment.

To turn the image another way, we can see the sacrificial knife (of differentiation) as the instrument of a kind of regeneration. It is one that kills the failing king or dominant part of consciousness. As such the knife acts like the Lacanian concept of any speech act: it carries content but also carries the implicit worldview in which the content can be viable, thus undercutting the very subject of the utterance. In Lacan's case, what must be given up is the attachment to a specular (i.e., apparent in vision only) wholeness in favor of a more authentic experience of fragmentation in the face of ideological social pressure (Lacan 1901/1981).

Lacan's analysis indicates the coercive aspect of sacrifice that may be supported by a social agenda. In this we see that the dynamics of sentimentality include brutality, so that a statement of sacrifice of some overt type "I sacrifice for you" (or the call for a patriotic sacrifice under the banner of "us" when what is meant is "you") is revealed as a desperate gambit to maintain control at any price and is the reverse of a personal spiritual process.

Sacrifice is a key aspect of both religion and psychology. In religious terms, it was archaically practiced through the sacrifice of an animal in order to change the supplicant's relationship with the divine. It has changed to become a sacrifice of personal intention in favor of divine spirit – although this is ambiguous, it brings the

concept very close to the psychological meaning in which growth is seen as giving up the smaller for the larger. For Freud this meant giving up the sexual urge, or sublimating it, into cultural pursuits. For Jung there is a definitive religious instinct in which sacrifice is made of the small personality in favor of the large. Although simple to describe, in practice it involves a typically difficult struggle to let go of something that previously defined the subject in favor of something not yet fully known but more comprehensive.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)

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### Sacrifice of Isaac

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The sacrifice of Isaac, in Hebrew the *akedah*, i.e., the *binding* of Isaac, is one of the Bible's most dramatic stories. In its extreme brevity, the narrative is an archetypal skeleton, not fleshed out by personal details or human feelings. It thus lends itself to innumerable theological explanations, philosophical readings, and psychological interpretations.

God tells Abraham to go to the land of Moriah (possibly meaning the land of the Amorites, the land of worship, or the teaching place of God) and offer his beloved son Isaac for a burnt offering. Abraham does not question his God, with whom he has sealed a covenant. He has been promised that he will "multiply exceedingly" and become a father of many nations. He binds his son Isaac and lays him upon the wood on the altar he has built, but when raising his knife, the angel calls upon him not to slay his son. He has passed God's test of devotion, and a ram is offered in place of Isaac. Abraham then calls the place *Adonai-yireh*, because "the Lord has been seen" (Genesis 22: 1–14).

For philosophers and religious commentators, the test of Abraham has provided a stage, similar to the trial of Job, for contemplating good and evil. Kierkegaard emphasized Abraham's anguish and suffering in preserving his faith. For him, "only one who draws the knife gets Isaac" (Kierkegaard 2006, p. 27). The willingness to fulfill the command (or rather, as phrased in Hebrew, the request) to sacrifice Isaac becomes, then, for Kierkegaard, a rekindling of faith in the good God, while for Kant it represents an act of evil to be rebelled against.

In Jewish thought, the perception of the story has commonly emphasized Abraham's devotion to God, to the extent of sacrificing the embodiment of his future. It has been considered a paradigm of the readiness to give up life in

order to sanctify the divine name but also as punishment for Abraham having sent Ishmael into the wilderness.

Some biblical scholars have read the account as a prohibition against child sacrifice, such as mentioned, for instance, in Jeremiah (7: 31; see also Exodus 22: 28–29; 2 Kings 3: 27, 16: 3, 21: 6), with the angel intervening to prevent Abraham’s act of filicide. The narrative has also served as a model for anti-Semitic blood libels accusing Jews of ritual murder of non-Jewish children.

Already, some early legends told the story that Abraham in fact did slay and then burned Isaac. The lad “was reduced to ashes,” only to be revived by God’s “life-giving dew” (Spiegel 1993, p. 37). Thus, Isaac served as a “symbol for the archetypal experience of death and re-birth” (Dreifuss 1971, p. 72).

The symbolic death of Isaac has been understood as transformative, confirming him in his role as chosen to carry out God’s promise to Abraham, to be the one in whom the seed shall be called (cf. Abramovitch 1994, p. 123; Genesis 21: 12). This seed, says St. Augustine, while called in Isaac, is gathered together in Christ by the call of grace. The sacrifice of Isaac becomes the precursor of Christ; like Jesus carried His cross, Isaac himself carried the wood to the place of sacrifice, and like the ram was offered in place of Isaac, so Jesus would die on the cross for humankind.

The name of the sacrificial child is not mentioned in the Quran. Consequently, Muslim scholars have disagreed whether it concerns Ishmael or Isaac. Since it is said that Abraham offered up his only son, scholars have argued this could only mean Ishmael, the elder of the two. The importance ascribed to the sacrifice is reflected in Eid-ul-Adha, the Feast and Festival of Sacrifice, celebrated immediately after the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

### Psychological Aspects

The akedah offers a kaleidoscope of psychological facets and interpretations. Abraham, Urvater

of the monotheistic religions, stands in the center, between the Father-God, who now requires of him the sacrifice of his repeatedly promised seed, and the late-born son, predestined to fulfill the covenant and conceive the earthly offspring. The offering of a child to appease the gods is a common theme in myth and legend in many traditions.

Psychological interpretations naturally tend to look at the father-son relation. One aspect of this is submission – both Abraham’s and Isaac’s – to the command of the father. It entails the recognition of God’s supremacy, interpreted on the psychological level as reflecting weakness in relation to authority. Yet, the archetypal scheme seems more important than personal character, since Abraham already had shown himself quite capable of challenging God, as when he argues and negotiates with God to spare the sinners with the righteous in Sodom (Genesis 18: 23–33).

### Father’s Reluctance Against His Son

In a sense, the akedah is a reversal of and predecessor to the Oedipus complex. A complex would not have been born in Oedipus’s name if it were not for his father Laius, who frightened by the oracle’s prophesy of his son’s patricide and mother-incest exposed Oedipus to certain death. Only the shepherd’s compassion saved Oedipus the child from certain death by unprotected and defenseless exposure to archetypal forces. Likewise, Acrisius, fearing the prophesy that his grandson would kill him, locked his daughter Danae and grandson Perseus in a chest and threw them into the river to an unsure fate, though they were saved by the good fisherman. (Later, Perseus saved Andromeda, who was offered by her father, the king, to appease the sea monster Cetus.) The Laius complex, the father’s fear of the son, who eventually will destroy and replace him, precedes the son’s slaying of the father.

Castration anxiety, in which the child fears the father’s anger because of its choice of the mother as love object, is an innate aspect of the Oedipus complex. Theodor Reik refers to *Das Incestmotiv* by Otto Rank, in which he “conceived of Isaac’s



sacrifice, prevented only at the last moment, as a threat to castrate Abraham's son" (Reik 1961, p. 66). The threatened castration and near sacrifice of the son can be taken to mean that the genitility and vitality of the ego may feel threatened by new instinctual and archetypal elements that arise from the unconscious. Consequently, the ego responds like a vulnerable father who undermines his son's rise to masculinity.

The libido and potency of the son may threaten many a father, and the youthful spirit of the revolting son may pose a challenge to his authority. Jung relates *father-and-son* not only to an interpersonal dynamic but also to the intrapsychic polarity of *discipline and instinct* (Jung 1956, *CW* 5, par. 396). In the individual psyche, the father may represent adherence to the collective consciousness of established norms, rules, and principles, whereas the son represents an upcoming, purposeful complex, which by its mere newness may pose a threat, even in the case when, as with Isaac, he collaborates in the sacrifice. In the edifying process of acculturation, aspects of the child's nature are slain.

### Rite of Initiation

The sacrifice of Isaac (whose name means *he laughed*, Genesis 21: 6) has been looked upon as a puberty rite of initiation. The characteristics of the divine and innocent child, who has thrived in the delightful embrace of the Great Mother, are shed in juvenile rites-de-passage. In the process of becoming an adult, the child is now exposed to the requirements and principles of the spiritual father. Isaac's age at the time of the sacrifice is unclear; while phenomenologically he appears to be a child, legends have given his age as 25 or 37. That is, Isaac moves from childhood to maturity, from innocence to consciousness. In some legends Satan tries to prevent Abraham from carrying out the sacrifice, thereby introducing conscious doubt into the otherwise passive submission. Satan is thus found in his role as adversary, instigating toward consciousness.

Rites of initiation require the sharpening of the maturing ego's strengths by exposure to what is

experienced as a very real threat to body and soul. The ego is exposed to hardships and extreme conditions, such as sleeplessness and infliction of physical pain. The ego is required to hold out against its own destruction, in order to be rendered adequate to carry the Self or a transcendent principle into living, embodied reality. The danger may entail, as in the case of Isaac, being burned by fire, nature's very essential transformative energy, whether representing Logos and consciousness, Eros and relationship, or Thanatos and destruction (Shalit 2012, p. 5f.). The evolving ego must be able to both endure and revolt against the father's authority, in order to carry, continue, and regenerate the collective spirit, whether social, religious, or otherwise.

### Sacrifice and Transformation

The readiness to sacrifice one's offspring for a higher cause has been prevalent during all times, as the death of the young in innumerable wars testifies. In devotion of a principle, whether transcendent, ideological, or intrapsychic, the individual's embodied identity may be sacrificed. Many wars for one's devoted country, religion, or ideology attest to the sacrifice of one's offspring, even if reluctant and painful.

In the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham succumbs to the command of God to sacrifice the human flesh and ego for divinity and a greater Self. As a prefiguration of Christ, God's test of Abraham "is to determine whether Abraham was willing to share Yahweh's later ordeal of sacrificing his son, Christ. Abraham is asked to participate in the tragic drama of divine transformation" (Edinger 1984, p. 98).

Processes of psychological transformation and individuation entail the temporary defeat, or sacrifice, of the ego. Jung writes, "Quite apart from the compassion [Abraham] felt for his child, would not a father in such a position feel himself as the victim, and feel that he was plunging the knife into his own breast?" He continues, "The self is the sacrificer, and I am the sacrificed gift, the human sacrifice," whereby the self can be integrated or humanized and pass "from unconsciousness into consciousness"

(Jung 1969, *CW* 11, par. 397ff.). With the sacrifice of Isaac, God nearly destroys his own creation (Shärf-Kluger 1967, p. 154). Destruction is psychologically crucial in processes of transformation and creativity, and the process of individuation requires sacrifice and near destruction or representative, symbolic sacrifice, as in the akedah. However, the individual ego may, likewise, collaborate with an ideology, a mass, or a leader claiming God-like proportions, sacrificing mature and critical consciousness.

## Psychization

Jung coined the term *psychization* for the process whereby an instinct or a sensory experience is transferred into the psyche and consciousness. The instinctual *reflex* becomes the *reflection* of the psyche, just like soul and psyche constellate by the capacity to reflect. This is the process whereby the actual deed can be psychically represented, and experience becomes consciously *experienced* experience (Shalit 2004). The infant comes to *psychically* experience, for instance, touch and pain to which he or she is exposed. The concrete deed or physical sensation, such as pain, becomes represented and imagined in the psyche. This lies at the core of symbol formation and acculturation and of the representative dimension of art and literature.

Psychization expands the human sphere, says Neumann, by the withdrawal of “Gods, demons, heaven, and hell,” in their capacity as psychic forces, “from the objective world,” and their incorporation in the human sphere (Neumann 1970, p. 338f.).

The binding of Isaac signifies a cultural transition, whereby the sacrifice of the firstborn was replaced by animal sacrifice. Whereas there is little or no archeological evidence of the practice of filicide, the binding of Isaac provides a striking archetypal image of the transition from literalness to symbolic representation, from actual deed to image formation, i.e., of soul making, in the absence of which the ego is literalized and “trapped in ‘reality’” (Hillman 1992, p. 51). By substituting the sacrificial animal for the actual

son, the akedah represents the separation of meaning from act. The near sacrifice thus represents the very essence of psychic processes – intrapsychically, interpersonally, as well as culturally.

## See Also

- ▶ Abraham and Isaac
- ▶ Akedah
- ▶ Augustine
- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Christ
- ▶ Evil
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Hillman, James, and Alchemy
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Kierkegaard, Søren
- ▶ Oedipus Complex
- ▶ Rank, Otto
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Sacrifice
- ▶ Scapegoat

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## Sai Baba

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### Personal History

Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a holy man who was born in the tiny hamlet of Puttaparthi in south-central India on November 23, 1926. At age 13 he declared his spiritual purpose and commenced a ministry that has provided spiritual nourishment for millions of devotees worldwide. Until he died on Easter Sunday, April 24, 2011, Sai Baba was a teacher, healer, and miracle worker. He valued all religions and was trans-traditional in outlook. Over the years his influence expanded so that his organization has been providing free education and medical care and clean water to countless poor Indians. Similar projects are organized in other countries because Sai Baba's call is to universal love and service. He taught: "The best way to love God is to love all and serve all."

To his devotees Sai Baba was an Avatar, and he is believed to be the second of three Divine Incarnations that all carry the name Sai Baba. The first of the three lived in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in a mosque in the town of Shirdi, India. Although his parents were Hindu, he was raised by a Moslem holy man, after his parents went off to the forest to become ascetics (*sanyases*). That first Sai Baba was a teacher and healer who used ashes from a fire in the mosque for healing purposes. Shirdi Sai Baba, as he is called, fostered interreligious understanding by teaching Hindus about Allah and Moslems about Rama and Krishna. At the time of his death, both Hindus and Moslems claimed him. Shortly before he died in 1918,

he confided to a close devotee that he would return in 8 years.

In 1926, a child was born and named Sathya Raju. There are many stories about miraculous events that attended his conception and birth, and, as a young boy, Sathya was known to be very spiritual and loving. His playmates called him *Guru* ("teacher") and he was known for his generosity both to his friends and to wandering beggars. Whenever he witnessed suffering, he provided help in some way.

Sathya's parents were sometimes distressed by his unusual behavior, especially when he quit school at the age of 13 and announced that his devotees were waiting for him. "Who are you?" his perplexed father asked. Sathya replied, "I am Sai Baba," and picking up a handful of jasmine flowers, he threw them on the ground. The flowers are said to have formed themselves into letter shapes that spelled out the name: Sai Baba.

Thenceforth, he has been known as Sathya Sai Baba. His miracles are numerous. Among the most frequent and well-documented miracles are materializations. When Sai Baba waved his hand, various material objects appeared, apparently out of thin air. He sometimes made jewelry – rings or locketts – or icons for devotees. These religious objects included Hindu images such as Krishna or Christian icons such as the crucifix. Frequently, he materialized *vibhuti*, a sacred ash used for healing. In providing this healing ash, he echoed and went beyond the sacred ash that Shirdi Sai Baba used for similar purposes. (Even after his death, numerous devotees have discovered *vibhuti* coming forth from pictures of their beloved *Guru*.)

Sai Baba lived in a large *ashram* in the town of Puttaparthi, where he has also built a hospital and a university, both to serve the people free of charge. At his *ashram*, called *Prashanti Nilayam*, (Abode of Highest Peace), major feast days are celebrated by hundreds of thousands of devotees flocking in to view the holy man (*darshan*) and to receive the spiritual energy of his blessings. Sai Baba has told devotees that shortly after his death the third Sai Baba reincarnation will occur, who will carry the name of Prema Sai Baba (*Prema* means love and *Sathya* means truth).

## Teachings

In addition to his charitable work, materializations and occasional miraculous healings, Sathya Sai Baba taught his devotees through public discourses given frequently at his *ashram*. These teachings have been gathered into books, which now comprise the 42-volume *Sathya Sai Speaks* series. There is also a website where his message is articulated. For example, this writing from 1968 describes Sathya Sai Baba's self-definition of purpose:

I have come to light the lamp of Love in your hearts, to see that it shines day by day with added luster. I have not come on behalf of any exclusive religion. I have not come on a mission of publicity for a sect or creed, nor have I come to collect followers for a doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into my fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this unitary faith, this spiritual principle, this path of Love, this virtue of Love, this duty of Love, this obligation of Love (Sathya Sai Baba, 7/4/68, cited on [www.sathyasai.org](http://www.sathyasai.org)).

Despite his stated lack of specific plans to attract followers, there are over 30 million devotees worldwide who follow the teachings of Sai Baba and believe him to be an Avatar, that is, an incarnation of God on earth. When asked directly whether he is God, Sai Baba frequently responded, "Yes, and so are you!" A central component of his teaching is that the Divine is omnipresent; Divinity resides in every person and our primary duty in life is to discover that indwelling divine life (*Atman*). In 1997, he spoke to a large group of devotees:

*Embodiments of Love!* Only that person can be said to lead a full human existence whose heart is filled with compassion, whose speech is adorned by Truth and whose body is dedicated to the service of others. Fullness in life is marked by harmony of thought, word and deed. . . . In every human being Divinity is present in subtle form. But man is deluded. . . . The innumerable waves on the vast ocean contain the same water as the ocean regardless of their forms. Likewise, although human beings have myriads of names and forms, each is a wave on the ocean of *Sath-Chith-Ananda* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). Every human being is invested with immortality. He is the embodiment of love. Unfortunately he fails to

share this love with others in society. The root cause of this condition is the fact that man is consumed by selfishness and self-interest. . . . Only when this self-interest is eradicated man will be able to manifest his inner divinity (Sai Baba, 1997, p. 191f).

Like Jesus, Sai Baba frequently taught in parables, which were often spoken in modern idiom. He used airplanes, for example, to teach about the presence of an unseen God (the pilot), and electrical energy to teach about the inner, unseen current that activates a multiple of appliances, even as God motivates and activates humans. Sometimes Sai Baba taught from the wisdom of the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, or other ancient Indian scriptures; at other times he spoke quite directly to the needs and problems of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century global society. In 1993, for example, he spoke about a problem that is increasingly newsworthy in the twenty-first century:

My advice to office-goers and students is that it is good for them to commute by cycle at least 5 or 6 km a day. This cycling exercise is very useful, not only for maintaining health, but also for reducing the expenditure on automobiles. . . . Moreover it serves to reduce atmospheric pollution caused by harmful fumes from automobiles. The carbon dioxide smoke from motor vehicles and factories is already polluting the air in cities and is affecting the ozone layer above the earth. The primary task is to purify the environment, which is affected by pollution of air, water, and food. All the five elements [earth, water, air, fire, and ether] are affected by pollution. People should, therefore, try to reduce the use of automobiles and control the emission of harmful industrial effluents. . . . Trees play a vital role in helping mankind to receive oxygen from the atmosphere while they absorb the carbon dioxide exhaled by human beings. Hence the ancients favored the growing of trees to control atmospheric pollution. But nowadays trees are cut down indiscriminately and pollution is on the increase (Sai Baba, 1993, p. 35f).

Like Gandhi, Sai Baba emphasized the importance of the fivefold values: truth, love, peace, nonviolence, and righteous living (*Sathya*, *Prema*, *Shanti Ahimsa*, and *Dharma*). Sai Baba treasured the *Bhagavad Gita* and he frequently taught his devotees the meaning of the metaphors of that archetypal story of the war between good

and evil. For example, on the battlefield in the *Gita*, Krishna says:

The point, old friend – and this is very important – is to do your duty, but do it without any attachment to it or desire for its fruits. Keep your mind always on the Divine (Atman, the Self). Make it as automatic as your breath or heartbeat. This is the way to reach the supreme goal, which is to merge into God (*Gita* 3:19. Hawley, 2001, p. 32).

Sai Baba taught that the battlefield is our inner life. Our spiritual aim should be to surrender to the Divine, to be a willing instrument of God's Will, and to leave the results of that action in God's hands. This relatively simple statement is the essence of life's goal; it is a spiritual work worthy of conscious effort (*sadhana*). Sai Baba has provided many teachings that support this goal. To keep focused on the Divine, he taught that the easiest method in this era is, with every breath, to repeat the name of God (*namasmarana*, remembering God through any name that has personal meaning).

Sai Baba's teachings also emphasize the importance of purity of heart, which entails letting go of desires and attachments. The union of opposites involves transcending the natural tendency to have likes and dislikes, attachments, and aversions. Rather, he taught, one should strive to care equally for friend and foe, to behave calmly whether one receives praise or criticism, and to be indifferent to honor and ignominy. Equanimity is fostered when one is able to accept suffering as a blessing in disguise and to accept adulation with humility.

## Psychotherapy with Devotees

In working psychologically with devotees of Sai Baba or with others who adhere to similar Eastern traditions, it is important to understand and accept their worldview. While anger, jealousy, fear, pride, lust, etc. are natural psychological states, the spiritual aim in this Eastern tradition is to transcend those states. World – as we know it – is illusory (*maya*). The only permanent reality is the Divine and that permeates everyone and everything. Every situation is a scene in the

Divine play (*leela*). Psychologically, this attitude enables devotees to take life a little more lightly and to cope with its vicissitudes a little more gracefully.

## Self-Realization

In summary, to the devotee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the aim of life is to surrender to God, to be the Instrument of Divine Will, to fight the various battles of life, but to leave the outcome in God's hands. In order to accomplish that aim, the primary purpose of life is to discover the Godlife (*Atman*) within oneself and to honor that same Godlife in others – all others. Self-realization means to know that identity and unity experientially. Sai Baba promised that such self-realization results in a state of bliss. In essence, he said, we are being, awareness, and bliss (*sath-chith-ananda*), i.e., when we are fully aware of the Divine within each of us, and acting from that awareness, we shall receive bliss as a natural occurrence. Thus, when we aspire for world unity and work toward that end, we work in consort with the Divine Will. We merge with the Divine One.

## See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Avatar](#)
- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Incarnation](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)

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## Samsara and Nirvana

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On Buddha's birthday a spotted fawn is born – just like that (Bashō 1999, p. 70).

### Introduction

The structure of this double entry, i.e., the combination of the entries Samsara and Nirvana, moves from an analysis of samsara and nirvana as religious concepts to the question of the relation between nirvana's revelation and the perceptual shift which results from performing a phenomenological reduction (cf. Heidegger, 1962; cf. Heidegger, 2008). In other words, if the practice of meditation, for example, zazen (cf. Suzuki 1993, p. 29) or koan (cf. Suzuki 1971, pp. 18–200), produces what is tantamount to a phenomenological reduction and if meditation is a practice toward the revelation of nirvana, then to what extent is the accomplishing of a phenomenological reduction a practice toward revealing or realizing nirvana?

Next, a brief conceptual analysis of nirvana in relation to different conceptualizations of time follows the examination of the above question. On the one hand, it seems as though how one thinks of time influences how one thinks of samsara and nirvana. On the other hand, complicating matters further for anyone who would attempt to understand samsara and nirvana, thinking of nirvana tends to invoke concepts like “absolute emptiness” or “nothing(ness),” and how we think of these concepts seems to be intimately dependent on our understanding of the relation between time and existence. Hence, to conclude the first part of this double entry, I clarify the difference between nirvana and nonbeing by way of a phenomenological description of nonbeing for the sake of illustrating what nirvana is not. Realizing that the “nothing” to which nirvana is often

taken to refer is not the nothing of “nonbeing” should help clarify how to think of samsara and nirvana.

The entry concludes, then, with a gesture toward what the research project of tracing the textual use and changing readings of nirvana and samsara might look like across psychology as a natural (*Naturwissenschaften*) and as a historical-social-individual-human science (*Geisteswissenschaften*). Such a research project would include a discussion of the differing conceptions of nirvana found in Freud and Jung and a gesture toward explicating the presence, and perhaps therapeutic use, of the psychic revelation of “nothingness,” “emptiness,” or nirvana (or at least the differing uses of phenomenological reductions) present in the various accounts spanning the division often referred to as “the four forces of psychology.” The four forces of psychology are here taken to be varying psychological accounts divided by methodology and theoretical point of departure.

### Conceptual Analysis

Nirvana is notoriously an elusive notion. Take, for example, Nagarjuna's celebrated claim: “Samsara is nothing essentially different from nirvana. Nirvana is nothing essentially different from samsara” (cf. Lee 2006, pp. 464–465; Nagarjuna 1970, p. 158). Further, nirvana is supposed to refer to some difference, i.e., a salvation, worth striving for by way of the “thirty-seven practices” which lead to enlightenment, i.e., nirvana (Hirakawa 1990, pp. 48, 51). These practices conclude with the famous “Noble Eightfold Path” supposed to lead to the “cessation of suffering,” i.e., *dukkha* (Humphreys 1990, pp. 65–70). The trajectory of this soteriology may be thought through by thinking Samsara *to* the Four Noble Truths *to* the Three Jewels of Buddhism (which include meditative practices leading to the experience of a phenomenological reduction revealing samsara as profane) *to* a contemplative life (*samadhi*) for the sake of further unfeathering *to* nirvana “with spatiality” *to* only a small number of rebirths with nirvana while perfecting wisdom (*prajna*) as an



arhat and enduring until *samyak sambuddha*, i.e., “final” nirvana.

Along this trajectory, then, may be thought various stages relative to two different revelations of nirvana – nirvana with spatiality (nirvana with embodiment/remainder) and nirvana without spatiality, i.e., final nirvana (nirvana without remainder). Before discussing the above trajectory further, however, it is worth mentioning that according to the “Mindfulness of Breathing Sutra” from the *Middle Length Discourses* (118.15), the development and cultivation of “mindfulness of breathing” is supposed to be sufficient to achieve enlightenment, i.e., awareness of nirvana from within samsara. Hence, “mindfulness of breathing” as the performance of a phenomenological reduction opens an interesting space for comparison of Western philosophers and psychologists informed by phenomenological practices.

The Four Noble Truths, then, are considered one of the Three Jewels of Buddhism. And, upon embracing the Jewels, a being enters the first stage toward nirvana, i.e., as a “stream-entrant” (Hirakawa 1990, p. 57). Embracing these Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) is tantamount to believing in the possibility of enlightenment and nirvana, believing in the path leading to enlightenment, e.g., the Four Noble Truths, and participating in the practices associated with enlightenment and nirvana (Hirakawa 1990, p. 57). To contextualize, such a path to enlightenment may fruitfully be compared to Plato’s description of the just released “prisoner” in the “Allegory of the Cave” (cf. *Republic* 515c-e3).

There are three other stages associated with progress through the “thirty-seven practices.” They are once-returner, non-returner, and *arhat* (the one who is worthy of *samyak sambuddha*, i.e., final nirvana) (Hirakawa, 1990, p. 57). Further, the ethical path along these stages, invoking liberation, is described as the loosening of “ten fetters – ignorance, conformations, consciousness, name and form, the six senses, contact, sensation, grasping, becoming, and old age and death . . . to be overcome before Nirvana [can] be reached” (Humphreys, 1990, p. 66). And, the distinction between two nirvanas helps here,

since the *arhat* “manages to avoid suffering that arises due to change in something to which he is attached, but not the fact that sensations are often unpleasant nor that things are imperfect due to being brought about by something else” (Leaman 1999, p. 22). Hence, release from one’s fetters may be thought of as ascendance through these stages toward nirvana; and the successful overcoming of the realms, to which one would have otherwise been bound by fetters, allows an *arhat* to enter final nirvana upon the death of the physical body (cf. Schopenhauer 1958, pp. 506–507).

An adequate *conceptualization* of “Samsara” and “Nirvana,” then, would render samsara as the repetitive cyclical realm of birth and rebirth associated with suffering and nirvana as both salvation through liberation from the suffering associated with samsara and liberation from rebirth in samsara. Such a rendering follows the Buddha’s first teachings after experiencing nirvana in which he revealed the “Four Noble Truths” which relate to suffering. First, the “truth of suffering,” which is the awareness of suffering, is also thought to be the awareness of samsara. Second, the “truth of the origin of suffering” refers to an awareness of desire and attachment in relation to suffering. Third, the “truth of the cessation of suffering,” which is an awareness of the cessation of suffering, is also thought to be an awareness of nirvana. Fourth, the “truth of the path to the cessation of suffering” refers to the habits and practices involved toward the cessation of suffering, i.e., nirvana (cf. Gyatso 1994).

### **Nirvana: Aporia, Phenomenological Reduction, or Death?**

With the path of liberation identified, then, is it possible to think through an agent’s psychological process leading from samsara to nirvana? If so, then Western philosophers concerned with agency might be able to help. For example, Immanuel Kant’s (1724–1804) description of apperception suggests an agent becomes self-aware through a focal revelation derived from awareness immanent in multiple perceptions. In other words, through an agent’s interaction with

the phenomenal world, i.e., samsara, an agent becomes self-aware – as that which is interacting.

However, there is still a third step left in this dialectic. The third step, on the one hand, the agent is not the phenomena experienced. On the other hand, the agent is neither the “I” nor any of the discursivity which may stand in for the “I.” Rather, the agent is transcendental. The third step’s uncovering being, then, the revelation of the nondiscursive transcendental, i.e., the agent, as condition for the possibility of both the unity of apperception and the experiencing of samsara. Further, just as we can encounter an object through a phenomenological reduction such that the more discursive aspects of its being are bracketed, so too can we realize our movement and dwelling as that of a nondiscursive transcendental being. Notice the process of this realization may also be referred to as the “emptying” of the self. And emptying here is in quotes as it is clearly meant metaphorically, since the self is, of course, not a physical object. Hence, awareness of being transcendental, as such, arrived at via phenomenological reduction is entrance into the nirvanic stream (noted above).

Now, to perform a phenomenological reduction, without doing so merely in reflection (cf. Husserl 1983, p. 103), would be something like attempting to sense your senses sensing. And, to accomplish this, you would need to be in a phenomenologically reduced relation to experience. Prior to meaning “your” senses, they would just *be* (the repetition of not-yet-judged apprehensions, i.e., sensations). Further, supposing a “sense” to be a bundle of multiple unconscious possible thoughts (cf. Kant 1998) and supposing the automaticity of contraction dilation which allows for the exchange of content in sensory awareness (“I” feel “my feet,” “I” feel “my hands”), then there would be gaps created in the process of exchanging content. Such would be to not make the being of the sense depend on the presence of the object but to make the presence of the object depend on the capacity of the power of animation ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\iota}$ ) to sense.

In this way, it is possible to become aware of gaps in your experiencing, in other words, the power of animation instantiates, but does not

perpetually hold an experience in being. “Nonbeing” refers to those gaps in experiencing. Your being is not persisting, it is pulsing (Scalambrino 2011, p. 560). Hence, just as it seems incorrect to equate nirvana with nonbeing, it seems incorrect to equate nirvana with death. So, the physical death associated with final nirvana is not more nirvana; it is less samsara.

### Eternity and Perspective: The Hermeneutics of Samsara

Is there awareness of the presence of the eternal? In *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, Shunryu Suzuki (1904–1971) recounts: “Dogen said, ‘Time goes from present to past.’ This is not true in our logical mind, but it is in the actual experience of making past time present” (Suzuki 1993, p. 33). And a question to help clarify, “When you are sitting in the middle of your own problem, which is more real to you: your problem or you yourself?” (Suzuki 1993, p. 40).

Similarly, St. Augustine’s perplexity moves from “If the future and the past exist, I want to know where they are” (Augustine 1993, p. 222) to “the present of things present is sight, the present of things past is memory, the present of things future is expectation” [223]. And juxtaposing Suzuki and St. Augustine illuminates the question: Are memories and expectations clouding a vision of the present? This is perhaps what the Buddhist monk Dogen (1200–1253) referred to in stating, “Most people think time is passing and do not realize that there is an aspect that is not passing” (Dogen 1975, p. 70). Finally, coming full circle, to think through the possible relations between eternity and time would be to answer the question asked earlier regarding possible awareness of eternity.

The post-structuralist tradition beginning with Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781–1787) and especially with his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) seems open to the possibility of a difference that cannot be structured. Hence, post-structuralism is capable of reading the structure of memory, expectation, and the objects of sight as identifiable precisely because of their

being part of a structure. Now, if this structure includes time, then the post-structural difference could be eternal as “outside” the structure identified as time.

In order to think through the possible relationships between eternity and time, consider an example from Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* (1887):

*Sub specie aeterni* – A: “You are moving away faster and faster from the living; soon they will strike your name from their rolls.” – B: “That is the only way to participate in the privilege of the dead.” – A: “What privilege?” – B: “To die no more” (Nietzsche 1974, p. 218).

This movement is mirrored (cf. Williams 2001) in Nietzsche’s “The Three Metamorphoses of the Spirit” (cf. Nietzsche 1969, p. 54), and Wilhelm Wurzer (1942–2009) links the metamorphoses with different perspectives regarding eternity (cf. Wurzer 1983, p. 269). Hence, the “Camel” spirit who carries the burden of samsara thinks “time” in “eternity.” The “Lion” spirit who rages against the burden of samsara thinks of an “eternity of time,” and, as the agent of a “New Enlightenment,” the “Child” spirit eternally plays, thinking of time with the seriousness of a child at play (cf. Nietzsche 1989, p. 83).

Notice, then, that thinking through these possible relations between time and eternity affirms the conclusion of the previous section. A non-reflective phenomenological reduction and a contemplation of time provide the possibility of identifying more with the nirvanic stream than with samsara. Further, it is possible to think of the power intuiting time to *thereby* be eternal “outside” of time. Hence, this different perspective regarding eternity opens a space to think the possibility of reincarnation not merely after physical death but repeatedly in regard to “your” *current* physical body.

Summarized a different way, the awareness of the presence of the eternal would be like the realization of the power animating an experience both as the power allowing for the conceptualizing of an experience and as the nonconceptual power that you most are. Keeping in mind that space and time depend on the present (“sight” of the) environment of the experience for identification, even if time

and space are intuitions of the power allowing for an experience in space and time, the power itself is neither of space nor time. In other words, depending on how you think of time, the power of animation ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) might be eternal. Perhaps Plato would call this the “immortality of the soul” (cf. *Phaedo* 63e8–64a7; 66b2–66e2; 67e3; 72d6–73a3).

It is the awareness of that power undergoing transformation to leave the wheel of birth and rebirth that allows us – to “enter the stream” – the option to live more mindful of that power than any of its manifestations. Despite the difficulty of the dialectic leading to such a psychological discovery, retreating to a position of “eliminative materialism” (EM) (cf. Churchland 1981) would be tantamount to embracing samsara to deny nirvana. In the same vein as this criticism of EM, Henri Bergson (1859–1941) argued concerning the relationship between the natural scientific discoveries regarding brain damage studies and the psychological truths they purportedly uncover:

That there is a close connection between a state of consciousness and the brain we do not dispute. But there is also a close connection between a coat and the nail on which it hangs, for, if the nail is pulled out, the coat falls to the ground. Shall we say, then, that the shape of the nail gives us the shape of the coat, or in any way corresponds to it? (Bergson 1991, p. 12).

Whereas answering Bergson by affirming a correspondence between brain and psychē tends toward thinking psychology as a natural science (*Naturwissenschaften*), denying a direct correspondence tends toward the thinking of psychology as a historical-social-individual-human science (*Geisteswissenschaften*).

### Scala Amoris v. Scala Natura

Reminiscent of the disagreement among the central figures taken to illustrate Plato and Aristotle, respectively, in Raphael’s (1483–1520) famous fresco “The School of Athens” (1510–1511) is the disagreement between those who claim the methods of psychology should reflect its status as a historical-social-individual-human science (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and those who claim

the methods should reflect those of natural science (*Naturwissenschaften*) – *scala amoris* v. *scala natura* (cf. Van Kaam 1958, p. 22). Moreover, this distinction is not unlike the different discussions of the *psychē* found in Plato (*Geisteswissenschaften*) (cf. *Phaedo*) and Aristotle (*Naturwissenschaften*) (cf. *De Anima* 414a-414b). Hence, analyzing the single idea of “psychology,” one could use this distinction to indicate the subsequent two parts (cf. Gadamer 1989; Husserl 1970).

A further distinction, perhaps most useful when distinguishing between therapeutic intervention orientations, referred to at times as the “four forces in psychology” may be used to indicate the difference(s) across various psychological accounts (cf. Brennan 2003; Hergenhahn 2008). Such clarification is beneficial, for example, when texts such as Raymond J. Corsini’s *Handbook of Innovative Therapy* suggest the existence of over 1,000 different types of psychotherapy (cf. Corsini 2001). Hence, if we take the four forces of psychology to be divided by the extent to which the methodologies involved embrace “natural kinds” in regard to psychology, then the first two forces of psychoanalysis and behaviorism may be thought of as on the natural kinds side of the division (*Naturwissenschaften*) along with a number of reactions to these forces which still adhere to natural kinds, e.g., functionalism, cognitivism, and neuronalism. In contrast, on the side of the division which thinks natural kinds as dependent on the mind (*Geisteswissenschaften*), i.e., the side of the division which embraces the Kantian Copernican revolution (Kant 1998, pp. 110–111), are found “third force” phenomenological-hermeneutic psychologies such as Rogerian, Gestalt, Existential, Transpersonal (contemplative), and post-structuralist theories and the fourth force of “systems”-based theories of psychology such as family therapy and other theories which maintain, e.g., “that individuals may *only* be understood within the social [and historical] context in which they exist [emphasis added]” (Prochaska & Norcross 2006, p. 352). Whereas – generally speaking – the former (*Naturwissenschaften*) lends itself to an understanding of psychological

salvation as dependent on physical destruction, the latter (*Geisteswissenschaften*) seems to allow for a salvation more consistent with that found regarding samsara and nirvana.

## Sigmund Freud

Though one might refer to a more existential-phenomenologically grounded psychoanalytic theory as “psychodynamic,” the Freud who authored *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895) seemed interested in psychology as a natural scientific enterprise. Similarly, and following Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860) (cf. Schopenhauer 1958, p. 506–509), Sigmund Freud (1856–1931), specifically in the *Economic Problem of Masochism* (1924), suggested, “the nirvana principle expresses the tendency of the death instinct” (Freud 1961a, p. 160). And the aim of the “death instincts” is to “conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state, and it would have the function of giving warnings against the demands of the life instincts” (Freud 1961a, p. 160). Hence, Freud seemed to read any striving for nirvana as the manifestation of *the body’s* desire to cease its own processes of maintaining life (cf. Freud 1955, pp. 143–144).

Since, in Darwinian fashion, life for Freud emerges from the nonliving and struggles to survive, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud speculated an “inertia” tending, then, toward nonliving. Further, Freud suggested, “everything living dies for *internal* reasons [Freud’s emphasis]” (Freud 1955, p. 38). And Freud unfolded this interiority from which death derives in *Instincts and Vicissitudes* (1915) noting “an ‘instinct’ appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind” (Freud 1957, pp. 121–122). And Freud clarified that “By the source of an instinct is meant the somatic process which occurs in an organ or part of the body and whose stimulus is represented in mental life by an instinct” (Freud 1957, p. 123).

## Carl Gustav Jung

It is possible to arrive at Carl Gustav Jung's (1875–1961) reading of samsara and nirvana in at least two ways – his direct comments in their regard and his criticism(s) of the interpretation of instinct in which Freud grounds nirvana. To begin, Jung spoke of samsara and nirvana directly, and, in contrast to Freud's equation of ego dissolution with internal death, Jung wrote:

To us, consciousness is inconceivable without an ego ... If there is no ego, there is nobody to be conscious of anything. ... The Eastern mind, however, has no difficulty in conceiving of a consciousness without an ego. Consciousness is deemed capable of transcending its ego condition; indeed, in its 'higher forms, the ego disappears altogether. Such an ego-less mental condition can only be unconscious to us, for the simple reason that there would be nobody to witness it (Jung 1969, p. 484).

In this way Jung allows for a reading of nirvana beyond a Freudian psychic-apoptosis. According to Jung, "The Mind in which the irreconcilables – samsara and nirvana – are united is ultimately our mind" (Jung 1969, pp. 488–489). Moreover, "what we [in the West] call the 'dark background of consciousness' is [in the East] understood to a 'higher' consciousness. Thus our concept of the 'collective unconscious' would be the European equivalent of *buddhi*, the enlightened mind" (Jung 1969, p. 485). And since Jung associates this "higher consciousness" with introversion, he noted "Introversion is felt here [in the West] as something abnormal, morbid, or otherwise objectionable. Freud identifies it with autoerotic, 'narcissistic' attitude of mind. ... In the East, however, our cherished extraversion is depreciated as illusory desirousness, as existence in the samsara" (Jung 1969, p. 481).

In *Freud and Jung: Contrasts* (1929), then, Jung declared, "I prefer to look at man in the light of what in him is healthy and sound, and to free the sick man from just that kind of psychology which colors every page Freud has written" (Jung 1970, p. 335). And, according to Jung, "the question of instinct cannot be dealt with

psychologically without considering the archetypes, because at bottom they determine one another" (Jung 1978, p. 134). In a parallel construction, Jung then unfolds his understanding of instincts and archetypes. On the one hand, "Instincts are typical modes of action, and wherever we meet with uniform and regularly recurring modes of action and reaction we are dealing with instinct, no matter whether it is associated with a conscious motive or not" (Jung 1978, p. 135). On the other hand, "Archetypes are typical modes of apprehension, and wherever we meet with uniform and regularly recurring modes of apprehension we are dealing with an archetype, no matter whether its mythological character is recognized or not" (Jung 1978, pp. 137–138). Jung's notion, then, holds open the possibility of unconscious apprehension and a way of discussing the apprehension by way of archetypes, such that "Just as conscious apprehension gives our actions form and direction, so unconscious apprehension through the archetype determines the form and direction of instinct" (Jung 1969, p. 137). And, finally, regarding the archetype in its relation to instinct Jung notes, "the yucca moth must carry within it an image, as it were, of the situation that 'triggers off' its instinct" (Jung 1978, p. 137). Hence, Jung clearly seems to have the more *Geisteswissenschaften* friendly reading of samsara and nirvana.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it would seem that to do the least amount of interpretative violence to the notions of samsara and nirvana in the process of performing a more thorough examination of the concepts across psychology, one might proceed by comparing various psychological accounts regarding change and death. For example, how might the influence of Epictetus' *Enchiridion* square with what may be thought of as the more natural scientific interests of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)? Moreover, is it the case that CBT's roots run too deep in the psychoanalytic soil from which it came to consider it based in phenomenology and hermeneutics? Is it



possible to provide “mindfulness”-based therapy within a natural scientific perspective, and, if so, then is it possible to reread phenomenologically based approaches without altering their fundamental character? To what extent might “stream-entering” make one a better psychotherapist? Finally, in regard to systems theory, one might examine the extent to which the psychological change of individual family members shifting the family unit from a closed to a “healthier” open position utilizes agent, i.e., group member, specific techniques which may be thought of as designed for “stream-entering.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Arhat](#)
- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Death Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Eschatology](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Immanence](#)
- ▶ [Immortality](#)
- ▶ [Incarnation](#)
- ▶ [Instinct](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Koan](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Mindfulness](#)
- ▶ [Nietzsche, Friedrich: Religion and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Nirvana](#)
- ▶ [Nonduality](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Plato on the Soul](#)
- ▶ [Prajna](#)
- ▶ [Quest](#)
- ▶ [Shakers](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Soteriology](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Birth](#)
- ▶ [Zazen](#)
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## Sangha

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In Buddhism the Sanskrit term “sangha” has two meanings. More generally, it refers to the entire community of all practitioners of Buddha dharma, both lay and monastic. It is also used to specifically refer just to the monastic community, both monks and nuns. Contemporary Buddhists often refer to themselves not only as Buddhist but as dharma practitioners. This emphasizes the point that they are active in meditation, chanting, or some other spiritual practice or discipline. This is in contrast with the Western monotheisms where the term “believers” emphasizes the cognitive component, what doctrines one holds or affirms.

The sangha is one of the three gems, the other being the dharma and the Buddha. Collectively, they are known as the “triple gem.” To become a Buddhist one would take refuge in the triple gem. The concept of taking refuge refers to the first of the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, the pervasiveness of human suffering. As one experiences the reality of suffering, one seeks refuge from not only the suffering itself, but with knowledge of the cause of suffering, attachment, one seeks the way out by practicing the methods that lead to enlightenment.

## See Also

► [Buddhism](#)

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## Santería

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## Origins

Santería, more formally known as Lukumí or La Regla Lukumí, originated in Africa and was brought to Cuba by slaves from western Africa, many of whom were from Yoruba-speaking areas that are now part of Nigeria and Benin. The religion was brought to the United States during the 1940s by immigrants from Cuba. It has been estimated that approximately 10 million individuals in the Americas are adherents to the Afro-Cuban religion Santería; somewhere between half a million and 5 million of them are located in the United States. It is believed that approximately 50,000 adherents reside in South Florida. In addition, there are also large clusters of practitioners (*santeros*, a status that is explained in greater detail below) in New York City, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Although many believers may have been raised in the Santería tradition, followers of other faiths are increasingly identifying as believers of Santería.

In many respects, Santería is unlike Western religions. While Western religions such as Christianity, Islam, and Judaism rely on doctrine and liturgy embodied in sacred texts to define their beliefs and boundaries, Santería relies instead on the careful performance of numerous rituals and the fulfillment by its followers of these prescribed rituals and sacrifices. Unlike various denominations within Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, for

example, Santería does not have a centralized, hierarchical structure. Each house-temple (*casa de santos*) acts independently of others and may engage in very different practices and have different interpretations of those practices in comparison with other house-temples. Followers of Santería are known as such because they have carried out specific actions during prescribed rituals, not because of an accident of birth.

Significant disagreement exists with respect to the characterization of Santería as a syncretized religion. Santería has been labeled as such because some observers have noted that adherents to Santería appear to be praying to Catholic saints and concluded that Santería followers have merged the Catholic and African belief systems and abandoned their gods (*orishas* or *orichas*) in favor of the Catholic saints. Various scholars, however, have argued that because the Yoruba slaves in Cuba faced religious persecution when they worshiped the orishas, they masked this worship by imbuing a particular Catholic saint with the power and characteristics of a particular orisha. Although it appeared that the slaves were now praying to a saint, they actually continued to worship a particular orisha as manifested in the form of a particular saint. As an example, the orisha Orúnla, who is the god of wisdom, is often manifested as Francis of Assisi, St. Philip, or St. Joseph. The persecution in Cuba of adherents to Santería continued until relatively recently; the practice of the faith was a punishable crime in Cuba until 1940, and persecution continued until the 1980s. Even in the United States, Santería did not gain formal recognition as a religion until 1993, when the United States Supreme Court ruled that prohibitions against religious rituals involving animal sacrifices were violative of the United States Constitution.

## Basic Beliefs

Santería is a highly complex and ritualized faith. The various rituals, proverbs, and relationships that exist between adherents and officiants of the faith and the orishas serve to bind each to the other. As evident from the following discussion, survival of one depends on nourishment of the other.

It is believed that the orishas manifest themselves in other religions in addition to Santería by virtue of *ashé*, an amoral neutral energy force that serves as the foundation for all that exists and that is possessed by all entities that have life or power. Accordingly, it is believed that every human being who worships the Divine is actually worshipping the orishas. All religions, however, are to be accorded respect since all faiths contain truth.

Every individual is believed to be the spiritual child of an orisha. The identity of the orisha parent will become known once the individual becomes a follower of Santería. The new believer can then begin to foster the relationship with his or her orisha parent and look to the orisha for guidance and assistance with his or her problems. Significantly, the sexual orientation and gender identity of the adherent are not tied to the characteristics of the deity. For example, a self-identified gay male with female-associated mannerisms may be a follower of *Changó*, one of the most powerful orishas.

When an individual dies, his or her *ori*, analogous to the Christian concept of a soul, returns to *Olodumare*, the ultimate god, who causes the *ori* to be reborn in successive lives until its destiny on Earth has been fulfilled. Accordingly, death is viewed not as the end of life but rather as the beginning of a new existence.

Although the orishas are powerful, they are not immortal. Their survival depends on sacrifices made to them by their believers. The relationship between the orishas and believers is complex; each depends on the other for survival.

Santería's primary purpose is to assist the individual to live in harmony with his or her destiny; they will more easily be able to meet life's challenges and overcome difficulties if they follow the appropriate rituals. These difficulties may include marital strain, financial stress, illness, and problems with children. Although the individual is deemed to be responsible for his or her actions, assistance may be sought from the appropriate spirit. The individual's performance of a prescribed ritual will provide energy to that spirit so that the spirit can provide assistance to the individual.

Santería does not personify the qualities of good and evil as God or Satan, angels or devils. Rather, what is to be considered good or evil depends upon the particular circumstances. Unwelcome events are not deemed to be punishment for having committed a sin or for a human frailty but are instead seen as the natural consequence of disharmony. Restoration of harmony between the physical and spiritual realms is deemed to be critical. This can be accomplished through the perfect performance of various rituals designed to demonstrate respect to the appropriate orishas and to placate them. If done successfully, the orishas will reward the individual by granting his or her request, even if the fulfillment of that request would be to the detriment of others.

## Ritual

Individuals seeking assistance with their difficulties will consult a *santero* or *santera* for a *consulta*. (*Santero* refers to males and *santera* to females; the term *santero* will be utilized in the remainder of this entry to signify both male and females.) *Santeros* who have developed a reputation of being knowledgeable and powerful may have established a *casa de santos*, known as an *ilé*. These are often located in a room or basement of a house that has been converted for this purpose and that houses shrines of Santería. *Santeros* are believed to be extensions of *Olodumare*, the supreme spiritual source. In their role as mediators between humans and orishas, they are able to officiate at ceremonies and rituals, diagnose illness, effectuate healing, and dispel evil spells. *Santeros* have been trained by longer-term practitioners of the faith who have "birthed" more junior members (male *padrinos* and female *madrinas*) and are recognized as their mentors' godsons (*ahijados*) and goddaughters (*ahijadas*).

The process of restoring harmony between the physical and spiritual worlds and discovering how to be in balance with one's destiny often begins with divination. Although each individual is believed to have a destiny, actions are not predetermined; rather, each person can pursue actions that are congruent with their destiny and

reach their full potential, or they may act in ways that are in opposition to their destiny and create disharmony. Divination will help to clarify the client's situation, reduce anxiety, and identify a solution to the client's difficulties. The santero will ask the client questions about his or her situation; the client is able to clarify for him- or herself the presenting problem as he or she relates it to the santero.

A detailed description of the varied divination processes is beyond the scope of this entry. In brief, divination may be achieved through reliance on sanctified coconuts which, after being tossed, reveal a yes-no response to a question that has been asked of an orisha; through the use of cowrie shells that constitute the "mouth" of a specified orisha; and through the use of kola nuts or palm nuts.

Only *babalawos*, male high priests whose abilities exceed those of the santeros, are authorized to perform various forms of divination, such as that accomplished through the use of kola nuts or palm nuts. Additionally, only *babalawos* can perform animal sacrifices. Over time, the power and importance of *babalawos* has diminished as increasing numbers of santeros learn the rituals involving animal sacrifice and the more advanced forms of divination.

A sacrifice or tribute to a particular orisha may be prescribed at the conclusion of the consulta. Offerings, known as *ebbós*, may be prescribed for a variety of purposes: to give thanks for the favorable resolution of a problem; to obtain an orisha's favor; to appease an angry orisha; to ward off an attack; to mark the beginning of a particular ceremony, such as an ordination; and to obtain an orisha's blessing at the start of a new venture or enterprise, among others. Each ritual service necessitates the payment of a monetary offering (*derecho*) to the orisha. The *derecho* is often needed in advance in order to pay for the various component objects to be used in the ritual, such as food, candles, and animals. The blood from animal sacrifices is used to nourish the orisha; the animals are cooked and eaten following most Santería rituals, with the exception of healing and death rites. The ritual of sacrifice or offering serves as a catharsis for the client's emotions that are

associated with the difficulties he or she described during the consulta.

A santero, or even an adherent, may become possessed by an orisha during the course of a ritual. A client's belief in spirit possession may in some cases complicate a mental health diagnosis by a Western-trained mental health professional. However, a client's reliance on Santería rituals and consultas may serve to complement therapy by providing additional support, feedback, and opportunity for self-reflection. Accordingly, it is critical that a mental health professional be willing to engage his or her client in a discussion of the client's religious and spiritual beliefs.

Adherence to Santería or membership in the faith is not a prerequisite to a consulta. Individuals who seek entrance to Santería as a full member must proceed through a series of four rituals that includes (1) receipt of the beaded necklaces (*elekes*), containing specific beads that reflect the orishas to whom the individual is responsible; (2) making the image of Elegguá, a warrior orisha responsible for determining human destinies; (3) receiving the warriors (*Guerreros*), that is, receiving from the *babalawo* objects associated with the warrior orishas Elegguá (his image), Oggún (iron tools), Ochosi (a bow and arrow), and Osún (an iron chalice with a rooster); and (4) *asiento*, an elaborate multi-day ritual through which the individual is reborn into Santería. Various aspects of the *asiento* serve to distinguish and separate the post-*asiento* individual from his pre-Santería identity: the initiate's head is shaven, he is given a new name, and he is kept in seclusion. Initiation into the faith through the four rituals typically requires several years and tutelage under a particular santero. The individual is free to halt the process at any stage and may continue as a member of the faith at the level he has attained.

## Benefits

Santería has provided and continues to provide its adherents with a sense of family, community, refuge, and belonging and the possibility of

exerting some degree of control within one's current existence. Reincarnation of the ori assures the continued existence of the individual and the regeneration of the community. These physical and emotional benefits are evident throughout the faith's history. During the period of slavery in Cuba, the faith provided a mechanism through which individuals could momentarily escape from their oppression. Cuban immigrants to the United States found fellowship and community in the *casas de santos*, where fellow clients spoke the same language and held similar worldviews. The *santeros* and *santeras* serve as surrogate godparents, while fellow adherents are seen as siblings. The *casas de santos* also serve as marketplaces, where clients can exchange goods and assist each other economically. In short, the *casas de santos* and its personages constitute family and community, bound together through an intricate system of ritual and respect and, not infrequently, experiences of oppression.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)

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## Sarasvati

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Sarasvati is a riverine goddess invoked in the *Rig Veda*, the oldest of the ancient sacred text of India. She maintains a prominent place in Hinduism as goddess of knowledge, music, and sound and is often portrayed as one of the three great (*maha*) female deities along with the goddess of prosperity, Lakshmi, and the fierce protectress mother, Durga. She is a pan-Asian goddess represented in Jain, Sikh, and Buddhist temples, rituals, and narratives. There is some evidence that an Old Iranian river goddess, Haraxwaiti, may also refer to a similar female deity.

Historically, a river Sarasvati existed until its mysterious disappearance by 800 BCE, which is variously attributed to climate changes, geological shifts or possible earthquakes, and drought conditions. Speculations of locating the actual river continue to this day, pointing to the geographical areas along the west border areas of India between modern day Punjab and Pakistan.

The Sanskrit name suggests a flowing quality associated with both water and eloquence. Sarasvati is usually depicted with four arms holding her musical instrument (*vina*), sacred beads (*mala*), and a scroll or book and with her animal vehicle the goose, swan, or peacock at her feet. Painted images of Sarasvati portray her gliding on river waters cascading from a mountain source. She is associated more with moving waters that transform the landscape rather than with still, placid bodies of water. The knowledge attributed to Sarasvati therefore arises from the life force and movement of the river.

The Sarasvati river as described in the *Rig Veda* is powerful, forceful, and unpredictable. In this way, the quality of the waters differs greatly from lake, sea, or pond deities. Yet she is not only a water deity for she also is Sound. Sarasvati is invoked by poets and seers for inspiration, poetry, and music. Knowledge is gained by entreating





**Sarasvati, Fig. 1** Sarasvati clay statue, street shrine during Sarasvati Puja, 2011, Kolkata (Calcutta) (Photo courtesy of the author)

Sarasvati to bless her devotees with the flow of thoughts, words, and music.

Psychologically, Sarasvati symbolizes the cognitive skills of reading, thinking, and free-flowing verbal and written expression. She also symbolizes the psychology of the artistic “flow” of inspiration and skill in musical performance. She represents the divine gift of these skills of articulation, arising from inspiration.

Knowledge of words is used in conjunction with knowledge of the healing powers of water (often in the form of prescribed baths) and specific medicinal herbs found along the river waters. Thus, an early version of Sarasvati portrays her as a physician who was called on to heal the Vedic god Indra after he drank an excess of Soma. It is understood that knowing the correct mantra and proper recitation of these powerful sounds may bring about restoration of health and remedies misfortune. Psychologically she is an

image of the knowledge of healing arts and medicine – herbs and mantras.

Knowledge depicted as a female divinity can be found in the Greek religious and mythological narratives of Sophia and Athena as well as in the biblical references to Eve receiving the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Each of these offers a specific understanding of the qualities associated with the acquisition and use of knowledge according to specific historical and cultural context that contributes to the formation of how knowledge is psychologically defined and perceived (Fig. 1).

Sarasvati in modern Hinduism has come to be associated with the pure (*sattvic*) knowledge of the Vedas. She is often associated with the sacred rituals of Brahminical knowledge which include performance of correct ritual and recitation of Sanskrit *mantra*. She also appears in non-Brahminical literature and ritual such as in Tantric traditions which view all female deities as manifestations of the goddess and as *sakti*.

In popular rituals, Sarasvati is frequently associated with the privilege of psychologically accessing and receiving a specific education such as literacy or the sacred Sanskrit language. In this context, she represents the arts and technology of civilization. In India, statues and poster art of Sarasvati are most often found in libraries, bookstores, and performing arts halls, since it is understood that these are places where the goddess resides. Children offer their books to Sarasvati to receive her blessings and to ensure success in educational endeavors.

Sarasvati is honored during the 9-day Durga Puja festival in autumn as well as on a specially designated Sarasvati Puja day in February/March. Rituals include offering books, learning devices, and musical instruments to the goddess as well as abstaining from reading for the day to honor the importance of words.

Knowledge, as defined by the myths and images of Sarasvati, includes not only the sacred psychology of intelligence but also memory, insight, cleverness, inspiration, eloquence, and the ability to read, recite, and perform songs, rituals, and chants. She is often considered to be speech (*vac*).



Sarasvati is associated with the arts through storytelling, music, drama, science, technology, medicine, and a metaphysical realization of the universe as sound. Sarasvati always holds the *vina*, the musical instrument that symbolizes the subtle vibrations of the body and the universe itself, at both the psychological and the divine level.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Water](#)
- ▶ [Women in Hinduism](#)

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## Satan

- ▶ [Devil](#)
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## Scapegoat

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Scapegoating commonly refers to the process by which an individual, or perhaps a group, gets shunned unfairly so that a community can avoid considering a more complex problem. An unremarkable employee, for example, might get fired from a company experiencing major systemic problems, in the hopes that this action will show that the company is serious about reform. Scapegoats can also be found at the more prominent levels of a community. A football coach will often be fired in an attempt to reform a team of weak players, or more seriously, a political leader will be killed in response to problems among the populace.

The common factor here seems to be the defenselessness of the victim or group of victims and the injustice of the punishment, which is either misapplied or inappropriately harsh. The origin of the scapegoat, however, comes from Leviticus 16, where the process is actually prescribed by law. A priest is instructed to lay his hands on a goat, confess the sins of the people, and send the goat out of the community and into the desert. The consequences of the people's sins, which otherwise would build endlessly, are thus believed to be expunged from the community along with the animal. The goat is neither guilty nor innocent: it is just a goat. The punishment is thus not misapplied, and the punishment is not too harsh – unless we consider alternative versions of the story in which the goat is pushed off of a cliff. A similar story of scapegoating occurs in the synoptic Gospels in the story of Jesus banishing demons by transferring them into a herd of swine that were sent into the sea.

The demons are named “Legion” and require a scapegoat in the plural.

The fact that in both stories the scapegoat is an animal and not a human seems to justify the action morally. When humans are the ones scapegoated, however, the act is regarded as unjust. The problem with scapegoating, however, is that its perpetrators often do not see it for what it is. A myth develops that the sins of the individual are real and justify his exclusion. When Jesus is being crucified, he remarks that the people “know not what they are doing.”

Identifying this kind of blindness is important to the work of Rene Girard. According to Girard, a largely unconscious *scapegoat mechanism* is at work in the foundation of human civilization. The mechanism takes the form of unchallenged religious rituals. “Violence and the sacred are inseparable,” says Girard in *Violence and the Sacred*, “but the covert appropriation by sacrifice of certain properties of violence - particularly the ability of violence to move from one object to another - is hidden from sight by the awesome machinery of ritual.”

This machinery results from the pervasiveness of *mimetic desire* within communities. Mimetic desire is a type of rivalry in which its competitors are focused not on objects of desire, but rather for the desire itself. Girard’s example involves considering two children who are simultaneously introduced to a new toy. Rivalry develops as soon as one child, perhaps sensing the impending interest of the other, is attracted to that toy. Predictably, the second child will also become interested in that toy, but not because of any intrinsic value in the object. Rather, the child is interested in the other child’s interest. The object in question is of secondary importance and, in the case of pronounced mimetic rivalry, becomes irrelevant.

One does not have to look to the immaturity of children to find examples of mimetic rivalry. The interest of a few customers in a sales bin usually prompts the interest of many others. As clever marketers understand, the contents of the bin are not as important as the fact that someone appears

interested in sifting through it, and this interest causes an anxiety in others, who fear they just might be missing out on something. What they are missing out on is the act of looking.

There are of course more intense and important cases of mimetic rivalry involving jealous lovers, business competitors, rival countries, etc. These cases involve more significant and dangerous conflicts and threaten community stability. According to Girard, mimetic rivalry is both contagious and violence inducing, and when the threat of mob violence becomes sufficiently acute, a scapegoat is sought by the members of the community. The violence done to the scapegoat by the community serves to dispel the dangerous force by symbolically expelling the agreed-upon object. Yet the symbolic expulsion is not viewed by the community as such. Scapegoat rituals are seen as real solutions, not just symbolic acts. In the case of the witch trials in colonial America, the common interpretation is that the sacrificed women were victims of some kind of conscious conspiracy by the male elders, who trick the gullible masses. Such an interpretation avoids considering the insidiousness of scapegoat mechanism. According to Girard, both the persecutors and the public are sincere in their beliefs. The primitiveness of a community (and indeed for Girard its lack of Christian revelation) is measured by the extent to which this scapegoat mechanism eludes consciousness.

The importance of Christianity is that it reveals the scapegoating mechanism by showing that the victim, in this case Christ, is innocent. The point however is not that innocence condemns scapegoating while guilt exonerates it; the point is that either way scapegoating is a mistaken response to the problem. The scapegoated individual is not the real threat; it is, rather, an escalation of communal rivalries that threatens peace. The resurrection of Christ is seen as a victory over the dark necessity of violence and scapegoating that constitutes particular communities and indeed civilization in general. Christianity reveals, according to Jesus, and elaborated by Girard, “things hidden from the foundation of the world.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)

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## Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Atheism

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Schopenhauer's atheism is implied rather than directly stated. For nowhere in his published works does he either deny the existence of God or describe himself as an atheist. Hence, Nietzsche's confident claim, in his *Gay Science* 357, that Schopenhauer was the "first admitted and inexorable atheist among us Germans" (1974) stands in need of qualification. A more accurate statement might be that for a German – rather than a French or British writer of that time – Schopenhauer was an honest and open atheist.

### Schopenhauer's Atheism

That having been said, atheism does seem to be a clear implication of Schopenhauer's system: for given that this world is essentially blind eternal will to life, there does not seem to be any need for an intelligent and good God who creates this world.

There is, however, at least one place in Schopenhauer's published work where he comes close to making his atheism explicit, which he does by what is essentially a psychological argument. The argument, in his main work, *The world as will*

*and representation*, vol. 2, xlviiii, is based on the fact that we human beings represent the highest possible development of morality and intelligence. Schopenhauer's argument is not just that there is no evidence that there is any being higher than us in these respects but that there couldn't be. And this is shown, he thinks, by the saints and ascetics of all religions, who, because they are more morally and intellectually sensitive than their fellow human beings, are able to see that this world is the worst of all possible worlds, which moral insight leads them to mortify or deny themselves, with the aim (most clearly expressed in Buddhism) of achieving nirvana or nothingness, which for Schopenhauer is the most perfect state. Hence, it is clear to Schopenhauer that if, for the sake of argument, we try to imagine a (supposed) more intelligent and good being, such as God, or a being even marginally superior to the saints, we would realize that such a being would even more instantly annihilate itself when it realized how revolting this world was.

Schopenhauer's psychological-atheistic argument is important not only for the light that it sheds on his mind and metaphysical system but also as providing the crucial context for Nietzsche's idea of the overman, the central idea of his *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Part 1, 1883) and his general attempt to rescue man from nihilism. In his early work, the *Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche accepted much of Schopenhauer's pessimism, but still not Schopenhauer's nihilistic belief that the highest good was nirvana. Instead of that bleak prescription, Nietzsche puts forward the more nuanced idea of the tragic life, as exemplified by Aeschylean tragedy, as the highest condition for man. And while he does not repudiate this aesthetic prescription in his later work of the 1880s, Nietzsche does change his focus there, a change that was partly brought on by his break with Richard Wagner and their common mentor, Schopenhauer, who, in 1886 Nietzsche nonetheless describes as "my first and only teacher, the great Arthur Schopenhauer." More positively, Nietzsche had by that time come under a new influence, more scientific than aesthetic, namely, the theory of evolution. For now his hope is that a new type of man might be evolved, which will answer the threat of nihilism. Thus, Zarathustra's announcement of the death of

God, at the beginning of *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, is immediately followed by “I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. . . [and] What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman. . .” (1962, 124).

### Nietzsche’s Anti-Atheism

But against such a higher development was Schopenhauer’s atheism, as outlined above, which appeared to show that such a development was not possible, since man represented an evolutionary dead end; hence, no being more perfect than man can evolve – which, for Nietzsche, was the nightmare of nihilism. So Nietzsche opposed Schopenhauer’s atheism, although not completely, since for one thing he still accepted much of Schopenhauer’s pessimistic account of life. So Nietzsche, like his great teacher, rejected the optimistic idea that scientific or cultural or political improvements might be effected which would improve our happiness quotient – something Nietzsche associated with the shallowness of English Utilitarianism.

In short, for Nietzsche, Schopenhauerian atheism had many roles and implications, sometimes pushing in different directions, which Nietzsche importantly explores in *The Gay Science*, sections 125, 343, 357, and 370 (Berman 1998). So atheism, thanks to Schopenhauer and others, is going to bring about enormous destruction in our world. A vast amount is going to crumble, “for example, the whole of European morality” (Nietzsche 1974, section 343). And yet Nietzsche says, in 125, we human beings did it, we are God’s “murderers.” But then he dramatically asks: “How did we do this? How could we drink up the sea. . . wipe away the entire horizon?” (1974). And Nietzsche goes on and on about the dire consequences of the deicide, which there is no need to stress here, since it is widely appreciated; but what is not so conspicuous or appreciated is the opposing tendency in Nietzsche, his anti-atheism, according to which the destructive deicide also has a good side, since it is going to clear the way, opening up new possibilities for

new creations (1974, section 343), to which Nietzsche alludes even in 125, when he says: “Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?” (1974). This is Nietzsche’s hope. But it is a hope that is threatened by Schopenhauer’s psychological-atheistic argument, a threat that Nietzsche sought to oppose by, among other things, his acute unmasking or transvaluating of what he took to be Schopenhauer’s nihilistic concepts of goodness and knowledge, pity and compassion, showing how they worked against life and instinct and hence against the great hope of a new evolutionary development of man (Berman 1998).

### See Also

- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Nirvana](#)

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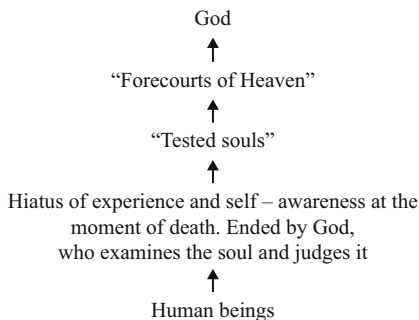
### Schreber, Daniel Paul

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Daniel Paul Schreber (1842–1911) was a lawyer and judge by profession but became infamous as

the author of *Denkwürdigkeiten eines Nervenkranken*, or *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. In this work he detailed his experiences during his second period of mental illness, lasting from 1893 until 1902. Many well-known psychologists subsequently adopted Schreber as a case study, although none of them ever met or corresponded with him.

Schreber's illness began with his half-dreaming thought that it must be nice to be a woman submitting to sexual intercourse. He began to experience auditory hallucinations shortly before his hospitalization in October 1893, but in February 1894 his hallucinations became more severe and for the first time visual. From these hallucinations Schreber extrapolated information that he used to create a complex worldview:



Humans have material souls present as “rays” in the nerves of the body. At the moment of death, the body is left behind, and God then examines the soul for “blackening,” or damage through sinful behavior. Once finished, God assigns the soul a period of time and a method through which it will be purified; it becomes a “tested soul,” meaning that it is untested. Schreber’s “soul-language” contains several similar antonymic references, e.g., “juice” for “poison.” Once the soul is purified, it enters the “forecourts of heaven,” where it enjoys continued “voluptuousness,” defined by Schreber as pleasurable experience caused by the uninterrupted closeness of God. God is split into Upper and Lower Gods, named after Ahriman and Ormuzd, the sons of Zurvan, the Persian God of Time. He is unlike the Judeo-Christian God in that He is neither omnipotent nor benevolent; He is a disinterested observer of the world and only intervenes in exceptional circumstances.

Schreber believed that earthly harmony could only be achieved through his transformation into a woman so that he could bear God’s children and thus perpetuate a new and superior race of human beings. To encourage the transformation, he took to wearing feminine adornments and asking medical staff to examine his developing breasts. Schreber believed that God was working against the “Order of the World” in this matter: His rays had become dangerously linked with Schreber’s, a link that could prove fatal to God were it to be severed while Schreber was still in possession of his wits. For this reason God was involved in an attempt with Schreber’s psychiatrist Flechsig to destroy Schreber’s reason. This “soul murder,” as Schreber termed it, took the form of physical attacks and constant harassment from “tested souls.”

The most famous of the multiple analyses of Schreber is Freud’s own. Freud, like the others, never met Schreber and concluded that Schreber’s homosexual anxiety was to blame for his breakdown. Freud argued that Schreber turned the love he felt for another man, possibly his father or brother, into hate. He then justified his hatred through delusions of persecution. Schreber’s change of sex was therefore an attempt to render his homosexual desires acceptable.

Alternative analyses include Nederland’s, who noted the similarity between the miraculous punishments suffered by Schreber with the suggested educational methods of Schreber’s father, the pedagogue Moritz Schreber. Schatzman’s analysis went further than Nederland’s and blamed Moritz Schreber’s “sadistic” teaching methods for Schreber’s illness on the grounds of these miraculous punishments. All of these analyses accept the original diagnosis of Schreber as suffering from paranoid schizophrenia, but Koehler suggested that Schreber may originally have been suffering clinical depression and in fact only made the “schizophrenic switch” in February of 1894.

Schreber published his *Memoirs* partly in the hope that they would become the foundational text for a new religion based on the knowledge revealed to him by the “tested souls.” His experiences were to be viewed in the context of martyrdom; his suffering led to the acquisition of knowledge of the extraordinary world that is

inaccessible to humans under normal circumstances. Comparisons can also be drawn with Biblical Job, Hildegard of Bingen, and other religious mystics.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Job](#)

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## Search for the Father

- ▶ [Monomyth](#)

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## Seder

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The Seder, a yearly event celebrated on the 15th and 16th of the month of Nissan, is a part of the

Passover celebration that marks the Jew's Exodus from Egypt in the thirteenth century BCE. The word "Mitzrayim," Hebrew for Egypt, comes from the root meaning narrow, so the Jews escaped from a narrow place to a broader world.

Since the Exodus is a prelude to God's revelation on Mount Sinai, the Seder is an opportunity for each participant to relive the Exodus as a personal spiritual event. The Seder meal is supposed to replicate the experience of escaping from bondage to freedom and can include family references and stories about danger, freedom, and redemption. Reciting the family's history is a way to draw individual members closer together; and the Haggadah, the story of the Exodus, says that the more one speaks about liberation, the better. The Haggadah and the family stories together are an oral recitation of history and a way to remember it.

The word "seder" means order, or order of service, referring to the ritual and the celebratory meal. A thorough house cleaning leads up to the event. Special pots, pans, tableware, and foods are served, and some foods are prohibited – no leavened foods or grains are eaten.

Matzo's are allowed because they have been carefully prepared in under 18 min. They commemorate the haste with which the Jews fled the Egyptians, without time to let the bread rise.

The Seder meal teaches about the Exodus. Since it is so different from usual family meals, it inspires people, especially children, to ask questions, like the famous, "Why is this night different from every other night?"

The Seder is quintessentially a *family* meal, usually led by the eldest male in the household. Participation in the Seder at whatever level is a powerful emotional experience of the love and hate occurring in the outside world and within the family as well. Using special cookware and dinnerware and avoiding prohibited foods for the entire week of Passover can be an exercise in mindfulness or frustration.

The meal concludes with songs and with the declaration, "Next year in Jerusalem!" This can mean the literal city of Jerusalem, or it can mean Jerusalem as a symbol of personal redemption and freedom. Whichever theme is emphasized, the personal effect of recreating ancestral, family,



and individual histories and relationships to bondage and freedom can indelibly mark one's soul with a respect for self-determination and an eternal emotional connection with one's people.

### See Also

- ▶ [Exodus](#)
- ▶ [Jerusalem](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Self

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*Self* lies at the heart of Jung's conceptualizing on the structure and dynamics of the psyche. He first encountered the Self in midlife during the turbulent years of 1916–1918 while undergoing his “creative illness” following the difficult breakdown of his relationship with Freud. As a result, Jung took midlife to be universal for experiences of the Self to come into being, a view that has been contested by later analytical psychologists. Jung's definition of the Self is that it is the totality of the psyche as well as being the prime archetype that keeps the psyche from disintegrating at times of stress. Furthermore, it transcends and goes beyond psyche.

If it is conceptualized as the prime archetype, the Self would be the container of opposites, above all perhaps those of good and evil. In this regard, Jung refers to it as a “*complexio oppositorum* (which) proves to be not only a possibility but an ethical duty” (Jung 1954, p. 320). This is to be

found at the very center of what it is to be human which is also an analogy of God: “Man is God, but not in an absolute sense, since he is man. He is therefore God in a human way. . . every endeavour of our human intelligence should be bent to the achieving of that simplicity where contradictories are reconciled” (Jung 1954, p. 320). Here Jung is quoting Nicholas of Cusa of whom he says: “The alchemists are as it were the empiricists of the great problem of opposites, whereas Nicholas of Cusa is its philosopher” (Jung 1954, p. 320). Furthermore, “The self is a union of opposites *par excellence*, and this is where it differs essentially from the Christ-symbol. The androgyny of Christ is the utmost concession the Church has made to the problem of opposites” (Jung 1953, p. 19).

On the other hand, Jung's writings contain many references to the synonymous nature of the Self with the God-image as follows: “*Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self*” (Jung 1959a, p. 37) (Original italics). “The Christ-symbol is of the greatest importance for psychology in so far as it is perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the self, apart from the figure of the Buddha” (Jung 1953, p. 19). However, in so doing Jung was not trying to take on the mantle of a religious thinker but, instead, remained always aware that he was an empirical psychologist. “Strictly speaking, the God-image does not coincide with the unconscious as such, but with a special content of it, namely the archetype of the self. It is this archetype from which we can no longer distinguish the God-image empirically” (Jung 1958a, p. 469). This image of wholeness rises independently in the conscious mind from the depths of humankind's psychic nature. He goes on to say: “. . . the self is not a philosophical concept like Kant's ‘thing-in-itself,’ but an empirical concept of psychology, and can therefore be hypostatized” (Jung 1958b, p. 262).

### Self and Individuation

The Self is all important not only in the individuation process of individuals but also in that of collective groups though the symbols of the Self

are different at different historical epochs. He elaborated this in his work *Aion*, the name of which is taken from the Mithraic god who rules over time, as follows:

...“wholeness”... is nevertheless empirical in so far as it is anticipated by the psyche in the form of spontaneous or autonomous symbols. These are the quaternity or mandala symbols, which occur not only in the dreams of modern people... but are widely disseminated in the historical records of many peoples and many epochs. Their significance as *symbols of unity and totality* is amply confirmed by history as well as by empirical psychology (Jung 1959c, p. 31) (Original italics).

Jung goes so far as to say the Self represents psychic totality and is both conscious and unconscious. From the latter realm, it may manifest in dreams, myths, and fairy tales in the figure of the “supraordinate personality” (Jung 1971, p. 460). In this way, it takes on the form of king, hero, prophet, or savior or a symbol of wholeness such as a circle or cross. “I have called this wholeness that transcends consciousness the ‘self’ The goal of the individuation process is the synthesis of the self... symbols of wholeness frequently occur at the beginning of the individuation process, indeed they can often be observed in the first dreams of early infancy” (Jung 1959b, p. 164). This tantalizing glimpse into Jung’s interest in infancy was taken up and elaborated by the analytical psychologist, Michael Fordham, whose ideas will be expanded further in this entry.

### Encounter with the Self

In exploring the connection between the Self and ego, Jung turned to the Biblical story of the *Book of Job*. Similarly, the analytical psychologist Edward Edinger depicts the relationship between the story of Job with its relevance for the psyche of modern man and William Blake’s *Illustrations of the Book of Job*. As Edinger states: “. . .the Job story is an archetypal image which pictures a certain typical encounter between the ego and the Self. This typical encounter may be called the Job archetype” (Edinger 1986, p. 11). Edinger further states: “The term ‘Self’ is used by Jung to designate the transpersonal center and totality of the psyche.

It constitutes the greater, objective personality, whereas the ego is the lesser, subjective personality. Empirically the Self cannot be distinguished from the God-image. Encounter with it is a *mysterium tremendum*” (Edinger 1986, p. 7).

An encounter between Self and ego always results in a defeat for the latter. However, if it can sustain the ordeal and at the same time become aware of its meaning, ego may experience an insight into the transpersonal psyche. In the Blake drawings, Job is first depicted as living in a state of unconscious innocent contentment. In the second picture, Satan manifests in a stream of fire between Yahweh and Job and represents the urge to individuation which is a challenge to complacency and living unconsciously. “Dionysian energy of excess has erupted into the Apollonian order” (Edinger 1986, p. 19).

The later pictures illustrate the growing dynamism of Dionysian energy and its impact on ego by destroying its containing structures, depicted in the Job story as the loss of his children and their families. Psychologically, this corresponds to the onset of bad dreams and neurotic symptoms such as depression and psychosomatic symptoms. Ego may try to deal with these by splitting them off and dissociating them from consciousness, which results in an impoverishment of the conscious personality.

The book goes on to illustrate the complete breakdown of Job (ego) when confronted with the dark side of the Self (Yahweh), which a later picture depicts as Job on high pointing down to the chthonic aspects of the numinosum, Behemoth and Leviathan. “This is the other side of the *numinosum*, which we must always remember is a union of opposites” (Edinger 1986, p. 55). As Edinger goes on to say: “Job is being shown the abysmal aspect of God and the depths of his own psyche, which contains devouring monsters remote from human values. . . God reveals his own shadow side, and since man participates in God as the ground of his being he must likewise share his darkness” (Edinger 1986, p. 55).

Blake’s pictures and the *Book of Job* end with Job’s fortunes being restored and with an enlargement of his personality through an encounter with the Self. As Jung says: “. . .the widening of consciousness is at first upheaval and darkness, then

a broadening out of man to the whole man” (Jung 1963, p. 171).

## Primal Self

The analytical psychologist, James Astor, views Michael Fordham as the last of the founders of a movement in analysis, who tapped into something essential in the discipline. Fordham’s pioneering work led to a developmental model of Jung’s ideas of the self. “His most radical departure from Jung was to describe the actions of the self in infancy and childhood such that the infant, far from being uncentered at birth, as Jung originally thought, is a person with an individual identity even in utero” (Astor 2007).

In this way, Fordham revised Jung’s thinking of the self in showing how, through interacting with the environment, it helped to mold and create it. In this way “The self, as Fordham conceived it, was the instigator as much as the receptor of infant experience. This conception gave rise to the particularly Jungian theory of ego development in which the interaction between mother and baby ensured the uniqueness of the situation, a uniqueness created as much by the infant as by the mother” (Astor 2007).

The prospective nature and self-regulating function of the psyche through the self’s unifying characteristics “could transcend what seemed to be opposite forces” though in the course of that it could be “‘exceedingly disruptive’ both destructively and creatively” (Astor 2007).

Astor sums up Fordham’s revised thinking on Jung’s theory of the self to include a primary self or original state of integration as follows: “This primal self, he thought, gave rise to structures from interaction with the environment which it in part created. It existed outside of time and space, and was similar to a mystical (or contemporary scientific concept such as emergence), whose manifestations had archetypal form. This primary self was integrated, and in Jung’s sense it was an agency of the psyche which transcended opposites” (Astor 2007). Astor links this to Fordham’s innovative thinking about the *dynamic structure* of the self which infant research is arriving at quite

separately from analytic thinking. “Fordham took the innateness of Jung’s archetypal psychology and demonstrated the way in which the environment affected it” (Astor 2007). Furthermore, “by having a theory of deintegration we are able to think about the observed behavior of the infant as being continuous with the self. What this means is that the development of the individual baby is in effect an early form of individuation” (Astor 2007).

Fordham also challenged Jung’s thinking about the self as both the totality of the psyche and an archetype. “As for the archetype definition, Fordham notes that it accounts for a range of phenomena related to wholeness (archetypal images) and, in fact, is closer to the data than the totality definition. However this data ‘cannot also be the totality’ because it excludes the ego, which Jung differentiated from the archetypes” (Urban 2005, p. 574).

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the term “Self” is spelt with a capital “S” in some instances and a small “s” in others. The former tends to be used by classical Jungians who view the Self as synonymous with the God-image; in the latter, it is used by analytical psychologists of the developmental school of thought. While Fordham was not an atheist, “Much of Fordham’s work has countered this religious aspect of Jungianism” (Astor 2007). At the same time, “His respect for Jung and his understanding of the value of his studies of the manifestations of the collective unconscious led him to try to take a balanced position with respect to both the psychological and religious perspective” (Astor 2007).

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Job](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Numinosum](#)

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## Self Psychology

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The psychology of the self is a psychoanalytic theory of the development of the self which focuses

primarily on narcissistic disorders or configurations of the self. With the publication of Heinz Kohut's *The Analysis of the Self* in 1971, the psychology of the self, though widely criticized by psychoanalytic theory purists, began to gain respect as a psychoanalytic treatment for a particular kind of pathology – narcissism. Heinz Kohut understood his work to be an addition to, rather than a replacement of, Freud's groundwork in psychoanalysis. There are several significant points of departure from Freud's metapsychology including Kohut's precise understanding of transference, internalization, and empathy.

Narcissistic patients, according to Kohut, experience the transference not as a projection of their existing internal psychic structures but rather as an expression of a need for internal psychic structures which are missing. Thus, the analytic task focuses on liberating the patient from his or her denial of a need. Likewise, Kohut offers us a somewhat different understanding from Freud of the process of internalization. Building upon Freud's work, Kohut understands internalization as more than the taking in of the qualities of the libidinal object which is lost and mourned; it is a process which includes the taking in (or internalizing) of idealizations of a selfobject when that object has temporarily failed in one of its need-fulfilling functions. One indication that analysis is progressing from Kohut's perspective is the ability of the analysand to tolerate the inevitable empathic failure of the analyst.

Kohut proposed a bipolar model of the self: one pole is related to ideals (idealized self), the other is related to ambitions (grandiose self), and the area or space between the two is comprised of inborn skills and talents. The poles of the self are developed in relation to selfobjects (or the original primary caretakers who fulfill the needs of the developing self). The maternal selfobject is associated with the idealized self while the paternal selfobject is associated with the grandiose self (originally the narcissistic self). These selfobjects are not viewed as separate entities but rather in terms of the way they fulfill or fail to meet the needs of the developing infant. Kohut theorized that an infant could tolerate a traumatic failure on the part of one but not both parental selfobjects (or others who may have primary caretaking

responsibility). Thus, a paternal selfobject need not be the biological father; it may not even be a male but someone who provides father-like care. The same is true for the maternal selfobject.

The three major constituents of the self (ideals, ambitions, and talents) shape the three major groups of transference experiences in the analytic process. If the area of ambitions (grandiose self) is damaged, the patient will likely experience a mirror transference in which the analyst is the person around whom constancy is established. This can be related to the “gleam in a mother’s eye as she gazes at her infant.” If the area of ideals is damaged, then the patient experiences an idealizing transference which means that the analyst provides soothing and tension-regulating functions if the narcissistic injury occurred early in childhood. If the injury occurred later in childhood (or even beyond childhood), then the analyst may become “de-idealized” quickly as the analysand seeks attachment with an omnipotent object. And finally, if the area of skills and talents is damaged, then the patient looks for reassurance in an alter ego or twinship transference in which the analyst is experienced as being similar to the analysand’s grandiose self. How then does analysis change from Freud’s original understandings according to Kohut’s theory of the self? In other words, how does analysis provide a cure?

Freud maintained that a narcissist was not curable because a narcissist was not accessible to the influence of psychoanalysis; thus, the patient lacked the ability to invest in a transference relationship (Freud 1959a, b). The noteworthy difference is Kohut’s focus on the treatment and cure of narcissistic personality disorders. The touchstone in Kohut’s analytic process is empathy which he understood as a *data-gathering tool* within the analytic relationship, not a cure in itself (see *How Does Analysis Cure?* 1984, pp. 300–307). Why is empathy in and of itself not a cure? Kohut, using an illustration from Nazi Germany, demonstrated that empathy (or the ability to put oneself in another’s shoes) can be used for good or ill. The Nazis used empathy to exploit the vulnerabilities of their victims to inflict emotional pain. Nevertheless, Kohut contended that empathy is what

ultimately affirms our humanness and makes psychological existence possible (Kohut 1995). In an attempt to correct the many misunderstandings and misappropriations of empathy in the analytic relationship, Kohut offered the following toward the end of his life in 1981: empathy is “the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person” (*How Does Analysis Cure?* 1984, p. 82). Indeed, the capacity to experience empathy is one of the five qualities identified by Kohut which signal the transformation of narcissism in the therapeutic relationship. The origin of empathy is located in the earliest mother-infant relationship as the developing self of the infant takes in the mother’s feelings toward the infant.

Other determinants of a healthy self include creativity, transience, humor, and wisdom. The analyst is able to observe these qualities developing in the transference relationship. Creativity, quite simply, is a person’s ability to idealize his or her work; it suggests a capacity of playfulness and imagination. One may observe that a patient is now able to celebrate his or her innate skills and talents instead of seeking reassurance.

Transience is the ability to accept one’s own mortality. The patient demonstrates an ability to surrender the need to be omnipotent, first in relationship to the analyst and then subsequently in other relationships. Humor, if it is not a defensive posture (e.g., sarcasm may be a defensive signal), suggests an acceptance of transience. When humor is indicative of a transformation of narcissism, the patient has experienced a strengthening of his or her values and ideals. A genuine sense of humor, according to Kohut, is witnessed by the analyst as the patient’s ego is able to experience amusement when reflecting upon old rigid configurations of the ego (e.g., grandiose fantasies and exhibitionistic strivings).

Wisdom, or at the very least a modicum of wisdom, may emerge at the end of a successful analysis. Like Freud, Kohut suggested that analysis never truly ends but he maintained that a successful analysis is eventually terminated. During the concluding phases of analysis, wisdom attained by the analysand helps to maintain self-esteem even upon recognizing personal



limitations. The analysand may exhibit a friendly disposition toward the analyst even though there are conflicts remaining, and the analyst's limitations have been recognized by the patient as well. In brief, human frailties are now tolerated with composure instead of being defended against with tendencies toward self-aggrandizement or infantile idealization.

Within a religious framework, too much interest in the self may be viewed as pride, self-centeredness, selfishness, or sinfulness. Pastoral theologian Donald Capps has written about the narcissist as a tragic self (Capps 1993) who feels more depleted than ever upon the recognition or observation that others receive the mirroring that one desires for oneself. The unmet desire for mirroring triggers a shame response as the grandiose self receives another disappointment. As Capps observes, many faithful Christians reel from the admonitions against seeking praise and recognition which is in itself a tragedy of faith because “[w]hat was a display of healthy narcissism is redefined as an expression of self-centeredness, and the Christian faith is used to legitimate the renunciation of our desire to be mirrored. This is tragic, for mirroring is at the very heart of the Christian gospel. Quite simply but profoundly, it is the form and means by which the depleted self experiences divine grace, the benediction of God” (Capps 1993, p. 64). Thus, in part, Christian faith may be an impediment to the analytic process, especially if the narcissistic vulnerability presented by an analysand is a wounded grandiose self.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Kohut, Heinz
- ▶ Libido
- ▶ Narcissism
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Selfobject
- ▶ Self Psychology
- ▶ Transference

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## Selfobject

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## Definition

Selfobject: An object which is used in the service of the self or objects which are experienced as part of the self and provide a function for the self.



## Discussion

The selfobject is the central psychic apparatus within Heinz Kohut's theory of self psychology. To understand this ambiguous concept, one must understand Kohut's departure from conventional analytic discourse. Kohut's usage of an object significantly differs from the Freudian usage of an object. Freud's object exists, primarily, as the target of libidinal cathexis; whereas Kohut's object is cathected with narcissistic energy in the service of the self. Freud's thinking was bound to the Cartesian dualism of the scientific revolution, in which one is experienced as either a subject (ego) or an object (other). Kohut, on the other hand, recognized the capacity for internalization of the experiences of the subject-in-relation to the object and the object-in-relation to the subject. Accordingly, the selfobject is those dimensions of our experience of another person that relates to this person's functions in establishing our sense of self.

Based on his groundbreaking work with traditionally unanalyzable individuals, narcissistic patients, and those with other disorders of the self, Kohut established a bipolar theory of development that contrasted with the traditional drive model proposed by Freud. Extending the works of Margaret Mahler, Heinz Hartmann, and Edith Jacobson, Kohut's work sought to develop a theory of self. For Kohut, the infantile or rudimentary self develops along two primary continuums in relation to others, the grandiose self and the idealized parental image.

Kohut viewed narcissism not as pathological, but as a necessary component of healthy development. In his theory, the infant must develop a sense of confirmation through the mirroring of the parent. Thus, the parent must reflect back the grandiosity of the child as a means of her acceptance and participation in the infant's developing sense of self and self-agency. Children are biologically and environmentally dependent on an (m)other for food, shelter, and nurturance. This other provides critical tasks by fulfilling physiological and psychological needs that the child cannot fulfill herself, though the child will experience the other as an extension of herself. Effective mirroring builds the child's internal confirmation of her

self-agency through the development of healthy selfobjects. These internalizations will aid her by mobilizing her to act on the world and to have her needs met. If the need for mirroring is absent or inadequate, the child will grow to feel deficient and will spend her life seeking the selfobject to fulfill this gap within herself. Psychic structures of self are built through the process of transmuting internalizations. Through the process of optimal frustration of the child's narcissistic needs by the parent, the child's emergent self develops. The emergent self will eventually provide mirroring and idealizing through mature relations and the external/internal functions of mature selfobjects.

According to Kohut, one's experience of self is the unconscious experience(s) of self in relation to objects, therefore self is selfobjects. Thus, as an individual experiences a sense of "I," he/she is inextricably bound to the "I" in relation to the particular "other" to whom he/she is experientially connected. Therefore, the experience of self differs across time, contexts, and relationships. The concept of a selfobject refers not to an object in the interpersonal sense of the word, but to the inner experience of an object; therefore, the selfobject is defined by our inner experience of the object and its function in establishing a sense of self. Put more simply, selfobjects are not necessarily selfs or objects, but one's internal subjective experience of the relationship and its functions for the self.

It is important to note that the rudimentary infantile self is bound to the experience of external others and their selfobject functions. As the individual matures, selfobjects may not necessarily be experiences with a physical manifestation of an other, but may be one's dynamic experience of a piece of art, music, literature or religious traditions, beliefs, and associated matters. Mature individuals can turn to selfobject functions of symbolized abstractions to meet their deepest self needs, as we are never fully independent of our deepest self needs.

In his interview with Robert L. Randall, a young theologian, Kohut briefly outlines the theological implications of self psychology. For Kohut, the role of religion could not be simply reduced to one dimension of the self, though with

this said, his focus on the idealizing needs and the role of religion is worth noting. According to Kohut, the core nuclear self is developed through mirroring, idealizing, and the optimal frustration of these needs. Through the optimal responsiveness of the caregiver in meeting the mirroring and idealizing needs, and the eventual frustration of those needs, the child slowly internalizes the selfobject functions and the nuclear self emerges. The parent must allow the child to idealize him or her, essentially merging with the perceived strength found within the parent. In the rudimentary child unable to meet her own needs, this process may be internalized in ways such as, “You are perfect, and I am a part of you, so I am perfect.” As mentioned above, the mature individual never outgrows the basic self needs, though they are altered through the usage of mature selfobject relations. Accordingly, God is the perfect idealizable object. The sense of belonging to a religious tradition or having a personal relationship with God may, through the process of merger and idealization, align one with God’s perfection.

A benevolent image of God may provide the mirroring and idealizing functions needed during times of distress. It is not unusual to hear an individual state that “God is my strength,” indeed the psalmist even made this assertion. Thus, faith or one’s faith may function as an organizing selfobject experience, providing psychic structure and experiences of self leading towards equilibrium, cohesiveness, well-being, and esteem. Individual differences are uniquely respected within this conceptualization, as one’s experience of a religious experience is not internalized and experienced in the same manner as another’s. The religious experience of hearing a moving sermon, participation in the Eucharist, or the symbol of Christ on the cross becomes internalized sources of self through the experience and selfobject functions of these abstractions. In the Muslim tradition, the Koran and recitation of Koranic verses may hold substantial symbolic selfobject functions for individuals of this faith. The Koran soothes, supports, and strengthens the Muslim through its subjective and shared selfobject functions.

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Kohut, Heinz
- ▶ Narcissism
- ▶ Object Relations Theory
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Relational Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Self Psychology

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## Sex and Religion

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Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
 Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me  
 (John Donne, *Holy Sonnet 15*).

Sexual and religious experiences have in common characteristics conveyed by such words as *desire, mystery, ritual, passion, ecstasy, and union*. Ideally we go to religious services and “to bed” because our bodies and our psyches *desire* something beyond ourselves. There is a sense of awe and mystery associated with both

activities and certain *rituals* that contribute to *passion* and, when things go well, to *ecstasy* in both. The fact that, for some, such an analogy will smack of sacrilege or even heresy only indicates the depth of the split between these two natural human activities. If we have a deeply ingrained horror of mixing sex and religion, this has not always been so.

To begin as far back as we have records of religious experience, we would have to look to the Paleolithic (Old Stone Age) period to such sites as the great painted caves and prehistoric settlement ruins in southern France. There we would find, among other objects, abstract and stylized drawings of what appear to be female genitalia and paintings of strange humanoid male figures with animal heads and pronounced genitals dancing before great horned beasts. The themes of the paintings and related figurines, and the dark and moist painted caves themselves, as many scholars have pointed out, suggest not prehistoric bathroom graffiti but myths of a goddess-based religion in which human sexuality, centered on the woman, serves as a metaphor for the hoped-for fertility of the humans of the given tribes and of the surrounding earth with its potential plant and animal food sources.

A natural development of the Paleolithic goddess mythology took place in the Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) and Neolithic (New Stone Age) periods, in which the female, now clearly a mother goddess associated with the emerging practices of agriculture and animal husbandry, was often depicted in the act of giving birth, as, for example, in the famous case of the goddess on sanctuary walls and in figurines at the site called Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia (modern Turkey). Appropriately, the goddess at Çatal Hüyük was accompanied in her many birthing representations by a male fertility principle in the form of a bull.

The sacred marriage of the Great Goddess and the Bull of Heaven – of Earth and Sky – would be celebrated as a central act in the various forms of the Sumero-Babylonian religion in Mesopotamia throughout the Copper and Iron Ages. It was celebrated, for instance, in various “hymns” which today’s religious people would probably

consider to be pornographic and sacrilegious. In one hymn, the goddess Inanna calls out:

My vulva, the sacred horn,  
Heaven’s vessel  
Is eager, like the new moon, to be full.  
My fallow land desires a plow  
Who will plow my moist ground?

The goddess being impregnated and giving birth to new life was a logical and almost inevitable early metaphor for hunter gatherers and especially for agriculturalists that depended on the fertility of earth for survival. And it is in this context that the depositing of the male seed in the womb or any plant seed in the ground would have been expressed metaphorically by way of such mythical figures as the god who pours out his life-giving fluid and the dying and buried or “planted” god who returns in the spring.

The process by which sexuality begins to get a bad name in religion seems to coincide with the demise of female power and political importance in the face of a rising male-dominated, warrior-based patriarchy. In ancient Mesopotamia, for example, we find a significant change from early-second-millennium BCE Sumerian stories of a positive relationship between the hero-king Dumuzi (Tammuz) and the goddess Inanna (Ishtar) to a late Babylonian version of the stories, in which the heroic Gilgamesh scornfully refuses the advances of the same goddess. The situation in which the patriarchal hero refuses the sexual advances of the now suspect, strength-draining female is repeated in other contexts around the world. The Irish hero Cuchulainn’s refusal of Queen Maeve – an avatar of the old fertility goddess Morrigan – is a Celtic example. The Bible contains stories of the harm that can come when the otherwise powerful and dominant male is seduced. The stories of Adam and Eve and Samson and Delilah are only two of many such stories in which the femme fatale has replaced the old fertility goddess. In Greece it is Pandora, whose name really means “gift giver” and who was in all likelihood once a goddess of agricultural abundance, who is said by Hesiod to have released the evils of the world from her famous box.

Nowhere is the antagonism between sexuality and religion more evident than in the three great monotheistic or Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as they have evolved. The “People of the Book” envision a world created alone by a distinctly mateless god, Yahweh-God-Allah. Although there are other examples of ex nihilo (from nothing) creations by male gods, the more natural metaphor for the conception and birth of the universe has involved the union of male and female. Whether by way of a primal mound (literally a pregnant Earth), the primal maternal waters, the cosmic egg, or intercourse between primal god and goddess, the feminine aspect of nature, with only a few exceptions, plays a significant role in the world’s creation stories. This is true, for example, of most animistic religions as well as of Hinduism, Shinto, Taoism, and certain branches of Buddhism, although, it must be said, each of these religious cultures, like the Abrahamic traditions, has tended to place women in an inferior position to men in human society.

The exclusion of the feminine from godhead in the Abrahamic religions developed in part, of course, from the concept of a single deity and the desire of Jews, Christians, and Muslims to separate themselves from so-called Pagan traditions. Furthermore, the depiction of the Abrahamic god – Yahweh, God, or Allah – as essentially male is a reflection of the realities of cultures that had long been patriarchal. It might well be argued, however, that patriarchy itself, including as it does the insistence on God’s maleness and singularity and the relegation of women to secondary status, is, as Karen Armstrong has suggested, “expressive of deep anxiety and repression” (1993, p. 50).

“Repression” is an important word here. We know, for instance, that the Hebrews in Canaan as depicted in the biblical book of Exodus, like most peoples of the ancient world, tended to assimilate the deities of conquered or neighboring peoples. It was only the development of priestly law and early rabbinical condemnation of Canaanite religious practices that led to the repression of the popular worship among the Hebrews of the goddess Asherah (“God’s wife”), for example, in her many, often erotic, aspects. By being stripped

from godhead, sexuality, associated particularly with women, inevitably became tainted by the concept of sin. Women were tempters; women were psychologically and even physically dangerous. Thus, it was Eve who corrupted Adam, initiating, among other things, shameful sex. And it was Delilah who seduced Samson, symbolically castrating him by cutting off his hair.

The repression of the natural relationship between sexuality and religion in the Abrahamic religions has not been limited to story or myth. It is clearly expressed in ritual practices which, whatever their original “religious” or social intent, have resulted in a sense of the essential impurity of certain biological functions associated with human sexuality and an inferior role for women. In effect, religion has been used to reinforce the repressive patriarchal idea of women as the valuable property of men, the necessary but controlled vehicles for pleasure – under certain circumstances – and reproduction.

Christianity and Islam have perpetuated the tradition of the essential impurity of sex and the consequential inferiority of women. The repression of sexuality in Christianity is expressed metaphorically in the depiction of Jesus and his mother in the canonical gospels and dogmas. There the asexuality of Jesus, the virginity of Mary, and Mary’s own immaculate conception form a de facto denial of the sacredness of sexuality itself, a denial that is in conflict with the depictions of holy men and avatars of godhead in other religions – Krishna and Moses, for example. Jesus’ asexuality undermines the theological position that Jesus is God truly sharing our human nature.

Until very recently, Christians and Jews did not ordain women to their clergy ranks. And even now such ordination is denied not only by the more orthodox branches of Judaism but by most Muslims and by the largest sect of Christianity, the Roman Catholic Church. It should be pointed out that this is true in spite of the prominent role played by women in the early organization of Christianity and Islam.

Saul of Tarsus (Saint Paul) preached the “head covered, back of the church” doctrine that greatly resembles the early prohibitions against women studying the *Torah* or praying in the synagogues

or the present restrictions applied to Muslim women in regard to places of prayer. By the second century CE, the North African theologian Tertullian (160–220) saw women as “the devil’s gateway,” a point of view developed by one of the most influential of the “church fathers,” Saint Augustine (354–430), in the doctrine of Original Sin. The first sin, that of Adam and especially Eve, was passed on to humans in the sexual act; he announced an act to which men were enticed by women: “What is the difference, whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman” (see Armstrong 1993, pp. 123–124).

As in the case of Judaism and Christianity, certain Islamic scholars have used often distorted understandings of scripture to justify what can only be called, in spite of various complex and supposedly positive rationales, the oppression of women in such institutions as polygamy, female circumcision, *pardah*, and the denial of basic social and political rights. At the center of this oppression has been the sense of male ownership and a strict double standard in regard to sexual practice. For the Muslim, as for the Christian and Jew, the female and female sexuality are powerful and potentially tempting distractions that can take the believer’s mind away from religion and proper order and threaten male control. For many among the Abrahamic faithful – believers in the one god, a wifeless male god, and his prophets – to accept the equality of women would be to accept what are seen as the chaotic ways of the pagan. In short, the secondary status of women is linked to the doctrines of exclusivity associated with Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

On the other hand, it has been argued by many that the Abrahamic attitude towards sexuality represents an alienation of humans from their humanity. Nietzsche called the Christian God a “crime against life.” And there have, of course, always been challenges within religious traditions to the prevailing view of the incompatibility of sex and religion. Like the ancient hymns to Inanna, the biblical Song of Songs is a celebration of holy sex. And, implicitly or explicitly, mystics of all three Abrahamic religions (and other religions as well) have turned to sexuality for

language that can convey the desire, the mystery, the ritual, the passion, the ecstasy, and the union that together comprise full religious experience.

In a poem of the sixteenth-century Christian Spanish mystic Saint John of the Cross, the Soul sings of its intimate union with God:

O flame of love so living,  
How tenderly you force  
To my soul’s inmost core your fiery probe!  
Since now you’ve no misgiving,  
End it, pursue your course  
And for our sweet encounter tear the robe!

The thirteenth-century Sufi (Muslim mystic) Jelaluddin Rumi used similar imagery to convey his sacred love of a friend, a love inseparable from his love of God:

The Friend comes into my body  
looking for the center, unable  
to find it, draws a blade,  
strikes anywhere.

And later,

Two hands, two feet, two eyes, good,  
as it should be, but no separation  
of the Friend and your loving.  
Any dividing there  
makes other untrue distinctions like “Jew”,  
and “Christian”, and “Muslim”.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Exodus](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [John of the Cross](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Song of Songs](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Sexuality and American Religions

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The academic consideration of sexuality is crucial to the study of American religions. Religious thought, belief, affect, and practices construct and constrain America beliefs about and practices of sexuality. Scholars of American religions should be “thinking sex”: because religious Americans take sex very seriously; and because religious Americans’ thinking about sex has significant material consequences.

Theories of sexuality begin by confronting and complicating the normalization of a heterosexual/homosexual binary. Psychoanalysis helped create and enforce this binary by insisting that sex is the truth of ourselves (Foucault 2012). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, analysts and sexologists began to catalogue and pathologize sexual differences as deviances. Consequentially, psychoanalysts also diagnosed as *deviants* those who engaged in “unusual” sexual behaviors (nonreproductive sex acts, including masturbation as well as same-sex sexual object choices). The semantic space between deviance and deviants is small but significant: while sexology and early psychoanalysis focused on a number of sexual “abnormalities,” their key epistemological innovation was the creation of sex-as-identity. The popular conviction that sex tells us who we *really* are owes much to psychoanalysis; the prevailing organizational structure that emerged from psychoanalysis has been a heterosexual/homosexual binary. Thus, until the late nineteenth century, many people might have engaged in sodomy, but homosexuality as an identity was literally unthinkable (Foucault 2012).

As historian David Halperin (2004) explains, we now find it hard to imagine a world *not* organized around sexual identity – but critical sex theory tries to do just that.

Thinking critically about sex means challenging cultural assumptions about what is “normal” to do with (to, on, in) one’s body, as well as thinking hard about where our ideas of normalcy came from. Critical theories of sex address and trouble the pathologization of difference. Such theories have traditionally focused on individual subjectivity, agency, and resistance.

In short, critical sex theory addresses cultural assumptions about sexual bodies, including issues related but not limited to gender and sexual practices. While contemporary theorizations of sex began with challenging heteronormativity (the primacy and normalization of heterosexuality), this school of thought now addresses homosexuality as an identity, same-sex sexual object choice as a practice, nontraditional gender presentation (transsexuality, transgender, intersex), and transgressive sexual practices (e.g., celibacy, BDSM, non-monogamy, sex work). Critical theories of sexuality consider all those who are or feel marginalized based on their sexual practices and/or identities, as well as their bodily identities and/or presentations (Halperin 1997, p. 62).

Several key premises about sexuality should inform scholarly engagement with American religions. Foremost among these must be the terms’ universal importance: cultural assumptions about “normal” gendered behaviors and sexual practices shape us all (Sedgwick 2008). Thus, a theoretically rigorous approach to sexuality in American religions must attend to masculinity as well as femininity and account for cis- and transgender as well as intersex and gender-queer presentations. American religious scholarship informed by sexuality studies should moreover account for how groups are shaped by their relationships to hetero- as well as homosexuality; such an inquiry should also interrogate how, when, and why certain groups institute transgressive sexual practices (e.g., non-monogamy, cross-generational relationships, celibacy).

Second, the study of sexuality is neither interchangeable with nor reducible to the study of



gender. Rather, each term informs the other. Queer theorist Judith Butler suggests that heteronormativity – the cultural assumption that heterosexuality is both exclusively natural and universal – creates gender by requiring binary roles. Butler calls this the “heterosexual matrix,” which “assumes that for bodies to make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (Butler 1990, p. 151). That is, heteronormativity makes sense of sexual bodies in hierarchical, binary, reproductive terms – and thus compels certain gendered behaviors.

Finally, western cultures value some sexual acts and gendered behaviors more than others: those acts and behaviors usually correspond to a hierarchical, binary, reproductive understanding of human embodiment. Those who engage in “normal” sexual acts and gendered behaviors are considered sane, respectable, law-abiding, worthy of social mobility, institutional support, and marital benefits (Rubin 1993, p. 12). Unrepentant sexual transgressors and “gender outlaws” (cf. Bornstein 2012) may be accused of mental illness, disrespectability, and criminality, as well as restricted social and physical mobility, loss of institutional support, and economic sanctions (Rubin 1993, p. 12). Mainstream cultures often interpret unconventional religious beliefs or practices as evidence of sexual and/or gender transgression, and engagement in sexual and/or gender transgression often invites mainstream suspicion toward marginal religions’ theologies and praxes.

Accepting these premises – the universal importance, imbricated construction, and hierarchical cultural valuation of gender identities and sexual behaviors – allows insight into the function and significance of sexuality studies for the field of American religions. The insights provided by sexuality studies allow scholars to interrogate the ways American religions use sexuality to create space for difference, secure access to privilege, or are denied privilege on the grounds of sexual transgression.

It is moreover important to note that “thinking” sex does not exclude the consideration of sexuality

in conservative religious movements, such as Orthodox Judaism or Christian ex-gay ministries (Gerber 2011). Much critical work on sexuality focuses on transgression of and resistance to norms. As American religious historian Ann Taves (1997) notes, “recent textbooks of American religions... discuss sexuality explicitly only when it ‘deviates’ from the norm” (p. 28). But disrupting the presumed naturalness of heterosexuality also allows scholars to interrogate instances in which religious people practice and valorize conservative sexualities.

Scholars of American religions must also resist “overthinking” sex – which is to say that sex is religiously and politically significant, but also one among many concerns for scholars of embodied religions (Jakobsen and Pellegrini 2004, p. 139). Focusing on sexuality in American religions does not exempt scholars from considering other cultural factors – race, education, geographic location, economic status – that construct and constrain religious belief and practice.

Scholarship of sexuality and American religions engages the field of psychology at several points. For example, ex-gay ministries such as Exodus International and Love in Action, maintaining that homosexuality is not in keeping with Christian doctrine, advocated “reparative” or “conversion therapy” to shift the sexual orientation of nonheterosexuals (Erzen 2006). [Notably, the president of Exodus International (perhaps the most visible of such ministries) stated unequivocally in June 2012 that the organization no longer focuses on sexual reorientation (Gerber 2012)]. The American Psychiatric Association (2000) has condemned any treatment “based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the *a priori* assumption that a patient should change his/her sexual homosexual orientation”; however, a number of ex-gay ministries continue to support conversion therapy. Similarly, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints continued to advocate electroshock therapy as a treatment for homosexuality years after the APA condemned the practice; pressure from the APA is thought to have finally discouraged electroshock therapy at Brigham Young University (Vance 2008).

Psychology also finds itself in tension with sexuality and religion in the theology and

practice of Scientology. The Church of Scientology has officially denounced psychology and psychiatry as harmful and deceptive, and homosexuality as sexual perversion or illness (Hubbard 1969, 2007). The Church's current position on homosexuality is contested; however, Church leaders in San Diego publicly supported Proposition 8, a 2008 legislative attempt to ban same-sex marriage in California. At the same time, queer author and activist Kate Bornstein (2012) recounts being attracted to the Church because thetans (Scientologists' "eternal souls") have no gender. Scholars might draw upon such cases as Scientology and ex-gay ministries for a richer consideration of the imbrication of sexuality, psychology, and American religions.

Critical consideration of sexuality in North American religious scholarship requires taking seriously the embodied construction of religious difference. Critical theories of sexuality in conversation with psychology encourage scholars to think differently – deeper, broader, more carefully – about what sex is, what it can mean, and what it can do. As such, “thinking sex” facilitates rich and theoretically rigorous scholarship of psychology and American religions.

## See Also

- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQI and Queer Studies](#)
- ▶ [Religion, Sexuality, and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Transgender and Gender Identity](#)

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## Sexuality and Buddhism

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## Sexual Ethics and the Buddhist Precepts

There are two codes of sexual ethics underpinning all schools of Buddhism, those regarding monastics and those for the laity. The monastic code for all

monks and nuns across all three Buddhist vehicles (Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana) is simple and straightforward – total celibacy. The reason for this is that undertaking to train in the monastic code involves the renunciation of sexual desire, which is understood to be caused by a form of dissatisfaction that detracts from spiritual practice. Monks and nuns are required to adhere to strict vows of celibacy in accordance with the Vinaya, which includes refraining from masturbation and nongenital contact with the opposite sex, such as hugging or kissing. Private meetings between monastics and the opposite sex are also restricted to protect the deterioration of the vows. Such meetings usually involve a chaperone, such as trusted upasaka (lay Buddhist holding the five precepts), who will accompany the monastic to such a meeting.

For lay people the sexual ethics are somewhat different and to a large degree a matter of voluntary conduct. A lay follower of any Buddhist vehicle may volunteer to undertake training in the five precepts. Practitioners of the third precept undertake the training to abstain from sexual misconduct. However, for lay people sexual expression in the context of an appropriate relationship is understood to be a healthy method of dealing with the consequences of having a human body in the desire realms. We all have sexual hormones driving us to reproduce and/or experience sexual pleasure, and for most people this is not something we can conquer voluntarily. However, there are situations where sexual behavior can lead to violations of other precepts, and it is in these situations when a lay follower is encouraged to abstain. Precepts that can be violated easily when not training in the third precept properly include the second precept “I undertake the training to abstain from taking that which is not given” and the fourth precept “I undertake the training to abstain from false speech.”

### **What Constitutes Sexual Misconduct?**

Sexual behavior towards or with a monk or nun is always a form of sexual misconduct, as is any form of nonconsensual sex as defined by the laws of the land and at a given time, including rape, molestation, and sex with minors. Other areas of

sexual activity that have led to ethical debates among Buddhists are mentioned below.

### **Monogamy Versus Non-Monogamy**

When lay people train in the Buddhist precepts, each situation which risks undermining those precepts should be assessed individually using wisdom and compassion. One can assess whether sexual behavior constitutes misconduct through reference to the other precepts and a consideration of potential consequences of the behavior. For example, extramarital affairs may involve lying to others because the truth would cause suffering to other people. As people tend to find out the truth in the longer term, then, to avoid causing suffering, those training in the third precept should try to abstain from this kind of behavior. Of course it is possible that taking another sexual partner than one’s spouse is consensual and that everyone involved knows what’s going on, but this kind of situation is rare. A downloadable booklet on *Buddhism and Polyamory (2006)*, written by Zen practitioner H.E Hoogstra, argues that what causes suffering in non-monogamous relationships is attachment, not the sexual behavior itself in any intrinsic sense. She argues that non-monogamous committed relationships can offer the greatest opportunity to overcome attachment and its allies, such as jealousy, greed and hatred. Casual sex outside of a committed relationship may also risk hurting others who find themselves becoming more attached or emotionally involved than they anticipated, due to the emotional bonding that can occur during the sexual act. However, the truth is that there can be no hard and fast rules about how to apply the third precept, except in relation to the other precepts and the specific situation and people involved.

### **Homosexuality, Bisexuality, Transgendered Sexuality, and Nongenital Sexual Acts**

There are some debates among Buddhists about these matters. Those holding proscriptive views about nonheterosexual relationships are being

influenced more by their predominant cultural attitudes than explicit prohibitions laid down by the Buddha. On the whole, the Buddha never said anything explicit about the ethics of gender in relation to sex acts, but he did refer to the unethical nature of sexual behaviors which involve violence, manipulation, deceit, or intoxication. Whether these behaviors took place between members of the same gender or different genders was not mentioned. In Ancient India the third precept discouraged sexual exploitative practices such as abduction, forced marriage, rape, incest, sex with minors, sex with monks or nuns, and coerced adultery. In certain cultures additional texts that comment on the given teachings of that tradition also include commentary on homosexuality, bisexuality, and nongenital sexual behavior as forms of misconduct, because they contravene traditional cultural norms around what is deemed acceptable. However, nothing was stated explicitly in the original Sutras about whether same sex relationships constituted misconduct, rather all sexual behaviors were understood to lead to suffering, as sex tends to evoke attachment, which leads to craving and sorrow. Even when sex takes place in an appropriate relationship, it leads to pleasure associated with a release of tension, but this is impermanent and will soon be replaced by further dissatisfaction and craving. This is why the Buddha exhorted those wanting liberation to abstain from sexual behavior as far as possible.

## Pornography

As Winton Higgins says in his excellent talk on “Buddhist Sexual Ethics” about the third precept,

... the precept’s ambit, especially today, is obviously much wider and covers violating behaviours that the women’s movement among others has rightly politicised(...) Where power relations are prevalent, the power relations themselves have a gender component, and opportunities and cultural encouragement for abuse are ubiquitous. Among other things, sexual harassment is harming and involves taking the non-given, based on a deep-seated presumption - and delusion - in male conditioning about the constant sexual availability of

women(...). Rape in marriage is strikingly similar. Also violent and misogynist pornography which creates a hostile and unsafe environment for women and induces moronic and demonic mind-states in men, including delusions about the nature of women and what they want. So both sexes suffer harm. Publication or use of pornography which eroticises women’s subordination thus plainly contravenes the third precept. But by no mean all pornography does so, and other sexually explicit material might be equally innocent.

The proliferation of free pornography available to download via mobile phones and the internet was not something the Buddha could have predicted, and so sexual ethics around the use and abuse of pornography have never been covered in the Sutras. However, the issue is highly relevant today and arguably leads many men and women into mutual sexual objectification and related acts of psychological violence against themselves and each other which need to be reflected upon mindfully. Equally the Sutras’ emphasis on monogamous marriage as the most suitable vehicle for a layman to satisfy sexual desires must be understood in its specific historical and cultural context – the Ancient India of 2,600 years ago. Contemporary sexualities and the range of possible relationships that can satisfy a need for loving companionship and sexual fulfilment for lay people are now very different. Buddhists need to be mindful of the ever-changing and impermanent nature of the conditioned responses we have to our relationships and be open to exploring more creative ways of meeting our needs for intimacy than just conforming to sets of prescribed social norms, especially those recommended by the Buddha for his community of followers in Ancient India. Desires and feelings are impermanent, especially sexual desire, as is romantic love and even the love we feel for our friends. This is because everything we relate with, including our own hearts and minds, is evolving and changing all the time. Any attempt to solidify our responses and needs into the conditioned categories of culturally normative relationships, such as monogamous heterosexual marriage, can be regarded as non-Dharmic. However, if this kind of arrangement does meet the needs of the individual people concerned, then this may be right for them. But it is not Dharmic to promote

a socially sanctioned relationship structure as spiritually superior to other arrangements, as the same relationship structure will not work for everybody and is even unlikely to work for the same person or couple across their lifetime.

Higgins writes:

The Buddha (. . .) did not waste a word of condemnation on non-procreative sex (hence no list of no-no's), but he inspired thousands to ordain into celibate monasticism and so leave baby making behind altogether. This was not because he disapproved of sex or babies, but in an era when a non-celibate usually ended up with many children to feed, clothe and house and so had little freedom or time for spiritual pursuits, celibacy made a lot of practical sense for many people with a spiritual urge. Needless to say, the choice is not nearly as stark in developed countries today, where contraception is available and earning a living is a good deal easier.

In conclusion, the third precept on sexual ethics in relationships must be interpreted in relation to the other precepts and the specific situation one is dealing with. Anything less than that would be reactive and habitual rather than mindful and liberating.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Mahāyāna: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Theravāda: Philosophy](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism's Vajrayāna: Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)

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## Sexuality and Judaism

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Jewish attitudes toward sexuality have shifted across times and locations. Even today, Jewish ideas about gender and sexuality vary greatly. Historian David Biale (1997) has argued that Judaism cannot be understood as either exclusively repressive or accepting of sexuality; instead, Jewish tradition is replete with examples of pervasive ambivalence toward sexuality and the body. Contemporary Jews are heirs to a legacy of conflicting arguments about sexuality. What has remained constant though is a focus on marriage as the ideal space for sexual activity. However, for centuries, rabbis, Jewish intellectuals, and others have debated what is sexually permissible and forbidden within and outside marriage.

The expectations to marry and procreate are as central to Judaism as the expectation to refrain from food on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. While attitudes toward sexuality and sexual practices have changed throughout Jewish history, most Jewish groups and authorities have restricted sexual intercourse to marriage. The premise for situating sex and reproduction within matrimony is based on biblical creation stories. Rebecca Alpert (1997) suggests that

The creation of humans as male *and* female, not male or female, presents [Jews] with the paradigm of the complementary coupling of men and women as essential to human experience. . . .suppl[ying] basic explanations about gender, complementarity, sexuality, and compulsory heterosexuality (p. 22).



Thus, Jewish tradition has maintained that only two genders exist and has required everyone to enter married sexual relationships where biological progeny will be a possible outcome. Marriage in Judaism, however, has not always been an arrangement between one man and one woman. Polygamy was sanctioned and common for many prominent Biblical figures. The patriarch Jacob, for example, had two wives and two concubines. Polygamy remained permissible within Jewish law and was not officially circumscribed for Ashkenazi Jews (Jews primarily from Eastern and Central Europe) until about 1000 CE.

Jewish law has always required that everyone marry, and for much of Jewish history, marriages were arranged relationships. During the European Enlightenment though, Jewish intellectual reformers (the *maskilim*), influenced by new approaches to sexuality, romance, and marriage, opposed arranged marriages, asserting that the ability to freely select one's spouse is necessary for a healthy sexuality (Biale 1997). But even within marriage, sexuality has remained largely regulated by Jewish law. For example, the Jewish legal precept of *onah* demands that husbands regularly engage in sexual relations with their wives. For centuries though, rabbis have debated how often husbands are required to engage in intercourse and when (and if) it is permissible to have sex for pleasure or only for procreation. Jewish law also dictates that wives are not to engage in intercourse while menstruating every month, as well as for the 7 days after all menstrual bleeding has ceased. Known as *niddah* ("seclusion"), at the conclusion of those days, the wife immerses herself in a mikveh (purifying ritual bath) and may then resume sexual relations with her husband. In contemporary times, few non-Orthodox Jews observe *onah* or *niddah* (Telushkin 1991).

Ancient Jewish law allows husbands and wives to engage in anal and oral sex, as well as various sexual positions, as long as sex is done with the intent of procreation. One sexual activity forbidden for most of Jewish history, however, is male masturbation. The *Zohar*, a chief Kabbalistic text, treats male masturbation as a heinous, almost unforgivable sin considered worse than adultery. Known as a mystical form of Judaism, Kabbalah

began between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, and Kabbalists were interested in esoteric connections between God and creation. Kabbalistic writings hold that the sexual union of husbands and wives brings together the masculine and feminine powers of the Divine. Sex, therefore, has cosmic consequences. Kabbalists circumscribed male masturbation as a violation of Jewish sexual norms for, among other things, failing to unite the masculine and feminine in intercourse. For much of Jewish law, any sexual act that deviates from the sanctified union of the male and female, such as masturbation, is expressly forbidden.

Female masturbation is not given anywhere near the attention that male masturbation receives. In fact, most Jewish texts on sexuality, until the contemporary period, were written by and addressed to men. Ancient and medieval writers and codifiers of Jewish law did believe, though, that women have a sexuality. More specifically, they believed that, unlike men, women could not control their sexual desires. Because of their presumed inability to restrain their sexuality, extensive restrictions were placed on women. Jewish law, for example, forbids women from touching men unless they are a relative. Women must dress modestly, and they are to be separated from men during prayer services. These constraints also purportedly serve to prevent men from being tempted by women's ever-present sexual aura. Like the laws of *onah* and *niddah*, in the present day, these gender restrictions are largely rejected by non-Orthodox Jews.

Sexual activity occurring between two women has, historically, not been regarded by most Jewish authorities as an especially heinous violation. The Bible contains no explicit condemnation of female same-sex relations. Ancient rabbis only briefly chastised female same-sex behavior, and not until Maimonides, the twelfth-century codifier of Jewish law, was much written on the topic. Even Maimonides regarded female same-sex sexual activity as a minor offense to be monitored and punished by husbands and fathers. Presumably because penile penetration is not involved, lesbian sex for Maimonides neither claimed a woman's virginity nor aroused accusations of adultery if she was married.



Following one biblical verse though, male same-sex intercourse carries with it the threat of the death penalty. Primarily based on two verses in Leviticus, Jewish law unequivocally condemns male same-sex sexual activity. Rabbis of the Talmud even categorize the prohibition against male-male sex as *gilui arayot*, meaning that a person should sacrifice his life before committing such a sin. Not until late in the twentieth century did rabbis begin to formally reevaluate the prohibitions against same-sex relationships and sexual activities.

In examining contemporary Jewish perspectives on sexuality, Alpert (2003) writes that, “Although remaining committed to marriage as the best option, liberal Jews have abandoned other prohibitions around sexuality” (p. 186). Therefore, for most non-Orthodox Jews who are not as closely bound to Jewish law, prohibitions against masturbation, sex during menstruation, and premarital sex are generally obsolete. And with the emergence of the gay rights movement in the 1970s, attitudes toward gays and lesbians have also shifted in many Jewish communities. Synagogues organized primarily by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Jews started to appear in Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, and other major cities in the 1970s. In 1985, the Reconstructionist Movement, an American-born progressive denomination of Judaism, ordained its first openly gay rabbi. The Reform Movement endorsed the ordination of openly gay rabbis in 1990, and the Conservative Movement reached the same position in 2006. Orthodox Judaism, which unlike Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative Judaism does not have one unifying governing body, generally continues to proscribe same-sex sexual activity, and no Orthodox rabbinical school has publically endorsed the ordination of gay rabbis.

In a qualitative study of 18 gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews, psychologists Halbertal and Koren (2007) found that their participants could not be described by earlier development models of homosexuality (e.g., Cass 1979) where identity synthesis is seen as the ultimate goal. According to Halbertal and Koren, being gay was almost always incompatible with being Orthodox, writing, “Neither one of these identities is assimilated

into the other – that there is neither synthesis nor resolution of the fundamental opposition between them” (p. 42). Their findings, therefore, challenge earlier models of identity development which claim that a synthesis of one’s identities is necessary for healthy functioning. They conclude that many gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews renegotiate their identities in various contexts and that, “the picture that emerges is rather of two mutually exclusive selves that, following formative periods of intense conflict and struggle, manage ultimately to achieve a working coexistence within the same body and mind” (p. 40).

Asserting similar findings, in a study of both Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jewish gay men in Great Britain, Coyle and Rafalin (2000) maintained that all but one of their 21 respondents reported periods of identity conflict in trying to reconcile their gay and Jewish identities. The participants commonly remarked that they had experienced pressures from their families and from Jewish institutions to enter heterosexual marriages and to have children. Additionally, Coyle and Rafalin found that, “several participants described identity conflict in gay contexts and related experiences of anti-Semitism in gay communities and organizations” (p. 17). In other words, the respondents suggested that the difficulty of synthesizing their gay and Jewish identities exists not only within Jewish spheres but also within predominantly gay circles where anti-Jewish sentiments may have prevalence. Their study also highlights how the challenge of identity synthesis was difficult for Jews from both observant and secular backgrounds. Thus, with regard to Judaism and sexuality, expectations to marry and reproduce remain a feature of many Jewish institutions and communities, regardless of their adherence or connection to formal, rabbinic Jewish law.

## See Also

- ▶ [Hasidism](#)
- ▶ [Homosexuality](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Law](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Sexual Mores](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)

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## Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views

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Feminism has taken a variety of iterations throughout the history of the psychology of religion. In the 1970s, feminism emerged in the West within the fields of theology and psychology, challenging psychological theories, methods, and applications, as well as the androcentrism of many religious traditions. This included questions about the images of the divine, the role and authority of sacred texts, and the power of redemptive figures.

Feminist views in relation to sex and sexuality are rooted in an awareness of the dualisms that have so often pervaded Western society, especially those between sex and God, spirituality and sexuality, body and spirit, and pleasure and goodness. It recognizes that many dualisms can be traced to androcentrism within society, including the religious and psychological traditions. (For a full discussion of the historical development of this phenomenon, see this encyclopedia's article “► [Sex and Religion](#),” which chronicles the development from goddess-based religions to present religious traditions). These dualisms, products of a patriarchal and hierarchical worldview, have often included a deep suspicion of erotic love, as well as a privileging of men over women, and heterosexuality over homosexuality. They are also often linked to other forms of injustice, including racial, social, and socioeconomic, as they have rendered the male experience normative in religious spheres and in psychological research and theory.

As feminism evolved, so did the realization of the diversity within feminism, both in ethnicity and social location. There was increased attention in psychological research and theories to women of nonwhite ethnicities, although textbooks and more mainstream publications tended to still reflect a white, middle class focus. Multiculturalism was also showing its face in the theological realm, with the emergence of womanist and *mujerista* theologies, and burgeoning voices of women from around the globe. More recent trends in feminism in the religious and psychological realms inquire as to the relationship between feminism and postmodernism. Within this discourse, postmodern approaches examine the socially constructed nature of knowledge, including concepts and theories, and ask whose interests are being served by particular constructions. This takes the form of critiquing the scientific method and also analyzing the implicit assumptions embedded in psychological and theological concepts (i.e., gender, sex, and objectivity). Postmodern feminists suggest that the production of knowledge privileges certain views, while discounting or marginalizing others. They are attentive to the power of language, and they examine how language is used to frame women's experience.

The views of feminists in relation to sex and religion function as critical, inclusive, analytic, and constructive. As part of the critical project, they frequently engage in critique of classic texts and theories. For example, they examine the absence of women's experience in Freud's formulation of the Oedipus complex, noting that women are only present as an object of their sons' incestuous desires. Others critique Jung for his tendency to downplay personal relationships in favor for eternal transpersonal archetypes. Feminist scholars in psychology of religion also participate in an inclusive project, whereby they name and incorporate women's lives and experiences into the research agendas of the field. They ask how women's experiences of the divine feminine and of embodiment shape the ways that they approach their own sexuality. The third feminist project is the analytical stance, which questions the ways that gender shapes knowledge, culture, and research. This involves an increased attention to the role of multicultural issues in this dialogue, including the importance of social location and the ways in which current gender scholarship and postmodernism affect discourses around and about sexuality. Finally, the work of feminists on sex and religion involves a constructive effort. It recognizes that much of the pervading discourse around sex and religion has functioned to harm individuals and communities throughout time, and thus, new discourses must be constructed as counter and corrective. Some have disputed Freud's stance towards sexuality, offering instead an alternative theory of sexuality embedded in a relational context.

An example of this would be Miranda Shaw's work on the place of women in Tantric Buddhism (Shaw 1994). Shaw first critiques the tradition that sees women as marginal and ancillary within Tantric Buddhism. She argues that Buddhist studies have lagged behind other fields when approaching the subject of gender and have posited male dominance as a fixed principle within Buddhist history. Through employing methods of women's studies, historiography, and translation, Shaw engages in an inclusive project. She seeks to reclaim the agency of women throughout history, exhibiting that women played a central,

active role in Tantric Buddhism in India; they acted as gurus, created new rituals, and were worshipped as divine beings. Shaw then participates in an analytic project, questioning how gender and colonialism shaped the views of devadasis – women who played significant social roles as artists, scholars, and performers of ritual dance and worship. She proposes that colonial powers, uncomfortable with women who were engaging in nonmarital sexual activity and/or were religiously exalted, demonized these women, labeling them "harlots" and "sluts." Finally, her constructive effort involves an in-depth examination of the Tantric union, a ritual that involves the joining of the male and female in a sexual union that ultimately leads to enlightenment. Shaw demonstrates that, far from being a degrading ritual where the woman was sexually exploited for male spiritual gain, the Tantric union was an ultimate expression of balance and equality. Women were, in fact, some of the first teachers who imparted instructions for the implementation of sexual union as a means of liberation and were essential in the creation of an atmosphere of male/female reciprocity.

### **Relational View**

Certain feminists doing work on the intersection of pastoral psychology and feminist liberation theology build on the work of object relations and use such figures as Fairbairn and Winnicott to develop a relational approach to mental health. This branch suggests that "we become persons literally in and by relation, it is only in 'mutually empowering and empathetic relationships' that our wellbeing can be secured and sustained" (Heyward 1989). This view departs from more traditional individualistic notions of psychiatry, psychology, and psychotherapy, which link mental health to the process of becoming an "autonomous" or "individuated" self. In contrast, these feminists propose that one's mental health is ultimately linked to and enhanced by one's relation to others, by connection as opposed to separation. Not wanting to slip into the fallacy that women realize their mental health when they live

for others, rather than for themselves, they believe that all humans live into health and wholeness when they live *with* others, in relationships that embody certain characteristics, including greater energy (or zest) for the self and for action on behalf of the community, a greater sense of self worth, and an increased sense of connection to one another and to persons outside of the relationship (Miller 1986). The flip side of this view is that the absence of mutually empowering and empathetic relationships is the root of abuse.

For feminists who hold views similar to this, sex is embedded within this relational context and ultimately contributes to deeper relationality with one another and with the broader world. Some feminists address the connection between the sacred and erotic, others focus more on the role of sexual pleasure, and nearly all highlight the broader connection of eros and sexuality to issues of social justice. Those who address the relationship between the sacred and erotic believe that one explores and experiences the sacred through sexual experiences, as the erotic is a tangible and embodied experience of God's love. Some go far as to define the erotic or God as an experience of "power in right relation" (Miller 1986). This view of the erotic contradicts Freud's view of sexuality, which maintained that sexuality needed to be restrained in order to live into fullness of self (the ego ideal). In this alternate view, sexuality generates "more energy, not less" for justice-related actions in the world. It allows people to experience the depths of power in relation to others as pleasurable and therefore connects people to the larger relationships of power in the world. For these feminists, sexual expression not only beckons people inward but also inspires them towards right action on behalf of the least.

Others in this vein address the undue focus on procreation within sexual discourse, as well as the way that current theological discourses view eros and sexual pleasure. Some maintain that the task of feminism in relationship to sex is to retrieve eros from its problematic place as something needing to be "controlled" by a patriarchal tradition and to grant it a privileged place in human relationships, due to its special power to



**Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views, Fig. 1** The Kiss. Sculpture by Auguste Rodin. Rodin Musée, Paris (Public Domain. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TheKiss.JPG>)

work for justice, mutuality, and solidarity in relationships (Gilson 1995). Others counter the undue focus on procreationism by replacing the emphasis on procreation with an emphasis on pleasure, which itself indicates the fundamental goodness of sex. These feminists argue that pleasure, far from being suspect, communicates both the purpose of sex and its blessed quality. In this view, when pleasure is mutual, it has the power to bind people to one another in relationships of mutuality, love, and justice (Gudorf 1994). For nearly all feminists who espouse these views, the erotic is not limited to monogamous heterosexual relationships. They would maintain that sexual expression needs to be reimagined in terms such as "erotic mutuality," which is not limited by gender, and is characterized by justice and reciprocity which leads to deeper connection and solidarity with others (Fig. 1).

## Goddess and Sexuality

While most of the views mentioned above fall into the Christian tradition, feminist positions regarding sex and religion also build bridges between psychology and goddess spirituality, asserting that the goddess traditions offer helpful tools for speaking about sexuality and sexual expression. In pre-patriarchal goddess-worshipping civilizations, the goddess was associated with the planting and harvesting of crops. As the body of the goddess changed, seeds sprouted, and crops were harvested. The female body was revered for its similarity to the goddess, both in its fertility and sexuality. The narratives that were passed on therefore honored both the goddess and women, as the processes of the female body (birth, menstruation, rebirth) had divine resonance. Feminists who embrace goddess traditions note that, with the onset of Christianity, women's sexuality became something associated with sin; instead of a creative, God-revealing force, it was something that was in need of control. Patriarchal religions thus exercised control over women and their sexuality, as is manifested in the biblical narratives and the writings of the Church Fathers. Those who embrace goddess spirituality draw on varying psychological traditions. Many point to the work of Carl Jung to assert the needed connection between mind and body (Mijares 2003). Drawing on his assertion that the collective unconscious is manifested in the body, they believe that the unnatural separation of mind and body has severed humanity from a larger field of potential consciousness. They point to Jung's concept of archetypes, revealing the goddess as one such archetype of feminine power which needs to be retrieved to free women from limited self narratives. They maintain that the recovery of the goddess tradition offers women and all of humanity the potential to develop new reverence for life and sexuality and for the Earth itself. Goddess traditions note that disrespect for and domination of women and the earth are closely related to the domination of the Earth and offer the potential for healing this split.

## Multiculturalism

Feminism's attention to the reality of multiculturalism has also influenced opinions on sex and religion within the psychology of religion. This includes areas of intersection between womanism and *mujerista* theology and psychology. Women of color have divergent responses to feminism, which include both womanism and black feminism. Both of these realities reflect the reality that feminism has not adequately addressed the reality and the needs of women of color, including the fact that women of color are frequently victims of multiple oppressions (not only sexism but also racism, colonialism, socioeconomic factors). Womanism incorporates various elements of spirituality and engages in a critical analysis of issues such as race, gender, class, geopolitics, and culture. A womanist psychology both associates with and departs from feminist psychology in that it promotes knowing and being known from the perspective of black women. It challenges feminist psychology to become more inclusive and to incorporate the views of women of color into its work. The issue of sexuality is of great importance to womanist psychologists of religion. The black woman's body and sexuality has historically existed for the profit and pleasure of men who owned them and, as such, has endured physical and sexual abuse. Those who embrace a womanist psychology of religion ask how religion and psychology can be used to heal the sexual wounds of black women, enabling them to love themselves and their bodies. Womanist psychology accentuates the stories and psychological state of these women as they fight for their own liberation and healing. It builds on different branches of psychology, including transpersonal psychology. For example, by placing stories of generational abuse into a transpersonal communal context, womanist psychology does not confine these stories to the family of origin, but incorporates the community across time and space.

An appreciation of multiculturalism has also given birth to *mujerismo*. *Mujerista* theology is a blend of feminism, Latin American liberation theology, and cultural theology, which has as its



aim the liberation of Latinas from oppression (Comas-Diaz 2008). *Mujerista* psychology is based in a liberation approach. It studies the experiences of oppression, resistance, race, and gender related to dominant Western discourse. In relation to sex, the intersection of *mujerista* theology and psychology recognizes that many Latinas simultaneously cope with the previous generation's rigid gender roles, their daughters more progressive attitudes regarding sexuality, and their own sexuality. Thus, *mujeristas* attempt to balance these positions, while also remaining rooted in their own social location. For example, while white feminists frequently advocate for contraception and abortion, Puerto Rican women suffer from a position of forced sterilization as a consequence of US policy (Comas-Diaz 2008). To address this reality, *mujerista* feminists reclaim the full spectrum of their sexuality, while also embracing tools such as folk spirituality and syncretism.

## Postmodernism

More recently, as feminists engage in a dialogue with postmodernism, feminists within psychology of religion critique the discourse that surrounds religion. The dialogue between feminism and postmodernism includes two main views: those who assert that psychoanalysis is helpful in the formation of subjectivity and the understanding of sexual difference and those who critique the marginalization of women within psychoanalysis. Those who espouse the first view believe that the ideas of traditional psychoanalytic theory highlight that gender and sex are formed within culture, which enables feminists to critique that such identities are natural or intrinsic. Many in the second camp focus on the marginality of women in psychoanalysis. They charge that women have been closed out of religious discourse by a notion of God who has been defined in solely masculine terms. As such, religion cannot account or name the desire of women, except in a distorted way.

Feminists within the psychology of religion incorporate an attention to gender, relationality, and social location in order to build bridges

between psychology and theology. They incorporate a variety of psychological theories in their efforts, which continuously stress themes of liberation and social justice. Yet, it is important to recognize that a variety of views of sex and religion exist within the field and that feminism, in advocating for the importance of social location and subjectivity, would affirm the diversity of these views, asking what each contributes to the wider body of literature around sex and sexuality within the psychology of religion.

## See Also

- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ecstasy](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Libido](#)
- ▶ [María Lionza](#)
- ▶ [Religion, Sexuality, and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Religion, Sexuality, and Violence](#)
- ▶ [Rites of Passage for Girls](#)
- ▶ [Roman Catholic Women Priests](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and American Religions](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Women, Sex, and Religion](#)

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## Sexuality and Wicca

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The Wiccan understanding of sexuality is derived from its history, philosophy, and practice. Wiccans perceive life to be a precious gift that should be lived and enjoyed, thus sexuality is valued as a pleasure as well as for procreation. Sex is also respected as a means to a sense of communion with the divine and to connect to the life force and the creative energies of the cosmos (Clifton 2006). The life force can be understood in the same way as *prana* or *ch'i* of the eastern meditative systems and is believed to be generated and transmitted via magical practice.

Since Wicca emerged as a new religious movement in the mid-twentieth century (Hutton 1999), most Wiccans grew up during or after the sexual revolution of the 1960s, within a culture that condones sex before marriage and the use of birth control within and outside of marriage. Wicca mirrors these contemporary cultural norms. Most adult Wiccans engage in monogamous, sexually active, relationships prior to monogamous marriage. Alternative relationships such as polyamory also exist within a smaller demography that reflects numbers exploring alternative relationship structures in Western society today. Celibacy is accepted if Wiccans do not wish to have sexual relationships, and gay and lesbian relationships are celebrated and may be affirmed in same-sex marriages. All relationships are guided by one rule, the *Wiccan Rede*, which states “An it harm none, do what you will.”

This view of sex and sexuality is emphasized in *The Charge of the Goddess*, a ritual text that has a variety of older original sources but was rewritten by High Priestess and author, Doreen Valiente (1989), in its current form. It is widely used in Wiccan rites and features in the traditional Wiccan initiation ceremony:

... Whenever ye have need of anything, once in a month, and better it be when the Moon be full, then ye shall assemble in some secret place and adore the spirit of me, who am Queen of all Witcheries. There shall ye assemble, ye who are fain to learn all sorcery, yet have not yet won its deepest secrets: to these will I teach things that are yet unknown. And ye shall be free from slavery; and as a sign that ye are really free, ye shall be naked in your rites; and ye shall dance, sing, feast, make music and love, all in my praise. For mine is the ecstasy of the spirit and mine also is joy on earth; for my Law is Love unto all Beings. . . Let my worship be within the heart that rejoiceth, for behold: all acts of love and pleasure are my rituals. And therefore let there be beauty and strength, power and compassion, honor and humility, mirth and reverence within you . . . (Valiente 2009).

Many Wiccans come from a Christian background and have rejected Christianity. They report a sense of “coming home” to Wicca (Adler 1986; Harvey 1999). This feeling of coming home is due to the fact that many have felt uncomfortable with, or alienated by, the philosophies and practices of traditional religion,

while Wicca fulfils them, its philosophy fitting with their own personal and long-held belief systems (Harrington 2002).

One aspect of Wicca that draws many people is that it is a religion that celebrates women and includes Goddess worship. After millennia of patriarchal monotheism women find this to be a potent force for empowerment (Starhawk 1989). They draw on Goddess iconography to explore different aspects of their own psyche as well as archetypal images of womanhood (Salomonsen 2002). They celebrate their sexuality as part of a holistic and holy model of femininity (Rountree 2004).

Equally, men are drawn to Wicca to worship the Goddess, but they also find that they are able to engage with empowering archetypal models of the male psyche within its rites. The rituals of the seasonal festivals or *Sabbats* incorporate folk traditions and mythology with ritual psychodrama that links the human life span to the cycle of the year's seasons. This *wheel of the year* revolves around the God and Goddess meeting, marrying, giving birth, dying, and being reborn in an endless cycle of regeneration. Witches believe that enacting these rites brings them closer to the divine, to nature, and to the life force and forces of nature of which we and the rest of the natural world are integrated parts, hence Wicca is often called "Nature Religion" (Clifton 2006).

The ceremony of Cakes and Ale concludes all rituals. This consecrates ritual food via an act of symbolic sex. The Priestess who has embodied the Goddess in the rite plunges a ceremonial dagger or *Athame* into a chalice held by the Priest who has embodied the God, who kneels before her. She says "As the *Athame* is to the male so the cup is to the female, and conjoined they bring forth great blessings." He then extends a plate of cakes to her, asking her to "bless this food unto our bodies, bestowing health, wealth, strength, joy, truth and that fulfillment of love that is perpetual happiness." The coven passes the chalice to each other and shares the consecrated food, believed it to be imbued with magical energy and life force. In this ritual Wicca is also consciously inverting traditional power structures as the man kneels before the woman, it further plays with power/gender in that each holds a symbol of the other sex, and the



**Sexuality and Wicca, Fig. 1** Wiccan handfasting wedding ceremony in Castlerigg Stone Circle, England (Photo courtesy of the author)

man is the passive/receptive partner to the woman who is in an active/dominant role (Fig. 1).

Generally however Wicca does not challenge gender stereotypes; rather it works with them, as can be seen in the *Sabbat* cycle. This is a heterosexual and monogamous interpretation of the human life cycle in which traditional stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are affirmed. As Wicca has developed, it has attracted gay practitioners, some who find the classic model of the *Sabbats* irrelevant to their sexuality. They have begun to work out ways in which the Wicca can be more meaningful for them. This had led to a widening of Wicca's denominations which has encouraged expanding and deepening Wiccan liturgy and praxis.

Whatever their personal sexual orientation, Wiccans believe sex can be a sacrament. In most rites in Wicca, the Gods are called on or *invoked* into the sacred space of the Wiccan temple and into

the bodies of a consecrated Priest and Priestess, for the duration of the ceremony. One Wiccan rite consummates this sexually, the Great Rite. Due to Wicca's respect for sex and sexuality, the Great Rite is considered to be a ritual that only highly experienced practitioners should undertake, and is usually conducted by a couple of equal status, who are already a partnership, as a private sacrament. Here, the body is seen as a sacred vessel of the Gods and a channel for the divine force of the living universe. Otherwise, the Great Rite is conducted *in token*, as in the ceremony of Cakes and Ale, with adherents believing that it is just as powerful when performed symbolically as when *in true* (Valiente 1989), particularly as this avoids complicating relationships between participants.

The Great Rite is also used in the third and final initiation into Wicca. It is believed that when in the altered state of a Wiccan ceremony, infused with the divine spirit, the witch is able to transcend consciousness and reach states of religious ecstasy and gnosis. Vivianne Crowley discusses its effects in Jungian terms of the integration of feminine *anima* and masculine *animus* within the psyche of an initiate, leading to states of psychological well-being and spiritual integration (Crowley 1996).

Sexual energy is also perceived as a potent source of energy that can be harnessed for magical means. Energy is thought to be directable by any witch. Part of the earliest Wiccan training includes the use of candles, chanting, drumming, dancing, mediation, and knotting cords to raise and send physical, mental, and magical energy. Thus, sex magic can also be done as a conscious act by a couple, who send the resulting energy towards a specific purpose. This is often absent healing for another person, as an act of sympathetic magic, whereby physical means are used to achieve physical ends.

Wiccan rites also incorporate methodologies that help changing practitioners' consciousness, but maybe seen as titillating to outsiders and exacerbate taboo aspects of modern Pagan witchcraft. Some denominations practice nude or *sky clad* and report similar feelings of freedom and closeness to nature as do secular nudists. Initiations include a short and carefully ritualized act of mild flagellation that helps to send the initiate into trance. This is part of a long and effective

tradition in the history and technology of religious consciousness change within initiatory traditions of the magical the Western Mystery Tradition (Bogdan 2008).

As a religion in its current form, Wicca is only half a century old and perhaps that is why it embodies the *zeitgeist* of the twenty-first century with its concerns for equality, ecology, and individualism set within a postmodern framework of personal and spiritual choice. Its preoccupation with the sacrality and fragility of the Earth and its revival of Goddess worship are key attractions, but so too are its view of life and of sexuality. Perhaps the rites of the initiatory mystery schools of Wicca are a little too intimate and obscure for them to ever to become a mainstream religion, but as Modern Pagan Witchcraft is growing into a more wide spread form of ecumenical Neo-Paganism, it continues to diversify and adapt to suit much wider congregations. Within them all however remains one shared view that all sexuality is a sacred gift, and all sexual practices valid, as long as they bring pleasure, empowerment, connection to nature and the life force, and communion with the divine to their participants and harm to no one.

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and American Religions](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Judaism](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Women, Sex, and Religion](#)

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## Shadow

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For Swiss psychiatrist C. G. Jung, the theory of the “shadow” was a metaphorical means of conveying the prominent role of the unconscious in both

psychopathology and the perennial problem of evil. In developing his paradoxical conception of the shadow, Jung sought to provide a more highly differentiated, phenomenologically descriptive version of the unconscious and of the *id* than previously proffered by Freud. The shadow was originally Jung’s poetic term for the totality of the unconscious, a depiction he took from philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. But foremost for Jung was the task of further illuminating the shadowy problem of human evil and the prodigious dangers of excessive unconsciousness. Especially concerned with those pathological mental states historically known as “demonic possession,” Jung’s psychological construct of the shadow corresponds to yet differs fundamentally from the idea of the Devil or Satan in theology. As a parson’s son, Jung was steeped in the Protestant mythos, digested the rich symbolism of Catholicism, and studied the other great religious and philosophical systems. But, as a physician, he intentionally employed the more mundane, banal, less esoteric or metaphysical, and, therefore, more rational terminology “the shadow” and “the unconscious” instead of the traditional religious language of god, devil, *daimon*, or *mana*. For Jung, depth psychological designations, such as *the shadow* or *the unconscious*, were “coined for scientific purposes and [are] far better suited to dispassionate observation which makes no metaphysical claims than are the transcendental concepts, which are controversial and therefore tend to breed fanaticism” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 97).

The shadow is the unknown “dark side” of our personality – dark both because it tends to consist predominantly of the primitive, benighted, negative, and socially or religiously depreciated human emotions and impulses like sexual lust, power strivings, selfishness, greed, envy, aggression, anger, or rage and due to its unenlightened nature, obscured from consciousness. Whatever we deem evil, inferior, or unacceptable and deny in ourselves becomes part of the shadow, the counterpoint to what Jung called the *persona* (see *persona*) or conscious ego personality. According to Jungian analyst Aniela Jaffe, the shadow is the “sum of all personal and collective psychic elements which, because of their

incompatibility with the chosen conscious attitude, are denied expression in life. . .” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 96). Indeed, Jung differentiated between the *personal shadow* and the impersonal or *archetypal shadow*, which acknowledges transpersonal, pure or radical evil (symbolized by the devil and demons) and collective evil, exemplified by the horror of the Nazi holocaust. Literary and historical figures such as Hitler, Charles Manson, and Darth Vader personify the shadow embodied in its most negative archetypal human form. “The shadow,” wrote Jung (1963), is “that hidden, repressed, for the most part inferior and guilt-laden personality whose ultimate ramifications reach back into the realm of our animal ancestors and so comprise the whole historical aspect of the unconscious” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 96). The shadow is a primordial part of our human inheritance, which, try as we might, can never be eluded.

The pervasive Freudian defense mechanism known as “projection” is how most people deny their shadow, unconsciously casting it onto others so as to avoid confronting it in oneself. Such projection of the shadow is engaged in not only by individuals but groups, cults, religions, and entire countries and commonly occurs during wars and other contentious conflicts in which the outsider, enemy, or adversary is made a scapegoat, dehumanized, and demonized. Two World Wars and the current escalation of violence testify to the terrible truth of this collective phenomenon. Since the turn of the twenty-first century, we are witnessing a menacing resurgence of epidemic demonization or collective psychosis in the seemingly inevitable violent global collision between radical Islam and Judeo-Christian or secular western culture, each side projecting its collective shadow and perceiving the other as evil incarnate.

For Jung, the shadow is most destructive, insidious, and dangerous when habitually repressed and projected, manifesting in myriad psychological disturbances ranging from neurosis to psychosis, irrational interpersonal hostility, and even cataclysmic international clashes. Such deleterious symptoms, attitudes, and behavior stem from being possessed or driven by the dissociated yet undaunted shadow.

Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic story of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* can be taken as a cautionary tale par excellence: dissociation of the shadow results in a perilously lopsided development of the conscious personality and renders us susceptible to destructive possession by the disowned shadow. The overly good Dr. Henry Jekyll is at times taken over body and soul by his equally evil shadow: the depraved, nefarious, wicked Edward Hyde, his complete opposite. Indeed, the shadow contains all those qualities we hide from ourselves and others, but which remain active within the unconscious, forming a sort of “splinter personality” or “complex,” not unlike the relatively autonomous sub-personalities found in multiple personality (dissociative identity) disorder or in so-called demonic possession or demonism. Under stressful circumstances or in states of fatigue or intoxication, this compensatory alter ego or shadow complex can be triggered into temporarily taking total command of the conscious will. The abject negativity and destructiveness of the shadow are largely a function of the degree to which the individual neglects and refuses to take responsibility for it, only inflaming its ferocity and pernicious power. The shadow’s sometimes overwhelming strength and disturbing ability to intrude into one’s cognitions, affects, and behavior have historically been experienced and misinterpreted as demonic possession, for which exorcism is believed to be the only treatment. Yet, it must be emphasized that the shadow is not meant to be taken literally but rather allegorically: it is not an evil entity existing apart from the person, nor an invading alien force, though it may be felt as such. The shadow is a universal (archetypal) feature of the human psyche for which we bear full responsibility to cope with as creatively as possible.

But despite its well-deserved reputation for wreaking havoc and engendering widespread suffering in human affairs, the shadow – in distinction to the literal idea of the devil or demons – can be redeemed: the shadow must never be dismissed as merely evil or demonic, for it contains natural, life-giving, underdeveloped positive potentialities too. Coming to terms with the shadow and constructively accepting and assimilating it into the conscious personality are central to the process of



Jungian analysis. Working with dream material (see dreams) is key to comprehending and dealing constructively with the shadow. The shadow tends to appear in dreams as a figure of the same sex as the dreamer, but Jung draws a distinction between the personal shadow and the anima or animus, symbolized in dreams as the opposite sex. Typically, it is the subjective experience of the shadow or evil and its ego-dystonic effects (or, as in the case of the hypercivilized Dr. Jekyll, an inexplicable malaise or vague sense that something vital is missing in us) which motivates the person to seek psychotherapy and spurs one toward new growth, maturation, and individuation. Indeed, in many ways, we need the shadow and must therefore learn to develop a more conscious and constructive relationship to it. Becoming conscious of the shadow requires tolerating the inherent tension of opposites within, sometimes “having it out” with the shadow and standing up to its destructive influence, other times permitting it some measured outward expression in the personality, but always treating it with utmost respect.

Notwithstanding its negative influence, Jung understood the daimonic nature of the unconscious, and that the compensatory effects of the shadow upon individuals, couples, groups, and nations could be beneficial as well: “If it has been believed hitherto that the human shadow was the source of all evil, it can now be ascertained on closer investigation that the unconscious man, that is, his shadow, does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses, etc” (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 96). Creativity can spring from the constructive expression or integration of the shadow, as can true spirituality. *Authentic spirituality* requires consciously accepting and relating properly to the shadow as opposed to repressing, projecting, acting out, and remaining naively unconscious of its contents, a sort of precarious *pseudospirituality*. “Bringing the shadow to consciousness,” writes another of Jung’s distinguished followers, Liliane Frey-Rohn (1967), is a psychological problem of the highest moral significance. It demands

that the individual hold himself accountable not only for what happens to him but also for what he projects. Without the conscious inclusion of the shadow in daily life, there cannot be a positive relationship to other people or to the creative sources in the soul; there cannot be an individual relationship to the Divine (cited in Diamond 1996, p. 109).

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## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Nazism](#)
- ▶ [Persona](#)

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## Shakers

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### Introduction

The Shakers were the largest, longest-lasting, and the most widespread of all the communal or utopian societies that flourished in nineteenth-century America, whether secular (Fourierists, Owenites) or religious (at Amana, Bishop Hill, Ephrata, New Harmony, Oneida, and Zoar). Their formal name is the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing. A Christian millennial sect, they looked to their founder, "Mother" Ann Lee, as a female manifestation of the Christ spirit.

Described first as "Shaking Quakers" from the free, ecstatic movements that characterized their worship (shaking is mentioned in several passages in the Bible, as God's activity and humans' response, e.g., Ezekiel 38:19–20 and Hebrews 12:26–27) and because they were mistaken for nonconformist Quakers, the Shakers developed certain religious and psychological practices that helped them to grow, prosper, and endure for many decades, eventually shrinking to currently one small group at Sabbathday Lake, ME – still vibrant and supported by a large organization of Friends of the Shakers.

### Origins

From humble origins in Manchester, England, at a time of religious ferment and searching outside the Established (Anglican) Church – for example, the Quaker movement, itinerant evangelists such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, and possibly the immigrant "French Prophets" or Camisards (a Huguenot sect) – an illiterate woman named Mrs. Ann Lees Standerin (variant spellings exist) emerged as a charismatic leader in a local revivalist group of Quaker origins that was previously led by a couple named Wardley. After severe persecutions, she and a few followers,

including her husband who eventually left her, emigrated in 1774 to New York City in the American colonies. Within a few years, they had established themselves near Albany, NY, first at a wilderness site called Niskayuna (now Watervliet) and later at a permanent center not far away in New Lebanon, NY. A nearby revival of "New Light" Baptists was petering out, and Ann Lee's fresh message of salvation found willing converts.

### Growth

Missionaries were soon sent from the new center into four New England states. While enduring much prejudice, violent opposition, and the death of Ann Lee in 1784 at age 48, the Shakers still managed to establish a total of 11 communities by 1793. Several strong and capable leaders carried on her work, and by 1836, 10 additional communities had been founded in Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and western New York. Out of a total of 23 Shaker communities, 18 endured for an average of over 125 years. The Shakers reached a peak population of 5,000–6,000 by ca. 1840.

### Religious Practices

Religiously, the Shakers are noted for the following: an emphasis on the female or maternal aspect of God as manifested in Ann Lee; equality of leadership roles for men and women; their "shaking" behavior during worship including marches and patterned gestures as well as spontaneous ecstasies and speaking in tongues; celibacy and separation of the sexes by mandating separate sleeping quarters, dining tables, seating in worship, and entrances to major buildings; pacifism; confession of sins; separation from the "world's people" in isolated rural villages; the inspired creation of many new songs, hymns, and mystical "spirit drawings" – especially in the revival period known as "Mother's Work" (1837–1847). Members turned over all their money and possessions to the community, following Acts 2:44–45 and 4:32–35 where the early Christians "had all things in common." Biblical support for the female aspect of divinity is found in Genesis

1:27 and Rev.12:1 ff., while the elimination of marriage is justified at Luke 20:34–35 and supported by Jesus' radical challenge to abandon family ties at Matt. 10:35–37 and Luke 14:26 (and similar Gospel parallels). While confession of sins was a universal requirement and the loss of sexuality, possessions, and family was a standard sacrifice, probably the dominant theme of Shaker religion has been an upbeat one: *love*, always available from God and always needed between humans – a succinct principle that exemplifies the Shakers' characteristic simplicity.

### Psychological Features

Psychologically, the emergence of Several exceptional female leaders following Mother Ann encouraged the gradual development of gender equality for all members. The absolutes of celibacy and separation of the sexes were tempered by the Shakers' enthusiastic worship, e.g., loud singing, synchronized energetic marching and dancing, and physical gestures in which both sexes mirrored each other. During much of the nineteenth century, young men and women would join in "union meetings," small, mid-week gatherings where the sexes would sit in two rows opposite to each other and converse, with an elder Shaker monitoring, on various topics of the day – an outlet of heterosexual socializing that helped make the daily controlled proximity of the sexes workable. Individualism was downplayed while the importance of the community was stressed: cemeteries have just one large gravestone marked "Shakers," or small identical markers recording only names and dates. When whole families joined, they were separated into men's and women's dwellings, and their children reared communally. Shaker education of children was often considered superior to local public schools. Communities were organized into large, separately sited "Families" for full members, novices, and inquirers, with a leadership hierarchy of elders and eldersses and deacons and deaconesses. Although previous family ties were severed, this community organization provided a larger family, in which all members were known as "brethren" and "sisters," while special leaders were termed

"Mother" and "Father." In general, the austerities of Shaker life were balanced by spiritual resources and intuitive psychological sensitivity that enabled their remarkably long and fruitful communal existence.

### Institutional Strengths

The Shakers' well organized communal life and industrious work ethic produced prosperous farms, innovative crafts, impressive large buildings, excellent functionally designed chairs and cabinetwork, a widely marketed variety of seeds in standardized packets, and a wholesome, plentiful diet – all of which made possible a unique material culture that also expressed the Shakers' active religious life, summarized in their motto: "Hands to work and hearts to God."

While the Shakers had their origins in *spontaneous* ecstasies and confrontational testimonies, as their responses to being seized and shaken by the sudden visitation of the Christ spirit, their widespread expansion and long endurance owe as much to the development, after Ann Lee's death, of *rational* designs for their social organization, economic structure, and formal worship – all of which served to perpetuate, in less spontaneous forms, the original spiritual message that was so liberating and nourishing to so many.

### Decline

After the Civil War (1861–1865), the Shaker communities gradually shrank in size and number. Over the years, there had been sporadic challenges to their inner stability: the all-too-human occasions of youth to rebel against older authority, of trustees (who were delegated to conduct business with the outside world) to embezzle funds or invest unwisely, and of illicit lovers and disillusioned apostates to leave the community. But it was external economic and social factors that caused accelerating declines especially, in the number of new members, and first the consolidation of dwindling communities

and then their closing, with some to reopen later as museums. The growth of cities, industrialism, and spreading rail networks reduced the market for Shakers' agricultural and handcrafted products, while also increasing the allure of "the world." New job opportunities, greater personal freedoms, and the gradual rise of foster homes and orphanages all contributed to the falloff in new members, especially of distressed women who had previously sought refuge with the Shakers and of orphaned children who had been brought to them. The proportion of male members shrank, and farming done by hired non-Shakers became common. Women came to dominate in leadership roles, and the average longevity of remaining members increased significantly, due to a healthy lifestyle and the mutual support of communal living. As times changed, so did many aspects of the Shakers' daily life and worship, demonstrating their adaptiveness.

## Historiography

Questions remain about how to interpret many early accounts and about the speculation that the deaths of Ann Lee's four children at very early ages had determined her negative view of sex (reportedly, Mrs. Wardley had also promoted sexual abstinence). Besides thousands of the Shakers' own publications and manuscripts now in archives, many non-Shakers have written about them; see the bibliography for recommended authors. Aaron Copeland's 1944 music for Martha Graham's ballet, "Appalachian Spring," incorporated the now-famous tune, "Simple Gifts," composed perhaps in 1848 by Joseph Brackett of the Alfred, ME, community, with words dating back at least to 1813. Recent television specials and musical recordings continue to appreciate and publicize aspects of Shaker life and make them available to a wide and interested public.

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)

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## Shakti

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The Sanskrit for "power" or "energy," Shakti (*sakti*) in Indian religion is the energizing material power of a given Hindu god, a power

personified as his wife, especially the wife of Shiva. Often depicted in a state of sexual union, the god and his shakti together represent the Absolute, the god being nonactivated Eternity, the goddess being activated Time. The Goddess, Devi, is Shakti or “Universal Power.” As Prakrti, she is the shakti or female energy by which the original Purusha, the primal male, becomes creation. As Lakshmi, she is the manifestation of the divine energy associated with Vishnu. Shiva’s shakti takes many forms – Uma, Durga, the terrifying Kali, and the motherly Parvati, for instance. By extension, Sita is the Vishnu avatar Rama’s shakti in the *Ramayana*, and Draupadi is the shakti of the Pandavas in the *Mahabharata*. And by further extension, the Hindu wife is a manifestation of her husband’s shakti. By still further extension, shakti may be said to be the spiritual equivalent of the Jungian *anima* (Latin for psyche or soul) in which the anima is the subconscious inner self of the male – his feminine principle – and the related animus is the subconscious inner self or masculine principle of the female. The individual might be said to be animated by the anima/animus as the god is animated by his Shakti.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Shamanic Healing

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### What Is Shamanism?

Shamanism is an ancient method of healing found in many cultures that focuses upon the relief of spiritual pain and suffering through interventions in non-ordinary reality. Non-ordinary reality (see Castaneda, who originally coined the term) can be described as the dimension of the Cosmos that exists outside of and parallel to the linear time-space arena of ordinary awareness. What distinguishes the shaman from other healers is the ecstatic flight or journey into non-ordinary reality in order to contact his or her tutelary spirits for the knowledge and healing needed for a specific patient or community. The shamanic state of consciousness which enables the shaman to see what others do not is entered into and exited at will, usually with the aid of repetitive drumming or rattling. The drum is often seen as a spirit horse whose sound allows the shaman to ride into the Upper or Lower Worlds of the shamanic Cosmos. It is the helping, compassionate spirits that the shaman interacts with in these realms – the power animals, teachers, and other wise beings – who do the diagnosis as well as the healing work in partnership with the shaman. A master of linking the ordinary with the non-ordinary worlds, the shaman therefore functions as an intermediary or bridge who also interprets and communicates the meaning of what is experienced in these alternate realities.

The resurgence of interest in shamanism and shamanic healing that has been thriving for the past few decades is evidence of a deepening hunger to reconnect with the transcendent dimensions of reality in a direct, revelatory way. Ancient shamanic practices have been resurrected and revitalized throughout the world as indigenous people have become freer to practice their own

traditions openly (e.g., as in the former Soviet Union) and have sought to recover the old ways of their ancestors in order to heal themselves and their communities. Feminine shamanic traditions which possess more of an interpersonal orientation that encourage and empower patients to become active participants in their own healing are also taking their rightful place of importance alongside the more masculine, heroic shamanic traditions (see Tedlock) where the patient adopts more of a passive role. While some Westerners have been drawn to study with indigenous shamans, many more have been able to explore shamanism through various training programs in what has become known as “core” shamanism that have been offered all over the world through organizations such as the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.

## Core Shamanism

The body of work referred to as core shamanism was originally synthesized and brought to Westerners by the pioneering work of anthropologist Michael Harner. During the 1950s, Harner conducted extensive fieldwork with the Jivaro and Conibo people in South America and was eventually initiated as a shaman. After further research into many other shamanic practices throughout the world, Harner began to synthesize and distill the fundamental techniques that he found in common across various traditions into a universal, core practice for integration into Western contemporary life. These techniques, the primary one being the shamanic journey process which enables one to enter into the characteristic ecstatic, shamanic state of consciousness, have proven to be accessible even for those who have no prior training or conscious experience with anything remotely shamanic.

Core shamanism is essentially a modern spiritual practice free of specific religious or cultural requirements. That said, the basic world view embodied in both traditional and core shamanisms is an animist one which perceives everything in the Cosmos as being imbued with life essence or spirit, including all members of the varied and wondrous kingdoms that are part of the natural world.

Everything is alive and connected within an intricate web or tapestry of energy, both in this physical realm and in other parallel realities. In contrast to a psychological perspective of spirits, where the phenomenon might be viewed as an externalization of an unconscious, autonomous complex (Jung), the shamanic experience of spirits is that they have an innate intelligence and a reality of their own that exists outside of the personal and collective psyche.

## The Spiritual Origins of Illness

Shamans and practitioners of core shamanism see the phenomenon of illness as a spiritual problem resulting from either a loss of power, a loss of soul, or an intrusion of an energy form which does not belong in the patient, which may be localized somewhere in the energy body or, in the case of spirit possession, systemic. A person suffering from soul loss, for example, does not feel fully alive and engaged with life. Symptoms of soul loss may include experiences of chronic depression, dissociation, addiction, and unresolved grief, as well as persistent physical illness. Judging by that list many if not all of us suffer, or have suffered, from some form of soul loss during the course of our lives. There are a number of ways in which the lost soul can spontaneously return to embodiment, such as in a healing dream or even in a luminous moment during analytic work. Sometimes, however, a shamanic intervention by another is needed.

## Soul Retrieval

One of the most powerful core shamanic healing practices engaged in today is that of soul retrieval, a classic form of shamanic healing (Eliade 1972) which was spontaneously rediscovered in a journey by shamanic practitioner, author, and therapist Sandra Ingerman during work with a client many years ago. Soul retrieval is a healing ritual where the shamanic practitioner, in partnership with his or her tutelary spirits, journeys into non-ordinary reality to search for the missing soul parts which are ready to be returned to the patient. The soul parts

are located, interacted with, and finally “pulled” or carried out of non-ordinary reality as the journey ends, after which the practitioner restores them to the patient by blowing their essence into the heart and crown chakras of the patient’s body. The energy contained in the returned soul essence is often experienced and felt on a subtle yet palpable level by the patient.

According to Ingerman, soul loss is a natural response to unbearable trauma. Trauma triggers a self-protective phenomenon consisting of the splitting off of a part of one’s vital essence or “soul,” which then literally flees the patient to become stuck in a dimension of non-ordinary reality where it then leads a parallel existence, but one where the gifts and potentials of that soul part (as well as the memories of the trauma) remain inaccessible and no longer incarnated in this world. This view is not so different from that of an analytical psychologist, who might conceive of soul loss as an archetypal defense of the personal spirit (Kalsched 1996); however, an analytical psychologist might also perceive the phenomenon as taking place in the inner world of the patient (see self-care system), whereas according to Harner, the practitioner of core shamanism observes the evidence of soul loss empirically, in the parallel universe known as non-ordinary reality.

### Integration with Other Healing Modalities

There is a growing interest with regard to integrating core shamanic healing practices with analytical psychology (and other forms of psychotherapy) as well as with other disciplines such as Western medicine. Having been trained as a psychotherapist, Ingerman sees work of therapy as having tremendous value; however, her pragmatic view is that for the necessary psychological working – through process to progress, the patient’s soul must be embodied and therefore in residence or “home” to engage with the therapist – hence the need for the shamanic approach to bring back the split-off soul parts in order to restore wholeness to the patient. Many analysts who have found themselves working endlessly with a patient’s “false self” (Winnicott) as

they patiently hold a space for the vulnerable child to appear in their consulting rooms might resonate with Ingerman’s position. While the experience of soul retrieval can be a powerful and transformative process standing on its own or a complementary practice to deepen the work of psychotherapy, it does not provide a quick fix. As with any other healing modality, there can be pitfalls, such as if the egos of the patient and/or the practitioner get in the way of the process. The work of facilitating and integrating the return of soul into life can be arduous, complex, and humbling, as much as it can be deeply rewarding.

### Conclusion

Integrating the two disciplines of analytical psychology and core shamanism in a way that honors the power and essence of each practice without falling into a diluted soup of New Age meaninglessness presents a worthy challenge going forward for all of us who seek wholeness for ourselves and the patients with whom we work.

### See Also

- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)

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## Shamans and Shamanism

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### Context for the Discussion: Shamans and Non-Ordinary Reality

Shamanism is a great mental and emotional adventure, one in which the patient as well as the shaman-healer are involved. Through his heroic journey and efforts, the shaman helps his patients transcend their normal, ordinary definition of reality, including the definition of themselves as ill. The shaman shows his patients that they are not emotionally and spiritually alone in their struggles against illness and death. The shaman shares his special powers and convinces his patients, on a deep level of consciousness, that another human is willing to offer up his own self to help them. The shaman's self-sacrifice calls forth a commensurate emotional commitment from his patients, a sense of obligation to struggle alongside the shaman to save one's own self. Caring and curing go hand in hand (Harner 1990: xviii).

The generic term “shaman” describes a wide range of practices among indigenous people wherein “helpers” or “spirits” are called upon to help the patient asking the shaman for help. The term is derived from the language of the Tungus people of Siberia (Eliade 1964; Harner 1990) and from the Chinese, *sha men*, as well as the ancient Sanskrit *sramana* which is translated as “ascetic”

and from *sramati* as “he fatigues” (Hopkins 1918). The term describes the indigenous practitioner who works with spirit helpers and through whom the spirits “doctor” or treat the individuals that come for help and healing. Often the metaphor of the “hollow bone or tube” is used to describe the power of the shaman – as he or she is one who is simply a tool or conduit for the helping or healing process – the power for the healing comes from something beyond the shaman – often from some other world or realm. Generally the shaman does not seek to become a shaman, but the spirits choose him or her for this purpose, or the individual inherits the “helpers” or “medicine” from their family ancestors (Personal communication, 1999, 2001). John A. Grim noted that “Among tribal people the shaman is the person, male or female, who experiences, absorbs, and communicates a special mode of sustaining, healing power. For most tribal peoples the vital rhythms of the natural world are manifestations of a mysterious, all-pervasive power presence” (see van der Leeuw 1938/1963; Grim 1983).

In the past other more pejorative terms were used to describe these healers, such as “witch,” “medicine man or woman,” “witch doctor,” and “sorcerer,” so the use of the more generic term “shaman” avoids such prejudicial overlays to this healing tradition and is preferred (Harner 1990). The shaman is distinguished from other kinds of healers by his or her use of altered consciousness, which Eliade called “ecstasy” (cited in Harner 1990). Harner notes that shamanism is the most widespread and ancient methods or systems of mind-body healing known to humanity (1990, p. 40). Equally remarkable is the fact that the assumptions and methods or processes of shamanism are very similar across the various and distant regions of the world (Harner 1990; Eliade 1964). Years ago, one of my students showed me a video tape of a spirit-calling ceremony conducted in a remote indigenous community in Brazil – which had many elements I had observed in traditional Lakota spirit-calling ceremonies, such as the use of earth in the “altar” as well as the use of six directions’ flags (the black, red, yellow, white, blue, and green), tobacco offerings, and a darkened room cleared of all furniture.

Harner noted that the shaman

operates in non-ordinary reality only a small portion of his [or her] time and then only as needed to perform shamanic tasks, for shamanism is a part-time activity. Among the Jivaro, the Conibo, the Eskimo, and most other primitive groups, the master shaman is usually an active participant in the economic, social, and even political affairs of the community. The shaman moves back and forth between the two realities deliberately and with serious intention (1990, p. 46).

The shaman I met in a remote Amazonian community was the president of his community council and a teacher and also collected Brazil nuts in the forest. When I first met him, his riverboat was on its way to the market, heading away from his village. When he learned that I had come to interview him, he met me at the small village grocery store where I was told to meet him – I was amazed that he arrived sooner than I did, even though he had been traveling in the opposite direction. He was a highly respected political leader of his community, was modestly dressed, and wore a rosary around his neck. The interview took place on the porch of the small building which served as the local “grocery store.” Other traditional “medicine men” or shaman I met often worked tirelessly helping their communities, one actually served as chairman of the tribe, served on tribal council, and conducted healing ceremonies whenever requested – pretty much at the request of anyone seeking help and assistance (Personal communication, 1999, 2001).

### **Shamans Do Not Operate in the Abstract**

I think the best way to discuss chamanism/shamanism is to describe it in concrete terms. In 2004 I had the opportunity to conduct field research in concert with the Amazon Center for Environmental Education and Research (ACEER) as part of a Faculty Development Grant made possible by West Chester University and the ACEER. As part of this project, I visited a traditional indigenous community along the Tambopata River in southeastern Peru. While conducting this field research, I had the opportunity to interview numerous individuals about the

healing and helping traditions of chamans/shamans in the area. These interviews included interviews with chaman, patients, community leaders, and other healthcare professionals. As part of this research, I asked a recognized chaman if he would sing a healing song used in his ceremonies. He told me to return later that evening to his casita, not exactly answering my question. Over the years I have learned to follow directions literally, without analysis (which requires a shift from my otherwise usual mode of study). I returned to the little casita at nightfall where he was resting in his hammock. I was invited to sit in one of the adjoining hammocks where we continued our conversation until he invited me into his house.

### **The Entire Forest Was Dancing!**

I was instructed to sit on the edge of his bed. He rolled four tobacco cigarettes, each about 3 in. long, and laid them aside. The chamen/shamen stood in front of me. Then he poured rose water over my head from a small bottle which dripped over my face and back. The rose water had a very pleasant fragrance. He then lit one of the cigarettes and blew smoke on me and all around me. He then took a small bunch of long leaves (called a chakra) that were tied at the stem which formed a handle; the leaf rattle was approximately 10 in. in total length and about 6 in. wide. The chamen/shamen then began striking the top of my head with the chakra while he sang a very simple melody in a very soft, subdued birdlike whistle, formed by the air blown against the roof of the mouth through the teeth, not a hollow whistle blown through the lips. All the while the chamen/shamen continuously struck the top of my head gently with the chakra. The chamen/shamen’s song did not have any recognizable words, consisting of a very simple and subdued, yet shrill, whistle. I recall thinking how simple and childlike the tune was – it seemed like a very “happy” tune. I recall feeling very relaxed and that I was “in good hands.” There were no explanations given by the chamen/shamen; the process was entirely experiential. By this time I had closed my eyes,

and I focused on the rustling sound of the dry leaves of the chakra. Before I knew it, with each strike of the chakra, I felt as if the entire forest had opened up and was dancing around me. It was as if the little leaf rattle became the spokesman for the forest, and it was as if I was hearing the entire forest singing and dancing all around me, and I was part of it. It was as if the chamen/shamen had brought the entire vegetation of the Amazon into that little casita.

## Shamanism and Psychology

John A. Grim noted a more universal implication for the interest in shamanism, noting, “Shamanism is not only characteristic of tribal peoples but also is an ongoing and irreducible mode of experiencing the sacred that is not limited to a particular ethnic group. . . .” Elsewhere he noted that shamanism has a certain attraction for our times, when the more sophisticated, or more rationalized, modes of religious life are often so weak that they no longer communicate the power needed by contemporary man, who must resolve a new and overwhelming set of tensions in a creative manner” (1983, p. 29). Shamanism is particularly of interest to those interested in the intersection between religion and psychology; J. A. Grim noted further that “The meaning of shamanism lies in the depths of the human psyche, which is not yet fully known to itself but is partially manifest in particular human efforts to structure symbols as a way of knowing” (1983, p. 31).

## Conclusion

A discussion of shamans and shamanism provides an important perspective on the intersectionality of psychology, religion, and ecstatic experience and focuses the clinician on the role of “caring and healing” in the therapeutic interaction which is not focused on clinical detachment or objectivity, but rather on ecstatic engagement, connectivity, and the subjectivity of the healer with the patient where both encounter the non-ordinary reality and subsequent psychological and spiritual transformation.

## See Also

- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Shamanic Healing](#)

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## Shame and Depth Psychology

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## Shame

Shame can be defined simply as the feeling we have when we evaluate our actions, feelings, or behavior and conclude that what we have done wrong makes us wrong. It encompasses the whole of us; it generates a wish to hide, to disappear, or even to die. Shame, as the deeper problem of the self, means that one has suffered a loss of being, not merely loss of status. Individuals suffering from a shame-based complex have a characterological style of identification with a given behavior due to internalization. For example, when someone is

called “an angry person” an emotion becomes the core of his character or identity. He does not *have* anger or depression; he *is* angry or depressed. Similarly, shame-based people identify with this affect-toned complex in a globalized way which becomes characteristic of their behavior. People with shame-based complexes guard against exposing their inner selves to others but, more significantly, will guard against exposing themselves to themselves. The shamed affect is ignited upon hearing a single word, observing a gesture by another that is distorted and catastrophized, or by just about anything that will trigger the complex, creating a negative affect that is felt in a global sense.

One way of understanding a shame-based complex is by noting what shame-based persons are not. Quoting from M. Scott Peck, John Bradshaw notes that to be a non-shame-based person “requires the willingness and the capacity to suffer continual self-examination.” Such ability requires a good relationship with oneself. This is precisely what no shame-based person has. In fact, a toxically shame-based person has an adversarial relationship with himself, often compulsively seeking ways to avoid the affect-toned shame-based feeling. It is this very reason that he projects it away from himself onto others. Other defensive mechanisms which the ego uses to avoid feeling the shame affect are repression, dissociation, distraction, or ownership. This intersubjective work occurs on an unconscious level; if he understood what he was doing on a conscious level, he would have learned to own it and become conscious of his projections.

The following three points attempt a description of the problem of shame emerging both at an individual and a communal level. First, a normal response of failure to an internalized standard created by an authoritative source such as family, society, or religious affiliation can generate a shame-based complex that has a globalized affect that engulfs one’s entire being. Further, shame-based individuals make no distinction between themselves and real and imagined failings. So, often what they imagine to be real is exaggerated.

Secondly, the inability to distinguish between imagined failings and behavior that is not exaggerated is referred to as fusion. Fused feelings blur the self, making it difficult to differentiate clearly. What is cognated, or re-cognized, such as inner features, feelings, memories, thoughts, images, standards, and God concepts, are fused with outer features, interpersonal associations such as church, family life, society, and culture. Another way to view it is to imagine a co-assembling of inner feelings and thoughts, images, memories, bound to outer shaming events associated with God, church, or family. The church, an outer association where acceptance and purpose is sought, can actually be a place where shame is internalized. Feelings of anger, rage, self-contempt, comparison with others, and meaninglessness are not relieved with Church activities such as prayer, Bible reading, or hearing homilies. Rather, life becomes a ritualized routine without any connection to a goal or purpose when what is heard is felt to be like shame. For some who have left the church, the hearing of a sermon can become fused with a feeling of shame and the feeling reexperienced as memories of childhood visits to the house of shame: the church. The sense of “feeling lost” is not unusual in a place where “being found” is preached.

Third, there is no one theory of shame that allows professionals in the field to devise a uniform treatment of the problem. A DSM diagnostic disorder of shame does not exist. Instead, shame is observed as symptomatic of that which stems from mood disorders or, some would argue, evident in the behavior of personality disorders. It would be helpful to define the state of shame by compiling a list of a unique set of behaviors or a set of stimuli that elicit the particular feeling, informing pastoral psychotherapists on how to treat a patient. What is evident is that those in Christian faith communities who suffer from shame acquire it as a by-product of their theological formation.

As persons of faith process psychological life through theological presuppositions that have helped guide and, at times, misguide them, rather than dismiss the theology or the Christian faith, the pastoral psychotherapist can help the patient discern and rethink metaphors, symbols, and stories that shaped much of the client’s identity

in a way that is empowering and liberating. Theological concepts such as incarnation, forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation, and unconditional love can be reframed by rehearsing the sacred narratives in a new way. A healing methodology of pastoral psychotherapy that reframes the stories, myths, and narratives can be discovered in depth psychology.

The pastoral psychotherapist trained in depth psychology can serve as a primary relational object for the patient's transferences and projections. His or her presence in the therapeutic moment can help to form a healing *imago* in the memory of the patient of non-shaming episodes. The Christian psychotherapist can discover a theological basis for this encounter in an incarnational theology that is vicarious in its expression, vicarious in the sense that the Christian psychotherapist who utilizes a depth approach to therapy can address shame by speaking in a theological language familiar to the patient. By *re-presenting* the humanity of the Christ that embraced all people in the light of their psychological formation, the Christian psychotherapist's non-shaming presence humanizes the process by moving away from absolute pronouncements of God's will to a declaration that embraces the mystery of the human. By accepting what appears as unrelated phenomena in feeling, thinking, and behavior, which, in a more behavioral modification approach, would have been avoided or minimized with absolute biblical principals, the depth approach honors that within the self and outside the self that seeks to bring transformation, including deriving meaning of the shame-based complex and its part in psycho-spiritual renewal.

## Depth Psychology

Jung's theory of depth psychology is distinguished by its emphasis on the unconscious as an objective reality. By exerting specific pressures on our subjective consciousness, it produces oppositional, at times compensating, viewpoints that guide the process of individuation. The unconscious does not determine consciousness in a fixed way but

operates constantly in the background as a guide to the process of healing and wholeness. To observe this background is to learn how to own the process of individuation. The patient in analysis learns to hear and be conversant with the shame-based complex when it rears its head. By capturing projections, the patient remains conversant with the oppositional voices, embracing the affect rather than avoiding, repressing, denying, or projecting. Differentiation of internalized shame-based affect from outer events is enjoined in the process. By differentiating internalized voices, the patient embraces what once felt oppositional and, in doing so, discovers that what once felt like a feeling to be avoided or projected can be viewed as a key to understanding the self. From a Jungian depth psychological point of view, transcendence and transformation are possible as the oppositional is now acceptable.

Depth psychology is much broader as a methodology for addressing shame than are Biblical ways of thinking as the source of solving personal complexes and problems. Some approaches to psychotherapy from a Christian perspective assume an anthropology that places the spiritual life as a higher or initial life of the self that is combined with a rational or mental self. By appealing to this spiritual motivation, an appeal that depth psychology also embraces, the cognitive approach seeks to direct the patient towards a Biblical way of thinking as the source of solving problems. The assumption is that if one is spiritually oriented towards God's principles and lives "obediently" in accordance with these principles, all else will follow. For some, this seems to work, but for those unable to accept this principle of spiritual obedience as a solution to all problems, the therapy may not be effective. Consequently, therapy for a non-Christian is not possible, as a prerequisite for successful therapy is to embrace the "truth" of God's principles.

Although depth psychology is similar to a Christian cognitive approach in its emphasis upon the spiritual as a medium for transformation, its universal approach to seeking what is common in all humans and cultures differs from a Biblical approach to counseling. In depth psychology, prerequisites like embracing Biblical principles are not

necessary. It seeks to ask what is it that is longed for in all humans through the symptoms that are expressed by all people. There is no fixed way of being “Christian,” rather; to be Christian is an invitation into a way of seeing oneself in its relation to the outer world through a Christ that is transcendent. In the spirit of the Christ of the gospels, the shame-based person learns to reconcile, embrace, and accept all that feels oppositional in him. Rather than seek to impose a conventional form of wisdom that is enculturated as a way of legitimating an institution, a depth psychological model can be woven into a theological anthropology that sees the unconscious process as guided by a Spirit that knows of the Christ, an archetypal reality Jung called the Self. The Self is that within all humans that acts as if it knew God or Spirit. It includes both the ego and the unconscious and is encountered when the human need for *transcendence* is understood in the psychotherapeutic moment.

The transcendent function is discovered in a process called oppositional dialogue or active imagination. The patient is empowered to hear the “authoritative” voices that once determined approval as a longing to be made whole. By placing oneself in an oppositional relationship with the affect – as if it were alive – one learns to hear and even speak to the affect, seeking meaning for its long and painful manifestation in the life of the shame-based person. Rather than be quick to purge it or perceive it as a result of a “disobedient life,” the process helps to reframe it as a summoning to a more spiritual life. In this approach, “disobedient acts” are less the focus of therapy, and learning to hear what the “acts” and their symptoms mean is a focus of the depth approach. One’s overall longing is what is most essential. Ann Belford Ulanov reminds us that “the encounter between Self and transcendence presses for its own resolution, towards what Jung called individuation.” The push for transcendence can be manifested in shaming behavior, and shaming behavior can be conceived as manifesting the need for transcendence. For a Christian psychotherapist practicing within a Jungian theoretical framework (since as mentioned, Christians tend to address personal issues from within their respective theological pre-suppositions), the spirit of Christ can be spoken of

as the presence that reconciles, embraces, and accepts what felt oppositional and shamed.

By defusing and differentiating the internalized voices discussed above through this active imaginative approach, the patient learns how to capture the unconscious projections. What is projected or transferred is the feeling that is avoided, namely, the affective shame-complex. Since passing blame through scapegoating or demonizing is a common transference phenomenon of the unconscious, it too is an archetypal reality called the shadow. The shadow is that which disrupts and interrupts the ego’s need to save face to the outer world. It is the psychological clothing we wear in order to survive an outer world that has shamed us. One cannot act as if the shadow does not exist, for it will manifest itself in projections. Consequently, coming to terms with one’s shadow involves clearly defusing and differentiating what is mine and what belongs to the other. It defuses the internalized images that are fused with the outer world and helps the patient arrest the projections. As the fusion of the inner and outer spheres created the globalized sense of shame, embracing the shadow and differentiating from the ego’s need to project contributes to the conscious ownership of the self, as it seeks to become whole.

In the case of a shaming theology, oppositional dialogue seeks to have the patient converse with inner feelings and voices that a shaming theology avoids, since its commitment is the legitimizing of an enculturated religious institution. Depth psychology holds to the legitimization of the objective psyche and its summons towards individuation. A Christian doing psychotherapy from within a Jungian theoretical model might say, “the spirit blows where *it* wills,” not where and how, the institution says it blows! This embracing of the oppositional within as an authentic process of the self is a way of learning about the “truth that sets one free.”

### See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Complex](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)



- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Transcendence
- ▶ Transcendent Function

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the ego; but shame is felt as an inner torment, a sickness of the soul. It does not matter whether the humiliated one has been shamed by derisive laughter or whether he mocks himself. In either event he feels himself naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth (Tompkins 1963, p. 118).

The affect of shame manifests in a variety of physiological ways including blushing, sweating, dizziness, lowering or averting of the eyes, and increased heart rate.

Shame, as distinguished from guilt (which affect theorists understand to be a subpart of the shame/humiliation affect), is about exposure and the experienced self. Guilt is remorse about acts believed to have been wrongfully committed. Shame is about the experienced wrongness of aspects of one's very being and is often, directly or indirectly, related to the condition, the needs, the desires, limitations, and suffering of the human body.

## Shame and Guilt

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### The Shame Affect

According to the influential affect theorist Sylvania Tompkins (1963, p. 118), shame/humiliation is one of the six innate negative affects. By the word "affect," Tompkins means "a physiological mechanism, a firmware script," that is dependent on "chemical mediators that transmit messages and on the organizing principle stored in the subcortical brain as the affect program" (Nathanson 1992, p. 149). "Shame," according to the oft-quoted definition of Tompkins,

...is the affect of indignity, transgression, and alienation. Though terror speaks to life and death and distress makes of the world a vale of tears, yet shame strikes deepest into the heart of man. While terror and distress hurt, they are wounds inflicted from outside which penetrate the smooth surface of

### Guilt Distinguished from Shame

It is believed by affect theorists following Sylvania Tompkins (1963) that guilt is subsumed under the affect of shame. Since guilt involves acts believed to have been wrongfully done or left undone, whereas shame involves a sense of the wrongness of the self regardless of acts or omissions, guilt involves less experience of the self than does shame. However, guilt and shame are often fused, with guilt also involving a conscious or unconscious fear of retaliation, or talion dread. Feelings of guilt imply basic trust in one's world, its laws, rules, and taboos, and in the persons who are the interpreters of these laws. It is generally understood that guilt feelings develop during the oedipal stage of life when culture's laws are first internalized through fear of the father.

Religions typically are among those societal institutions that create rules, laws, and taboos to which persons are expected to adhere. For example, in Judeo-Christian religious structures, the Ten Commandments set forth basic laws which must be complied with. Most Christian denominations provide mechanisms and rituals for confessing one's wrongful acts and omissions,

thus assuaging feelings of guilt and leading to a sense of forgiveness and reconciliation. It has sometimes been observed that in secular life psychotherapy provides opportunity for “confession.”

### Implications of Shame

Contemporary psychology understands the affect of shame as being necessary to protect individual boundaries of privacy and to ensure individuals’ social adaptation. Furthermore, psychological theorists following the groundbreaking study of Helen Lynd (1958) see experiences of the affect of shame as providing access to the deepest possible insight into personal identity, since shame is viewed as the affect closest to the experienced self. In her 1971 work *Shame and Guilt in Neurosis*, Helen Block Lewis persuasively argued from empirical clinical studies that real psychological healing cannot occur without express analysis of shame issues. However, it is axiomatic that for some individuals shame is the overarching and deeply engrained habitual mode of reacting to others. Large degrees of shame, inappropriately or obsessively fixed, can lead to profound depression and other mental illness. Defenses to the experience of shame include social withdrawal, isolation, addictions, depression, violent acting out, abuse of power, self-righteousness, blaming and projection, shamelessness (a power defense to shame), and perfectionism.

It has been argued that shame is archetypal, as is evidenced in the myth of Adam and Eve’s fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It has likewise been asserted that the enduring power of the narratives of the Christian Gospel derives from the shame that is explicit and implicit in Jesus’ birth, life, ministry, and crucifixion, as well as the shameful circumstances of many of the individuals to whom he ministered (see McNish 2004).

### See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)

- ▶ [Crucifixion](#)
- ▶ [Depression](#)
- ▶ [Fall, The](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Myth](#)
- ▶ [Power](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Taboo](#)

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### Sharia

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*Sharia*, or Islamic Law, is a set of principles implemented in the Islamic community. Sharia comes from the Arabic word (شريعة) Shara’a which means to enforce a code of conduct in order to facilitate a way of life. Islamic Law is integrated into almost all aspects of life, from relationships, education, and law to economics and politics. Islam proposes four descending criteria to which Islamic society or individuals can refer as an ideal model for social policies. Sharia has certain sources from which it derives its authority in Islamic society and characteristics that give it credibility and authenticity among Muslims. Sharia is divided into two major sources and nine sub-sources. The first two sources are *the Quran*

and *the Hadith*, which are believed to be directly or indirectly divinely inspired. The sub-sources are mainly based on scholastic interpretation and judgments.

## Sources of Sharia

1. Quran: Muslims believe it to be the literal word of God.
2. Hadith: the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed.
3. Ijma'a: the consensus or the collective agreement of Muslim scholars.
4. Qiyas: the standardization of any issue against Quran and Hadith based on Ijma'a.
5. Istihsan: it comes from the Arabic word *Istah'sana*, or to prefer something over other possibilities of decisions.
6. Masaleh Morsalah (the Common Good): a jurisprudential agreement can be Islamically approved if it brings about common good for the Islamic community or the public.
7. Sadd al-Dhara'i (the standardization of appropriate means and ends): it is to block any means that might cause social disruption even if the ends can be noble. This also means that any means that might bring about a common good should be Islamically facilitated.
8. Al Orf (conventions): it comes from *Arafa* in Arabic, which means an acceptable manner of doing something. It is the social convention or custom in any given Islamic society that may contribute to change in Islamic Law.
9. Math'hab al-Sahabi (the teachings of the Prophet's companions): it is to use the teachings of the Prophet's companions as a raw model in everyday life if there is no direct text from the Quran or Hadith or the previous Islamic Laws.
10. Sharia man Qablana (Pre-Islamic Laws): if there is no known source from a companion, Muslims can follow the laws of the previous messages like Christianity and Judaism as long as they do not conflict with the main sources of the Quran and Hadith.

11. Istis'hab (continuity): the presumption of continuation of a certain status is to remain as is until it can be changed or refuted by evidence.

## Characteristics of Sharia

1. Divine law: Muslims believe that the Quran is the third and final literal message that God has sent to humankind, after al Taurah (*Torah*) and al Injeel (*The later Bible*).
2. Long-term and short-term policy of reinforcements: the Quran speaks of promises and consequences for the short and long term. The mention of heaven and hell are emphasized throughout Quran. Muslims believe that every action has a reaction that can be either rewarded or disciplined in this life (al-Donia) or the afterlife (al A'khirah).
3. Universality: since the Quran is the last message from God, its message is universal to all human-kind in contrast to the previous messages of Jesus and Moses and other prophets whose messages were exclusive to their people.
4. Comprehensiveness: as the last message, the Quran discusses every aspect of human life on every level, personally, socially, politically, spiritually, scientifically, and educationally. Therefore, Muslims believe that the Quran is a divine law that is open to reinterpretation and so applicable at any time anywhere.

## Commentary

Several psychologists and sociologists of religion have distinguished between the focus of Islam and Western psychology. Islam tends to view religion as the core of the individual's life, while psychology tends to view religion as one aspect of the individual's life. Social psychology, therefore, may suggest that abiding by Sharia Law is to confirm the identity of the individual Muslim in society. To follow certain codes of conduct, to adhere to specific policies of discipline, or to at least accept such a lifestyle aim at sustaining the religious institution and ensuring its survival.

Islam, as a social system and establishment, introduces the term *umma* or nation to indicate the importance of a “unified Islamic community.” This community is governed by particular policies in order to fulfill certain needs and to meet specific goals. Sociology may explain this concept as follows:

... a cultural and ideological territory in which no Muslim would find himself alien regardless of political or geographical diversities. In one sense, it is comparable to the notion of ‘Western World’ abundantly used to define a cultural and ideological territory today (Ebrahimi 1996).

*Ummah* works as “. . . a common framework in which temporal association of different groups sharing the Islamic values can be maintained” where the goal and the strategy in cultivating the concept of *umma* is already recommended in the Quran.

## See Also

- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Qur’an

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## Shekhinah

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## In Rabbinic Literature

In early rabbinic texts such as the Talmud, the term Shekhinah (lit. “dwelling”) is used as one of many Hebrew names for God. Deriving from the verb meaning “to dwell,” this particular divine

appellation suggests imminent divine manifestation in a specific place or at a specific time. For example, the Shekhinah is said to rest at the head of a sick person’s bed, to appear when ten men gather for prayer, or to rest between a righteous man and his wife. Though this is the only commonly used Hebrew name for God that is grammatically feminine, in Talmudic and contemporaneous sources, overt feminine images are rarely associated with it. In most instances, the term Shekhinah could be replaced with other Hebrew names for God such as “Master of the Universe” or “The Holy One Blesses Be He” without any consequent change in the passage’s meaning.

## In Medieval Texts

A primary concern of many medieval Jewish philosophers from the post-Talmudic period such as Saadya Gaon, Judah Ha-Levi, and Moses Maimonides was to preclude any interpretation of scriptural passages which might suggest divine anthropomorphization. Revelation and prophecy were especially problematic phenomena for these philosophers because they presume that God communicates in human language. Consequently, among these philosophers, the Shekhinah was often understood not as another name for God but rather as a divinely created separate entity. The Shekhinah became the divine intermediary that would appear to prophets in visions; for God himself does not speak. The Shekhinah is the entity that reflects God’s presence in the world and that interacts with human beings because God’s ultimate transcendence makes direct human-divine contact impossible.

The concept of the Shekhinah evolved further in the writing of the Kabbalists (Jewish mystics) from the twelfth century on. Kabbalistic thought posits that a profound unity of the divine once existed but was severed because of human sin. With this rupture, the masculine and feminine principles of the divine were separated and remain alienated from each other to this day. The Shekhinah becomes the symbol of the feminine aspect of the godhead, the element of the

divine closest to the created world and most directly in contact with human beings. According to the Kabbalists, it is the duty of each individual to work to unite the male and female halves of God by observing the laws of the Torah and living a holy life. Human actions affect the divine, either promoting or hindering progress towards its reunion. Redeeming the Shekhinah from its exile from the remainder of the godhead becomes a primary motivation for behavior in Kabbalistic teachings.

It is in the Kabbalistic literature generally and in the Zohar most prominently that feminine and sometimes even erotic imagery is first associated with the Shekhinah. The Shekhinah is often depicted as a queen or a bride and serves as a foil to the traditional patriarchal images of a transcendent deity. It is not uncommon in Kabbalistic texts to find imagery portraying the reunion of the Shekhinah with the remainder of the godhead as sexual intercourse. Some Kabbalists would attempt to visualize such divine coupling when performing religious duties in order to remain aware of the broader theological implications of their righteous acts.

### Contemporary Analysis

Reflecting the status of women in the premodern period, the Shekhinah is often described in Kabbalistic texts as beautiful and radiant but passive and dependant on the deeds of men for redemption. Some scholars suggest that the popularity of the Shekhinah as a gendered representation of God may have arisen out of the same psychological and theological needs for divine intimacy and accessibility which popularized the Cult of the Virgin Mary among contemporaneous Christians. A number of modern feminists have argued that Jewish women should reclaim the image of the Shekhinah as a counterbalance to the many masculine images of the divine found in scripture and Jewish liturgy. Some Jewish pastoral counselors have reported positive results exploring feminine images of the Shekhinah with women who have suffered trauma and are alienated from more traditional divine imagery.

### See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)
- ▶ [Talmud](#)

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### Shema

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Shema Israel, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehad –  
Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

This prayer is recited in the morning and afternoon prayers and on the death bed. The word “shema” means listen, or understand, indicating that one is to turn inward and feel God, since God cannot be visualized. “God is one” is a unifying principle.

The word “Lord” is used to replace the name of God, which cannot be said.

Eloheinu means “our God.”

Ehad means “one.”

This short phrase captures monotheism and identifies the Jew saying it as a dedicated person of God and a member of the Jewish people – it is a statement of belief and of identity. It is an affirmation of Judaism and a declaration of monotheism. It unifies the self as it declares that the individual self belongs with a particular group. This unifying sound of the Shema can serve to hold the individual personality and make it feel safe and connected.

## See Also

- ▶ God
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Prayer

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## Shi'ite Islam

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Historically, the term Shi'a refers to the partisans of 'Ali b. Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad. The early Shi'is claimed that 'Ali was the only legitimate successor to the Prophet Muhammad having been explicitly designated by him at Ghadir Khum.

To understand the psychology of Shi'ism, it is important to comprehend certain historical events. With the coming of 'Ali to power in 656 Shi'ism emerged as an effective religiopolitical movement. Although unable to join him in battle, the Shi'is also supported Husayn, the son of 'Ali, in his uprising against the Caliph Yazid in 681. The massacre of Husayn and his forces at Karbala then was an important milestone in Shi'i history, as it affirmed notions of injustices endured by the progeny of the Prophet and exacerbated a passion for martyrdom. The "martyrdom complex" has generated the demonstration of grief and passion for the 12 Imams that Shi'is revere (Fig. 1).

An important feature in Shi'ism is weeping for the Imams for it is believed that they were all poisoned or martyred on the battlefield. Weeping for the Imam also reinforces his soteriological function for it is believed that even a tear shed in the memory of the sufferings of an Imam will result in him exercising his intercessory powers.

By participating in the sorrow of the family of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*, the sins of the faithful are obliterated. The importance of weeping can also be seen from the belief that weeping reenacts the cosmic drama. According to some Shi'i traditions, the heavens and earth wept for the blood of Husayn. As a matter of fact, the whole of God's creation cried for Husayn.

Shi'ite faithful also congregate in local assembly halls to hear repeated affirmation of the historical injustices endured by the progeny of the Prophet. The *majalis* (pl. of *majlis*) are lamentation assemblies where the stories of the martyrs of Karbala are recited for the evocation of grief. Narratives associated with the Imams are often heard in the *majlis*. In addition, their virtues, miracles, and valor are recounted.

## The Significance of Flagellation

An important ritual that often accompanies the outpouring of grief is that of flagellation. In Shi'ism, flagellation is a composite term that includes the use of swords and knives to cut the head (*tatbir*), the use of chains (*zanjeer*), as well as striking of the chest. *Tatbir* is the most violent of these acts and is practiced by only a small portion of the Shi'i community.

Together with other rituals, flagellation is important as it helps induce a state of altered awareness in which ordinary restraints of prudence are removed. The flagellant loses not only his sense of self-protection but also his sense of separateness from the Imam as the flagellations generate a mood of identification with sacred Shi'i figures. The flagellant breaks the boundary between himself and his fellow flagellants and even between himself and the model he seeks to imitate.

Flagellation performs different functions. For many flagellants, the induced physical sensations help in the attainment of spiritual states. Blows to the body stimulate identification with the blows inflicted on Husayn and allow the historical tradition not only to be intellectually apprehended but also emotionally and physically experienced. Shedding blood is seen as the pilgrim's way of





**Shi'ite Islam, Fig. 1** Husayn Shi'a Mosque in Karbala, Iraq; pilgrims commemorating the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, grandson of Muhammad (Public Domain [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kerbela\\_Hussein\\_Moschee.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kerbela_Hussein_Moschee.jpg))

demonstrating grief for Husayn's suffering and identification with the mortal wounds of the Imam. Symbolically, it is also his way of stating that had I been in Karbala, I would have protected the Imam with my blood.

Connected to the passion and emotions inherent in the Shi'i psyche is the *ta'ziya*, or expression of condolence or mourning over the martyrdom of Husayn. The *ta'ziya* was established soon after the martyrdom of Husayn when his son, the fourth Imam, Zayn al-'Abidin (d. 713), recounted the sufferings of his father. Later on, under the Buyids (945–1055), official ceremonies were organized to mark Husayn's martyrdom. Subsequently, the *ta'ziya* has assumed different forms as various Shi'i groups have expressed their devotion to Husayn in a myriad of culturally conditioned forms. In the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent, for example, *ta'ziya* refers to a replica of the tomb of Husayn that is constructed, paraded in processions, and then kept in special sanctuaries within the compound of the mosque. In Iran,

the same term signifies passion plays that depict the events in Karbala. In Lebanon, *ta'ziya* refers to a gathering to mark Husayn's martyrdom.

Other rituals that are often enacted in the month of Muharram (when Husayn was martyred) include passion plays, which attained their full expression in Iran during the Safavid dynasty. The plays reenact the events of Karbala and confront the issues of martyrdom, intercession, and the pivotal role of the Imams in the lives of the Shi'is. Passion plays are often held after a procession passes through the town. The processions often highlight political and social grievances and represent antigovernment protests. It is because of this factor that some Sunni regimes have tried to stop the processions.

Powerful symbols (called *shabih*) accompany the processions and passion plays. Especially in the Indo-Pakistani community, specially designed flags (called '*alams*) and biers are paraded to remind the crowd of the suffering that Husayn had to endure. *Jhula* (cradles) are

paraded in processions to remind the faithful of the innocent youthfulness of 'Ali Asghar, an infant son of Husayn who was also killed in Karbala. A horse, popularly called *dhu'l-jinah*, representing Husayn's horse in Karbala, is a focal point in some Muharram procession. As it is paraded among the crowd, the horse triggers an outburst of grief and initiates wailing. Like the other rituals performed in the shrine complex, the purpose of the *shabih* is to encourage weeping and engender a sense of commitment and devotion to the Imams. Through the symbols, the Shi'i is able to identify with the Imams and the suffering they endured.

### Shrine Visitation in Shi'ism

Shi'is also believe in the special charisma of the Imams. The sanctity and authority that are associated with the Imams are transferred to the places that contain their bodies as the spirituality of the Imams is believed to be embodied in the space they have sacralized. Thus, pilgrimage to the shrines of the Imams has become significant as it allows for a spiritual encounter with sacred figures.

The presence of the Imam at the shrine is interwoven with his *potentia*, his power to assist the pilgrims. The *potentia* of the Imam manifests itself in various forms, from the healing of the sick, alleviating calamities afflicting the people, to the restoration of their socio-political rights. Thus, notions of pilgrimage and intercession are pervasive in the Shi'i psyche.

Visitation to the shrine of the Imam is also connected to the use of a whole range of paraphernalia associated with the Imam, his shrine, and related material objects. It is in this context that we can comprehend the importance of holy objects. An object becomes holy when it manifests or acts as a medium with the sacred. In a sense, the divine reveals itself through holy objects, which have expressive power as vehicles of supernatural meaning and are an important means to the attainment of personal holiness. Holy objects offer salvific opportunities because

the presence of the Imam can be experienced by objects that come into contact with the shrine.

Objects help construct the physical presence of the Imam and extend his sanctity beyond the shrine. In this way, these vehicles anthropomorphize the sanctity of the Imam. In popular Shi'i culture, tying a sick person to the shrine is believed to be therapeutic. When it is not possible to bring him to the shrine, then bringing home a thread that has been tied to the shrine is believed to be an equally effective method to cure an ailment. Such objects recreate the presence of the Imam, extending the possibility of attaining his blessings and curative powers even without performing the pilgrimage at the shrine. The Imam acts through the objects just as he acts through his physical presence. At the same time, objects extend the *praesentia* and *potentia* of the Imam beyond the shrine complex, allowing distant Shi'is to experience the Imam's curative and other miraculous powers.

Another important element in the Shi'i psyche is that of waiting for the expected Messiah. Since they realized the futility of armed revolts against the political authority, the Imams, starting with Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 765), taught the doctrine of dissimulation (*taqiyya*) rather than jihad. Henceforth, Shi'is were to conceive of jihad in terms of keeping their faith intact and paying allegiance to the Imam rather than staging armed revolts against political authorities. Jihad was declared to be in abeyance until the time of the Mahdi, the twelfth Imam and promised Messiah. It is believed that the twelfth Imam was born in 870 CE and is currently in a state of occultation. He is expected to establish the kingdom of justice and equality and to eliminate injustice and tyranny. Thus, praying for the appearance of the Messiah and postponement of any rebellion against the political regimes is another important element in the Shi'i psyche.

### See Also

- ▶ [Grief Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Jihad](#)
- ▶ [Muhammad](#)

- ▶ [Patience in Sunni Muslim Worldviews](#)
- ▶ [Pilgrimage](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Violence and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Waiting](#)
- ▶ [Women in Shi'ism](#)

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## Shinto

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### The Nature of Shinto

The word “Shinto” can be translated as “The Way of the Gods” and refers to the traditional religion of Japan. Shinto has roots in the prehistoric past of Japan before the introduction of Buddhism, together with Chinese forms of writing and culture, around the sixth century CE. “Shinto” then appeared as a term to differentiate the worship of the traditional kami, or gods, from “Butsudo,” “The Way of the Buddha.” The two

faiths became deeply intertwined in the Middle Ages, when Shinto shrines were often closely associated with Buddhist temples, the deities of the former regarded as guardians, students, or even alternative indigenous expressions of the imported Buddhas and bodhisattvas. But during the modernizing and increasingly nationalistic Meiji era (1868–1912), Shinto and Buddhism were separated by the government. Shinto became in effect a state religion. Extreme nationalists favored Shinto, regarding it as the authentic Japanese faith, its deities being ancestors or divine companions of the imperial house. After the end of World War II in 1945, Shinto was separated from the state. Its some 80,000 shrines were placed under local control, and apart from a few controversial relics of the past, such as the Yasukuni Shrine, dedicated to Japanese war dead, the religion went its own way.

Shinto, however, continues in what many consider to be its true nature, a religion centered on the patronal deities of particular places and communities. Most Shinto shrines are *ujigami* shrines, that is, shrines of the patronal deity of a particular community, extended family, place, or occasionally class of persons, such as a certain trade. The kami (or it may be a family or group of kami) is either unique to that shrine or is a mythological figure of broader background essentially in the same local role. These places of worship are maintained by that community, and their *matsuri* or festivals are celebrations reaffirming traditional bonds.

Shinto shrines are easily recognizable by their distinctive *torii* or gate, with two upright pillars and one or two large crossbars, through which one passes to enter the shrine precincts, as though moving from one world to another, from the pollution of everyday life to a realm of sacred purity. The shrine itself will typically have an outer porch, bearing such symbols of kami presence as a mirror, drums, and hanging *gohei* or zigzag strips of paper. Behind them stands an eight-legged table for offerings. Finally steep steps rise up to massive doors, very seldom opened, concealing the *honden* or inner sanctum where the *shintai*, or token of the divine presence, is reverently kept.

## Shinto Worship

Shinto worship typically commences with a stately, highly ritualized offering of food (typically rice, salt, vegetables, fruits, seafood, and rice wine), followed by the chant-like reading of a *norito* or prayer and the reception by worshippers of a sip of the rice wine as a sort of communion. At major community festivals, worship is followed by colorful, celebrative events, ranging from sacred dance and *sumo* wrestling to processions, fairs, and traditional horse or boat races. This last part of the festival, which may go on all day to end with fireworks in the evening, is far from solemn, often having more the atmosphere of Mardi Gras or Carnival in Latin countries.

In any case, the main annual *matsuri* is an important solidifier of community identity; its preparation takes months, and it usually involves special, jealously maintained customs distinctive to that place. Shinto is fundamentally grounded in archaic agriculture, and most festivals are related to the agricultural year: seedtime, the growing season, and harvest. New Year, the time of renewal in this highly “cosmic” religion, is also very important.

Persons frequently visit shrines at other times as well to pray, customarily approaching the shrine porch, clapping hands twice as it were to attract the deity’s attention, then bowing the head for a few moments.

## Main Themes of Shinto

Five main themes can be thought of as characterizing Shinto:

1. The importance of the purity versus impurity concept. Shrines, and persons taking part in their rites, must be kept free of contamination by death, disease, or blood. Kami, together with their abodes – which are usually set in green park like spaces as far as possible – bespeak the purity of pristine nature as over against the pollution so often afflicting the city and human life.
2. Tradition. Shinto strives rigorously to maintain traditional practices extending back to the mists of prehistory. For many Japanese,

buffeted by the immense and unsettling changes that have affected their country in recent centuries, it is undoubtedly reassuring that one segment of national life changes little and connects them to ancient roots.

3. Matsuri or festival. Shinto fully recognizes the value of “sacred time” that affirms community, permits joyous and even ribald behavior, and is like a release from the tensions of a highly structured, achievement-oriented society.
4. Pluralism. It must always be borne in mind that Shinto is only a part of the Japanese spiritual spectrum; there is also Buddhism and (while it is not a religion in the strict sense in Japan) Confucian morality, still extremely important in attitudes to family, work, and society. Most Japanese have some connection to all three, having an affiliation with both a traditional family shrine and Buddhist temple, while affirming Confucian ethics. Shinto is typically thought to affirm the joys and relationships of this world, while Buddhism has to do with ultimate metaphysical questions and life after death. Thus, marriages are frequently celebrated in Shinto shrines, and funerals (which, having to do with death, would pollute a Shinto shrine) are conducted in Buddhist temples.

In this regard it should be pointed out that membership figures for Shinto are virtually meaningless; while few Japanese would think of themselves as “a Shintoist” in the western sense of belonging exclusively to one religion, most in fact are likely to visit shrines and participate in Shinto festivals, whatever exactly that may mean in terms of commitment.

5. Polytheism. Shinto, with its many thousands of finite kami, seems to be the only thoroughly polytheistic religion in a major advanced society today.

## Shinto and Psychological Themes

All of these points are of great psychological interest. Psychologists know that issues of purity and pollution can be very real to countless people, that the place of tradition as over against other forces is the subject of vehement debate both in



society and within individuals, that the need for celebrative release in a world of tension must somehow be dealt with, and that we need to find ways to live with integrity in a highly pluralistic society. In all these matters, undoubtedly there is much to be learned from the Shinto experience.

Polytheism is an especially fascinating case, because it is a challenge to the monotheistic or monistic direction in which most of the world's other religions have gone in the last 2,000 years. The theologian Paul Tillich once pointed out that the difference between monotheism and polytheism is a matter not just of quantity, of one God versus more than one, but also of quality. Polytheism involves a different way of seeing the sacred world, not as all centered in one divine power and person, but as diffuse and diverse. The polytheist perceives separate spirits, finite but with distinctive personalities, in this sacred grove and that waterfall, over this town and that, for love and for war. Modern Shinto apologists have argued that this is important and that Shinto is the most democratic of religions because it holds the universe runs by processes of divine conflict and consensus, rather than by a single autocratic will. Some psychologists, from William James in *The Pluralistic Universe* to post-Jungians like James Hillman in several works, have perceived modern western society to have become psychologically polytheistic in all but name and have urged us to come creatively to terms with that vision. Neo-pagans around the world have also lately been paying renewed attention to Shinto.

The psychological significance of Shinto for many Japanese also lies in its symbolic relation to primary social identities and to nature. Both are very important in Japanese consciousness. In this society, anomie and insecurity can be felt very acutely when the support of a family or peer group is lacking. Families, communities, trades, and businesses have their patronal kami and shrines and collective worship events that reinforce bonding. Shinto has been called a religion of the particular; rather than universal themes, it emphasizes sacredness in particular places and groups so strengthens attachment to significant locations and people.

Shinto moreover consorts well with the Japanese love of natural beauty. It has been spoken

of as a "natural religion" in another, more psychological sense as well: as religion in harmony with the "natural" cycles and social structures of human life, unlike faiths that challenge the merely "natural" on the basis of transcendent revelation. But inspired by Shinto, as well as forms of Buddhism such as Zen, the Japanese appreciate finding the sacred in the world and human life as it is when it is rightly perceived.

Shinto, then, remains an ancient religion with contemporary relevance. It is important for understanding Japan and also perhaps ourselves.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Polytheism](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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### Shiva

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Shiva is one of the major Hindu gods, typically ranked with Brahma, the Creator, and Vishnu, the

Sustainer of the universe. Brahma and Vishnu arrived in India with the Aryan invaders from the northwest around 2000 BCE, bringing the Sanskrit language, horses, and iron weapons. Shiva was an indigenous deity who was absorbed by the larger culture over centuries. Brahmanic caste society did its best to prevent mingling of Aryan blood with indigenous dark-skinned Dravidian peoples, excluded by caste rules from intermarriage, eating together, and funerals. But this effort was slowly, partly undermined by centuries of mingling. Gandhi eventually refused to attend weddings unless they were intercaste. Aryan ancient legends and rituals (*Vedas*) and later philosophical explorations (*Upanishads*) combine conservative social customs such as caste and yogic meditative sexual abstinence with highly refined cosmic speculations. Aryan gods such as Vishnu represent the saving spirit of sustaining life on earth, formal rituals, and the social order of the priestly caste system. The indigenous Dravidian peoples of India, including the Tamil people, were pushed to the south. Their primordial gods, such as Shiva and Kali, represent a more archaic type of shamanic divinity that embraces both the creative and destructive extremes of existence, embracing ecstatic methods of experiencing divinity, both fertility and death, ascetic self-control and wild song and dance, fed by mind-altering plants. Over time both Aryan and Dravidic major gods and goddesses were accepted across India, next to thousands of local deities (Storl 2004, pp. 173–189). Many Aryans see Shiva's *lingam-yoni* altars and many Dravidians embrace meditation.

When a worshiper of Shiva enters a Shiva temple, a typical ritual is for him/her to take in flowers, incense, and a coconut. The priest takes the coconut and smashes it on a hard surface, spilling the milk for Shiva to drink. This symbolizes the smashing of the worshiper's ego in our skulls, thus sacrificing its narrow instincts to the much greater transcendent, numinous presence of the Great Shiva Mahadeva (*great god*) (Storl 2004, p. 1). This is a ritual that Carl Jung would see as the ego serving the self.

Shiva is a multifaceted composite divinity that has absorbed sometimes opposing aspects over the centuries and from various regions of India.

In the *Mahabharata* text, he is portrayed as invincible might and terror, as well as honor, brilliance, and delight (Sharma 1988). As an archetypal image of divinity, Shiva has absorbed elements from various historical periods' religious traditions.

## Shamanic Elements

Ancient shamanistic cultures provided much of Shiva's roots – spirit flights where he encounters supernatural beings, elemental spirits, nature spirits, the souls of the dead, and night visits to cremation grounds that take the devotee into the dark unconscious and death images. Thus, he is called the old hunter, wild, insane, carrier of the skull, trickster, drum rider, and the black one. He is envisioned as a ganja-smoking, trance-dancing horned god, lord of the animals, and guardian of souls. He inspires many naked (*air-clad*) wandering mystics covered with ash and meditating in the wilderness, as Shiva does on his Himalayan home Mt. Kailash. He has a third eye, normally closed, but, when opened, is able to send devastating rays of fire to destroy demons, as he did the body, but not the spirit of Kama, god of desire. Shaivites' foreheads are marked by three horizontal lines of white ash to indicate his three eyes and many other trinities, such as heaven, earth, and underworld (Storl 2004, pp. 86–92). His son, elephant-headed Ganesha, likely has roots in Stone Age culture, when big-game hunters were awed by these huge, powerful animals. There are many Paleolithic cave paintings of elephants (Storl 2004, pp. 157–164). Shiva is a teacher of Tantric paths to cosmic bliss, teaching couples eternal love and a pathway to enlightenment. Tantric traditions are not ascetic, but celebrate the discovery of the Ultimate Mystery in the world and its energies. As Storl (2004, p. 210) says, “Love, not renunciation, frees the soul! Everything is divine and worthy of worship.” Food is a gift of a god; music, art, and poetry are divine. Every woman is the goddess; sensual pleasure need not be a hindrance to salvation (*moksha*) but gifts of Shiva's Shakti. This is not to welcome impure or forced relations, but



to see that love overcomes the rigidity of the ego, letting the energies of Shakti take lovers out of their minds to the self (Shiva). Miranda Shaw researched Tantra in Tibet, where it had been absorbed and transformed by Buddhists, and after undergoing strict purification rites, she concluded that Tantric sex is “holy bliss” (Shaw 1994, p. 189).

### Matrilineal Elements

Matrilineal agricultural societies later gave Shiva the Great Goddess (*Devi*) and his wife Parvati, a river goddess who is one with him as *Shakti* energy. Goddess societies gave Shiva the fertilizing phallic *lingam-yoni* altar, earth-crawling serpents, the fertilizing bull mount (*Nandi*), whose horns decorate a Neolithic sanctuary in Catal Huyuk, and the divine feminine energizing power of *Shakti*.

### Patrilineal Aryan Elements

Then, beginning around 2,000 BCE, the more puritanical patrilineal Aryan sages identified Shiva with their all-devouring fire god *Agni*, their intoxicating drink soma, and the howling storm god Rudra, who leads a parade of the dead, ghosts, and spirits. Brahmans have contributed to Shiva’s more restrained, transcendent spirituality. Many devotees who have overcome demons of egotism wear necklaces of Rudra’s tears (*Rudraksha*), strings of shriveled nuts. Sitting in serene yogic meditation, Shiva is called *Shankara* (*Peaceful One*), an image of dispassionate, calm presence. He channels the Ganges River through his head that flows down to Benares and washes the sins of the living and the ashes of the dead. His blue neck came from the Vedic tradition of creation, when the gods were churning the cosmic ocean of milk with mythic Mt. Meru. A poison came up, but Shiva drank it, showing his power to overcome evil or the power of meditation (like later psychotherapy) to bring up shadows from the deep unconscious and neutralize them.

Shiva is most commonly represented abstractly in the widespread stone *lingam* (male organ) atop a dish-like *yoni* (female organ). Worshipers pour milk or honey on it, then add flowers. This represents his role as the power of reproducing life. The *lingam* is imagined to become hot and so needs cooling liquid poured over it. His statues may represent him seated in calm meditation or whirling in ecstatic dancing. He may carry a trident as a weapon, indicating the syllable OM, meaning infinity. He wears a crescent new moon on his head, symbolizing the cycles of time, for the Eternal is beyond time.

Shiva often wears a cobra wrapped around his neck, for his wisdom conquers dangerous animal instincts. Southern India has many jungles populated with cobras. Women ritually, carefully approach trained cobras in baskets and touch them with a flower to gain fertility from Shiva. He may wear a garland of skulls, indicating that his Being embraces death. He is shown seated on a tiger skin that represents his conquest of lust. He may smear his body with ashes (*bhasma*) and inhabit cremation grounds, thus embracing death’s lessons. He has matted hair, rolled into swinging ropes or wound up atop his head. His abode is Mount Kailash, in the Himalayans, where the glaciers have for centuries melted into rivers below (until global warming melts them). This sacred mountain is seen as the axis of the world. Pilgrims walk around it, for it is too sacred to climb.

Shiva holds a small double-headed drum (*damaru*), especially when dancing. He reveres the city of *Varanasi* (*Benares*), the holy city where pilgrims immerse themselves in the Ganges River to purify themselves, and corpses are cremated. Nandi the bull is Shiva’s mount, indicating that he is protector of Dharma, the law that regulates and upholds the universe – he is known as Lord of the Animals.

Shiva is both an ascetic, sitting in yogic isolation, and a householder, married to the goddess Parvati, the divine Mother, and Shakti, divine energy. Their elephant-headed son Ganesha is worshipped as Remover of Obstacles, all over India. Their other son, Kartikeya is

vanquisher of demons and savior of the earth (Storl 2004).

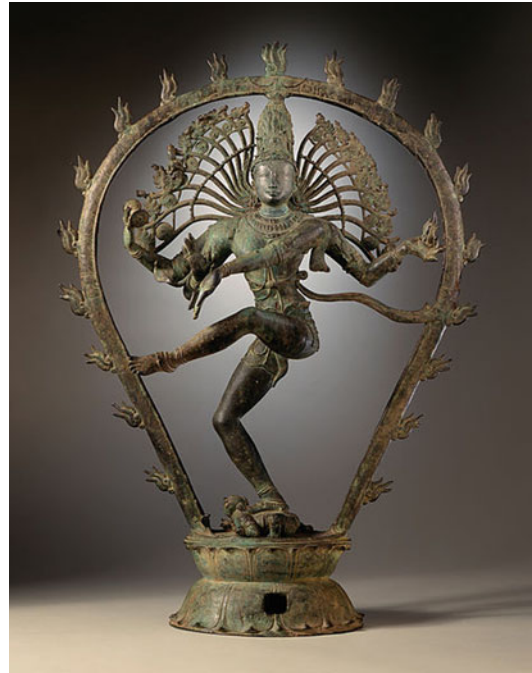
## Conflict

The conflict between the Aryan invaders and the indigenous people is reflected in the conflict between the gods. Shiva's narratives are mostly in the *Purana* texts. In the *Brahmanda Purana*, some Aryan priests in a forest saw Shiva dancing erotically, and their wives were excited by him. So the angry sages demanded that he let his *lingam* fall off. So he did, and all the virile powers in the world stopped. The priests were alarmed and went to Brahma, who realized that this was Shiva and that "He alone creates all creatures by his own energy." So Brahma told the sages to go around India and make *lingam-yoni* altars to Shiva. They did, and when he returned with his powers, they begged his forgiveness and he graciously praised their self-control practices (O'Flaherty 1975, pp. 141–148). Although this may be told from the Shiva perspective, it shows that the competing religions came to terms.

## Nataraja

As Nataraja, Shiva sculptures show him dancing the cycle of creation and destruction, with hair swirling and the shamanic drum of creation, surrounded by a circle of the cosmic round of seasons and planets. The shamanic drum, the "shaman's horse," generates a "hypnotic regression," with the heartbeat, opening depths of soul. His foot crushes the demon of ignorance (*Muyalaka*). As Storl says, "Here, in the center of our being, he, who is our own true Self, dances the joy of being, as well as the dance of doom that turns ego, greed, hate, false pride, and jealousy into pure ash" (2004, pp. 141–145) (Fig. 1).

Wolf-Dieter Storl is a psychologically astute Shiva scholar. He says, agreeing with Jung, "Many a would-be saint has been undone by their rage. Before any spiritual progress is possible, the repressed needs and desires must be lived out and exhausted." Freud called Indian Shakti



**Shiva, Fig. 1** Shiva as lord of the dance, Nataraja (Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shiva\\_as\\_the\\_Lord\\_of\\_Dance\\_LACMA\\_edit.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Shiva_as_the_Lord_of_Dance_LACMA_edit.jpg))

libido that cannot be simply repressed (Storl 2004, pp. 214–220). Psychotherapy is hardly available to many Shaivites, and so they live out the unconscious in their social situations, rather than talking it out with a therapist. This can enable some shady behavior, such as India's "Thuggees" and bandits that lurk about in Shiva's shadow. But positive energy from meditative reflection is a part of Shiva's tradition also. The illusions of ego are not easily shed, but Shiva's tradition of being called "God of Gods," which is not uncommon for other deities as well, points the ego to self, which awakens compassion, justice, and ethics. Practice of Kundalini, which blends earthly with spiritual energies, awakens this.

## Kundalini

The Yogic and Tantric *Kundalini* serpent power is a strong tradition of raising the image of the primordial serpent energy up the spine through

the body's chakras, from the lowest intestinal exit through to the highest cosmic release from the skull. The root *Muladhara Chakra* is about earthiness; the next up, the *Svadhithana Chakra*, at the genitals, is about fire and sexuality; the *Manipura Chakra*, at the digestive tract, is about hunger and greed; the *Anahata Chakra*, at the heart, is about love and imagination; the *Vishuddha Chakra*, at throat level, is about mystical insight; the *Ajna Chakra*, between the eyes, is about higher consciousness; and the *Sahasrara Chakra*, at the crown of the head, is the focus of release into cosmic oneness, where all oppositions and forms melt into ultimate reality, the ground of all Being (Storl 2004, pp. 222–227). Why waste time at the lower end of the spine when the blissful highest awakening of the self beckons above? If we pass through each level with purity and without causing problems, we are not repressing, but are experiencing the holiness of each level. This system blends and moves the psyche through the lower to higher elements of Indian religion, instead of trying to jump over psychological issues to higher consciousness.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Nonduality](#)
- ▶ [Saravati](#)
- ▶ [Tantrism](#)
- ▶ [Trickster](#)

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## Sin

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The concept of sin can be thought of as a type of error. This can be an error according to either divine or social standards. Furthermore, the concept of sin is active in both religious and secular determinations of group allegiance, human fallibility, suffering, and the cure of suffering. Having said that, the dynamics and repercussions of sin are quite different depending on whether the sin is conceived of as transgressing secular law or divine order. Since there is no sin that is good, it is related to evil. Evil can be seen as relative harm (good for me, bad for you), as distance from the divine (St. Augustine and the *privatio bonum*) or as an absolute and archetypal aspect of the construction of reality.

It may clarify the concept of sin to describe it as a more differentiated and active form of a sense of the taboo that can be seen in relationship with confession, heaven, and hell. Since no significant religious or secular traditions propose a worldview in which humanity is in a state of perfection, sin can be seen as a fairly universal concept although one with incredible variation. Not all religions use a concept of sin in a narrow sense, but it does appear that all religions and indeed all individuals have a way of identifying and dealing with problems, errors, or situations that appear to be beyond the scope of local logic. Local logic (so-called because sensible patterns of thought are only comprehensible within a shared emotional, cultural, and metaphysical frame) easily identifies mistakes and can chart the course of their correction. For experiences that supercede this capacity, metaphysics of some kind enters the fray. Metaphysics in this context covers the conceptualization of all nonrational modes, including experiences of love, death, birth, sin, or anything that humans have the capacity to conceptualize but not satisfactorily explain. That is, experiences which are in some way transpersonal are also beyond the normal

problem-solving mechanisms of the mind. Not only is the apperception of some types of experiences such as birth, death, and aging beyond the conscious mind's capacity according to psychological theory, evolutionary psychology has shown that there are not any conscious cognition modules for processing them.

Large-scale forms of transpersonal thinking can also be fruitfully described as religions or political ideologies, whereas small-scale forms are called personal projections. Projection is here meant in the broadest and most neutral form: the subject's assumptions about reality are constantly being refined and tested by social interactions and so are in some sense projections. However, if personal projections become too detached from social networks of meaning, the subject may be identified by the society as psychotic. This can happen even locally, as many people report having neighbors who are "completely crazy" (see Horwitz 2004). To further complicate the picture, even individuals who identify as fully secular imagine the transpersonal aspects of sin in a highly uniform and predictable way that is functionally similar to the various religious modes (Boyer 2002).

Sin is typically defined by dictionaries in two ways: on the one hand, it is an offense against God, and on the other, it is something highly reprehensible but otherwise secular (Miriam Webster Dictionary). To the religious and secular aspects, we will add psychological views in the following discussion. However, from within the structure of religious experience, an offense against God carries definite consequences and demands solutions which are only offered by expert technicians (priests) validated by the religious hierarchy. Thus, as previously stated, we can think of sin as an error or transgression. To whom or what, and what the consequences and solution are, varies by tradition and culture, but in any case, the systems are closed and sin is seen as in some way evil.

All of the major religious systems employ a category of sin. Other types of religious or supernatural traditions such as the Greek pantheon or many ancestor or spirit-based traditions have a way to account for actions which anger the

supernatural beings and usually need some kind of specialized intervention. It is instructive that the primary Hebrew words for sin are *het*, meaning something that has gone astray or off the path, and *aveira*, or transgression (There are at least 20 Hebrew words that convey variations of the meaning of sin!). What goes astray is *yetzer*, or the human inclinations which must be channeled by the law. The cure for *het* is found in adherence to the law (in Orthodox and Conservative Judaism, the law or *Halakha* – meaning the way of walking, or path – is comprised of 248 positive and 365 negative *mitzvot*) and the expiation of guilt during the celebration of *Yom Kippur*. The *yetzer hara* is the evil inclination which would appear to be a conceptual cognate of original sin except that it is balanced by *yetzer ha-tov*, or the good inclination. This is strongly paralleled (in contradiction to the doctrines of St. Augustine) in the Christian New Testament by Rom. 5:12–19. Psychologically speaking, original sin can be translated as an acknowledgment of feeling estranged or alienated from the law of one's psychic dominant. Spirituality, within this psychological model, depends upon discovering and submitting to a law that comes from a nonconscious aspect of ourselves. In this view, spirituality is not dependent upon social norms or emotional states, but rather upon acting and thinking in ways compatible with the psychological structure that each person comes to discover.

The concept and dynamics of Sin have been gradually differentiated throughout the Hebrew Bible into the New Testament, reaching a crescendo of complexity in the Catholic scheme. The latter includes sins ignorance as well as deliberate action, venial and mortal sins (the mortal seven sins of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth are held to be fatal to spiritual progress), sins of animosity to God, and finally the state of original sin which is not dependent upon an action (The Catholic Encyclopedia; also cf. Genesis 3, as developed originally by St. Augustine but refuted by the monk Pelagius). Sins of commission are expiated through a 5-step process of confession, whereas original sin is only transformed through the mystery of the Eucharist. Original sin, although an

unpopular concept in many circles, can be seen psychologically as an intuition that something highly charged needs attention in the very foundation of the human condition and as such has parallels even in the Buddhist tradition.

Buddhism is usually portrayed as having no concept of sin. While it is true that in most forms of Buddhism there is no metaphysical divinity, in practice there are many conceptions of different Buddhas which are beyond space, time, and causality, making them functionally identical with divine beings. Also, the concept of karma, while not implicating a judgmental higher being, is nevertheless a system of punishment and reward for misdeeds (or errors) both of omission and commission. This is further differentiated into a large array of behavioral precepts not unlike the *mitzvot* or Catholic list of sins (*Nirvana Sutra* and spread around the *Pali Canon*, see Nakamura 1980). Furthermore, Buddhist texts outline the three poisons or hindrances to the realization of one's Buddha nature: anger, greed, and ignorance (Watson 2001). The most potent is ignorance, seen as the root of all suffering. This is the original state of mind of all humans and is described very specifically as ignorance of the ontological truth of the emptiness of human nature. All suffering, and to put it another way, all sinfulness, is related to this ignorance. Suffering is not the same as pain, and neither Buddhism nor psychology would promise to eliminate the kind of discomfort that comes from making hard choices or what Jung called conflicts of duty. Rather what can be changed is neurotic suffering, or to put it the other way around, neurotic suffering is often the avoidance of the authentic struggle implied by integrative growth.

The Muslim Qur'an describes also describes sin (like the Jewish and Buddhist traditions) using the error and guidance model (rather than the fall and salvation model). Sura 1:5 describes God sending a succession of prophets to lead the faithful back to the straight path. Sin is thus a kind of distraction correctable by following the examples of the prophets and of course the great prophet, Muhammad.

In all of these descriptions, we see a common human experience of something being wrong,

and sin locates the problem in the relationship between the personal subject and some transpersonal aspect. Sin moves fully to the psychological realm if conceived of as the description of an experience which leads away from the dominant (and usually unconscious) value in a given personality. Thus, sin, radically seen psychologically as a symptom or symbol, also gives shape to a change of attitude which closes the gap between the personal subject and his or her highest value (leaving aside, for the moment, whether that value is conscious, unconscious, ideological, or individual). In other words, sin is the recognition of a projection that is now ready for integration, as well as containing, in itself, as the direction (in symbolic form) of the integrative process.

We can see that this recontextualizing completely changes the symptom into a complex signifier of psychological progression. An illustration of the flatness of the concept of sin when seen from a predetermined perspective is contained in the following vignette: President Calvin Coolidge, seeking guidance, attended a sermon on sin. Upon returning, his wife asked what the preacher had said about it. The President shrugged and answered, "He was against it." Instead, the psychological dynamics of sin have a double quality, like the original sin of Adam and Eve being seen as both the cause of expulsion from the Garden as well as the beginning of some correction. The experience of a fall or expulsion can be seen as the first step in moving away from a relationship based on assumption and fusion and toward a more nuanced and conscious position directed by the very symbol that had been called sin.

An example is found in the treatment of alcoholism. As soon as the subject becomes aware that alcohol has been having a negative effect, the projection on the substance is already beginning to change. However, rather than merely avoiding the concrete usage of alcohol, the cure is found in investigating what exactly was the change in personality that occurred when drinking was engaged (whether this is an increased level of social comfort, an interest in others, relaxation, or even aggression). It is this very change in



consciousness that the psyche as a whole is pressing for an awareness of, and experience shows that it will not be satisfied (rather like a jealous god) until this change is accomplished. From the neutral, amoral side of the psyche, there is no preference for just *how* this is done. However, from the side of personal consciousness, it makes all the difference whether the change takes place through practice and engagement or through drinking.

This double description is not far from a Gnostic view in which the beginning of the path toward gnosis is found in filth, sin, decay, and the experience of alienation (Jonas 2001). Medieval alchemy, as well, locates the initiation of the opus in the experiential feces of the human condition, and for Jung the deep analytic process begins with the cast-off and despised parts of the personal psyche, the shadow (Jung 1979).

In addition to the religious, secular, and psychological aspects, two others should be mentioned in order to highlight the multiple valences of this concept. Evolutionary anthropology has shown convincingly that religion in general and the embedded concept of sin specifically enable the identification of trusted cohorts, allow room for the problem of decoupled scenario building (called imagination in other contexts) and provide the economic incentives for a priestly class. From the perspective of a Lacanian critique of the subject (in many ways not different from the Buddhist; see above), the conceptual error is found in the *very idea* of wholeness or healing (Lacan 1982). Wholeness is thus seen, like the Freudian interpretation of religion in general, as an illusion (Freud 1989). Instead the subject is constituted at the deepest level by a lack of being which is only painfully exacerbated by collusive and ideological strategies of regaining any concept of wholeness. These strategies actually open the wound through the foreclosing of the natural flow of language.

Both of these latter approaches enable us to ask of sin: what is sin for in the dynamics of the subject? This question allows one to translate from the dogma of a religious tradition to an experiential appreciation of the concept of sin.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology

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## Skinner, Burrhus Frederic

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Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1904–1990) is known as the pioneer of radical behaviorism. He was an avowed atheist as an adult, and his ideas and methods are not generally associated with religion. However, Skinner's work clearly shows that he was exposed to and influenced by religion and religious ideas. In his autobiography, Skinner describes the influence his Presbyterian Sunday School teacher had on his early love for learning and writing. He also recounts having a "mystical experience" as an adolescent and losing his belief in God after he did not receive additional "signs" to confirm and build on this experience.



A central idea of traditional Presbyterianism is that of predestination, the belief that an omnipotent and omniscient God has determined the fate of the universe from creation until the end of time. This theme is explicitly discussed and contrasted to the idea of free will in Skinner's novel, *Walden Two*. Skinner's radical behaviorism posits that all behavior is determined, not free. In this way, the determinism of radical behaviorism is similar to the religious idea of predestination. While he does not explicitly acknowledge such in his autobiography, it is possible and even likely that the ideas and arguments put forth in *Walden Two* were influenced by Skinner's early exposure to the Presbyterian faith.

## See Also

► [God](#)

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## Smith, Joseph

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Joseph Smith (1805–1844) was the founder of Mormonism. He was only 14 and living with his parents in Palmyra, New York, when he became absorbed with finding out which of the various religions was the true one. The whole region was known as the “burned-over” region because of the very active evangelization by preachers, a period known as the Second Great Awakening of religion in America. After a period

of fervent prayer in a forest grove near his home in 1820, he received a theophany, or divine manifestation, where he was told that none of the current religions were true. This is known as the First Vision. Three years later he received another visitation, this time from an angel called Moroni. He was instructed where to look for some plates which he was to recover and then translate the contents with the aid of devices known as the Urim and Thummim. The resulting book was published as the *Book of Mormon*. It claims to be the record of several waves of ancient Hebrew peoples who came to the New World by boat and the civilizations which developed from them over centuries.

From this and several other revelations, he was instructed to found a church which was to be a new dispensation of the Gospel with full authority of priesthood to perform sacraments and teach the true religion. In 1830 he and several others including some family members founded the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), also commonly known as Mormons. The reception to this new proclamation was not generally favorable. Many thought him possessed of the Devil; others just thought he was deluded. Even from an early point in the history of the movement, word surfaced of his association with magical practices such as use of divining rods for finding buried treasure or lost objects (Brodie 1971; Quinn 1998). Though later attempts to sanitize his biography have dismissed these claims, there is good evidence for some involvement in folk magic traditions.

Despite critics, the LDS Church grew and so did opposition. He moved his flock to Kirtland, Ohio, after a former Campbelite (Disciples of Christ) preacher, Sidney Rigdon, converted along with many of his congregation. It was here that the first temple was constructed. Temples are buildings for special rites apart from the regular meeting houses. Persecution of the church continued as many Christians found the fundamental claim of authenticity of the *Book of Mormon* as a supplementary scripture to the Bible to be unacceptable. Additional practices and beliefs articulated by Smith as Prophet, Seer, and Revelator of the new Church were also at

odds with orthodox Christian teachings. He rejected all previous creeds, Ecumenical Church Councils, and other sources of authoritative teachings held by many Christians. In addition to the *Book of Mormon*, he began compiling his revelations in a book now known as the *Doctrine and Covenants*. A third new scriptural book, the *Pearl of Great Price*, contains books whose authorship is claimed to be Abraham and Moses. These are claimed to have been translated from papyri found with a mummy which came into Smith's possession. As a result of continued challenges, he moved the church to Independence, Missouri, building a temple there and proclaiming it to be the center of Zion.

From an early period, Smith supported aggressive evangelization of others. Missionaries were sent to various parts of the United States and began traveling to Europe, bringing in many converts, mostly from northern European countries. Smith moved the church to Missouri and, then after further persecution, to a city he founded on the Mississippi River in Illinois, named Nauvoo. Here, he felt, he and his followers could be secure by building a place where they could be concentrated and thereby hold political control. He founded the Nauvoo Legion, a militia, to guarantee protection for his followers. However, opposition continued and mounted. By this time the Mormon doctrine of polygamy had become widely known and the source of much additional anger from the surrounding community and the American public. Finally, in an outbreak of violence, he declared martial law. He and his brother were then taken on criminal charges of treason to the jail in Carthage, Illinois. On June 24, 1844, a mob seized control of the jail and killed both Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum. Several other followers who were with him were wounded but survived.

His death precipitated a struggle for succession of the church. The largest faction favored the election of Brigham Young, who was then a leader of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, the major body of leadership of the church directly under the President and his counselors. Another faction supported his son, Joseph Smith III. This became known as the Reorganized Church of

Jesus Christ of LDS. Young decided to move the flock deep into the far west of the United States to avoid further persecution through isolation and is now known as the Community of Christ. In the winter of 1846, the largest body moved across the river and camped in Iowa, at a place now known as Winter Quarters. From there they migrated across the plains and on July 24, 1847 entered the valley of the Great Salt Lake in what is now Utah. There Young proclaimed that "this is the place" where they could settle and find a new community.

Smith's legacy is established as a founder of a major religious movement, including both the dominant LDS Church based in Utah and several offshoots. The movement was burdened for many years by the doctrine of polygamy, which has been abandoned by all but a few fundamentalist spin-offs. The LDS Church in Utah is one of the most rapidly growing religions and is perhaps the leading example of "restorationist" Christianity, which rejects the bulk of the history of the church as clouded by apostasy and claims that one or more modern prophets have restored the true religion. Brodie's (1971) biography was the first scholarly work which differed from the Church's official hagiography; it stimulated controversy which still reverberates today. Regardless of how one conceives of the status of the *Book of Mormon* or the religion founded by Smith, it is certainly clear that he had a prodigious capacity to formulate a new theological vision and attract followers to that vision.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Mormonism](#)

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## Socrates' Daimonion

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Probably the fullest description of Socrates' daimonion is in Plato's *Apology* 31c, where Socrates says:

I have a divine sign [daimonion] from the god which... began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never turns me towards anything. This is what has prevented me from taking part in public affairs, and I think it was quite right to prevent me. Be sure, gentlemen of the jury, I should have died long ago otherwise.

One reason that Socrates' daimonion is important is because in *Republic* 496, Socrates suggests that it enabled him to become a true philosopher. This is puzzling but is made even more so by the fact that the daimonion does not offer any reasons, but only deters from this or that action. And yet notwithstanding, Socrates, the great rationalist, submits to it. The problem then is squaring Socrates' overriding commitment to having reasons and his willingness to follow religiously his daimonion.

## The Sources

We have two primary sources for the daimonion, the writings of Plato and those of Xenophon, another contemporary follower of Socrates. The data that we need to work from are Plato's *Apology* 31c (as quoted above), also 40 and 41, *Euthyphro* 3b, *Alcibiades* 1, 103, *Euthydemus* 272, *Phaedrus* 242, *Theaetetus* 151b, *Republic* 496; *Theages* 128–30, and probably *Hippias Major* 304 (accepting Reeve's proposal in Smith and Woodruff 2000, pp. 31–33). The sources from Xenophon are his *Memorabilia*, I.1.1–9; and 3.5; also IV. 8.1 and 8.5; also *Banquet* viii.5; and Socrates' *Defence* 5 and 13.

On the whole, there is considerable coherence and consistency in these sources. Probably the biggest textual problem is the dialogue called *Theages*, which of all the Platonic dialogues

contain the most material on the daimonion. The problem is that in it Socrates says that his daimonion was the dominant element in what he taught his followers. Here Socrates the rational moralist seems to give way to Socrates the man magically possessed by his daimonion, which he says "has absolute power in my dealings with those who associate with me" (129). But since it is agreed by present-day Plato scholars that the *Theages* is not by Plato, we can put its evidence to one side in this entry.

Here, then, is what we learn about Socrates' daimonion:

1. It is a divine sign that Socrates had since childhood and which always turns him away from something, never directly towards anything (Ap. 31).
2. Specifically, it stops him: (1) in mid-speech (Ap. 40); (2) from leaving the changing room at the bath house (Euth.); (3) from crossing a river to return to Athens (Phaed.); (4) from initially befriending Alcibiades (Alc.) and from initially associating with Antisthenes (Xen, Banq.); (5) from accepting back students that have left him (Theat.); (6) from going into politics (which he believed saved his life) Ap. 40 and also other professions (7) such as becoming a Sophist (Hippias Major); and (8) from twice worrying about or preparing for his defence at his trial (Memorabilia 148 and 491).
3. It frequently came to him and sometimes in small things; Ap. 40.
4. It was the source of one of the three accusations made against him at his trial, namely, that he introduced new divine things; Euth., Ap. 31; Memo 1.
5. He believes that it was responsible for his becoming a true philosopher; Rep. 496.
6. In Rep. 496 he also says that it was unique or rare.
7. It seems to compel acquiescence; for Socrates always, as far as we know, obeys it.
8. It gives no reason, although this might be qualified by the evidence of the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates says that "just as I was about to cross the river, the familiar divine sign came to me" and adds "I thought I heard

a voice coming from this very spot, forbidding me to leave until I made atonement for some offense to the gods.” – which could be taken as the reason for the sign, although hardly a sufficient, justified reason.

9. Unlike the usual divinational signs, such as thunder, birds of omen, and sacrificial victims, Socrates' daimonion is not publicly observable. And although he describes it as a voice (in Ap. 31 and Def.), all his other references to it are as a sign. However, here again the evidence of *Phaedrus* might also seem to go against this, since Socrates does talk of a voice speaking to him from “this very spot,” although he says that it seemed to be, or he thought it was, a voice speaking to him.
10. In the *Phaedrus* passage, the sign is preceded by Socrates feeling uneasy.
11. When Socrates describes his daimonion at his trial (in Ap.31 and Def.), and especially its prescience, it provokes an angry response from his judges.

## Interpretations

This, then, is the hard or hardish evidence. The question is: what does it tell us about Socrates' daimonion?

1. Perhaps the most widespread view, recently expressed by Gosling, is that “The voice of the daimonion is pretty clearly what we would call the voice of cautious conscience” (1997, p. 17). This fits with its subjective character and with Socrates' concern with what is right. But the interpretation seems belied by what Socrates says in Rep. 496 that it is unique or rare, for then Socrates would be saying that that he was unique in having a cautious conscience. Gosling characterization also seems at odds with the outbreak of anger from the judges, which strongly suggests that they thought that Socrates was making an outlandish claim. Seeing the daimonion as a moral manifestation also does not fit the appearance of the sign in the *Euthydemus*, where it stops Socrates from leaving the bath house.
2. Another widely held interpretation is that the daimonion was essentially an indirect manifestation of Socrates' rationality. Among the proponents of this view is Martha Nussbaum, who speaks of the daimonion as “an ironic way of alluding to the supreme authority of dissuasive reason and elenctic argument” (see Smith and Woodruff 2000, pp. 32–33). What is attractive about this view and those like it is that if it were right, we would then have a way of dealing with the problem mentioned at the beginning of this article. For then there would be no fundamental conflict between Socrates' rationality and his daimonion. But this suggestion, like Gosling's interpretation, does not fit the evidence of the *Euthydemus*, or (comfortably) most of the other appearances of the daimonion.
3. A variation on (2), which also draws somewhat on (1), is that the daimonion is rational but that its conscious rational operations have become instinctive or intuitive by long use in the service of virtue. This seems to be Montaigne's proposal that Socrates' daimonion was “a certain impulse of the will that came to him without awaiting the advice of his reason” (p. 35). But, though attractive, it also suffers from the difficulties of (1) and (2).
4. A more searching suggestion, although prima facie less attractive, is made by Nietzsche in his important “The Case of Socrates.” This is that the daimonion, which Nietzsche describes as an “auditory hallucination,” was an indication that Socrates was suffering from mental illness. I think this is essentially right, but it needs to be honed in important ways. Most importantly, it needs to be observed that not all mental illnesses are bad. Socrates himself is especially clear about this in the *Phaedrus* 244–5, where he speaks of the valuable things that have come from madness (mania). Also, it is not clear, despite Nietzsche' description, that the daimonion was a psychotic symptom. For unlike the classic psychotics, such as Schreber, Socrates does not believe he was hearing voices that brought him into direct contact with other persons or agents. What all the evidence (with the possible exception

of *Phaedrus*) suggests is that he was experiencing (subjective) signs or urgings. Hence, if Socrates was suffering from a mental illness, it is probably closer to a neurotic rather than a psychotic illness. And there is evidence that it did resemble an important neurosis, namely, obsessional neurosis, now also described as obsessive compulsive disorder or OCD, a condition most famously described by Freud in the seventeenth of the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* and the case of the Rat man.

The most important evidence pointing to the daimonion as a form of obsessional neurosis is that:

1. It compels but without giving a reason; and yet the sufferer feels that it must be obeyed.
2. That those subject to such compulsions often try to rationalize them after the fact, which is what Socrates does.
3. As the obsessional neurotic very frequently believes that he, or his condition, is virtually unique, so did Socrates.
4. Having this condition gives the sufferer a sense of his importance even grandeur. Of course, in one way this does not fit with Plato's picture of the modest Socrates. But this was not how the judges at his trial reacted to his account of his daimonion. It created clamor, since it suggested that he had a special relation with a god.
5. In the *Phaedrus* it goes with or is preceded by uneasiness or anxiety. Obsessional neurosis is also frequently found in people obsessed with morality (as, e.g., Zola) which was also Socrates' case.
6. It also very often takes a religious form, most famously shown in Luther and Bunyan.

Of course, in proposing that Socrates' daimonion should be seen as a form of good obsessional madness, I am not claiming that it perfectly fits. Thus, we do not know that Socrates found his daimonion oppressive or unwanted. But then, it isn't clear what his attitude to it was or whether it was consistent over the many years that he had it. That he believed it divine and obeyed it does not prove that he liked having it.

Another likely objection to this interpretation is that it is crudely reductionistic. In fact, this need not be the case, if we bear in mind Socrates' judgement in the *Phaedrus* that the most valuable things have come from good madness. For then, it is not religion that is being reduced to psychology, but psychology that is being raised to religion. And given Socrates' extraordinary accomplishments – i.e., becoming arguably THE exemplary wise man, even perhaps the noblest human being in history, and, through his crucial impact on Plato, the guiding spirit of western philosophy – we have little or no reason to regard anything which was distinctive of him as MERELY psychological or bad psychopathology. Nor, bearing this in mind, should we even exclude the possibility that the daimonion was what Socrates thought it to be, namely, a supernatural sign from a god. Seeing the daimonion as some form of good madness does not exclude that. Indeed, if anything the extraordinary character of Socrates' achievements seems to call for some such an extraordinary, paranormal explanation. The daimonion as good or divine psychopathology also offers a way of reconciling the conflict between Socrates' daimonion and his rationalism: in short, that it provided the necessary safety net or veto for Socrates' commitment to reason and rational justification, preventing him from becoming a rational tyrant as well as encouraging his rationalism by the tendency that obsessionals have for finding reasons for their compulsions or – perhaps we should say in Socrates' case – his repulsions.

Of course, one thing that needs to be mentioned, as lying behind Socrates' unique accomplishments and between the plausibility of the supernatural interpretation and the psychopathological interpretations, was the apparent ability of his daimonic repulsions to be unerringly, providentially right.

### See Also

- ▶ [Daimonic](#)
- ▶ [Plato and Religion](#)

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## Solution-Focused Counseling

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Solution-Focused Therapy/Counseling, or Solution-Focused Brief Therapy as it is sometimes referred, is one of the postmodern psychotherapeutic methodologies which developed out of a critique of the traditional approaches to psychotherapy. The impetus of the critique was that traditional models of psychotherapy take an overly hierarchical and pathologizing approach, based on biased presuppositions and worldviews. Thus, traditional approaches of psychotherapy focus predominately on identifying the cause of problems (interpreted by an objective observing expert) while the solution-focused approach believes that knowing about the problem is no longer necessary, and in fact, can be limiting in many cases (Walter and Peller 1992). Moreover, the client, not the therapist, is actually the expert on his or her experience and determines what is problematic as well as what will be helpful. In short, the emphasis is on *solution building* rather than *problem solving* wherein solutions are

constructed via describing the problem, establishing goals, exploring exceptions, and noting client strengths and resources.

Solution-Focused Therapy (SFT) was developed by Steve de Shazer (1940–2005), Insoo Kim Berg (1934–2007), and their colleagues at the Brief Therapy Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This group was influenced by the findings in cybernetics (Bateson), the Milan Strategic Family Therapy approach, the Mental Research Institute (MRI) in Palo Alto, California, and Milton Erickson's theory of untapped potentiality in persons. Each of these approaches, along with SFT, began to ask different kinds of questions and created new ways of thinking about persons and psychotherapy.

In what follows, we will explore these differences and how they make SFT popular and unique by unpacking three areas: (1) the philosophical underpinnings, (2) the key elements of the theory, and (3) the key elements of practice. Following this, we will bring SFT into conversation with spirituality and religion and then close with future directions of this approach.

## Philosophical Underpinnings

In order to discuss the specific elements of SFT, one needs to locate it within a larger, more general paradigm of thought. As stated previously, SFT is one of the postmodern approaches to psychotherapy, based on particular philosophical orientations. Providing an exhaustive description of the distinctive features of all postmodern approaches to psychotherapy is somewhat contradictory given the philosophical underpinnings and is beyond the scope of this entry, but this term does highlight a major paradigm shift which occurred throughout all realms of intellectual pursuit in the late 1970s/early 1980s. This shift was based on the work of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, among others (Tarragona 2008). Each of these thinkers was instrumental in numerous ways building postmodernity as a *critically liberative and deconstructive critique of the nature and sources of*



*knowledge*. In other words, universal givens, pure objectivity, and authoritative meta-narratives were no longer assumed to be true, rather a hermeneutic of suspicion examining underlying premises and power dynamics became a necessary prerequisite for any hope of constructing, not finding, truth.

More importantly for psychology and religion, this work introduced new emphases in psychotherapy and the study and understanding of human experience. Postmodern critique has highlighted the biases and limitations of positivist epistemology and embraces constructivism and social constructionism – meaning reality is not “out there” to be discovered but is constructed socially through language. In this paradigm, meaning making, particularly the continual co-constructed meaning, that persons give events and experiences, not scientific or empirical data, is what shapes identity and reality (Anderson 2006). Moreover, a postmodern understanding views pure objectivity as impossible because persons are already-always looking at the world through a lens shaped by one’s social location – culture, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and so on. As a result, a new appreciation for difference and particularity emerged in the postmodern era, with an emphasis on the local knowledge and expertise of the “other” rather than a pathologizing of that which is “other”. And this new appreciation led to more liberative, strength enhancing, and collaborative approaches to psychotherapy.

## **Key Elements of Theory: Assumptions and Concepts**

### **Solution Building, Not Problem Solving**

SFT, unlike traditional forms of therapy, believes that one does not need to understand the problem in order to alleviate it and that the solution may not even be related to the problem (de Shazer 1988). In fact, according to this approach, a problem-solving mentality has a detrimental effect on the client and therapist, as this often limits the vision of exceptions and possible solutions.

### **Exceptions**

A solution-focused approach believes that no problem occurs all the time and that there will inevitably be “exceptions” when the problem either is not a problem or is less of a problem (de Shazer 1988; O’Hanlon and Weiner-Davis 1989). There will always be a moment, an event, or an experience wherein the problem is not impacting a person’s life or is less severe, and these offer a glimpse into the person/client’s strengths, abilities, and resources. To create such moments, the client must be building solutions to the problem, and thus the therapist points this out and asks important questions about how this is accomplished. For example, a therapist might ask, “*Are there times when you don’t have this problem?*” “*What is different at those times?*” “*How does that make a difference to you?*” “*What will make it possible for more of that to happen?*” (Lipchik 2002).

### **Change as Already-Always**

In the solution-focused approach, change is viewed as already-always occurring – even before the client enters therapy for the first time. De Shazer notes the fact that a person who seeks therapy reveals that change is already occurring by the simple fact of their entrance into therapy (de Shazer 1988). Furthermore, the therapist realizes that a client’s situation is always in flux, but often change goes unnoticed (O’Hanlon and Weiner-Davis 1989).

### **The Beginner’s Mind**

The beginner’s mind is a mind-set or stance of working with persons based on a Zen phrase: “In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few” (O’Hanlon and Weiner-Davis 1989, p. 8). What this mind-set illustrates is that the therapist must clear himself or herself of preconceived views and solutions and be open to learning from the local knowledge of the client. Such a “decentered” stance allows the therapist to assist the client in finding solutions that fit their particular interpretive framework and worldview (Gehart and Tuttle 2003).

### Present and Future Focus

Solution-focused therapists ask mostly present- and future-oriented questions based on the belief that finding lasting solutions is best done by focusing on what is already working well and how the client would like their life to be, rather than focusing on the past and origins of the problem (Dolan 2012). Once a goal or solution is established, it can be carried into the future to strengthen it.

### Key Elements of Practice: Skills and Techniques

#### Formula First Session Task

The *formula first session task* is a theoretical orientation and technique of practice simultaneously. De Shazer developed this method as a way of reorienting the focus on solutions and what was working rather than on problems and what was going wrong. It provides an opportunity for clients to notice otherwise unseen strengths, abilities, resources, and solutions. As the initial session wrapped up, de Shazer would say something like:

Between now and next time we meet, I would like you to observe, so that you can describe to me next time, what happens in your (pick one: family, life, marriage, relationship, etc.) that you want to continue to have happen (de Shazer and Molnar 1984).

#### The Miracle Question

The miracle question is probably the most recognized aspect of the solution-focused approach. It is used as an assessment tool, a goal-setting strategy, and an intervention technique (Gehart and Tuttle 2003). In this technique a client is asked to describe what their life, relationships, family, sense of self, etc. would be like if the problem was no longer around. De Shazer would often set the stage for this question explaining that he was going to ask a somewhat bizarre question that required the imagination but hoped the client would play along. Following this, he would say something like:

Suppose that one night, while you were asleep, there was a miracle and this problem was solved. But because this happened while you were asleep, you did not realize that this miracle occurred. . .what would be the first sign that will make you notice that something is different? What would be the first thing that you would do that you don't normally do?

#### Scaling Questions

Scaling questions refer to the use of a 10-point scale to measure status and change. Therapists ask clients to give themselves a score as a way of assessing where they are in relation to the problem. Take depression, for example, a therapist would say, "*On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 representing a place where depression is no longer a problem and 1 representing depression as extremely problematic, what is your relationship with depression today?*" The client would then offer a number (let's say 4), and the therapist would follow with, "*What would need to happen between now and the next time we meet, for it to go from a 4 to a 5?*"

#### Exception Questions

Earlier it was noted that no problem is all encompassing; thus there will always be times or experiences that do not fit with the understanding of the problem, and solution-focused therapists ask questions to unearth these exceptions. Such questions invite clients to reflect on times or experiences when the problem either was not a problem or was less of a problem and are important because they reveal past solutions, strengths, and resources. Another method of discovering exceptions is to use coping-type questions. For example, when working with clients in extremely challenging scenarios, a therapist might simply ask, "*How have you managed to carry on?*" or "*How have you prevented things from becoming worse?*" (Dolan 2012).

#### Compliments and Feedback

Compliments and feedback (a method similar to collaborative therapists Harry Goolishian and Tom Anderson's reflecting teams) provide the therapist an opportunity to highlight and validate

clients' strengths and resources by noting what they are already doing well. It also offers an opportunity for the therapist to communicate that he or she has been listening and knows how challenging the problem is for the client (Dolan 2012). Often times, but not always, the compliment and feedback occur after the therapist has taken a short "consultation break" towards the end of the therapy session. This is a brief break wherein the therapist leaves the room to reflect and then returns with feedback, emphasizing the strengths and progress of the client.

### Reflecting Theologically

The literature connecting SFT and spirituality and/or religion is sparse, yet not without potential. Earlier it was noted that a solution-focused approach uses a Zen "beginner's mind-set," but there is much more to reflect theologically in this approach – particularly from a Judeo-Christian perspective.

First, the solution-focused approach has an ethic of neighbor love, which highly respects and values persons. A person seeking care is not seen as a deficient "patient" in need of an expert's diagnosis and treatment plan, but is seen a valuable human being, with strengths, resources, and goals that contribute meaningfully to the therapeutic process. Second, there is an empowering and liberative impetus for persons who have been subjugated/pathologized by the dominate norms of traditional psychotherapy. This stance echoes themes from the prophetic writings and liberation theology. Additionally, Jesus modeled a deconstructive and prophetic critical lens for the dominant norms of society, as he often taught saying, "*You have heard that it was said...but I say*" (see The Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5–8; Caputo 2007). Third, Kornfeld (1998) uses the theological concept, *discernment*, to describe the solution-focused approach. She illustrates how both the therapist and client are looking [discerning] where change is already happening and thus re-/training themselves to notice and be open to the presence and activity

of God. Finally, the solution-focused approach is hope filled and future oriented and thus teleological (Lester 1995). There is a spirit of anticipation in the possibilities of a God who is beyond us and out in front of us calling humanity towards greater healing, restoration, liberation, and reconciliation.

A couple of theological critiques arise, which must also be noted. The first critique is in relation to the view of human sinfulness and limitation and the reality of systemic evil. In other words, what are the limitations of human potential and possibility, or of solution building, in light of human sin and vulnerability? A second critique is that of extreme relativism, as a Judeo-Christian worldview asserts that not all truth claims are equally valid or authoritative. Thus, the question becomes how does one navigate competing norms? I believe such questions, and others, are best offered and not simply answered, as a way of highlighting the tensions and inviting constructive solution building.

### Future Directions

Solution-Focused Therapy is one of most popular and widely used forms of psychotherapeutic practice in the world (Trepper et al. 2006). This is likely due to its brief, collaborative, and empowering model, which makes it popular and applicable to a wide variety of situations. Trepper et al. (2006) highlight such uses as follows: family therapy (Campbell 1999; McCollum and Trepper 2001), couples therapy (e.g., Hoyt and Berg 1998; Murray and Murray 2004), domestic violence (Lipchik and Kubicki 1996), sexual abuse (Dolan 1991), substance abuse (Berg and Miller 1992; de Shazer and Isebaert 2003), and schizophrenia (Eakes et al. 1997). Additionally, the solution-focused approach has been utilized by social service agencies (Pichot and Dolan 2003), educational settings (Franklin and Streeter 2004; Rhodes and Ajmal 1995), and business systems (Berg and Cauffman 2002). SFT is also undergoing new emphases of research to evaluate its effectiveness including microanalysis of language within session, the role of emotions,

brain imaging, and qualitative approaches (Trepper et al. 2006). It seems likely that, like the theory itself, the solution-focused approach will continue into an expansive future ripe with potentialities and possibilities.

## See Also

- ▶ Existential Psychotherapy
- ▶ Narrative Therapy
- ▶ Pastoral Psychotherapy and Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Postmodernism
- ▶ Psychology
- ▶ Psychotherapy

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## Song of Songs

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The Song of Songs, also known as the Canticles of Solomon, is a collection of lyrical love poetry belonging to the Wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures or the Old Testament of Christian Scriptures. The Song's title, the Song of Songs, is in the style of the superlative, similar to other Scriptural references as "the Lord of lords," "the God of gods," and "the Holy of holies." While the Song has neither evident moral or ethical teaching nor any mention of God and is highly charged with passion and desire, deeply sensual and earthy in nature, by this designation, the Song is upheld as the Song above and beyond all songs, the godliest and holiest, and the greatest of all songs. Within Jewish and Christian traditions, from as early as Rabbi Aqiba (c. 100 CE) and Origen of Alexandria (c. 240 CE), Gregory of Nyssa and Bernard of Clairvaux, to the mystics Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, the Song is most commonly read and interpreted as an allegorical expression of God's agape, the divine passionate love for Israel, the chosen people, and later of Christ's intimate love for his Bride, for the individual soul, and for his Church. At the same time, while providing an analogue with which to speak of the intensity of divine love, a faithful reading of the Song, which alternates between three voices, a woman, her male lover, and a female chorus, needs also to recognize its particular nature as a secular, erotic love poem. From its onset, the Song is eloquent with vivid metaphor and pulsating imagery that playfully express without inhibition or constraint the human experience of sexual yearning, desire, and fulfillment:

Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!  
(Song 1:2).

Oftentimes, the challenge lies in being able to hold together these two ways of reading the Song. Spiritual growth and closeness to the divine do

not entail a shunning of the authentic human capacity to be sensual and sexual, to know pleasure, and to experience the urgings of desire and the delight of its satisfaction. Development and maturity in the spiritual life does not mean a forsaking of what is innately human, a relinquishment of our embodied nature. Disembodiment deprives and alienates, rather than nourishes and ennobles, the human spirit.

The religious patient in therapy might have profound sexual shame, guilt, and inhibition around speaking of and referring to the body, sexual sensations, and feelings because of imbibed religious beliefs that have dichotomized and alienated the life of the spirit from felt and sensed human reality. Deep shame can hinder the knowing and trusting of the body's inherent goodness and worth, beauty, loveliness, and desirability. Spiritualization as a defense often serves to protect this patient from intense anxiety around being in the body and from experiencing powerful feelings and palpable sensations as well as from having to face and work through internal conflicts around religious beliefs, guilt from the association of the body and pleasure with evil, and sexual shame. Rigid, obsessive attitudes and compulsive behaviors might develop to support and consolidate a defensive spiritualized wish for self-lessness and accompanying disembodiment. Patients might also struggle with repression or dissociation around experiences of relational intimacy and sexuality especially if there is some history of sexual trauma, abuse, or trauma to the body. The fear and terror of reawakening or reliving these traumatic experiences can keep patients numb and disconnected from their bodies, unable to feel and, consequently, unable to feel real and in themselves. On the other hand, there are patients who must deal with promiscuity or with sexual addictions and compulsive behaviors that also struggle with a form of this dichotomy between body and spirit. For these patients, there can be an obsessive, insatiable desire for the thrill and pleasure involved in these encounters, a longing that is dissociated from the human reality of the embodied love object and their potential for a mutually intimate relationship.

A radical experience of the divine as well as an authentic movement towards wholeness and integration involves and presumes an immersion in one's body and a growing awareness of the liveliness of its senses, a consciousness of one's sexual nature and robust capacity for mutuality and intimacy. The Song expresses sheer joy in the sensual: fragrant scents and aromas, the taste of sweetness and spice, the roundness of the belly, curve of the cheeks and color of the lips, the radiant ruddiness of the lover and the growing excitement that accompanies the sound of his approach, the heart-piercing desperation and frustration around his leave-taking, and the exhilaration of desire and of being desired:

How fair and pleasant you are, O loved one, delectable maiden! You are stately as a palm tree, and your breasts are like its clusters. I say I will climb the palm tree and lay hold of its branches. Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine and the scent of your breath like apples (Song 7:6–8).

The Song touches on deeply human struggles: to take in and receive such profuse admiration of oneself and one's body, to risk physical touch and emotional connection that opens one to vulnerability and the possibility of painful rejection, to experience deep neediness and desperation for love along with the angst that comes with loneliness and abandonment, and to deal with familial and cultural stereotypes that affect and distort issues of body image and physical self-care. The Song also provides a vital way of being with and in the body through which the world is known and experienced: allowing the mutuality of sexual desire and delight, palpable affection, and playfulness; acknowledging that the human and communal journeys involve comings and goings, searching and finding, finding and losing, want and woo, intimacy that can be left bereft, need and satisfaction, lack and deprivation, assurance and insecurity, the yearning to touch and be touched, to hold and be held, wounding by love, and fulfillment in love; and recognizing that these same dimensions are reflected in the spiritual journey and in each one's sacred relationship with the Divine.

The Song calls to a lived consciousness and embrace of the human-divine capacity for

passion, yearning, and oneness that is both singularly embodied and spirited, allowing each to be deeply moved and affected by the other, that is, empowering, vitalizing, and transformative, as audacious and bold as the woman of the Song demanding her lover to

Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a raging flame (Song 8:6).

### See Also

- ▶ [Affect](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [John of the Cross](#)
- ▶ [Religion and Mental and Physical Health](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)
- ▶ [Teresa of Avila](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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### Sophia

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### Origins

Sophia is derived from the Greek word *sophizesthai* (Cady et al. 1986) or one who is wise. Her name also comes from the Greek word *sophos* (Cady et al. 1986) or to be of the same kind. An interpretation of this definition is that Sophia is



contained in all of life; each life form is of the same kind as Sophia. Matthews (1991) describes Sophia as a warrior, dressed in camouflage haunting history. Similarly Schaup (1997) describes Sophia as a red thread who can be traced throughout the history of human experience.

Sophia has been defined as a deity, goddess, creator, and archetype. She is referred to many entities: a Middle Eastern goddess, the “she” listed in the *Book of Proverbs*, the creator in the Gnostic gospels, a symbol of God in matter in Eastern Orthodox theology, the primordial Jungian archetype of all matter and life in Jungian thought, and synonymous with Prajnaparamita, the mother of all Buddhas. Sophia is the spiritual force which formed the material world, and as such her spiritual energy is in each form of creation. Because of this, Sophia can be a conduit from the material world to the spiritual essence in each life form.

## Goddess

As a Middle Eastern goddess, Sophia’s name is associated with Barbelo (Ann and Imel 1993) who is the mother of all the angels, as well as Jehovah’s mother. There is an entity called Sophia Prunikos (Ann and Imel 1993) or the fallen half of Sophia who was thrown out of heaven and became a whore on earth. She experienced the dark side of the human condition, integrated this, and then returned to heaven as an aeon. In another form Pistis Sophia (Davidson 1967) was the serpent who tempted Eve. Pistis is translated as faith. As a deity, Sophia embraces all of life without moralistic judgments.

## Creator

Sophia was also named as the creator in the Gnostic gospels in the *Nag Hammadi* scrolls (Eliade 1987). The name for the gnostics comes from the Greek word *gignoskein* (Eliade 1987) meaning to know. In the scrolls Sophia is described as a self-generating, emergent force that rippled into existence to begin creation. This story has similar features to the structure of

the Jewish kabbalah, where wisdom is *hokhmah* (Seghi 1995) and is the first manifestation of the unknowable divine energy.

The Gnostic gospels with Sophia as creator are related to Plato’s *Timaeus* (Conford 1959). Speaking through *Timaeus*, Plato described creation as beginning with “one” or the world soul, termed Sophia by the Gnostics, and then subdividing exponentially. In all its varied forms, all matter and life still contained a piece of the world soul, Sophia.

In the *Nag Hammadi*, Sophia is beyond the opposites that define reality and becomes a paradox that unites.

I am the knowledge of my inquiry  
and the finding of those who seek after me,  
and the command of those who ask for me  
and the power of the powers in my knowledge  
of the angels who have been sent at my word  
and of the gods in their seasons by my counsel  
and of spirits of every man who exists in me  
(Bonheim 1997, p. 216).

## Old Testament

Cady et al. (1986) say that the “she” in The Book of Proverbs, Wisdom, and Baruch was Sophia. The following quotes exemplify Cady’s point (*Catholic Family Edition of the Holy Bible* 1953):

For wisdom is more active than all active things;  
and reacheth everywhere by reason for her purity  
(Wisdom, Chapter 7, vs. 24).

For she is more beautiful than the sun, and  
above all the order of the stars being compared  
with the light, she is found before it (Wisdom,  
Chapter 7, vs. 29).

Learn where is wisdom, where is strength, where  
is understanding; that thou mayst know also where is  
length of days and life, where is the light of eyes and  
peace (Baruch, Chapter 3, vs. 14).

Receive my instruction, and not money, choose  
knowledge rather than gold, for my fruit is better than  
gold and the precious stone and my blossoms than  
choice silver (Proverbs, Chapter 8, vs. 10 and 11).

## Religious Contexts

A Russian orthodox mystic, Vladimir Soloviev (1978), created a theology called Sophiology in

an attempt to resacralize nature. Bulgakov (1993), one of Soloviev disciples, makes the point that Sophia is unspeakable and unknowable but she is where the “creaturely world is united with the divine world in divine Sophia” (p. 17). Sophiology teaches that the way to become spiritual is through the material world.

In Tibetan Buddhism, Sophia is Prajnaparamita, the Mother of all Buddhas (Macy 1991). Prajna is profound cognition and Paramita is translated as perfect or gone beyond.

Freed from the dichotomies which oppose earth to sky, flesh to spirit, the feminine appears here clothed in light and space, as that pregnant zero point where the illusion of ego is lost, and the world, no longer feared or fled, is reentered with compassion (Macy 1991, p. 107).

Paramita personifies the Buddhist concept of “dependent co-arising.” All sentient and insentient life arises from the same energy, consistent with *sophos*, to be of the same kind. Paramita or Sophia symbolizes the possibility of transforming the human mind to sense the interconnection of all life.

Sophianic scholars such as Thomas Schipflinger (1998) and Susan Schaup (1997) conclude that the ecstatic visionary experiences of Hildegard von Bingen and Jacob Böehme were of Sophia. Arne Naess (1992) coined the word Ecosophy to create a philosophy of aligning human life to ecological equilibrium.

## Archetype

Marie-Louise von Franz, a Jungian therapist, calls Sophia the self-knowing primordial cause or the energy from “the archetypal world after whose likeness this sensible world was made” (von Franz 1985, p. 155f). She also says that Sophia is the fundamental archetype or the blueprint of the material, sensible world (von Franz 1996). Woodman and Dickinson (1996) believe that humans are at the brink of a paradigm shift moving into a state where the spiritual self is the locus of development and interconnectedness will mark consciousness, or the paradigm contained in the archetype, Sophia. The search for wisdom, then, is contained in this quote: “To become like Adam and unite with the inner

Sophia and become androgynous” (Eliade 1987, p. 13). Sophia transcends religious, racial, tribal, national, and even species differences as part of creation and becomes a method of gaining wisdom of merging human consciousness with the world soul contained in all life.

## See Also

- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Eliade, Mircea
- ▶ Female God Images
- ▶ Gnosticism
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Prajna

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## Soteriology

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Soteriology is the branch of theology dealing with the study of salvation. The term comes from the Greek *soterion*, "salvation," and is also related to *soter*, "savior."

Soteriology relates to several other branches of theology in that it asks who is saved, by whom, from what, and by what means. It asks, as well, what the end goal of this salvation is. In Christianity, soteriology is inextricably linked with Christology, for both fields centralize the significance of Christ as savior. Christian soteriology, then, developed vis-à-vis the process of defining doctrinally who Jesus is and what his life, death, and resurrection mean for humankind. While it is outside the scope of this article to give a comprehensive overview of Christological developments, we may examine two Christological concerns of the early church that are immediately relevant to soteriology: that Christ must be fully God and that he must be fully human.

The issue of Christ's divinity came to the fore in the early fourth century, when the priest Arius of Alexandria insisted that the Son, Jesus, was not coeternal with the Father but was created by him. Jesus was the first of all creation, but created, nonetheless. He was, Arius claimed, *homoousious* with the Father – of *similar* substance. Would Arius' position have been accepted, the soteriological implication would have been that the world's Savior would have been only an instrument of God and, thus, one

who did not necessarily himself passionately desire the world's salvation.

While the Council of Nicaea condemned Arianism in 325 by declaring the Son to be *homoousious* – of the *same* substance – with the Father, another soteriological challenge soon arose. Apollinaris of Laodicea described Christ as being fully human insofar as his body was concerned; his divinity, however, took the place of a human soul. In this instance, Christ would not be truly human; he would simply be the divine Logos enfleshed in a human body. Soteriologically, Jesus the Savior would be, in the Apollinarian view, one with the Father who desires the world's salvation but unable to be identified with the humans whom he saves. The Council of Chalcedon in 381 condemned Apollinaris and his teaching. Christian soteriology, then, insists that the savior be one with both the God who saves and the people whom he saves.

Certainly, Christianity is unique in being defined by its savior, but there are savior figures in other religions, too. For instance, some sects of Buddhism see a bodhisattva as helping to bring about salvation. In Pure Land Buddhism, devotees believe that the Dharmākara bodhisattva (also known as the Amitābha Buddha) works to help them enter the perfect land of bliss.

Soteriology, though, deals not only with the *soter*, the savior figure, but also addresses what salvation means. In Christian theology, salvation classically means salvation *from* sin and *for* Heaven. Among and within Christian denominations, however, this statement of salvation still leads to disparate understandings. Western churches traditionally have taught that Christ redeems humankind from personal and original sin; Eastern churches, however, have no doctrine of original sin. Likewise, salvation to Heaven classically means, in the West, that humans can hope to experience the *beatific vision*, seeing God face-to-face in the afterlife. In the East, Heaven has been construed differently; the emphasis has been on Christ bridging the gap between humankind and God so that, through Christ's saving work, the human experiences *theosis*, a divinization by which he or she

participates in the divine life of the godhead. Heaven, then, is the fulfillment of Athanasius' axiom that God [Christ] became human so that humans may become [by adoption, not by nature] God.

Like Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam has no doctrine of original sin, so Muslim soteriology focuses on salvation *for* Heaven. This is accomplished primarily through faith, although some sects of Islam also emphasize adherence to the law and the need for purgation of sin.

In both Buddhism and Hinduism, salvation entails liberation from the illusions of this world. In Hinduism, it is primarily ignorance from which one must be saved, and so the process of salvation is a process of becoming aware of the illusoriness of the world, the transience of all things, and the self as an extension of *Brahman*. According to Buddhism, the person escapes suffering through freeing himself or herself from desires and false attachments to the world and the self.

Increasingly across faith traditions in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, soteriology has come to be understood as having ramifications in this world as well as in the afterlife. Liberation theologies emphasize that salvation is not salvation from sin alone but also from structures of oppression and violence. Faith communities have become more socially engaged to promote human flourishing in this life.

## Commentary

In Christianity, soteriology has an undisputable relationship with sin, especially in the Western churches. From a psychological perspective, then, soteriology presupposes a state of guilt, the state in which an individual feels he or she has committed a violation of moral law. While guilt can be a positive impetus for change, it can also fester and lead to anxiety, depression, and despair.

Freud understands guilt as a state of disjunction between the ego and the superego. More relevant, though, is the notion of existential guilt, associated with Søren Kierkegaard, among others. Kierkegaard denies a concept of original sin that implies that humans cannot resist sinning.

Rather, he suggests that humans are free, and in the face of this freedom, they experience anxiety (and, to be sure, this anxiety does incline a person to sin). It is through wrestling with this anxiety that the person becomes authentically human; failure to do so furthers guilt. Ultimately, the person who does not engage his or her anxiety will fall into despair. Salvation in Kierkegaard's paradigm entails recognizing oneself as a sinner, culpable in one's own right, and acknowledging the need for Christ.

## See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Atonement](#)
- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Confession](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)
- ▶ [Fall, The](#)
- ▶ [Heaven and Hell](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)
- ▶ [Liberation Theology](#)
- ▶ [Original Sin](#)

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## Soul in the World

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The separation of psychology from religion is a modern philosophical argument that went a long way toward solidifying the “internal” psychological ego that interacts with the “external” world. It took off with René Descartes. Ancient indigenous religions believed the world to be full of spirits and divinities that interacted with humans. This was the importance of the biblical first commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:2). This assumes that there are other gods around, but they are not to be honored; this is called henotheism, the early step toward Hebrew monotheism, which took centuries to achieve. Monotheism teaches that humans are first of all creations of the one God, neither related to other spirits nor independent souls. But Descartes solidified the concept of the subject versus objects.

Descartes (1596–1650), the “Father of Modern Philosophy,” argued that human minds are not children of God, but have autonomous subjective, internal psyches, led by the conscious ego. This was encapsulated in his famous saying: “I think, therefore I exist [*cogito ergo sum*]” (Descartes 2011). He proclaimed, not “I am a creature participating in earth’s existential energy fields, therefore I exist,” or other options. This is the origin of the modern philosophy of the ego/subject standing independently from God and from the “objective, external” world, explainable by natural laws and mathematical principles. Thus emerged the modern onset of the separation of psychology and religion.

As science developed, the metaphysical claim that human souls are not creations of God, but have independent psyches in a world of separate objects, made the development of science and industry easier, since their advocates did not have to respect any inherent spiritual or ethical guidelines toward nature. This left the world free

for humans to dominate and exploit. As the powerful idea of the “neutral, soulless objective, external” world developed increasingly effective knowledge and technologies, this idea looked good at first, freeing humans to exploit nature to solve human problems. Since monotheism rejected ancient nature spirits, nature was for the first time a neutral, “objective” realm, and Descartes’ “I think” defined the conscious ego. In theory, that is.

Psychology developed the theory of “projection” beginning with Feuerbach in the 1840s and finalized by Freud around 1900. The theory of projection became a powerful argument against lingering religion, claiming that God was “nothing but” a subjective content that was inappropriately “projected” from subjects into the objective heavens. This showed how far psychology had accepted the Cartesian separation and helped reinforce it. Religion began a slow decline in industrial cultures, since God had become mainly a matter of personal experience. Meanwhile, the machine world of industry fascinated people with its speeding trains and mass-production industries and sometimes saw its smoky pollution as a sign of “progress.”

Most psychology as subjectness has not challenged its own worldview. But some, such as Ralph Metzner, say: “The environmental disconnection of modern psychology is indeed a conspiracy . . . . To keep human nature as distant, different, and disengaged from nature as possible” (Metzner 1999, p. viii). This disconnection is now being seen as a defense, part of the subject/object metaphysics that is fading.

### Subject/Object Metaphysics in Decline

Industrial society’s premise of the subject/object dualism has always had problems. The nineteenth-century air pollution in coal-burning towns like London was almost as awful as the coal miners’ “black lung” from inhaled coal dust. Now pollution and ecology are problems on a vast scale – for example, global warming from excessive CO<sub>2</sub>-filled smoke, overfishing the oceans, clear-cutting forests, and fighting for

increasingly scarce resources such as forest and water – because people feel no ethical obligation to respect the “objective” world. Better to escape the ugly polluted industrial realm for a vacation in the peaceful countryside. But slowly this barrier between inner and outer worlds is disintegrating. Now we know that, at a deep level, we exist not essentially as subjects/egos, but existentially as parts of important fields such as atmosphere, temperature, and electromagnetism.

The combination of the population explosion and the effectiveness of machine technologies to produce mass quantities of artificial products has led to growing problems of ecology, such as pollution – air pollution, water pollution, mountains of trash on land and islands of floating trash in the oceans, species extinctions, and chemicals producing unanticipated results. Serious ailments such as cancer from nuclear leaks are showing that the isolation of subjects from the objective world is not a useful metaphysical paradigm. Psychology is no longer taken for granted by all as just as the metaphoric “in here” nor nature merely “out there.” And nature is not just neutral “things” since we interact with them at deep, often unconscious levels, from inhaled gases to polluted water. Western religion, which has been relegated to just a private matter separate from nature, is increasingly being questioned. Even “unreligious” people now speak of “spirituality” as *experiences* of sacredness, in the soul and in nature, as distinct from conventional religions of “the book” (Elkins 1998).

### Soul in the World Reviving

Becoming conscious of experiences of soul in the world is taking a long time. But there are many sources. The Romantic artists of the nineteenth century began to oppose the rise of industrialism with books such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) that pictured the tragic consequences of seeing the human body as a collection of separate parts that a mad scientist could assemble like a machine and, by some unexplained process, bring to life. This expresses fears of the soul-less “objective” materialistic factory-like machine model for humanity.

The revival of feeling soul in the world rejects the harsh industrial exploitation and ravaging of nature and activates another way of knowing. Emerson said: “The earth laughs in flowers” (Van Matre and Weiler 1983, p. 9). Thoreau intentionally lived close to nature at Walden Pond. Countless others, notably artists, celebrated soul in the world. Walt Whitman said: “Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth” (Van Matre and Weiler 1983, p. 12). John Muir said: “*This grand show* is eternal. . . Eternal sunrise, eternal sunset, eternal dawn. . .” (Van Matre and Weiler 1983, p. 13). Muir’s psychological experience of nature was religious; he saw soul in the world. He roamed the California mountains and persuaded President Teddy Roosevelt to establish National Parks to preserve islands of undisturbed nature, such as Yosemite Valley. These are places to experience soul in nature’s beauty and majesty. Robert Service, “Bard of the Yukon,” wrote: “Have you seen God in His splendors, heard the text that nature renders? (you’ll never hear it in the family pew.)” (Van Matre and Weiler 1983, p. 20).

Soul in the world requires a rejection of ego’s literalist, materialistic, and purely practical readings of nature. It needs to include an intuitive, imaginative symbolic perception. Modern art rejected the “realistic” art of classical tradition and forced viewers to see art and thus life symbolically, deeper into the soul, not literally. For example, Picasso’s painting *Guernica* is a symbolic cry against the first bombing of civilians in Spain. Aerial bombing treats its victims like objects out of sight, out of mind. Andy Warhol’s Campbell soup can is a portrait of the industrialization of food into commercial objects. Now, while bombing civilians has become too common, the rise of the health food movement and protests against industrial pollution has increased, and not just in yogurt and granola. People are striving to preserve nature’s soul in healthy organic food and prevent pollution of natural water, land, and air. Why? Not just for the health of humans and nature, but because such movements immerse soul in the world’s field energies, not egos



standing against theoretical objects. This is partly unconscious, but it is emerging into collective consciousness.

The quest to reawaken soul in the world takes psyche out of logical ego into nonliteral, poetic, paradoxical soul languages to help express the new/old consciousness of the depths of soul in the world, spoken often in paradox. Gaston Bachelard wrote: “The falcon is always at the summit of the mountain, crying: “I am the White of the Night, the Red of the Yellow”” (Bachelard 1948, p. 46). Look sensitively for the subtle, paradoxical, unexpected tones, deeper than the surface of the world deeper than the shadow of meaning in the literalism of science.

Indigenous cultures have always experienced soul in the world, as ancestors reborn in nature, spirits, and divinities in nature. One Hopi says that we should live in harmony with the world because “We are all of one human life, human world. We’re also involved in the animal world, and the plant world, and the cosmos” (Trimble 1986, p. 89). In his initiation into African manhood, Malidoma Somé, after a hot, sweaty day embracing a tree, ego-subject dissolved as he saw face-to-face an image of the soul of the world:

I thought I was dead . . . . When I looked once more at the *yila* [tree], I became aware that it was not a tree at all . . . . My body felt like it was floating. . . . When I looked again, she had lifted her veil, revealing an unearthly face. She was green, light green. Even her eyes were green, though very small and luminescent. She was smiling and her teeth were the color of violet and had light emanating from them . . . . She was green from the inside out . . . this green was the expression of immeasurable love . . . . We exploded into each other in a cosmic contact that sent us floating adrift in the ether in countless intertwined forms . . . . She placed her lips close to my left ear and she spoke so softly and tenderly to me that nothing escaped my attention. I cried abundantly the whole time. . . . because every word produced an indescribable sensation of nostalgia and longing in me. . . . The power of nature exists in its silence. . . . Human language has access only to the shadow of meaning (Somé 1994, pp. 220–222).

Take me out of ego and let me hear the loving, luminescent green goddess. Embrace the world and feel how it already embraces you. Knowledge needs to incorporate soul’s caring. “Green” has become a metaphor for nonpolluting ecological

*caring* about nature. This caring about green is an important spiritual step away from the separation of subject and object.

The post-Jungian archetypal psychologist James Hillman wrote about *Anima Mundi*, “Soul in the World.” For him psychology has failed its healing task by attending only to what we imagine as a completely enclosed internal psyche and repressing our soul in the world, trapped as we are in the Cartesian dualism. But he breaks free:

I can no longer distinguish clearly between . . . . psychopathology of self and psychopathology of world . . . . to place neurosis and psychopathology solely in personal reality is a delusional repression of what is actually, realistically, being experienced . . . . The world is inundating me with its unalleviated suffering (Hillman 1992, pp. 93, 99).

When we ignore the suffering of the natural and cultural world, we are blind to the way it affects our own souls. Looking at the world’s psyche, its feeling embraces us is a new way of seeing:

Hence, to call a business “paranoid” means to examine the way it presents itself in defensive postures. . . its delusional relations between its product and the speaking about its product, often necessitating gross distortions of the meanings of such words a good, honest, truth, healthy, etc. (Hillman 1992, p. 104).

To accept the definition of our egos as “consumers” who compulsively mob stores for “holiday” sales, trampling each other in a pushy, me-first grab-all materialistic rush, is a pathological example of the denial of the collective interaction of world and personal psyches:

To call consumption “manic” refers to instantaneity of satisfaction, rapid disposal, intolerance for interruption. . . the euphoria of buying without paying (credit cards). . . . To call agriculture “addictive” refers to its obsession with ever-higher yields, necessitating ever more chemical energizers (fertilizers) and mass killers (pesticides, herbicides) at the expense of other life forms and to the exhaustion of agriculture’s earthen body (Hillman 1992, pp. 104–105).

The psychopathology of repressing soul in the world has reached a dangerous extreme – paranoid, manic, and addictive. This is a sick

situation, yearning for re-enchantment of soul-in-the world with psychological and spiritual empathy for the “out there” that is not really “out there” or “environment.” We are in it, and it is in us, as a deeper, holistic world, and our lives depend on its health. It is demanding a different, non-Cartesian psychology of the oneness of existence, just below the psychopathological denial of soul in the world. We even need to stop saying “subject” and “object,” stop thinking of the world as a machine, and let imagination and empathy shape more thinking. But this re-enchantment of the world is another article.

### See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Anthropomorphism](#)
- ▶ [Archetypal Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Green Man](#)
- ▶ [Intersubjectivity](#)
- ▶ [Muir, John, and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Participatory Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Projection and Han Fortmann](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)

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## Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach

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It has become very fashionable for depth psychologists to speak of the soul, although there is great variation in the way they use this word. Traditionally, the word “soul” refers to a suprasensory reality, an ultimate principle, a divine essence, or an energy that is essential for organic life, but depth psychologists have appropriated the word as a way of distinguishing themselves from other schools of psychology. Some writers use the word “soul” to deliberately imply an overlap between psychology and spirituality or to imply depth of experience or a romantic sensibility. For the psychotherapist, the main importance of this word is that it distinguishes between everyday ego concerns and deeper levels of meaning. The word soul is also a useful term for that mysterious, often uncanny sense of presence familiar to all psychotherapists that occasionally pervades the therapy room.

According to Bettelheim (1983), Freud used the term “*die Seele*,” not in its religious sense but metaphorically, to indicate our common humanity or as the seat of human identity and uniqueness. Bettelheim believed that Freud used this word for its psychological impact and to evoke mythological and humanistic resonances in the reader. Bettelheim suggested that Freud was aware of the spiritual nature of his work, but this awareness was ignored by his translators, and the word “soul” was deliberately excised or

mistranslated as “mind” to make Freud’s work more acceptable to the scientific community. This, even though Freud thought that psychoanalysts could be “secular ministers of souls.”

Jung’s writing consistently emphasized the soul rather than the mind or the brain. In 1933, in the heyday of behaviorist attempts to rid psychology of words with a religious connotation, he suggested that the recovery of the soul is an essential task for us. Although he insisted on the reality of the soul as a principle in its own right, he used the term in various ways. Sometimes “soul” was used as if it were synonymous with the whole psyche, which for Jung is an irreducible realm in its own right. Because the psyche creates the reality in which we live, his ontological position is what he calls *esse in anima*, or being in the soul, meaning that our experience of the world is a combination of its material reality and the way the psyche or the soul imagines or fantasizes about it (Jung 1971). This is an intermediate position between purely materialistic or spiritual perspectives – *esse in re* or *esse in intellectu*.

Jung also uses the term soul as if it were a kind of psychological organ which produces images and symbols which act as a bridge between consciousness and the unconscious. When we dream, or when we have a numinous experience, transpersonal levels of the psyche interact with human levels of consciousness. In this sense, the soul is that which allows us to link with spirit and perceive the sacred – what we know about the spirit comes by means of the soul. The soul casts the experience of spirit into emotions and images that are transmitted into personal awareness and into the body, a process known as the ego-Self axis.

Jung used the term “soul figures” to refer to a female figure in a man’s dream (the anima) or a male figure in a woman’s dream (the animus). These parts of the psyche are particularly unconscious to the dreamer, more “other” than same-sex figures in a dream, so they bridge to deeper levels of the psyche. Today, we are reluctant to attribute specific gender qualities to the soul, because these often repeat gender stereotypes. What remains important is the soul’s function of linkage to the unconscious.

Hillman (1975) wrote of the soul as “a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint rather than a thing itself.” He points out that the soul is a way of talking about something that cannot be fully articulated. The soul refers to our capacity for imagination, reflection, fantasy, and “that unknown human factor which makes meaning possible, turns events into experiences, is communicated in love and has a religious concern” (Hillman 1972). Hillman is fond of Keats’s (1958) notion that the world is a “vale of soul-making,” although he uses this term in a somewhat different sense than Keats did. Depth psychologists understand “soul-making” to mean the development of interiority, achieved by processing our experience psychologically, by casting our experience into words and images, and by seeing our situation metaphorically rather than literally, perhaps with a mythic sensibility. Arguably, however, it is the soul itself that allows us to do these things. If the soul is an a priori, supraordinate principle, we cannot “make” soul; to do so would imply something beyond the soul that is doing the making. It is more likely that the soul makes us, or makes us human. Our problem is to contact the soul amidst everyday life, whose activities, if understood properly, are a bridge to the soul, which makes the world and the body necessary.

Hillman makes much of the distinction between soul and spirit. He suggests that the soul is deep, moist, and dark, while the spirit is fiery, light, impersonal, and ascending. This distinction may be carried too far, since at times the soul can also soar and feel dry, so it is arbitrary to attribute these qualities to spirit alone, not to mention the fact that there are many descent or earth-based spiritualities. But Hillman (1987) makes this distinction so that we do not confuse (soul-centered) psychotherapy with spiritual disciplines such as meditation, which aim at self-transcendence. For him, spirit prefers clarity and order and is often aloof or imageless, whereas soul is about experiencing the soup of daily life, natural urges, memories, the imagination, fantasies, suffering, and relationships, much of which the spirit considers unimportant. Since only the soul but not the spirit suffers psychopathology,

the soul is the proper province and the root metaphor of psychotherapy. For Hillman, it is important to distinguish soul and spirit when we are trying to understand the soul's own logic, its suffering, fantasies, and fears, which is a different project than a metaphysical approach to spirit and its ultimates. While he is correct to point out the danger to the psychotherapist of excessively spiritualizing human concerns, it is also true that the soul has spiritual needs. When we think of soul and spirit as transpersonal processes or qualities, it is overly dualistic to separate them completely. Without actually conflating them, we can think of the soul as an extension of spirit into the body, soul as the way we subjectively experience spirit, or spirit inducing what we call soulful experience.

Other writers in this tradition use the term soul when referring to the deepest subjectivity of the individual, especially to emotionally important experiences. "Soul" is often used synonymously with powerful emotion, especially among psychotherapists with a strong thinking function for whom emotions are numinous. Because emotion is the effect of the archetype in the body, and the archetype is a spiritual principle, soulful emotions such as love, hatred, terror, sadness, and joy are spiritually important to the psychotherapist.

As Jung (1969) puts it, the psyche contains a divine power, or the psyche is a metaphysical principle in its own right. The problem of dualism arises here, of how this essence interacts with the body, or how the body acts as an organ of the soul, which is a preferable attitude to traditional ideas that the soul is trapped in the body. For psychotherapeutic purposes, one can bracket this problem, which does not arise in the consulting room. Here one can think of soul and body as two aspects of the same reality, experienced differently because of the limitations of our perceptual apparatus, emanations of the same source expressing itself on a gradient of different levels of density.

In his seminal work on the soul, which is now rarely acknowledged, Christou (1976) points out that the proper field of psychotherapy is subjective experience, which is not the same as the brain, the body, or the mind. The soul is the

experiencing subject, not the mind or the body that is experienced. Just as there is a difference between a physical object and our sense data about it, so there is a distinction between states of mind such as willing, perceiving, and thinking and our *experience* of these states of mind, what we do with them and what they mean to us subjectively. The language of reason and sense perception may vitiate the experience of soul, which is a reality of its own. Just as the body and mind develop in their own ways, so "the soul has its own developmental processes leading to psychic maturity and psychic plenitude" (Christou 1976, p. 37).

For Christou, there is a difference between ordinary states of mind and deeply meaningful experiences, which are the province of the soul. Mind is the name we give to ideas and thought, but soul is the name we give to our ability to transform these ideas in our imagination. Mind, body, and emotions are *sources* of psychological experience, but they are not the experience itself—to fail to make this distinction is to confuse different levels. Our imagination elaborates our bodily states and our feelings, and the result is much more than simple conceptual understanding of an original experience. "Soul" therefore implies not just intellectual or aesthetic understanding of an experience but our gut-level relationship to it, its effects on us, and the ethical demands of the experience on the personality. We participate in soulful experience; we do not just impartially observe it.

The soul cannot be thought of conceptually, because it is that which witnesses thought going on; it is the matrix within which mental life happens. In spite of the claims of cognitive-behavioral approaches, behavior and ideas are of a different order than the order of the soul. There is a distinction between a science of the mind and the reality of the soul, which is not just about behavior. The realm of soul is the realm of meaning that is discovered when we look into ourselves, when we are inspired or deeply affected by music, art, ritual, relationship, nature, love, or beauty, whatever really matters to us.

Mainstream psychology rejects the language of the soul because it seems too religious.

The soul is impossible to study using empirical criteria; it needs its own methods of study. Dreams and spiritual experiences have no rational explanation, or they have their own rationale – they defy the inductive scientific approach because they produce something new and impossible to replicate, so they are anathema to positivistic approaches.

The word psychotherapy means attending to the soul, and the word psychopathology means the suffering of the soul. If the therapist does not work at the level of the soul, by default we work only with the ego, the sense of personal identity, and with the personal unconscious. But soul is the larger context of experience, so that the ego's attitude may be mistaken from the point of view of the soul. Therefore, psychotherapy that only supports adaptation to the environment may produce a "cure" that ignores the values of the soul. Accordingly, Christou suggests that the "proof of psychotherapeutic cures takes the form of 'testimony,' a 'witness,' rather than that of logical conclusions or empirical observations of an objective event" (Christou 1976, p. 3).

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Sound

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Sound is scientifically defined as any vibratory disturbance in the pressure and density of a medium (solid, liquid, or gas) that stimulates the sense of hearing. It measures the ability to vibrate. Creation myths of a number of ancient religions – African, Australian, Polynesian, Tahitian, Hawaiian, and Japanese – reflect the belief that matter is formed and life begins through God's sounds and tones. In Hinduism, the importance of sound, and particularly of chant, is firmly rooted in the belief that sound vibration is the basic nature of the universe, *Nada Brahman*: "Sound is God." The Sanskrit language is essentially a 3,000-year-old science of sound. For the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, "A stone is frozen music, frozen sound." Hermetic principles tell us the universe is nothing than more an endless number of vibrations and rhythms.

Ancient ideas that sound and vibrations represent the fundamental nature of reality are reflected in the theories of modern particles physics and quantum mechanics.

Most objects, from subatomic particles to planets, have one or more frequencies at which they vibrate. Sound is widely used in modern science (notably in medicine, as in MRI and other technologies) in its resonance meaning,

literally, resound for diagnosis and healing. When a sound wave strikes an object, if there is a match between the frequency of the wave and the frequencies inherent in the object, the object begins to vibrate (creating resonance). The same phenomenon applies at the symbolic level in psychology. The verb “vibrate” means “move, swing to, and fro,” which is precisely the description Jung gave of the transcendent function, “the psychic function that facilitates a transition from one attitude to another.”

The word *persona* is made up of two Latin syllables: *per*, which means “through,” and *sonare*, the verb for “sound.” Together they mean “sounding through, through sound,” an allusion to the hole in the mask worn by actors in ancient times, through which the voice was sounding, moving through.

In psychology, sound is a bridge between Spirit and matter. Through the vibrating energy that is sound, the invisible world can touch this physical plane. In a number of practices (ancient Egypt, Kabala, Sufism, and Buddhism), it is believed that the chanting of particular vowel sounds has the ability to connect the chanter with the energies of the Divine and with the mystery of healing.

## See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mantra](#)
- ▶ [Music and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Music Thanatology](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Spectrum of Pastoral Counseling

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Pastoral counseling, a specialized form of pastoral or spiritual care, is a structured form of caring ministry which is accountable to and reflects the particular commitments of religious communities through skilled representatives of those communities. Practiced by both ordained religious professionals and lay representatives of religious communities, pastoral counseling can be understood as either one function of a larger healing practice of a congregation or more formally with clinically trained pastoral counselors who use contractual agreements and charge fees. (For more on this, see websites for The American Association of Pastoral Counselors –[www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org) – and the American Association of Christian Counselors –[www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net)). Largely a Western Christian practice, the discipline has grown globally to include Judaism, Islam, and other religious traditions that see healing as the work of the religious professional (Friedman 2001; Kobeisy 2004). Central to the work of pastoral counseling is the integration of theological understandings and commitments to therapeutic resources in order to facilitate healing and growth. Because religious traditions understand the importance and manner of integrating theology and therapeutic resources in different ways, pastoral counseling can best be understood on a spectrum of theological and methodological commitments. This essay will provide an overview of the spectrum of pastoral counseling, using the framework of premodern, modern, and postmodern approaches to knowledge (Doehring 2006). Starting with the foundational work of Seward Hiltner (1949), we will explore modernist approaches to pastoral counseling. From there we will examine two responses to this modernist emphasis on healing and growth: premodern critiques as found in the work of Christian counseling and postmodern critiques as found in pastoral counseling influenced by liberation themes, poststructuralism, and intercultural contributions.



## Modern Approaches

American Liberal Protestants influenced by a post WW II renaissance in pastoral psychology (and hence pastoral care and counseling) look to the pioneering work of four formative pastoral theologians who represent a strong modernist approach to integrating theology and psychological resources in pastoral counseling (Holifield 1983). Seward Hiltner (1949) drew on social and cultural anthropology as he emphasized educative counseling, or a drawing out of concerns and problem-solving resources of the counselee. Carroll Wise (1951) based his work on personalist theology and dynamic psychology, as he emphasized the goal of insight. Paul Johnson (1953), strongly influenced by philosophical personalism and the work of Harry Stack Sullivan, advocated a “responsive counseling.” Wayne Oates (1974) worked within the free-church tradition as he argued against pastoral dogmatism and in favor of responsiveness to the counselee’s concerns. These pastoral counselors understood the human as an autonomous self, while they draw upon rational and empirical methods of inquiry (biblical critical methods, psychological and medical knowledge, and the social sciences) to help careseekers heal and grow.

All four of these formative figures engaged the educative and nondirective client-centered counseling approach of Carl Rogers (1951). Their work reflected Roger’s notion of liberal optimism about human nature and his commitments to self-actualization as the goal of growth and healing. Rogerian client-centered counseling was popular with religious liberals because it appealed to an optimistic image of the self as capable of growth and change. This reflected the growing sense in Protestant liberalism that openness to the future was a prime mark of the Christian faith. As well, Roger’s notion that conventional social expectations inhibited the true self was reflected in the distaste many liberals held for moralistic legalism. Roger’s client-centered model of counseling exerted a normative influence on American Protestant pastoral counselors of the period because it was a counseling model that could be taught in an

already crowded seminary curriculum (Holifield 1983).

Theologically Protestant pastoral counselors of this formative period were significantly influenced by the work of Paul Tillich and his correlational model, which allowed them to relate psychological concepts to theological traditions. Carroll Wise asserted that Tillich “provided the pastoral psychologist with a theological method for translating the power of the gospel into the idiom of the twentieth century thought, namely a psychological way of thinking” (Holifield 1983, p. 303). By acknowledging that clinical therapeutic practices provided both the language and the inspiration for his understanding of grace, Tillich provided a theological method for pastoral counselors and scholars to bridge the disciplines. In an era represented by theologically neoorthodox commitments to isolating theology from the secular disciplines of psychotherapy and medicine, Hiltner and others picked up on Tillich’s work to discern the meaning of the “Christian context” for psychotherapy and counseling.

Pastoral counselors reflecting modernist approaches to healing and growth engage the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament in ways that utilize a modern historical-critical biblical method of interpreting the texts and the doctrines of the faith traditions. As such, the pastoral counselor looks for the disclosive power of the text rather than an inductive approach that calls the careseeker to accept or adjust to set interpretations of the Scriptures (as practiced in Biblical counseling). Pastoral counselors following this modern approach consider the Bible both authoritative in faith and life and understand it to hold symbolic meaning for a careseeker. The relevance of a biblical text is determined both by its interpretation and the light it brings to a human situation. The use of the bible and its insights are always considered in light of good counseling principles. Hiltner was clear that referring to scriptures during counseling did not justify moralizing with biblical legalism; he made a clear distinction between moral clarification and moral coercion. The American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC) ([www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org)) and the College of Pastoral Supervision and

Psychotherapy (CPSP) ([www.pastoralreport.com/](http://www.pastoralreport.com/)) serve as membership, training, and credentialing guilds for pastoral psychotherapists and counselors in both the modernist and post-modernist approaches.

## Premodern Approaches

Christian counseling, a premodern approach to pastoral counseling, is an inductive mode of counseling in which both the counselor and the counselee directly engage biblical and doctrinal resources that are understood to be true in all times and places. It draws on a “biblically based, Spirit-directed, and empirically validated model that invites Christ into the healing process to meet the deepest needs of individuals and families” (Clinton and Ohlschlager 2002, p. 37). For Christian counseling, full reciprocity between Christian and psychological resources is not expected and, for some, dismissed. Pastoral counseling in this premodern form can function as the application of biblical and theological resources to inform a faithful use of secular psychological wisdom. When social sciences are integrated into the practice of care, it is done in ways that preserve the integrity of conserving theological or biblical perspectives. The Bible is often used both in assessment and treatment of persons, as well as defining the goals and procedures for change. Unlike a postmodern approach, mutuality in the counseling relationship is not stressed. Identifying problems and experiencing acceptance happen in the guise of confessing one's sins and experiencing forgiveness. Person-center, nondirective, Rogerian notions of counseling and the centrality of the immanence of God (rather than a transcendent notion) are critiqued as a “New Age marketplace” approach to spirituality that neither recognizes sin, calls for sacrifice, or confesses the need for change in the form of redemption (Collins 2007). Christian counseling emphasizes the need for personal change that comes in response to a transforming life experience in which “God touches, heals, and reshapes the deepest recesses of heart and soul” (p. 34). Relying on a legalistic biblical hermeneutic, it is a rational,

problem-centered, behavior-oriented approach. Counseling techniques are considered effective and moral when they are consistent with biblical texts. Effective tools of counseling include the reading of Scriptures, prayer in the counseling session, “gentle confrontation with Christian truths,” and encouraging counselees to become involved in faith communities. The Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation (CCEF) ([www.ccef.org](http://www.ccef.org)) and the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) ([www.aacc.net](http://www.aacc.net)) serve as accrediting guilds for Christian and Biblical counselors.

Christian counseling is best understood in three related “evangelical ministry movements.” Nouthetic or Biblical counseling, identified in the works of Jay Adams (1986) and David Powlison (2010), understands the Bible as the “textbook for counseling” and serves as the ultimate source for discernment and interpretation of other sources. While Adams holds that the Bible is the exclusive source for understanding the human condition and its redemption (healing), Powlison rejects the split between spiritual and psychological concerns, recognizing that some nonbiblical sources can be informative as they challenge and inform us about the human experience. For both, Biblical counseling is a form of “Christian psychology.” Ultimately, any extrabiblical sources are strictly subordinate and secondary to a conserving biblical interpretation of the human condition. Critiques of Biblical counseling claim that it disregards the complexity of the Bible and the freedom of the human spirit, is too focused on a confrontational style of dealing with sin and behavioral change, and gives insufficient attention to human grief (Anderson 2005).

An Integrationist model of Christian counseling, best identified in the works of Gary Collins (2007), works to integrate “biblical theology” and the psychosocial sciences into a unified counseling model. While biblical knowledge has primacy, integrationists hold that God permits us to learn through methods of scientific investigation. These discovered (empirical) truths must always be consistent with, and tested against, the norm of “revealed biblical truth.” Some Christian counselors find integrationism to be invalid and pernicious because it imports corrupting and under-examined

psychological theories into the church (Clinton and Ohlschlager 2002, p. 41).

A Community model of Christian counseling, championed by the work of Lawrence (“Larry”) Crabb (1975), is centered in the daily life of the church and focuses on the notion that counseling needs to be situated in church communities, where the work of healing “soul wounds” happens within small Christian groups, or among “spiritual friends.” Crabb understands spiritual direction encompassing all that is legitimately done in psychotherapy, seeing the “battle between flesh and the Spirit” at the root of all organically caused psychological disorders (Clinton and Ohlschlager 2002). Some in the Christian counseling movement critique Crabb’s notion of spiritual friends and community healing as devaluing the significance of the trained Christian counselor. In putting this forward, the Community model bridges the commitments of premodern Christian counseling and modern Rogerian-influenced modes of pastoral counseling.

### Postmodern Approaches

A postmodern approach to pastoral counseling reflects three overlapping influences: liberation themes, poststructuralist interpretations of reality, and intercultural/multicultural analysis. Liberation themes of resistance and solidarity, power analysis, internalization of oppressive systems, and relational justice had a transformative effect on the work of pastoral counselors who moved from understanding the person as an autonomous self to one who lives in a network of connections, or a “living human web” (Miller-McLemore 1996). Those connections included both the historical community in which the person developed their identity and forces that exerted power from oppressive and controlling systems. African American pastoral theologians like Edward Wimberly (2006) recognize that pastoral counseling liberates by empowering and strategizing in the face of oppressive systems. He asserts that the most important role of pastoral counseling with African Americans is “to liberate (them) from the negative images, identities, and

stories into which they have been recruited, and to accompany them in discerning how best to make use of their resulting personal and political agency and efficacy” (p. 11.) Nancy Gorsuch (2001) proposes a feminist model of counseling that decenters the counselor and privileges the careseeker’s knowledge and experience, definition of the problem, and identification of the resolution, before turning to the knowledge and experience of the counselor. Carroll Watkins Ali (1999) draws on contributions from womanist theologians and African American psychologists as she recognizes the limits of a clinical pastoral model for the communitarian context alive in many African American communities. Joretta Marshall (1997) presents a model of pastoral counseling with lesbian partners that nurtures covenantal relationships built on the transformative values of love, justice, and mutuality. Like other pastoral theologians influenced by liberative themes, Marshall calls for prophetic and priestly counseling practices aimed at transforming oppressive systems that cause suffering.

Like those influenced by liberation themes of resistance and solidarity, postmodern pastoral counselors are influenced by poststructuralist understandings of knowledge and the self. For these pastoral counselors, Scripture provides just one of many truths and that truth is mediated through its disclosive and liberating power to the careseeker. Narrative counseling theory, based on poststructuralist philosophies, recognizes the notion of the self as socially constructed. For Christie Cozad Neuger (2001), the interpretation of reality *is* reality and as such is socially constructed. “Realities...are organized and maintained by stories that are personal, familial, and cultural. Thus, a major part of the work of narrative counseling is to help people generate new language and new interpretive lenses and thus create new realities” (p. 232). This narrative approach provides a liberating promise because just as our lives are socially constructed, so too can they be reconstructed.

Intercultural and multicultural analysis in pastoral counseling arises from a particular awareness of the global dimension of the asymmetry of political and economic power associated with

racial and cultural difference. Emmanuel Lartey (2003) suggests three interdependent principles inherent in intercultural care: contextuality of multiple influences on identity, multiple perspectives on knowledge, and authentic participation made possible by attention to the voices silenced by those in power. Lartey's work represents a widening of the pastoral counseling lens to include theories and practices from around the globe. Pastoral counseling with a global lens requires multiple perspectives and an acceptance of ambiguities that exist when multiple truths coexist.

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Biblical Psychology
- ▶ Calvinism
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Evangelical
- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Fundamentalism
- ▶ Grace
- ▶ Hermeneutics
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Postmodernism
- ▶ Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Psychotherapy and Religion
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Religious
- ▶ Theodicy
- ▶ Twelve Steps

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## Spectrum of Religions

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The spectrum of religions can be approached by various themes, such as the traditionalist/moderate/progressive theme: (1) whether a major religion seeks to maintain a historically traditional approach, (2) is moderately adaptive to its cultural context, or (3) seeks to adapt more fully to current cultural movements. These have psychological as well as regional, historical, and theological roots. Global archetypal themes, such as family, gender roles, and death, appear in many ways.

### Traditional

Religions whose goal is to maintain traditional practices strive to stay rooted in various elements of past principles. Psychologically, this may provide a sense of rightness, security, identity, stability, social order, family history, moral order, and survival, as in gender roles or land ownership. Change is difficult, perhaps threatening. Since religions often make social order and psychological identity a matter sanctioned by ultimate reality, they seem to be fixed and immovable.

Indigenous nations are guided by ancient traditions such as clan and tribal social organizations, gender roles, and ancestral veneration. The presence of sacred spirits is felt in the world and the sky. Traditional rituals are maintained, such as drumming, dancing, and gods and goddesses, such as Chronos and Mother Earth. Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) nations keep to Long House political structures whereby clan mothers choose male chiefs, who relate to the outside world. Some traditional first nation people do not believe in teaching nonnatives their traditions, since they feel that their land was stolen and do not want their culture stolen as well. Arctic peoples strive to maintain their traditional longboat sea hunts and honor ocean

goddess such as Inuit Sedna of the sea creatures. Caribbean religions keep traditional rituals such as Spiritism or Voudon alive with drumming, dancing, and possession by spirits during ritual dances.

Chinese folk religions maintain ancient *shen* gods and goddesses, such as Mazu (Mother Ancestor), who rescues drowning sailors. Chinese New Year is a major celebration including family reunions, ancestor veneration at family graves, and dragon parades with firecrackers to scare off threatening spirits. Confucianism is usually called not a religion, but a philosophy for social order, yet its texts revere the “Mandate of Heaven.” Confucian tradition still teaches a preference for male babies and patriarchal society. Taoism teaches the ancient dynamic energy Qi (chi), incorporating the Yin/Yang energy pair of opposites in relation, such as dark/light, female/male, and traditional arts. Pilgrimages to ancient Taoist or Buddhist temples and Chinese mountain shrines are popular.

Hindu traditionalists learn spiritual traditions from gurus and priests. They celebrate holidays such as Holi, when raucous crowds throw brightly colored powder on each other as they process to temple celebrations. Belief in karma and reincarnation is widespread across Asia. The seemingly sacred Hindu caste system lingers among traditionalists, even though it is now officially illegal. Thousands of gods and goddesses and their temples fill India, but the greatest gods are Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Goddesses include Kali, goddess of life/death, and Durga, a fierce warrior who rides a tiger. Ascetics reject conventions and retreat to the forests or beg in cities.

Buddhist traditionalists vary by country, support celibate monks and nuns who educate their children, and celebrate holy days such as Buddha’s birthday. Indonesians have little model Spirit Houses, where they believe indigenous spirits and ancestor spirits live and are fed to assure peace. Tibetan monasteries and refugees strive to maintain monastic traditions. Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion, is a popular Tibetan form of Buddha. The Chinese chant and burn incense in Buddhist Amita-fo Pure Land Buddhist temples. Chinese Chan Buddhism is the mystical branch

that spread to Japan and became Zen. The goddess of Mercy Guanyin is a syncretic blend of the Buddhist Avalokiteshvara and ancient goddesses.

In Japan, Zen Buddhists maintain their elegant temples and monasteries with model gardens of harmony with the spirits throughout the cosmos. Monks seek to drop the bottom out of the mind and experience the Buddha mind throughout existence by practicing the rigorous Zen meditation, koan riddles, and chanting sutras. Ancient indigenous Japanese Shinto belief in *kami* nature spirits continues, as in the blessing of the rice before planting. Mountain pilgrimages may include standing under cold waterfalls.

Most Jews now live in Brooklyn, New York, and Israel. Jewish traditionalists include the mystical Hassidim and pious Orthodox, who emphasize strict adherence to Torah laws, and later interpretations, such as male leadership and religious education, gender separation, kosher diets, nineteenth-century dress in black suits and beards for men, modest dress for women, strict Shabbat rules, arranged marriages, and rituals such as Yom Kippur New Year cleansing practices. Israel is the protected Holy Land.

In Christianity, traditionalist Eastern Orthodox believers practice worship with ancient ritual chanting. They venerate medieval-style icon paintings and have a hierarchical, bearded male priesthood. Priests marry and Bishops come from celibate monastic lives. Traditionalist Roman Catholics celebrate ritual masses in Latin, with a celibate male priesthood, centered in the Vatican in Rome, where the Pope leads the hierarchical global church. Strongly Catholic countries, such as Italy, Spain, and southern Germany, are now being outnumbered by former colonies such as South America, Asia, and Africa. They oppose modern birth control, abortion, and many women's rights. Protestant Fundamentalists are usually independent "free church" or nonhierarchical churches, like the US Southern Baptists. The Bible is the primary authority for faith, read literally. The Protestant belief in the priesthood of all believers reduces clerical authority. Evangelical traditionalists promote belief in creationism against evolution and have other conflicts between science and biblical literalism. Episcopalians and Lutherans retain bishops and

formal liturgies, but most Protestant worship is simplified and communal, rather than formal and hierarchical, and married men are preferred for traditional ministry and leadership.

Muslims are most traditional in Arab countries, centered on Mecca in Saudi Arabia, where the annual Hajj pilgrimage attracts millions of fervent believers. Traditions such as reverence for the Qu'ran are kept, such as saying the key belief in only one God Allah and that Muhammed is His one Messenger, daily bowing prayer facing Mecca five times a day. Loyalty to family and clan are very important. Men prefer beards and women are generally required to dress modestly, sometime totally covered.

## Moderate

Moderation of traditional practices often comes from cultural mixing, due to today's globalization of cultures. Moderate religious practices among indigenous peoples include interacting with and teaching nonindigenous people native ways, such as respect for nature. Some Native Americans have Indian gift shops selling beads or Hopi Kachina dolls, hosting public powwows, native museums, and gambling casinos. Chinese dragon boat races in the Duanwu Festival originating in China have become a popular event worldwide. Some indigenous people move to industrial cities for jobs, such as ethnic grocery stores or restaurants. New Orleans has become the home of moderate Caribbean Voudon traditions, with a temple, a museum, and the sale of love potions.

Some moderate Hindus adopt English customs and education and revere leaders such as Gandhi, who led an influential nonviolent resistance against British imperialism. He rejected industrialism and promoted handmade clothing. Some Hindus emigrate to other countries and build Hindu temples. Yoga has become a popular practice in the West, although sometimes more fitness-oriented than spiritual.

Buddhist programs in foreign countries build temples and monasteries for immigrants, usually using native languages. They often translate



religious literature, such as Buddhist books and DVDs. Moderate leaders may work with new local converts to establish publishing houses to distribute their books and artifacts. Americans become Buddhists and influence the US culture with meditation and new forms of spirituality.

Moderate Jews have founded Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist branches. Most support the Israeli State, speak some Hebrew, and celebrate traditional holidays such as Rosh Hashanah and Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, while living otherwise largely Western lives. Women in these traditions have increasingly become rabbis.

Moderates in the Roman Catholic Church like the ritual and symbols, although they may ignore some rules, many practice contraception. Women have gained increasing leadership roles in many churches. Mass was often celebrated in modern times in local languages, but in 2007 Pope Benedict XVI restored Latin to the Mass. Moderate Protestants, the “mainstream” denominations, continue a rather traditional worship, with a new informal dress code. Many have supported civil rights for minorities. Modern large “megachurches” such as the large Lakewood Church in Houston, TX, have spread a conservative gospel with modern architecture, nontraditional music, television, and often a “prosperity gospel.”

Turkey is a rather moderate Muslim country, where one can see many large mosques, and women dressed in many ways, mostly modestly, but some in youthful modern clothes, many in very modest modern clothes, and some in fully black robes with only their eyes showing. Many moderate Muslims have emigrated West and assimilated somewhat into Western culture. In parts of Brooklyn, one can see Muslims in traditional dress walking down the same streets as Orthodox Jews.

## Progressive

Progressive believers offer spiritual support for making changes in their societies. Progressive indigenous peoples focus on the struggle for political and economic equality. They often stand strongly for the protection of the earth’s

ecological health, against industrial society’s destructive exploitations. Southwestern US Indians say: “You look at that mountain, that mountain has a spirit, that mountain has holiness” (Trimble 1986, p. 27). They may seek to regain tribal lands lost in past wars of conquest. They may create new ceremonies and resources for rebuilding their communities. Kwanzaa is an African-American celebration since 1966 that focuses on seven principles (*Nguzo Saba* in Swahili): *Umoja* (Unity), *Kujichagulia* (Self-Determination), *Ujima* (Collective Work and Responsibility), *Ujamaa* (Cooperative Economics), *Nia* (Purpose), *Kuumba* (Creativity), and *Imani* (Faith) (Karenga).

Progressive Chinese are increasingly traveling and getting higher education abroad. They are rapidly absorbing industrial culture at home. Chinese Amita-fo Buddhism is gaining ground at home, as well as the Daoist mystical traditions of Lao Tse’s *Dao de Ching*, some with women priests (Johnson 2010).

Progressive Hindus often promote Gandhi’s principles: the harmony among all religions, rejection of the caste system, untouchability, and non-violent resistance. Women are also gaining power, as expressed by Guru Mata Amritanandamayi (2002), a leader for women’s liberation. She ordains women as priests, in opposition to Brahmin tradition. She is considered a divine mother by many of her followers worldwide. Progressive Hindus also emphasize the urgency of restoring the earth’s ecological balance. One group hugged trees so they would not be cut down to make sports equipment (Hinduism and Ecology).

Progressive Buddhists have created the “Engaged Buddhism” movement that works to change oppressive social structures. Work for education, health, environment, and social justice for the poor is now considered an important part of Buddhism, expanding from monastic and meditative traditions (Queen & King 1996). The Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh (1987) emphasizes “Interbeing,” the full relatedness of all existence at the foundation, the Buddha Nature. His precepts include “Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry,” and “Do not live with a vocation that his harmful to humans and nature.” Similarly, the

Dalai Lama (2011) spreads Buddhism worldwide with teachings on the dangers of the population and environmental consciousness, consumerism, and religious intolerance. He supports the growing number of women Buddhist leaders, such as Tsultrim Allione (2000). He urges compassion, increased democracy, and, in a new book, the theme of going *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*.

Progressive Jews encourage the ordination of women into the rabbinate, such as Sally Priesand, in 1972 the first US woman rabbi. Progressive synagogues now call girls to the Torah in a Bat Mitzvah. Prayers are becoming gender-neutral, and the birth of a daughter is celebrated. Women celebrate their own Passover Seders. Yeshivat Maharat is the first school to train women to be Jewish leaders (Umansky). Rabbi Michael Lerner (2005), editor of *Tikkun* magazine, advocates a rewriting of the Ten Commandments as the Ten Commitments. Rethinking “Thou shall not steal,” he writes “. . . I will support a fairer redistribution of the wealth of the planet so that everyone has material well-being. . .” Secular Humanistic Judaism celebrates Jewish customs and holidays, but without belief in God.

Progressive Christians are represented by Matthew Fox, the priest who was expelled from the Catholic Church for advocating feminism, and Episcopal Bishop John Spong, who challenges fundamentalist and mainstream churches alike (Spong 1998). Most progressive churches support African-American concerns. Most have welcomed women clergy. Some Catholic women have been ordained illegally (Roman). Some progressive Protestant churches have embraced rights for gay and lesbian believers. Sexuality is increasingly discussed openly in feminist circles. Some progressive Christians have supported ecological spirituality and global warming awareness. Many are ecumenical, engaging in shared services and programs with other churches. Others are active in interfaith movements to bring together various world religions. World Religions college courses are common. Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Guidance, blending psychology and religion, are spreading worldwide. Goddess spirituality is an expanding area of feminist theology.

Most Muslim countries are experiencing struggles between traditional leaders who control most of the wealth and the masses who are pressing for democracy, using the Internet, sometimes protesting forcefully, as in the 2011 “Arab Spring.” Progressive Sufi mystics have strong traditions of chanting, meditation, and the dramatic Whirling Dervishes. The International Sufi movement supports creative interfaith spiritual practices (International). Debates continue over conflicts between the progressive *Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights* (Islamic) and traditional Muslim Sharia law (Salem 1981).

The spectrum of religions shows that religions are always changing. Today, rapid growth in global communication and travel, education, and immigration are bringing together stimulating psychological and spiritual forces at a rapid pace.

## See Also

- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)
- ▶ [Roman Catholic Women Priests](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Mountains](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Care](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Ecology](#)

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## Spielrein, Sabina

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Sabina Spielrein (1885–1942) was a first-generation psychoanalytic pioneer whose collected works, available in German since 1987, have only recently been rediscovered by English-speaking scholars. Spielrein's original contributions at the dawn of psychoanalytic thinking, as typified by her papers "Destruction as a Cause of Coming into Being" (1912/1987) and "The Origins of the Words Mama and Papa" (1922/1987), deserve to reemerge from the heavy shadows of the Freud/Jung legacy to be studied and appreciated in their own right. Spielrein published over 30 papers during her lifetime, served as Piaget's analyst, and helped to establish psychoanalysis in her native Russia. The origins of Freud's "death instinct," Jung's "anima," and Klein's theories about the infant's experience of the breast have all been linked to Spielrein's prior contributions. The correlations Spielrein identified between evolutionary biology and psychoanalytic thinking,

resisted by her contemporaries, prefigure the work of Bowlby and Bateson (Launer 2011). Her contributions to psycholinguistics and psychoanalytic theories of human development as applied to early childhood clearly precede those of Melanie Klein (1882–1960) and Anna Freud (1895–1982).

Spielrein was also influential as an early psychoanalytic patient. What Anna O (Bertha Pappenheim) and Dora were for Freud, foundational cases for the practice of psychoanalysis, Spielrein was for analytical (Jungian) psychology. Arriving as an inpatient at the Burghölzli in 1904, where Jung had been working since 1900 under the direction of Bleuler, hers was the first case Jung attempted to treat using Freud's psychoanalytic method. The treatment was both a success and a disaster: a success because Spielrein went on to train as a psychiatrist, publishing articles in German, French, and Russian, and a disaster because she was in some respects betrayed by both Jung and Freud. What Jung and Freud learned, and what subsequent analysts can glean from her treatment, informs understandings of therapeutic transformation, individuation, boundaries, and frame identified as best practices today.

Spielrein was the firstborn daughter of a well-to-do Jewish couple living in Rostov-on-Don, near the eastern shores of the Black Sea. Her parents' arranged marriage was apparently never happy. Her mother, Eva Lublinsky, trained as a dentist and was the daughter and granddaughter of respected rabbis. Both Sabina's mother and her maternal grandfather had first loves who were Christians before marrying within their faith. Sabina's father, Nikolai, originally from Warsaw, prospered as an animal feeds dealer, but Sabina's mother repeatedly provoked him to rage and threats of suicide with lavish spending and affairs. When Sabina was admitted to the Burghölzli hospital at the age of 19, marital strife and humiliating corporal punishment inflicted by both father and mother were cited as causes for what we would now consider posttraumatic stress.

Sabina was sent away from her family to live with relatives in Warsaw at age 5, perhaps because her parents already recognized her

signs of disturbance. Sabina later returned to live with her parents and three brothers and was educated at home until she entered the gymnasium. A second daughter, Emilia, was born when Sabina was 10. Fluent in German and French as well as Russian, Sabina studied biblical Hebrew to read the Bible in the original. She studied piano and voice as a child and composition as an adult. In keeping with the Hassidic rabbis on her mother's side of the family, she had a mystical bent, believing that an angel spoke to her in German, telling her that she was destined for great things.

With encouragement from her father, she aspired to be a doctor, while her mother wished her to remain ignorant in sexual matters. Despite academic success, she developed symptoms including depression, nervous tics, and psychosomatic ailments. Her mental health worsened at the age of 16 when Emilia, age 6, suddenly died from typhoid fever. Sabina then withdrew from friends and family, becoming increasingly agitated. When her mood failed to improve, her mother and physician uncle took her to Switzerland for treatment. At 10:30 p.m. on the night of August 17, 1904, she arrived at the mental hospital made famous by August Forel and Eugene Bleuler, respected throughout Europe, the Burghölzli.

Spielrein's case, diagnosed as hysteria, was assigned to the 29-year-old Carl Jung who, having been encouraged by Bleuler to read Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, attempted to treat Spielrein using Freud's then-novel psychoanalytic method, despite his personal reservations about the sexual etiology of mental illness. Jung had been conducting association experiments since 1901 and proceeded to "analyze" Spielrein during episodic sessions, sometimes lasting 3 hours at a time, during which he attempted to understand her "complexes." Spielrein's initial disruptive behavior, eliciting negative attention by provoking staff, responded positively to treatment despite, with occasional setbacks when Dr. Jung was not available.

The Burghölzli at that time was a true "asylum," in the sense that patients whose mental illnesses were either hereditary or induced by

abuse were to be treated with kindness and respect. Every patient capable of contributing through work was given a task. Both patients and staff were expected to attend psychoeducational sessions designed to help them understand the nature of mental illness. As Spielrein recovered, she assisted Jung in his ongoing association experiment research. By April 1905, only 8 months after being admitted as an inpatient, she began to attend medical lectures at the University while still living at the hospital. On June 1, 1905, she was discharged and lived independently in Zurich while continuing her medical studies. In May 1908, she passed her preliminary medical examination, and in 1911, her qualifying psychiatric medical dissertation, *Über den psychologischen Inhalt eines Falles von Schizophrenie* (On the Psychological Content of a Case of Schizophrenia) was accepted, using the term "schizophrenia" recently minted by Bleuler.

Spielrein's successful recovery demonstrated the value of the psychoanalytic method. But the disaster that followed was to have a profound effect on both Spielrein and Jung, altering the course of psychoanalytic history. As early as September 25, 1905, after Spielrein had been discharged but was still seeing Jung on an outpatient basis, Jung prepared a "Report on Miss Spielrein to Professor Freud in Vienna, delivered to Mrs. Spielrein for use if the occasion arises." The report begins as a standard case summary but concludes: "During treatment the patient had the misfortune to fall in love with me. She raves on to her mother about her love in an ostentatious manner, and a secret perverse enjoyment of her mother's dismay seems to play a not inconsiderable part. Now in this distressing situation the mother wants to place her elsewhere for treatment, with which I am naturally in agreement" (Covington & Wharton 2003, p. 106). Jung's 1905 report was apparently never sent to Freud (though Spielrein would eventually meet Freud in Vienna).

Sabina remained in Zurich through 1911 to pursue her medical studies and continued to see Jung, first as patient, then as research assistant, becoming, in the course of completing her

psychiatric dissertation under his supervision, the first of his many “muses,” later to be succeeded by Maria Molzer and Toni Wolfe. Through the intensity of their work and his own emotional vulnerability, it seems possible that the “poetry” Spielrein wrote of in her journal included an affair (Carotenuto 1982). Clearly Jung, a fully qualified psychiatrist 10 years her senior, had a moral obligation to Spielrein to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with his former patient. But it is significant that Jung did not truly embark on his own self-analysis until after Spielrein left Zurich for Vienna (via Munich) in 1911. Jung’s own woundedness included the hospitalization of his mother when he was three. During her absence Jung the toddler depended on a dark-haired caregiver and developed what he called a distrust of women (Jung 1961, p. 8). Today this would be considered an insecure attachment style compromising trust and monogamy in adulthood. Moreover, as Jung confessed to Freud “. . . my veneration for you has something of the character of a ‘religious’ crush . . . I still feel it is disgusting and ridiculous because of its undeniable erotic overtones. This abominable feeling comes from the fact that as a boy I was the victim of a sexual assault by a man I once worshipped” (49J, 10/28/1907). Like Spielrein, Jung’s childhood was overshadowed by parental conflict, attachment injuries, and sexual abuse. As yet unanalyzed regarding his own woundedness, the intensity of his analytic work with Spielrein, coupled with grueling demands at the Burghölzli, meant that Jung was increasingly unable to contain the flights of nondirected thinking that were to become *Symbols of Transformation* (Jung 1956).

From the beginnings of the Freud/Jung correspondence in April 1906, until Spielrein left Zurich in 1911, Jung’s attempts to cope with the intense countertransference he developed using Freud’s psychoanalytic method resulted in requests for supervision. Jung mentioned her case to Freud in his fourth letter, “disguising” the case by stating that the unnamed patient had an older brother: “First trauma between third and fourth year. Saw her father spanking her older brother on the bare

bottom. . . couldn’t help thinking afterwards that she had defecated on her father’s hand” (Freud & Jung 1974, 4J 10/23/1906). From this report and Jung’s history, we can infer the interlocking nature of his countertransference to Spielrein, who had also experienced preoedipal trauma and abuse of a sexually invasive nature. Jung’s therapeutic work and subsequent boundary transgressions with Spielrein served to precipitate his own period of “creative illness” from 1913 to 1919, following his break with Freud. In moral terms, Jung’s psychological vulnerability at this stage in his career does not excuse his “use” of Spielrein, or Toni Wolfe and others, in transgressing therapeutic boundaries. These are the potential perils of intense countertransference that have served to establish the emphasis on the “temenos,” the inviolate container required for therapeutic transformation that is the norm for Jungian analysts today.

In recent years Spielrein has gained notoriety, if inadequate recognition, through the publication of Kerr’s *A Most Dangerous Method* and a 2011 film directed by David Cronenberg that relies heavily on his text. Kerr recognized the pivotal role Spielrein played in the Freud/Jung correspondence and subsequent falling out. What is only now being acknowledged is the significance of Spielrein’s own original work. She is justly credited with contributing to Jung’s understanding of Jung’s anima/animus “syzygy” as the bridge between the individual ego and the transpersonal self (Bettelheim 1983). Clearly the paper she delivered to Freud’s Wednesday Psychoanalytic group first named the “death instinct” theme was later taken up by Freud (1920) and others. But these facts do not exhaust the originality of her work. John Launer, a British psychiatrist, asserts in *Sex Versus Survival: The Story of Sabina Spielrein: Her Life, Her Ideas, Her Genius* (2011) that her work is the most significant for the way it anticipated contemporary efforts to link psychoanalytic theory with evolutionary biology, as represented in the work of Bowlby on attachment theory and Bateson’s *Steps Towards an Ecology of Mind*.

Despite the condescending tone of the letters that Freud and Jung exchanged about her,



Freud cited her work 4 times and Jung 16 times in *Symbols of Transformation* alone. Spielrein continued to correspond with Jung until 1918, referencing the mystical and ambiguous Siegfried symbol they shared, and she corresponded with Freud until 1923. She not only attempted to bridge the differences between the two through her own understanding of symbols, but according to Launer, she was ahead of her time through attempting to provide a biological basis for psychoanalytic thinking. This was a theoretical vein that both Freud and Jung resisted, thereby foreshadowing the efforts of subsequent theorists.

Like Rosalind Franklin (1920–1958), another Jewish female intellectual who had her understanding of the DNA double helix formation pirated by Watson and Crick (Sayre 1975), Jung is credited with the anima/animus concept that developed in the context of his relationship with Spielrein, and Freud claimed the “death instinct” that first appeared in Spielrein’s *Destruction* paper. Similarly, Melanie Klein is known for her psychoanalytic work on representations of the breast in infancy, which may well have been influenced by Spielrein’s paper “The Origin and Development of Spoken Speech” delivered at the 6th International Psychoanalytic Conference in Spielrein (1920) that Klein attended. Kerr notes that “the talk was striking in its attempt to integrate Freud’s notion of a primary autistic stage in infancy ruled by the pleasure principle with the findings of developmental psychology.” Anticipating Winnicott’s understanding of transitional phenomena (1953), Spielrein noted that “spoken speech arises in an intermediate zone between the pleasure and reality principles” (Kerr 1993, p. 493).

Following the 1920 conference, Spielrein moved to Geneva, delegated to the Institute Rousseau as an evangelist for psychoanalysis. She conducted a “didactic” analysis with Piaget, which, according to him, did not take. In 1924 she moved to Moscow, establishing early childhood care based on psychodynamic principles, and then returned to her birth place where, following the rise of Stalin banishing psychoanalysis, she was killed with her two daughters when the Nazis invaded Rostov-on-Don for the second time.

Too idealistic to believe that Germans who spoke the language of her angel could be butchers, she resisted those who urged her to flee, and so her life was cut short at the age of 57. Had not Aldo Carotenuto discovered her diaries stored in the building that was formerly the Rousseau Institute in Geneva and published *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein Between Jung and Freud*, Spielrein’s work might well have remained forgotten. But it is now high time to appreciate Spielrein’s pioneering efforts in their own right, not Spielrein *between* Freud and Jung, but Spielrein *beyond* Freud and Jung (Launer 2011; Kelcourse et al. 2012).

## See Also

- ▶ [Countertransference](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Feminism](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Religion, Sexuality, and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Shakti](#)

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## Spirit Writing

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Spirit writing is a popular form of divination used in Taoist temples and folk shrines located principally in Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Mainland China. The Chinese name for this traditional method is *fúji* (扶). The *fúji* diviner uses a stick to convey messages from a god or a spirit by drawing Chinese words in a tray of sand or on a table. Once the character has been identified, a second person transcribes it for later study so that the drawing area can be swept clean to make

way for the next word. Although the guiding force behind the stick's movements is thought to be the god or spirit, the diviner participates in the process to the extent that he must be deemed deserving of the post by virtue of his good character. Spirit writers generally appear to be in a mild trance and do not often show signs of overt spirit possession.

## See Also

- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Taoism](#)
- ▶ [Wong Tai Sin](#)

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## Spiritism

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“Spiritism” is the creation of the French educator Hyppolyte Leon Denizard Rivail (1804–1869), who went under the alias of Allan Kardec for his Spiritist writings. Spiritism incorporates the archaic mediumistic methods of American “Occult Spiritualism” of the Fox sisters but is more Christian than the American. Spiritism also incorporates reincarnation. Spiritism spread from France to Cuba and Brazil, where in some instances it blended with Cuban and Brazilian African traditions.

## Kardecan Spiritism

From the United States, Modern American “Spiritualism” traveled to Europe in the mid-nineteenth

century, where it became especially popular with the professional classes. In England Sir Arthur Conan Doyle later codified Spiritualism in two volumes that were published in 1926 as *The History of Spiritualism*. In his work Doyle made only slight mention of a phenomenon derived from Spiritualism, known as Spiritism, that continued to be distinctly popular in France. Doyle only dedicated about five pages to Spiritism in his work. To this day Spiritism is more widely known in countries where Romance languages are spoken, especially Cuba and Brazil, whereas Spiritualism is more popular in the English-speaking world.

In 1800s France Rivail had codified Spiritism and distinguished it from Spiritualism. These Spiritist writings were written under the pseudonym of Allan Kardec, a name Rivail believed to be that of a previous Druid incarnation. Kardec never claimed to be a medium or to have the ability to communicate with the spirits. It was on the basis of conversations with and observation of mediums that he elaborated Spiritist doctrine. Kardec wrote a series of books in which he expounded Spiritist doctrine. Although not a medium, Kardec claimed that it was superior Spirits who guided him to write *The Spirits' Book* and that it was their work.

Kardecan Spiritism is specifically Christ-based. Jesus Christ is upheld as the role model for spiritual perfection and God is seen as the telos. In Spiritism, the spirit is endowed with free will. However, a spirit receives a mission from God and submits to the law of constant progress. It is this notion of reincarnation as constant spiritual progress that takes the spirit through various lifetimes on its way to moral perfection, which is the desired goal. Reincarnation is thus viewed as progressive and one is never reincarnated into a lower life form. Comparable to Hindu karma, Spiritism believes in the law of cause and effect; thus, the human spiritual condition in any given lifetime, be it happy or unfortunate, is predicated on actions taken in previous lifetimes. Spiritual progress or evolution is made possible through Christian charity, and charity, followed by wisdom, is one of the two premier Spiritist virtues. As Christ-based, Spiritism holds Jesus Christ as the most elevated Spirit and spirit guide. He is seen as the highest example

of an incarnated spirit. Indeed, Spiritist doctrine teaches that Jesus was sent by God to show humanity the way toward spiritual perfection. Spiritism views itself as pure and basic Christianity that is untainted by organized religion. In keeping with this notion, Spiritism utilizes Christian prayers such as “The Our Father” and borrows sayings from the Gospels, but these are interpreted in a Spiritist context as teachings related to the attainment of moral perfection and the personal quest for a higher reincarnation. Spiritism is a syncretic blend of ancient mediumistic communication with spirits, Christianity, and reincarnation.

In his books Kardec specifically differentiates between “Spiritualism” and what he now calls “Spiritism,” because for him not all Spiritualists believe in the reincarnation of spirits or that spirits exist and that they can communicate with the material world. Most importantly, for Kardec there is God, who is the Primary Mover and the Supreme Intelligence who generates all things including the spiritual and the material; but there are also the Spirits who perfect themselves in the astral plane and through reincarnation; these Spirits can both communicate with the living and interfere in their lives.

Kardec also believed that there is intelligent life on other planets that is more intellectually and morally advanced than we. Spiritism envisions Earth as a place of atonement. In Kardecan cosmology the Spirits communicate through mediums. Mediums are individuals who have the sensitivity to be able to hear, see spirits, or have these spirits communicate with them through various means such as trance, possession, and automatic writing. But Spiritism does not believe in supernatural elements such as miracles. Spiritism believes in an invisible, or nonmaterial, yet natural, plane, where the spirits abide. Spiritism holds that communication is possible between both the material and nonmaterial planes. Indeed, the natural world encompasses both material and nonmaterial planes and both planes are subject to experimentation on the basis of natural laws. For Spiritism, what we call the human body is comprised of the soul, or spirit, which is responsible for our thoughts, will, and moral sense and the material body that permits

the spirit to abide in the material world. Beside the material and the spiritual, there is an intermediate body designated by Kardec as the *perispirit*, which is a term he adapted from the botanical “perisperm.” As Kardec states in answer to his self-posed question 93 in *The Spirits’ Book*, concerning whether spirits have an outer covering:

The spirit is enveloped in a substance which would appear to you as mere vapor, but which, nevertheless, appears very gross to us, though it is sufficiently vaporous to allow the spirit to float in the atmosphere, and to transport himself through space at pleasure. As the germ of a fruit is surrounded by the perisperm so the spirit, properly so called, is surrounded by an envelope which, by analogy, may be designated as the *perispirit* (Kardec 1996, p. 92).

It is this *perispirit* that allows spirits to manifest themselves in the material world. The *perispirit* is drawn from the particular world the spirit is in. A spirit manifesting in different worlds may appear differently as the *perispirit* “material” of the world the spirit finds itself in determines the apparition. This quasi-material substance is what permits the spirit to appear and communicate with us through rappings, movement of furniture, etc., in our material world. Kardecian séances were practiced throughout France and then Cuba and Brazil.

In Cuba and Brazil, like in Europe, Spiritism first became very popular with white upper class women who would often engage in séances and Spiritist masses. In Brazil and Cuba, especially for practitioners of African religions, Spiritist beliefs in reincarnation and the ability to communicate with the dead resonated with ancient indigenous African beliefs in ancestor spirits. Due to historical exigency, certain Afro-New World religions such as Cuban *Lukumi* (Santería) and Brazilian *Umbanda* and *Candomble*, while discarding the philosophical underpinnings, adapted certain elements from Kardecian Spiritism. These Kardecian Spiritist elements came to be adapted in a roundabout manner. For example, the arrival of Spiritism in Cuba coincides, as it did in Brazil, with the demise of the *egungun* cults. “*Egungun*” is a Yoruba word that means skeleton and is often shortened to “*egun*,” or bone; either word generally refers to the deceased, such as an ancestor.

The *egungun* were needed for various rituals including the indispensable funerary rituals having to do with appeasement of a newly diseased practitioner’s *egun*, or spirit.

By the 1880s *egungun* cults in the Americas were generally on the decline, for various reasons. For example, 1880 saw the outlawing of slavery in Cuba, but not the legalization of Afro-Cuban religions. Because of their trappings, that included a public display featuring full body costume and maniacal shouting, *egungun* cults such as the Oro and the *Egungun* secret societies were especially feared and had been specifically outlawed. Also, the relatively minimal influx of *egun* technicians from Africa into Cuba and Brazil that the slave trade had supplied, and now the lack of willing apprentices required to continue *egungun* cults, resulted in a major problem for Afro-Cuban and Brazilian religions. Additionally, improperly carrying out an *egungun* ritual could result in the death of the technician and all present witnessing the event. Seeing that it was socially acceptable for white women to become possessed by a spirit and that Kardecian Spiritism had much structurally in common with West African religious beliefs relative to *egungun* practices, *Lukumis* (as did Afro-Brazilian religious practitioners) adopted these Kardecian practices with the conscious twofold understanding that it could meet and supplant the need left by the demise of the *egungun* cults and additionally serve as one more instance of dissimulation of West African ritual under the guise of dominant cultural practices. Also, priests were now freed from reliance on the specialized services of *egungun* cults.

Today there are Spiritist societies in both Canada and the United States, most with roots in Brazil. Spiritism continues to be very important in both Brazil and Cuba. It continues both as a freestanding system of beliefs and as a structure for communicating with spirit ancestors in the context of Afro-New World practices. For example, there is a Cuban saying illustrating this idea that states that “All Santeros are Spiritists, but not all Spiritists are Santeros,” or “*Todos santeros son espiritistas, pero no todos espiritistas son santeros.*” Spiritists also often practice Catholicism and/or one or more Afro-New World religions. Besides its adaptation by some Afro-New World religions, Spiritism as

such has the largest population of believers anywhere in Brazil. In 2010 director Wagner de Assis's Brazilian film *Astral City: A Spiritual Journey* was released. Said to be the most expensive Brazilian film ever produced, it is based on the renowned Brazilian medium Francisco "Chico" de Paula Candido Xavier's Spiritist book, *Nosso Lar*, "Our Home," and supposedly relates the after-death experiences of a physician who was channeled by Chico Xavier (Xavier 2000). This film has helped to familiarize non-Brazilian audiences with Spiritism.

Allan Kardec is buried in Paris at Cimetière du Père Lachaise. The French inscription on his tomb states, "To be born, die, again be reborn, and so progress unceasingly, such is the law," a distillation of Spiritist doctrine. Kardec's grave is a pilgrimage site for practitioners of Spiritism and West African diaspora religions.

Spiritism is psychologically appealing because of its belief in moral improvement, reincarnation, mediums, and healing. Spiritism provides psychical comfort derived from the possibility of communicating with recently deceased family members and helps stave off the fear of one's death. Because it is couched in Christian language and has moral improvement as a goal, Spiritism also dispenses with the fear of impropriety or nefariousness often attached in the West to practices involving communication with spirits. Brazil alone has more than twenty million practitioners of Kardecian Spiritism.

## See Also

- ▶ African Diaspora Religions
- ▶ Occultism
- ▶ Spiritualism
- ▶ Yoruban Religion in Cuba

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## Spiritual Care

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Spiritual care is based on the assumption that each human being bears a longing for relationship with that which is "more than" human, or to paraphrase philosopher Blaise Pascal, each human is born with a God-shaped vacuum, for which fulfillment the heart longs (Pascal 1993, p. 45). Care consists of attentive listening to the heart of the conversation, in a formal or informal setting, two persons face to face, or group conversation. And the heart is found in the

spiritual significance, the deep meaning of life emerging from a person's speech and nonverbal communication.

Although Christians generally identify the presence as the Holy Spirit, non-Christians and those with a nonpersonal notion of the sacred may also experience longing for deeper meaning in life, as for example, archetypal psychologist James Hillman's invitation "to see with the eyes of the soul, the soul of things" (Hillman 1975, p. 201).

In the more evangelical Christian denominations, the connection with God/Spirit is viewed as a one-step process, completed in a once-only response to the question, "Do you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord?" But more mystical and liturgical Christian traditions understand an ongoing spiritual life, a lifelong process of growth and change, as in any meaningful relationship. Thus ongoing spiritual care becomes helpful to name shifts in experience or explore new practices that intensify the spiritual dimension of life.

## Relationships of Spiritual Care and Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy and spiritual care share the aims of helping a person move toward inner freedom and wholeness. While spiritual care relates this task to the quality of a relationship with God, psychology might call it a move beyond the relatively narrow claims of the ego toward the greater wholeness offered by self. To speak of Christian spirituality specifically is to acknowledge a meeting point between Christian revelation and human psychology (Bouyer 1982, p. ix). Dogma plays a role, but spirituality has to do primarily with living a life that is experientially meaningful. The concern for wholeness is particularly characteristic of C.G. Jung's psychology. Both spiritual care and psychology aim to identify blockages that prevent inner movement and offer practices to dissolve such blockages.

The Jungian process of active imagination begins with awareness of an emotional disturbance that signals a need to rebalance the psyche. The parallel in spiritual formation is a periodic

need to reexamine basic assumptions that have ceased to be health-giving.

The second step in active imagination is using the arts to release unconscious content, with the ego consenting to engage disagreeable materials. In spiritual care, the seeker is encouraged to look honestly at life, remembering one's past with fresh eyes, accepting suffering and shock at betrayal, as well as awareness of beauty in self and other.

The third step in active imagination is bringing one's opposite positions together, as in Jung's transcendent function (Jung 1970, pp. 67–91). Here Jung acknowledges the ongoing presence of the unknown, which bears great gifts for those who dare its presence. This is not dissimilar to the moment in spiritual care of surrender to being "spun around" (*epistrephein*) or converted to a new way of being by God (Thomas 1997).

## Classic Resources for Christian Spiritual Care

Over time, many approaches to spiritual depth and prayer have developed as streams of Christian spirituality. Themes from Hebrew scripture include covenant, exodus, and the fidelity of God; Christian scripture themes include love, joy, and peace. Other approaches are liturgical, including regular daily periods of prayer rooted in the Psalms (Benedictine); nature-based, discovering the presence of God in the created world (Franciscan); ritual prayer, honoring the sacred in daily life (Celtic); and imaginative interaction with Gospel events (Ignatian) (Vest and Vest 2007). Each of these forms of prayer, study, and reflection helps deepen spiritual life. All include support for the poor and needy, both locally and worldwide.

The Carmelite approach to spirituality offers generations of attentiveness to constant lived prayer, which reveals a typical pattern of prayer including "basically three stages. . . the purgative, illuminative, and unitive" (Burrows 1980, p. 15) in a process that unfolds repeatedly in a lifetime.

Purgation refers to the inner work of what is called "detachment," or weaning oneself from

excessive attachments, what psychology might call obsessions. This is not a harsh asceticism, rather eliminating things that interfere with loving God and being receptive to God's love.

Illumination is a deepened joy in the presence of God and seeing the world with God's eyes. Physical perceptions seem strangely heightened, and one may feel that one has found the secret of the world.

Finally comes union with God, which sixteenth-century Carmelite Teresa of Avila observes is simply "making my will one with the will of God" (St. Teresa 1946, p. 13). One is so immersed in one's sacred origin as to feel no separation. Although maturation to this stage requires patience and faithfulness, "it cannot be brought about through either spiritual ambition or self-domination, but only by an un-self-regarding response to the love of God" (Jones et al. 1986, p. 370). Ultimately, union with God is a gift from God.

Mystic Evelyn Underhill suggests the addition of two other stages to the Carmelite approach to spirituality (Underhill 2010, p. 109). Before purgation, she adds the experience of the thrilling "touch of God." This may feel wondrous but can also feel like failure or loss, such as an alcoholic "hitting bottom" that hopefully precipitates a move toward "reform."

Underhill also adds a stage of the "dark night of the soul" *between* illumination and union that may feel like depression but is primarily an anguished loss of awareness of God's presence and care (John of the Cross 1945, p. xiii). The dark night is perhaps a reminder that this process is not solely a matter of "executive will."

While persons in spiritual care may not experience any of these traditions or stages in the sequence stated, nor perhaps at all, spiritual guides are trained to be well acquainted with a range of experiences so that they can offer guidance, encouraging seekers that they are not alone.

## Spiritual Care and the Person

One ancient and contemporary articulation of spiritual care comes in the relationship between

a seeker and a spiritual director, a process known as spiritual direction, spiritual companionship, spiritual accompaniment, and spiritual guidance. The language of spiritual direction comes from the Christian tradition, yet spiritual companionship has emerged in many contexts using language specific to particular cultural and spiritual traditions. It is a ministry of accompanying one person on a spiritual journey and focusing attention to the movement of God in the seeker's life by engaging in deep listening. In response to growing interest, Spiritual Directors International (SDI), a registered nonprofit charity, was formed in 1989.

From that small beginning, SDI has today grown to a membership of over 6,000 persons of many faiths (including Buddhist, Jewish, Islamic, and pagan) and in all inhabited continents (Africa, Asia, Australia-Oceania, Europe, North and South America) (view spiritual director demographics). Members of SDI constitute a global learning community of people who share a common concern, passion, and commitment to the art and contemplative practice of spiritual care through the ministry and service of spiritual direction. The purpose of the learning community is to foster the transformation of individuals, organizations, and societies in light of the holy.

Spiritual care and spiritual formation live in the heart of spiritual direction. Trappist monk Thomas Merton is reported to have said that spiritual direction is fundamentally about leading a person to see and obey God/Spirit in the depths of the soul. Additional descriptions pertaining to spiritual direction in the Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and Taoist spiritual traditions may be accessed on the SDI website, [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org). Contact information for individuals who currently offer this form of spiritual care can be obtained online using the *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource Guide of Available Spiritual Directors*.

To assist seekers in locating a spiritual director befitting of his or her particular needs and spiritual context, SDI offers interview questions aimed at determining the compatibility of



a particular spiritual director. These questions include:

1. What enrichment, spiritual formation, and theological education do you have in spiritual direction?
2. What is your personal experience tending your own prayer, meditation, and contemplative life?
3. What is your experience as a spiritual director? How many years? In what environments? What are you most interested in spiritually?
4. How do you continue your education and supervision for your spiritual direction ministry?
5. What ethical guidelines do you abide by, such as those published by Spiritual Directors International? Have you ever been accused or convicted of misconduct?
6. What type of engagement agreement will we establish to clarify roles and responsibilities in our spiritual direction relationship, such as samples provided to members of Spiritual Directors International?
7. How often will we meet, and for how long?
8. Is there a cost associated with your spiritual direction ministry?

For some, the best way to start looking for personalized spiritual care and a spiritual director is to experience a retreat that includes spiritual direction. Spiritual Directors International maintains a list of retreat centers that offer spiritual direction in a variety of traditions.

To support people seeking spiritual direction and spiritual directors, SDI publishes the *Seek and Find Guide*, *Listen: A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction*, *Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*, and *What to Expect in Spiritual Direction*, a series of materials designed for those inquiring about spiritual direction. Included in the *What to Expect* series is the booklet *What to Expect in Christian Spiritual Direction* and separate articles that examine Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish, and interfaith spiritual direction.

For those interested in pursuing spiritual care by offering spiritual direction, an online listing of available enrichment, formation, and training programs is accessible to the public on SDI's website.

Spiritual care can be very helpful to a person's unique spiritual journey. Taking into consideration one's personality and temperament, spiritual direction assists reflection on how to pray, ongoing or unfolding spiritual practices, and the stages of spiritual development in one's life. Spiritual care nourishes the spiritual aspect of being human, enabling service with authenticity and a grateful heart.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Christian Mysticism](#)
- ▶ [Faith Development Theory](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Direction](#)

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## Spiritual Direction

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Spiritual direction is the process of one person accompanying another person or persons on their spiritual journey, a journey that emphasizes a growing closer to God, the Holy, or a Higher Power. However, each spiritual director tends to have a modified or different definition of spiritual direction germane to his or her context, background, and experience. Currently spiritual direction is experiencing a rebirth or resurgence in Christianity, and other faith traditions are discovering or rediscovering spiritual direction as well.

Spiritual direction consists of a director and a directee, or directees in group spiritual direction, that are in a process of seeking out the operation and direction of God, the Divine, or the Holy in the directee's life. Although, modern spiritual direction has its root in Catholic and Anglican faith traditions, all Christian faith groups do not universally accept spiritual direction as a valid ministry or expression of faith. Many Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations believe that Christ is the mediator between humankind and God and that the Holy Spirit is the only spiritual guide needed. They fear that using another person as a director is allowing that person to come between the directee and God. In addition, spiritual direction is not a uniquely Christian phenomenon. Witch doctors or shamans perform the role of spiritual guide in primitive cultures and many instances of spiritual guides may be found among eastern traditions. The ascetics of Buddhism, the sages of China,

and the soul guides of Sufism, with the guru in Hinduism being the closest to the Judeo-Christian concept of a spiritual director, are examples of other spiritual guides or directors.

Although spiritual direction may examine and highlight many issues of life, spiritual direction is not the same as its relative of psychotherapy. While an individual may need and use a combination of psychotherapy and spiritual direction, spiritual direction, although at times overlapping the boundaries of psychotherapy, is a different and distinct helping discipline. Spiritual directors use many of the same techniques such as active listening, compassion, and reflective open-ended questions that psychotherapy practitioners use, but spiritual direction encompasses a differing agenda and stated result.

## Commentary

Spiritual direction and psychotherapy have many similarities but they are fundamentally different in content and intent. Psychotherapy focuses on emotional and mental dimensions such as thoughts, feelings, and moods, while spiritual direction focuses more precisely and specifically on spiritual issues such as prayer and the relationship to God and God's direction and work directly in the life of an individual. The intent of psychotherapy is not to facilitate the growth of persons in their relationship with the Divine, the Holy, or God. Modern psychology is valuable in that it gives hope that individuals can really grow and change. It helps to keep individuals moving in life and relationships, but psychology cannot assist in finding the direction that the directee's growth and change should take to facilitate their spirituality. Another major difference between psychotherapy and spiritual direction is that in spiritual direction, the director must be willing to be known in his or her vulnerability and limitations as a child of God, while the psychotherapist remains safely spiritually and many times emotionally unknown to his or her client.

However, it is important to understand that spiritual as used in spiritual direction is not the guidance of a person's spiritual activities alone nor is it

particularly directive in nature. The spiritual director is not like a dentist who cares for a patient's teeth or a barber who cares for an individual's hair. A spiritual director is concerned with the whole person including those issues of life that affect an individual's relationship with God and others. Spiritual direction spiritualizes all aspects and activities of the spiritual person's life, but modern spiritual directors do not give answers to their directees nor do they discipline them in the classic image of a master teacher and his or her learner.

Spiritual direction and psychotherapy differ in the degree of training and certification required. Therapists must graduate from an approved and accredited graduate program to meet state requirements for licensure. There are no educational or licensure requirements for one to become a spiritual director. Although spiritual directors may be ordained clergy holding advanced graduate degrees, they may also be laypersons or individuals who are spiritual directors as evidenced by others seeking them out for spiritual direction.

An effective and experienced spiritual director will acquire and use tools from the other helping disciplines as well as attending formation and certification programs for spiritual directors to contribute to acquiring the necessary skills that will contribute to their ministry of spiritual direction. Many of the same active listening and reflective skills used in psychotherapy will aid the spiritual director in hearing God's voice in all of the day-to-day noise experienced by the directee.

## See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religion and Mental and Physical Health](#)

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## Spiritual Ecology

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We can hear it in water, in wood, and even in stone.  
We are earth of this earth, and we are bone of its bone.

This is a prayer I sing, for we have forgotten this  
and so

The earth is perishing

(Barbara Deming in John Seed, 1988, *Thinking Like a Mountain*).

Spiritual ecology is a major shift from religions that ignore nature into a growing sense that we participate in nature, realizing and feeling that we do not stand against nature, but are part of it. We do not have dominion over nature, but we depend on it – for air, water, earth, food, and the entire system of life given by the Great Mystery that created all its wonders. It is spiritual when we think at the ontological level, seeing ultimate reality as the ground of being that underlies all existence, and is far grander than our systems of thought. It is psychological when we feel that reality, “thinking like a mountain,” feeling the awesome wonder in 150 billion galaxies, the majesty of the blue oceans, the delicate balance of life systems, and the gift of consciousness to think about and feel ourselves part of life on Earth. It is ethical when we strive to let this spiritual and psychological awakening stimulate efforts to stop dirty energy, air and water pollution, and industrialism’s destructive domination of nature.

Secular approaches since the first Earth Day in 1970 have proven insufficient to resolve the growing ecocrises, from the local to the global levels – growing numbers of floods and rising seas related to global warming. In recent decades, an additional approach has been growing exponentially: spiritual ecology. It may be defined as a complex, diverse, and dynamic arena at the interfaces of religions and spiritualities on the one hand and on the other environments, ecologies, and environmentalisms with intellectual, spiritual, and practical components. Note that each of these subjects is plural reflecting the vastness, variety, and variability of spiritual ecology (Sponsel 2012).

While for some persons spiritual ecology is only an interesting academic pursuit, for others it is a sacred subject touching their deepest concerns, emotions, commitments, and aspirations. Even though usually they do not advertise it, ultimately many environmentalists and conservationists are, to some degree in various ways, spiritual ecologists as well. Usually, they have been profoundly moved by some kind of epiphany or awesome experiences in nature (Wilson 1984).

Ecopsychology, like spiritual ecology, shifts the focus to inner development in relation to nature, instead of economic development, the latter often at the expense of the health of ecosystems, human beings, society, and future generations. For those pursuing spiritual ecology, nature is a grand cathedral of communal beings rather than an unlimited warehouse of mere objects to exploit for profit and greed (Coleman 2006; Macy and Johnstone 2012).

Elsewhere other designations for this arena may be used, although a narrower pursuit is usually involved: earth spirituality, earth mysticism, ecomysticism, ecopsychology, ecospirituality, ecotheology, green religion, green spirituality, nature mysticism, nature religion, nature spirituality, religion and ecology, religion and nature, religious environmentalism, and religious naturalism. The magnitude, complexity, diversity, and dynamism of spiritual ecology, as well as its great interest and promise, can be appreciated by exploring the websites of the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Yale University and *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (Gottlieb 2006a; Taylor 2010). The Forum advocates the Earth Charter:

For millennia the world’s religious, spiritual and ethical traditions have provided ethical grounding for the shaping of various cultures throughout the world. From the indigenous traditions to the Axial age religions arising in the last 3,000 years, humans have oriented themselves to the mystery of existence, to relations with other humans, and to nature itself (Forum on Religion and Ecology).

The many roots of spiritual ecology are deep, extending back at least some 30,000 years ago to cave paintings of the Upper Paleolithic in France. The most recent interpretation of this prehistoric art is that it reflects shamanic spirit possession. It is one expression of Animism as a belief in multiple spiritual beings and forces in nature, which is by far the oldest and most widespread of all religions. Variants of it are manifest among many indigenous people such as Winona LaDuke and adherents to variants of Paganism such as Starhawk and Graham Harvey. The roots of spiritual ecology also include historical pioneers of many centuries ago like the Buddha as well as Saint Francis of Assisi. Francis was known for taming a wolf that had been killing animals and

people in an Italian village. He spoke to the wolf, who laid down at his feet. Then the people fed him regularly and he no longer caused them harm (Francis). Among the best-known American pioneers in spiritual ecology are Henry David Thoreau and John Muir in the nineteenth century and Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold in the early twentieth century. These and many other individuals have laid the foundation for the vital rethinking, revisioning, and refeeling of the place of humans in nature that is necessary for restoring some modicum of ecosanity in the future (Kinsley 1995; Sponsel 2012; Taylor 2010).

Lynn White, Jr., ignited heated controversy when he basically blamed the environmental crisis on the application of the prevalent interpretation of selected passages in the Bible regarding human domination and the use of nature (Spring and Spring 1974). Various responses to his thesis by Christian theologians and others in turn generated the field of ecotheology, which remains an important component of spiritual ecology to this day. However, this has been transcended by the cosmic spiritual ecology of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and Matthew Fox (Bauman et al. 2011; Kinsley 1995; Tucker 2003).

Several outstanding scholars have in various ways further developed the intellectual scope, aims, and substance of contemporary spiritual ecology since the 1990s, especially Steven C. Rockefeller, Mary Evelyn Tucker, John A. Grim, Bron Taylor, and Roger S. Gottlieb. Rockefeller was the principal organizer of the historic interfaith conference *Spirit and Nature* and the resulting book that he coedited with the same title and the PBS film. Tucker and Grim co-organized a series of many books and conferences and established an interdisciplinary graduate program on Religion and Ecology at Yale University. Bron Taylor is editor-in-chief of *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*; founder of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture; and editor of its *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*. He developed the Religion and Nature graduate program at the University of Florida. Gottlieb (2006a, b) authored and edited several major surveys of religion and ecology.

In world religions, pioneering contributions have been made by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in the study of Islam and ecology, Stephanie Kaza on Buddhist environmental ethics, and Satish Kumar, a Jain. Thanks to these and other authors, by now there is substantial literature on each of the world religions and ecology.

Some of the most well-known pioneers beyond academia include ecopoets and essayists Edward Abbey, W.S. Merwin, and Gary Snyder (Felstiner 2009). The Green Patriarch Bartholomew I of the Christian Eastern Orthodox Church is an influential environmental leader. Christopher McCleod's *Sacred Land* Film Project documents sacred sites of Native Americans and others throughout the world, seen on PBS. Marten Palmer heads the Alliance for Religions and Conservation (ARC) in association with the World Wildlife Fund. ARC has hundreds of projects working with about a dozen world religions in numerous countries to conserve biodiversity in relation to sacred places. Rev. Sally G. Bingham's Interfaith Power and Light Project has mobilized thousands of religious organizations in the USA to promote energy efficiency and conservation (Gottlieb 2006a; Sponsel 2012).

The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess developed "Deep Ecology" to transcend treating only the superficial symptoms of the environmental crisis and instead identify and pursue the underlying causes and ultimate solutions. Principles of deep ecology encompass ecocentrism with an emphasis on the psychological feeling for the intrinsic values of nature (Dregson and Devall 2008).

Spiritual can involve mysticism, rituals, ceremonies, and sacred sites and landscapes. The locus of the spirituality may reside in the individual person and/or in supernatural beings and/or forces in nature, depending on one's belief system and experience. The spiritual is often one of the most important catalysts for environmental activism. [Julia Butterfly Hill](#) was psychologically stimulated by a car crash to deepen her life's commitments to higher spiritual values. So she sat high up on a California Redwood tree for 738 days to protest loggers clear-cutting those trees (Spring and Manousos 2007) (Fig. 1).



**Spiritual Ecology,**

**Fig. 1** Medicine Lake below the sacred Mt. Shasta in California (Photo courtesy of the author)



Ecopsychology overlaps with spiritual ecology as well as deep ecology (Buzzell and Chalquist 2009; Louv 2005). Its working premise is that the health of humans and nature are interconnected and interdependent. The corollary is that restoring human well-being is dependent on restoring the well-being of nature. Such principles have been explored by many ecopsychologists such as pioneers Ralph Metzner and Theodore Roszak (Metzner 1999). Joanna Macy runs workshops to help people cope psychologically with their concern about the degradation of nature and to empower them to engage in effective environmental activism (Macy and Johnstone 2012).

David Cameron's record-breaking 2009 mythic movie *Avatar* captivated a worldwide audience by depicting the contrast between a psychologically cruel, alienated, militaristic, and imperialistic society obsessed with greedy materialism and massively destructive technology, attacking an extraterrestrial indigenous society for a symbolic mineral. By contrast, the indigenous people shared the highest values of spiritual ecology, such as a profound psychological sensitivity to interconnected plants and animals. They bowed, sang, and worshiped around a wondrous goddess tree whose branches glowed with light and could resurrect the dead.

Even atheists can be spiritual ecologists, such as philosopher Donald Crosby, who finds sacredness to be inherent in nature itself. Some scientists who are also theologians find convergences through spiritual ecology. For example, Alister McGrath, with a doctorate in molecular biology and another in divinity from Oxford University, is reworking aspects of natural theology (McGrath 2002). Although not inevitable, the potential danger of militant atheism can be seen in what has been happening with the desacralization and corresponding ecocide of Tibet accompanying the military invasion and colonial occupation by the communist regime from China since the second half of the twentieth century (Sponsel 2012).

Spiritual ecology has generated three types of unprecedented collaboration: among and within religions, between religion and science, and among the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities (e.g., Carroll and Warner 1998). Examples of this collaboration include the [Forum on Religion and Ecology](#), Canadian Forum on Religion and Ecology, and European Forum for the Study of Religion and Ecology. Beyond academia there is the National Religious Partnership for the Environment in the United States, composed of both Christian and Jewish organizations (Gottlieb 2006a).



There is a revolution in developing a new spiritual and ecological psychology stimulated by many factors, such as the shocking effects of global climate change and the Internet (Bourne 2008; Hartman 1999; Sponsel 2012; Taylor 2010).

There are, however, major obstacles confronting spiritual ecology. It challenges the interests of the powerful establishment and the inertia of the status quo. Spiritual ecology is antithetical to people myopically pursuing scientism or Marxism. Fanatical religious conservatives and extremists fear and even dismiss spiritual ecology as incompatible, even a reversion to Paganism (Gottlieb 2006a; Sponsel 2012; Taylor 2010). Reactionary politics can revert to the most incredible denial and evasion of ecological responsibility in the name of vested interests, such as dirty energy. The urgent problem of overpopulation that keeps overwhelming technological advances, such as cleaner automobiles, is a great challenge to the conservative religions that oppose birth control. The psychology behind this exaggerated sense of purity in some religions and transcendence of nature must be faced.

As a revolution in consciousness, spiritual ecology may be quiet, nonviolent, and decentralized, but it has far-reaching ramifications. If its accelerating momentum and other trends continue, then it has the potential to transform the place of humans in nature and thereby restore a far greater degree of ecosanity. This transformation engages the inner being as well as outer world; hence, it has psychological and spiritual as well as ecological and political dimensions. The main question is whether or not all of this will prove enough and soon enough to avoid a global catastrophe, when human environmental impact reaches some unknown critical threshold or tipping point.

## See Also

- ▶ [Animal Spirits](#)
- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Ecology](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Creation Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ecology and Christianity](#)

- ▶ [Green Man](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Jewish Tradition and the Environment](#)
- ▶ [Muir, John, and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Participatory Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Re-Enchantment](#)
- ▶ [Sacred Space](#)
- ▶ [Soul in the World](#)

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## Spiritual Emergence

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The term “spiritual emergence” was coined by Dr. Stanislav Grof and his wife Christina Grof, two leaders in the field of transpersonal theory, as a way of referring to breakdowns of meaning that lead to transformative growth and greater psycho-spiritual health on the part of the individual. It is, as the Grofs describe it, “the movement of an individual to a more expanded way of being that involves enhanced emotional and psychosomatic health, greater freedom of personal choices, and a sense of deeper connection with other people, nature, and the cosmos” (Grof and Grof 1990, p. 34). The term

*spiritual emergence* is often used in conjunction with “spiritual emergency” (also coined by the Grofs), a term used to describe a crisis state in which the process of growth and change stimulated by this “emergence” becomes so overwhelming and unmanageable that the individual is unable to gracefully return to day-to-day functioning.

## From Breakdown to Breakthrough

The concept of the “spiritual emergence” is not a new one. The belief in the need to induce states of consciousness in which the individual experiences an oftentimes frightening psycho-spiritual *breakdown* of meaning in order to achieve an eventual *breakthrough* into higher functioning is the sine qua non of many shamanic and mystical traditions around the world. Within these systems of thought, spiritual seekers are encouraged to disengage themselves from their ordinary state of consciousness through practices such as meditation, fasting, the ingestion of psychoactive substances, ecstatic ritual, and so on. Here, the teacher (“guru”) and community play a fundamental role in helping the individual move through the process gracefully and in a way that helps assure successful integration and transformation.

In contrast, Western psychological paradigms have historically tended to take a pathologizing approach to any mental state that deviates from what is considered “normalcy.” The terms “spiritual emergence” and “spiritual emergency” came about as a response to what the Grofs and others considered to be a failure in the mainstream Western mental health system to distinguish between psycho-spiritual healing crises and actual psychopathologies. They attribute much of Western psychology’s inability to see the positive value in transpersonal crises as the result of a superficial and inadequate model of the psyche used by clinicians and academicians, one that is limited to “postnatal biography” and the Freudian individual unconscious. Because conventional psychology is often unable and/or unwilling to distinguish between a spiritual *breakthrough* and a psychological *breakdown*, individuals going through these experiences are often misdiagnosed.

Says Oscar Miro-Quesada, humanistic psychologist and Peruvian shaman,

As a clinician myself, I have found that about seventy percent of all socio-psychotic states are spiritual emergencies. The other thirty percent are psychopathological illnesses. But in the rest of these cases, if you help the client or the patient interpret his or her experience as a spiritual awakening rather than a sickness, they find purpose and meaning in the experience, rather than condemnation by societal norms (Webb 2004, p. 13).

## Identification and Diagnosis

Misdiagnosis is understandable, as many of the symptoms of spiritual emergence/emergency manifest in ways that are similar to those of chronic psychosis. Symptoms may include disorientation, disassociation, difficulty in communicating, and visual and/or auditory hallucinations. An individual may be disturbed by physical feelings and emotions that are seemingly unconnected to anything. Some experience feelings of pressure, claustrophobia, oppression, tightness, restlessness, struggle, and even a sense of losing all reference points towards the self (Grof and Grof 1990).

Individuals experiencing such episodes may feel that their sense of identity is breaking down, that their old values no longer hold true, and that the very ground beneath their personal realities is radically shifting. In many cases, new realms of mystical and spiritual experience enter their lives suddenly and dramatically, resulting in fear and confusion. They may feel tremendous anxiety; have difficulty coping with their daily lives, jobs, and relationships; and may even fear for their own sanity (Grof and Grof 1989, back cover).

Within the spectrum of crisis, there are various levels of emergency, which range from mild disorientation and fragmentation to a state in which one undergoes a complete loss of connection to ordinary reality. A spiritual emergence/emergency can occur on its own, or it can co-occur with conventionally diagnosed mental disorders that may, in fact, constitute pathology. In order to help clinicians identify some of the characteristic features of a spiritual emergence/emergency, the Grofs compiled what they had observed to be ten “varieties of spiritual

emergency” (Grof and Grof 1990), many of which are named according to the features that they share with emergences/emergencies found within various spiritual systems. These include “the shamanic crisis,” “the awakening of kundalini,” “episodes of unitive (nondual) consciousness” (also referred to as “peak experiences”), “psychological renewal through return to the center” (also referred to as “psychological renewal through the central archetype”), “the crisis of psychic opening,” “past-life experiences,” “communications with spirit guides,” “near-death experiences,” “experiences of close encounters with UFOs,” and “possession states” (Grof and Grof 1989).

## Influence on the Field of Psychology

The Grofs’ contribution to the field of psychology has been considerable. In his early studies of LSD and its effects on the psyche, Stanislav Grof constructed a theoretical framework for pre- and perinatal psychology, which mapped early fetal and neonatal experiences, eventually developing into an in-depth cartography of the human psyche. This presented a new perspective on the healing, transformation, and the evolutionary potential of the human psyche, thus challenging psychiatry’s perspective on states typically seen as psychoses. In 1991, the Grofs’ organization, the Spiritual Emergence Network, petitioned the then-in-development DSM-IV to create a new diagnostic classification that would address issues that involve religio-spiritual content, arguing that such a category would increase the accuracy of diagnostic assessments in cases where religious and/or spiritual issues are involved. The proposal was eventually accepted. Current versions of DSM-IV now include a diagnostic category of “Religious or Spiritual Problems.” This change to the DSM-IV is considered to be evidence of an important and necessary shift in the mental health profession’s view of religion and spirituality as essential aspects of the human experience. The concepts of “spiritual emergence” and “spiritual emergency” have likewise become key components in transpersonal psychology, a field that

considers the spiritual dimensions of human experience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Spiritual Direction](#)
- ▶ [Transpersonal Psychology](#)

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## Spiritualism

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Broadly defined, spiritualism is a philosophical orientation that embraces extrasensory epistemologies, an all-knowing infinite God, and the immortality of the soul. With the mid-nineteenth-century flowering of interest in the occult, however, the word came to signify a largely unchurched religion which espoused not only belief in life after death but in the ability of mediums to communicate with the departed.

Most authorities agree that the movement first began in the mid-1840s in Hydesville, New York, with the Fox sisters' widely publicized séances which attracted the attention of thousands. Mental phenomena associated with the movement include clairaudience, clairvoyance, and telepathy, while physical manifestations such as levitation, psychokinesis, table rapping, and any

purported supernatural visitations, such as ghosts, are also included.

The writings of Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Mesmer – although themselves, not spiritualists – informed much of the movement's thought. Largely a phenomenon of the upper and middle classes, spiritualism relied on periodicals and trance lectures for dissemination. Lacking both administrative and canonical cohesion and plagued by the constant ousting of frauds, starting in the mid-1920s, membership drastically declined. Although still extant today – both independently and as absorbed by various syncretic movements – it was never to enjoy such widespread devotion again.

## Commentary

The modern spiritualist movement arose at a particularly turbulent time, the various scientific and technological revolutions of the age calling into question the very meaning-making matrices of the Occident. A novel resolution to the cognitive dissonance pervasive in Victorian culture, spiritualism was a way to fuse both faith and faith in science, although efforts to prove its tenets using the latter's methodologies were met resoundingly with failure.

## See Also

- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Direction](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Emergence](#)

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## Star of David

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The Star of David (in Hebrew *Magen David*, literally the “Shield of David”) competes with the menorah (seven-branched candelabra) as the most iconic and recognizable symbol in Judaism. Although the exact origins of this hexagrammic six-pointed star (one triangle inverted over another) remain an open question, scholars generally agree that it does not trace its roots back to the shape or design of King David’s actual shield (Fig. 1).

The original psychological potency of the Star of David, as with numerous geometric figures found cross-culturally in the ancient world, rests in the widespread belief in the protective powers that it possessed. This idea was chiefly popularized by medieval Jewish mystics, though most likely shares genetic roots with the more ancient five-sided pentagrammic variant sometimes referred to as the “Seal of Solomon.” In antiquity, for example, the Pythagorean Pentagram was a well-known symbol representing the agencies of knowledge and understanding. We later find the double-triangle hexagrammic figure frequently appearing in seventeenth-century alchemical literature as a symbol representing harmony between the antagonistic elements of fire and water.

So closely linked were these two symbols that between the years 1300 and 1700, they were used interchangeably until the Star of David eventually gained prominence. The Seal of Solomon was ascribed magical powers by Jews and Gentiles alike and was believed to have been



**Star of David, Fig. 1** The Star of David (This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Star\\_of\\_David.svg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Star_of_David.svg))

a magical signet ring possessed by King Solomon himself. Although the Jewish Talmud (Talmud 1989–1999, Giṭ. 68a) briefly makes mention of this ring, in Arabic traditions we find embellishments that describe the ring imparting Solomon the power to command demons, genies, and even communicate with animals. Islamic folklore further describes Solomon’s ring being inscribed with “The Greatest Name of God” which was unknown to anyone else and represented the source of the aforementioned mythical powers.

One of the earliest undisputed uses of the Star of David (c. third century CE) on a Jewish tombstone has been located in Taranto, Apulia, in Southern Italy – a city that possessed a sizable Jewish population that had been noted for their Kabbalistic scholarship. The six-pointed star was likewise commonly featured on notarial signs in Spain, France, Denmark, and Germany in the tenth and eleventh centuries. It appeared in Jewish synagogues and was even ornamentally employed in many Byzantine and medieval churches, such as the cathedrals of Brandenburg and Stendal and on the Marktkirche at Hannover (Singer and Adler 1912, p. 252).

The Ḥasidei Ashkenaz of the twelfth-century Eastern Europe are commonly credited with



producing the oldest textual mention of the Shield of David in which they provided an explanation of the magical “alphabet of the angel” “Metatron”; however, it was here that the mystical 72 Names of God were engraved in and around this protective shield along with the name MKBY, thought to represent a magical homage to the Hasmonean Zealot Judah Maccabee. In other texts of the geonic period, the name of the angel Taftafiyah – one of the more magical names of Metatron – was added to the 72 holy names, and subsequently it was an amulet in the form of a hexagram with this one name that became one of the most widespread protective charms of the period. These hexagrams, however, rarely were drawn with simple lines but rather were composed of an elaborate combination of these various written names. Although there can be little doubt that the manner in which these names were patterned to form the star carried significance, efforts at deciphering their meaning have been elusive. Casanowicz (1916), for instance, was of the opinion that the Shield of David, while representing a “medley of names of God and angels, some of them ‘wonderful and fearful,’” they nevertheless defy “. . . rational philological and etymological explanation, written forward and backward and crosswise in all possible permutations and transpositions of letters” (Casanowicz 1916, pp. 156–157).

The mystical themes attributed to the Star of David indicate the psychological intersection between the religious symbolism, the protective qualities, and metaphysical attributes ascribed to the emblem. Some Kabbalists thought that the six points signified God’s absolute rule over the universe in all six directions: north, south, east, west, up, and down. They also believed that the triangles represented humanity’s inherent and paradoxical dual nature – good and evil, physical and spiritual – and through the balancing of these forces, the star could be used as protection against evil spirits (Wolf 1999).

The earliest known piece of Jewish esotericism *Sefer Yetzirah* (“Book of Creation”) – a book of Jewish mysticism that predates the Zohar (the primary source of Jewish mysticism) – observes that the overlapping, interlocking triangles actually create six smaller triangles and is

ultimately composed of a 12 (dodecagram) sides. Accordingly, these 12 sides are likened to the Jewish people, representing the 12 tribes of Israel as well as other esoteric meanings that cohere around the number 12 (Kaplan 1997). The structure of the star, with two overlapping triangles, may also represent the reciprocal, covenantal relationship between the Jewish people and God. The triangle pointing “up” symbolizes our good deeds which go up to heaven and then activate a flow of goodness back down to the world, symbolized by the triangle pointing down. In a similar vein, the triangle that points upward symbolizes God, while the star that points downward represents mankind (Sperling and Simon 1984, p. 73a).

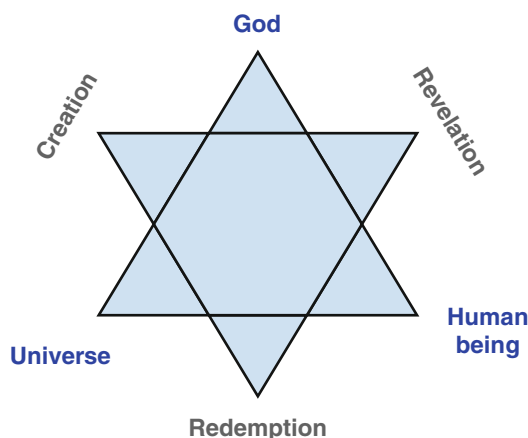
Another Kabbalistic idea that carried mystical currency in the Middle Ages, particularly amongst those who practice Lurianic Kabbalah, is that a six-pointed star receives form and substance from its solid center. This inner core (*yesod*) represents the spiritual dimension, surrounded by the six building blocks of the universe: *Chesed* (Kindness), *Gevurah* (Severity), *Tiferet* (Harmony), *Netzach* (Perseverance), *Hod* (Splendor), *Yesod* (Foundation), and *Malchut* (Royalty) (Oegema 1996).

Apart from appearing in mystical Kabbalistic manuscripts, in 1354 the Jewish community of Prague was the first to use the Star of David as its official symbol (Frankel and Teutsch 1992, p. 161). It wasn’t until the seventeenth century that we find the Star of David emerging as a prominent emblem in Muslim and Christian countries being used an in-group marker amongst its Jewish inhabitants (Trachtenberg 1979). Then the Star of David became an architectural fixture and decorative ornament in European synagogues, Jewish literature, and Jewish artwork. Unlike the mystics of the Middle Ages, however, the Jewish communities of this period did not seem to invest a great amount of religious significance into the star.

## Modern Era

In more modern times, the Star of David has been used as both a symbol of persecution and of





**Star of David, Fig. 2** The Star of Redemption – Franz Rosenzweig (This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:TheStarOfRedemptionEng.svg>)

redemption. In 1897 Theodore Herzl, likely because of its religiously neutral connotations, chose the Star of David to be adopted as the Zionist Nationalist symbol in the First Zionist Congress held in Basel, Switzerland. This redemptive motif was substantially amplified in Franz Rosenzweig's (1912) seminal work, *The Star of Redemption*, where he employed the Star of David to frame his philosophy of Judaism. Each half of the star, according to Rosenzweig, was composed of two conceptual "triads," which, in concert, form the foundation of Jewish belief: Creation, Revelation, and Redemption; God, Israel, and World.

However, beginning in 1939, after the Germans invaded Poland, a shift occurred and the Nazis progressively required Jews to identify themselves in public by affixing a badge of the Star of David with the word *Jude* (German for "Jew") printed onto their clothing. This was, of course, a throwback to the common practice of forcing Jews to visibly identify themselves in public, such as in Portugal where a red Star of David was used as an identifier in the Middle Ages (Piponnier and Mane 1997, p. 137) (Fig.2).

Following the fall of the Third Reich, the Star of David quickly reclaimed its positive,

redemptive symbolism, figuring prominently on the flag of Israel shortly after the founding of the country in 1948. Gershon Scholem (1972), in his erudite treatise on the history of the Star of David, has made a compelling case that the mystical overlay of the Star of David has been negated in modern times by the self-defining redemptive symbolism of this emblem driven by the Holocaust and the founding of the modern State of Israel. The Star of David, Scholem contended, pivoted from a symbol of exclusion to a symbol of redemption, not in a strictly messianic context, but in a nationalistic, existential manner that characterizes the resilient nature and renewed bond of faith between God, the Jewish people, and the land of Israel.

## See Also

- ▶ [David](#)
- ▶ [Esotericism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Folk Magic](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)

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## Stern, Karl

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Karl Stern (1906–1975) was born in Bavaria to an assimilated Jewish family and received little formal religious education. After a profoundly alienating experience at his Bar Mitzvah, he repudiated belief in God and became a Marxist and a Zionist. Stern studied medicine and neuropsychiatry in Munich, Berlin, and Frankfurt and underwent a somewhat unorthodox analytic training with a practitioner who blended Freudian and Jungian perspectives but leaned strongly toward a belief in “Spirit.” During this period, he briefly immersed himself in Orthodox Jewish observance but meanwhile cultivated close friendships with ardent Christians, who seemed to understand his religious longings even better than his own relatives. In 1936, Stern and his family fled from Germany to London, where he continued his neuropsychiatric work. Two years later, he arrived in Montreal (via New York). After much study and reflection, in 1943, he finally converted to Roman Catholicism (Stern 1951).

Stern’s first book, *The Pillar of Fire*, was published in 1951 and gives a vivid account of his childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood and the various experiences and events that led to his eventual conversion, including his close friendships with Jacques Maritain and Dorothy Day. Like his younger contemporary, Cardinal

Jean-Marie (Aaron) Lustiger, Stern was unable to understand why most Jews – including many old friends – regarded him as a traitor, a recurrent theme in the literature by “Hebrew Catholics.” Coming as it did on the eve of the Holocaust, Stern’s pain and perplexity on this score seem quite odd or disingenuous to most Jews, since he was quite open about his proselytizing agenda. But regardless of how his actions were experienced and interpreted by his former friends, it is important to note that together with other converts like Edith Stein, Israel Eugenio Zolli, and Aaron Lustiger, Karl Stern worked diligently to overcome anti-Semitism in the Church.

In any case, *The Pillar of Fire* won the Christopher Award, became an international best seller, and is full of illuminating reflections on the political-religious complexion of different Jewish denominations, the differences between Catholic and Nazi anti-Semitism, and of different currents within Nazism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. In his next book, *The Third Revolution: A Study of Psychiatry and Religion* (1954), Stern explored the relationship between psychoanalysis and religion, arguing that the two are completely compatible. In his third book, *The Flight From Woman* (1965), Stern explored the pitfalls of (male-centered) enlightenment rationalism, with the premium it places on abstract and discursive intellect, to the detriment of empathy and intuition, which he deemed to be women’s ways of knowing and engaging with the world. Unlike Freud, who stressed Oedipal conflicts between fathers and sons, Stern argued for the primacy of the maternal imago and argued that much of Western misogyny – which shows up in philosophers like Descartes, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Sartre – was rooted in the experience of early maternal deprivation, anticipating the insights and attitudes of attachment theory and some recent feminist theorists who are not in the Catholic orbit.

Like Erich Fromm and Erik Erikson, who were also raised in German-Jewish households, Stern was a psychoanalyst who became a public intellectual. Like them, albeit in different ways, he addressed the relationship between science and religion, issues of gender identity, and the

nature of religious experience. Stern is well known in Catholic circles as a formative influence on psychoanalyst Paul Vitz, whose writings on psychoanalysis and faith are deeply influenced by Stern. Though he wrote from the perspective of a psychoanalytically oriented clinician, Stern's books are informed by a deep knowledge of history, philosophy, and sociology and attest to the yearning for transcendence that persists in the midst of our secular society.

## See Also

- ▶ [Conversion](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Stigmata

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## Introduction

From the Greek meaning “to prick; to burn in marks; brand” (Perschbacher 2004). In the ancient Greco-Roman world, stigmata were the brand marks inflicted on slaves by their owners. The term is today most often associated with Christianity and refers to physical wounds, similar to those inflicted on Jesus of Nazareth during his crucifixion, that appear spontaneously on the body of a believer. The first use of the term in connection with Jesus appears in the New Testament, where the apostle Paul refers to his scars from injuries inflicted during imprisonment as “the marks of Jesus branded on my body” (Galatians 6:17); most scholars take his meaning to be that the scars mark him as belonging to Jesus the way a brand marks a slave. This is the sense given to the term in writings of early Christian theologians like Jerome and Augustine. Paul Orosius, a fifth-century Spanish theologian, first used it in reference to the actual wounds inflicted on Jesus. In the thirteenth century an Italian monk, Br. Elias of Assisi, first used the word to refer to spontaneously appearing wounds marking the body of Francis of Assisi (Schmucki 1991).

## Historical Background

A few unsubstantiated instances of stigmata have been reported among Muslims in the form of wounds suffered by Muhammad during his efforts to spread Islam, and at least one Jewish case involving a young man who felt an intense identification with Jesus, but the phenomenon has historically been found overwhelmingly among Catholic Christians (Copelan 1975). The spontaneous appearance of wounds perceived to

duplicate those experienced by Jesus is not reported in historical documents before the thirteenth century. There is some disagreement over whether the first witnessed case was that of a British man, Stephen Langton (1222), or the Italian monk, Francis of Assisi (1224). Since that time, the phenomenon has proliferated. Three to 500 cases have been reported, with peak activity in the nineteenth (20 documented cases) and twentieth centuries (perhaps 100 or more claims). The most famous twentieth-century cases were Thérèse Neumann (1898–1962) and Padre Pio (1887–1968). The majority have been Italian Roman Catholic women who experienced significant trauma (physical or mental) prior to the first appearance of the stigmata. Sixty-two stigmatics have received beatification or canonization by the Catholic Church, although the official position of the Vatican has been that only St. Francis' case is of clearly supernatural origin (Alonso-Fernandez 1985; Carroll 1987; Albright 2002).

Generally, stigmatics experience pain and bleeding intermittently from wounds in the hands or wrists, feet, and one side. Not all experience the same number and type of wounds, not all wounds bleed, and not all are visible; the so-called invisible stigmata cause pain in the hands, feet, and side without the development of wounds or scarring. Appearance of stigmata tends to be periodic, manifesting at times associated with Christ's Passion (on Fridays or during Lent), on church feast days, or when receiving Holy Communion. Many report a drastic reduction in the need and desire for food, with some claiming to ingest nothing but communion wafers after the onset of the phenomenon.

### Religious Interpretations

For many devoutly religious people, the stigmata are a sign of sainthood granted to very spiritual men and women as a sign of God's grace. They are miraculous manifestations of divine love and a foreshadowing of the goal of faith-union with God. For the stigmatic, the experience is intensely humbling and painful. In some cases, individuals report having prayed to share Christ's

suffering or spending long hours in meditation on the crucifixion before onset. St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380) was very highly revered during her lifetime but prayed that the wounds be invisible so that she could continue to function as an influential figure in papal and Italian politics. She was so highly regarded that her head has been preserved in a reliquary which is kept on the altar of her church to this day.

Given the reverence accorded the phenomenon among religious individuals, it is puzzling that there are no records of stigmatization before the thirteenth century. One possible explanation leads us toward psychology and has to do with the fact that Christians did not commonly depict Christ's bodily suffering in art during the first one thousand or so years of the faith. The cross without Christ's body had become a symbol of the faith during Constantine's (272–337 CE) reign. In the early centuries, when Jesus' body was depicted, it was clothed in a shroud and usually without explicit signs of torture. From the ninth century forward, the body appears more and more often either naked or clothed only in a loin cloth, and with the twelfth century we see an upturn in graphic depictions of blood and suffering. By the late Middle Ages, the representation of Christ in excruciating pain becomes the norm (Illich 1987).

### Scientific Interpretations

The first attempt to explain stigmata scientifically is found in Alfred Maury's *La Magie et l'astrologie dans l'antiquité et dans le moyen âge* (1863). With the advent of scientific investigation during the nineteenth century, a discernable shift in status "from saint to patient" has transpired (Albright 2002). Growing caution regarding the phenomenon is illustrated in the fact that only one stigmatic living in the last two centuries (Padre Pio canonized in 2002) has been declared a saint by the Catholic Church. The church hierarchy's prudence regarding stigmata is a function of the difficult questions raised by scientific investigation of religious phenomena. Medically, the wounds are often

labeled psychogenic purpura or autoerythrocyte sensitization syndrome, which involves easy bruising that spreads to adjacent tissues and causes pain. This condition may be due to auto-immune sensitization or to purely psychogenic causes. Because stigmatics are most often devoutly religious and their wounds mimic those of Christ, the tendency among medical professionals is to attribute the condition to psychological factors.

In some cases, the wounds appear to have been self-inflicted. Wovoka (1856–1932), the Paiute leader of the second-wave Native American Ghost Dance movement, had a vision of God during a solar eclipse in 1889 after which he preached a message of impending resurrection of the ancestors and end of white rule. He also exhibited the stigmata, which are thought to have been self-inflicted in order to more closely identify his message with Christ. Clearly fraudulent cases have occurred often, with wounds and bleeding caused by everything from self-injury to using makeup or the concealing vials of red food coloring and animal or human blood beneath layers of false skin (Krippner 2002). Faking of the wounds was substantiated in the case of Magdalena de la Cruz (1487–1560), a Spanish nun. Whereas Wovoka may have inflicted the wounds to achieve ideological goals, stigmatics like Magdalena may suffer from what is now called factitious disorder (sometimes called Munchausen syndrome), the intentional production of medical symptoms. These sufferers have no discernable external incentives, like political or monetary gain, apparently needing to assume the “sick” role for its own sake (DSM-IV 2000, pp. 471–475).

### Psychological Interpretation

Stigmatics have, since the mid-nineteenth century, most often been diagnosed with hysteria or hysterical conversion – somatoform disorder in today’s terms (DSM-IV 2000, p. 445 or pp. 451–452). In this condition,

recurrent clinically significant physical symptoms cannot be explained by a diagnosable medical condition or as resulting from substances or intentional infliction. Pierre Janet (1859–1947) first noted that hysterics tend to be easily hypnotized, and Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) discovered that stigmata-like wounds could be induced through hypnotic suggestion (Albright 2002). The classic Freudian explanation is that stigmata arise due to sexual and aggressive urges originating in childhood (for an interesting Kleinian interpretation, see Carroll 1987).

Freudian interpretations have been criticized based on the fact that many stigmatics suffered significant physical and/or psychological trauma just prior to the first onset. One argument is that post-traumatic stress disorder (DSM-IV 2000, p. 309.81) may be more accurately descriptive. Thérèse Neumann, for example, suffered a debilitating back injury when putting out a fire at a neighbor’s home when she was 20 years old. Her physical condition deteriorated into temporary blindness, left-sided paralysis, inability to speak normally, and lack of appetite. She was bedridden for 6 years, during which time she suffered a seizure and developed infected bed sores. Her condition dramatically and spontaneously improved on the day her namesake, Thérèse of Lisieux, was canonized. Soon afterward she had a vision of Jesus and developed an open wound on her left side, followed by bloody tears and wounds on her hands and feet. She claimed to have ingested nothing but communion wafers for the next 36 years and experienced the stigmata after entering a trance-like state nearly every Friday through Sunday for the rest of her life. In Albright’s analysis, Neumann suffered post-traumatic stress symptoms expressed in dissociative self-mutilation (Albright 2002). It must be said, however, that even if science can identify underlying psychological mechanisms at work in the lives of stigmatics, the sufferer’s faith that this is a spiritual experience is not thereby disproved. “The fact that an idea satisfies a wish does not mean that the idea is false” (Fromm 1950).

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Jesus

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## Stone Circles

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### Stone Circles: Mysterious Skeletons of Stone-Age Culture

Stone circles are ancient purpose-built rock structures found all over the world. Their origins and uses are a source of continuing research and debate. The number of standing stones in a circle can range from 4 to 60. Some stone circles are concentric. Some are elliptical or oval. Others are recumbent, in which a single stone is laid flat between the highest two upright pillars. The elements of stone circles and stone monuments include a variety of terms including dolmen, cairn, menhir, tumuli, barrow, cromlech, and center stone (Stone Circles of the Gambia). Symbolically they can have many meanings, including the broad Jungian theory of the mandala, an archetypal image of psychological divinity, and the archetypal Self that regulates and balances the various archetypal dynamics (Jung 1959). This appears in many ways, such as reference to stars, the afterlife, and divinities.

The term “henge” refers to Neolithic circular or oval earthworks identified by a ring bank with an interior ditch. Henges sometimes have incorporated stone circles as a part of the earthwork. The study of the origin of stone circles has been somewhat aided by the science of radiocarbon dating; however, the results are often inconclusive. People who built stone circles in the Neolithic era left no written source materials, but legends survive. More reliable dating parameters have been deduced by sifting through what ancient cultures have left behind as clues and by looking into the heavens.

### Stonehenge as an Icon

The stone circle on the Salisbury Plain, Stonehenge, is arguably the world’s best known.



### Stone Circles,

**Fig. 1** Stonehenge on July 30, 2007 (Photo by garethwiscombe. Courtesy Creative Commons 2.0 Generic License. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stonehenge2007\\_07\\_30.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Stonehenge2007_07_30.jpg))



It began as a henge around 3100 BCE, was then abandoned, and remained untouched for nearly 1,000 years. Construction resumed in 2150 BCE when 82 bluestones from the Preseli Mountains, over 200 miles away in southwest Wales, were brought to the site. These stones weigh 4 t each. Their transport apparently included dragging the stones overland and rafting them on various connecting rivers. In the third building stage of Stonehenge, circa 2000 BCE, the Sarsen stones, boulders of silicified sandstone, arrived. The largest of these stones weighed 50 t and were moved 25 miles overland using sledges and ropes. The final stage took place in 1500 BCE when 60 additional bluestones, a general term for dolerite rock slabs, were used to complete the circle. Only 43 of the original bluestones remain (Fig. 1).

### The Builders of Stonehenge

The official Stonehenge visitor's brochure refers to the builders as "a prehistoric culture now lost to us." DNA analysis suggests that modern *Homo sapiens* arrived in Britain at least 25,000 years ago, some of whom came across a land bridge which then existed between what is now the far southeast coast of Britain and the European

continent. Maritime migrations also added to the mix of residents in Britain during the era of stone circle building. The first known writings about Stonehenge are from the twelfth century by Henry of Huntingdon and Geoffrey of Monmouth. In one British legend, King Arthur asks his court magician Merlin who built Stonehenge. Merlin says that giants moved the great stones from Wales (Wace, 14th century). There are those who believe that sophisticated civilizations with technological skills existed before 12000 BCE, when geologists indicate that a meteor impact changed the face of the earth and its survivors. In truth, the identity of the builders may never be known.

### Why Stonehenge Was Built

Excavations have revealed cremated human bones in some of the chalk mortar fillings at Stonehenge, but it is not thought to be a cemetery as such. The chalk fillings were likely the result of cremations held amid religious ceremonies and then put to both practical and memorial use. Some archaeologists believe Stonehenge was constructed as a burial monument for a very important person, based on the amount of

dedicated work and coordination required to move and assemble the monolithic stones.

Between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, three British astronomers, Sir Norman Lockyer (1909), Gerald Hawkins (1965), and Alexander Thom (1971), each argued that Stonehenge and other ancient monuments were aligned to follow the motions of the sun, moon, planets, and constellations and validated the study of archaeoastronomy. Recently two more theories on Stonehenge have emerged. One posits that Stonehenge and other stone circles and monuments were part of an early navigational system for travelers on land and at sea. Building on the concept of ley lines, introduced by amateur archaeologist Alfred Watkins and others spent decades researching stone circles as early navigational tools (David and Davidson 1925/1988). Travelers could have used dead reckoning from one stone circle to another as Neolithic road maps along the coastlines of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, France, and Spain and into the interior of Britain (Davidson, Davidson & Davidson).

### Peace and Reconciliation in Stone

Another theory is that stone circles were part of a vast planetary geo-energy network. The Stonehenge Riverside Project (SRP) (University of Sheffield) proposes that Stonehenge was as a tribal unification project, bringing together the previously separated tribes and cultures from the east and west sides of the land mass. These groups, which had warred over religious beliefs and territorial claims, formed an alliance and built Stonehenge as a symbol of peace and reconciliation. The large standing stones, it is suggested, each represented the various clans that had battled until the end of the Stone Age (Society for the study of peace, conflict and violence).

### Other Worship and Belief Systems

Geomancy, lithomancy, and litholatry are terms used to describe the act of giving special powers

to stones or to the worship of them as symbolic representations of one or more deities. Stone circles are the rough-hewn ancestors of religious icons, which evolved into the status of saints. They are reflected in great cathedrals to modest chapels to the headstones placed above graves. Standing stones infuse religious history and practice. Comparisons of diverse Neolithic cultures suggest that these peoples' beliefs often depended upon their agricultural sophistication driven by various climates and growing seasons. Psychology was based on ecology, infused with spiritual beliefs. The earth was revered and feared, and the gods were seen in the stars. Understanding these celestial movements – used to predict planting and harvesting – was crucial to everyday life and survival. Exhortations to “higher powers” are, arguably, the basis of all religions that followed this era in human history (Eliade 1958).

Psychologists and theologians have reached a consensus that the urge to build sacred structures seems to be embedded in the human psyche. We still mark historical events, and the passing of people, with standing stones, metal monuments, and gravestones.

Studies on primitive religion concur that burials and community ceremonies were widely practiced in all early societies. A strong belief in the afterlife linked to the cosmos is a common thread in many primitive religions and accounts for the astronomical placements of stone circles (Eliade 1958). Twice a year, at the solstice and equinox, heavenly light beams focus through key portals for as few as 7 min. These may have meant to lead the spirits of the departed to the life beyond. Paul Sèbillot detailed various stone circle and large rock cultural myths and practices in France. These included marriage ceremonies, supplications for wealth and health, and love and fertility rites (Sèbillot 1902). D. L. Ashliman, of the University of Pittsburgh, has compiled an online collection of Stone Monument Legends (Ashliman 1996-2012).

Aubrey Burl asserted that Stonehenge was a temple. Using the findings of the archaeoastronomers, Burl suggests that such sites would have been presided over by a group of astronomer

priests. These holy leaders would have led their cohorts through the cycle of rituals that the stone circles were designed to teach and keep alive down through future generations. These priests would have read the heavens to announce planting and harvesting cycles, holding rituals to invoke good weather, good harvests, health, and safety from invasions (Burl 2005a, b, c).

All circles have centers. Many of them are highly symbolic. These are places where the faithful assemble to observe common beliefs. Circles represent the cyclical nature of life and the seasons, of marriage (the exchanging of rings), of birth, and death. Walking in circles around sacred places is a common practice in many faiths. From ancient Labyrinths in Christian sites to Islam's meteorite shrine, the Kaaba, in Mecca, these monuments are circled by the faithful to show religious devotion. Jung saw such circular rituals psychologically as sacred mandalas, pointing to the central sacredness (Jung 1959).

Contemporary Pagans, Wiccans and Druids, see their right to worship at Stonehenge to be sacred to their belief systems. Stonehenge has become a legal religious battleground, as these faith factions ask for tolerance and equal access. In *Sacred Architecture* Humphrey and Vitebsky (2005) note that "humans attempt to bring themselves closer to the divine by creating a special space to hold a powerful and precious contact." The prevalence of stone circles seems to underscore this principle.

## Stone Circles Around the World

Beyond the 1,000 standing stone circles in the British Isles, countless other mysterious stone monuments circle the world. At Carnac, France, pre-Celtic societies raised at least 3,000 Neolithic standing stones between 3300 and 4500 BCE. Legend holds that one set of the standing monoliths was made when a league of Roman soldiers were turned to stone by Merlin, the omnipresent mythical magician (Briard). The lines of stones corresponded with the changes of the seasons, according to the archaeoastronomers. Nabta Playa

in the Egyptian Nubian Desert dates from the fifth millennium BCE and has alignments to astronomical points (Wendorf and Malville 2001).

In Japan, ceremonial stone circles first appeared at the beginning of Jomon era (14000 BCE). They continued to be built through 300 BCE. They were positioned near mountain locations that allowed viewing of the star Polaris. During the equinox and solstice, they served as astronomical calendars. Like many other stone circles, they were often the site of religious ceremonies and social gatherings. The Lo Ah Tsai Circle in the northern part of the Lamma Islands, China, was built 4,100 years ago. In China's Shanxi Province, the Fau Lau Stone Circle, on Lantau Island, was identified as a late Neolithic structure in 1980. There is evidence that it was used as a ritual site. Chinese archaeologists also claim to have discovered the world's earliest observatory in Shanxi Province. It dates back to 45,000 years ago (Megalith).

## Göbekli Tepe Rewrites History

A new discovery in the 1980s has challenged the preeminence of sites such as Stonehenge and has shifted much attention to this very ancient huge site (long misinterpreted as medieval) located in modern Turkey. Göbekli Tepe is a series of circular rings and T-shaped monoliths decorated with animal carvings. It was constructed some 11,500 years ago, or about 6,500 years before Stonehenge. It has 30 acres of pillars, 150 in all, weighing between 7 and 10 t each. The temple of hunter-gatherers living nearby reveals many bones of wild animals (Fig. 2).

Klaus Schmidt has studied Göbekli Tepe for decades. He sees it as the world's first temple, a place of worship built by hunter-gatherers. Schmidt and others assert that erecting Göbekli Tepe laid the groundwork for creating more complex Neolithic societies. Göbekli is astounding for it changes major theories of the development of civilization. It is complex and was built prior to the development of pottery, metallurgy, agriculture, and writing. Apparently it was the social organization behind its construction required

**Stone Circles,**

**Fig. 2** Göbekli Tepe, Şanlıurfa, 2011 (Photo by Teomancimit. Courtesy Creative Commons ShareAlike 3.0 License. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Göbekli\\_Tepe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Göbekli_Tepe))



that led to these later Neolithic innovations (Curry 2008; Göbekli Tepe; Scham 2008).

The many uncovered stone monuments, recent theories about Stonehenge, and the discoveries at Göbekli Tepe still hold secrets that deepen our understanding of ancient history and intrigue archaeologists, psychologists, and theologians alike. It seems clear that the sacredness that they perceived around them and in the heavens led to these archaic cultures' intense, difficult determination to build such large monuments.

**See Also**

- ▶ Astrology
- ▶ Indigenous Religions
- ▶ Jungian Self
- ▶ Labyrinth
- ▶ Mandala
- ▶ Participation Mystique
- ▶ Soul in the World

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## Story as Scripture, Therapy, Ritual

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Storytelling is known to be a primal human activity, a ritualized interaction between teller and listener that wove the fabric of earliest societies; yet our contemporary conceptualizations of storytelling have, like our societies themselves, grown considerably more complex and sophisticated. The postmodern impulse has had far-reaching implication across such disciplines as literary criticism, psychology, and religious studies, especially in developing greater awareness of the ways in which the collected stories that are constitutive of history could themselves be considered discrete constructions. Increased appreciation for narrative calls for an interdisciplinary approach that makes literature, psychotherapy, and religion more mutually informative in this era. Because humans are by nature storytellers, constructivist investigations into storytelling can reveal something significant about the various meanings ascribed to the human condition.

Constructivist approaches regard endlessly proliferating narratives as proof positive of the human need for meaning-making (Saleeby 1994). Many people's understanding of themselves and their larger culture has been shaped by the stories that get told frequently enough to become folklore. Even where meaning appears to be lacking – in needless suffering, for instance, or mass destruction – meaning has been devised through and derived from the stories people told to one another.

The Epic of Gilgamesh, believed to contain the oldest written narratives in history, had

Sumerian origins dating to the third millennium BCE, predating the Homeric epics. "It is an old story," the epigraph declares, "but one that can still be told..." In fact, its ancient account of a cataclysmic flood is later retold in the Book of Genesis with the version of the story famously featuring Noah. Across cultures, stories have attempted to describe not only how the world had been created but also how it had been reconstituted. Like Greek mythology, Sumerian mythology proffered explanations about what exactly separated the human from the godly, the mortal from the immortal, imbuing humans with ever greater self-consciousness.

Even as humans developed a deeper appreciation for the extent to which they were subject to circumstances such as earthly finitude, they also tried to exert individual agency within those confines. The struggle inherent in this dual reality gave rise to tension that created the story dynamic, one that poses questions about whether people are autonomous creations or relationally defined, self-determining, or simply the pawns of fate. By the fourth century BCE, Aristotle had already recognized that stories tended to conform to certain poetic expectations in their imitations of reality. He catalogued three distinct genres emerging: the epic, the comic, and the tragic, with the tragic becoming the most developed dramatically.

Tragedy extends a kind of cautionary tale. The didactic functions of story find their expression not only in tragedies but also in fables and parables. Stories seem to be educative in the sense that they are generally perceived as somehow providing a moral (Coles 1989). Those stories that give us our most memorable moral instruction come to comprise a kind of sacred scripture. The scripture presumes a moral universe that requires human participation. The scripture also presumes an arc of action that is purposeful. As narrative-based faiths, Jewish and Christian religious traditions maintain a profound historical sensibility that asks believers to consider themselves players in a larger story, namely, in God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Although psychotherapy challenged the Judeo-Christian emphasis on the collective experience of a shared reality by privileging instead

the role of the individual's inner life, it left unchallenged in the West a fundamentally narrative epistemology. In the early twentieth century, Freud introduced the modality of psychoanalysis through case histories recounting the life stories of his analysands. As the psychological disciplines developed, they framed case histories with a degree of clinical certainty that frequently risked an overdetermined presentation of past events standing in causal relation to present difficulties (Polkinghorne 1988).

Yet as constructivist approaches such as narrative therapy suggest, persons struggling with significant problems frequently have problematic life scripts (Roberts 1999). They may have unconsciously concluded that serious troubles have been scripted for them; their troubled reenactments begin to take on a ritualistically repetitious quality that leads them to play caricatured roles in their own lives. Such persons can operate with the assumption of a tragic outcome unchanged in the face of a changing cast of characters in various stages of their life. They live to tell their tales but again and again. The more regularly these persons tell their tragic tales, the more powerfully they get reinforced as a personal reality.

Storytelling tends not to be an indifferent act. Rather, it evokes certain emotional states for purposive and persuasive effects (Ochberg 1996). Generally, narratives create an internal logic that must be preserved, often at the cost of curtailing scope and perspective. Stories establish what is and what is not relevant to a given course of action. They determine what knowledge is essential to right understanding.

This essentialism helps to explain why so many of the world's religious communities have established which stories will get told and retold in ritual settings by sealing a canon (Schussler 1994). Yet there is a twofold danger in this sealing: first, as stories grow old, they get told so grossly out of context as to be at times almost unintelligible and so are no longer heard in the same spirit as they were originally, and second, newer stories set in familiar contexts that would communicate the proper spirit in intelligible contexts may never be granted a hearing. In the



Christian testament, the Pauline commandment to preserve the spirit and not the letter of religious teachings underscores the importance of appreciating the spirit of story, investigating whether it is sufficiently edifying to merit inclusion in the scripture. Presumably, the scripture offers healing stories that provide people a hopeful glimpse of possible resolutions to their own storied circumstance.

Sometimes sharing life stories provides persons in similar situations the promise of reparative experience by allowing positive identification with others. In recent decades, Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs have basically provided recovering members the chance to construct a conversion narrative which they then testify to on a regular basis (Kurtz and Ketcham 1992). Members make important corrections in what would otherwise be tales of woe by confessing all their past errors. With the Twelve Steps providing their narrative framework, they learn a new genre of life story that involves being both psychologically and spiritually restored, the ultimate ends of recovery being sanity and serenity.

The potential of storytelling as therapeutic technique lies in its ability not only to provide people with an open hearing and cathartic release but also to cultivate their awareness of the narrative structures they use to organize their existence. People can be encouraged to become simultaneously author and protagonist in their own stories, carefully crafting intersections of meaning around central themes that can be collected in a coherent self-narrative (Peacock and Holland 1993). They can become the authorities on their lives as they are lived, recognizing the power of their ability to make choices in the present tense, shaping a storyline as it progresses.

Psychotherapy is usually a narrative undertaking, with persons telling their therapists the stories they want heard. The therapists have greater latitude in the interpretation of those stories if they recognize them as idiosyncratic constructions as opposed to objective factual accounts. Constructivist approaches resemble cognitive approaches in their exploration of the assumed contexts, perceived motives, causal

connections, and characterological attributions that are then enlisted as narrative strategies (Mishler 1995). Recognizing the story as a strategy enables therapists to reframe situations so that alternate narrations become possible. These revisions frequently become far more serviceable than the original versions in the therapeutic process.

Narrative therapists listen for stories that have been and that have not yet been told. They challenge the unitary truth posited in a dominant narrative by highlighting the exceptional instance when a problem-saturated story has minimized or excluded a unique outcome which can only be accounted for in a broader narrative framework, one that does not require the narrator to subjugate such realities for the sake of an overall expediency or intended effect (White and Epston 1990). Instead of overidentifying with the problems memorialized in the story, the narrator is free to externalize the problematic story in order to investigate its narrative logic more thoroughly and modifying it accordingly. In this manner, the narrator achieves a degree of liberation through both narrative competency and self-mastery.

If such liberation is not possible, the narrator becomes stuck in the story and options suddenly seem to narrow. Lacking a sense of authority, the narrator is no longer able to make meaning in and through the story. Should the interests of the story as artifact start to supercede the uses of it as life script and should the story enlist the teller for its ends instead of the opposite thing occurring, the story itself become inviolate in the imagination and a rigid fundamentalism results. It is the letter and not the spirit that triumphs as a mode of instruction and ultimately becomes a method of indoctrination. Because stories deal with animated individuals interacting, they generally represent complicated formulae that generate more questions than they answer (Bruner 2002). What makes stories useful is their ability to state problems in terms that establish clear analogies.

Story conventions themselves provide people a set of concepts that might otherwise be unavailable. Aristotle recognized that plots turn on both reversals and recognitions, reversals being primarily external occurrences and

recognitions being primarily internal ones. The majority of modern literary work does not have an epic sweep; it betrays less fascination with a series of large-scale external events occurring in a certain sequence, being more preoccupied with the machinations of inner processing by characters themselves. Point of view now figures prominently and decisively. To an extent it never was before, Western literature has become psychologically minded. It has become an unmistakably humanist endeavor.

This humanist orientation does not mean that literature overlooks the sacred dimension altogether. Rather, modern articulation of the sacred tends to be grounded in a particular perspective rather than in disembodied omniscience. As contemporary sensibilities empower them as storytellers, people become more fully engaged not only as author/protagonists but also as listeners. They research scriptures and question canons. Testing the spirit of stories, they begin to expect texts to be inspiring as well as inspired. Some old stories may no longer be told with any conviction, while some may need to be told in novel ways. Others in the canon stubbornly resist revision. Other old stories survive because they still invite the kind of participation that elicits personal identification and renewal on the part of their listeners. Such stories have gained credibility by being capacious; they enable connections to continue to be made today.

## Commentary

The need for story is evident in young children, just as it was in earliest societies. Children, like the cultures they inhabit, exhibit preference for certain stories by urging that they be retold. Childish efforts to learn a story by heart, to have memorized it in its entirety through ritual repetition, imply a desire for mastery, a developmental drive to parse story grammar and discern the range of narrative elements at play. Some constructivists have posited that narrative is the primary mode humans have for giving the larger world coherence. Without narrative, humans

might have difficulty locating themselves in any recognizable context or gaining any sense of direction.

Recognizing stories as fabrications rather than artifacts, people become co-creators capable of restorying their lives in meaningful ways. The decisions people make about how they will regard and meet life circumstance enable them to choose with intention the sort of story they will participate in, be it scriptural or secular, conventional or exceptional. They then tell stories that merit their assent and create a significant sense of community. Like psychotherapy itself, storytelling has long been considered as a shamanic practice, a method of channeling numinous energies in the service of human concerns and the greater good. With narrative awareness, constructivists intimate, people can communicate stories that express a conscious desire to heal themselves and their storied world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Epiphany](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Monomyth](#)
- ▶ [Narrative Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Persona](#)
- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Twelve Steps](#)

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## Substance Abuse and Religion

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Interest in the relationships between substance use and religion/spirituality has a long history. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, first published as a book in 1902, William James commented on the relationship between alcohol use and mysticism. In 1961, Carl Jung and Bill W. of Alcoholics Anonymous famously corresponded concerning their perceived relationships between alcohol use, recovery from alcohol addiction, and the search for spirituality.

Certain psychoactive substances are associated with use by specific religions for mystical or

ceremonial purposes. For example, peyote is associated with use by some indigenous people groups in North America. Kava is associated with use for religious purposes by people groups in the Pacific.

In modern research, an inverse relationship between substance use and religiosity (i.e., higher levels of substance use correlate with lower levels of religiosity and vice versa) has generally been observed across many studies. This relationship has been observed for various aspects of religion/spirituality and well as for the various levels of licit and illicit substance use. However, research has also shown that findings regarding the relationships between substance use and religion/spirituality depend on many factors. These include the specific aspect of religion/spirituality being measured (e.g., frequency of religious service attendance, spiritual practices, scriptural study), the specific aspect of substance use being considered (e.g., lifetime use, substance dependence, abstinence, lifetime risk for substance abuse), and the population being studied (e.g., adolescents, older adults, men, women). It must be noted that inverse relationships observed between substance use and religiosity are not merely a reflection of some religions' prohibitions against substance abuse. As Gorsuch (1995) has said, there is no single set of religious/spiritual norms regarding substance use. Precise research on the relationships between substance use and religion/spirituality requires specification of the various dimensions of religion/spirituality as well as the specific aspect of substance use being examined.

Because of the apparent protective effects of religion/spirituality in relation to substance use, some have proposed that the value of incorporating religion/spirituality should be considering in conceptualizing prevention and treatment programs for substance abuse and dependence. The success of spiritually oriented programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) suggests that religion/spirituality may play an important role for some persons in recovery from substance dependence. However, it is important to note that the overt spirituality of some AA groups can possibly be seen as a barrier to program participation for those persons who do not identify as religious or spiritual.

## See Also

- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Suffering and Sacred Pain

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Suffering is an experience of severe distress and pain affecting one or more domains of human experience: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. To suffer (*sub + fero*) literally means to “bear up under,” to submit, or to be forced to endure conditions that threaten well-being. Suffering is often a profoundly personal experience, and an inability to fully share one’s suffering may compound the distress. Disciplines such as philosophy, religion, medicine, and the social sciences have sought to understand the experience of human suffering and the profound questions raised by its ubiquitous presence. Recent research by medical anthropologists (such as Arthur Kleinman and E. J. Cassell) has sought to distinguish the physiological experience of pain from the subjective experience of suffering. In some religious traditions, including Buddhism and Christianity, suffering is seen as an inescapable dimension of human life.

### Perspectives on Suffering in the Christian Tradition

Multiple perspectives on the purpose of suffering are found in both scripture and tradition.

Suffering may be seen as a time of testing or trial, as an educational or formative process, as the consequence of sin, or simply as mystery. While various reasons why God *allows* suffering are found within the Christian tradition, agreement on one point is clear: suffering is not God’s *intent* for humankind. From the earliest Jewish narratives of origin, incorporated in the Christian tradition, suffering is seen as opposed to the goodness of creation. Suffering that results from violence, injustice, grief, loss, death, self-hatred, and self-destruction is a consequence of the fallen state of humanity and not in accordance with God’s will. Humans exist within this fallen world in tension between the dignity God intended and the reality of finitude.

### Perspectives on Suffering in the Hebrew Scriptures

The multiple perspectives on suffering found in the Hebrew Scriptures must be seen in the context of God’s covenant with Israel. The “law of retribution,” by which the righteous are rewarded and the evil suffer, is a prominent theme in Deuteronomy, as well as the books of Joshua through second Kings. Suffering is also seen as time of trial or testing or as form of education that draws us nearer to God. Lament, in which one cries out God in the midst of suffering while trusting that God receives the plea and continues in faithful presence, is presented as a legitimate response to suffering. The Book of Job provides the most sustained and nuanced treatment of innocent suffering in the Hebrew Scriptures and raises enduring questions about God’s presence or absence in the midst of suffering. The final depiction of God in the Book of Job is as One who draws close to us in the midst of suffering, and though this scripture gives no definitive answers regarding the reason for suffering, this communion with God is itself described as transformative.

### New Testament Perspectives on Suffering

The Hebrew Scriptures served as the first Christian sacred texts and provided the lens through which the suffering and death of Jesus were understood. Yet God is doing something new

through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, which leads to a revised view of suffering. In the New Testament as in the Hebrew Scriptures, suffering may be understood as a trial that strengthens the faith of believers. However, the Christian believer's ability to endure trials is made possible through identification with and participation in Jesus' death and resurrection. Christ's resurrection has relegated suffering to a temporary power in this world that will be overcome when God's reign arrives in its fullness at Jesus' return.

At least three overlapping views of suffering can be found in the New Testament. First, Jesus proclaims the *coming reign of God* now breaking into creation but not yet revealed in its fullness. Human beings have resisted and fallen away from God's intention for creation resulting in a world wounded by evil and suffering. Jesus is himself a manifestation of this new reign of God through which salvation – that is, healing, restoration, and the alleviation of suffering – will occur. Second, God most fully enters into human suffering through the *death and resurrection of Christ* breaking that power of death. While suffering will not fully cease in this life, those united to Christ will experience the love and presence of God in the midst of profound suffering. The power of love breaks the hold suffering has on us so that we are no longer defined by suffering alone but transformed by love in the midst of suffering. Third, the Apostle Paul's writing develops the theme of *suffering for the gospel* in which he speaks of his own suffering endured as an apostle of Christ. Believers are encouraged to identify with the crucified and risen Christ for it is through participation in his death and resurrection that suffering Christians find meaning. The New Testament proclaims a God who is present in the midst of suffering and continues to bring life out of death.

### Theological Perspectives on Suffering and Evil

A certain tension exists within the Christian tradition between accepting suffering as an inevitable part of the human condition and resisting it as a form of evil opposed to God's will. This tension

is further nuanced by the distinction between *material* and *moral* evil. Suffering which occurs as a consequence of "acts of nature," such as hurricanes, earthquake, or disease, is considered an occasion of material evil. Such experiences, though not God's intent, are a part of our finite human condition, may provide opportunities for spiritual growth, and are to be accepted. However, the suffering inflicted by other human beings is moral evil and occurs through oppression, dehumanization, and multiple forms of violence. Moral evil is experienced as dehumanization or a loss of one's sense of intrinsic worth as a human being, and it is this form of evil and suffering which is to be resisted.

Material and moral evil may occur simultaneously or separately. Examples of suffering occurring as a consequence of moral evil apart from material evil include feelings of remorse of guilt, brought about by our own actions, or experiences of loneliness, hurt, betrayal, or alienation resulting from the moral evil inflicted on us by others. Moral evil inflicted on self or others can also be mediated through material occasions of suffering, such as self-mutilation, rape, torture, murder, and war. Some forms of suffering may be occasions of material suffering in which no moral evil is present. Examples of this form of suffering are found in natural disasters and illness in its various forms. Still other occasions of suffering are part material evil and part moral evil. Illnesses related to addictions and compulsive behaviors, such as lung cancer from a long habit of cigarette smoking, are examples of mixed types of suffering.

The multiple perspectives on suffering found in the biblical tradition extend through the larger Christian theological tradition. For example, Augustine's privation theory asserts that evil and its attendant suffering occur in the absence of the good. Irenaeus, a second-century theologian, argued that while evil does not have a real existence, the suffering attendant to it provides opportunities for spiritual growth and an increase in charity, courage, and self-discipline. The mystical tradition within Christianity also frames certain forms of suffering as potential occasions for spiritual growth. Suffering is one of the mysteries

of creation and an inescapable part of our human condition. An attempt to flee it often leads us to secure ourselves through material goods, leading to idolatry.

The mystical tradition emphasizes God's presence and profound love in the midst of suffering and asserts that true knowledge of ourselves and of God comes only by embracing suffering. Julian of Norwich, an English mystic, in her work *Showings* describes the immense depth of God's love for us revealed to her through an intense experience of physical suffering. She suggests that the path toward spiritual maturity and wholeness requires a voluntarily reentry into experiences of suffering for the sake of healing and the restoration of wholeness in which the paradoxes of life and death are held in creative tension rather than split into destructive opposition.

In the midst of suffering, the human cry is "Why?" a cry often addressed to God. Theodicy, now a subdiscipline in theology, emerged in the eighteenth century as a philosophical attempt to answer this cry and is associated with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. In the *Theodicy* (1710), Leibniz gives a reasoned attempt to reconcile the existence of an all-good, all-powerful, all-knowing Creator God with evil and suffering. More recently, contemporary theologians have raised objections to the enterprise of theodicy itself. Some argue that while this approach affirms the impassibility or unchanging nature of God and protects God's transcendence, it also mitigates the impact of the tragedy of human suffering and mollifies evil. Theodicy itself thus becomes a source of suffering. Critiques of theodicy increased in the wake of the *Shoah*, the Jewish genocide undertaken by the Nazi regime, as well as more recent experiences of genocide in Rwanda, Burundi, Cambodia, Bosnia, and Darfur. Opponents to classical theodicy argue that it can instill passivity in the face of evil and lead to deafness to the cries of those enduring radical forms of suffering, a position inconsistent with the gospel message. Liberation theologians have pointed out that those most often urged to endure suffering as means of spiritual growth or to benefit the larger, common good are those who have the least access to power and privilege.

Contemporary theologians, including Dorothee Soelle and Jürgen Moltmann, reject God's impassibility and offer the image of the crucified Christ as God's solidarity with us in suffering. Another contemporary theological approach to suffering reframes the question of suffering by embracing a view of human existence and creation as tragically structured. From this view, all suffering is tragic but not all suffering is evil.

## Pastoral Responses to Suffering

Some systematic and practical theologians argue that resisting and transforming suffering is the principal theological task, rather than explaining its presence in the world. One example of this response is found in the work of pastoral theologian John Swinton who rejects theodicy and develops a set of practices to resist and transform suffering. These interlocking practices include lament, forgiveness, thoughtfulness as opposed to mindlessness or unthinking obedience to authority, and a form of friendship that requires radical hospitality. It is through such practices of redemption that the church shows how to continue loving God and other human beings in the midst of evil and suffering.

## Psychological Perspectives on Suffering and Growth

The tension between accepting and resisting suffering in the Christian tradition is also present in some psychological views of suffering. Psychodynamic psychology views the suffering of mental illness as the result of disturbed relationships in childhood, which leads to unconscious internal conflicts. The process of healing requires uncovering these conflicts, which can be painful. Similar to the approach of Christian mysticism, psychodynamic psychotherapy requires the patient to reenter the original suffering so that it may be transformed and healing can occur.

A link between suffering and growth is also found in recent psychological research on resilience which has demonstrated that, contrary to



expectations, the majority of children who experience trauma or grow up in dysfunctional families do well as adults. Protective factors that foster growth even in the midst of trauma and suffering include a strong sense of identity, intelligence, physical attractiveness, supportive caregivers, family cohesion, and external support networks. The resilience literature also suggests that religious and spiritual beliefs are key elements of resilience. Religious beliefs that endow suffering with meaning may offer persons an opportunity to live in the creative tension of accepting and resisting suffering.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Atonement](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Compassion](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness](#)
- ▶ [Hope](#)
- ▶ [Melancholia](#)
- ▶ [Psalms](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice of Isaac](#)
- ▶ [Scapegoat](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)
- ▶ [Theodicy](#)

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## Sufi Psychology

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Sufism is considered the inner dimension of Islam and is based on the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) and the holy Qur'an. Sufi psychology is the application of Sufism. Expressions of the basic concepts vary, sometimes radically, between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and between the various Sufi orders (See Fadiman and Frager 1997; Geoffroy 2010; Grisell 1983; Lings 1993).

The goal of Sufism and Sufi psychology is unified oneness, in which every aspect of one's being is unified in harmony. It is based on the concept *La ilaha illa Allah*, which means there is only one God. The Prophet taught through his actions that whatever exists in one individual has to come to one point and present itself. When this occurs, the absolute knowledge of oneness with Existence is attained. Called Irfan, derived from the word ma'rifa meaning cognition (Angha 2002b), Sufism is considered the science of the soul.

Amir al Mo'menin Ali (2000), the cousin, son-in-law, and successor of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh), conceived that this law of Islam works in all aspects, stating: "Whoever sets right his inward self, God sets right his

outward self.” Early examples are Salman Farsi and Oveys Gharani (Uwais al-Qarni). Salman Farsi went from one religion to another before becoming a Muslim, always learning and acting upon, in reaching his goal of cognizing reality. Oveys Gharani (Uwais al-Qarni) never met the Prophet, but by focusing on knowledge and aiming for cognition, became one with Existence, and the Prophet sent him his own cloak to signify his elevated spiritual status.

Sufi psychology sees our identities as formed primarily externally through identification with objects, life experiences, acquired knowledge, expectations of others, and societal roles, standards, and norms. This mental construct becomes our ego and our invented identity. It is our ever-changing, unstable, little “i.” These externally based life purposes and derived life goals constantly alienate us from our true self and true identity, which is our eternal “I,” our connection to Existence, to God. The connection to the spiritual realm, known as the Divine Seed, the Precious Pearl, lies within the physical heart.

Lacking inner awareness and experiencing a state of disconnection with the true self, people experience separation, insufficiency, and feelings of being entrapped. Believing they don’t have what they need, they try to acquire it from the external world by any means possible and become prone to addictions and mental disorders. Symptoms are signs of dissonance between the outer and the inner world.

To combat this estrangement and facilitate the journey of self-knowledge, a sophisticated set of spiritual, educational principles and practices has emerged over the last 1400 years. Sufi psychology teaches each individual the science of exploring his own being and unfolding the inherent, vast, and infinite knowledge within. This, plus the individual supervision of the Sufi Pir (Spiritual Master) has proved highly effective in stimulating positive changes in human behavior. Not everyone can attain unification and at-oneness, but any progress is beneficial.

These teachings historically have been presented in the elegant love songs of numerous poets such as Nizami (1976), Sadi (1979), Rumi (1982), Attar (1984), and Hafiz (1998).

Annemarie Schimmel’s (1985) work provides the most accurate introduction in English to these historic love poets.

In the twentieth century, key Sufi concepts began to be translated into the language of modern science, and the teachings, formerly available only to a handful of carefully selected students, were opened to all sincere seekers by Molana Shah Maghsoud Sadegh Angha. He (1975) stated the human body is equipped with 13 electromagnetic energy centers. Cognition and development of these centers create the required harmony and facilitate discovery of the spiritual dimension of the human being. The most important center resides in the heart. Professor Angha called it the “I,” or the “source of life.” Today Sufi concepts are being explained in terms of physics (Angha 1996).

In *Sufism: A Bridge Between Religions*, Pir Salaheddin Ali Nader Angha (2002a) uses an analogy to explain the developmental process. He states that people love candles and candlelight but have forgotten the true, symbolic meaning. A candle is a model of what a human being should be, for the candle has the same purpose as the true purpose of the human being – to give light to the world.

Sufi psychology presents the methods and techniques necessary to cleanse, purify, unify, and form us like the candle, so that we, too can be illuminated. Wax directly from a beehive is lumpy, uneven, and contains contaminants. For a good candle, the wax must become uniform, smooth, and perfectly clean. So also do the practices of Sufism purify our body. Our physical body is like the wax, but instead of being smooth, concentrated, and purified, we are full of impurities, and our energy is dissipated in many directions, wasted on our desires, reactions, ideas, illusions, and conflicts. The chattering brain reigns.

The central portion of the candle, the wick, is the heart of the candle and is made of cotton fibers, which must also be cleaned and purified, combed and carded, and then twisted together tightly to form a unified whole. The wick represents the innermost yearnings of one’s being, our connection to the spiritual realm. The wick and

the wax are completely different, yet each is necessary for a functional candle, which can give light. It takes the wax and the wick to make a candle that can be lit and will then give light and heat.

The teachings of the prophets, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad, etc. (pbut), are delineated in three stages. The first is called *SHARIAT* and includes the obligations and purification necessary for the physical body and nature. This is like the wax of the candle and is concerned with all communication and behaviors toward the world outside ourselves. This is the surface level and involves the basic practices necessary for purification of the physical body. Unfortunately, many people stop here.

The second is *TARIGHAT* and is the inner part of the human, which must be purified, unified, and concentrated so that all our thoughts, emotions, and tendencies should come together as tightly as the fibers are twisted to make a wick. This is the path of the seeker in Sufism.

The third part is *HAGHIGHAT*, which is unifying and receiving the truth of the light. It requires complete and total concentration and unification, focused in one direction for one purpose, as finely as a laser beam.

*SHARIAT* is like the *WAX*  
*TARIGHAT* is like the *WICK*  
*HAGHIGHAT* is receiving the *LIGHT*

The purified, spiritual person receives the flame of love and gives light. The person who attains this level is the Aref. The final goal is receiving and keeping the light. Once that occurs, then all is seen with the light of knowledge. This is also called the second birth. Candles cannot light themselves. When one is purified and ready, then Existence will give the light. The quality of light comes to the candle, and the candle keeps it. Human beings cannot give the light to each other. The flame of love providing light is a gift from God.

In Sufism and Knowledge, Pir Salaheddin Ali Nader Angha (1996) makes it clear that the phenomena of the light are reflected in physics as well as metaphysics. In it he uses the example of a proton and electron to describe how the

“...‘attractive’ force between the electron and proton results in their ‘unity,’ that is the birth of the ‘hydrogen’ atom. The off production of the ‘attraction’ is ‘light.’” In other terms, in Sufism the power of attraction creates an internal revolution in the seeker, until his entire being is submitted to God, just as the electron submits to the proton. Ultimately the seeker “...is annihilated in the Absolute, and none remains but God.”

Symbolically, the goal of discovery of the “I” has been poetically presented in various forms – the moth perishing in the flame, union with the Divine Beloved, the drop of water becoming one with the sea of Existence. The goal may be seen as a “death” which is entirely different from physically dying. The moth becomes one with the flame. The lover is annihilated in union with the Beloved. The drop loses its boundaries in the ocean’s depths.

The first step in readiness is to find and follow the teacher, who is called “The Light of the Path.” The teacher has received the light, knows the perils and pitfalls, and can help others find the way. Rumi (1926–1982) stated: “He who has himself for a guide takes 200 years for a two day journey.” The teacher is introduced from within, through the heart of the seeker, and guides the process necessary for the candle to receive the light.

Application of the following principles of Sufism (Angha, quoted in Wilcox 1995) is essential to the goal.

*ZEKR* (to remember) remembering God at all times

*FEKR* (to think, meditate) being in the state of awareness and wondering

*SAHAR* (to awaken) awakening of soul and body  
*JUI'* (to hunger) having exterior hunger (mind) and interior hunger (heart) to persist in the search to obtain the truth

*SUAMT* (to observe silence) ceasing to think and talk about worthless things

*SAUM* (to fast) fasting of body from food, mind from attachments, and soul from desires

*KHALVAT* (to observe solitude) praying in solitude, externally and internally

*KHEDMAT* (to serve) ultimately dissolving in the Truth of Existence

Tamarkoz<sup>®</sup>, meaning concentration of forces, is an important component of purification. These meditative practices help to reduce distractions and disconnections encouraged by the continual attempts of the material world to stimulate more wishes and wants. They also balance and focus personal energy, enabling one to attain a state of concentration necessary for the healing of the heart and soul. The zekr, or rhythmic chanting in remembrance of God, characterizes Sufi practice and is essential in the process.

The state of disconnection from one's core self and from the Divine is painfully lonely and unsettling. Healing occurs naturally when we are reconnected to our eternal, constant "I". Sufi psychotherapy offers an empowering perspective, reminding people of their infinite potentiality, true identity, and inner resources and strengths. It focuses on the spiritual realm, on rekindling the spiritual flame within each human heart, enabling all the positive attributes that lie within to emerge and expand. The goal of Sufi psychotherapy is healing the soul and union with the Beloved, union with the divine creative energy of the universe that is called God. The outcome is one of deep, permanent transformation.

Know that both your pain and your remedy reside within you (Ali 2000).

Basically the goal of both Sufism and Sufi psychology is self-knowledge, and through self-knowledge, knowledge of the Creator. Sufi psychology does not focus on words or thoughts, which veil the truth. It concentrates on the development of inner, heart cognition guided by the spiritual master, the Pir. The focus is on creative development, leading to recognition of one's true identity and purpose in life. It is called the Way of Love.

To introduce the American public to Sufi psychology, students of M.T.O. Shahmaghsoudi, School of Islamic Sufism<sup>®</sup> founded the Sufi Psychology Association in 1997. They hold four retreats and at least three conferences each year. Their website is [sufipsychology.org](http://sufipsychology.org) and their semiannual journal is titled *Sufism: Science of the Soul*.

God is the light  
Of the heavens and of the earth.  
The parable of His light  
Is as if there were a niche,  
And within it a lamp,  
The lamp enclosed in glass,  
The glass as it were, a brilliant star,  
Lit from a blessed tree,  
An olive, neither of the East nor of the West,  
Whose oil is well nigh luminous,  
Though fire scarce touched it.  
Light upon light!  
God doth guide whom he will to His light.  
God doth set forth parables for men, and  
God doth know all things.  
(Holy Qur'an, 24:35)

## See Also

- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Jihad
- ▶ Rumi, Celaladin
- ▶ Sufis and Sufism

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## Sufis and Sufism

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We are the flute, our music is Yours;  
 We are the mountain echoing only You;  
 Pieces of chess, You marshall us in line  
 And move us to defeat or victory. . .  
 (Rumi, cited in Mabey 2002, p. 35).

Sufism is the mystical expression of Islamic faith. Numerous orders or brotherhoods (*tariqa*) have been formed over the centuries, many following well-known spiritual leaders (*shaykhs*). Best known in the West is the Whirling Dervishes or Mevlevi, a path of which Rumi was the founder. Jalal al-din Rumi (1207–1273 CE) was born in Persia and settled in Konya in present-day Turkey. His poetry speaks eloquently of love and surrender to the Divine One and especially of the longing for mystical union (Rumi 1975). The aim of the Sufi is to perfectly reflect the image of God in one's heart, thus to achieve union with the Divine. For 2 years, Rumi's closest soul mate was Shams-i Tabrizi, and after the unexpected departure of this companion, Rumi's grief was expressed passionately as "the dance of the spheres" in which whirling motion served to heighten altered states of spiritual consciousness (Trimingham 1998). In his longing for Shams, his spiritual companion, Rumi wrote some of his most potent poetry. For example, the longing of the soul for God:

O, make me thirsty, do not give me water! Make me your lover! Banish my sleep! (Mabey 2002, p. 21).

Likewise, the willingness to surrender to the Divine One:

My heart has become a pen in the Beloved fingers. . . The pen says, 'Lo, I obey, for You know best what to do.'

Of Rumi, it is written:

Thus the primary goal of the Sufi is to transcend or "naught" the self or ego, which acts as a barrier or "veil" between the human heart and God, distorting our perception of reality and inhibiting our capacity to mature to our full "selfhood" in which we perfectly reflect the attributes of God. The focus is therefore on turning the soul to God; on becoming God-centered rather than self-centered; on the spiritual rather than the material, transitory world; and on inner, spiritual change rather than on the external reality of worldly status and wealth (Mabey 2002, p. ix).

## Sufi Asceticism

Asceticism and a life of renouncement were highly valued spiritual approaches among the Sufis in the medieval period. Many of the early Sufi ascetics were quite extreme in their behavior. Some Sufi ascetics became hermits and wandered around naked or formed communities that used mind-altering substances such as alcohol, cannabis, or hashish. They also followed Islamic law assiduously, fulfilling spiritual duties including prayer, ritual, fasting, and cleanliness of body and spirit.

## Sufi Mysticism

Ibn 'Arabi (1165–1240 CE) was one of the most articulate of the theologians of Sufism. As he pointed out, all Sufis commit themselves to become lovers of God. In Islamic tradition, the 99 beautiful Names of God all refer to the One. So they may describe God, in terms of many attributes, as follows: the Merciful, the Just, the Wrathful, the Powerful, the Active, the Creator, the Author, the Form-Giver, the Bestower, the Patient, the Separator, the Sustainer, the Wise, the Stability, the Keeper, the Gracious, the Forgiver, the Experiencer, the Self-Sufficient, the Encompassing, the Hearing, the Seeing, the Subtle, the Beloved, and so forth. All Names refer to the One who is God.

And that God is infinite Love, infinite Compassion, a feeling-full Person who desires to be known. Following the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (the *Hadith*), Ibn 'Arabi wrote that God's Mercy is greater than God's Wrath. "His Mercy encompasses everything existentially and in principle. . . . The Mercy of God flows in [all] created beings and courses through the selves and essences" (Ibn 'Arabi 1980, p. 224). In fact, says Ibn 'Arabi, Mercy is inherent in all creation. Not only things and people but also experiences are created by Mercy. Even the experiences we would rather avoid: "Know that Mercy is inherent in all creativity, so that, [even] by the Mercy bestowed on pain, pain was created [brought into existence]" (Ibn 'Arabi 1980, p. 224).

In Ibn 'Arabi's psychology, he divides humans into three classes: (1) the disciples of the *science of the heart*. . . the mystics, and more particularly the perfect among the Sufis; (2) the disciples of the rational intellect. . . the scholastic theologians; and (3) simple believers. The Sufis are disciples of heart; the theologians are disciples of intellect. Never the twain shall meet. For simple believers, he holds out more hope: "Under normal circumstances a simple believer can develop into a mystic through spiritual training; but between mystics and rational theologians there is an unbridgeable gulf" (Corbin 1969, p. 230). What Ibn 'Arabi is saying is that essentially we are all blessed. Because of the blessing of our imaginative function, we are at least potentially capable of receiving the theophanies of God. These glimpses of God manifesting to humanity occur definitely but rarely for ordinary folk. They occur hardly ever or are ignored by intellectualizers who only believe what the rational intellect dictates. But for the prophets, the Sufis, the Shi'ite saints, and the mystics, the door is more widely open to receive the frequent glimpses and the revelations of the Divine. Furthermore, one can cooperate with the Divine Intent by making oneself more capable of receiving these Manifestations. This is done through spiritual practices and especially through the loving prayer of the heart (*himma*).

Today, in working therapeutically with spiritually oriented clients, we can see that Ibn 'Arabi's insights into the difference between heart and intellect can profoundly inform our

understanding of passion versus thought in providing access to spiritual growth and development. Creativity itself is "attributed to the heart of the Sufi. . . here *himma* is defined as the 'cause' which leads God to create certain things, though *himma*, strictly speaking, creates nothing" (Corbin 1969, p. 227). This is the power of prayer. As Ibn 'Arabi says, *himma* is "a hidden potency which is the cause of all movement and all change in the world" (cited in Corbin 1969, p. 228). When we yearn, as the Sufi does, for God and for His Mercy, and when we surrender to God's Will, then the prayers are heard and the Divine response is according to our best interests.

### See Also

- ▶ [Ibn al-'Arabi](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Rumi, Celaladin](#)
- ▶ [Sufi Psychology](#)

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### Sullivan, Harry Stack

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Harry Stack Sullivan (1892–1949) was an American psychiatrist who developed a theory of psychoanalysis which focused on the importance



of interpersonal relationships. He grew up in New York State, the son of an Irish-American farmer. His childhood was an impoverished one, in which the Sullivan family often had financial difficulties. Sullivan also may have been isolated at times from other boys during his early years and experienced some degree of loneliness during his childhood. He was brought up in the Catholic faith but left the church in his adulthood. Sullivan went on to study medicine at the Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery and received an MD degree in 1917. It was during medical school that Sullivan first studied psychoanalysis as well as entered into his own analyses. In the 1920s, Sullivan worked with schizophrenic patients at the Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital in Maryland, which inspired him to reevaluate the current approach in working with this population. He used specially trained ward attendants to work with patients in order to provide them with peer relationships that Sullivan believed the patients had missed during the latency period of development. It was during this time that Sullivan worked closely with William Alanson White, who was interested in the influences of social sciences on psychiatry. White, along with Adolph Meyer, was looking to explain mental illness in more than just physical terms.

Sullivan viewed his patients as being acutely aware of other people, and in order to understand a patient's psychopathology, it was important to view the interpersonal field of the patient as well. He branched out from the typical Freudian approach of the time and began to conceptualize patient's distress as more interactional than intrapsychic. Sullivan asserted that human personality and behaviors are created in interactions between individuals, as opposed to something that resides within the individual. This approach of viewing the patient within the context of others was profound at the time, and Sullivan believed that one must focus on the past and present relationships of the patient in order to fully understand the individual.

In 1929, Sullivan left Maryland and moved to New York City, where he began work in private practice of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. He did much to advance the study of psychiatry in the 1930s. Following the death of White in 1933,

Sullivan and some of his colleagues established the William Alanson White Psychiatric Foundation. The foundation was originally developed to train psychiatrists in both traditional medical education as well as the influences of sociocultural factors. He also founded the journal *Psychiatry* in 1938, which he edited until his death. In 1941, Sullivan left clinical practice to work as a consultant to the US Selective Service Commission, which was attempting to improve the psychiatric evaluations of draftees. This experience assisted in the development of a series of lectures, which was published posthumously as *The Psychiatric Interview*. After World War II, Sullivan participated in international mental health seminars and organizations and, in 1948, was active in developing the World Federation for Mental Health. He died unexpectedly in Paris, France, in 1949 of a cerebral hemorrhage. Sullivan's work in examining interpersonal relationships became the foundation of interpersonal psychoanalysis, a school of psychoanalytic theory that focuses on the detailed exploration of the patients' patterns of interacting and relating with others. Sullivan, along with Clara Thompson, Karen Horney, Erich Fromm, Erik H. Erikson, and Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, laid the groundwork for understanding the individual patient based on the network of the patients' relationships. Sullivan was also the first to introduce the concept of the psychiatrist as a participant observer in therapy. Sullivan acknowledged that the psychiatrist's understanding of the current therapeutic interaction stems from his own past experiences. He taught that the psychiatrist must be aware of countertransference feelings within himself. Sullivan credited three well-known therapists with significant influence in his psychiatric approach: Sigmund Freud, Adolf Meyer, and William A. White. While Sullivan never met Freud, he was an avid follower of his writing and credited him with his fundamental orientation. Meyer helped Sullivan to view mental illness as a dynamic pattern of behavior, and White assisted him with the practical aspects of therapy. Although Sullivan published little in his lifetime, he influenced generations of mental health professionals and therapists; many of his ideas and writings were collected and published posthumously.

## See Also

- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Relational Psychoanalysis](#)

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## Sunyata

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Sunyata is a Sanskrit term which has been translated into English as “emptiness or voidness.” Along with *pratityasamutpada* (dependent arising, dependent origination), sunyata constitutes the foundational cornerstone of Buddhist phenomenology. By emptiness or voidness, Buddhists mean that all phenomena are empty of, lack, or are void of any “own,” inherent, permanent, or separate existence. All phenomena arise dependently contingent on causes and conditions. Sunyata has been confused with nihilism. This incorrect view has been criticized by both Asian and American Buddhist scholars (Abe 1985; Hopkins 1983). On the contrary, Buddhist scholars describe both nihilism and materialism, being and nonbeing, as dualistic, and as a misguided delusion. For example, D. T. Suzuki notes that “When the mind is trained enough it sees that neither negation (niratta) nor affirmation (atta)

applies to reality, but that the truth lies in knowing things as they are, or rather as they become” (1949, p. 143). Recently, sunyata has been translated as “wondrous being” and “pregnant gourd” to convey both the nature and creative potential in its experiential realization.

American psychologists have also addressed this point of misunderstanding and have raised important implications for psychotherapy. For instance, Jack Engler gives an example of the potential misuse of the notion of sunyata among American students of Buddhism. He writes that “Students may mistake subjective feelings of emptiness for ‘sunyata’ or voidness; and the experience of not feeling inwardly cohesive or integrated for ‘anatta’ or selflessness” (Engler 1984, p. 39). The complimentary teaching of nonattachment is then often misunderstood, according to Engler, “. . . as rationalizing their inability to form stable, lasting and satisfying relationships” (Engler 1984, p. 37).

Mark Epstein (1989) draws attention to the distinctions between the experience of emptiness associated with depression and that requires treatment and emptiness as a core Buddhist experience and religious principle.

The unreality of a nihilistic misunderstanding of sunyata has clinical relevance as exemplified in the following: “For Anna, this unreality of the no-thing that has become reified into an ‘I don’t exist self.’ As she and I look for this ‘I don’t exist self’ what will we find? The no-thing has the same solidity as the some-thing. Ultimately, the no-thing is as insubstantial as the no-thing.” This formulation has demonstrated clinical usefulness (Cooper 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ [American Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Superego

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The basic theory of the development of the superego, according to psychoanalytic theory, can be summarized briefly: the child is punished by its parents, either physically or by the withdrawal of love, for indulging in certain behavior, and later experiences anxiety when it does so because of anticipated punishment. The child identifies with the parents and wishes to be like them and conform to their demands. Parental requirements are internalized and the child now feels guilty even if the parents are absent. The psychological structure which represents the parental demands is called the superego. Superego has two parts: the unconscious conscience and the conscious ego ideal.

The conscience, the bigger part, is harsh and irrational, because aggression towards the parents is redirected to the self; this is particularly likely to happen when the parents are kind but frustrating in subtle ways. When physical punishment is used, children feel more able to express their frustration in outward aggression.

Psychoanalysts have postulated that the conscience part of the superego is projected on to the image of a God. This superego projection helps to maintain the adult's typical balance between desire, morality, and action.

It may be that the internalization and formation of conscience occur with the image of God serving as a “portable punisher.” B. F. Skinner observed that an “all-seeing God” is uniquely effective, because escape from the punisher is impossible. In the search for self-control, external supports are often utilized. This psychological reality is reflected in the familiar philosophical debates about whether morality is at all possible without belief in God, and in many cultures, religion is identified with law and morality.

The superego is likely to come into conflict with instinctive desires, particularly sexual and aggressive desires. This conflict is resolved or relieved by projection of the superego which now appears as God. For example, the superego can be projected on to a doctor, teacher, leader, or priest; the repressive demands of the superego are then thought to be prohibitions imposed by the person in question, who is felt to be coercing and looking down on the subject. In J. C. Flugel's formulation, a more radical type of projection is postulated, in which the superego is projected on to the universe as a God, and the instinctive desires similarly as the Devil. Alternatively, the instinctive desires can be projected on to groups of people such as Jews or Africans who are then thought to be highly sexed and aggressive. The gains for the individual are that the conflict is reduced through being no longer an inner one, while he feels that he can deal with the situation by overt action, instead of by changing himself. The presumed role of religion in impulse control is highly relevant to test this hypothesis. Findings on the effects of religion in controlling aggression, sex, and drug use and in promoting pro-social behavior are relevant to this hypothesis.

Related to the notion of superego is the function of religion in relieving guilt feelings. Several psychoanalytic writers have discussed the function of religion in relieving guilt feelings, interpreted as the direction of aggression towards the self, and there is evidence that it is connected with internal conflicts between the self and the ego ideal or the conscience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Shame and Guilt](#)

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## Supervision in Pastoral Counseling

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Contemporary professional pastoral counseling and psychotherapy is deeply anchored in supervised clinical practice. Pioneers of the early twentieth century pastoral counseling movement saw great potential in psychoanalysis and psychology for a clinical ministry to troubled souls. These leaders used psychological and psychoanalytic supervision methods to expand their work, integrate psychology with theology in ministry, and develop theory and skills to train new generations of ministers proficient in psychologically informed pastoral care and counseling. This supervisory tradition shaped clinical pastoral education and professional pastoral counseling.

Prior to the nineteenth century, western Christian pastoral counseling focused on direct moral instruction informed by church tradition and the moral theology of the age (Clebsch and Jaekle 1967). New ministers learned how to provide moral instruction as part of their general preparation for ministry. Historian Brooks Holifield (1983) notes that the North American religious context was particularly sensitive to emerging mental philosophies and psychology. As university-educated pastors integrated these ideas into ministry practice, pastoral counseling focused more on parishioners'

internal psychological life and less on moral instruction. Early innovators like Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758) and Ichabod Spencer (1798–1854) provided rudimentary counseling supervision through their pastoral manuals (Edwards 1743; Spencer 1851) and encouraged pastors to embrace psychologically informed, conversational methods of counseling. In counseling, pastors should be “easy of access... compassionate, tender and gentle” (Edwards 1743).

In the early twentieth century, Sigmund Freud provided a teachable method of psychotherapy. Becoming a psychoanalyst required collaborating with the community of psychoanalysts and completing a definable training process. Oskar Pfister (1853–1956), a Swiss Lutheran pastor who had studied psychology at the University of Zurich and Basil, was one of the first pastors to make full use of supervision and psychotherapy training. He completed training as a lay (nonmedical) psychoanalyst through the Zurich psychoanalytic circle (which included Carl Jung and Eugen Bleuler). A psychoanalytic pioneer in his own right, Pfister is best remembered for his deep friendship and ongoing theological correspondence with Sigmund Freud (1964).

American pastors saw great promise for congregational care through psychoanalysis and the psychology of William James. One early expression was the Emmanuel Movement (1905–1929). Rev. Elwood Worcester, rector of the Emmanuel Church (Episcopal), believed that all pastors, intentionally or unintentionally, provided therapy. He led the church to develop a model of care in which physicians trained in psychotherapy diagnosed parishioners' problems and then oversaw the work of clergy who treated “nervous diseases resulting from defects of character” (Holifield 1983, p. 206). Through what appeared to be an early form of collaborative supervision, church-centered therapists were trained and monitored by physicians in the limited use of psychotherapeutic methods. This approach spread to well-to-do congregations in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Africa. By 1929, it had lost momentum because of conflicts about the authority and role of clergy therapists.

Contemporary pastoral counseling supervision is rooted in the clinical pastoral education movement of the early and mid-twentieth century. In the 1920s, Congregational pastor Anton Boisen gathered a small group of ministers in Boston to learn clinical treatment methods in local hospitals and social agencies. His own struggle with mental illness led him to find better ways to minister to persons with psychological problems. In 1925, Boisen and neurologist Richard Cabot collaborated to train small groups of theological students using medical case study methods. Though Cabot and Boisen parted ways in the mid-1930s over disagreements about the nature of mental illness, their collaboration deeply influenced how pastoral counseling supervision practices developed in the United States. Cabot emphasized training that focused on clergy counselors' persistence, effort, and competence. In contrast, Boisen's psychoanalytic approach introduced "pastoral counselors to deeper motivations of the self experienced in disorder, conflict, and guilt. Insight into one's own pathological motivation modeled on psychoanalysis became the focus of both clinical training and counseling practice" (Townsend 2009, p. 18). While both positions were important supervision methods as they developed in the twentieth century, Boisen's belief that practical skills (*doing*) must be grounded in personal insight (*being*) became a near-universal position for most pastoral counseling supervision. The power of this position reflected the cultural strength of psychoanalysis, Boisen's own success as a trainer and organizer, and the fact that influential theologians (e.g., Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr) were constructing a theological framework to integrate psychoanalysis into pastoral practice. This emphasis on insight and being reflects "what is essentially a theological judgment – that ministry necessarily involves the whole person of the minister, not just what he or she knows or does" (Patton 2005, p. 1240). It is instructive that pastoral counseling's primary journal of supervision is published as *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry*.

Supervision is central to personal and professional formation as a pastoral counselor.

Formation itself is understood as a lifelong process that stimulates and defines growth through each stage of a pastoral counselor's career (Bidwell and Marshall 2006). A supervisory relationship facilitates several central formative processes:

- Counselor insight and self-understanding
- Skill development
- Contextual awareness
- Theological/spiritual reflection
- Entrance into professional practice or new stage of an established practice

A developmental model of supervision helps define tasks, processes, and goals in several stages of formation (Stoltenberg and McNeill 2010). Supervision is a contractual relationship. Contracts between supervisors and supervisees define stage-appropriate conditions for supervision (where supervision will take place, how a supervisee's work will be observed, etc.) and goals for skill development, personal insight, use of self in counseling, and progress toward professional certification. Supervision differs from consultation. Consultation typically involves a short-term contract in which an expert provides input about specific aspects of a single case or treatment method. Supervision contracts attend to a supervisee's overall professional development. They require practical, legal, and ethical oversight of a supervisee's work.

In the earliest stages of a pastoral counselor's formation, supervision is usually part of a broader program of training. This includes classes in theory and practice, structured access to clients for experience in counseling (practicum or internship), and an institutional context in a university, seminary, or freestanding training organization that assures safety for both the counselor and client. For beginning students, supervision will focus on foundational skills and self-awareness required to engage clients safely, provide pastoral presence, and offer basic therapeutic interventions. In this stage, the supervisor also helps the student understand the institutional, spiritual, theological, and multicultural context of pastoral counseling. With beginning students, supervisors work to develop an effective supervisory relationship, help supervisees manage anxiety about

their counseling sessions, carefully monitor a supervisee's interaction with clients, and assist students with client assessment and treatment plans. Supervisors are responsible for assuring that clients receive adequate care and that supervisee's behavior meets legal and ethical standards. Most supervisors will require review of a supervisee's actual counseling sessions using video recording, live observation, or co-therapy with the supervisor. This allows supervisor and supervisee to discuss what happened in counseling sessions, explore alternatives, and assure that clients are receiving appropriate help. Viewing and reviewing cases also provides supervisors the opportunity to help supervisees understand their own feelings and assumptions. Supervisors will introduce beginning pastoral counselors to theological reflection on their work and help them examine contextual variables, such as gender, race, class, and religious or spiritual differences. Traditionally, beginning pastoral counselors are required to be in personal psychotherapy while in supervision. This helps supervisees identify and manage personal issues, biases, stresses, and transferences that may affect how they use themselves in therapy and relate to supervisors.

Supervision of intermediate pastoral counselors – those who are no longer novices, but are not yet qualified to work without continuous supervision – concentrates on expanding basic counseling skills, relating specific counseling theories to client assessment and treatment, conducting sessions with increasing independence, and completing requirements for certification or licensure. This stage is a time of concentrated growth. It provides a rich opportunity for personal formation, especially when the supervisory relationship is effective and trustworthy. In the safety of this relationship, supervisees are free to experiment with new techniques and theories. Good supervision helps supervisees examine how they use their own personality in counseling practice, explore their motivation to become a therapist, and develop autonomy in theological reflection and spiritual integration of their work. Supervision goals for intermediate therapists include increasingly nuanced attention to contextual variables such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and religious diversity.

Advanced pastoral counselors who are qualified to practice independently often continue in supervision as part of lifelong formation. Most use supervision to help manage difficult transferences, deepen how they use their own personality in counseling, expand their use of theological reflection, gain assistance for difficult case loads, or learn new techniques or models for therapy.

Theological or spiritual reflection is at the heart of supervision in pastoral counseling. Supervisors teach and/or model reflective practices as they supervise students. Townsend (Townsend 2002, 2006) describes four primary methods of reflection used by pastoral counselors and suggests that a supervisor's preferred method of reflection is an important formation variable. A supervisor's preferred reflective method influences how a supervisee interprets the meaning and context of counseling and the theories of therapy they adopt and how one uses oneself in counseling practice and defines the place of spirituality and theology in treatment.

Historically, pastoral counselors became supervisors through a process of apprenticeship based on psychoanalytic training models. Supervision was simply an extension of a particular model of psychotherapy. However, as psychotherapy theory expanded in the mid-twentieth century, supervision became an area of scholarly interest (Ekstein and Wallerstein 1957; Klink 1966). By the time the American Association of Pastoral Counselors formed in the mid-1960s, supervision was a ministry specialty that required a theoretical framework to understand supervision processes and supervised practice as a supervisor. *The Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry* was founded in 1977 as a vehicle to share supervision practices and theory among seminary field education directors, chaplains, and pastoral counselors. The journal was renamed *Reflective Practice: Formation and Supervision in Ministry* in 2007. In the 1980s and 1990s, the study of psychotherapy supervision developed as a subdiscipline of psychology, professional counseling, and marriage and family therapy (Falender and Shafranske 2004; Liddle et al. 1988; Stoltenberg and McNeill 2010; Todd and Storm 2002). This has benefitted pastoral



counselors by providing a broader empirical foundation to ground pastoral counseling supervision. Like other disciplines, becoming a certified pastoral counseling supervisor now requires both academic study of supervision and supervised practice of supervision.

## See Also

- ▶ Pastoral Psychotherapy and Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Spectrum of Pastoral Counseling

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## Surrealism, Religion, and Psychology

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Surrealism is an artistic and literary movement that began in Europe in the early 1920s. It features fantastic, whimsical, and dreamlike images that express an alternate reality of sorts, which the members of this movement refer to as “surreality” (Breton 1972). Surrealists employ a variety of techniques derived from psychology and alchemy, as well as from previous artistic movements, to induce the inspiration necessary to experience and express this “surreality.” Surrealism is not merely an artistic movement, but is also a way of life with strong philosophical underpinnings. André Breton, author of the *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, cites Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, G. W. F. Hegel, and prominent figures in the western esoteric tradition such as Franz Hartmann and Cornelius Agrippa among his influences (Breton 1972). Artists associated with this movement are Man Ray, René Magritte, Salvador Dalí, André Breton, Max Ernst, Giorgio de Chirico, Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo, and Yves Tanguy, among others (Alexandrian 1985; Waldberg 1971).

The Surrealists’ project was to bridge the gap between ordinary wake-state consciousness and those more unconscious processes associated with dreams, imagination, illusion, and madness (Colville 1991). André Breton writes, in the first *Manifesto of Surrealism*, “I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality,

which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak” (Breton 1972). Breton further states that one must:

not lose sight of the fact that the idea of Surrealism aims quite simply at the total recovery of our psychic force by a means which is nothing other than the dizzying descent into ourselves, the systematic illumination of hidden places and the progressive darkening of other places, the perpetual excursion into the midst of forbidden territory (Breton 1972).

This inner journey was reported to be conducive to both artistic inspiration and a radical transformation of one’s consciousness. The subsequent artistic expression of the realizations inspired by these inner journeys was intended to awaken and liberate both the individual Surrealist and humanity at large, giving rise to a kind of social and psycho-spiritual revolution.

The Surrealists derived many of their conceptions of the unconscious from the philosophy of Sigmund Freud. Breton writes in his first *Manifesto*, “it was . . . by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer . . . has been brought back to light. For this we must give thanks to the discoveries of Sigmund Freud” (Breton 1972). In later Surrealism, however, some female Surrealists drew greater inspiration from the conceptions of the unconscious posited by Carl Gustav Jung (Chadwick 1985). While some paintings contain more archetypal and alchemical imagery, for example, others simply provide direct references to key figures in psychology such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and Alfred Adler (Kaplan 2000).

The way “surreality” is represented also varies from artist to artist. Some paintings are more mimetic in nature, whereas others portray hallucinatory landscapes that are unlike anything experienced in ordinary wake-state modes of consciousness. Some paintings include archetypal images, as mentioned above, while others contain specific magical images, such as magic squares and sigils (Choucha 1992). The techniques used to induce artistic inspiration also varied from artist to artist, despite their common goals.

One of the techniques employed by Surrealists was automatism, a technique inspired by

spiritualism in which the artist places him- or herself in a passive, receptive state, forgets about the usual parameters of one’s creative or artistic abilities, and writes or paints quickly without any preconceived subject in mind (Breton 1972). The goal of automatism was to allow the artist to derive one’s own mythology and unconscious imagery through the archetypes of the collective unconscious (Carrouges 1974).

A similar technique employed by Surrealists was to record one’s dreams and pay special attention to them. Breton writes, “I have always been amazed at the way an ordinary observer lends so much more credence and attaches so much more importance to waking events than to those occurring in dreams” (Breton 1972). The intention of a dreamwork was similar to that of automatism in that it provided a method of accessing unconscious imagery or formulating a kind of personal dream mythology that unites the personal and the collective to give rise to a more holistic perception of reality and to derive artistic inspiration from that unique perspective.

Although these techniques were primarily used as a source of artistic inspiration, biographical studies of some of the artists associated with Surrealism suggest a psychotherapeutic benefit to using them. Jungian perspectives on the relationship between psychoanalysis and alchemy, for example, proved beneficial when dealing with trauma associated with the events of World War II, in addition to providing tools for psychological integration and psycho-spiritual transformation (Aberth 2004; Kaplan 2000).

## See Also

- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Occultism](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Surrender

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Surrendering (and/or taming) the ego is an important theme in the mystical traditions of all the major world religions. In the Sanskrit, *saranagathi* connotes personal surrender in terms of acceptance of the Divine Will and devotion to God. It is *not* meant as surrender to another human being or as relinquishment of one's own intellectual discrimination. Like asceticism, surrender fulfills the spiritual purpose of renouncing the cravings of the ego.

Psychologically, ego is important. According to Jung, ego is built up in the first half of life and performs very necessary functions as center of the conscious psyche. Spiritually, however, there comes a time when ego, with its many desires and propensity to control, must let go of the reins. As the slogan in the 12-step programs articulates it, the essence of the surrender process is to "let go and let God." Mystics in all of the world's religions have found that higher spiritual states cannot be reached until ego control is

surrendered; the illusion of separation is renounced; and one's actions are dedicated to God, leaving the results in God's hands. This attitude implies acceptance of all aspects of life as they emerge, while continuing to strive to live a virtuous life, according to one's conscience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Asceticism](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Twelve Steps](#)

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## Swamis

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One of the more ubiquitous word acquisitions from Sanskrit, its meaning can roughly be translated as "he who knows and is master of himself" – or *herself* – as the case may be, for swami is an honorific designation for men as well as women. Often indicative of one who has chosen the path of renunciation, it is more often than not attributed to someone who has achieved mastery of a particular Yogic system or demonstrated profound devotion to a god or gods. While there are a multitude of lineages, with a dizzying array of beliefs, perspectives, and loyalties, swami is a pan-traditional designation that tends to mean, simply, "master."

Perhaps the most well-known representative of Indian religion in the West to bear this moniker is Swami Vivekananda. The chief disciple of the Bengali saint and mystic Ramakrishna, the man born Narendranath Dutt, was one of the early mediators between the religious traditions of the Occident and Orient, appearing before a spellbound audience at Chicago's World's Parliament of Religions in 1893. Vivekananda was instrumental in the founding of the Ramakrishna Order, one of the earliest Vedantic monastic sects to emerge in the West.

Continuing Vivekananda's legacy of spiritual translation to the West was Swami Nikhilananda. Born Dinesh Chandra Das Gupta was instrumental in the founding of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York. He, like Vivekananda, was integral to the process of bringing Eastern spirituality to the West, translating many Hindu holy texts into English, among their number the *Bhagavad-Gita* though perhaps his greatest contribution was the translation of *Ramakrishna Kathamrita* from Bengali into English published under the title *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* in 1942.

The aforementioned religious figures were integral to process of translating Eastern spirituality to West. The Occidental appropriations that naturally unfolded often used psychological concepts and language in making sense of the unfamiliar semantic terrain. The onus of this reinterpretation lay on the first generation of Westerner's to encounter these figures who were part of a larger cultural process of psychologizing religion that continues to this day.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)

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## Symbol

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According to Carl Jung, the development of consciousness has meant that within the psychic processes of civilized humanity there is a capacity for reflection upon the differentiation between psychic and external reality, a capacity which is unknown to the instinctive mind of the primitive. Because of this, the psychic system of civilized humanity engenders difficulties that traditional societies never experience. In traditional societies, there is no differentiation between psychic and physical reality. The primitive's relationship to the world is one of "participation mystique," that is, the primitive projects his unconscious onto the external environment. Jung writes:

The fact that all immediate experience is psychic and that immediate reality can only be psychic explains why it is that primitive man puts spirits and magical influences on the same plane as physical events. . . In his world, spirit and matter still interpenetrate each other. . . He is like a child, only half born, still enclosed in his own psyche as in a dream (Jung 1934, para. 682, p. 195.).

For the civilized human being, the primitive's way of existence is no longer a valid option. Because of the development of consciousness, the unconscious is no longer projected onto the external environment.

Jung writes:

The psychic life of civilized man, however, is full of problems, we cannot even think of it except in terms of problems. Our psychic processes are made up to a large extent of reflections, doubts, experiments, all of which are completely foreign to the unconscious, instinctive mind of primitive man. It is the growth of consciousness which we must thank for the existence

of problems; they are the Danaan gift of civilization. It is just man's turning away from instinct – his opposing himself to instinct – that creates consciousness (Jung 1954, para. 388).

The primitive psychic life is concrete and symbolic at the same time. As a consequence, he can speak of having a totem, a bush brother, or see himself as being a relative of the crocodile who protects him and whom he protects.

By contrast, conscious reason always seeks to find answers, to resolve apparent opposites. It takes a stand, assuming that a logical, understandable, and containable answer exists. It can do this because reason is perceived as an unchanging essence. This perspective renders any symbolic view of itself redundant. Objectivity is seen as an inevitable and attainable concomitant of reason. Knowledge is defined by the interest we have in knowing it. For civilized society, knowledge is about controlling the environment, managing its vagaries for the sake of greater prosperity and security. However, reason is always relative, and the concept of an unchanging essence of reason is an illusion. Reason, like the totem system, is a means to an end, a symbolic expression, although different in substance to the symbols of the primitive, of a transitional step in the path of development (Jung 1954, para. 47).

For Jung, the psyche of both primitive cultures and children is closely connected to the unconscious. It was Jung's view that consciousness began in childhood and developed out of the unconscious. "One can actually see the conscious mind coming into existence through the gradual unification of fragments" (Jung 1946, para. 103). This process is comparable to the evolutionary process of humanity that Jung regarded as the evolutionary development of consciousness. He writes:

Consciousness is phylogenetically and ontogenetically a secondary phenomenon. . . . Just as the body has an anatomical pre-history of millions of years, so also does the psychic system. And just as the human body to-day represents in each of its parts the result of this evolution, and everywhere still shows traces of its earlier stages – so the same may be said of the psyche. Consciousness began its evolution from an animal like state which seems to us unconscious, and the same process of differentiation is repeated in every child (Jung 1977, p. 381).

The child lives in a world which is understood through the primal relationship with the mother. This relationship is one of "participation mystique." The world for the infant is the mother's body world. The infant has no initial perception of itself as a separate being. With physical touch and stimulation, the infant begins to encounter physical realities which stimulate its sense of being and otherness. Therefore, when a child expresses the desire to take, to grasp, and to eat, it is attempting to explore and understand the world, and it is in this process that differentiation begins.

Jung argues that if human beings lived by instinct alone, consciousness would be achieved by biological growth and ageing. This is not, however, the experience of all human cultures. It is evident in Jung's analogy of cultural development with early childhood development that Jung, being a creature of his time, perceives culture through the lens of social Darwinism and his language is reminiscent of early Australian explorers who spoke of the Australian Aboriginals as a "child race" (Waldron and Waldron 2004).

Nevertheless, Jung's contention that intention and determination cannot accomplish psychic development is valid. Psychic development needs symbol to express and grasp realities beyond the scope of consciousness if it is to cognitively apprehend and develop those realities.

The unconscious, out of which symbols emanate, is unknowable and cannot be brought to consciousness because its content would overwhelm the conscious mind. It needs the mediation of symbol.

A symbol expresses those aspects of the psyche that are differentiated and primal, conscious and unconscious, and good and evil, the psychic opposites. Whenever such a symbol spontaneously erupts from the unconscious, it dominates the whole psyche. The symbol is a conduit by which the energy generated from the tension of opposites is channelled so that the psyche can move forward (Jung 1948, para. 25).

Jung conjectures that the language of all human beings is full of symbols (Jung 1964, p. 3). For Jung, symbols are language or images that convey, by means of concrete reality, something hidden or unknown. They have a numinous quality only dimly perceived by the conscious mind. These symbols can never be fully

understood by the conscious mind. In symbols, the opposites are united in a form that is “never devised consciously, but [are] always produced out of the unconscious by way of revelation or intuition” (Jung 1964, p. 48).

The function of a symbol is both compensatory and integrative. It is compensatory in that it illuminates something that belongs to the domain of the unconscious. It compensates for that which is hidden from our conscious. It is integrative in that it is a union of opposites, holding in tension the different aspects of the psyche.

Jung posits individual and collective symbols. Individual symbols are peculiar to individuals. They arise out of the individual’s personal unconscious and, as a consequence, have little or no meaning to other individuals. Collective symbols are psychic images that arise out of the collective unconscious of a group, tribe, culture, or nation. As such, they possess a functional significance for the community.

For a cultural symbol to be dynamic, it must relate to an unconscious factor that the individuals within that culture hold in common. For the symbol to be relevant to a culture, it may appear to need to have a functional meaning, and this may be seen to contradict the argument that the symbol only needs to relate to unconscious factors. However, the function of meaning will have significance only because its perceived social function is based on a significance that is apprehended and given value by means of the collective unconscious. The more immediate a symbol is to the unconscious reality common to the collective, the greater the effect on that society.

Jung also perceives a “religious function” operative in the psyche, an instinctual drive for a meaningful relationship of the personal self to the transitional source of power, the reality represented by the symbol. This instinctual drive manifests itself in the spontaneous production of religious symbols or “god images.” God images are characterized by their central function, to reconcile the opposites within the psyche. In order to creatively engage with a god image, it is not required to solve the clash of inner opposites but rather to work with the symbol, to explore its parameters. As we come face to face with the

dark side of God, masculine and feminine, we are more able to come to terms with our own dark side and contra-sexual aspects (Jung 1977, p. 367).

This transcendent function of the symbol enables a transition from one psychic state to another. Thereby, the drive for religion seems to urge the full development of the individual.

The religious symbols thus generated become symbols of totality. The god image is an archetype and as such is a source of inexhaustible meaning and intelligibility. It has a numinous quality and cannot be explained or verified through rationale. Because the god image is a symbol, it can never be reduced to its subjective origins. Like all symbols, the god image emerges spontaneously from the unconscious and is independent of an individual’s religious convictions.

The god image functions as a mediator between the conscious and the unconscious. It is a union within the psyche of male and female, good and evil, and all other opposites. It is comprised of unconscious and conscious components and is an essential element in the process of individuation. The goal of the process of individuation is the birth of the self. The self is symbolized by the mandala, a mystical circle expressing the totality of the individual. The god image is a reflection of this psychic truth.

It seems evident that there are times when the god image ceases to be an integrative image through which the individual or culture moves towards wholeness. The potential exists for the shadow to be suppressed so that a split occurs in the psyche.

When this happens it is possible for the shadow to erupt in symbolic form. The resultant god image is not integrative but rather expressive of the shadow and suppression of aspects of the psyche. Manifest abuse of power and suppression of minorities and the defenseless elements in society or adjacent societies will demonstrate the non-integrative nature of such a split in the god image.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)



- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mandala](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Symbols of Transformation in Dreams

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Everybody dreams. We may not remember our dreams, but the psychologists tell us that everyone dreams. The sleep laboratories have described for us the phenomenon of REM sleep. There have been many theories throughout the ages about the purpose of dreams. Postmodern depth psychologists emphasize that dreams are an important way to carry on the dialogue with the unconscious.

Yet there is still the mystery of understanding what the unconscious side of the dialogue is saying. Those little books at the grocery checkout counter tell you this image means so-and-so and

“no question about it” – this is not helpful. Dreams use a symbolic language that has many meanings. So to explore what the symbols in dreams mean may give us a picture of ourselves of which we are unaware. Thus, dreams give us data. That may help us to decide on a different course of action, or we may still choose to continue the way we have been – the dreams do not dictate what action, if any, we take in response to their information. However, this data becomes the possibility of transformation of a previously held opinion or behavior.

In interpreting those symbols, we use C. G. Jung’s theory of dream interpretation, which is what most people use today whether they mention Jung or not (Jung 2012). We have found it helpful to use what we call “the 4 notes of dream interpretation.”

The *first note* is that dreams are usually *compensatory*. They give us a kind of “snapshot” of the psyche. The picture, however, is one that adds to our conscious attitudes, calling our attention to something of which we are not consciously aware. In other words, the picture may hold up for us our “blind spots” – what we are not seeing about ourselves.

Jung himself gives a clear example of this compensatory function in a dream he had about a patient of his (Jung 1961). He says that the analysis was not going well, and he felt that he was not getting at the correct interpretation of his patient’s dreams. He decided to speak to her about this, and the night before he planned to speak, he had this dream:

I was walking down a highway through a valley in late afternoon sunlight. To my right was a steep hill. At its top stood a castle, and on the highest tower there was a woman sitting on a kind of balustrade. In order to see her properly, I had to bend my head far back. I awoke with a crick in the back of my neck. Even in the dream I had recognized the woman as my patient.

Jung realized immediately that if in the dream he had to look up so high to see the patient, he had probably been looking down on her. The distortion was so severe that it was a “pain in the neck.” When he told the patient of his dream and his interpretation, he says the treatment once more moved forward.

In this example, Jung decided that the dream showed him that he had fallen into a one-sided stance which was blocking him from seeing his patient “properly,” even as the dream language suggested. In such dreams, one is likely to speak of the dream as “telling me what to do” but notice that the dream does not give Jung a direct “message” that prescribes his future behavior. It simply tells him, by the compensatory imagery, “how it is” – what his conscious attitude has been. He made the decision, based on that information, that he would modify that conscious attitude, but he might just as well have decided that he did not choose to modify it. He simply had more information than before the dream on which to base his choice.

If our conscious attitude has been rather extreme, the compensatory imagery may be extreme (and we may call it a nightmare). However, if our conscious attitude is only slightly out of line, the dream imagery will be much closer to the outer perception – complementary to consciousness, that is, only adding an additional small perspective.

The *second note* is the consideration of both “*objective and subjective Levels.*” When we dream of a person we know, the dream may well be holding up something for us to see about our relationship with that person, and we can look at that. Regarding the dream this way is to examine it on the “objective level.” Regarding the dream on the “subjective level” means treating the dream figure, even if we know the person, as an aspect of oneself. Unknown people or people with whom we do not have a personal relationship are always to be treated on the subjective level – as an aspect of ourselves.

Other images in the dream, however, are also to be approached on the subjective level to some extent. For example, if we dream about a house – a particular kind of house – it may well represent where, so to speak, “we have been living” or in the jargon of today “where we have been hanging out.” If we dream about some animal, we may need to ask ourselves if some instinct has been intruding in our response to life – we speak of “animal instincts.”

A *third note* is Jung’s suggestion that we may learn something about ourselves by looking at

a whole *series of dreams*. One single dream may not be obvious, but if we notice the same motif occurring in several dreams, then we may see something that we had missed by looking at only one dream. This same motif may not occur in the very next dream, but over a period of time, a pattern might present itself. This entails keeping a dream journal.

A *fourth note* is one of the most important – Jung calls it *amplification*. This entails looking at your *associations* with the particular dream image. You note down your personal associations with an image, which is personal amplification. These are, of course, basic, but you also need to look beyond them. Jung concluded that the symbolic language of dreams sometimes made use of associations from culture in general – even if the dreamer had never been aware of such association. Myths also provide valuable collective associations.

One of the examples of personal association that we gave in our book, *Symbols of Transformation in Dreams*, is particularly helpful in suggesting how one can use a dream in helping one to be a more whole and real person (Clift and Clift 1984).

A woman we know had a dream about Elliott Gould, and when she was asked, “Who is Elliott Gould?” she replied that she knew him only through parts he had played in films (cinematic myths). As she thought of her general ideas about him, she realized that her main association was that he usually played the part of someone who acted as if he were less capable and much dumber than he actually was. With that association, she could then ask herself: do I sometimes act as if I am less capable and much dumber than I actually am? Her rueful laughter was her answer, and then “Elliott Gould” became a handy way to catch herself in that rather destructive pretend game she had played for years, largely unaware that she was doing so. In this way, her own association with the dream figure gave her a continuing, living symbol to tease herself with; when she caught herself behaving that way, she could inwardly chide, “Oh, come on, Elliott.”

Near the end of our stay at the Jung Institute in Zurich (1966), Wallace had a dream that would

be disturbing as well as puzzling if not examined on the subjective level (Clift and Clift 1984). He had previously written his bishop inquiring about a parish appointment, thinking our grant was probably ending, though what he really wanted to do was be a teacher in a seminary. That seemed impossible without getting a Ph.D. This is the dream:

I dreamed that I had killed someone in Israel and that I was going back to Israel to settle it – it would be “paid for” there. The killing seemed impersonal, as I did not remember anything about the person killed. I was sorry that I had, that was all. It seemed that someone would have to die when I went back, though the killing of someone else did not seem to be the way. (The dream ended unresolved.)

The dream presents the matter clearly; “Someone in Israel” is obviously the parish priest in Wallace. To go back to another parish assignment is pictured as “paying for the crime” of having left the parish (or killing the parish priest). The dream points out that this action means the death of someone else. It now seems clear that going back would have meant the death of the student who wanted to be a teacher. Actually, subsequent events led eventually to his being offered a further grant to get a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and that made possible the teaching career that followed.

If we dream of someone dying that we know or have known, we can ask ourselves what our associations are with that person or what they are like and then ask ourselves if that part of us, that particular kind of attitude or approach to life, is dying or has died in us. What we call “nightmares” may not be so scary when we deal with them symbolically on this subjective level.

## Symbolic Language

C. G. Jung and the theologian Paul Tillich both made a distinction between signs and symbols (Jung 2012; Tillich 1957). Signs point to something. Symbols not only point to something but they participate in the other reality toward which they point. One of the easiest examples of this is a nation’s flag. If you see an American flag on

a building, you may realize that’s the post office, or, in another country, the American consulate. The flag is functioning only as a sign, pointing to some reality. However, when angry crowds burn an American flag, it is also functioning as a symbol, and it participates in the reality toward which it points – toward policies which the crowds deplore.

Approaching any dream image, then, demands that one stay open to not only some obvious external meaning (a sign) but also some unknown, suggestive, internal elaboration of the meaning (the symbol). These inner meanings and elaborations will frequently have an emotional content, the object of which is to get the dreamer’s attention to some unconscious or ignored facet of the dreamer’s life.

We have discovered that interpretation of symbols is a universal process, applying not only to dream images but to religious and literary images. The power carried by the images in all these fields is at the heart of the meaning they carry for the dreamer, the believer, and the reader.

Jungian psychology has also given us a powerful understanding of human imagery in what Jung called the archetypes of the collective unconscious – the universal human experience. He named these archetypes the persona, the shadow, the animus and anima, and the Self, and he saw them as the common experience of us all.

The term “persona” comes from the masks that actors wore in ancient drama, and it refers to the roles everyone plays in everyday life – one’s system of adaptation to each encounter in outer life. It is usually an adaptation between one’s personal sense of identity and a sense of what others are expecting. The most frequent and obvious symbol of the persona is the clothes one is wearing – or not wearing. Inappropriate dress or nakedness indicates an inadequate adaptation, a sense of being too exposed or ill adapted.

The “shadow” refers to the unknown or un-lived part of ourselves. Honest attention to the task of knowing oneself is beneficial, and spiritual guides throughout history have emphasized the need to grow and enlarge our knowledge of ourselves. St. Teresa describes our lives as

moving from one “room” to the next as we develop maturity, leaving the old behind (Teresa 1921). She says the one room we never leave behind (in our interior castle), in life’s growth, is the room of self-knowledge. The shadow is represented in dreams by figures of the same gender as the dreamer.

Jung used the Latin words for soul or spirit to represent our contrasexual aspect – the “anima” for the feminine figure in a man’s unconscious and the “animus” for the male figure in a woman’s dreams. There are two ways of being human – male and female – and every individual has aspects or qualities of both. Figures in dreams of the other gender, particularly persons not in one’s daily life, represent one’s anima or animus.

Gender is one of the most complex areas of dream interpretation, especially because it has both positive and negative aspects. Interpretation in this area can take the dreamer into ever deeper areas of personal development and serves as a pathway to the last and perhaps most profound of the archetypes of the collective unconscious.

This last archetype, the “Self,” is perhaps Jung’s most important insight. He calls the Self the archetype of wholeness and also the “god image” in the psyche, symbolized in many ways, often as the mandala circle. He does NOT mean one’s own conscious self, for which he used the term “ego.” Encounters with the Self have all the qualities associated with the concept of God. The Self is the image Jung observed of the universal need for a sense of meaning in life and the human experience of a response to that need. Thus, with those for whom a traditional religious symbol system still functions, Jung’s concept of the Self accords with their religious experience in which the transcendent has become immanent.

All these archetypal images (and especially the last, Self) are part of what Jung called the process of individuation – the movement toward a conscious process of becoming human and whole. Though it is, of course, possible to get “lost” in this process and become focused purely on one’s own self, Jung taught, along with religious teachers throughout history, that this process of becoming more conscious is a gift not only for the person but also for the

world collectively. Increasing human consciousness can transform not only the individual, but, person by person, the one world in which we all live.

### See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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### Synchronicity

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As a practicing psychoanalyst, Carl Jung became aware of a process of meaningful coincidence between physical events and the subjective states of his patients. He termed this phenomena *synchronicity*, and he came to believe that the acknowledgement and utilization of synchronous phenomena was a valuable tool in the process of understanding and interpreting the expressions and manifestations of the psyche.

The concept of synchronicity is part of a conceptual triad which Jung conceived of as

essential to the understanding of the experience of the psyche. The first element is causality, best understood through Freud's ideas of how libidinal energy is managed within the psyche. Repressed energy in one area is likely to express itself in another form in order to be released. In this way the psyche maintains a balance of libidinal energy which becomes converted in response to the principles of cause and effect. Jung broadened this concept into the idea of a more generalized psychic energy. He imagined that the expression of this force is particular to the unfolding of the individual psyche. From this emerged a *teleological* view, in which the psyche contains within itself the potential for self-actualization. This forms the second of Jung's developmental triad. This teleological potential for expression is contingent upon opportunities that encompass causality as well as the element of serendipity. Without supporting circumstances, the germ that is the potential of the self may never have the opportunity to develop. It is here that synchronicity plays a crucial role. The element of chance may enhance or eliminate opportunities for actualization of the self. Synchronicity, or meaningful chance, can be defined as a seemingly significant coincidence in time and space of two more events that are related, but not causally connected. An image, thought, fantasy, or symbol presents itself to consciousness, and this is reflected in a meaningful external event that appears to have no causal connection. Synchronicity, then, is the third principle by which the experience of the psyche may be understood or interpreted. Jung considered that a law of synchronicity might contrast with the physical law of causality. Causality propels the objective world, while synchronistic phenomena seem to be primarily connected to conditions of the psyche or processes in the unconscious. Synchronicity takes the coincidence of events in space and time as meaning something more than mere chance, namely, a particular interdependence between objective events with the subjective state of the observer.

Jung's exploration of this concept was based on his belief that an emphasis on the rational aspects of consciousness results in a one-sided view of the psyche. This inhibits understanding of the

unconscious and its expression through dreams, fantasy, and other nonrational experiences. Synchronicity, as a correspondence theory in which inner events occur simultaneously with exterior events, is a reflection of a deeper perspective found across cultures in which there is the philosophical perception that parts are not only aspects of the whole but reflections of it. That is, the microcosm mirrors the macrocosm. For example, Jung recognized this concept as an aspect of early Taoist Chinese thought. Synchronous events may be generated through the activating of archetypes. These are unconscious preexistent primordial images that yield believed to be a part of the deep structure of the psyche and shared collectively and therefore might be a creation of the collective unconscious and perhaps even the psychoid strata. The psychoid strata can be equated with a generative yet undifferentiated source that undergirds the collective unconscious. When archetypes are experienced by an individual, they are often expressed through dreams and fantasies or through a conscious process Jung applied in his practice called "active imagination." In this process, special attention is given to the appearance of archetypal material and the impact of its presentation on the psyche of the individual. An archetype can act as a mediator between the macrocosm that characterizes the collective unconscious and the microcosm which is the individual expression. The value of attention to synchronistic phenomena, then, lies in its ability to illuminate a dimension of the psyche that cannot be reached consciously. For Jung, the fullest potential of the human psyche lies in the integration of unconscious material, both personal and collective, into consciousness. This assimilation expands the individual psyche towards a fuller degree of awareness or a conscious experience of wholeness.

Because synchronicity may seem to involve the observed as well as the observer, there are two possible ways to view synchronous events. In the first, there is a relationship between events that can be observed objectively. In the second, synchronicity involves the participation of the observing psyche which in some way becomes reflected in the objective material. In this case,

synchronicity becomes a type of psychophysical parallelism.

## Expressions of Synchronicity

Two forms of synchronous expression most commonly experienced are (1) the perception that the internal reality of the psyche is being externally manifested in the world through an experience or event. This may take the form of (a) a dream, vision, or premonition of an experience that has not yet happened or (b) two or more external events that appear to be meaningfully, but not causally related.

Synchronous expression appears to serve a significant, if not urgent, purpose, which is to bring attention to a perception or perspective that is needed for the development of the psyche. Synchronous experience may be urgent in presentation, acting as a signpost to bring awareness to the psyche of a situation or state that is in need of attention. In contrast, it may be initially veiled, allowing an idea to be presented to the receiver in a form that will not overwhelm the conscious mind but allow it to assimilate indirectly. Regardless of presentation, it would seem synchronous phenomena serve to bring to conscious awareness concepts of value for self-development.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Syncretism

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The term “syncretism” has had different denotations and connotations over time. In current usage in anthropology and religious studies, it generally refers to a mixing of elements from different religious systems or traditions. From the perspective of many religious leaders, such a mixing is often viewed as a negative process, as an abandoning of true religion. From the perspective of many anthropologists, psychologists, and professionals of other academic disciplines, religious syncretism may assist in a positive acculturation process, whereby elements of different systems emerge in a new format allowing an integration of ideas and behaviors. It is important to bear in mind that whatever example of syncretism is in focus, it always takes place in a psychocultural and sociopolitical context, and therefore, the psychological effects of such need to include those levels of analysis. Though a central historical concept, globalization as well as the challenges of voluntary and forced migration have given birth to a reexamination of religious syncretism. As Greenfield and Droogers (2001) point to, there is a reemergence of the concept as a tool for understanding such complex phenomena as ethnicity, postcolonialism, and transnationalism. Three examples of religious syncretism are presented here. They are drawn from different cultural contexts and illustrate the complexities for understanding syncretistic systems and behaviors and their varying psychological effects.

### Example 1: Syncretism as an Act of Survival

Drawing upon his fieldwork in Afro-Brazilian religions, the French ethnologist Roger Bastide (1978) has emphasized two aspects for historically understanding syncretism in this cultural



context. First, attention needs to be given to the systematic way in which elements from different religious sources come together. Second, the role of power mechanisms is emphasized, especially in the contact between two categories of individuals, slaves, and slaveholders. Similarity in worldview structures among African, Catholic, and also Amerindian systems has facilitated this syncretism. In this way African gods could be identified with Catholic saints and with Amerindian spirits. Catholic elements were selectively adopted and adapted through the application of African criteria, without the knowledge of the slaveholders. In practice, as strategic devices, identification with and differentiation from the slaveholders' religion were both used for literal and symbolic survival. Thus, the apparent adoption of a Catholic ritual attitude in Mass could serve as an alibi for the continuation of African ritual practices. Despite this clever illustration of a survival deception, the reality undergirding this example of syncretism is one of supreme oppression. An examination of the legacy of this syncretism in contemporary Afro-Brazilian expressions of religiosity reveals a variety of mixtures of these religious traditions both in terms of meaning structures and ritual practices.

### **Example 2: Syncretism as Competitive Sharing**

A second example of religious syncretism is found in the article by Robert Hayden (2002) linked to the concept of competitive sharing. This concept explains how sacred sites that have long been shared by members of differing religious communities, perhaps even exhibiting syncretic types of mixtures including the practices of both, may at some point be seized or destroyed by members of one of them in order to manifest dominance over the other. Hayden argues that competitive sharing is compatible with a passive meaning of "tolerance" as noninterference but incompatible with an active meaning of tolerance as an embrace of the other. This confusion lies at the heart of a critical weakness of most current

explanations of nationalist conflict in the Balkans and communal conflict in India. Syncretism, in this example, may be fostered by inequality and is actually endangered by equality between the groups. The term, syncretism, is problematical, however, carrying a negative charge for those concerned with analyzing or maintaining putatively "pure" or "authentic" rituals and a positive one for those who criticize concepts such as cultural purity or authenticity or favor the idea of "multiculturalism" (Shaw and Stewart 1994). For the former, syncretism is a matter of violating or contaminating categories. For the latter, since supposed boundaries are inherently flexible, syncretism is universal and therefore not an isolable phenomenon (Werbner 1994). As Hayden notes, the problematical nature of syncretism increases with the growth of the polarizations captured by the word "communalism" in Indian discourse and the comparable "fundamentalisms" elsewhere (Hayden 2002, p. 207).

Understanding and approaching syncretism in any given cultural context is dependent upon the framework used for interpretation. Consider the contrast between the following interpretations. Bayly's analysis (1989) has focused on a situation of "paradox" in South India noting a growing tendency for groups and large corporations to be hostile to one another yet at the same time there are persisting or reinvented overlapping religious beliefs and syncretic religious practices. That of van der Veer, on the other hand, has noted that "'syncretism' in India. . . is a trope in the discourse of 'multiculturalism'" and that scholarly discussion of "syncretic" phenomena such as Hindu worship of Sufi saints usually omits consideration of conflict or of the processes of expansion and contraction of religious communities (van der Veer 1994, pp. 200–201). One of the critical differences in these frameworks is that in Bayly's framework, syncretism represents tolerance, with a presumed stasis, while for van der Veer, time is brought into the analysis thus creating an approach to syncretism as a dynamic expression that assumes no inherent understanding of tolerance. As Hayden notes, when time is added into the analysis, "syncretism seems to be a measure at a given moment

of relations between members of groups that differentiate themselves, and to see it as tolerance instead of competition is misleading” (Hayden 2002, p. 207).

### **Example 3: Syncretism as a Postmodern Choice or Acculturation Survival Tactic**

The third example is that of a functional religious/existential syncretism that can be found in what ostensibly has been labeled one of the most secular cultural contexts, Sweden. In this context, organized religious services, based on the Protestant-Lutheran faith and until 2,000 expressed through the National Church of Sweden, are not well attended. However, participation in different church-based rituals and ceremonies such as baptism, funerals, and weddings is common. From a functional perspective, ethnic-Swedish participation in ritualized activities remains high though not within the context of a faith or belief tradition. Looking at the results from the multi-country World Values Survey, Sweden appears as an outlier in terms of being the most secular and nontraditional country (Inglehart 1996). At the same time, there is a growing body of information pointing to an increasing search for existential meaning in this cultural context. The conscious or unconscious expressions of this search not infrequently result in an interesting pattern of existential behaviors and ritual practices that combine elements from different meaning-making traditions and new or alternative religious movements, a mixed existential worldview (DeMarinis 2003). One illustration of this is an ethnic-Swedish person who may be a member of a Wiccan group and at the same time remain involved in some of the Church of Sweden rituals. Another illustration is of a person with an immigrant or refugee background, involved in both the traditional religious rituals and belief system of the home country and also participating in a religious or other meaning-making system of the new host country.

From the psychological vantage point of postmodernism as defined by Bauman, the individual must create or chose an identity. He also notes that the reverse side of identity choice is that of

identity confusion (Bauman 1998). In this kind of postmodern context, syncretic religious/existential patterns are created as part of the internal choice process and expressed in the external sphere where rituals and practices are enacted and experienced. The degree of social support or negative pressure experienced by the individual from the surrounding society in relation to having a mixed existential worldview can lead to a change in the worldview’s structure. In other words, the process is dynamic and open to change.

### **Psychological Implications of Religious Syncretism**

A classic psychological approach to syncretism as a mental function is reflected in the comparison of syncretism with the process of individual cognition (Burger 1966), in that both create an analogy between the old and the new and thereby facilitate an innovation acceptance. Syncretism modifies but perpetuates the essence of all impacting sectors, thereby reducing the dangers of cultural shock. Symbolic sectors such as religion can syncretize more easily than artifactual sectors. The psychological mechanics of syncretism need to be understood in relation to the psychocultural and sociopolitical dynamics taking place in the given cultural context. This may seem an obvious need when thinking about the three examples provided, as it is this deeper type of understanding that is essential for mapping the different types of psychological effects of syncretism. The analysis necessary for arriving at this type of understanding is not a standard part of the psychological process of investigation. A valuable resource here is a working approach to cultural analysis that has emerged from the field of cultural psychology (Marsella and Yamada 2000). Culture is based on shared learned meanings and behaviors that are transmitted from within a social activity context for the purpose of promoting individual/societal adjustment, growth, and development. Cultural representations are both internal (i.e., values, beliefs, patterns of consciousness) and external (i.e., artifacts, roles, institutions). Changing internal

and external circumstances brings about changes or modifications for shared meanings and behaviors.

Using this approach with respect to understanding a situation involving religious syncretism, the following steps can be taken. First, a cultural mapping needs to be done involving the internal as well as external representations of the syncretistic meanings and behaviors. Such a mapping will provide a means for locating the cultural groups, religious systems, and levels of interaction involved. Second, a historical layer can then be added to this mapping with special focus placed on understanding the power dynamics and sociopolitical circumstances initially leading to the syncretistic expression and what has happened to that expression over time. The third and most important step is assessing the psychological effects, for both individuals and groups, of engaging in the syncretistic behaviors. Such varied syncretistic behaviors may, as in the very varied examples provided, be associated with psychological consequences ranging from individual and group trauma to a stress-relieving and salutogenic outcome. Each case needs to be assessed on its own, in cultural context, and over time. Clearly, religious syncretism has never been and will never be a simple system with a single design. For this very reason, an understanding of the psychological effects of religious syncretism needs to approach with extreme care and with sufficient, multidisciplinary methods.

## See Also

- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Migration and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Trauma](#)

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## Taboo

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Something that is taboo is so powerful that it must be approached only with the proper attitude and training or not at all. The concept of taboo derives from the Tongan *tapu* or the Fijian *tabu*. In both cultures it carries a double meaning: it refers to what is both sacred and forbidden. That is, it indicates that which is so powerful that it is dangerous unless treated the right way, or by the right person, under the right circumstances. In original usage, taboo could refer to certain foods, to bodies of the deceased, to the resting places of powerful spirits, to tribal rulers and to warriors who have slain others, and often to women's menstrual periods, as well as even mentioning some of the above in conversation (Frazer 1990). Thus, we see that it can apply to words, objects, actions, and concepts (including metaphysical actors such as divinities) and also that there is a temporal aspect; for instance in some warrior cultures we find a taboo on sex but only before battle. In many religious traditions, the complex mythopoeic indications combined in the term taboo have been differentiated into the categories of sacred, protected, holy, ritual, and sin.

Social usage indicates that a taboo action or conversation is likely to cause shame or

embarrassment within a given social group. This is likely only part of the story, since most taboo subjects that are not abhorrent carry an edge of allure or even excitement in the right circumstances, bringing the concept closer to the Tongan sense. Furthermore, there are relatively few things that appear to be repugnant in all societies, these being confined to corpses and incest (and even here, there is some disagreement). So most things that are taboo in one group or society are not taboo in another, showing that something about the dynamic of the taboo must be more important than the particular item, topic, or action (Durkheim 1912).

Evolutionary biologists suggest that taboos originated from a hardwired repulsion of disease vectors (in the case of the dead) or social bonding habits (in the case of patricide); however, this explanation does little to explain the multiplicity and richness of the concept as it is found in practice or in its religious formulation (Pinker 1997).

Sigmund Freud noticed a similarity between obsessive states and the descriptions of taboo. This connection shows that taboos can be understood as "a psychological condition that prevails in the unconscious" and states that the only two "universal" taboos are that of incest and patricide which formed the eventual basis of modern society. This conception is not far from the biological and again does not account for the liminal quality of the concept.

Freud continues with his classic statement about taboo, one which has helped shape a generation of understanding:

Taboos, we must suppose, are prohibitions of primeval antiquity which were at some time externally imposed upon a generation of primitive men; they must, that is to say, no doubt have been impressed on them violently by the previous generation. These prohibitions must have concerned activities towards which there was a strong inclination. They must then have persisted from generation to generation, perhaps merely as a result of tradition transmitted through parental and social authority (Freud 1998).

So, for Freud, the incest taboo keeps the subject from doing the abhorrent, and so a more refined outlet must be found through the process of sublimation.

Jung's view of taboo (and especially the incest taboo) is typically prospective, psychological, and serves to uncover progressively more subtle layers of process. On one hand, it does not settle the question, but on the other, it allows for the mystery, the social importance, the allure, the horror and the psychological complexity, and importance of taboo. Taboo indicates, after all, that which we are inexplicably drawn to and repulsed from at the same time and in certain meaningful ways.

Concepts and impulses that arise from the unknown, regardless of the term used for that other place, are dangerous. Religious symbolic systems, including the forms and laws of the church arise due to the desire of the human subject to avoid revelatory contact with these unconscious forces. Because of this, from ancient times to the present, societies construct ritual and taboo to protect them from the uncanny voices of dreams and the content of the unconscious in general (Jung 1960).

For Jung, the pressure to make some personal psychological change is an automatic response to something in the psyche being stuck, like water building up behind an obstruction in a stream. In cases of stuckness, or libidinal obstruction (including such symptomatic descriptions such as depression and the various neuroses), the conscious mind feels threatened by an invasion from the unconscious, since the unconscious itself is

pressing for a change in conscious attitude. Rather than holding this change at bay, if it is instead possible to be informed by the images that arise (i.e., the symbolic form of the symptoms), then the invasion could be completed on its own terms, and the conscious mind would break free of the inertia and move forward.

A similar situation is detailed in the poetry of Hölderlin – this theme can be seen as central to the theme of the German aesthetic philosophers in general from Kant to Goethe and Schiller and which is now seeing a resurgence in, of all places, the post-Lacanian work of Slavoj Žižek – particularly in his increasing estrangement from reality. “The god/Is near and hard to grasp/But where there is danger/A rescuing element grows as well” (Hölderlin 2004). This indicates that regression is an involuntary introversion, of which depression is an unconscious compensation. The psychological task, in this case, is to make the introversion voluntary, both activating the imaginal realm of the mind and lifting the depression (since it has gotten what it was after). Jung uses psychological material as well as Hölderlin's poems to illustrate that regression is actually a link with primal material. This primal material contains both the energy that is dammed up and the specific form of a new conscious attitude. However, both of these must be assimilated by the conscious mind lest the primal material keeps its chaotic form and produce disorientation or even, in severe cases, schizophrenia.

This very regression, being dangerous to the conscious mind as well as social norms, is the subject of taboo. However, it is clear that the object of desire is rebirth, not (as in Freud's literalist interpretation) incestuous cohabitation. In this conception, incest refers to the draw towards, and horror of, immersion in the unconscious as the source of the conscious subject. The incest taboo indicates the danger of this regression, and religion aids in systematizing the canalization (or routine, even automatic use) of libido into safe and socially acceptable forms. Thus, symbolism and symbol formation are civilizing processes at the collective level (such as found in religious traditions), whereas when the

symbol is engaged personally, it represents an individuating and internal psychological truth (Jung 1967). Taboo can be seen as a form of collective mediation of overwhelming unconscious forces. However, the advent of neurotic symptoms shows that this collective mediation has broken down, such as when religion no longer seems to mean anything. In these cases, a symbolic interaction with the taboo under carefully controlled circumstances (the container of analysis, e.g.) allows the instincts to be mediated in a new and personal way, resolving the neurotic suffering.

Finally, since the canalizations or routines surrounding symbol making and the taboo are collective (i.e., shared by populations), we can see that the evolutionary instinct has as its goal the *making of meaning*. These instincts manifest also as mythological figures born to the unconscious. That is, it was not the incest taboo that forced mankind forward but rather the evolutionary instinct from which this and other taboos came. Certainly, the making of meaning is most safely done in a collective setting, such as a political or religious tradition, since these structures are mediating symbol systems that let only a small amount of the primal libido through to an individual. When a symbol system no longer works, the individual must take special precautions not to become overwhelmed by an unconscious and unmediated flood of affect and imagery. To reiterate, the cultural injunction against introversion has led, in modern times, to the rituals of the analytic container (other responses to this injunction occur as well, from the development of the projection of the numinous out onto UFOs to the various new age attempts to encounter the unconscious) and the methodical withdrawal of projections as a safe way to approach the numinous (life-giving but dangerous) core indicated by the term taboo.

## See Also

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- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav

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## Talmud

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From the Hebrew verb “to learn,” Talmud refers to the central text in the vast corpus of rabbinic literature which serves as a repository of legal discussions, biblical exegesis, theology, philosophy, hagiography, legend, history, science, anecdotes, aphorisms, and humor. The Babylonian Talmud was edited over several generations by the rabbinic authorities of Babylonia, probably attaining a somewhat fixed form in the sixth century. However, individual passages included may be up to several hundred years older having been transmitted orally prior to their inclusion in the text. A second Talmud exists, edited in the land of Israel during the fifth century. Known as the Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud, it is smaller, more opaque, and less authoritative in later legal debates. The term Talmud unqualified always refers to the Babylonian Talmud which is written primarily in Aramaic though it often cites large passages in biblical or Rabbinic Hebrew.

The Talmud is structured around a second century rabbinic document called the Mishnah or “recitation.” Composed in terse Hebrew, the Mishnah compiles unresolved legal debates among



rabbis on a wide range of subjects including worship, dietary laws, torts, family law, criminal law, agricultural practices, mourning customs, sexual mores, and holiday observance. These legal discussions are often surrounded by related narratives and relevant biblical interpretations. The Mishnah settles very few of the legal debates it presents and frequently suggests no rationale supporting the various opinions cited. The Talmud begins as a commentary on the Mishnah elucidating its cases and alternatively challenging or defending each of its legal opinions.

While the Talmud retains its structure as a commentary on the Mishnah, it functions much more broadly, citing new legal cases, relating stories about rabbinic figures, and opening moral or theological debates unimagined by the Mishnah. The different material included is woven together in a complicated arrangement that is only sometimes topical. Often, connections between Talmudic passages rely on free associations or any number of other nonlinear progressions. The Talmud gives great weight to material from dreams, wordplay, and the exploration of fantasy.

The Talmud's primary method of expression is debate. No legal precedent, biblical passage, or other ostensibly authoritative statement stands immune to challenge. Much like the psychoanalytic process, rather than attempting to avoid or resolve conflict, Talmudic discourse identifies and even elevates disputes among principles, teaching the reader to embrace discord rather than repress it. While the Talmud rarely affirms or rejects one opinion outright, ironically, it often signals its preference for one opinion over another by challenging the favored opinion more extensively. Biblical laws are almost never explicitly repealed, but, with some frequency, problematic biblical passages are interpreted through Talmudic debate to be so narrow in scope as to be practically irrelevant in contemporary society.

The Talmud is traditionally studied in pairs or small groups, reflecting the conversational question-and-answer style of the text itself. Many have argued that the process of studying Talmud parallels the psychoanalytic task as the reader is directed to infer underlying conflicts

from surface level ambiguities or inconsistencies in the text. Some scholars claim that Freud fashioned elements of his therapeutic technique from methods of traditional Talmudic analysis. In modern times, the Talmud is almost always printed together with the commentary of Rashi, an eleventh century scholar from Provence, whose glosses guide the reader through the difficult text which often assumes that its readers know the entire contents already.

## See Also

► [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Tantrism

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Tantrism is a religious and philosophical movement appearing in India around 400 CE that existed within both Hinduism and Buddhism. In medieval India, Tantrism was a common element of all the major religions. Tantrism focuses upon ritual aspects that involve the use of the physical in sacred and worshipful settings to access the supernatural. Tantrism also can be traced to Jainism and Bön, and elements of Tantric practice are also evident in Burma, China, Japan, Mongolia, and Tibet. The word Tantrism originates from the Sanskrit word *Tantra*:

which is translated variously as “weave, warp, or loom,” offering a sense of bringing together or connecting into a whole. Tantrism is comprised of numerous texts referred to as *Tantras*. The primary philosophy and goal underlying the practice of Tantrism is that it promotes spiritual growth and leads to personal freedom.

The concept of evolution and involution is central precepts. Tantric practice leads to an outgoing current of energy as well as the return of the current, which is taken back in toward the source of reality rooted in the consciousness of the human being, revealing the pure being of the infinite. In time, with practice, the outgoing current is changed into the return current. This specific interchange is believed to release the chains created by *maya* (the illusion of the phenomenal world) and to free one from illusory existence. Unlike the more orthodox tenets of the Hindu or Buddhist religions, the Tantric aim is to engage with rather than negate reality by undergoing phases of purification, elevation, and finally reaffirming one’s identity on the plane of pure consciousness.

Tantric bodily disciplines and techniques in ritual settings are combined with the learning of specific doctrine. The practitioner of Tantrism develops a more expansive internal awareness and ideally achieves union with the divine. In Hindu Tantrism, *Shakti* is active female energy and *Shiva* is passive, male consciousness, whereas in Buddhist Tantrism, *Prajna* is the passive female element and *Upaya* the active, male element. In the Hindu tradition, *Shakti*, the active female energy is promoted as the main deity or god worshiped and is personified as the divine active force. In the Tantric tradition, clearly female energy penetrates male essence.

The doctrine of the *Tantras* claims that an individual practitioner can tap the interplay between these two dynamic universal forces, internalize these energies, and apply them in life. It is believed that the human body itself is a symbol of these universal energies. Sexual union between two persons can become a symbol of liberation when symbolically understood as the union of *Shiva* and *Shakti* or of *Prajna* and *Upaya*. *Shakti* is also understood as

a profound force that manifests itself by igniting energy at the base of the spine and winding its way through the chakras (centers of spiritual power in the human body of which there are seven) toward the opening of the third eye – the highest chakra – enlightenment. In many Tantric forms of meditation, such as *Kundalini* yoga, the initiate undergoes a ritual in which he or she receives divine *Shaktipat* through the touch of a master who has achieved a level of union with the divine. This touch ignites the movement of *Shakti* energy. The central object of the Tantric ritual, then, is to awaken *kundalini* energy and to merge with the godhead. To sustain the activation of this vibrant energy in meditation, tantric practices focus upon the breath, or *prana*. Concentrating upon the breath relinquishes the practitioner from worldly distractions and removes obstacles from the chakras. Some tantric forms use mantras, incense, chanting, and singing to activate the breath, followed by silent meditation. Meditating upon a specific *yantra* (a geometrical diagram) or *mandala* (a circular figure symbolizing the universe) associated with a deity is a technique employed for the purpose of subjecting the body to the will. As the progressive phases of enlightenment occur and deepen, the experience becomes a mystical one, and the presence of the divinity grows ever more real as the energies of *Shakti* weave their way like a double serpent around the spine, always moving upwards. To learn these meditative practices, an initiate works the guru or a master teacher. Consistency in practice yields a greater response of the universal vibration of *Shakti*. If one achieves a state of union with the divine, often depicted in symbol as the opening of a lotus, or as an illumination of the third eye, then one is considered to have become the *Ishta-deva* or meditational deity. Developing the attributes of an *Ishta-deva* is an important phase, for it means one is able to visualize oneself as the deity or to achieve *darshan* and experience a vision of the deity.

Tantric practices are also known for the ritual use of wine, meat, and rituals that involve mystical-erotic sexual practices, emphasizing the primacy of divine union. Participants were

prepared in the art of controlled sexual intercourse, *maithuna*, (L., *coitus reservatus*) meaning sex without male orgasm. Through intricate training, the male partner learned to store up his own sexual fluid and to absorb through his penis the fluid engendered by his partner's orgasm. This discipline prolonged the sexual act for an extended period of time. In this way the male partner became similar to *Shiva*, the god in perpetual union with the goddess. The conserved vital fluids were to be stored in the man's spinal column, working their way through the chakras to unfold into the inspiration of divine wisdom.

For both partners, the goal was to awaken the *kundalini* energy culminated in *samadhi* (contemplative rapture). Each of the persons was to be completely dissolved in the unity of the godhead represented on the earthly plane by the energy field created by the synthesis of *Shiva* and *Shakti* in the couple. The male *linga* and the female *yonis* were symbolic of the generative powers of the two coexisting principles of nature (White 2000). The production of fluids represented a sacred offering to Tantric deities and was described as an ambrosia-like nectar that permeated the entire spinal cord, genitalia, and brain.

Tantric sexual practices conflicted with orthodox Buddhism, which promoted chastity and, like Christianity, split the feminine principle into virginal and compassionate or bodily and sexual opposites. Nonetheless, variations of Tantric practices survived in both Eastern and Western civilizations through forms of goddess worship originating from early Pythagorean and Neoplatonic sources. Certain sects such as the Christian Gnostic *Ophites* performed Tantric sexual rites in devotion to the symbol of the Holy Spirit in the orthodox church, *Sophia*. The orthodox church found these practices to be promiscuous and completely unorthodox. Similarly, Islamic religious authorities condemned the Sufi sects who worshiped the feminine principle of love, although Ibn 'Arabi claimed that the most complete union possible was the sexual act between a man and woman, which he associated as a state of bliss beyond pure interior contemplation of God. Thus, Sufism achieved life in sexual mysticism. Sufism was kept alive by troubadours, self-named

"Lovers," who worshiped the feminine principle as the source of divine energy. Eventually, Sufi influence predisposed European troubadours, following the crusades, to found the renowned movement of Courtly Love. Courtly Love appeared in literature, poetry, and song for centuries until the powerful patriarch that was simultaneously branding women as witches and devils condemned such activity as heterodox. Although sexual practices clearly have been an aspect of Tantric rituals, ultimately the *Tantras* stressed sexual ritual more as a conduit to the underlying creative energies of the universe and were practiced by a minority of sects. The ritual sexual practices centered upon harnessing the more mundane human impulses of desire toward higher aims in order to replicate the activity of the divine couple. The sexual acts were less for pleasure and intended as an offering toward higher aspirations. The psychological symbolism of the internal male and female energies was the major focus.

## Psychology

Carl Jung, along with other academics and intellectuals (Heinrich Zimmer and Mircea Eliade), examined the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric teachings. Sigmund Freud tended to interpret all religiously endowed and emotionally significant experience as derived from or a substitute for basic physical sex. Religious and emotional acts were equated as irrational and needed to be sublimated, modified into a cultural higher form. Freud's emphasis was on the biological; thus, sex was primarily a biological function. Unlike Freud, Jung found that there are specific commonalities between the practice of Tantrism and depth psychology. Jung considered sexuality itself to be a symbolic, numinous experience. Analytical psychology complements the aims of Tantrism by performing a soul-seeking or soul-retrieval function within a ritualized setting that invokes the divine and effects the embodiment of imaginal transformation. This union is analogous to the notion of the *coincidentia oppositorum* in analytical psychology in which the *anima* and *animus* (non-gender-specific female soul and non-gender-specific male soul) are united with spirit to form

a whole or oneness. Additionally, the internalization of the universal feminine principle is not unlike internalizing the good mother through which a person can relate positively to a feminine principle, fleshing out and healing the wound of previous emptiness of this aspect of the psyche. Tantrism and Jungian depth psychology offer methods for arriving at a more complex and intimate relationship of self (ego in Western psychological terms) with self. The notion of self in Jungian psychology would find its analog in the Tantric notion of unity achieved through oneness with the divine feminine, in which the essence of female follows the lineage of Shakti, Shiva, Sophia and Courtly Love.

Jung affirmed the nature of the opposites as being bi-gendered. The anima and animus are contained within each human psyche. Like the dual-serpents of *kundalini* energy, these twofold aspects must be set in motion to realize psychic equilibrium. The combination of these opposites does not depend as much upon two opposite genders but is based more upon the achievement of an embodied non-dualistic consciousness. The ultimate image that guided the practitioner of Tantrism was that of a male and a female conjoined in sexual intercourse. The contemplative aspect of the practice required “meditating upon emptiness and emanating supreme immutable bliss – a state of *passionate desirelessness*” (Emery 2005, p. 6), thus, a unified divine consciousness. Analogously, the *conuinctio* of anima and animus does not pertain to sexual gratification but represents an integrated expression of harmonious wisdom that surpasses mundane sexual longings. The capacity of Tantrism to comprehend the efficacy of the symbolic demonstrates how these early practices offer valuable tools to psychoanalysis in terms of working beyond words, a helpful factor with preverbal patients, and dealing directly with the essential being of the person.

Tantric sexual practices more rightly might be compared to the transference between a modern day therapist and patient, although the bodily emphasis is transformed into emphasis upon the imaginal and the symbolic. If desire is ignited in a positive transference, it finds life in the imaginal and sacred realm of the therapeutic space and

the third space shared by the two persons. The process of *conuinctio*, or divine marriage, is a goal much like that of the early alchemists who projected upon matter symbolically to achieve transformative ends.

Tantrism and Jungian psychology place emphasis upon a *temenos*, a sacred container, and both emphasize the numinous and mystical in the physical and phenomenal realm. Tantrism strives toward internalization of the divine imago. Jungian theory likewise seeks this emphasis. The notion of individuation is analogous to the Tantric understanding of the exchange of currents, once internalized, flowing to and from the source with an ongoing reciprocity (ego and self or ego-self axis in analytical terms). Just as the goddess *Shakti* seeks to create an imprint or image in human form, the self of the psyche seeks us, fueled by the divine source that fuels it. The divine intentionally comes into a human form.

Tantrism, like depth psychology, affirms the tumultuousness of the descent that the individual psyche must undergo into the chthonic realm in order to attain higher consciousness. Similar to Tantric practice, analytical psychology understands the role of the healer as one engaged in a liturgical ritual as a priest. Depth psychology presumes that the therapist, like the master in Tantrism, has sufficiently developed an element of the divine within that enables one to guide the patient in bringing an element of the divine into fruition.

Psychoanalysis, in general, mirrors Tantrism, in that it has specific tenets such as the frame (time, place) and an alliance between two persons comparable to the relationship between initiate and guru/master. The authority of the therapist is not derived solely from intellectual theory, any more than the guru's power is a mere derivative of Tantric doctrine. Differences would be that a therapist would not consider himself to be equated with the divine, for this would be an inflation of narcissistic grandeur. Nor does a therapist intend to transform himself into a divinity. The guru, however, is assumed to have achieved a non-dualistic state of being.

In contrast, a therapist will struggle in an ongoing way with various issues of countertransference (individual response to what the patient

induces in him or is already a vulnerable aspect of the therapist's psyche). Unlike the psychoanalyst, for whom the transference can induce potentially negative psychic effects, the guru remains untouched by the initiate's damaging energies, having attained high spiritual awareness.

Depth psychology maintains a very structured system of ethics comparable to Tantric doctrine. Yet, unlike some Tantric practices in which the priest enacted sexual practice with virgins representing the divine goddess, a therapist adheres to a completely different code of ethics. If a therapist were to act out with a patient, this would be considered to be not only unethical, but an abuse of the patient's vulnerability in light of the therapist's authority. Further, as the alchemists would say, the bird has flown out of the vessel, meaning that such an action would entirely disrupt the growth of the patient up to this point and that the patient would need to begin all over again in the process of healing.

The downside of removing the bodily aspect from actual proximity to analytic psychology is that the body, along with the desires (*Shakti*) aroused within certain psychotherapeutic transferences, must find a conduit in life, or these energies will go underground again like a recoiled serpent. The separation of the body from ritual practice has promoted a split between the fields of psychology and "body work." This split has yet to be resolved successfully in our time.

The Tantric ideals of preparation and initiation are equally evident in psychological practice. Initiation might be compared to the power of the positive or negative transference that the patient transfers onto the therapist, which changes over time as the two persons create an energy field. The individual, like the Tantric initiate, comes to the therapist/master with the projection that the person possesses the capability of changing his or her future. The very existence of the transference maintains a specific kind of authority needed by the therapist to impart "insights" comparable to the hidden truths or mysteries of the *Tantras*.

Tantrism arose historically as a movement that developed in reaction against the authoritative high forms of orthodox Hinduism and Buddhism

that neglected the sensation of the body, while also relegating the feminine principle to a secondary or nonexistent status. Psychology emphasizes that instinct and imagination are aspects of the bodily senses and thus necessary parts of the ritual healing. Depth psychology, inclusive of both Freudian and Jungian schools of thought, arose specifically as a humanistic form of healing practice in response to the inability of medicine, theology, and religion to sufficiently address many of the issues of the ailing person.

Analogous to the notion in analytical psychology that both persons in the therapeutic process undergo transformation, in Tantrism, the initiate transfers his or her inborn self-healing potential to the guru. The guru, like the analyst, "holds" this potential until it becomes conscious to the patient/initiate.

Similarly, the guru assists the initiate in realizing images and symbols through the specified preparation and purification processes. Tantrism, with its openness to the instincts and emotions of the body, allows considerable access to potent and numinous symbols, accompanied by the psychic energies that are freed along with making the unconscious conscious. The Tantric mind is analogous to the embodied psyche – the experience of the body being penetrated or infused by spirit.

Perhaps the most essential insight is that, in either case – imaginal or actual – desire in relation to the feminine was not despoiled in Tantric practices but offered multiple levels of conscious spiritual attainment through practices involving mind, body, and psyche. In our contemporary world, how do we embrace the significance of phenomenal experience in relation to spirituality? Is real or imaginal affinity for the feminine figure more significant in the process of spiritual consciousness?

Tantric practice as it informs analytical psychology suggests how feminine consciousness and the inclusion of the body offers a transformational process in spiritual growth that effects the maturation of psychological and spiritual development. We differentiate ourselves through participation with otherness – what is most opposite and other than ourselves – toward a *jouissance* of being that is inclusive of spiritual embodiment.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Taoism

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Lao Tzu wrote in the sixth to seventh century: “Every being in the universe is an expression of the *Tao*. . . The *Tao* gives birth to all beings, nourishes them, maintains them, cares for them, comforts them, protects them, takes them back to itself. . . That is why love of the *Tao* is in the very nature of things.” (Lao Tzu in Mitchell 1989, p. 13)

The *Tao* (pronounced “Dao”) is “The Way” of the ancient Chinese philosophers. The central idea is that harmony with nature is the way to live graciously. To live in harmony with the way the universe works is to keep in tune with natural laws.

The concepts of *Yin* (feminine) and *Yang* (masculine) energies flow all through the worldview of the Taoists. The classic text, the *Tao te Ching*, is believed to have been written by the poet and philosopher Lao Tzu. Much of Chinese culture has been deeply influenced by these Taoist ideas, including statesmanship, religion, medicine (e.g., acupuncture), physical exercise (*Tai Chi* or *Qi Gong*), and even auspicious placement of buildings and interior decorations (*Feng Shui*).

Psychologically, a Taoist perspective could be considered to be quite counterculture in the United States today. The emphasis on yielding, for example, would be contrary to the current psychotherapeutic emphasis on assertiveness. Among Asians, however, this Taoist outlook may permeate their worldview, and the influence of Asian culture (including martial arts) has had its impact on the mainstream US culture as well.

## See Also

- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)

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## Tara

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## Origins

The goddess Tara, one of many female deities, was first found in early Hinduism and later was adopted



by Tibetan Buddhism in the early third century BCE. She is worshiped throughout Tibet, Nepal, and parts of Southeast Asia. Some schools of Buddhism recognize 21 Taras. The Chinese call her Kwan Yin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, her name meaning “one who hears the cries of the world.” Tara is known as the Mother of Mercy, the Goddess of Compassion, the “mother of liberation,” and the “one who saves.” According to one legend, she emerged from a lotus that grew in a lake made by the tears of Avalokitesvara as he wept for the world’s sufferings. In the early Sanskrit tradition, she was also known as Dhruva, the Pole Star, and so has also been associated with Mary, the Mother of God known as Star of the Sea. There are different forms of Tara represented by different colors, including blue, green, red, yellow, black, and white aspects of White Tara, reflecting her responsiveness to the needs of beings in different circumstances. The colors also represent the many facets of wholeness or balance. The Green Tara is known for her activity of compassion for all beings. Some say the Green Tara represents the night. The White Tara contains all the colors and is also the symbol of compassion, healing, and serenity. The Red Tara is recognized as the fierce aspect of Tara, but the fierceness is not about destructiveness but about magnetizing all good things. Some representations depict her as wrathful, destroying negativity, and overcoming disharmonious conditions. In these pictures, Tara sits in the center of a raging fire destroying the enemies within: all that is delusion and that gets in the way of liberation and enlightenment. The Black Tara is often associated with power, the Yellow Tara with wealth and prosperity, and the Blue Tara with the transmutation of anger (<http://www.crystalinks.com/tara.html>).

The Buddhist tradition has 21 different manifestations of Tara, and there are mantras or songs of praise to each, describing her attributes (for reference to these, see *Praises to the 21 Taras* – <http://www.fpmt.org/prayers/21taras94rdr.pdf>).

### Other Manifestations

Tara can be likened to the Virgin Mary – known also as Stella Maris – Star of the Sea, or to

Aphrodite, also said to be born from water and known as the Morning/Evening Star. In other cultures, there are vibrations of her name. In a Polynesian myth, Tara is a beautiful sea goddess; in Latin, she is Terra or Mother earth; the Druids’ mother goddess was Tara; in Finland the Women of Wisdom were known as Tar; in South America, an indigenous tribe in the jungle called her Tarahumara; and, finally, Native American people speak of a Star Woman who came from the heavens and from whom all essential food grew (<http://www.crystalinks.com/tara.html>). As with many female deities, “Tara governs the Underworld, the Earth and the Heavens, birth, death and regeneration, love and war, the seasons, all that lives and grows, the Moon cycles - Luna - feminine - creation” (<http://www.crystalinks.com/tara.html>).

### Psychological Images

From the standpoint of psychology, Tara is symbolic of the Great Mother archetype, the feminine principle. Embodied in men and women, Jung refers to this feminine principle as the *anima* or *soul* (Jung 1969). It is the principle of relationship and of feeling, eminently expressed in Tara as compassion. The mother is responsible for birth and life, for nurturing and development, and for fertility and fruitfulness. “The place of magic transformation and rebirth, together with the underworld and its inhabitants, are presided over by the mother” (Jung 1982, p. 16). Hence, the task of each individual is the development of all the qualities embodied by Tara, in order to achieve wholeness and completeness and inner wisdom. In Tibetan symbolism, green is considered to be a color that embodies all other colors. Hildegard of Bingen spoke of the “greening of the earth,” implying that all of us need to develop this wholeness and greenness. We can learn from Tara simple and direct means of discovering within oneself the wisdom, joy, and compassion of the goddess as we travel along the path to enlightenment. As a female bodhisattva, Tara combines the spiritual with the human – heaven and earth. Each human being is a potential bodhisattva, learning to bring

into balance, yin and yang, male and female, consciousness and unconsciousness, and the self and no-self. The bodhisattva within each of us challenges us to keep on the journey towards maturation or individuation and to reach out in compassion to all other sentient beings.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)

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## Teilhard de Chardin

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Many spiritually oriented individuals have as their personal aim the realization of union with the Divine. Many spiritual paths view the sense of union with all humanity as being preliminary or at least concurrent with Divine union. It is to Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J., that contemporary religion owes its increasing capacity to see humanity as an interrelated whole and its will to transform religious thinking into global consciousness. Teilhard wrote:

Across the immensity of time and the disconcerting multiplicity of individuals, one single operation is taking place.... one single thing is being made: the Mystical body of Christ (Teilhard de Chardin 1960, p. 143).

Reflecting on Teilhard's worldview, Catholic scholar Ewert Cousins wrote:

Clearly, the earth is on a trajectory toward unification. That we of the twenty-first century can conceptualize this process spiritually is due in large part to the prophetic vision of the Jesuit mystic-scientist (Cousins 1985).

## Teilhard the Man

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955) was born into an aristocratic family in France, where he acquired both traditional Catholic piety with mystical interests, and scholarly, scientific traits. He was educated by the Jesuits and ordained a priest in 1911. As a member of the Society of Jesus, he briefly taught physics and chemistry but devoted most of his life to the pursuit of scientific knowledge. Evolution was his passionate study. Involved in many archeological digs in China and Outer Mongolia, he was a key member of the paleontology team that discovered *Sinanthropus pekinensis* ("Peking Man"), an important early link in the evolution of humankind (Teilhard de Chardin 1966). Reflecting deeply on the process of evolution, Teilhard brought his contemplative consciousness to bear on what he called the "diaphaneity of matter." In *Hymn of the universe* he wrote:

Blessed be you, mighty matter, irresistible march of evolution, reality ever new-born; you who, by constantly shattering our mental categories, force us to go ever further and further in our pursuit of the truth. Blessed be you, universal matter, immeasurable time, boundless ether, triple abyss of stars and atoms and generations; you who by overflowing and disordering our narrow standards of measurement reveal to us the dimensions of God (Teilhard de Chardin 1961, p. 68f).

## Teilhard's Thought

As a mystic, Teilhard viewed evolution in both scientific and spiritual light. He saw repeated

patterns, with life emerging from the simple to the complex. From atoms to cells to living creatures, he recognized the processes inevitably requiring first differentiation and then unification. Human life, for example, begins with single cells that differentiate into two and then four, then multiple cells, each cell finding its purpose in the development of neonatal life. He saw that the process is one of repeated “complexification.” Extrapolating from the intelligent, complex beings in the human species, Teilhard foresaw the next phase of development wherein humans will first differentiate and then unite into a higher level of being, i.e., humanity as a whole. This will occur, he predicted, when a shell of intellect, or “noosphere,” envelopes the earth. This is an irresistible physical process, the “collectivization” or “planetization” of humanity (Teilhard de Chardin 1964). To Teilhard, the endpoint of this evolutionary unification would be what he called the Omega Point, wherein humanity would be united by the force of love. The “fire of love,” as he called it, is what Teilhard thought to be the power of Christ.

Teilhard’s ideas were so radically new in the 1940s and 1950s that he was prohibited from publishing his *magnum opus*. Although Teilhard’s thoughts seemed new, they are really quite in tune with the unitive insights of the mystics both East and West throughout the ages. In 1955 the Jesuit Order permitted posthumous publication of *The Phenomenon of Man*. Since then, his ideas have had a tremendous impact not only on Catholic thinking but also on scientific thought.

## Global Consciousness

If Teilhard and all the great mystics are right, then there is de facto unity among us, and what is emerging is global awareness of that underlying unity. Today the Internet, which was not yet known in Teilhard’s life, is a manifestation of the “noosphere” or shell of intellect enveloping the earth. When Teilhard foresaw the tide of destructive forces that threaten the planet, he called upon all people to unite in building the earth. With

today’s threats from terrorism as well as climate change, Teilhard’s call remains the same.

Our task, from a psychological perspective, is to deepen our personal awareness of the interconnections among us and to help others to become aware of those deep spiritual interrelationships. In so doing, we participate as co-creators in the evolution of human consciousness. The interreligious dialogue is today a vibrant venue for such deepening awareness, helping humanity first to differentiate, to appreciate diversity, and then to integrate, through comprehending our essential spiritual unity.

Teilhard himself always saw the Omega Point in Christian terms. However, others who follow him have realized that in true global unity, no one religion can dominate all the rest. Thus, a true sense of dialogue must be established wherein mutual respect is engendered. Psychology has a significant role in fostering and facilitating that dialogue. Seen in breadth and depth of perspective, the world religions have not only different theologies and philosophies but also, in essence, vastly different worldviews (Panikkar 1999). Toward furthering cross-cultural understanding and appreciation of religious differences and similarities, psychology has the opportunity to foster understanding with persons from varying cultures and religions. In like manner, in the spirit of Teilhard, psychological understanding can facilitate globalization by dialogue addressing such problems as global warming and combating deleterious climate change.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Omega Point](#)

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## Teilhard de Chardin: Cosmic Christ

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If Western religion can be characterized by a pivotal notion around which it has turned in the last century in anticipation of the new millennium, it might best be encapsulated in a single image: the *Cosmic Christ*. The bold theory of combining the scientific evolution of nature and consciousness that played such a powerful role in ushering in a call by many contemporary writers for a metaphor to unite science with the globe's perennial philosophies and religions had its inception in the writings of the French Jesuit priest and mystical visionary Teilhard de Chardin (1881–1955). He spent 20 years in China doing paleontology, and he had a wide view of history and culture, nature, and spirit. He sought to blend science and religion into a single theory of evolution with the early postmodern insight that a scientific study of nature and psycho-spirituality cannot be separated, because:

... the investigations of science have proved beyond all doubt that there is no fact which exists in isolation, but that every experience, however objective it may seem, inevitably becomes enveloped in a complex of assumptions... (Teilhard de Chardin 1960a, p. 30).

Thus, Teilhard worked to blend physical evolution with the evolution of consciousness moving towards a divine “Omega” Point. The apotheosis

point for the notion of a Cosmic Christ (as distinguished from the historical Christ) may be found later in Matthew Fox's 1988 book *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. This vision can be expanded to embrace world religions.

Although Teilhard's writings were suppressed by his Catholic superiors and he was forbidden from teaching and publishing his major masterpieces, many volumes were made available to readers in the years following his death on Easter Sunday, 1955. A new era of a uniquely global vision of transcendent cosmic spirituality emerged within 5 years. Chardin is often rightly seen as a main ancestor of Western religion. Psychologically his vision can be seen as an evolving union of human consciousness with the divine Light. But this is not the same metaphor of the Cosmic Christ we see in New Age spirituality, where it is all about incense and love and a Light that is typically unaware of its own shadow; for Teilhard the divine is the “combined essence of all evil and all goodness,” filled with compassion as well as with “violence” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, pp. 60, 61).

A similar but broader vision of the divinization of consciousness was coined by Richard Maurice Bucke in his seminal book *Cosmic Consciousness*. It is not Jesus who emerges in *Cosmic Consciousness* as the book's primary exemplar of the type of expansion Bucke felt the world needs to experience in order to know the meaning of divine evolution in the universe. It was America's seminal bard: Walt Whitman and I would not characterize Whitman's spirituality as “New Age” (Hanegraaff 1998) either. Nevertheless, I do see Whitman as a major ancestor of autochthonous American spirituality that has a direct link to shamanism. I think we can trace the image of the Self in the human psyche to the archaic *shamanic* archetype, which is at the center of all religions: from Shaivism to Buddhism, from Zoroaster to Moses, Jesus to Mohammed, and the Goddess to Whitman (see Herrmann below). This gives a psychological grounding to the history of consciousness and the Self's emergence at a critical period of the approximately 30,000–40,000 BCE. As archeologists have

shown, this is the crucial time in human evolution when we see a sudden explosion of consciousness, which we see, for instance, with the proliferation of shamanistic art.

Many spiritual writers have latched onto the idea of a Cosmic Christ. It is essentially a vision of the “divinization” of consciousness throughout all of the universe (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 23). It can be seen as an evolution of nature and consciousness towards a “convergence point” (Omega) that culminates in a grand phenomenon of “cosmogogenesis” and “hominization” of humanity into a “divine *milieu*,” as Teilhard called it, with the Christ image at its center of psychological and spiritual metamorphosis. Teilhard felt the Christ image was large enough and evolved enough, to appeal to everyone. But now the same could be said of a Cosmic Buddha, Cosmic YHWH, or Cosmic Allah, to satisfy the demand of the world’s faithful for a spiritually democratic vision that allows all religions to be embraced as equals.

First of all and perhaps most importantly, Chardin was a visionary mystic, and he was also an archeologist who was one of the first researchers to excavate Peking man in China. All of his writings are an attempt to portray one spectacular picture of physical, psychic, and spiritual evolution in the human species, tending towards an apex of Light. He was dazzled by a grand vision of this in China in 1916. At the center of this powerful pulsating vision is the radiant Light of the cosmos that infused Chardin in China, insofar as that great explosion could be imagined then. At the beginning of Chardin’s theology are cosmic *Fire* (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 21), “*The Whole Universe is aflame*” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 78), and “Blazing Spirit, Fire. . . This is my Body. . . This is my Blood” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 22). Chardin’s view of the mystical body of Christ extends from the wafer of the consecrated host to the entire “cosmos itself” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 14). This is a highly personal, psychological, and mystical vision, one that sees the very purpose of your being, my being, and all of your love and life, and mine, and his, as dependent on an interrelatedness of “the

union between yourself and the universe” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 36).

In “Hymn to Matter” Teilhard acclaims further the “melodious fountain of water” and the “limpid crystal” from which the “new Jerusalem” or *divine milieu* of the Cosmic Christ springs (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 70) to be a living fountain of our common origination in anthropocentric *cosmogogenesis*. This is also (I would add) a *shaman’s crystal*: an object of clear light that shines at the heart of every religion, in every culture on earth from the radiating heart of spirit and matter. Significantly, Teilhard refers to such a crystallizing prism as a “psychic cosmic center” or “supreme pole of consciousness” towards which all of the “elementary consciousnesses of the world shall converge” towards the “rising of a God” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 90).

Today a major conceptual confusion in Chardin’s attempts to sketch out the lineaments of a Cosmic Christ rests, at least from a depth-psychological angle, in the exclusively Christian accent of his vision, as opposed to a more universal one, such as we find at apotheosis, for instance, in Matthew Fox’s *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*. The main questions to ask ourselves here are (1) What is the image of God that is coming? (2) Is the Christ image large enough to subsume the all towards which all religions turn?

Another term that became popular in the 1970s was spiritual “energy” and once again Chardin anticipated this *energy* concept by over 40 years with his concept of “cosmic energy” (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 96), although this is by no means a new spiritual concept, as the Chinese called it *qi* (“chi”) divided and united in Yin and Yang. It may be a reawakened consciousness in industrial society, but most religious traditions have had what one might call spiritual emotion, or “energy,” as part and parcel of their world views, such as in the notions of the Shekinah, Holy Spirit, or Kundalini. In Melanesia the term *mana*, for moreover, is a forerunner of G. G. Jung’s notion of psychic energy. *Mana* has parallels in Native American religions with the notions of *wakan* in the Siouxan language, *wakonda* among the Dakota Indians, *oki* among the Iroquois, and *manitu* among the Algonquins



(Jung 1960, p. 61). The psychological notion of *psychic energy* = *Cosmic Energy* in Teilhard's thought. Such cosmic/psychic energy is in the process of emerging towards an ever-increasing point of spiritual *intensity*: "the bubbling up of the newly-formed life-centre as it explodes upon itself" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 102). This explosive extension of the global consciousness towards an Omega Point is what Chardin calls the "*critical point of species-formation*" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 110), and it has been in the process of progressive psychosocial evolution during the "whole process of *hominization*" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 116). In *The Phenomenon of Man* he points in the chapter "The *Homo Sapiens Complex*" to the Neolithic age of the reindeer, when "a definitely liberated thought explodes, still warm, onto the walls of the caves" of our ancestors (Teilhard de Chardin 1960a, p. 202). This is the central nucleus at the heart of the human psyche that I have called the enduring *shamanic impulse*: the impulse towards poetry, healing, science, and art.

In Teilhard's overall vision "The mystical Christ has not yet attained its full growth; and therefore the same is true of the cosmic Christ" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 133). The Cosmic Christ is, therefore, a world phenomenon that is in the process of *becoming*. This is not the Christ of the "old cosmos" only "but also of the new cosmogenesis" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 139). More, the most "cosmic" of sacred Christian writers was not St. Augustine wrestling with evil, but St. John and St. Paul mysticism (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 144). At the end point of Chardin's notion of the Cosmic Christ, finally, is his belief that the "most massive blaze of collective love that has ever appeared in the world burns here and now in the heart of the Church of God" (Teilhard de Chardin 1965, p. 155).

This is the primary point of contention between Chardin's view of the Cosmic Christ at inception and the Cosmic Christ at apotheosis, in Fox's writing. Whereas Teilhard sees the Church as the vehicle for divinization, Fox envisions something much wider that may include all Temples of God, shrines to the great Goddess, and Mosques, as places for the world's spiritual transformation.

And Fox too has been wrongly pegged as a New Age writer. The main question for the history of psychology and religion is the important question of antecedents in the notion of cosmic awareness, as we see, for instance, in the following question asked by him in *The Divine Milieu*: "Could there be a more up to date or more faithful version of St Paul's doctrine of the 'cosmic' Christ?" (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 41). Yes, certainly there can, given the new cosmology.

Teilhard appears to answer his own question definitively when he says:

Such has been my experience in contact with the earth—the diaphany of the Divine at the heart of the universe on fire... Christ; his heart; a fire; capable of penetrating everywhere and, gradually, spreading everywhere" (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 46).

This is Chardin's subjective truth, his personal belief, or subjective confession. What is true for Teilhard may not be true for a Hindu or Sufi, where Shiva, or Allah, or Khidr might be formulations for the better consciousness at the center of the cosmos, whether as a Divinity of compassion, blazing annihilation, or love.

The personalization and divinization of the universe is what most writers on the Cosmic Christ agree on: a *vehicle* of "vocation" is the way the Cosmic Christ may be ushered in (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 46). Central in this vision is the realization that there can be no mention of a divine milieu, anthropogenesis, hominization, or Omega Point without mention of personal *vocations*. The universal divine milieu is the ultimate point upon which "all realities converge" (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 114) and the reason for the radical spiritualization in the human species is the creative *vocational* channel the Cosmic Christ carved in the collective psyche (Jung) or noosphere (Teilhard):

Christ—for whom and in whom we are formed, each with his own individuality and his own vocation—Christ reveals himself in each reality around us, and shines like an ultimate determinant, like a centre, one might almost say like a universal element (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 125).

The divine milieu is not a fixed point in the universe, but a moving center that we each, in our



own individual ways, have to follow like a loadstar and to this end: “That star leads each man differently, by a different path, in accord with his vocation” (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 139). Thus, the soul of each person is not the entire cosmos. Rather, the end point is reached in “the body of him who is and of him who is coming” (Teilhard de Chardin 1960b, p. 155). What is the nature of the Divinity “who is coming”? This remains the main question to many, not to Chardin. For him belief in the second coming of Christ is enough, for it had already occurred in Teilhard.

While Chardin’s notion of the Cosmic Christ began with a vision in 1916 in China, it was not until 14 years later, in 1930, that the idea of the “convergence of the cosmos” and the whole train of consequent ideas evolved in him into “the Law of Complexity-Consciousness, the Confluence of human branches, and existence of an Omega Point at the head of Noogenesis” (Teilhard de Chardin 1978, p. 48). In a section called “The Religion of Tomorrow” he adds: “*In a system of cosmo-noo-genesis, the comparative value of religious creeds may be measured by their respective power of evolutive activation*” (Teilhard de Chardin 1978, p. 97).

What Chardin actually means by Cosmic Christ was stated perhaps most succinctly in one of his last statements written in March 1955, one month before he died: the Truth had to appear only once to begin its spreading effect universally, with the aim of setting “everything ablaze” with a Light that testified that “*sooner or later there will be a chain-reaction*” (Teilhard de Chardin 1978, p. 102). This chain reaction is the spirituality of the earth’s peoples that is coming.

In sum, we all evolved from the massive explosion of a supernova that burst beautifully against a sea of dark energy and dark matter 13.7 billion years BCE, and that incredible blaze of cosmic Light can still be perceived both in the physical world and in the inward mirror reflection of human consciousness, at its dawn state; preserved as it has been, for at least 30,000 years in Paleolithic cave paintings, the first explosions of cosmic thought appeared in portrait representations of shamanistic art and continued, for

example, psychologically in Jung’s hypothesis of the Self, as it appears variously in the world’s religions and now reawakens in the Age of Aquarius (Herrmann 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ Creation Spirituality
- ▶ Fox, Matthew
- ▶ Omega Point
- ▶ Teilhard de Chardin
- ▶ Whitman, Walt

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## Temenos

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*Temenos* [Greek τέμενος] refers to a piece of land set aside or cut off from everyday use and assigned as a special domain for the veneration of

a temporal ruler or a god. It may also be a built structure as in a *temple* that has been consecrated for a sacred purpose, such as a place of sacrifice to a deity or of worship.

A *temenos*, in a narrow sense, is a Greek sanctuary that has been constructed in a specific location that has significance for a ruler or god to be venerated. The temenos dedicated to the chief of the gods at Olympia is called the temenos of Zeus. A temenos may be demarcated by boundary stones possibly erected as a colossal wall or rampart. It is frequently associated with a special tree, such as the Bodhi tree (Sri Maha Bodhi), under which Siddhartha Gautama sat and achieved enlightenment and which was to become the site of the Mahabodhi Temple of Buddhism. The temenos may, itself, take the form of a sacred grove of trees, such as Plato's *grove of Academe* outside of Athens.

The practice of dividing the world into sacred and profane precincts is observed throughout prehistoric, ancient, and civilized societies. The temenos universally represents a sacred place set aside from the secular or profane world. It is an integral part of so-called primitive cultures where the sacred place was seen as the center of the cosmos (the Axis Mundi) and was often marked by a sacred tree which represented death and rebirth and the connection between heaven, earth, and hell. Stone and water were usually also a part of the sacred place – stone for its symbolization of permanence and water for purification.

From Celtic spirituality comes the concept of the *thin place*, an idea that is related to that of temenos. A thin place is a sacred place where the veil or membrane between heaven and earth is thin or where one can pass easily back and forth between the material and spiritual worlds. A thin place may be a specific location where great spiritual energy is experienced by many as being received, such as at Stonehenge, Glastonbury, Luxor, or Mecca. It may be situated on a mountain such as Sinai, Ararat, Machu Picchu, Fuji, or Athos. A temenos or temple is often erected at or near the site of a thin place in response to the presence of spiritual energy that is found there. The temenos serves to facilitate passage between the opposing realms of the

visible and invisible, conscious and unconscious, inner and outer, and spiritual and earthly.

In a certain sense, the work of depth psychology, as experienced in the encounter between analyst and analysand, is soul work. The work of this interaction is benefited by a space that is experienced by both therapist and patient as quiet, safe, and sacred, where it is possible to access the unconscious without fear of distraction from the profane world outside. The therapist's office is a form of holding place or vessel; its walls and ambiance cut it off from the rest of the world, so that the work of healing can be done. The therapy room may be seen to function as a thin place or temenos for the practice of psychotherapy. It might even be thought of as a sacred enclosure where a symbolic journey through death and rebirth can occur.

### See Also

- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)
- ▶ [Bodhi Tree](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Communitas](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Gardens, Groves, and Hidden Places](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Water](#)
- ▶ [Western Wall](#)

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## Teresa of Avila

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St. Teresa was born on March 28, 1515, in Avila, Spain. She joined the contemplative Carmelite order, taking the habit on November 2, 1535. She founded her first monastery, St. Joseph, in Avila, in 1562. She then founded 17 convents, all smaller and simpler and with more discipline than the traditional ones of her times.

Teresa is best known for her three main works. The first was her autobiography, *The Life of Teresa of Jesus*, written when she was in her 40s and completed in 1565. *The Way of Perfection* was written a year later in 1566. Finally, near the end of her life, in 1577, when she was 62 years old, she completed *The Interior Castle*, a work she considered a masterpiece, her best work. She died on October 4, 1582. She was canonized in 1622. In 1970 Pope Paul VI declared her a Doctor of the Church.

St. Teresa suffered from serious illnesses. She was bedridden for years. She had emotional issues as well. From the beginning of her religious life, she faced enormous physical and spiritual challenges. She had to find her way, and she began by exploring herself. Her spiritual/psychotherapeutic journey was typically a slow, arduous journey requiring courage. Yet she was always attentive, constantly and consistently moving toward self-integration. She visited those places we might call mad or unreasonable. She noticed and then abstained from her “old passions,” her neuroses. She prayed, she meditated, she contemplated, and she looked within, all the time. Her journey to God was a journey to herself. She was a strong individual and example of a woman who strived through discipline, through prayer, through contemplation, and through seeking self-knowledge, to actualize herself. We can easily apply these spiritual struggles to a psychological perspective. She has been called a “psychological mystic.” Self-knowledge was very important to her. “This matter of self-knowledge must

never be neglected...” (St. Teresa of Avila, 1960, p. 145).

In *The Interior Castle*, she explores her “interior” self in a journey through seven “mansions.” Consistent with modern psychotherapeutic theory, houses often represent the self. This is a spiritual journey but a psychological one as well. As in therapy, it is a voluntary journey. It is also a heroic journey into the unknown. As in therapy there are stages. In St. Teresa’s first three stages or “mansions,” we are more active. We meet and become aware of our demons. We fight and subdue them. But after the fourth mansion, we can become less active and more receptive. We can go deeper. In the psychological journey, St. Teresa can be a guide to finding and growing an inner self, becoming clearer and deeper room by room. Especially for those with a lack of a sense of self, or those dealing with a narcissist or a schizoid dynamic, reading St. Teresa can be very helpful.

Therapists can find a model in St. Teresa as well. Often a new therapist is very active like the seeker in the beginning mansions. As she notices by exploring her own vices, like the religious person seeing what keeps her away from God, she sees that activity gets in the way. And as she reflects on how her own dynamics contribute to excessive activity, she can become less active, able to use Freud’s suspended, free-floating attention. Few words are required. There is less effort, more listening.

### See Also

- ▶ [Contemplative Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Ecstasy](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Thanatos

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The Greek word Thanatos literally means “death.” Thanatos also can have metaphorical meanings, such as the personification of death (cf. Romans 5.14 and 1 Corinthians 15.26), as well as spiritual meanings, such as eternal death (cf. 2 Corinthians 7.10). Edward Tripp (1970) notes that in classical mythology, “Thanatos was born of Nyx (Night)” and that Thanatos “and his brother Hypnos (Sleep) lived together in Tartarus” (p. 555). He also notes that “Thanatos appears in Euripides’s *Alcestis* to carry off the heroine from her tomb. Heracles wrestles with him, however, and brings her back to life” (Tripp 1970, p. 555). Tripp also directs us to these passages in mythology: *Iliad*, 16.453–455, 16.672–673, 16.682–683; *Theogony*, 211–212 and 758–766. This article will focus on Thanatos as it relates to psychology and religion, focusing in particular on the thought of Sigmund Freud, Norman Brown, and Robert Dykstra.

## Freud on Thanatos

In psychological circles, Thanatos always recalls Freud’s theory of the death instinct (some prefer the translation “death drive”), despite the fact that Freud never used the word Thanatos in his writings. However, Freud all but invites the term when he writes in *Civilization and Its*

*Discontents*: “And now it is to be expected that the other two ‘Heavenly Powers,’ eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result?” (1930/2001, p. 145). On the other hand, perhaps the omission of the title Thanatos was intentional, as it could intimate that the powers of Eros are more integrated, whereas the powers of the death instincts are more diffuse. Another explanation could be that the term Thanatos was first used by Wilhelm Steckel (Jones 1957, p. 273) and Freud and Steckel had a falling out (Gay 1988, pp. 213–124, 232), perhaps prompting Freud to never use the term in his writings. In any case, in Freud’s thinking, Eros is associated with the sexual and life instincts, instincts that tend to be constructive and have a uniting quality, whereas Thanatos is associated with the death instincts and have a destructive, aggressive, sadist, and even masochistic quality about them.

Freud first put forth his notion of the death instinct in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and he did so first in speculation to make sense of a problem with his theory of dreams. Since Freud earlier argued that all dreams are wish fulfillments, anxiety in dreams was problematic for his theory. How, for example, could recurring traumatic dreams possibly be wish fulfillments? What we normally think of as nightmares, on the other hand, did not pose such a problem, because Freud explained nightmares as repressed wishes coming too close to consciousness. That is, nightmares are revisions of dreams that have come too close to exposing repressed desires. But explaining *recurring* dreams that produce anxiety proved to be much more difficult for Freud, so much so that he eventually postulated the idea of the death instinct. Freud talked of this recurring as a “compulsion to repeat.” And he believed that it was an attempt to gain control over past situations retrospectively. He also likened the death instinct to the property of inertia. He observed that there is a tendency in organic life to return to an earlier state of being – in religious language, “from dust to dust.” Freud famously proclaimed, “*the aim of all life is death*,” and in this sense,

the death instinct can be thought of as a suicidal impulse. But why, one might object, does not all life perish immediately? To this, Freud responded that our life instincts prevent this. And this seems to mean that the death instinct and the life instinct, taken together, guide organic life to die on its own terms. The death instinct also provides an explanation for aggression. Aggression, Freud came to believe, is the projection of the death instinct. The upshot of Freud's notion of the death instinct is that aggression is instinctual and basic to human nature. This means that attempts to eliminate particular aggressive behaviors will not solve any problems, which is why Freud argued that communism could not contain our aggressive impulses, because these impulses are not rooted in property (they are a part of human nature). Aggression cannot be eliminated; it can only be directed or channeled in better and worse ways (cf. Carlin 2009).

Freud's views on aggression and the notion of Thanatos have been debated and applied inside and outside of medical and psychological circles (see, e.g., Afkhami 1985; Arundale 2006; Bennett 2005; Brady 1974; Cho 2006; Groves 1999; Hutcheon and Hutcheon 1999; Marcuse 1966; Menninger 1938, 1942; Percy 1987; Ricoeur 1970; Stepansky 1977).

### Norman Brown on Thanatos

One of the more interesting philosophical and theological interpreters of Freud on the death instinct has been Norman Brown. In *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*, Brown (1959) notes that in 1953 he "turned to a deep study of Freud, feeling a need to reappraise the nature and destiny of man" (p. xi). And in this book Brown argues that "mankind, in all its restless striving and progress, has no idea what it really wants," that "Freud was right: our real desires are unconscious," and that it "also begins to be apparent that mankind, unconscious of its real desires and therefore unable to obtain satisfaction, is hostile to life and ready to destroy itself" (1959, p. xii). Brown further suggests that "the theory of

neurosis must embrace a theory of history; and conversely a theory of history must embrace a theory of neurosis" (1959, p. 13). Brown believed that psychoanalysis "can provide a theory of "progress," but only by viewing history as a neurosis" (1959, p. 18). He elaborates:

If therefore we think of man as that species of animal which has the historical project of recovering his own childhood, psychoanalysis suggests the historical proposition that mankind will not put aside its sickness and its discontent until it is able to abolish every dualism (Brown 1959, p. 52).

The reunification of Life and Death, Brown writes, can be envisioned as the end of the historical process (1959, p. 91). David Greenham has written the first systematic work on the work of Norman Brown. Greenham (2006) notes that "Brown is not writing history from a psychoanalytic point of view—a study in the Oedipal motivations of "great individuals" for example—but he is interpreting the very drives of history using the implications of Freud's late metapsychology" (p. 77). And, in his chapter on Brown's *Life Against Death*, Greenham notes that, "For Brown history has no ontological weight, it is rather only a symptom; it is neurosis pure and simple," for "nature has not history; it just *is*, it does not *become*" (2006, p. 64). He elaborates:

So by the transformation of psychoanalysis into a theory of history . . . he means a theory of the *end* of history, as we find in the Bible, as well as in Hegel and Marx. Brown's history "ends" not with revelation or absolute knowledge or the dictatorship of the proletariat—though in part it is all of those things. His history ends by plunging humanity into the immanence of "nature" (Greenham 2006, p. 65).

It is difficult to imagine what it would mean to plunge humankind back into the immanence of nature. But if one were to be able to imagine it, it would be even more difficult to imagine how this might be possible. But what is clear is that Brown is articulating a critique of western civilization and its denial of death. Greenham writes:

So, according to Brown, humans repress their death and in so doing create history as the history of repression: civilization as neurosis. It is the



human failure to recognize, at the most basic level, that life and death are the “same,” one half of the dialectic; which both fuels history and its meaning. Freud, perhaps, suggests this conclusion when he argues that the goal of all life is death, but he shies away from the truth as Brown sees it, and retains a dualism (2006, p. 79).

Greenham argues that, for Brown, Eros is the key to unlocking—and ending—history (2006, p. 67), and Religion is important for Brown not because he is putting forward any particular faith, but because he sees religion as a half-way house to curing history (2006, p. 66). Again, it is difficult to understand how religion can cure history in the sense that Brown is suggesting, that is, by reuniting life and death. But another author, Robert Dykstra, a pastoral theologian, has written more clearly about how aggression – what, in the context of this essay, we might call Thanatos – ought to be integrated into the lives of Christian men, uniting, in other words, Eros and Thanatos.

### Robert Dykstra on Aggression

In his “Rending the Curtain: Lament as an Act of Vulnerable Aggression,” Dykstra (2005) reflects on God’s own lament over the death of Jesus to address the lives of contemporary Christian men. His central theme, as his title indicates, is what is called “the rending of the curtain.” When Jesus died, Dykstra notes, the biblical text records that the curtain in the temple was torn in two. Dykstra argues that here God not only revealed Himself but also *exposed* Himself. Just as the Son was exposed on the cross, literally crucified naked, God the Father likewise exposed His genitals in the rending of the curtain. Dykstra draws on Howard Eilberg-Schwartz (1994) to suggest that “the veiling of God may serve as a theological legitimation of male hegemony. Unable to identify God’s sex, Israel’s men maintain their status as God’s beloved, while at the same time remaining safe from insinuation of homoeroticism” (Dykstra 2005, p. 61). He elaborates,

If Eilberg-Schwartz’s provocative thesis about ancient Judaism’s prohibitions against speculation about God’s sexual anatomy is correct, I suggest that Gospel accounts of the rending of the temple

curtain change all this, and that the lament is at the very heart of this decisive, even earth-shattering change . . . . God’s own nakedness is at last revealed. In this, God the Father fully identifies with God the Son (Dykstra 2005, p. 62).

Such an interpretation as Eilberg-Schwartz’s regarding God’s body – i.e., God’s body is concealed in the biblical text so as to conceal the implicit homoeroticism of the men of Israel uniting with their male God – accounts, Dykstra believes, for why there seems to be “an enduring underlying anxiety among men that faith somehow threatens masculinity” (2005, p. 62). However,

God’s lament, then, drives God—and this underlying anxiety among men of faith—from the closet; an unbearable grief, shame, and rage in response to Jesus’ death compel God to step out from behind the curtain in all God’s desperate glory. In Jesus’ death, we at last get a full frontal glimpse of God. God’s lament removes the dividing line between the holy and the profane. As the curtain is rent in two, so too the old division between sacred and profane is forever torn apart (Dykstra 2005, p. 62).

For too long, Dykstra rightly notes, “good Christians” have falsely believed that they are not supposed to express or delight in such emotions. Men are to be composed, especially in difficult times, but the result is that men “tend, as a result, to experience a diminished capacity for intimacy, mutuality, and authentic forgiveness with God and one another” (2005, p. 63). But because of the cross, we find “a God now suddenly revealed in lament, angry, and aggressive while naked and vulnerable, a God engaging in a sacred exhibitionism,” and Dykstra’s hope is, as he so eloquently puts it, “Would that those men who have the most to lose could love a God like this, could love God like this, could finally, in the end, simply love like this” (2005, p. 68).

Dykstra offers one way – a compelling way, to be sure – to think theologically about Thanatos: God here is destructive and aggressive, ripping the curtain in two, while also naked and vulnerable, breaking the conventions of public decency. There are surely other ways to think theologically about the vicissitudes of Thanatos. In any case, the theme of Thanatos has persisted since ancient days and haunts us even today. Those interested in psychology and religion cannot afford to



neglect these forces, whatever their ontological status may be, since they are nevertheless real mythologically and emotionally (cf. Menninger 1938, 1942).

## See Also

- ▶ Dreams
- ▶ Eros
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund

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## Theodicy

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The term “theodicy” was adapted from the French *theodicée* which is a compound of the Greek *theós* (God) and *díkē* (justice). Etymologically it means the “justification of God.” Generally speaking, theodicy refers to the vindication of divine government given the existence of evil.

Whatever else may be said of evil, it is certainly the abuse of a sentient being, a being that can feel pain. It is the pain that matters. Evil is

grasped by the mind immediately and felt by the emotions immediately; it is sensed as hurt deliberately inflicted. Evil is never abstract. It is an existential reality and has to be understood in the personal context of suffering.

In fourth-century Athens, the Epicureans challenged the Stoics with a trilemma: if God could have prevented evil and did not, he is malevolent; if God would have prevented evil but could not, he is impotent; if God could not and would not, why call him God? Here is the primary moral quandary for any monotheism claiming God to be omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. The problem is inescapable as well as profound. *Si deus bonus, vede malum?* “If God is good, why evil?” The insistence behind this question is the concentration of theodicy, a specific dimension of natural theology that attempts to justify or vindicate God’s morality vis-à-vis the evil that infects mankind.

The word “theodicy” was coined by the German mathematician and philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. In 1710 he used it as a theme and title of a book on metaphysics, *Essais de Théodicée sur la Bonté de Dieu*. Leibniz was a “theodician” who believed some error is unavoidable in any creature less perfect than its creator, all possible worlds contain some evil, and evil reveals good through contrast. If goodness was constant, we would take it for granted without realizing the blessings of God. In this life, evil is a necessary element like the shade in a picture, throwing into relief the beauty and harmony of the whole.

There are numerous dogmatic expressions of theodicy from two basic perspectives. The first emphasizes God’s ultimate goodness in spite of the existence of evil. Evil is negative but necessary. It eclipses the good which produces a contrast that ultimately clarifies God’s omniscience. Yahweh, for example, allows Job to be tortured and then rewards him. The second perspective is concentrated more on mankind’s responsibility than God’s because, in creation, the latter endowed the former with free will. The abuse of this freedom originates from within the human psyche. Injustice, cruelty, and

indifference are not divinely enabled but willfully enacted human behavior.

The subject of theodicy rarely appears in psychology texts or mental health journals. It is periodically addressed by grief literature and thanatology studies. The pastoral counseling movement has made some unique contributions to the literature via hospital chaplains who minister to the terminally ill. Pastoral counseling also explores the clinical significance of theodicy and how it can be used to intellectually block the grief process.

Theodicy may be seen as an indirect denial of God’s inconceivable nature or *mysterium*. For the justification of God’s permission of evil requires a comprehension of the incomprehensible. Nevertheless, the belief in an all-good and all-powerful God naturally leads to a faith in providence – *bonum ex nocentibus* – “out of evil good emerges.” Providence is hope that out of even the most negative experience, no matter how evil, as long as one chooses to look with insight, beneficial results will be revealed. To quote Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, “. . .to the height of this great argument I may assert eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to man.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)

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## Theophany

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Coming from the Greek *theophaneia*, “appearance of god,” a theophany is a revelation of god in which the divine is mediated by sensible matter. A theophany, then, is distinct from other mystical experiences in that it involves material, rather than merely psychic, phenomenon. Indeed, in a theophany, the natural world may exhibit characteristics unable to be explained by laws of nature or unable to be replicated and verified by empirical experimentation. Further, while achievement of a mystical state oftentimes depends upon, or is at least facilitated by, entrance into a receptive emotional or psychological state, a theophanic experience does not; it seems to spring from a source external to the visionary. In scriptural accounts, theophanies seem to be an interruption of the visionary's psychic state rather than an outcropping of it.

Nonetheless, a person *can* induce a hallucination that he describes as theophanic through meditation practices or the use of psychedelic drugs.

It must be noted that a theophany specifically reveals the *deity*. A mystical vision of a saint (such as a Marian apparition in Catholicism) does not qualify as a theophany. “Theophany,” thus, is a more restrictive term than is “hierophany,” Mircea Eliade's preferred term for a manifestation of the divine.

Theophanies may be found in any theistic religious tradition and, in modern times, have even been reported by individuals not subscribing to any religion. From both a doctrinal and a literary perspective, though, theophanies often function to make immanent a god who is typically characterized as being transcendent.

The Hebrew Bible recounts several theophanies, including Abraham's reception of the divine visitors at Mamre, where God tells him that he will bear a son by Sarah (Genesis 18:1–15);

Moses' theophany on Mount Sinai, during which God inscribes God's law on the tablets of stone (Exodus 19:16–32:14); and Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures and the wheels (Ezekiel 1:1–28). Two especially paradigmatic theophanies are Jacob wrestling with God (Genesis 32:22–33) and Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–4:7). In the former narrative, Jacob's body attests to the contact with God; after the encounter, Jacob's hip is dislocated. In the burning bush account, we see the divine utilizing the material world, yet transcending natural laws: the bush burns, but it is not consumed, as it would be by a merely natural flame.

Although inhabiting the material world, and thus less ephemeral than other mystical experiences, most theophanies are, nonetheless, temporary; after the deity has revealed its purpose to the visionary, the divine presence withdraws, and the natural world assumes its normal workings. The most enduring instances of theophanies are incarnations, in which the god assumes human (or animal) flesh and remains revealed for the duration of its earthly life. For Christianity, the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity as the historical Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God. The Eastern Orthodox churches, in fact, observe January 6 as the Feast of the Theophany, commemorating the Baptism of Jesus. (In the Western churches, January 6 is celebrated as the Feast of Epiphany and recalls the visitation of the Magi to the newborn Jesus.) As narrated in the Gospel accounts (Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22), Jesus' baptism portrays a unique theophany in Christianity – one that features the manifestation of all three Persons of the Trinity: the Father speaks, “This is My beloved Son,” as the Son emerges from the waters of the Jordan, and the Spirit descends in the visible form of a dove.

Hinduism, too, has incarnational theophanies in its idea of avatars. In Hinduism, a god may become incarnate more than once through the ages, and each incarnation is known as an avatar (from the Sanskrit *avatāra*, “descent”). The most well-known examples are the ten avatars of Vishnu. The versions vary slightly, but the Garuda Purana provides a standard list: a fish,

a tortoise, a boar, a lion man, a dwarf, the man Parashurama, the man Rama (legendary king of Ayodhya and hero of the Ramayana), the god Krishna, and Siddhartha Gautama (the Buddha). The tenth avatar, Kalki, is anticipated to come at the end of the present age (the *Kali Yuga*) to combat evil and corruption and usher in a new golden age (the *Satya Yuga*). In all cases, avatars become incarnate in order to respond to a specific need of the cosmos.

Although generally Islam eschews theophany in order to safeguard the utter transcendence of God, the notion of theophany appears in the thought of some Sufi Muslims. For instance, the Andalusian Sufi Ibn 'Arabī (1165–1240 CE) developed a cosmology in which all of creation, including humankind, is essentially a theophany. According to Ibn 'Arabī, God desired to know Godself in others who know God. God's being unknown (both to others and, as one who is known, to Godself) caused God sorrow, a creative sorrow out of which God reveals Godself through creation. Creation is an exhalation of God or God's shadow; God creates *within* the space of God's own breath. Ibn 'Arabī's system is panentheistic, a world in which all is in God and is thus not totally other than God. Creation is necessarily theophanic. In particular, according to Ibn 'Arabī, the divine names of God are theophanic; through each name, God reveals to creation (and, therefore, to Godself as well) an attribute of God's own divinity.

## Commentary

In psychoanalytic theory, mystical experience in general can be explained as misdirected sexual feelings, the mystical ecstasy proving for the sexual energy an outlet without directly engaging the sexual. Also, the psychic struggle between a superego and a force placing strictures on it can bring about a theophany when the psyche surrenders to exhaustion.

On the other hand, Jung ascribes theophanies to the unconscious. A theophanic experience, then, could be explained as the active imagination

probing the unconscious and assigning to the "vision" a particular theological significance.

Additionally, theophanic visions can be induced through the use of psychedelic drugs. The use of peyote in Native American ceremonies and references to soma in the Rig Vedas attest the widespread phenomenon of psychedelic theophanies.

Finally, a theophany may also be explained as a symptom of a psychotic or neurotic condition. Schizophrenics, in particular, may experience hallucinations that they describe as theophanic, particularly when the schizophrenia is marked by delusion, as well.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Avatar](#)
- ▶ [Baptism](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [God](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Hallucinations](#)
- ▶ [Hierophany](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Ibn al-'Arabī](#)
- ▶ [Incarnation](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Sufis and Sufism](#)

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## Theosophy

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“Divine Wisdom,” is a system of thought emphasizing mystical insight into the inner workings of the divine nature. The term is often used more restrictively to refer to the modern movement inaugurated by the creation of the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875. The principal founders were the enigmatic Russian noblewoman Helena P. Blavatsky (1831–1891) and the US lawyer and journalist Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907).

Blavatsky articulated an ideological basis for modern Theosophy in her writings, especially the monumental *Isis Unveiled* (1877) and *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). Olcott in turn was the first president of the organization. In his inaugural address of 1875, he referred to the conflict between religion and science which so disturbed

many Victorian minds, perceiving both pulpit and laboratory as, in his day, representing shallow, dogmatic views of truth. The real solution, he contended, lays in the rediscovery of an “Ancient Wisdom” known in former times but now nearly forgotten, except to various esoteric lodges and teachers, which could show anew the oneness of matter and spirit and the way to its realization.

Oneness and the Path constituted the essential message of the Theosophical Society. It was indicated in different words in the three objectives stated by the society, agreement with which is the only criterion for membership. Abbreviated and in current wording, they are to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity; to encourage the comparative study of religion, philosophy, and science; and to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in humanity.

Other teachings, developing implications of these principles and found in the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and other classic Theosophical writings, are also associated with the movement. One is that there are several “planes” or “bodies” in a human being and correspondingly in the cosmos. These embody different aspects of nature, but also in their interrelatedness express the ultimate oneness of reality. They are named and divided somewhat differently in different sources but include the physical, etheric or energy field, the “astral” (roughly emotional and mental-image sphere), mental, “buddhic” or intuitive, and “atmic” or divine.

Each individual is seen as a “monad” or “pilgrim” on a long journey, the “cycle of necessity,” passing through countless aeons, worlds, and lifetimes out from the one into the realm of manifestation, therein to experience it in innumerable ways, finally returning to the one enriched by all experience.

A corollary of this teaching is that some individuals are well ahead of the common run of humanity on the pilgrimage. They serve as guides and instructors to those willing to accept their tutelage. These persons are often called Masters, Mahatmas, or Elder Brethren. It was said that Blavatsky had a close relationship with certain

of them and that they had a role in the establishment of the Theosophical Society.

Modern Theosophy's history has been sometimes colorful, producing several divisions. All Theosophical groups have been relatively small but have had a significant cultural influence through their promulgation of concepts important particularly to modern art, poetry, and the "new age" movement.

## See Also

► [Pilgrimage](#)

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## Tillich, Paul

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### Tillich's German Years (1886–1933)

Paul Johannes Tillich (1886–1965), a Protestant Christian theologian and philosopher of religion, was born in the village of Starzeddel, East Prussia, a province of the German Empire where his

father, Johannes Oskar Tillich (1857–1937), was a conservative Lutheran minister and church administrator. In 1900, Tillich and two younger sisters, Johanna Marie (1891–1920) and Elisabeth (b. 1893), moved with their parents to Berlin, the city where their father was born and educated. Their mother, Mathilde Düselen Tillich (b. 1860), died in 1903.

After studying Greek and Latin at humanist *Gymnasien* in Königsburg and Berlin, Tillich pursued theological studies at the University of Berlin (1904), the University of Tübingen (1905), and the University of Halle (1905–1907). He completed his Doctor of Philosophy degree with a dissertation on philosophy of religion and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854) at the University of Breslau in 1911. Tillich earned his Licentiate of Theology at the University of Halle with a thesis titled *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development (1912/1974)*. By the age of 25, Tillich was prepared to lecture in both philosophy and theology at the university level.

Ordained a Lutheran minister in his father's church in Berlin in 1912, Tillich first served a parish in an inner city district of Berlin where he ministered to the working poor (Tillich 1931/1948). He also began to imagine ways to revive the relevance of Christian teachings among members of the educated classes.

In 1913, Tillich began his academic career with postdoctoral work on a *Habilitationsschrift* at the University of Halle, a thesis on philosophy and truth in theologians prior to Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) which would help him secure university employment. That same year he married Margarethe (Greti) Wever (1888–1968), a union that did not survive Tillich's volunteer service as a German army chaplain on the Western Front from September 1914 to December 1918. At war, Tillich witnessed countless horrific scenes, including the epic Battle of Verdun (February–December 1916), where he was responsible for the care and burial of thousands of combat casualties. Twice he suffered nervous breakdowns in response to what might now be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The World War, writes Tillich in 1919, "caused a tear



in the deepest foundations for me and my generation so great that it could never be closed up again” (Bayer 2009).

Following the war, Tillich began lecturing at the Theology Faculty at the University of Berlin as an untenured lecturer (*Privatdozent*). There he presented an inaugural address entitled “The Existence of God and the Psychology of Religion” and offered a course on “Christianity and the Social Problems of the Present.” In 1920, he met Hannah Werner Gottschow (1896–1988). They married in 1924, the same year Tillich became Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at the Phillips-Universität Marburg where, for a brief time, he was a distant colleague of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976). In 1925, he assumed a position as Professor of the Science of Religion at the University of Dresden where he produced *The Religious Situation* (1926), a critique of the spirit of capitalist society. In 1929, he was appointed Professor of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Frankfurt. There he taught with Max Horkheimer (1895–1973) and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), who arrived at Tillich’s invitation to submit a *Habilitationsschrift* on the Danish existentialist philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855).

With Frankfurt as a base, Tillich became well known through speeches and lectures promoting Christian socialism. His growing public presence brought him into conflict with the National Socialist government. At the end of 1932, he published *The Socialist Decision*, an appeal to the German people to choose socialism over Nazism. In April 1933, Tillich’s name appeared in German newspapers as an “enemy of the state,” and he became the first non-Jewish professor dismissed by a German university after Adolph Hitler (1889–1945) came to power. In May, he witnessed the public burning of his *Socialist Decision* in a scene that reminded him of paintings from the Spanish Inquisition. In December 1933, Tillich emigrated to the United States with his wife and daughter, Erdmuthe (b. 1925). (A son, René [b. 1937], has been a practicing psychologist in Hawaii since 1968.)

### Tillich’s American Years (1933–1965)

At the age of 47 and with rudimentary English skills, Tillich arrived in New York City at the invitation of Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) with the promise of shelter and employment as a lecturer in philosophy of religion and systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary. He entered fully into New York cultural life and was promoted to the rank of Professor of Philosophical Theology in 1940, the same year he became a United States citizen. The sermons, courses, and lectures he offered to Union seminarians, Columbia University graduate students, émigré intellectuals, and the general public were usually oversubscribed.

Until his retirement from Union in 1955, Tillich was especially interested in relating pastoral theology to depth psychology, a project furthered by the New York Psychology Group he began with Erich Fromm (1900–1980), a social psychologist he first knew in Frankfurt. The group met monthly in the years 1941–1945, often gathering in Tillich’s apartment. Members included anthropologist Ruth Benedict (1887–1948), Presbyterian minister Seward Hiltner (1909–1984), psychoanalyst Rollo May (1909–1994), psychologist Carl Rogers (1902–1987), and Jungian analyst Frances G. Wickes (1875–1967) (Stokes 1985; Cooper 2006).

In the autumn of 1955, Tillich became one of four University Professors at Harvard, a prestigious appointment that allowed him to freely explore and integrate various domains of knowledge in relation to what he called the “ultimate concerns” of human beings. His stature as a public intellectual grew during this time to the extent that he was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine in March 1959. In 1962, he left Harvard for the John Nuveen Professorship at the University of Chicago Divinity School. There he lectured on the history of Christian thought and, in a joint seminar with Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), developed his thinking on systematic Christian theology in relation to the history of the world’s religions. He died following a heart attack in Chicago on 22 October 1965 at the age of 79. His ashes were interred on Pentecost in 1966 at

Paul Tillich Park in New Harmony, Indiana, the former site of a community founded by the Welsh socialist reformer, Robert Owen (1771–1858).

### Tillich's Theology and Psychology

Over the course of his American years, Tillich published the three-volume *Systematic Theology* (Tillich 1951, 1957a, 1963) that he began to construct while teaching at Marburg in 1924. This magnum opus is a sustained demonstration of Tillich's *method of correlation*, a question-and-answer approach to theological inquiry that shows how symbols that carry the substance of Christian teachings point toward answers to questions that arise out of particular life situations. This method is an expression of what Tillich calls the *Protestant principle*: a protest against absolute claims for relative realities. The Protestant principle and method of correlation serve as theological defenses against *idolatry*: the substitution of something for God that is not God, a reality referred to by Tillich as *ultimate concern*, *ground of being*, *being-itself*, *the unconditional*, or *God beyond God*.

The Protestant principle thus functions as a constant reminder that human beings are prone to forget or distort their reliance on the contingent circumstances that enable their existence. This leads him to define *sin* as estrangement from the way things actually are, exemplified by the love (*agape*)-centered *New Being* revealed in Jesus as the Christ, the one who bears witness to the New Creation anticipated by the Spiritual Community that is the essential or ideal church. Whether and how one participates in the life of this community is a matter of *faith*, “the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern” (Tillich 1963). As such, *faith* includes the experience of *doubt* and is different from *belief*, important points Tillich elaborates in his *Dynamics of Faith* (Tillich 1957b/2009).

The method of correlation requires that theologians grapple with major issues and ideas of their time, so Tillich turned his attention to Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), whose work he

first encountered in 1912, the year of his ordination. His engagement with Freud led him to conclude that “a religion that does not appeal to the subconscious basis of all decisions is untenable in the long run” (Tillich 1931/1948). As he became more involved with the theology of pastoral care at Union Seminary, he realized it had become impossible to develop a Christian theological anthropology “without using the immense material brought forth by depth psychology” (Tillich 1952b/2000). Moreover, Tillich recognized that the very idea of God was changing under the influence of psychotherapy on pastoral care, for the therapeutic encounter offers a “modification of the image of the threatening father—which is so important in Freud's attack on religion—by elements of the image of the embracing and supporting mother” (Tillich 1960/1984).

Tillich's most sustained psychological investigations concerned the existential status and function of *anxiety* in the history of western thought, especially with regard to the numbness, meaninglessness, doubt, loneliness, and cynicism he thought characterized his age. In his popular 1950 Terry Lectures at Yale, published as *The Courage to Be*, Tillich argues that the psychotherapeutic approach fails to distinguish between existential and neurotic anxiety. For this reason, the psychotherapist needs what the theologian is able to provide: “Only in the light of an ontological understanding of human nature can the body of material provided by psychology and sociology be organized into a consistent and comprehensive theory of anxiety” (Tillich 1952b/2000). Tillich's main contribution to psychology may be that he developed an ontology – a theory about the nature of being – in psychological terms.

A modern spiritual classic, *The Courage to Be* examines and demonstrates qualities of character and intellect that enable resistance to forces of dehumanization through the technical and psychological controls refined in the perpetual wartime economies of the twentieth century. Tillich is particularly interested in the ways “an existentialist revolt in art and literature” informed by depth psychology probes beneath surface-level reality in order “to save life from the destructive power of self-objectivation” (Tillich 1952b/2000).

Artists such as Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, Kafka, Auden, and Arthur Miller, among others whom he mentions, are courageous because they do not back away from the anxiety of meaninglessness, but take it into themselves so that they might perform and thereby reveal the persistent and creative power of being in the face of the constant threat of nonbeing. “Being,” writes Tillich, “must be thought as the negation of the negation of being” (Tillich 1952b/2000). He concludes these challenging lectures by pointing to a middle way of faith in a “God above God” who experienced the dialectical play of an individual’s mystical participation and self-affirmation.

Tillich assumed that every supposedly secular inquiry is rooted in largely unconscious premises that betray a religious impulse. He wrote, “everything is secular, and every secular thing is potentially religious” (Tillich 1931/1948). Hence, Freud or anyone’s claim to scientific objectivity as an ultimate concern will rest on unscientific, largely unconscious foundations. Tillich puts it this way: “The naturalistic elements which Freud carried from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, his basic puritanism with respect to love, his pessimism about culture, and his reduction of religion to ideological projection are all expressions of faith and not the result of scientific analysis” (Tillich 1957b/2009).

As a preacher and teacher, Tillich reminded his listeners that it takes courage to recognize and accept that *you are accepted in spite of* the uncertainties, ambiguities, failures, demonic forces, and ever-present possibility of nonbeing that threaten to undermine a felt sense of existence as a secure, centered, loving, and free human agent. “You are Accepted” is Tillich’s succinct summary of the Christian gospel and title of his most famous sermon (Tillich 1948).

## Tillich’s Legacy

Tillich’s life and legacy represent a transition from the modern to the postmodern era in Protestant Christian thought. As he entered into a practice of interfaith dialogue in the last decade of his life, Tillich sensed that his heroic effort to

produce a coherent, comprehensive yet relatively isolationist theological *system* would soon be outmoded and thrown onto the “dustheap of the past” (Pauck and Pauck 1974). However, Tillich’s work continues to inspire and inform research in Christian and comparative theology, psychology, and religious studies.

It is, for example, fairly well known that Martin Luther King, Jr., (1929–1968) produced a doctoral dissertation on *A Comparison of God in the Thinking of Paul Tillich and Henry Nelson Wieman* (King 1955/2000), yet scholars are only beginning to explore the relation of Tillich’s theonomous social ethics to King’s thought and the American Civil Rights Movement generally. Second, while Tillich gave more attention to Freud than to Carl Jung (1875–1961) in his published works, recent studies by John Dourley (2009) underscore affinities between Tillich and Jung in their approaches to understanding the power of religious symbols and the sacramental impulse. Third, Jonathan Z. Smith has examined ways Tillich’s theological vocabulary informed the creation of religious studies as an academic field in America of the 1960s. “Tillich remains,” Smith claims, “the unacknowledged theoretician of our entire enterprise” (Smith 2010). Further study of Tillich’s influence may help us better understand some of the biases that inform the academic study of religion.

The passage of time allows for clearer and broader perspectives on Tillich’s contribution, and the recovery, translation, publication, and ongoing study of his sermons and writings further illuminate experiential and academic sources for his thought (there are over 600 items in the Tillich bibliography). Thus we are better able to appreciate the ways Tillich probed, interpreted, and related Christian spiritual truths to the human sciences so that they remain relevant to the many existential challenges of the present age.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Fromm, Erich
- ▶ Hiltner, Seward
- ▶ Kierkegaard, Søren
- ▶ Love
- ▶ Luther, Martin
- ▶ May, Rollo
- ▶ Nazism
- ▶ Protestantism
- ▶ Rogers, Carl

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## Traditionalism

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Traditionalism is a contemporary esoteric current that develops a philosophy critical of modernity, based on a reinterpretation of the concept of "Philosophia Perennis." The notion is founded upon monotheistic theologies, and it understands the world as a created reality that conceals a system of divine signs. Signs, here, are particular manifestations of the truth; an absolute entity of divine nature manifested in all created things and beings. Perennial philosophers sustain that

everything is divinely created and that an ontological metaphysical essence exists in every created being. That is to say, it has always been and therefore its existence is not historically or culturally framed. Owing to its immutability and eternity, this spiritual essence is regarded as divine. According to Perennialists, human spirituality in its diverse manifested religious forms is the way that humankind has developed to participate of this Eternal Quintessence. Since it is believed that human participation in godly essence is entirely divine, human reasoning is regarded as not interfering in this process of divine apprehension.

From its early formulations in the late antiquity, with thinkers such as the Christian neoplatonists Ficino and Pico, to its flourishing during the Renaissance and its later modern and postmodern adaptations, Perennial philosophy has been expressed in diverse ways while remaining faithful to its driving ideas: Firstly, Perennial philosophy is understood to be both divinely received and beyond human action; secondly, Perennial philosophy assumes a divine original spirit in each being, who is aware of its originality. This process gradually distances the spirit from its source beginning immediately after creation. When people wish to regain the absoluteness of the origin, religious experiences are meant to be open accesses to the Divine, a way of returning to the original standpoint; and, lastly, the created world is ectypal of the primordial essence; there exist various explanations – remarkably, the neoplatonist and the neo-Pythagorean – on how this reproduction process occurs.

## History

Although these tenets have been present in Western esoteric thought since the third century CE, it was not since the Renaissance that the actual term “*Philosophia Perennis*” was literally used. It first appears in Agostino Steuco’s (1497–1548) book “*De perenni philosophia libri X*” (1540), and it was used to describe

scholasticism as the referential core from which all Christian teachings derive. The notion was later employed by the mathematician Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716) who uses it to designate a universal mystical core, not only existing in Christianity but common to all the world religions. The notion “*Philosophia Perennis*” reappears in the twentieth century in the work of the English novelist Aldous Huxley (1894–1963). In his 1945s “*The Perennial Philosophy*,” Huxley describes it as a divine metaphysical entity existing in all substantial things and beings, connecting the physical, substantial world to the transcendent. Furthermore, for Huxley, this “*Philosophia Perennis*” is something with basics that have been apprehended and incorporated in the wisdom of peoples of every region in the world since the origins of humankind, but has only been more sophisticatedly articulated by what he called “higher religions” – meaning the main world religions: the three monotheistic creeds, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Accordingly, the plurality of religions of the world is, in this view, only a kaleidoscope of diverse manifestations of one unique divine truth, generally referred to – among modern authors – with the term “Tradition.” Tradition is for Traditionalists what the inner spirit was for former Perennialists, eternal, infinite, unaffected by contextual variables, cross cultural, and a historical.

Although Huxley’s work already made use of the term to build up a criticism towards the “modern world,” it was the French thinker René Guénon (1886–1951) who popularized the turned-into-critique term. Thus, it can be suggested that Traditionalism uses Perennialism to elaborate a variety of criticisms towards “the modern.”

In Guénonian Traditionalism, European civilization has progressively distanced itself from the “Tradition” that once was part of. This lack of memory, the forgetting of Tradition, makes European civilization entering a state of dementia, ultimately responsible for the supposed terminal decline in which Europe is in modern times immersed. Since it is only “Tradition” that can produce the foundation of a genuine



civilization, and its wholeness is somewhat quintessentially embodied in “Traditional religions,” only the return to this common wisdom can save Europeans or Westerners, in general, from the debacle. Christianity is generally discredited of being capable of such transformation. Hence, Traditionalists rely on non-Western religious wisdoms with the hope of, individual by individual, return to the West, its original spiritual sense, and with it saving from the moral crisis, if not the whole civilization as such, the souls of those individual spiritually awakened Westerners.

Despite of the fact that Perennialism has a longstanding trajectory, its instrumentalization as a critical discourse is much more recent. Traditionalism as such originates in Europe in the interwar period, taking its inspiration from the writings of René Guénon. The first Traditionalist groups were established before the Second World War, and they were the seed of what was going to become a relevant movement of international dimensions. In 1948–1950, the initial Guénonian school suffered its first division, creating the scission of a group led by one of the most prominent Guénonian disciples, the Swiss Muslim convert Frithjof Schuon (1907–1998). Decades later, Traditionalism has taken three main directions: (1) the one of Schuon, who created the Western Sufi order Maryamiyya, that grew in importance in Europe and North America and uprooted in Iran led by Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933); (2) the political orientation of the Italian Julius Evola (1898–1974), who transformed it into a post-Second World War fascist-inclined ideology inspiring some Italian terrorist groups of that time; and (3) the scholarly approach of the Romanian Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), who turned Traditionalism into a hermeneutical perspective to be used for the comparative study of religions.

## In Religion

Since its inception, Traditionalism has been closely connected to Western forms of Sufism.

The first followers of Sufism appeared in the West at the beginning of the twentieth century – writers such as Doris Lessing and Robert Graves. There have been other famous Traditionalist converts, but it is by far the figure of René Guénon, who has been most influential in inspiring many Western Traditionalists’ conversion to Islam. Coming from a catholic family, it is sometimes said, although it has not been proved yet, that Guénon was first initiated into Hinduism through the line of Shankarâchârya. However, he is more famous for moving to Cairo in 1911 – where he did live the rest of his life and where he had entered Sufism, adopting the Muslim name of “Abd al-Wahid.”

Traditionalist thought has also been crucially influential in the academic field of religious studies where instead of Traditionalists are generally called Perennialists. The school initiated by Eliade posed the notion of “mystical experience” at the center of a scholarly debate about the particular/universal nature of religious feelings. Scholars such as Rudolf Otto, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, Walter Terence Stace, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, and Robert Forman are outspoken voices of this trend, decisive in the emergence of an academic school specialized in comparative religion. Perennialist authors have supported the idea that mystical experiences are ephemeral but ineffable, unmediated contacts with the Divine. They belong to the “One Core” though find expression in multiple forms, becoming what all Traditions worldwide have in common. Furthermore, in the hermeneutics of religious studies, the concept is commonly used to question the authority of empirical methods seeking objectivity to prioritize the value of the individual pulse and subjectivity. Today, authors such as William Chittick, James Cutsinger, Huston Smith, Harry Oldmeadow, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr use markedly Traditionalist perspectives in their scholarly works.

Critics of the Traditionalist approach suggest that Traditionalists apply Perennialist signifying layers to Sacred Texts, meanings that the text itself does not necessarily contain; critics suggest



that such misinterpretation derives from Traditionalists' *a priori* loyalty to their Traditionalist ideological stance.

## In Psychology

Traditionalism has supposed an important influence in the development of new trends of psychological theory, remarkably Transpersonal psychology. Transpersonal psychology is a modality that takes into consideration some aspects hitherto neglected by the previous schools of psychological thought. Transpersonal authors wanted to promote altered states of consciousness and mystical experiences as effective tools to consummate people's potentialities. The term "Transpersonal" is here used to denote that which goes beyond the self. Hence, for Transpersonal psychologists, psychical cure can only occur by abandoning the perceived as constraining self in order to gain access to an eternal meaningful reality of esoteric nature. This state may eventually help individuals to overcome "negative" feelings such as guilt or unease.

Transpersonal psychology is commonly known as the "fourth force," because it aims to overcome the limitations that Transpersonal psychologists perceive in the so-called first force (Freudian thought), second force (behaviorist school), and third force (humanist approach). It yearns to develop a radical new perspective by conceptualizing a leveled human psyche. Accordingly, it considers that both psychoanalytical Freudian thought and behavioral theorist have approached the lower levels of this scale but have failed to address the higher more sophisticated stages, those of the Transpersonal belonging to the transcendental.

The work of the Greek-Armenian Traditionalist George Ivanovich Gurdjieff (1877–1949) has been of particular relevance for the Transpersonal movement, specifically with regard to the insistence on a need for spiritual awakening and his theorization of "The Fourth Way" notion. Among the most prominent predecessor psychologists of the Transpersonal school are William James

(1842–1910) and Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). In his Gifford lecture (1901) at the University of Edinburgh (published in 1902 under the title of the varieties of religious experience), James became the first in supporting the study of religious experience using psychology's hermeneutics. Well versed in a wide variety of religiosities, ranging from Sufism, Buddhism, and Vedanta to the New Church, American Transcendentalism, the Theosophical Society, or some forms of Christian mysticism, James perceived the depth of human psyche as primordially spiritual.

Also attracted by several forms of religiosities was the Swiss Carl Gustav Jung. A former disciple of Sigmund Freud, Jung strongly disagreed with the Freudian conceptualization of religion as an outcome of neurosis. In contrast, he considered religion as genuine expressions of the psyche's universal patterns of human behavior. He typified religious feelings (mystical, philosophical, doctrinal, and so on) in accordance to the existing behavioral models. Further, in line with Perennialism, he suggested that religiosities were outer expressions of a "universal collective unconscious."

Despite these earlier contributions, it was not until the 1970s that Transpersonal psychology properly became a consistent, though controversial trend of psychological thought. The actual term "Transpersonal psychology" was for the first time employed by the Czech Stanislav Grof (b. 1931) who became famous for using LSD with his patients to help them "recover" pre- and perinatal memories. Since the 1970s, Transpersonal psychology has experienced a significant increase in popularity, when ideas of spiritual growth have extended beyond the psychological arena influencing various forms of New Age ethos and other manifestations of new spiritualities (notably, neo-paganism).

Transpersonal psychology is markedly Perennialist in that it assumes a timeless ahistorical dimension common to all human beings, and it proposes a return to the original source – here labeled as "high consciousness." It also shows a notable Traditionalist influence in that it uses a Perennialist perspective to build up its criticism

on modern society in general – its materialist excesses and superficial concerns – and in particular on modern psychological trends. However, Transpersonal psychology differs from Perennialism and Traditionalism alike, in its notorious, sometimes posed as problematic and contradictory, emphasis on the self that contrasts with the claim of abandoning the self to embrace a collective wisdom. Perennial philosophy also attributed a seed of divine nature contained in every individual, but the stress the Transpersonal circles put on self-experience denotes an individualistic shift not present in Perennialist or Traditionalist discourses. Further, even though Transpersonal's higher consciousness entails some kind of spirituality, Transpersonal psychology is in most cases detached from the Perennialist and Traditionalist theistic component. Nevertheless, its nontheistic approach has not exempted it from criticism. Transpersonal psychology's incorporation of Perennialist/Traditionalist principles into psychology has brought about fierce criticism from more secular-oriented psychologist sectors.

## See Also

- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Eastern Religious Traditions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Orthodoxy](#)

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## Transcendence

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Transcendence is an experience central to both spirituality and therapeutic transformation. In fact, it may be considered the most important and distinguishing factor in any form of liberation as transcendence is an experience of moving from one mode of existence to another, for various reasons, and done in a myriad of ways. Understanding the nature of transcendence as a phenomenon is essential to any theory of change.

Transcendence originally meant “going beyond or outside” one’s situation. This sense of transcendence is clarified only in relation to what was meant by “immanence.” The differentiation of transcendence from immanence was a theological concern as it became central for theologians to distinguish between the nature, relationship, and place of God in contradistinction to humankind and the rest of the natural world. While these apologists sought to defend God’s existence as immutable and as the uncreated Creator of life, other thinkers took a contrary route than proposed God is immanent within, and as, nature. The latter positions became known as pantheism or pan-en-theism. Either way, the debates, often ending in accusations of heresy, sought to understand and/or explain a metaphysical puzzle of how finite existence comes to know and relate to the infinite.

Part of the difficulty in resolving the puzzle of transcendence and immanence was the presumption that both realities were places in space and time. In other words, transcendence was a state of existence beyond or out of physical existence. Immanence, on the contrary, was finite physical existence. This raised problems for theologians, though, particularly Augustine of Hippo (354–440), who defended the belief that God could not be understood in terms of created existence in time and space because doing so

would result in God’s eventual decay and mutability along with the rest of immanent reality. A decaying god is not a god at all for Augustine and other likeminded thinkers (Augustine 398/1961; Fitzgerald 1999).

Moreover, trying to resolve the finite/infinite dilemma by stating that the ability to understand transcendence is simultaneously professing the grandeur of God and stating that the infinite mystery is simply beyond the grasp of the finite mind left a blatant inconsistency unaddressed: How can a finite person “know” an unknowable transcendent reality? Nevertheless, said other apologists, the very fact that one can even *imagine* a transcendent God was evidence enough of the empirical reality of transcendence.

With the impact of logical positivism and naturalistic empiricism, however, transcendence as an immaterial reality is simply rejected as a viable possibility, and no amount of faith in the unseen was able to squelch the need among natural scientists for observable proof as a prerequisite for assent. Empirical theologians of “The Chicago School” focused their energies on responding to the apparent scientific/religious rift, gaining particular ground with process theology based on Alfred North Whitehead’s thought (Meland 1969). The tradition of empirical theology opened other possibilities of understanding transcendence as a natural phenomenon that is consistent with natural science convictions while remaining meaningful to human significance.

Transcendence is also understood in other ways within various religious traditions. In Judaism, for instance, transcendence has been understood as that which is “hidden” or inexhaustible or, better yet, as the overwhelming power of the numinous. Thus, we hear of the inability to look on the face of God. What is also emphasized in Judaism is the poverty of language to capture and denote what is represented by transcendence. References to the divine are pointed differently in Hebrew or written in transliterated English as G-d. In Buddhism, we experience the possibility of *shunyata*, or emptiness, the void, or no-thing, which transcends attachments and binding

images. This is achieved *within* immanence, which is unlike the Hindu goal of escaping rebirth by transcending material desires. Both Buddhism and Hinduism, therefore, see transcendence as the state of relinquishing attachments, a theme which is present in any ascetic tradition. For Islam, and other traditions emphasizing the absolute transcendence of the divine, however, any link of immanence with God drifts lands us in into idolatrous conditions and should be abandoned.

Another very interesting conundrum in the history of transcendence, a nuance of the finite/infinite dilemma, is the paradox of personalistic relationships with God, when God's transcendence is supposedly beyond any personalistic and/or anthropomorphic representation. Nevertheless, transcendent experiences are related to prayerful and mystical experiences of intimate encounters with God as a person, despite the belief in the Eckhartian-flavored understanding of the experience of God as beyond any conceptualization of God. Understanding God as an enigmatic experience beyond any and all theistic conceptualizations. These challenges to understanding transcendence in theological and religious traditions join other philosophical ones.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) stood at the interstices of theology, philosophy, and psychology and defined the transcendent as that which lies beyond what our faculty of knowledge can legitimately know, thus, placing the transcendent beyond the scope of epistemology. At the same time, Kant saw the “transcendental” as the very conditions of the possibility of knowledge itself (Kant, 1781–2008). The father of transcendental phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), borrowing from his teacher Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), understood transcendence as that which is beyond or separate from the constructs of our consciousness (Husserl 1962). Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Husserl's student and assistant, came to a view of transcendence that reversed his teacher's position. For Heidegger, transcendence is always and already occurring within the context of our finitude and thrownness (Heidegger 1962). States of consciousness, therefore, are not separate from the world but

are contextual and co-constructive of experience in the world.

Transcendence, then, becomes a hermeneutical activity for Heidegger in which the interpretive process unveils authentic ways of being in the world. Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980), the French existential phenomenologist who saw much of his work as a continuation of Heidegger's project, saw transcendence as describing various relations of the self to the object-oriented world, including our relations with others. For Sartre, the “for-itself” is sometimes called transcendence, as such a state of existence seeks the freedom to create one's meaningful existence. This is opposed, for Sartre, to an unfree existence in which one forfeits one's subjectivity in collusion with the other's objectifying gaze (Sartre 1956). Finally, the Swiss psychiatrist Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) saw transcendence as that which is beyond time and space, or what he called the encompassing, which is ultimate nonobjectivity (no-thing-ness) (Jaspers 1971).

Current discussions of transcendence continue to resolve age-old dilemmas of describing the experience in ways that are respectful of freedom and transformation while attempting to resist reductionism. This is the case in theology, philosophy, and psychology. A few remaining issue merits address, however, for the future of clarifying transcendence.

## Commentary

What is vital in a contemporary understanding of transcendence, particularly as it relates to immanence, is to understand it as a *qualitative* experience and not to equate it with a location in physical space and time or as something that can be measured. We are still squeamish about immaterial realities. The recent debates on reducing transcendence to genetics and/or neuroscience are cases in point (Hamer 2005; Zimmer 2005), although it can be relieving to align with the “hard” scientists in order to receive their kind of evidence as further legitimization of transcendence. At the same time, it very well may be the

inaccurate approach with which to address this matter. Something seems anticlimatic about knowing that God's name is "Gene VMAT2!" Again, the perpetuated mistake in approaching transcendence in this way is in misunderstanding transcendence as a person, place, or thing. Transcendence is an *experience of liberation*, a type of qualia that is invisible, immeasurable, and incomparable, because not substantial.

Is the relationship between transcendence and immanence oppositional? Can one hold a respectable postmodern position without fusing transcendence with immanence? If transcendence is immanence, then how can we discern one experience from the other? These questions presume a faulty assumption, which is that immanence and transcendence are antagonistic polarities. The morphing of our understanding of transcendence has shown the contrary to this conclusion. The relationship between transcendence and immanence is a dialectical one, and, moreover, one in which each one cannot be understood without presuming the other. Tom Driver (1985) noted how transcendence is radical immanence. As Jean-Luc Nancy (1993) has proposed, we understand freedom only in light of "thrownness."

Finally, although discussions of transcendence as ascendance, as escape, as dissociation, or as a Gnostic extrication of our physicality mitigate against an existential conviction of transcendence within immanence, these experiences are nonetheless popular understandings of transcendence. The desire to escape one state of existence for another is at the heart of trance induction and other religious rituals. Opening ourselves to "other worlds" can give perspective to this one. Dissociating during the horrors of physical and sexual abuse can be the only freedom one may have during such a tragic time. Imagination of other worlds, other compartments, and other possibilities is perhaps the most powerful form of transcendence available to any of us and can be considered an existential. On the other hand, transcendence as escape is the project of the suicidal candidate, though a project carried out through a narrowed attunement to possibilities. Moreover, encouraging otherworldliness as a solution to confronting the complexity, pain,

and suffering in this existence can lead to a lack of concern for this life at least, and a hatred for it at best, much like Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) predicted. Agreeing with the sentiments of Nietzsche, Erich Fromm (1900–1980) noted that the pull away from life and toward a Freudian return to inorganicity is more appropriately driven by an escape from freedom. Contrary to common assumption, we often fear the freedom from which and to which transcendence delivers us (Fromm 1941).

In fact, what may fuel the pain of this life may be the perpetual desire to transcend-as-escape it. The remedy to our unnecessary suffering, then, may be to give oneself over to another kind of immanent transcendence, which lives out life all its pathos, as Michel Henry (1922–2002) advised, and experience the paradox of transcendence: We transcend existence when we enter it (Henry 2002). This is not an invitation to ignore oppression or deafen calls for liberation and deliverance. On the contrary, an invitation to live life in its fullness and uniqueness can very well inspire a more vivid respect and sensitivity to creating free, meaningful, and fulfilling lives for each and every person and/or sentient creation.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Transcendent Function](#)

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other way around. In analysis, the analyst can mediate the transcendent function for the analysand through the transference, and in this way, the patient experiences the analyst as indispensable. Jung defined his approach to transference as “constructive” which is based on evaluating the symbol via dreams and fantasies. It is the symbol that is “the best possible expression for a complex fact not yet clearly apprehended by consciousness” (Jung 1960, p. 75).

In his paper on the transcendent function, Jung writes about his constructive approach to dream analysis. In order to exemplify this, he cites the dream of a woman patient in which someone gives her a wonderful, richly ornamented, antique sword dug up out of an ancient burial mound. He interpreted this as her need for the inner father she needs to relate to in order to help her disidentify with remaining in a perpetual passive childlike state. Her actual father was a passionate, energetic man, and it is this energy that the patient needs to find in her inner father in order to live life fully.

According to Jung, the self-regulating function of the psyche can be helped through dreams but more importantly through fantasy which enables unconscious material to become activated through activating the transcendent function. In order to do this, he advocates the use of active imagination via drawing, painting, or sculpting which can give expression to unconscious material which may be expressed in a mood. Critical attention must be eliminated during this process and creative formulation allowed to break through. The second, more important stage of *active* imagination is for ego not to be overwhelmed by unconscious contents. An important way forward is the development of an inner dialog in bringing together the opposites for the production of the third, which is the symbol. Through this transcending of opposites, consciousness is widened by confrontation with unconscious contents, and the transcendent function proceeds not without aim and purpose but can enable an individual to move beyond pointless conflict and avoid one-sidedness.

As Jung says, truth, law, guidance is said to be nowhere save in the mind. “Thus the unconscious

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## Transcendent Function

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*Transcendent Function* is a term that first appears in a paper Jung wrote in 1916 where he states it is neither mysterious nor metaphysical but is, instead, a psychological function “comparable in its way to a mathematical function of the same name, which is a function of real and imaginary numbers. The psychological ‘transcendent function’ arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents” (Jung 1960, p. 69). As Jung states, the unconscious behaves in a *compensatory* or complementary manner to consciousness and vice versa. If consciousness is too one-sided, the unconscious may break through via slips of the tongue.

The transcendent function is so called because it enables the transition of contents from the unconscious to consciousness as well as the



is credited with all those faculties which the West attributes to God... the transcendent function... the phenomenon of spontaneous compensation, being beyond the control of man, is quite in accord with the formula 'grace' or the 'will of God'" (Jung 1958, p. 506).

The mediatory process of the transcendent function forms the material of construction "in which thesis and antithesis both play their part. . . in the shaping of which the opposites are united (in) the living symbol" (Jung 1971, p. 480). This symbol formation through the mediation of the transcendent function in the conflict of opposites is to be found in the struggle between Jesus and Satan, Buddha and Mara, or the regeneration of Faust through the pact with the devil.

### **Transference, the Transcendent Function, and Transcendence**

The analytical psychologist, Ann Ulanov's paper of the above title illustrates how transference, like dreams and symptoms, inevitably introduces the transcendent function in the course of analytic treatment. "The transcendent function is part of the compensatory function of the transference" (Ulanov 1997, p. 125). The analyst and analysand consciously take up what the psyche does spontaneously in producing opposite points of view in order to reach its goal of individuating or broadening consciousness. The analysand is dependent on the analyst's involvement and Jung's approach to the analytic process "consisted essentially in a dialogue and a mutuality requiring the emotional involvement of the analyst for change to occur" (Casement 2001, p. 79). Ulanov also alerts to the dangers of analyst and analysand "bumping around in the psyche" together which can take the form of inflation, seduction, power plays, and defensive intellectualizing.

"The transcendent function inaugurates transition to arrival of the new" (Ulanov 1997, p. 126). This initiates the arrival of a third point of view which surpasses the conflicting opposites and creates a space between consciousness and the unconscious wherein symbols arise. "In the

process of the transcendent function we not only struggle with opposites in ourselves, we also inhabit the opposites of our historical time" (Ulanov 1997, p. 137).

Ulanov relates the transcendent function and transference to transcendence which is not an abstraction but exists in the here and now. "Spirit and body go together. Transcendence always effects a striking conjunction of the particular and the universal, the awe-inspiring and the humdrum, the vast and the concrete." She quotes Jung as follows: "Analysis should release an experience that grips or falls upon us as from above, an experience that has substance and body . . . . It must be organically true, that is, in and of our own being. If I were to symbolize it I would choose the Annunciation" (Jung 1925/1989, p. 80).

### **Jung and Hegel**

The analytical psychologist, Hester Solomon, states that the schema of psychological functioning that Jung developed in the *Transcendent Function* has a parallel in the philosophical vision of Hegel's dialectic. In the immediacy of the disintegrating psychological experiences that he went through in the years between 1912 and 1916, Jung swung from one pole of experience to the other. Through this dynamic interplay, he was able to achieve a personal synthesis, a position of relative integration between the conscious and unconscious attitudes. So Jung himself was living the dialectic (Solomon 2007).

As Solomon goes on to say:

Hegel's grand design is an attempt to understand reality as constructed historically in pairs of opposites that are not dichotomous but are rather in intimate, dynamic, albeit oppositional relation to one another. The dialectical model allows for a twofold view of reality, on the one hand in terms of bipolar opposites in dynamic relation to each other, and on the other hand a unity of opposites towards which each strives. . . The task of dialectical philosophy is to strive for greater and greater comprehension until a kind of totality of understanding is achieved. This is what Hegel called 'absolute reason' (Solomon 2007).

The tripartite structure of the dialectical process, like the transcendent function, expressed as thesis/antithesis/synthesis reflects an archetypal pattern with the third position consisting of a resolution that has the capacity to hold two apparent opposites together. It is through the tension and conflict created by the dynamic relationship that a creative, forward-moving resolution is achieved between, for example, self and another whether it be mother/infant or analyst/analysand. This is also to be met in the “Christian idea of the threefold nature of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; Spinoza and Descartes’ threefold vision of reality as consisting of three different kinds of substance (thought, nature and God); the Socratic dialectic whereby rigid positions are confronted and thereby changed by adroit questioning. . .all attest to the ubiquitous, deep structural nature of the tripartite dialectical vision” (Solomon 2007).

Solomon’s conclusion is as follows: “Jung’s concept of the transcendent function and Hegel’s dialectical vision both seek to address similar understandings of psychic reality and as such demonstrate a remarkable similarity of structure” (Solomon 2007).

## Transcendent Function and Reflective Function

The analytical psychologist, Jean Knox, explores Jung’s concept of the transcendent function in relation to research on the reflective function in attachment theory. She states: “The concept of reflective function has emerged to explain the vital role that the parent plays in facilitating the child’s capacity to relate to other people as mental and emotional being with their own thoughts, desires, intentions, beliefs and emotions” (Knox 2003, p. 10).

Jung was using the term transcendent function to describe an individual’s capacity to tolerate difference in others and also in oneself. “In attachment theory it is the development of this capacity which defines reflective function, in that reflective function depends upon the awareness that other people have minds of their own

with beliefs and judgments that may differ from one’s own. . .Both transcendent function and reflective function are descriptions of the capacity to relate to other people as psychologically as well as physically separate” (Knox 2003, p. 164).

She goes on to say:

There would seem to be sound neurophysiological support for Jung’s model of the transcendent function as a dialog between conscious and unconscious processes of appraisal. Allan Schore draws on empirical research to support his view that the right hemisphere is predominant in “performing valence-dependent, automatic, pre-attentive appraisals of emotional facial expressions” and that the orbito-frontal system, in particular, is important in assembling and monitoring relevant past and current experiences, including their affective and social values. Crucially, he extends this appraisal function of the orbito-frontal cortex to underpin reflective function itself. (Knox 2003, p. 198)

It is this capacity for integrating opposites, emotional appraisal, and psychological separateness that Jung was pointing to in his concept of individuation in which the transcendent function plays such a major role. If “the ego is too unstable and weak to moderate impulsivity enough to allow for the constellation of the transcendent function. . .Shadow roles and impulses are acted out, without the appearance of a transcendent function to bring about an integration of opposites” (Stein 1998, p. 124).

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Transcendence](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)

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## Transcendental Meditation

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Transcendental Meditation, popularly known as TM, was introduced by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1917–2008) in 1958. Today, its programs and related initiatives are represented on six continents, claim upwards of six million adherents, and boast campuses in the United States, Mexico, England, India, and China.

It was not until the Beatles went to India and met with its founder, however, that TM made its appearance on the Western stage. Subsequently, many artists followed suit and brought with them into the Maharishi's fold innumerable devotees. Such widespread – if fleeting – fervor was enough to win the Maharishi the cover of *Time* Magazine in 1975.

The techniques of meditation are claimed by its founder to be “a path to God.” To follow this path, however, TM does not require any change in either faith or belief.

TM has, since its inception, invited and encouraged scientific investigation of its claims.

Because of this remarkable openness, a wealth of studies has been conducted on the salutary effects of which practitioners of TM claim to be in receipt. The first wave of these studies was published in the early 1970s and found that the techniques utilized by practitioners of TM led to a state of “restful alertness.” Subsequent studies have investigated TM's role in reducing blood pressure, obesity, depression, and a host of other afflictions – somatic and otherwise. These results, however compelling, are far from being undisputed, however.

This scientific turn, while relatively new in the history of religions, is certainly not restricted to TM, though it *is* emblematic of the trend to psychologize religion and in particular spiritual praxes. TM is a particularly salient example of how the religious and psychological horizons can be imperceptibly fused in a single tradition.

Criticism of TM has been harsh – even vituperative. Former members have come forward alleging that it is a cult, entangling the unsuspecting in the insidious web of its rhetoric. Adherents, on the other hand, hail the triumph of TM as the first truly universal spiritual practice scientifically proven to aid in evolution. In any event, TMs reception in the United States has irrevocably altered the landscape of the American religious imagination.

## See Also

- ▶ [Contemplative Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)

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## Transference

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The idea of transference is at the center of the classical psychoanalytic theory of object relations. Early object relations patterns, formed by our experiences within the family, become consolidated and remain relatively fixed throughout adult life. They are revealed as emotional reactions in interpersonal situations which are highly intense and realistically speaking quite improper. Any strong emotional reaction formed quickly in an interpersonal encounter, such as love or hate at first sight, represent a transference reaction, i.e., a reaction to a present object which is in reality an acting out of a childhood reaction to one's parents or other close figures.

Sigmund Freud claimed to have discovered transference through the practice of psychotherapy according to his/her technique of psychoanalysis. He reported that those being analyzed by him were not ready to regard the analyst merely, and realistically, as a helper and adviser. The analysand sees in the analyst "the return, the reincarnation, of some important figure out of his/her childhood or past, and consequently transfers on to him feelings and reactions" (Freud 1940, p. 192). These feelings and reactions are ambivalent, comprising both positive and affectionate and negative and hostile attitudes towards the analyst, who is put in the place of the analysand's parents, either father or mother. The transference is made conscious by the analyst and is handled by showing that the transference is a reexperiencing of emotional relations which had their origin in the earliest object relations in childhood.

Positive transference serves to create an attachment to the analyst, as the analysand seeks to please the analyst and win his/her applause and love. In Freud's phrasing, it becomes the true motive force of the patient's collaboration, his/her weak ego becomes strong, under its

influence he achieves things that would ordinarily be beyond his/her power, and he leaves off his/her symptoms and seems apparently to have recovered – merely for the sake of the analyst. Another advantage of transference is that the analysand produces and acts out a life story, with the earliest attachments at its center.

But the transference phenomenon exists outside the analytic situation. As described by Freud, it is a universal phenomenon of the human mind, which dominates the whole of each person's relations to his/her human environment. In other words, early object relations are acted out in every instance of human contact and in every instance of interpersonal fantasy.

Transference is a particular form of the more general mechanism of projection, and as we know projective hypotheses explain the contents of religious beliefs as reflecting specific human experiences and fantasies. In psychoanalytic writings, projection may be a general perceptual mode, externalizing internal processes or needs. In both cases the result is perceptual distortion. Psychoanalysis suggests an iconic correlation between the internal world and religious ideas, so that these ideas are a reflection of the internal psychic landscape. Psychoanalytic theorists have provided us with various content hypotheses, specifying what is projected. Psychoanalysis also specified the recapitulation mechanism of transference, through which early experiences in the family are recreated as cultural products. The presumably projected humans are the "significant others": father, mother, family relations, and dynamics.

Because of the centrality of family dynamics in early childhood, psychoanalysis suggests that all religious traditions would contain projective fantasies which construe the cosmic environment in the shape of the family drama. Parental care varies in different cultures; the child's concept of the parents will similarly vary and so will the resultant image of the deities. Not only are the images of the gods likely to vary in accordance with early concepts of the parents, but also the means of communicating with them and soliciting their help. A more complex view of the projection process notes that religious images

come before us ready-made as part of social learning, but then we as individuals project our personal, unique experiences on them. What a religious tradition teaches is an ambiguous stimulus, and we develop it in the image of our own private history and our own parents.

### See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Object Relations Theory
- ▶ Projection
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Transfiguration

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The word transfiguration derives from the Latin *trānsfigūrāre* and refers to transformation and change in form or appearance. The term is specifically used in reference to the change of appearance in Jesus Christ as narrated in the Christian biblical accounts of Matthew 17:2, Mark 9:2–3, and Luke 9:28–36.

The gospels report the transfiguration event as Jesus taking three of his disciples – John, James, and Peter – to pray with him on a mountain top. Going up on the mountain (*óros*) is significant in that it is the place set aside for prayer. While he was praying at the top of the mountain, Jesus was

transfigured. “The appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white” (1952, RSV).

### Exegetical Origins

The original Greek term for this phenomenon was *metemorphothe*. Metamorphosis refers to a conspicuous physical and rather sudden change in one’s form or structure. In the biblical event, the disciples witnessed Jesus’ face shining like the sun and his garments a brilliant white which they described as “light,” or “glory.” In his altered form, Jesus speaks with Moses and Elijah who also “appear in glory.” Glory stresses the concept of visible light (Luke 2:9; 9:31), the divine presence as a luminous manifestation and God’s glorious revelation of God’s person as borrowed from the Old Testament concept of *kabod*.

In the gospel narrative, the disciples were “heavy with sleep but kept awake.” They witness a conversation between Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. Luke tells us that they discussed what Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem – his death.

Then “a cloud came and overshadowed them [the disciples], and they were afraid as they entered the cloud; and a voice came out of the cloud” (1952, RSV) proclaiming Jesus to be the Son of God. The voice instructed the disciples to listen to Jesus as the “Chosen one” of God. The disciples are to tell no one of what they have witnessed.

In the image of cloud, (*nephélē*, *néphos*), we find a cross-cultural commonality in meaning drawing from the Hellenistic and Greek worlds and in biblical literature. The cloud was an image of religious significance, a theophany, God’s visible manifestation.

God indwells the cloud as indicated by the voice arising from it and invites participation. The disciples do not merely observe; they “enter the cloud,” even if only as a foretaste of the eschaton (the final event of the divine plan), the resurrected state in the afterlife, and the suffering and struggle which is to precede the resurrection with Jesus’ death on the cross.

## Synchronous Literacy Motifs and Influences

The transfiguration story is influenced both by Hellenistic categories, as well as by the genre of the Old Testament which also bears Egyptian and Persian influences by virtue of the exile of Israel into Babylon. Biblical scholars Helmut Koester and W. G. Kümmel place the transfiguration story in analogy with an epiphany story – Kümmel in association with the Hellenistic motif (1990, p. 122) and Koester, with the Old Testament genre and Jewish apocalyptic literature.

Although Hellenistic literature often pursued a more Gnostic strain which rejects the material embodiment of the divine and speaks of the miraculous transformation of a mythical figure, nonetheless, many examples of literature in the Hellenistic religions concerned a metamorphosis. In the story of Apuleius, we find persons and deities experiencing transformation and release as a first prediction before a process of suffering.

Thematic similarities also exist in early hermetic literature, in the literature of the mystery cults, in literature informed by Plato, and in parallel themes in other biblical literature. The mystery religions offered an analogous genre to the Christian biblical narrative offering stories of salvation on the basis of divine revelation.

Other literature that may have informed the transfiguration story was Hermes Trismegistus. Written between 100 and 200 CE, this series of tractates were astrological or magical. Some tractates contained writing that was religious which demonstrates literary connection with the Greek Old Testament. Hermes, a god, taught secret knowledge about salvation to a disciple. Those who recorded these documents believed that they had received revelation of a gospel, the difference being that the material or physical order is discounted. In *Poimandres*, powers appear before a disciple's eye, and Poimandres receives supreme vision. Receiving the benefaction of Poimandres, the disciple rejoices, for "the sleep of his body had become watchfulness of soul," and he "moves into life and light" (Barrett 1989, p. 89).

Literary fragments from the Egyptian magical papyri were also comparable to the definitive style and ethos of Hellenistic magic and, in turn, analogous to themes in the transfiguration: "once purified, the body is fit to receive a ritual vestment. . .the true new body of immaculate whiteness" (Jacq 1985, p. 37).

The Jewish apocalyptic literature and Wisdom literature have narrative similarities: the isolation of a special place, an extraordinary appearance (i.e., a bright, luminous light), and the self-revelation of divinity, followed by a description of the reactions of those who are present, and finally a command (Koester 1980a, p. 64).

## Social Need and Spiritual Longing

Clearly the narrative accounts of the Christian gospel did not arise in a religious-philosophical vacuum. The people of these times sought forms of knowledge and alternative channels of power in a situation that was dominated by Rome. Philosophers emphasized the theme of negotiating in a world that was disoriented.

Epictetus, a lame slave who was a philosopher contemporaneous to the gospel writer Luke, writes of the "universal" phase: an effort to define the free, moral persona as one who has freedom to speak freely regardless of oppressive threat. There was a collective desire for a new disposition of mind and heart. For those who felt marginalized, there was a turning inward, a relativizing of political and social circumstances. By retreating inward, one could discover being part of a principal work, "a fragment of God himself" (Barrett 1989, p. 67).

Persons pursued the mystery religions seeking a personal faith that would bring them into immediate contact with deity and would promise them salvation. The inability to negotiate their outer world increased their interest in astrology, fate, mysticism, and esotericism. Many of the mystery religions and cults contemporary to the writing of the gospel literature had existed for centuries. Mostly they were of Eastern origin before Hellenized.



The mystery cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, had come from Asia, the cult of Isis and Osiris from Egypt, and Mithraism from Persia. These cults shared the characteristic of being centered about a god who had died and had been resurrected. An initiate was inducted by specific rituals and secret symbols and participated in mystical union through sacramental means to share in the experience of the god to achieve immortality.

When Mark, the earliest of the gospels was written, the tradition of Jesus had already become saturated with the outlook of Hellenistic magic. The early stages of the interpretation of the miracles of Jesus, particularly his exorcisms and healings, were understood to be magical. Jesus was understood to have entered into the central conflict of the magician's art – the struggle with evil powers.

Informed by the collective psyche of the time, the spiritual world was understood as divided into two realms of power. A battle ensues between Jesus and his foes analogous to a battle between spiritual forces and magic. The folk belief was that Jesus overcame evil by his greater power as indwelt bodily by mana, a charge of divine energy, a vital substance that emanated from the spirit world. This power could be passed from one person to another (Brown 1978, p. 560). Those who received this power would undergo an initiation that would come to them as a Pentecostal event, an "inrush of God's kingdom." Christ was the vessel in the event of the transfiguration, the intermediary from whom the disciples received mana directly. A foretaste of the future glory was now *in* them.

Without hesitation, the early church attacked such magical beliefs and stressed that evil power yields to the superior power of God. Jesus was different from the magicians who were concerned with the control of the supernatural by techniques to further their own desires. He desired to do the will of the Father and to teach others to submit to that will.

### **Spiritual and Psychological Impact**

Jesus was fully aware of God's will for him. The intention behind the transfiguration event was to

show to the disciples that he would embody the reality of "glory" in the resurrection. He demonstrates that glory is more than a temporary contact to the divine presence. Glory is a reality that is revealed as a divine mode of being but a reality that is not visible to itself. It is a reality that must be witnessed by an "other." This perception is analogous to the belief in the practice of psychotherapy that healing is most efficacious in that two persons form a relationship in which healing occurs.

Jesus' inclusion of the disciples as witness to the event of the transfiguration indicates the potential of metamorphosis inherent in each person. Analogous to the long years one undergoes psychoanalytic or analytic reflection in the process of therapy, Jesus teaches that the transfiguration is a culmination of a long process and that we have to awaken from our "sleep," our dullness of "seeing and hearing," and recognize the light of the invisible source – the eternal life of the soul in a transfigured reality.

The manifestation of common images in the oral and written traditions points to how these images represent universal motifs that arise within the human psyche. When a people in history find themselves in a disenfranchised state in which their personal identity is in question or depersonalized, the human psyche reacts by development of a common theme of divine manifestation. From the depths of the human psyche, a healing, guiding presence makes itself known and offers the potential for efficacious change.

The deepest, most far-reaching change possible for human beings is expressed by the word metamorphosis. When we undergo metamorphosis, we are changed at the depths of our being and completely. Psychoanalysis, at its best, works at this level. The deeper psyche becomes the transformative ground for the original unity of soul and spirit. We know that we are in the terrain of deeper psyche when primal archetypal images and symbols grasp us and startle us beyond what we typically know and experience. Aspects of human existence replete with both light and dark sides begin to penetrate our personal consciousness,

analogous to the experience of persons in the first century and in all centuries.

From a psychological perspective, in metamorphic change, the ego may feel displaced as it changes experientially into new form informed by new knowledge emerging from the psyche as the unconscious becomes conscious. The ego may feel distraught, uncomfortable, as if it is dying unto its new role and existence.

Like the disciples' realization in Jesus' transfigured form, the ego in psychological analysis comes to recognize two layers of being. What the ego has known as self is not all that it is. This realization is accompanied by the profound awareness that archetypes and archetypal images do not veil the eternal world. They lead to it. An archetype can arrest us in a mood or a state of biophysical seizure as it announces the new, taking hold of our entire personality, as if, like the disciples, we were entering a cloud. Such inbreakings of the unconscious can transcend the injuries of our childhoods and fuel us with an experiential faith, one that convinces us with impenetrable faith that some precious aspect of our being is impenetrable to death. The psychological movement we make between each image, each point of being, each glimpse of transfigured reality, leads us eventually to a world beyond mere material surfaces.

### Transfigured Transfiguration

As the ego surrenders to this process of awareness, we come to realize that an archetype can present itself only in a numinous way if it is clothed in an adequate symbol: a cloud, a mountain top, a cross, for instance. Symbolic expression originates in the body and presents itself as a self-portrait of instinct. As we begin to relate to the unconscious products of dreams, waking imagination, and symbols, our consciousness is ignited into motion. Dreams point to that which is not yet ready to be born but also to the advent of new birth and the eternal.

In modern depth psychological terms, the notion of transfiguration and metamorphosis translates into the goals of the fully individuated

individual which emerges in the self-ego relationship, a psychological reality that finds an analog in religious terms with Christ as exemplar and internal guide. The disciples proclaimed such lived experience and accepted revelation as an ongoing unfolding of divine presence in their lives. They discovered that through the mysteries of the transfigured Christ, there is spiritual character that may be embodied in the conscious and visible world that transcends the manifest.

Similarly, the reflective and sacred space of therapy can become the transformative vessel for reaching toward the divine. Human deficiency and lack, as it appears in our most cast off and vulnerable parts, may be the source of our greatest offerings. Our depletion may be the stable of incarnation, life that translates into more life in contrast to evil which can translate only into poverty. Therapy is analogous to a parent communing to a child whose healing is greatly aided in feeling "chosen" by a loving, attentive presence.

The transfiguration event attests to the fact that a transformation mystery exists in which the vessel character of the archetypal layer of the psyche houses a creative principle. By means of receptivity, we are enabled to bridge the two worlds of consciousness and unconsciousness. Our receptivity is the only thing that can recover to some form of healing human suffering and despair and give meaning to the inevitability of tragedy, death, dissociation, and developmental traumas. Love has the power to break through our defenses. As the great story teller Ovid once said of metamorphosis, "let me die loving and so never die" (Maidenbaum 1993, pp. 679–724).

### See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Osiris and the Egyptian Religion](#)

- ▶ Prayer
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Resurrection
- ▶ Theophany

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## Transgender and Gender Identity

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Most children and adults develop a gender identity – an intrinsic sense of being male, female, or an alternative gender. Some individuals develop gender dysphoria, distress caused by a sense of disconnection between an individual's gender identity and their sex assigned at birth. For example, an adolescent

girl who feels that her true self is really male may experience gender dysphoria. Gender identity disorder is diagnosed when an individual experiences a strong and persistent cross-gender identification, a persistent discomfort with his or her own sex, or a sense of inappropriateness in the gender role of that sex which causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Gender identity disorder is currently a formal diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association 2000, p. 96). The term transgender refers to all gender-variant persons, including cross-dressers (who are often heterosexual males who cross-dress for pleasure or relaxation), and intersexed persons (those who have both male and female physical sex characteristics) (Lev 2004). Transsexual individuals are those who realize that their physical bodies do not reflect the inner understanding of who they are, and who may use both hormonal and surgical therapy to augment or otherwise alter their bodies (Newfield et al. 2006). Transition refers to the outer and inner process of moving from one's birth sex to one's psychological sex. For example, a person who was assigned as male at birth (born with male sex characteristics) but who is changing or has changed his/her body and/or gender role from birth-assigned male to a more female body or role has pursued a male-to-female (MtF) transition.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) is a multidisciplinary professional organization “whose mission is to promote evidence-based care, education, research, advocacy, public policy, and respect for transgender health” (WPATH 2012, p. 1). The accepted standards of care for transgender adolescents and adults developed by WPATH include a period of psychotherapy, living as the other gender for a period of time, hormone replacement therapy, and often undergoing reconstructive surgery to alter the individual's anatomy (Lawrence 2002). Mental health professionals often assist transgender adults in exploration of identity, making decisions about gender transitions, and ongoing adjustments

when an individual has elected to transition either wholly or in part. Religious professionals are less often involved in these processes for transgender adults.

The cultural and religious history of transgender communities show that, over time, there has been a dichotomy of opinions surrounding the acceptance of this group. Some Native American groups have held the idea of “two-spirited people” to describe those who are gender-variant, and those in this group are often respected and honored within their tribes. The use of cross-gender terms in indigenous cultures has been documented in over 155 tribes throughout North America, and “two-spirited people” are often considered prized caregivers and mates, as well as the tribes’ most gifted visionaries (Laframboise and Anhorn 2008).

Several other cultural groups have also shown some level of acceptance for individuals who differ from traditional gender expectations. For example, Myanmar has a group of people called the Acault who are feminine males possessed by the female spirit Manguedon. The Maa Khii in northern Thailand are primarily female-to-male persons, possessed by the spirit, Phii, who act as mediums for the family to help with well-being, health, and harmony. European history also includes gender-variant persons, such as Joan of Arc (1412–1431), a Roman Catholic saint who was sentenced to death for cross-dressing. Joan’s followers revered her for her virginity and her manly dress which portrayed power, and they considered the men’s clothes she wore to be sacred. Chevalier D’Eon (1728–1810), a French diplomat who lived the second half of his life as a woman, reportedly believed his transformation to be a religious experience (Bockting and Cesaretti 2001).

Western religious institutions, as a whole, tend to struggle significantly with gender-variant persons and tend to promote gender conformity. Within Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, particularly the mainline denominations, transgender persons have, in the past, often become disenfranchised, dehumanized, and suffered from discrimination. Some have reported a tremendous loss of their spiritual selves. However, that is beginning to change. As transgender

persons feel more able to seek help from mental health and spiritual professionals, they often gain a sense of a deeper connection with others in their lives and their God or higher power in a way that had been closed to them previously (Bockting and Cesaretti 2001, p. 8). Further, some religious groups have begun to accept transgender clergy, though this change appears to be slower than the changes made to accept gay, lesbian, and bisexual clergy.

The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE) estimates that between 0.25 % and 1 % of the population is transsexual; however, accurate statistics on the transgender population are unknown because many individuals are not public about their identities and no organization is systematically collecting data (NCTE 2009, p. 1). Based on estimates from an international survey, the number of elder (65 and older) transgender-identified people worldwide is projected at 4.1–12.3 million (Kidd and Witten 2008). Given that these figures do not include those under 65 nor any number of culturally variant transgender identities, it is clear that there is a need for counselors, therapists, and others in the helping professions to be familiar with this group (Kidd and Witten 2008). According to WPATH, those in the counseling field are likely to encounter gender-variant clients in unexpected ways. Among gender-variant individuals, mood, dissociative, and sexual disorders, as well as substance abuse and borderline personality disorders are believed to be common. Additionally, two groups who are often invisible are those transgender persons in the gay and lesbian communities and biological females (WPATH 2001).

Little research into the levels of religiosity and spirituality in the transgender community has been conducted. Current findings suggest that, as with other populations, the transgender community associates religion with construction of meaning, wisdom development, and a commitment to living a good life (Halkitis et al. 2009). Many transgender individuals have felt forced out of their religious communities or otherwise dislocated from their spiritual or religious traditions. The challenge for mental health professionals is to be willing to accept this community and learn about the

struggles and resources that are part of the transgender experience, including meaningful exploration of the transgender individual's spiritual and religious experience.

## See Also

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Body and Spirituality
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Gender Roles
- ▶ Prejudice

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## Transitional Object

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The term, first coined by analyst D. W. Winnicott, refers to the object that a child might confer with special significance, such as a piece of string, a teddy bear, or a blanket. A popular representation of the transitional object is the “security” blanket that the character Linus always carried in the Peanuts cartoon. In the treatment of this object, the child enacts the love and rage that results from the bond with and inevitable separation from the mother. Thus, the object can be the treatment of abuse, affection, or idealization and role play, with the function of allowing the child to create, in a liminal space, a relationship that is reciprocal with and at the same time a working-through of the original mother-child environment. The liminal space in which the object is created by the child is neither the mother-child environment nor the child separate from the mother but is the intersection of both settings in the space of play (Winnicott 2005, p. 3). The fact that the child chooses the object, uses it, and abuses it, but the object continues to exist, represents the child's creativity and the endurance of the earliest bond in spite of inevitable frustration and separation.

Winnicott argued that the space in which the transitional object is chosen, and thereby “created” by the child, is the same space in which culture is developed in adult life. It is not coincidental that Linus, in the Peanuts cartoon, is the character who is the most capable of philosophical reflection. The realms of art, religion, and

literature reflect the play of imagination and the “holding” space which is necessary for this play (Winnicott 2005, p. 4).

Religion is grasped in a manner similar to that which a child grasps and manipulates the earliest object. Frequent metaphors of “wrestling” or “struggling” with religion are reflective of the child’s testing of the object in the liminal space, in which the object’s permanence ensures that it will outlast even the rage of the infant. This permanence is reflected in forms of religion which tolerate doubt and even hatred of the deity, reflecting the fact that even after such a powerful struggle with the object, the object will remain.

While the believer may grasp religion as the child holds onto the transitional object, she may simultaneously have the sense of being grasped in relationship to her religion. This reflects the manner in which the psychic object echoes the earliest relations. Forms of Christian Platonism reflected how God seemed familiar to the soul and seemed to be “recalled” by it even in its encounter with God (Turner 1995, p. 70). While religion might be “used” by the adult in a similar manner to which a child uses a transitional object, it also has the quality of an encounter, especially in its mystical forms. In religion, when one may feel enveloped by or chosen by an object which has connotations of fascination, desire, or the uncanny, this sense of resonance with something “beyond” may be reflective of the prehistory of the person, in which mother and child existed in a relationship which predates the historical awareness of the person or personality (Bollas 1987, pp. 24–25).

## See Also

- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods, and Religion](#)

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## Transpersonal Psychology

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Often referenced as the fourth force of psychology (the previous three being behaviorism, psychodynamism, and humanism), transpersonal theory refers to the intellectual movement and its attendant therapeutic praxes that attempt to redress the perspectival imbalance of its predecessors by integrating the insights of the world’s wisdom traditions with the psychological concepts, theories, and methods of the West. Whereas traditional theoretical orientations tend toward the reductive end of the interpretive continuum, transpersonal psychology seeks to include within its purview those regions of the human experience overlooked and unexplored (or utterly reduced/collapsed) by other models. These “higher” states – for curiously, the lower ones are only rarely engaged – are the primary domains with which it is concerned. Transpersonal psychologists are explicit in their mission to unite under one rubric both psychology *and* religion, or, more accurately, psychology and spirituality, however, nebulously defined and protean in character the latter may be.

Fueled by the American (read Californian) counterculture of the 1960s, the transpersonal turn was part of a wider cultural process of turning away from the perceived-to-be crumbling occidental edifices of church and state. Still, the project was essentially an extension of enlightenment ideals, its earliest incarnations attempting to wed the methodologies of science to the experiential epistemologies described in various mystical (read Eastern) literatures. The consequence of this spiritually positivistic stance (e.g., there is one unitive ground of all being that can be



accessed/realized by practitioners following the various prescriptive technologies described in the various non-dual systems) was the effluence of all-encompassing meta-theories replete with competing ontological claims. These theories subsumed, into one ultimate or another, the insights of orthodoxy, eastern spirituality, indigenous traditions, contemplative prayer, holistic medicine, non-ordinary states of consciousness, ecstatic dance, shamanic trance, yogic breathwork, and spiritual emergencies – to name but a few – as they have arisen in the historical pageant of the world's religious systems.

Transpersonal psychology draws heavily from the hermeneutics of the humanities, such as existentialism, phenomenology, humanism, ethnopsychology, and anthropology, and is characterized by its kaleidoscopic inclusion of differing scholastic orientations. Such a promiscuous intermingling of ideas and epistemologies from both psychology and religion has led many to erroneously conflate it with the New Age, although admittedly, there is much overlap.

Much of transpersonal theory is indebted to the pioneering work of William James and Carl Jung, though as a discipline, it did not emerge until the late 1960s as a unique efflux within the humanistic school of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, the latter whom, in conjunction with Stanislav Grof, founded, in 1969, the first academic journal devoted exclusively to the exploration of the aforementioned themes, *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*.

The two towering pillars of the tradition, however, are undoubtedly Ken Wilber and Stanislav Grof, although Wilber has since distanced himself from the movement in favor of his own epithetical integral psychology.

Wilberian theory views the cosmos, and by extension the development of consciousness, as a series of unfolding stages, with higher levels superior to lower levels arranged in a progressive paradigm of transcendence and inclusion. His most significant contribution to the field has been his non-dually based spectrum of consciousness.

Grof's model, in counterpoint to Wilber's, is a more laterally oriented approach and arose from his research experiences as one of the first experimenters with LSD. Regression to pre-egoic states is understood in his model to facilitate psychological integration of the individual. At first, these states were encountered with the aid of entheogens, but later with Holotropic Breathwork, a trademarked technique of posturing and breathing designed to activate the same non-ordinary states as its chemical counterparts.

Other theorists of note include Ralph Metzner, Michael Washburn, Roger Walsh, Frances Vaughan, Robert Assagioli, and Jorge Ferrer. Ralph Metzner's pluralistic model eschews all linearity, while Washburn's calls for a helical process of graduated integration culling insights from both Jungian and psychoanalytic thinking. Jorge Ferrer has reevaluated the entire transpersonal project and is believed by many to have liberated it from the tyranny of any one metasystem, calling for a plurality of intersubjective epistemological grounds instead of the various intrapersonal models to which previous theorists had wholeheartedly subscribed.

Criticisms from outside the movement have typically taken several different forms, chiefly among them (1) that transpersonal theorists are guilty of sloppy scholarship; (2) that in selectively privileging certain religious systems over others, they unfairly skew the data to support their individual models; and that (3) its continued lack of engagement with the problem of evil impoverishes any attempt to comprehend the psyche as an integrated whole.

Perhaps most damaging of all, however, is the unfortunate fact of its being mostly ignored by both the academy and the general populace, although evidence is beginning to emerge that this may, indeed, be changing.

## Commentary

Although couched as an academic discipline, transpersonal psychology really signifies the dawning of a new species of religiosity – psychology *as* religion.

This alternative expression of the numinous seeks to expand our understanding of the individual outside of the egoic insularity of previous psychological systems. In doing so, it dually uses psychology to read religion and religion to read psychology, neither reductively nor dogmatically collapsing one into the other.

## See Also

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- ▶ Rogers, Carl
- ▶ Wilber, Ken

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## Trauma

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Trauma is the description given to an overwhelming, uncanny, or absurd experience, usually involving some kind of violence, abuse, or loss that threatens death of injury to oneself or another and that resists one's capacities to process, make meaning of, or schematize the occurrence in typical or familiar ways. Traumatic experiences can

be short lived and acute or chronic and seemingly unending. Often accompanied by various experiences and compartments of fear, worry, anger, and crises of meaning, traumatic experiences are encounters with the overwhelming and the overpowering.

Traumatic experiences are often considered experiences that “shatters assumptions” (Janoff-Bulman 2002; Kauffman 2002) or belie expectations of how life events should occur. We naturally personalize traumatic events in our lives as we operate from a web of meaning that presumes life is ordered, fair, and benevolent. We live out our existence viewing chaos, chance, random destruction, and absurdity as flaws in life rather than as experiences inherent to the very composition of life. The etymology of the word “traumatic,” in Greek, means “to incur or inflict a wound or injury.” Traumas, or traumata, can be physical, psychological, environmental, and/or spiritual and can be immediate, acute, chronic, or delayed in their impact. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-IV-TR describes a traumatic experience as evoking feelings of being overwhelmed and helpless (2000).

It is important to note, though, that a trauma is not only the event itself that occurs but is shaped as well by how the event is understood by those undergoing it and how one is cared for before, during, and after such events. Any imposing of generic templates on others of what is considered traumatic should be critically analyzed (Bracken 2002). What is traumatic for one person may not be so for another. Developmental levels of vulnerability, exposure to life-world situations, meaning-making skills, and cultural sensitivities are all aspects to consider in assessing the nature and intensity of traumatization. Due to its imposing and intimidating nature, traumata evoke our needs to organize, categorize, and make sense of them, even though traumata are by definition experiences that resist these processes. This point testifies to our nature as meaning-making creatures. For instance, habitual ways of defining traumata as horror laden, such as war trauma, rape, physical violence, accidental dismemberment, and so forth, often enframe our definitions of trauma such that we inattend to

“positive traumas,” such as winning the lottery, being proposed to, finding out your pregnant with triplets, and other experiences.

Psychological perspectives on trauma have included Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) explications of hysterical neurosis and repetition compulsion (Freud, 1895/2000, 1920/1990) and Otto Rank’s (1884–1939) views on birth trauma (Rank 1929/1994). Much of the field of trauma studies has focused on the neurophysiology of traumatic and post-traumatic reactions as well as on multicultural issues within traumatic experiences and situations, particularly in regards to displacement and torture among refugees. Standard of care for psychological treatment of trauma includes post-traumatic stabilization, integration, and post-integration or reinvestment in relationships and projects in life.

It is the liminal characteristic of traumatic experience, though, that lends itself to comparisons with religious experience. Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) noted how experiences of hierophanies, or the “inbreaking” of the holy, often leave one disoriented, feeling threatened, and “thrown” into an encounter with limitlessness (Eliade 1959). Rudolf Otto’s (1869–1937) descriptions of encounters with the numinous as wholly other include a mixture of awe-filled fascination and terror (Otto 1917/1958). Gerardus van der Leeuw’s (1896–1950) description of the divine as “power,” in the sense of profound, impressive, and exceptional confrontation with incomparable otherness, concurs with these other phenomenologists of religious experience (van der Leeuw 1933/1986).

These descriptions of numinous experiences are nearly verbatim of what others have said about traumatic experiences. The traumatic experience is also numinous in its ultimate, encompassing, and boundary oriented in nature, to use Karl Jaspers’ language, or “peak experience,” to use Abraham Maslow’s phrase (Maslow 1970). For Jaspers (1883–1969), boundary situations, namely, guilt, chance, suffering, conflict, and death, are experiences in which everything is unstable and in flux (Jaspers 1919/1997; Schlipp 1981). Traumatic experiences are also apophatic encounters with radical

otherness in that one often finds attempts as description ineffable. When undergoing a traumatic experience, one’s very ground of meaning is deconstructed, as evidenced by alienation, guilt, irrevocable loss, and the loss of identity. During the meaning-making crises created by trauma, it is hard to determine the level of existential loss of faith operative. Yet, Stanislov and Christina Grof (1989) have provided extensive scholarship on differentiating spiritual emergencies from spiritual emergence and how care for each respective phenomenon is different.

Ritual abuse explicitly links traumatic experiences with religious symbolism and ritual in such ways that the religious artifacts and activities are themselves traumatic. In classifying post-traumatic experiences, spiritual abuse is often overlooked, dismissed, or renamed and can range from sexually and physically violent ritual abuse to proselytizing and theological battery, resulting in devaluation of one’s worth and well-being at one’s core and banishment from the rejecting community. Although the most overlooked traumatic experience, spiritual abuse may indeed be the most devastating, necessitating a most unique and compassionate response.

## Commentary

*How* one becomes traumatized, *what* is considered traumatizing, and *how* one cares for traumatized individuals remain central to any discussion about trauma. Several issues embedded in these concerns are often overlooked or at least tacked on as supplementary to standard of care protocol regarding traumatic experience. Survivors of traumatic experience often refer to how their spirituality helped them cope. Although researchers such as Kenneth Pargament (2001) have so aptly shown the benefits of religious rituals and beliefs as coping mechanisms, equating spirituality with coping mechanisms can often miss the phenomenology of religious experience on which such coping mechanisms are predicated. Numinosity is inherent in the experiential structure of traumatic phenomenon

and not merely a consolation tool that can be chosen or not on an as-needed basis.

Another unanalyzed aspect of traumatic experience is a tendency to explain such experiences solely in terms of neurophysiology and cognitive schemas, rather than disclose the phenomenology of the experiences themselves through descriptive analysis of its significance as lived by those undergoing or having undergone such experiences. The field has tended to generically template, categorize, and collate what is counted as a traumatic experience and how someone should react to it. For instance, a traumatizing experience is not just “caused” by a prior happening in one’s immediate or distant past. For an experience to be traumatic, multiple factors have to occur and situations have to provide an arena for traumatic experiences to come into existence, including much that is chance, random, unsolicited, and undeserved. The genericizing of traumatic events and reactions runs the risk of missing the unique and incomparable meaning making that resists classification. Moreover, addressing trauma requires more than challenging globalizing cognitive distortions. An encounter with the traumatic, much like an encounter with the numinous, is “irrational” in Otto’s language (1917) and “absurd” in Camus’ (1955) language, and neither experience is a distortion of reality. Life, at times, does not make sense and sideswipes us in undeserved ways. Thinking otherwise is actually the distortion needing correction.

A final point often minimized or not thought about in therapeutically working through traumatic experiences for persons is how prevalent the problem of evil is for traumatized persons, including the often disenfranchised group of traumatized persons: the traumatizers. Whether or not one is theistic, atheistic, or nontheistic, traumas raise the question of the justice, fairness, and benevolence of existence, particularly for the one undergoing the trauma, and therapeutic care must face this often unspoken issue upfront. To do so requires much of the therapist, and given so, one must attend to the perils of vicarious traumatization (Nouwen 1979; Steed and

Downing 1998). Yet, the model of the wounded healer has guided us through these dark valleys long before the field of trauma was formally conceived. It is often that in caring for those who have survived the undeserved and unexpected visitation of unmitigated destruction that an antidote is offered to soothe the horror. The antidote does not deny that suffering is a part of life, and at the same time, it, too, is undeserved, unexpected, and uncoerced. The antidote may very well be simply the grace of having one’s resilient capacities borne witness to and celebrated in order to not only cope but also to thrive.

### See Also

- ▶ [Abbyss](#)
- ▶ [Chaos](#)
- ▶ [Dissociation](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Existential Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Holocaust](#)
- ▶ [Homo Religiosus](#)
- ▶ [John of the Cross](#)
- ▶ [Liminality](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Spiritual Emergence](#)
- ▶ [Theodicy](#)
- ▶ [Vicarious Traumatization](#)

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## Trickster

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The trickster is a common character in mythology and in certain religious traditions, especially, but not exclusively the animistic – spirit-based – religions of Africa and Native North America. Typically male, the trickster usually has extreme appetites for food and sex. He is immoral, or, at least, amoral, and he is, more often than not, a thief. Yet he often uses his inventiveness to help human beings and is sometimes, in effect, a culture hero. Often his inventiveness interferes with creation, however, and causes such realities as pain and death. The trickster is a shape shifter. He can change shapes at will and, in that sense, is perhaps a mythological relative of the shaman.

In the ancient Greek religion, Hermes, as a child, has trickster aspects, as, for instance, when he steals Apollo's cattle. In India, the great man-god Krishna, the most important of the avatars of the god Vishnu, constantly plays tricks – some of a sexual nature, as when he steals the clothes of his bathing female followers. In these cases, however, the trickster aspect seems to reflect essential inventiveness and creativity and points to later more important achievements. The same is true of stories of tricks played by the boy Jesus in some of the apocryphal gospels.

More typical tricksters are those such as the Native American Coyote and Raven and the African Ananse (the Spider). The fact that these figures take animal forms coincides with their unbridled appetites. Coyote is an expert seducer of women and he constantly steals food from others more needy than himself. The West African Ananse even steals the high god's daughter. Like Hermes and Krishna, these tricksters are highly creative, but their creativity almost always causes trouble for themselves or others.

Tricksters such as Erlik in Central Asia are often close to the creator and manage, while pretending to help, to undermine creation,

allowing evil in. In this sense, Satan, in the Abrahamic tradition, is a trickster. A fallen angel, once close to God, he enters the new creation – Eden – as a serpent and uses his natural guile to infect that creation with sin – sin immediately associated with sexuality.

The trickster is a clear representative of an id-dominated ego un-tempered by superego. He is the narcissistic child, whose physical appetites are uppermost in importance. Jung saw the trickster as “an earlier, rudimentary stage of consciousness” (1969: 141) and an expression of shadow, the primitive, irrational “dark side” of the unconscious, but also, in his creativity and inventiveness, as a hint of a later positive figure who takes form, like the Great Hare of the Native American trickster tradition, as a culture hero-savior.

### See Also

- ▶ [Animism](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Culture Heroes](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)

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### Tulku

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In Tibetan Buddhism, a tulku is an individual who is sufficiently advanced spiritually to be

able to direct their reincarnation and be able to guide their followers to find their next physical embodiment. Reincarnation is a core belief of both Hinduism and Buddhism and is found in many Western esoteric traditions as well. The general view of Buddhism is that all sentient beings are on a wheel of life, endlessly living lives, dying, and becoming reborn in another body. There is a broad assumption of an evolutionary process where greater spiritual accomplishments result in moving up the scale of beings. The Mahayana concept of “bodhisattva” is relevant here, since they postpone their complete enlightenment in order to continue to work for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. The tulku, as a bodhisattva, continues their life stream across particular incarnations in order to facilitate the enlightenment of all. In Tibetan Buddhism, the god realm exists, but enlightenment can only come through a human reincarnation, making it a precious gift. The specific Tibetan twist on this general doctrine of reincarnation involves this special ability of highly developed spiritual leaders; they can direct their own reincarnation and have prescience as to the circumstances so as to be able to guide their followers in finding their next form.

The most widely known of such lineages of lamas is the Dalai Lama, currently held by the 14th lineage holder, formerly known as Tenzin Gyatso. The oldest such lineage line, however, is the Karmapa (head of the Kagyu lineage) which is one of the four major lineages within the monastic community (in order of origination, they are Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug). Each of those lineages, as well as many early teachers within each lineage, has now recognized lineages of tulkus who are the thread of continuity in spiritual leadership.

Until recently only Tibetan children were recognized as instances of a lineage line, but there are several young Western children who have now been recognized and whose parents have allowed them to enter monasteries to receive training in Tibetan Buddhism and the specific traditions of their lineage. Individuals who are recognized as reincarnated lamas are



generally referred to with the honorific title “rinpoche,” or “precious teacher.” But this title is also granted to other significant teachers who are not recognized as part of a reincarnated lineage.

These tulku are themselves manifestations of other transcendental beings. The Dalai Lama, for example, is viewed as an embodiment of Chenrezig, the Tibetan equivalent of the Sanskrit Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. All of the great teachers and initiators of lineages are seen as tied to these transcendental Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The doctrine which provides the theology for understanding this is the “trikaya” (Skt), or three bodies theory. The transcendental Buddha has the capacity to be in three types of bodies: the Dharmakaya body is the truly transcendent realm beyond duality; the Sambhogakaya body, or “enjoyment body” is the realm of high bliss as one would experience in the god realm; and the Nirmanakaya body is the “body of transformation,” which is how the Buddha manifests in earthly human form. The Buddha’s most recent embodiment was the Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama, or Shakyamuni Buddha. Tibetan Buddhism shares the deep involvement in the reality of a pantheon of transcendental Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with the Mahayana tradition found in East Asia.

## See Also

- ▶ [Bodhisattva](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Dalai Lama](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Rinpoche](#)

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## Twelve Steps

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The 12-step program was founded in Akron, Ohio, in 1935 by Dr. Bob Smith (known as Dr. Bob) and Bill Wilson (known as Bill W.). It is based on the 12 steps and 12 traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is an anonymous (using first names only) self-help program based on the goal of attaining sobriety from alcoholism.

The 12 steps are:

1. *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
11. *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

The 12-step program aims at helping individuals achieve sobriety by modifying the dysfunctional patterns and defenses of behavior, developing and strengthening their adaptive coping mechanisms, building new supportive social networks through telephone calls and meetings, and utilizing community resources. It teaches individuals to address the feelings that they have avoided through the use of alcohol. It is a nonprofit organization based on fellowship of members who share the same goal, a desire to stop drinking.

Total abstinence, in combination with utilizing the tools of the program, is the program's goal for recovery. The tools require one to make a thorough process of working through the 12 steps by obtaining a sponsor (one who has more experience in the program, has long-term abstinence, and acts as a mentor/primary support). The program stresses the need to help others in order to maintain one's own sobriety. In addition, there is a wide variety of literature that members are encouraged to read daily. Meetings are a strong part of the program, ranging from topic (i.e., serenity, honesty, forgiveness), steps (any one of the 12 steps), and qualification (usually a 20 min description of one's story focused on sharing experience, strength, and hope with fellow members). In the meetings, each member is encouraged to share for 3–4 min, keeping the focus on the solution rather than dwelling on the problem.

According to Carl Jung, alcoholism in Latin is "spiritus" and one uses the same word for the highest religious experience as well as for the most depraving poison. Before Alcoholics Anonymous was established, doctors and psychiatrists did not have any cure for the alcoholic. It was suggested that many doctors referred to William James statement that religiomania is the only remedy for dipsomania (Cheever 2004).

In 1931, it is written that Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist, told his patient Mr. Rowland H. that the only solution for his recovery from addiction would have to be a religious or spiritual experience. Jung refers to craving for alcohol, on a low level, of the spiritual thirst of our being for

wholeness, expressed in medieval language: the union with God. Jung further elaborated that the only cure for alcoholism is a full-fledged religious experience. Rowland H. joined the Oxford Group, led by an old Episcopal clergyman, Dr. Samuel Showemaker, in England. The Oxford Group was a nondenominational evangelical movement, accepting the simple common denominators of all religions that would be potent enough to change the lives of men and women.

The practices of the Oxford Groups were:

1. *Admission of personal defeat (you have been defeated by sin)*
2. *Taking personal inventory (List your sins)*
3. *Confession of one's sins to another person*
4. *Making restitution of those harmed*
5. *Helping others selflessly*
6. *Praying to God for Guidance and the power to put those precepts into practice*

One of the most important requirements of the Oxford Group was to recruit more members to the group. It was only through helping others selflessly that one was cured. This doctrine was adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous. It was Ebby Thacher that carried the message of the Oxford Group to Bill Wilson in 1934, depicting that a spiritual awakening in combination with the spiritual principals could cure the alcoholic. Bill Wilson teamed up with Dr. Bob Smith and wrote the book for Alcoholics Anonymous, known as the "Big Book." Originally, there were 6 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, similar to the 6 steps of the Oxford Group's, which were later developed into 12 steps along with the 12 traditions. The 12-step programs stayed true to the tradition of the Oxford Group, remaining nondenominational, using terms as "higher power" and "God," as we understand him.

Although the 12-step programs are rooted in American Protestantism, it is not exclusive to Christian or theistic belief. Eastern spiritual practice such as transcendental meditation; Native American spirituality, such as sweat lodges; and rituals of singing and medicine circles are widely practiced, as well. All these spiritual models share a belief that the path to recovery lies in the first 3 steps, which emphasize a belief and

a readiness to turn one's will over to a higher power. Other groups have been founded throughout the world based on the same principles: Narcotics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Nicotine Anonymous, Al-Anon, Overeaters Anonymous, etc.

## Commentary

The most common theoretical approach to curing addiction at the early stages in psychotherapy has been cognitive therapy, behavioral therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). The theory involves adapting new behavior from old behavior, adjusting one's irrational and faulty thinking to a healthier thought process. It is achieved by setting up a schedule and a contract with a therapist, developing new activities, and keeping a journal of feelings and behaviors, cravings, and/or triggers. It also involves using positive reinforcement and addressing negative consequences of destructive behavior (Cooper and Lesser 2002). In the later stages of recovery, ego-supportive and ego-modifying work can be undertaken. Many people with substance abuse lack certain ego functioning, such as a state of identity, impulse control, good judgement, frustration tolerance, and object constancy (Goldstein 1984). Like the ego psychological perspective, the 12-step program promotes growth in ego functioning and ego synthesis, even though the language may be different.

Sigmund Freud's structural theory of the id, the superego, and the ego refers to drives by the id's need for immediate gratification, the superego's often punitive and moral perspective of society and the parent, and the ego which acts as the mediator of both the id and the superego. Freud's theories address the treatment of addiction in his discovery of the early defense mechanisms, such as denial, projection, and rationalization. In the 12-step program, steps 1 through 3 address these early defenses of denial and require a willingness and belief in a source (higher power) outside of one's own self. Steps 4 through 9 require the review of one's impulses (id drives), address the consequences to oneself and

to others, and require taking responsibility for one's actions. This step process requires awareness (observing ego) with a willingness to be able to adapt and modify one's thinking and behavior. Step 10 is a constant review requiring the ego to regulate these drives on a daily basis and to continue to take responsibility for one's actions. Step 11, prayer and meditation, continues to remind the ego to practice further self-awareness. Step 12 provides a moral structure for helping others, resisting the potential for grandiosity and narcissism, by focusing on one's strength in order to benefit newcomers to the program who are in need of help.

## See Also

- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Compulsion](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Healing](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Phenomenology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Meditation](#)
- ▶ [Personal God](#)
- ▶ [Prayer](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religion and Mental and Physical Health](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Substance Abuse and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)

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## Twice Born

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Categorical term in the psychology of religious experience developed and described by William James in his classic work *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The description is obviously rooted in the exchange between Jesus and Nicodemus in the Gospel of John (3:1–21) where Jesus comments that a man must be “born again” in order to enter the Kingdom of God, although James seems to have directly appropriated the term “twice born” from Francis

W. Newman's *The Soul; Its Sorrows and its Aspirations* (1882). The twice-born type is the counterpart of the firstborn personality, who represents an instance of what James describes as “the religion of healthy-mindedness.” These individuals are characterized by a shallow optimism in regard to religious belief and, in extreme cases, an almost pathological aversion to the reality of suffering and evil. In contradistinction to this type, the twice born has passed through the experience of what James describes as “the sick soul,” where the individual's greater awareness of manifest evil forestalls the formation of religious conviction. The twice-born type has successfully navigated the challenge of religious pessimism, represented by the sick soul, proceeding to an affirmation of life and development of a religious outlook that fully retains its experience of the darker aspects of existence. The twice-born personality, therefore, never represents a relapse into the religion of healthy-mindedness, which is characteristic of the first-born type, but indicates a more comprehensive and integrated religious perspective. In this sense, James' description of the twice born bears some resemblance to the successful integration of the shadow in Jungian analytical psychology.

## See Also

- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Theodicy](#)

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## Ulanov, Ann Belford

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Ann Belford Ulanov, theological educator, pastoral psychotherapist, and Jungian analyst, is the author of twenty books, including six coauthored with her late husband, Barry Ulanov (1918–2000). She is widely recognized in psychology and religion circles for her original 1971 publication, *The Feminine in Jungian Psychology and Christian Theology*, inaugurating themes that appear as red threads throughout her work, namely, the dialogue between spirituality/theology/religion, depth psychology, and the distinctive voice of the feminine. Since 1967 she has taught at Union Theological Seminary where she is Christiane Brooks Johnson Professor of Psychiatry and Religion and Director of the Psychiatry and Religion Doctoral Program. She further serves as a teaching and supervising Jungian analyst in private practice. Steeped in psychoanalytic thought as well as analytical psychology, Professor Ulanov writes from a Trinitarian theological perspective as an Episcopalian. Additional themes addressed through her teaching and research in the field of psychiatry and religion include prayer and the spiritual life, aggression, anxiety, imagination, dreams, and identity.

Dr. Ulanov received her B.A. from Radcliffe College in 1959. While still an undergraduate,

she engaged in private study with Paul Tillich (1886–1965). She completed both her Master of Divinity degree (1962) and her Ph.D. in Psychiatry and Religion (1967) at Union Theological Seminary in New York City where she studied with theologian Daniel Day Williams. Between 1959 and 1967, Ann née Belford was also engaged in clinical training: a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (1962) and the Pastoral Psychotherapy Residency at Blanton-Peale Graduate Institute of Religion and Health (1962–1965), culminating in training at the New York Jung Institute for Analytical Psychology (1963–1967) as a Certified Jungian Analyst. She became a diplomate member of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors in 1967, qualified to offer supervision of supervision. Continuously engaged in clinical work as an analyst since 1965, her ministry as healer and supervisor contributes primary research material for her writing.

Upon completion of her doctorate and clinical training, Dr. Ulanov joined the Union faculty in 1967 and was tenured in 1971. In 1968 Ann Belford married Barry Ulanov, a professor in the English department of Barnard College, Columbia University. Barry Ulanov had three children from his first marriage, Anne (23), Nicholas (12) and Katherine (11). A son was born to Ann and Barry in 1970, Michael Alexander Gregory.

While raising four children, the Ulanovs enjoyed a productive intellectual collaboration as coauthors of six books, *Religion and the Unconscious* (1975/1985), *Primary Speech:*

A *Psychology of Prayer* (1982/2000), *Cinderella and Her Sisters: The Envied and the Envy* (1981/1998), *The Witch and the Clown: Two Archetypes of Human Sexuality* (1988/2000), *The Healing Imagination: The Meeting of Psyche and Soul* (1991/1999), and *Transforming Sexuality: The Archetypal World of Anima and Animus* (1994). As these titles suggest, some of their collaborative works are more heavily weighted to theological concerns, others more steeped in Jungian archetypal dimensions of the psyche, but all honor the distinctive voices of Christian theology and analytical psychology as these are brought into creative dialogue. Barry Ulanov's contribution as a scholar of jazz, comparative literature, the arts, and medieval spirituality surfaces through manifold literary, artistic, and historical allusions.

Ann Ulanov's single-authored works since 1971 include *Receiving Woman: Studies in the Psychology and Theology of the Feminine* (1981/2002), *The Female Ancestors of Christ* (1993/1998), *The Wizards' Gate* (1994), *The Wisdom of the Psyche* (1994), *Finding Space: Winnicott, God, and Psychic Reality* (2001a), *Attacked by Poison Ivy* (2001b), *The Unshuttered Heart: Opening to Aliveness and Deadness in the Self* (2007), and *Madness and Creativity* (2013 forthcoming). Of these, *Receiving Woman*, *The Female Ancestors of Christ*, and *The Wisdom of the Psyche* are readily accessible to the general reader. *Finding Space* and *The Unshuttered Heart* reward those engaged in the practice of psychotherapy, whether as recipients or practitioners, based on moving illustrations of the ways that head, heart, and spirit conjoin to effect personal transformation.

Included in Ulanov's oeuvre are four volumes of collected papers: *Picturing God* (1986/2002), *The Functioning Transcendent* (1996), *Religion and Spirituality in Carl Jung* (1999), and *The Spiritual Aspects of Clinical Work* (2004). In 2008 she collaborated with Alvin Dueck to publish a monograph that serves as an introduction to her work *The Living God and Our Living Psyche: What Christians Can Learn from Carl Jung*, including three seminal articles, "The Christian Fear of the Psyche," "Where to Put the Bad?

Where to Put the Feminine" (answering Jung's proposal that evil and the feminine be added to the Trinity as a Quaternity), and "God Images in the Life of Faith." A detailed bibliography of her publications, including numerous translations of her work, can be found in *Healing Wisdom: Depth Psychology and the Pastoral Ministry* (Greider et al. 2010).

Dr. Ulanov is a recipient of numerous awards for her pioneering work to further dialogue between Christian theology and Jungian psychology, including the Oskar Pfister Award from the American Psychiatric Association for Distinguished Work in Depth Psychology and Religion (1996), the Distinguished Contribution Award from the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (2001), The Distinguished Alumna Award from the Blanton-Peale Graduate Institute (1992), the Vision Award from the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (1992), and the Gravida Award for Best Book in Psychiatry and Religion (*Finding Space: Winnicott, God and Psychic Reality*) from the National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (2002). In addition to recognition from her fellow counseling professionals, she has received honorary degrees from Virginia Theological School (1985), from Loyola College, Graduate Department of Pastoral Counseling (1993), and from Christian Theological Seminary (2007).

In her writings and public presentations, Ulanov frequently returns to the idea of "the gap," a potential chasm between aspects of our being and experience into which we may fall. The gap exists between "our conscious and unconscious, between ourselves and others, between our personal and social existence" (1991/1999, p. 20) and between our "pet gods" and God in Godself, God beyond God. Because we fear otherness, both without and within, the temptation is to deny it, denigrate it, or attempt to control it. Fear of the gap can account for many things: patriarchy's rejection of the feminine, heterosexual anxieties in relation to GLBTIQ (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning) individuals, Christian intolerance of other faiths, or conscious resistance to the



wisdom and creativity of the unconscious. Following John Sanford and Morton Kelsey as earlier interpreter of Jung for Christian audiences, Ulanov presents a nuanced and balanced dialogue between Christian theology and Jungian psychology, giving each language its due. Following Jung, Ulanov is sensitive to the “gap between our symbols and the transcendent reality they convey,” the gap between ego and Self, *Imago Dei*, that of God in us (2007, p. 207). As “America’s foremost theological interpreter of Jung” (Ulanov and Dueck 2008, p. 5), she brings to current social concerns the breadth of vision that arises from the depths of the psyche.

A careful reading of Ulanov’s work reveals her concern for the feminine as an aspect of consciousness and way of being accessible to all persons as a necessary antidote to the overly rational, linear “objective” scientism that continues to dominate our current age. Much of Ulanov’s writing, particularly her single-authored work, exemplifies a way of thinking, that is, fluid, rife with image, and metaphor, standing in stark contrast to the dryly rational style of much theological reflection. Her work invites readers to join her in bridging the cultural and experiential divides between psychological theories on the one hand and religious or “primordial” experience (1985) on the other. While the breadth of her interests and research, not easily categorized within an enlightenment understanding of theological education, make it difficult to assess the current scope of her influence as a theological educator, students responsive to her way of thinking consistently find it enlivening.

Depth psychology that takes seriously the reality and significance of unconscious knowing as it impinges on conscious awareness through symptoms, fantasies, and dreams is itself suspect in some theological circles. Those who, like Ulanov, are dually credentialed as theologians and clinicians cannot help but appreciate the poignant particularity of the many clinical vignettes that grace her writing. But even among pastoral counselors, psychoanalysis is generally more accepted than analytical psychology. Phillip Rieff’s *bon mot* is apt: “Better an outright enemy [Freud] than an

untrustworthy friend [Jung]” (1966, p. 91, cited by Ulanov and Dueck 2008, p. 4). Jung’s writings on the Trinity, the Mass, Christ, and especially his *Answer to Job* are troubling to persons of faith, not least because of Jung’s insistence that all symbols are bivalent and that God and Christ must therefore each contain both good and evil. Ulanov does not blindly follow Jung at these junctures. She notes that Jung is not at his best as a theologian, a role he disavowed even when tackling matters of Christian doctrine. In opposition to Jung’s insistence on theological dualism, Ulanov claims Augustine’s doctrine of evil as *privatio boni* – absence of the good – while affirming Jung’s point that to deny evil or to project evil onto “the other” only serves to give power to the shadow.

However certain feminists (discounting the significance of embodiment) may assess Ann Ulanov’s understanding of the feminine, one may say of her work as one might say of Jung himself, “by their fruits you shall know them.” Jung has been castigated for his affairs and misogynist elements in his writing. Yet in his own lifetime and through his celebration of individuation, Jung has inspired women, including Ann Ulanov, to find and express their own unique experiences of ego and self, as center of the psyche with affinities to Christian understandings of soul. Students reading Ulanov’s work and those who have known her as analyst, supervisor, or theological educator find through her words and her vibrant presence permission to imagine a life in which loving companionship, parenting, professional excellence, and creativity are all possible and fully lived. As in the Quaker adage “Let your lives speak,” Ann Ulanov’s life speaks fortitude, resilience, imaginative vision, and integrity of personhood to the lives of women and men still striving to realize abundant life. Individuation serves more than individuals, for through “aliveness that has the scent of joy (w)e contribute to a wholeness we share” (Ulanov 2007, p. 208).

### See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)

- ▶ Female God Images
- ▶ Femininity
- ▶ Goddess Spirituality
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Self
- ▶ Shadow
- ▶ Tillich, Paul
- ▶ Women and Buddhism
- ▶ Women and Religion
- ▶ Women in Chinese Religions
- ▶ Women in Christianity
- ▶ Women in Hinduism
- ▶ Women in Judaism
- ▶ Women in Shi'ism

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## Unconscious

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Whether structured like a language (Lacan), the submerged base of an iceberg (Freud), or the ocean upon which the iceberg itself is afloat (Jung), the unconscious is that vast “region” of mind that operates below (or para to) the limen of awareness, interacting with, affecting, and determining, to a certain degree, both our actions and our experience of consciousness in a myriad of ways only subtly perceived.

The discovery of this chimerical “entity” and the term which describes it has often been credited to Sigmund Freud, though articulator is perhaps a more fitting distinction. Innumerable authors have described and foreshadowed what we today call the unconscious, among their number Paracelsus, Schopenhauer, Leibniz, Spinoza, and Shakespeare, but it was Freud who first gave us a language and latticework with which to both read and describe it in the form of psychoanalysis.

In the history of psychology, it was this integral insight that shaped the discipline’s

theoretical orientation(s) and made therapy possible. Much of therapy consists of the seemingly Sisyphean task of unraveling the private mysteries of neurotic conflict, unearthing their roots and exposing these sources to the light of consciousness, and ideally, via the process of therapeutic engagement, successfully working through them.

In the psychology of religion, it is equally important.

Freud's reductive view was rooted in his hydraulically based psychodynamic understanding of the unconscious, believing the entirety of humankind's religious expression to be the glorious, though illusory, processes of projection, psychosexual conflict, and sublimation. This model has since been applied to virtually every god(dess) and his or her religion that scholars have come in contact with. Freud undoubtedly drew heavily from the work of the German theologian Ludwig Feuerbach, whose cataclysmic pronouncement was that the essence of Christianity (and by natural extension *all* religion) was simply our collective projections of all that is best in us as a species onto the intrinsically nonexistent cipher of "God." Although writing long before Freud and the coining of the term "unconscious," the concept is clearly operative in Feuerbach's analysis. Object-relations theory further developed these ideas in the context of idealized parental figures, while Jung believed the dazzling infinitude of religious expression could be read as permutations of a pantheon of archetypes.

The reception of these theories has historically been reductive, but recent reworkings of the psychoanalytic method have since seen that this unconscious process known as sublimation is precisely that – sublime. And that the erotic, which so often acts as both medium *and* message in the realm of the unconscious, cannot be collapsed into sex any more than three dimensions can be collapsed into two. And as embodied beings, it is the erotic dimension through which we seem to contact and express our experience of numinosity in its arborescent unfolding throughout the play of time.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Lacan, Jacques](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)

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## Underworld

- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)

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## Urantia Book

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The Urantia Book was published in 1955 by the Urantia Foundation in Chicago, Illinois. Urantia (you-ranch-ya) is the name assigned by the book to planet Earth, and the book purports to describe the physical and spiritual history of this world and the greater universe. By its own admission, the book claims to be a revelation. The 196 chapters that constitute the 2,093-page text are credited to a variety of angelic and celestial

authors. The exact process by which the book was created is a mystery though much is known about the people involved with the publication of the *Urantia Book*. The central figure in the book's long (by some accounts, almost 50 year) gestation was a prominent Chicago physician and author, William S. Sadler (1875–1969). Sadler; his wife, Lena Kellogg Sadler, also a medical doctor; his son, William, Jr.; and his adopted daughter, Emma Christensen formed the core "contact commission" to whom the contents of the book were first manifested. According to Sadler, a fifth person whose identity has never been revealed was utilized as the agent through whom the information was transmitted by a process never explained. Much of the information imparted by the celestials was in response to questions posed by people associated with the Sadler family, a group known as the "forum." The forum met on a weekly basis for many years to formulate questions and study the material.

The book is organized in four sections: the central and superuniverses, the local universe, the history of *Urantia*, and the life and teachings of Jesus. The first chapter is titled "The Universal Father" and the book emphasizes the personal and parental nature of God. Consistent with Christian theology, the book is also trinitarian. Jesus is identified as the human incarnation of a divine creator son, Michael of Nebadon. According to the book, Michael incarnated on *Urantia* as Jesus for many reasons, chief of which was to reveal the nature of God to man. Upon completion of his mission on *Urantia*, Michael assumed full authority as the supreme ruler of the universe of his creation (Nebadon) which consists of more than three million inhabited planets. From a psychological perspective, the book stresses the unique quality of each person and the evolutionary nature of mortal development. Human beings are ascending creatures on a long journey back to God. Spiritual progress comes as the individual discerns and accepts the will of God. To assist in this process, God has given each human a fragment of Himself called the thought adjuster, which guides a person toward perfection. When an individual has progressed sufficiently to have

accepted God's will as his or her own, then the soul and personality fuse with the thought adjuster and the individual attains immortality.

Personality is also a gift from God and every person is a unique and unrepeatable expression of the divine personality, fully endowed with free will. The soul is the product of the personality and thought adjuster working together; human beings create their own souls as they choose to express the divine will, the essence of which is love. The book describes seven psychic circles of advancement a person must attain to achieve immortality, which equates to an eternal existence of learning and service in worlds beyond. Upon mortal death, a person is resurrected on another world consistent with the person's spiritual development. The *Urantia Book* has been translated into a dozen languages and several hundred thousand copies have been printed.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)

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## Uroboros

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### Introduction

Uroboros (often *ouroboros*, sometimes *ourovoros*) is a transliteration of the Greek

ούροβόρος (ούρηβόρος). It has appeared in Latin as *ourovorax*. Uroboros is a composite word meaning “devouring its tail.” It is also synonymous with δράκων (*dragon*) and occasionally ὄφις (*ophis*). Whereas the gnostic Ophites and even contemporary snake handling sects within Pentecostal Christianity (originating in Appalachia) continue to exist sporadically throughout the Southern United States, these are perhaps more derivative of Minoan snake goddess cultic worship than uroboric devotion.

### A Powerful Primordial Symbol

Uroboros means “tail devourer.” Devouring the tail indicates the eating of one’s own flesh (without swallowing – yet). Tertullian (1989) and Chrysostom (1989) remark of the “autocannibalism” within the Eucharistic meal, the Lord’s Supper, wherein Jesus instituted the bread and cup of wine as his body and blood which his followers are to take, eat, and drink in anamnesis of him. Not only this, but he himself eats his own flesh and drinks his own blood and applies the alpha and omega (the first and the last letters in the apocalypse of John) to himself.

The uroboros is the most dynamic and primitive of all symbols representing the self-sufficient primordial deity. There is a connection between the uroboros and *khut*, the sacred snake that coils around the sun and marks the travel of the solar disk across the heavens in hieroglyphic representations of Ra within Egyptian theology and mythology. Uroboros as a sun depiction in Egyptian papyri is considered a *lemniscate*, or figure eight, the symbol for infinity. In such depictions, the uroboros appears in double and indicates volatility, is associated with the magician card in the Tarot deck, and has affinity with the one-sided Mobius strip that came to symbolize anxiety for Lacan (2004) because of its non-orientability. Representations of the lemniscate uroboros also appear in alchemical texts.

It is a round element, not unlike the Greek  $\alpha$ , and because it is a round element, the uroboros is also omega ( $\Omega$ ). The eat and be eaten aspects (life and death) are the hallmarks of the uroboros’

sustaining of the cosmic process. Not only has it affinity with the Eucharistic meal, but the uroboros is equivalent to the Holy Spirit because it is both actor and the acted upon and producer and product simultaneously.

There are incidences of triple uroboroi, as well. Charbonneau-Lassay (1991) includes a woodcut depicting such a symbol from a sixteenth-century Italian shield. This insignia is a good ancestor of the Borromean knot *matheme* in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory of the interconnection between the Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic – this despite the lack of the fourth ring (the *sinthome* or  $\Sigma$ ) that would hold the entire knot together should a piece of it be cut. Lacan points out that in the traditional Borromean knot of three interlocking rings, cutting any one of the rings would undo the knot entirely. The presence of the *sinthome* (etymological ancestor of the *symptom*) would keep this from happening. It is worth noting that with this fourth ring, we would have not only a quaternity symbol, a squaring of the circle, but also the fourth within the alchemical axiom of Maria Prophetissa (one becomes two, two become three, and out of the third comes the One as the fourth).

Throughout the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament or Hebrew bible, the uroboros appears in various guises as δράκων (*dragon*): There is the serpent in the Garden of Eden; there are epithetical comparisons of the uroboros/dragon to Babylon in the prophets; the uroboros is synonymous with Leviathan whom God tames, makes of it a plaything, and eventually destroys; uroboros/dragon is also epithetically used to describe the pharaoh king of Egypt using the metaphor of the Nile crocodile; and it appears even in apocryphal texts of the prophet Daniel in the stories of Bel and the dragon to be slain as a means to attempt a paradigmatic faith shift in the serpent cults of Babylon.

Interconnections have been made between the triad Leviathan-uroboros-Christ, since the uroboros is viewed as being a *homousia*. That is, it is of one substance, as Christian creedal statements have attempted to clarify in the relationship between God, Christ, and the Holy

Spirit in Trinitarian formulae. This is, of course, a throwback to the archetypal incest motif associated with the uroboros. Father, mother, son, and daughter are of the same substance, so that what happens to one happens to all. This ties in with the understanding noted in the *Chrysopoeia* of Cleopatra in the Egyptian *Codex Marcianus* (Berthelot and Ruelle 1888) wherein a light and dark uroboros surrounds the Greek phrase “en to pan” (ἐν τὸ πᾶν), “the One, the All.” This is indicative of the uroboros being at one and the same the sacrificer and the sacrificed (i.e., God and Christ), alchemically represented by the spirit Mercurius and his role as both uniter and divider.

In the New Testament, the imagery of the uroboros/dragon appears specifically in the apocalypse (Revelation) of John. In Revelation 12 (Aland et al. 1998, pp. 654–656), this dragon has been observed to be analogous to the mythologems of Apollo killing the Pythian dragon at Delphi and Zeus’ immobilization of Typhon as though to indicate the commonality of the need to overcome/overthrow/imprison/slay the dragon as offending beast. Indeed, it became a common practice in the Middle Ages to dub a knight in the name of God, St. Michael, and St. George as a symbol of Yahweh’s overthrowing the great sea serpent Leviathan and making it a plaything – not to mention the obvious affinities with the subduing of Satan by Michael in the Revelation of John. Such imagery also denotes the links the uroboros has with twinship, for example, the story of Castor and Pollux, the pillars of Hermes (Mercurius!) and Hercules (and the Kabbalah’s Jachin and Boaz columns), the Mithraic Cautes and Caupartes, as well as the Hero Twins in Pueblo lore: monster slayers and transformers of the old to the new. Bion (1950/1967) alludes to the poisonous nature in the swallowing of the analytic twin. Ode 22 of the pseudepigraphal *Odes of Solomon* (Charlesworth 1985, p. 755) recalls the “poison” of the dragon which is its dark half.

The uroboros motif is also present in the third chapter of the Johannine gospel wherein Jesus and Nicodemus broach the subject of the serpent lifted up by Moses. This is an overt allusion to the

lifting up of the Christ on the cross, the sacrifice by the sacrificer for the renewal and redemption of human beings. In this same chapter of John’s gospel, the uroboros image first appears in the call to be born from above (water and the spirit). Uroboros is associated with water (as in the Genesis story of creation), and it is affiliated with Okeanos, which has the dual meaning of life (*zoē*) and death (*Thanatos*). That the uroboros is capable of fragmenting, separating, and dividing is indicative of life, since *zoē* is an epithet for Dionysos, divine archetypal symbol of fragmentation. But the uroboric dragon is also a symbol of perpetual renewal, which is also indicative of *zoē* as rebirth follows death.

### Uroboros in Gnosticism and Mystical Judaism

In gnostic writings, such as the *Pistis Sophia* (Mead 1921/2005), the body of the mysterious serpent is divided into 12 aeons, corresponding to the 12 months of the solar year. Within the dialogue with the resurrected Christ, Mary Magdalene inquires about the nature of outer darkness. Jesus’ response is that the outer darkness is a great dragon with its tail in its mouth outside the whole world and surrounding the whole world. This may well be the same outer darkness into which the improperly attired guest is cast in Jesus’ parable of the marriage feast in Matthew 22. Thus, the light and dark attributes of the uroboros correspond to the *agathodaimon* (spirit of good) and the *kakadaimon* (spirit of evil), respectively. This is because as serpent, the uroboros gives and sustains life as well as removes and destroys life.

It is important to consider the issue of emanations when speaking of the uroboros. The gnostic texts that comprise the Nag Hammadi codices contain a number of references to the uroboric nature of the creation and dissolution of the cosmos which spring from emanations of the great serpent. These are, psychologically speaking, projections. Whether we put up barriers ( $\beta$ -screens) to block or repress these projections is something worth taking into consideration.



As knowledge of the uroboros is eventually related to the squaring of the circle (which allows us to discern God), contains the union of the opposites (tying it to the hieros gamos [q.v.]), and is, all in all, immune to injury, it is analogous to W. R. Bion's epistemological notion that knowledge leads to absolute reality, which he designates as "O." Put another way, knowledge respectfully leads to the indescribable ultimate reality, godhead (not *imago Dei!*), or "O," remembering that knowledge and ultimate reality are not synonymous.

Referring to Torah, Rabbi Yochanan ben Bag (Ben Bag Bag in the Babylonian Talmud) urges in *Pirke Avot* 5:22, "Turn it and turn it again, for everything can be found therein." It is the uroboric nature of Torah to reach out and draw the world into itself and project it. The same could be said of Kabbalah, since the uroboros is synonymous with Leviathan and this same tamed sea serpent and plaything of God is therein the name for *Yesod* and *Tifereth*.

## Uroboros in Psychology

With the uroboros, there is still turbulence, for it encircles the Void or abyss of chaos. This bears on Bion's (1977/2000) concept of emotional turbulence in the analytic encounter – indeed, within any encounter between human beings. This turbulence/chaos holds events that are discernible, and it is up to us to pick our way to them and draw them out. Films (e.g., *Stargate*) have capitalized on the uroboric interconnectedness between other galaxies and times, aeon fluxes, and the like. Joyce (1939/1967) produced an exceptional uroboric text in his *Finnegans Wake*.

The uroboros is the one that devours, fertilizes, begets, slays, and brings itself, like the phoenix, to life again. It is hermaphroditic and the container of the opposites: poison and panacea, as well as basilisk and savior. As a sexual symbol, the uroboros in fertilizing itself is thus related to hieros gamos. Charbonneau-Lassay (1991) mentions the existence of a gold ring in the form of a uroboros. A wedding band in gold (the highest

not-color color both symbolically and alchemically) is already a uroboros, further connecting it with the hieros gamos, or sacred marriage, acted out within the wedding rite.

Despite its lemniscate and Borromean emanations and derivatives, the uroboros is usually depicted as a serpent devouring its tail, ring shaped, a circle without beginning and without end. It is a symbol of infinite time, of death and rebirth, regeneration, dying in order to be born anew. Geometrically, the topology of the uroboros is that of a torus, a donut defined by two circles – one revolving about an axis coplanar with the other. Lacan used the torus to speak of the effect of the irruption of the Real into everyday life. With the torus, there is no inside or outside: only two voids by which to articulate request and desire which never quite find fulfillment and end up creating a spiraling chain of veiled originary remembrance. Because our lives and the world form a continuous order within the toroidal uroboros, when the Real irrupts, it does so everywhere at once, subjecting everything to change. Since the uroboros serpent not only signifies emanation/projection and dissolution but also life-giving and life-taking, such an irruption is threatening because of the potential for the dissolution of everything in its presence. The uroboros is thus a sublation (progress, qualitative change), the sort of *Aufhebung* used in Hegelian terminology. Nevertheless, whatever change occurs is essentially an enantiodromia. There is a return to the originary and the movement is not static but dynamic.

## See Also

- ▶ [Apocalypse](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Bion, Wilfred Ruprecht, and "O"](#)
- ▶ [Genesis](#)
- ▶ [Gnosticism](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Kabbalah](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)

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# V

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## Vatican

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The Vatican is a 108-acre territory and independent city-state located in the center of the Italian capital of Rome. It is headed by the Pope, as supreme governor, and administered through the Pontifical Commission. It has its own legal system, based upon the *2000 Fundamental Law of the Vatican City-State*, which was promulgated by Pope John Paul II, as well as a penal system, two jails, a post office, electric plant, bank, and publishing house. Canon law also presides, and in the cases where canon law does not apply, the laws of the city of Rome are employed. Originally, the term “Vatican” referred to the area of Rome called “mons vaticanus,” which was a hill sloping away from the center of the ancient city near the Tiber, and a location that was sacred for early Christians, who believed it to be the burial place of St. Peter (Allen 2004).

In common usage, the terms *Vatican*, *Holy See*, and *Roman Curia* are often interchanged imprecisely. Whereas the Vatican refers specifically to a physical location, the *Holy See* and *Roman Curia* refer to authoritarian and administrative roles. The *Holy See* is the centrality of authority, power, and jurisdiction, coming from the Latin *sedes*, or seat. It indicates the “proper term for designating the authority of the papacy

to govern the Church. It is a non-territorial institution, an idea rather than a place” (Allen 2004, p. 23). The *Roman Curia*, which originally referred to a seat in the ancient Roman Senate, is the “bureaucratic instrument through which the Pope administers the Holy See and carries out his function both as supreme governor of the Catholic Church and as a sovereign diplomatic actor” (Allen 2004, p. 28). This said, the use of the term “Vatican” continues to function in media and general discussion as a catchall for references to the central authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

## Freud, Lacan, and the Vatican

Freud visited the Vatican Museum and was positively enamored by its wealth of art. As Ernest Jones, Freud’s biographer, writes “he [Freud] was . . . in the Vatican Museum and came away from it exhilarated by the beauty of what he had seen” (Jones 1955, p. 20). But his feelings about the Vatican as a representative of the New Rome, which he recognized as the empire of Christian Rome, were negative. Unlike Lacan, who is sometimes described as “un cattolico non ortodosso” and a great admirer of Baroque Rome and its Catholic trappings, Freud was greatly conflicted over this new Christian Rome localized in the Vatican, especially as a tension rooted in his vision of Judaism in conflict with the Church (Amati 1996).

## Psychology and the Vatican

In the late nineteenth century, individuals such as Hermann von Helmholtz, Wilhelm Wundt, Pierre Marie Félix Janet, and Sigmund Freud were introducing experimental and clinical methods into the discipline of psychology. It was most significantly Freud, whose writings and psychoanalysis were to become anathema to the Catholic world (Gillespie and Kevin 2001). In a 1952 TIME magazine article entitled “Is Freud Sinful?” there is clear consternation from some Vatican officials, but these assertions are notably neither official nor dogmatic. One of the most vocal opponents of Freud was Monsignor Pericle Felici, an official of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, who “loudly attacked ‘the absurdity of psychoanalysis.’ He stated flatly that anyone who adopts the Freudian method is risking mortal sin” (TIME 1952). The general concern of most critics, though, had to do with any Freudian issues of sex and sexuality. The Vatican’s official status on psychoanalysis in 1952 was expressed in the statement: “should psychoanalytic treatment be judged harmful to the spiritual health of the faithful, the church would not hesitate to take adequate steps to brand it as such. Nothing, so far, indicates that such steps are about to be taken” (TIME 1952). Felici continued to criticize the role of psychology and his assertion that “the psychoanalytical school can easily become a school of corruption” resulted in controversy (Gillespie and Kevin 2001, p. 19). The official response to the storm over psychoanalysis came when Pope Pius XII spoke at the First International Congress on the Histopathology of the Nervous System, where he vigorously cautioned against “psychotherapeutic treatments that seek to unleash the sexual instinct for seemingly therapeutic reasons” (Gillespie and Kevin 2001, p. 19). The following year, on April 13, 1953, Pius XII addressed the Fifth International Congress of Psychotherapy and Clinical Psychology, saying

be assured that the Church follows your research and your medical practice with her warm interest and her best wishes. You labor in a terrain that is very difficult. But your activity is capable of

achieving precious results for medicine, for the knowledge of the soul in general, for the religious dispositions of man and for their development (Pius XII 1953).

In more recent times, there have been attempts at mollifying the historically tenuous and misunderstood relationship between psychology, psychiatry, and the Vatican. In 1993, Dr. Joseph T. English, then president of the American Psychiatric Association, led a delegation of prominent psychiatrists to meet with Pope John Paul II. The New York Times noted that there was a time when such an event “would have seemed unlikely, if not absurd” (Steinfels 1993). Some of the issues that were considered in this encounter dealt with the belief by some Catholics that psychological ills are simple moral failings and, thus, find psychotherapy something to be shunned (Steinfels 1993). Five years after this discussion, Pope John Paul II referred to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in a message on the sacrament of Penance, where he indicated that “the confessional is not and cannot be an alternative to the psychoanalyst’s or psychotherapist’s office. Nor can one expect the sacrament of Penance to heal truly pathological conditions” (John Paul II 1998). In the twenty-first century, the Vatican has become more involved in the psychological disciplines, primarily through the work of pastoral care and counseling.

### See Also

- ▶ Confession
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Lacan, Jacques
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Rome

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- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Ramakrishna Paramahansa](#)
- ▶ [Vivekananda](#)

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## Vedanta

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A philosophy of classical Hinduism *Vedanta* means “the culmination of the *Vedas*,” referring to the *Upanishads* as the final portion of that scripture. In essence, *Vedanta* is theology, with its main concern focused on divine power. In the past 100 years, *Vedanta* has been popularized in the West, a movement initiated by Swami Vivekananda who carried the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna from Calcutta to Vedanta Society centers in many major cities of the world.

Principal teachings embody the harmony of all religions: “As many faiths, so many paths.” With its aim to experience the oneness of all creation, *Vedanta* preaches kindness to all, nonviolence and service to others (*seva*). God (*Brahman*) can be known as form or formless. In form, for example, God can be found in Divine Incarnations (*Avatars*) and as the Indweller of every human heart (*Atman*). As formless, God is perceived as all-pervading and as pure consciousness.

### See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Avatar](#)

## Vestments

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Vestments are the garments worn by priests and other religious leaders in the performance of sacred rites. The term is used especially by Christian denominations which place particular emphasis on the sacrament of Holy Communion, the liturgy of the Eucharist. Thus, priests of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and most of the Anglican Communion wear vestments while celebrating the “Mass” or “Great Liturgy.” Vestments of various types and colors, depending on the liturgical season of the church year, are worn. The most common and most visible Eucharistic vestment is the chasuble, a poncho-like garment that originated in Roman times.

The psychology behind vestments would seem to have to do with the priest’s need during the sacred liturgy (service) to cover his particularity and individuality behind a “uniform” – a recognizable symbolic garment – so that he (or she in some traditions) may become the representative of his church as a whole. It is not Father X saying Mass; it is a representative of Christ and His Church, as the vestments indicate.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)

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## Via Negativa

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The Latin term, which means the “way of negation,” refers to the stream of Christian theology which emphasized the unknowability of God and the inability of positive theological attributes to define God. Also known as apophatic (literally “denial”) theology, this way of thinking can be seen in the writings of those who would later be known as mystics. The *vianegativa* paradoxically uses language to describe what is indescribable but prefers adjectives of cancellation to those of positive attribution, claiming that positive attributes drawn from human experience cannot reflect the divine. This stream of thought, far from being divorced from what preceded it in Christian theology, was present throughout Christian theology and could be seen as a direct reflection of a strong emphasis on the transcendence of God (Turner 1995, p. 1). Rejecting the positive naming of God found in Bonaventure and Aquinas, apophatic theologians emphasized the ineffability of God. Drawing from Pseudo-Dionysus, who in the fifth century described God as “dazzling darkness,” thinkers such as Meister Eckhart and the anonymous author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* describe God in terms of negation, reflecting in their language the inexpressibility of God. However, it is important that the *via negativa* not be objectified by a discussion of it, since it resists fixation and attachment upon it as a particular “correct way.” Apophatic theology is also an important stream in Islamic theology, which states the names of Allah, not as direct analogies to Allah but as “veils put on the mystery of God” (Borrmans 1993, pp. 63–64).

If, in theistic religions, the *via negativa* is a reflection of the otherness of God, in a nontheistic religion such as Buddhism, the *via negativa* could be thought of as a radical immanence. Especially in Zen, the *via negativa* is strongly exemplified in the use of the prefix “not” in such phrases as “no-mind” and “no-self” and in the tendency to cross out even sacred terms such as *sunyata* (“emptiness”), emphasizing the limitations of language (Abe 1995, p. 51). In Buddhism, the *via negativa* resists being put into the service of higher goals, or transcendence. In the Zen koan, the paradoxical approach of negation reflects the fact that the practitioner must grapple with the negation and senselessness of the riddle in order to approach meaning which is not positive or negative but transcends dualities (Suzuki 1927, p. 250).

The *via negativa* is not merely semantics, but it points to something central to mysticism, the overcoming of dualities and all notions of the pursuit of sense or purpose. The challenge of apophatic theology is a challenge that is directed against both religion and language but also inseparable from them.

## Commentary

Just as Freud’s discoveries unseated the omnipotence of the will and conscious thought, and therefore caused people to look deeper for the complexities of meaning, the *via negativa* also involves suspicion for the potential of positive language to clearly point to reality. The illuminating character of *parapraxes* echo negative theology in both the slipperiness of language and the sense of a deep reality being glimpsed. Jung built his theory of opposites upon a valuing of the supposedly paradoxical and contradictory sides of experience. His formulations emphasized mystery and resonated with the *via negativa* in their suspicion that there may be something more true than language can explain. The *via negativa* could be seen as a corollary to depth psychology in its attempts to seek to understand deeper aspects of experience, in its emptying of categories with an openness to what is beyond.



At the same time, the *via negativa*, in the Christian tradition, seems to rely upon the distance of God and thus could be seen to imply the distance of the believer from the object of worship. Feuerbach critiqued all expressions of a *via negativa* as really implying a failure of faith (Feuerbach 1957, p. 220). Negative theology could be analyzed as implying doubt or disappointment with a faith object in which one attempts to trust, and thus placing that object beyond all reach. Psychologically, this could be understood as reflecting failure in the earliest environments in which the psychic potential of faith is established for the child. However, apophatic theology should not too quickly be identified with disappointment or loss, or with what John of the Cross called “the dark night of the soul,” since it cannot simply be equated with an experience of depression or a purgative stage of faith through which one passes. It is best understood, in theistic settings, as an important stream of thought alongside positive mysticism. In nontheistic traditions, it is the relativity of language in service of non-duality. In either case, it refers to something which certainly has psychological components but retains its own religious logic and should not be flattened to fit psychological categories.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Depth Psychology and Spirituality
- ▶ Doubt
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ John of the Cross
- ▶ Koan
- ▶ Meister Eckhart
- ▶ Sunyata
- ▶ Zen

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## Vicarious Traumatization

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Defined as the indirect transmission of distressing symptoms following exposure to an individual who has directly experienced a traumatic event. After empathic and spiritual engagement with a traumatized individual, the listener may experience symptoms consistent with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These responses can include distressing imagery or reexperiencing of the event; persistent avoidance and numbing of stimuli, thoughts, or feelings reminiscent of the trauma; increased physiological arousal; somatic ailments; and significant impairment (DSM-IV-TR). In essence, the listener functions as the “container” for the uncomfortable thoughts and feelings that are elicited through exposure to another individual’s recollections of traumatic material. The listener may attempt to alleviate these distressing emotions through spirituality or religious affiliation. Shaw et al. (2005) describe how “religious beliefs may provide a framework to aid reappraisal of threatening situations as less of a threat and more of a challenge” (p. 3). After reframing the trauma

within a different context, the listener can begin to process existential conflicts and seek alternate meanings about life experiences (Frankl 1984).

## See Also

► [Trauma](#)

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## Violence and Religion

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All the religions of the world contain storehouses of symbols and metaphors of war and violence. At the beginning of the sacred history of the Bible – the fountainhead of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – God “Himself” hardens Pharaoh’s heart to set the Egyptians up for slaughter. The firstborn child of every Egyptian family is slain until every Egyptian knew death. Bloody stories of warfare, pillage, rape, and conquest fill the opening books of the *Torah*. Such texts lay the basis for the Holy War tradition in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The New Testament contains bloody portrayals of Jesus’ suffering on the cross, Paul’s metaphors of continual spiritual warfare, and the horrific images in the *Book of Revelation* so dear to apocalyptic Christians. The crusades, the inquisition, and the European wars of religion following the Reformation are all part of the history of

Christianity. Islam tells and retells the stories of the Prophet’s battles and conquest and there is the history of Islam’s bloody sweep across the Middle East and North Africa. The Pali chronicles contain many tales of the wars and conquests by Buddhist kings, tales that are told and retold among the Buddhists of Sri Lanka in their campaign to subdue the Tamil population there. In 1959, a Sri Lankan Prime Minister was assassinated by a Buddhist monk. Tibetan Buddhism also has many stories of warfare and its divine pantheon contains countless images of blood-thirsty deities and semidivine beings. And there is a long lineage of warrior Buddhist monks in China and Japan. The Hindu epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are full of epic battles and warrior heroes. No world religion is without a storehouse of more than enough texts and tales to justify any and all acts of brutality, bloodshed, and terrorism. Historically and textually there are many, many connections between religion and violence. In the sweep of human history, there is no evidence that any one world religion is bloodier than any other (Juergensmeyer 2000; Stern 2003).

No serious contemporary psychological study has found any evidence for diagnosable psychopathology in those who commit acts horrific violence in the name of religion (see, e.g., the review in Horgan 2006). Most extraordinary acts of inhumanity are committed by very ordinary people. Theologians have said this for centuries; many social psychologists are coming to the same conclusion.

Most contemporary psychological investigations of the connections between religion and violence are done by social psychologists, often in the context of more general investigations into violent behavior. Such studies almost always locate the causes of violent behavior in the dynamics of groups. The two most widely cited social-psychological experiments in the literature of genocide – Milgram’s obedience to authority and Zimbardo’s prison experiments – illustrate this. In the early 1960s, Stanley Milgram recruited a cohort of 40 ordinary men from New Haven, CT, and told them to inflict increasing electric shocks on a subject, in response to the

subject making mistakes on a word association test. The subject was, in fact, part of the experiment and did not receive any actual shocks. In response to the experimenter's requests, the majority of the participants inflicted increasingly severe shocks on the subject as a punishment for his wrong answers to questions. Even when the subject portrayed signs of severe distress, participants were willing to inflict that what they were told was a near-fatal shock to the subject in obedience to the experimenter's commands (Milgram 1974).

In 1971, at Stanford University, Philip Zimbardo recruited a cohort of typical college male undergraduates and randomly assigned one group to play the role of prisoners and the other to play the role of prison guards. He set them up in a mock prison setting. Anyone with noticeable psychological problems was screened out. Within days, a third of those assigned to be guards became increasingly cruel, sadistic, and tyrannical towards the prisoners, whom they knew were really just fellow undergraduates like themselves. This brutality escalated so rapidly that the 2-week-long experiment was stopped completely after 6 days (Zimbardo et al. 1999). These experiments demonstrate the ease with which violent groups can elicit cruel and sadistic behavior even from those not otherwise inclined in that direction.

Waller (2002) suggests four social-psychological factors that permit ordinary people to become perpetrators of extraordinary evil. The first factor claims that all of us have certain genetic predispositions shaped by natural selection that make us susceptible to committing vicious deeds. Religious leaders and institutions are particularly adept at manipulating these inherited inclinations towards ethnocentrism and us-versus-them thinking. Waller's second factor refers to the ways in which these inherited traits are shaped by culture to make us even more potentially available for heinous actions. Among the significant "cultural belief systems" are religious beliefs about the role of authority, about the dichotomy between the in-group and out-group, and the demonizing of those considered outside the true fold. Religious beliefs also serve as

justifications for killing. By reinforcing ethnocentrism and scapegoating outsiders, religion can facilitate a "moral disengagement," through which we cease to see a horrific deed as immoral, and may redefine and relabel otherwise abhorrent actions into something justified and even meritorious (Bandura 2004). The third factor is "a culture of cruelty" in which individuals, already predisposed in this way by genetic inheritance and religious and cultural training, are directly trained as killers. Through escalating commitments (in which an individual is gradually introduced and desensitized to more heinous acts) and a ritual initiation, the individual's conscience is gradually numbed or repressed. Initiation into such violent groups allows for a diffusion of responsibility, creates an ethos of "deindividuation" in which individuals can act with anonymity, and makes them subject to an almost irresistible peer pressure. Religious groups can become cultures of cruelty in this sense. Waller's fourth factor concerns the way in which potential victims are dehumanized, labeled as beyond the pale of human compassion and empathy. Religion has many powerfully effective ways to dehumanize and delegitimize opponents. Religion may be, in fact, one of humanity's most powerful means to the "social death" of the other (Waller 2002).

Bandura emphasizes that people need a moral justification before they will engage in reprehensible actions. He argues that "the conversion of socialized people into dedicated fighters is achieved not by altering their personality structures, aggressive drives, or moral standards. Rather it is accomplished by cognitively redefining the morality of killing" (Bandura 2004, p. 124). Bandura points out that "religion has a long and bloody history" as one of the major vehicles for providing that moral justification of mass bloodshed (Bandura 2004, p. 125).

The current psychological discussion of the origins of violence is mainly located here. Most recently published, psychologically oriented articles focus on the group processes and induction procedures by which individuals are recruited to perform violent actions (cf., Miller 2004). However, not every member of a society

from which religious violence arises joins a violent group and not every member of such a group actually commits a violent act. This suggests that the psychology of religious violence cannot completely ignore individual factors.

The clinical question is why certain individuals resonate with the messages of religious violence. In a study of religious violence across three traditions (Muslim jihadist, the Japanese Buddhist group Aum Shinrikyo, American apocalyptic Christianity), I argue that religions give rise to violent actions when they emphasize shame and humiliation, when they dichotomize the world into warring camps of the all-good against the totally evil, when they demonize those with whom they disagree and foment crusades against them, when they advocate violence and blood sacrifice as the primary means of purification, when their devotees seek to placate or be unified with a punitive and humiliating idealized figure or institution, when they offer theological justifications for violent acts, and when they promote prejudice and authoritarian behavior (Jones 2008). Psychological dynamics such as splitting, the rage for purification, the need for absolute certainty, the drive to externalize aggression, and demonizing an out-group – dynamics historically investigated by clinicians – may predispose individuals to find violent theologies meaningful (Jones 2002).

From a clinical perspective, religion leads to violence when universal religious themes such as purification or the search for reunion with the source of life or the longing for personal meaning and transformation – the classic instigators of spiritual search and religious conversion – become subsumed into destructive psychological motivations such as a Manichean dichotomizing of the world into all-good, all-evil camps or the drive to connect with and appease a humiliating or persecuting idealized patriarchal Other. The result is the psychological precondition for religiously sponsored violence. Some factors that might serve as warning signs that a religious group has a high potential for violence are (1) profound experiences of shame and humiliation either generated by social conditions outside the group and potentiated by it or generated from

within the group (Gilligan 1996); (2) splitting humanity into all-good and all-evil camps and the demonizing of the other; (3) a wrathful, punitive idealized deity or leader; (4) a conviction that purification requires the shedding of blood; and (5) often a fascination with violence (Jones 2008).

In a book whose title *Violence and the Sacred* says it all, Rene Girard offers an account of religion arising out of acts of violence (Girard 1977, 1996). In tribal societies, violence threatens the entire social order. The solution arrived at by our ancestors, Girard suggests, is the whole society coming together and channeling the urge for violence onto an object, person, animal – the scapegoat – who is then rejected, exiled, and killed. With the scapegoat sacrificed, the community is again reconciled, at least temporarily. The sacrificed victim, bringer of a new order of peace and harmony, is now regarded as a savior, a god. Scapegoating and sacrifice acquire the penumbra of the sacred by their power to contain and mute the devastating possibilities of violence. Because of the scapegoat, we are reconciled. Thus, the scapegoat comes to be worshiped. So, religious ritual develops. For Girard, religious ritual comes after the sacrificial deed, not before it. Religion develops out of the sacrificial action rather than sacrificial rituals being an expression of some religious impulse.

The sacrificers, now bound together by this bloody act, vow not to repeat the violent crime that led to the escalation of violence that only a sacrifice could stop. Thus, prohibitions – “thou shall not kill” (unless it is a ritual sacrifice) – arise and become established. Eventually this process must be explicated; it must enter into language and so a narrative grows up to explain the ritual. Thus, myth arises and it is established. Here then are the core processes of religion – ritual, prohibition, and myth – all arising out of what Girard calls the “scapegoating mechanism.” Religion becomes the major way of containing violence, that is, its first and most basic function. So religion and violence are inextricably linked.

A complete psychology of religion must include the psychology of religious violence. Psychological processes such as shame and

humiliation, splitting and seeing the world in black-white terms along with the inability to tolerate ambivalence, the dynamic of projection, and demonizing the other all contribute to violence apart from religion. But the history and psychology of religion make clear that such dynamics are not only central to the evocation of violence they also lay close to the heart of much religious experience. By demanding submission to a deity, text, institution, group, or teacher that is experienced as wrathful, punitive, or rejecting, religions inevitably evoke or increase feelings of shame and humiliation that are major psychological causes of violent actions. By continually holding before the devotee an overly idealized institution, book, or leader, religions set up the psychodynamic basis for splitting and bifurcating experience. By teaching devotees that some groups are inferior, evil, satanic, and condemned by God, religions encourage the demonizing of others and their “social death,” making their slaughter seem inconsequential, justified, or even required. For these reasons, any turn to violence is not accidental but is rather close to the heart of much of the religious life (Jones 2002, 2008).

### See Also

- ▶ [Apocalypse](#)
- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Evil](#)
- ▶ [Jihad](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sacrifice](#)

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### Virgin Birth

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In myth and religion, virgin birth is central to the life and coming into existence of the divine child. The Buddha, for example, descends from the higher realm into the womb of his mother the Great Queen Maya. He appears in the shape of a milk-white elephant. The conception in her womb occurs without defilement, as he is born coming forth from her side under the shining constellation of Pushya. The birth is miraculous, like those of other Hindu heroes such as Aurva and Prithu, for he does not enter the world in the usual manner. Similarly, Jesus is conceived through the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary. The conception and birth are acknowledged and celebrated by the cosmos, the Magi from

the East, and by Mary herself (Matt. 1.18–2.11; Luke 1.26–58). The virgin as divine bride is set apart from the collective element as a preparation and requirement for divine conception. *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* tells of Mary who as a child was in constant prayer and that the angels of God spoke with her often. She is called “blessed among women, and blessed is the fruit of her womb” (9). The mother of the Buddha is also marked as having special qualities. According to Buddha legend, she is the Great Queen Maya, splendid, steadfast, and having the beauty of a goddess after whom she is named. She seeks seclusion in the pure woods where she meditates continuously, and she suffers no discomfort during the birth of the Buddha child. In these examples, both virgin and child are trans-relational and have double-sided natures. The mother, having conceived through *pneuma*, now herself has a sacredness which exists along with her body which gestates, nurtures, and contains the infant child. Likewise, the child conceived as *pneuma* takes on flesh, becoming mortal and collective along with all human beings. This dual nature creates an implicit tension between the divine and human natures which may get played out in the external world. Mary the mother of Jesus is to be divorced by her betrothed Joseph and liable to death by stoning as an adulteress (cf. the Vestil Virgin of Rome who is buried alive for being unchaste). The divine-figure Jesus will be mocked by the mob and executed as “King of the Jews.” The Buddha will realize Nirvana only by entering into the suffering and poverty of the collective, mundane world. Virgin birth may be understood ultimately to occur as an act of divine imperative. The virgin’s womb becomes the means – the vessel – of divine will and purpose. A spiritualization of matter and the maternal takes place through/by *patēr*-animus. Virgin birth alternately may be seen to be pre-patriarchal in nature, not relying upon sexual intercourse and male human initiative. The virgin mother occurs as the “Great Mother,” the “Earth Goddess.” She is the true creator, as becomes the Egyptian goddess Isis who re-creates her dismembered husband Osiris and begets her son Horus to whom she gives the elixir of life.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)

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## Virgin Mary

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The Virgin Mary (Heb: *Miryam*; Grk: *Maria*) is the mother of Jesus Christ in the New Testament texts (most notably, the gospels of Luke and Matthew). Throughout history, the importance of the mother of Jesus Christ has been interpreted broadly by religious traditions, including Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianities, and Protestant denominations as well as theologians within each of these traditions. Each has contributed to a deep hermeneutical tradition of Marian studies. The Virgin Mary is often referred to as “Maria” (*Ave Maria*), “Mother of God,” “The Blessed Virgin,” “Mater Dolorosa” (mother of Jesus providing maternal care at crucifixion) (Pelikan 1996, pp. 14–15), “The Second Eve,” and “Mother of the People.” In Eastern Christian traditions, Mary took on the title of “Theotokos,” which has often been understood in translations from the Greek as “Mother of God” (Latin: *Mater Dei*; German: *Mutter Gottes*) but is more precisely translated as “the one who gave birth to the one who is God” (Slavic: *Bogorodica*; Latin: *Deipara*) (Pelikan 1996, p. 55).

## Mary in Islam

In Islam, there is favorable discussion about the Virgin Mary (Arabic: *Maryam*) in the Qur’an where she is seen as one of the holiest women to walk the earth. References to the Virgin Mary



occur prominently in suras 3 and 19, though the earlier sura 3, which is considered part of the prophet's Medina period, appears to focus on the negation of Jesus's divinity. In contrast, sura 19 strongly draws parallels between the prophet Muhammad and the Virgin Mary as each being bearers of the word of God (Pelikan 1996).

## Cult of Mary

The cult of Mary is relatively absent in the church until about the fourth century CE. Some scholars (Ashe, Carroll) have noted the rise in the cult at this time to be attributed to changes in the social strata of Roman society. The emergence of the cult of Mary in the fourth century has been partially attributed (in psychological terms) to an increase of proletarian Christians coming from father-ineffective families, which are marked by a "strongly repressed desire for the mother" (Carroll 1986, p. 83). The psychoanalytic origins of the cult of Mary have been explained by Freud as a compromise where unconscious desires are redirected through an activity representing disguised fulfillment of the unconscious desire (Carroll 1986).

## Mariology

The scholarly and theological study of Mary, most often through Catholic perspectives, is called *Mariology*. The history of Mariology dates back to late antiquity and includes works by Irenaeus of Lyons, Ambrose of Milan, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, and St. Thomas Aquinas. Mariology developed in a more Thomistic vein in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, specifically beginning with Jesuit scholar Francis Suarez (1548–1617). Francis de Sales (1567–1622), Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621), and St. Lawrence of Brindisi (1559–1619) also contributed to the development of philosophical and highly erudite Mariological texts in the Thomistic tradition.

Of the major theological aspects of Mariological history, there are four dogmas of the Catholic

Church which underscore the Mariological narrative and its importance. These are (1) the Perpetual Virginity of Mary, (2) Mary as Mother of God, (3) the Immaculate Conception of Mary by her mother St. Anne, and (4) Mary's Assumption into Heaven. Mary's *Perpetual Virginity* was discussed in Patristic literature (notably Augustine, in his *De Virginitate, Augustine*) and continually reasserted Mary's virginity throughout her entire life. The role of *Mother of God* emphasizes a divine maternity and the unity held between Mary and Christ incarnate. This was first defined ecclesiastically at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The *Mother of God* Feast Day is January 1st. The doctrinal understanding of the *Immaculate Conception* of Mary is not to be confused with the *Virginal Conception* of Jesus. The *Immaculate Conception* is the belief that the Virgin Mother was always without original sin and, specifically, that her mother (traditionally St. Anne) conceived Mary without sin. On December 8 (*Immaculate Conception* Feast Day), 1854, Pope Pius IX solemnly put forth this dogma in a constitution titled *Ineffabilis Deus*. The fourth dogma, the Assumption, was executed in 1950 by Pope Pius XII and defines that the Virgin Mary was assumed in body and in soul into heaven at the time of her death. August 15th is the Day of Assumption. An additional Feast Day of Marian importance is Annunciation Day, which is March 25th, commemorating the day when the angel Gabriel visited the Virgin Mother.

## Jung's Interpretation

The Assumption of Mary is an important aspect of the Marian narrative, which effectively explicates the death of Mary (often referred to as the *dormition* or "falling asleep") and her ascent into heaven. In this context, Mary is often given the title "Queen of Heaven" (Pelikan 1996). Carl G. Jung's assessment of the Marian Assumption, published in 1952, was in basic agreement with Pius XII's 1950 apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, which defined the dogma of Assumption (Pelikan 1996). For Jung, Mary is "the pure vessel for the coming birth of God"

but also both the daughter, bride, and mother of God, who is free from all original sin. As the bride of God, Jung establishes Mary as the incarnation of her prototype, Sophia, also being a mediatrix, or the one who leads humanity to God and assures immortality (Jung 1954). Jung also describes the relational aspect of Mary to her son as a closeness where they are not real human beings, but gods. In the twentieth century, the role of Mary as the *co-redemptrix*, or one who has an “active collaboration with Christ in the redemption of the world,” has been central (Miegge 1955, p. 155). These theological roles as *mediatrix* and *co-redemptrix* emphasize the *mother as divine* character.

### Psychoanalytic Interpretation in Art

Glorification of the Virgin Mary through art has been popular for over a millennium. Marian art has been assessed by the prominent psychological traditions, notably Freudian and Jungian analyses, and includes both analyses of the artists themselves and analyses of symbolism, for example. Psychological interpretations of Renaissance art depicting both Mary and the holy family, including St. Anne, are prominent. Images of the Virgin Mary can be seen in works as varied as Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque art. Prominent artists, who depicted the Virgin Mary, include Jan van Eyck (ca. 1390–1441), Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553), Hans Memling (ca. 1433–1494), Raphael (1483–1520), Michelangelo (1475–1564), Titian (ca. 1485–1576), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), Rembrandt (1606–1669), El Greco (1541–1614), as well as more modern artists, such as Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) and Salvador Dali (1904–1989).

Freud himself touched upon Marian studies in his attempt to explicate the painting of the Virgin Mary with Child and St. Anne by Leonardo da Vinci. In this work (entitled *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, 1910), Freud analyzed the painter through da Vinci’s depiction of the Virgin Mary (Freud 1957, p. XI). Scholars

have studied Freud’s own analysis as the first application of psychology to art and interpreted his study with insight into Freud’s inferences that Leonardo depicted two mothers of the Christ child, the biological mother and the stepmother. Other scholars have commented that Freud’s mistakes in his analysis of the da Vinci painting are equally as important as the initial analysis itself, because these errors underscore the role of the analyst in making observations (Thanopolous 2005).

### Marian Apparitions

Apparitions of the Virgin Mary have been numerous and recognized for several centuries. These include apparitions in Guadalupe, Mexico (1531), the French Alps (by Benoite Rencurel) from 1664 to 1718, Paris (1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Knock, Ireland (1879), Fatima, Portugal (1917), Beauraing (1932–1933) and Banneux, Belgium (1933), Necedah, Wisconsin (early 1950s), Garabandal, Spain (1961–1965), Zeitoun, Egypt (1968–1971), Bayside, NY (1970), Cuapa, Nicaragua (1980), and Medjugorje (1981).

The study of practitioners of the cult of Mary ranges from Freudian analyses of worship (*latría*), veneration (*dulia*), and hyperveneration (*hyperdulia*) – reserved strictly for the Virgin Mary – to Protestant explanations of visions in psychological terms and Samples (Miller 1992). Psychoanalytic hypotheses have detailed aspects of the relation between the *machismo* complex and the prevalence of the cult of Mary in southern Italy and Spain. Additionally, the concepts of *identification* (defined as “the process of adopting the characteristics of someone else, including only in one’s mind”) and *sexual attachment* are considered part of the hypothetical schematic for some Marian worship (Carroll 1986, p. 52). This continues in the vein of Oedipal frameworks and the sexual explications of both male and female relationships with the Virgin Mary (Carroll 1986). In the case of excessive Marian devotion by men, some scholars (including Freud) have suggested an association between this excessive

devotion and masochism, though evidence is not strong (Carroll 1986).

Psychological explanations of apparitions range from intentionally fraudulent claims to those manifested by illness. The reasons provided by modern psychiatry include psychological projection, hallucinations, and hysteria (Miller and Samples 1992). Other explanations of such apparitions, which scholars have deemed illusions, include feelings of anxiety induced by war, such as with the case of the Pontmain, France, apparition of 1871, which contextualized and has been understood as a family's deep anxiety produced around its three sons going off to fight in the Franco-Prussian war. The nineteenth-century novelist Émile Zola considered the future saint Marie-Bernarde Soubirous (the visionary at Lourdes) to be an exceptional case of hysteria, who suffered a degenerate heredity (Perry and Echeverría 1988). The example of Zeitoun, Egypt, is considered to be an illusion, as an unusual visual stimulus was detected by a large number of observers (Carroll 1986), while in other cases with fewer observers, the designation has been given as hallucination.

## Feminist Perspectives

Freudian analysis of theology and symbolism in contemporary Catholicism through a feminist perspective has yielded an interpretation of Marian femininity as inhibitory to psychological development and a continuation of the dominant patriarchal social structure (Harrington 1984). The spectrum of feminist approaches to Mariology has been broad and includes such scholars as Elisabeth Gossmann, Daphne Hampson, Elizabeth Johnson, Patricia Noone, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Catharina Halkes. The underlying and central themes in these perspectives are the issues of passivity, sexuality, gender, and dynamics of hegemony and power (McDonnell 2005).

## See Also

- ▶ Christ
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund

- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Mary
- ▶ Qur'an
- ▶ Sophia
- ▶ Virgin Birth

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## Vishnu

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For many Hindus, especially those of the Advaita school of Vedanta, the god Vishnu, along with Shiva and Brahma, the other members of the great Hindu triad of deities, is an emanation of the ultimate absolute, Brahman, the transcendent but immanent source of the universe. Brahman is expressed in the individual soul as Atman, total consciousness or self-identity, the embodiment of the realization that one's true inner self is the same as the transcendent self. If Brahma is the creator of the universe and Shiva is the force that destroys or changes it, Vishnu is its preserver or sustainer. Vishnu contains the whole universe within himself, a universe made real by his consort or Shakti, Lakshmi, the manifestation of his divine energy. Vishnu takes particular worldly forms as required to sustain life. These forms, or *avatars*, serve at various stages in human history to preserve a balance between the forces of nature and the universe. The two most important avatars are Rama, the hero of the epic the *Ramayana*, and Krishna, best known for his explanation of the nature of the universe—that is, the nature ultimately of Vishnu and of Brahman—in the *Bhagavad Gita*. In that work Krishna reveals himself to the hero, Arjuna, as Vishnu, the container of every aspect of existence, including the gods.

Vishnu might be said to be a metaphor for the process of individuation or full identity. His avatars are the stages we experience on the way to that identity. From the first avatar, the fish, the creature of the maternal waters, we move gradually by way of animal, animal-human, and human incarnations to the great Krishna, whose conversation with Arjuna in the *Gita* reflects the psychological struggles we all face in the decisions that life demands.

A crucial myth in the Vishnu cycle suggests a further psychological meaning of the god. It is said in one ancient creation story that Vishnu and Lakshmi slept on eternity itself, embodied in the

primal serpent Shesha or Ananta. While the great couple slept, the world was unformed, existing only in Vishnu's inner self. It was only when he awakened and began to meditate that creation began to occur. A lotus emerged from the god's navel, producing the creator god Brahma, who could then give form to Vishnu's thoughts. In this myth Vishnu was for Carl Jung the embodiment of a positive concept of introversion and ultimately of the unconscious as an intelligent and productive entity of the human psyche. Whereas for Freud the unconscious, expressed by introversion, was a breeding ground for the damaging fantasies of the libido, for Jung the unconscious was a source of higher intelligence than consciousness could provide. The image of Vishnu luxuriating in ecstatic sleep was the image of creative introversion, the process by which the unconscious could illuminate essential memories, understandings which could heal and preserve.

### See Also

- ▶ [Atman](#)
- ▶ [Bhagavad Gita](#)
- ▶ [Brahman](#)
- ▶ [Deity Concept](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Shakti](#)
- ▶ [Shiva](#)
- ▶ [Vedanta](#)

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## Vision Quest

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<i>Ate wiohpeyata</i>	Father, to the West
<i>nawwajin yelo.</i>	I am standing.
<i>Waayanka yo!</i>	Behold me!
<i>Ite Otateya nawajin yelo</i>	The wind blowing in my face.
	I am standing.

Vision Quest Song (Lakota Ceremonial Songs 1983).

## Introduction

The term “vision quest” describes a psychological metaphor based upon or inspired by the spiritual practice among Native American Indians. As a psychological metaphor, the “vision quest” has been used by some clinicians to illustrate the journey of understanding one’s dreams and experiences in terms of archetypal symbols related to self-understanding and individuation (see Temagami Vision Quest Program, <http://www.langskib.com/outdoor-programs-for-adults>). However, as the indigenous, American Indian practice, “vision quest” is what the traditional Lakota call the *Hanbleceya* or “crying for a vision” ceremony (see Black Elk 1953; Lame Deer (Fire) 1972; Lame Deer (Fire) 1992). Elsewhere, this ceremony is also called a “pipe fast” since the individual faster seeking to complete the vision quest often does so holding a “loaded” pipe, filled with a tobacco mixture that has been prepared by the individual

(often a medicine man or holy man; see Black Elk 1953, p. 45) who has agreed and committed to assist the individual complete his or her commitment to undergo this ordeal. Native Americans have used ceremonies to encounter the spirit world for thousands of years, and the *Hanbleceya* (pronounced han-bi-lech-ia) is such a ceremony.

## Hanbleceya: Crying for a Vision

“Are you ready to die?” was the question posed to the first author when he spoke to a medicine man about his desire to complete a *Hanbleceya*. That question reflects the traditional indigenous perspective that the “vision quest” or *Hanbleceya* is not something one undertakes lightly or casually. It is something one does under the careful supervision of a recognized medicine man or shaman or spiritual advisor (*Wicasa Wakan*) who serves as one’s spiritual guide and interpreter of the spirits (Little Soldier, 1998, personal communication). Traditionally, only males conduct the *Hanbleceya* ceremony. No “fees” are charged for the ceremony – although a star quilt is generally given to the medicine man in gratitude for the ceremony and there is often a *wopila* or thanksgiving feast which concludes the ceremony where everyone is fed a meal, often comprised of meat (beef or buffalo) soup, fry bread, and chokecherry or berry sauce (*wojape*) by the faster. Traditional beverages offered at the meal include mint tea, coffee, Kool-Aid, or Gatorade.

One does not enter into a *Hanbleceya* without proper guidance and preparation. Generally, the preparation requires a year, during which time the individual faster (as he or she is called) gathers all of the materials required for the fast, which includes hosting a feast or closing meal for all those who helped with the ceremony or served as supporters and assistants, as well as prepares spiritually for the ordeal. It is important to note that completing a *Hanbleceya* ceremony does not make one a medicine man.

The *Hanbleceya* may be done by anyone; traditionally, it was only done by males, and this has changed in recent years where women also fast. Generally, the vision quest or pipe fast



ceremony is undertaken by an individual who is drawn by a dream or a spiritual inclination to undergo this ceremony which incorporates a rather strenuous physical ordeal – a total solitary fast from food and water which may last anywhere from a half day or night up to 4 days and 4 nights. The medicine man chooses the location of the ritual site because of the spiritual significance or value rather than “natural beauty” of the place. Typically, such sites are often in a remote place without the intrusion of any outside interruptions or distractions. There are some well-known sites in North America where indigenous people seek visions; however, because of extensive exploitation of indigenous rituals, one should not journey to those locations unless accompanied by a recognized spiritual leader from an indigenous community. The individual faster’s own vision or dream is also taken into consideration in selecting the appropriate site for the fast. For example, one may dream of praying inside the earth, in a pit – close to the Unci (grandmother, Earth) or on a hill close to the Tunkasila (grandfather, Sky). So, all of this is discussed with the medicine man who then prepares the suitable place for the fast.

Often, people will refer to the entire experience as “going up on the hill” or “going up to pray” which reflects the common location for the *Hanbleceya* as a high elevated point. However, the site or location may also be in a pit or a hole dug into the ground which is then covered with tarps and earth so that the space is completely darkened. One may also complete the fast in an *Inipi* or sweat lodge, which is a small, low-lying dome-like structure. So, there is considerable variation here (Little Soldier, 1999, personal communication; Lame Deer 1992, pp. 190–200). The *Inipikaga* or purification ritual (also called a sweat lodge ceremony) is usually conducted prior to and after the *Hanbleceya*.

After the faster has decided to undergo the *Hanbleceya* or crying for a vision ceremony, he or she seeks out a medicine man-shaman, or spiritual leader (*Wicasa Wakan*), who is willing to take on this responsibility – it is important to note the relational quality to this ceremony. The medicine man who accepts the commitment of

a faster also assumes a very serious responsibility for them, and to the spirits, as also, opens himself up to the spiritual consequences of such a commitment. If the faster is not sincere or undergoes the ceremony for the wrong reasons or is not prepared, negative consequences could result. Fr. William Stolzman has prepared an excellent instructional book, *How To Take Part in Lakota Ceremonies* (Stolzman 1995), which has a detailed description of the vision quest ceremony (pp. 23–39). The book is a non-Indian view of the ceremony and provides helpful advice to the non-Indian interested in learning more about the ceremony or if ever asked to assist in such a ceremony. Of course, this does not replace the instruction provided by the medicine man or spiritual advisor, who will give very specific instruction on the way he conducts the ceremony. It is very important if one is taking prescribed medications to inform the medicine man so that this can be taken into consideration in the preparations.

The *Hanbleceya* is often repeated; the second author has participated in numerous vision-seeking ceremonies: on the hill, in an *Inipi* (sweat lodge) and in isolated locations for periods of time up to four days. Having a vision is important for most Native Americans in the Plains of North America, but having a vision does not make one a shaman or medicine man (Benedict 1922; Little Soldier, 1999, personal communication). The vision quest is often the precursor to participate in the *Wiwang Wacipi* or Sun Dance (Standing Cloud, 1987, personal communication; Little Soldier, 1999, personal communication).

The *Hanbleceya* has the capacity to be a powerful adjunct to psychotherapy (Hawk Wing 1997), but should not be facilitated by anyone not properly sanctioned to do so. Native American medicine men are the psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers of their communities. The responsibility of facilitating these rituals often involves as much training as is involved with the training of a sanctioned clinicians, and it would be irresponsible to practice or lead Indian rituals without obtaining the proper training and permission to lead them.

It may be very difficult for non-Indians or individuals not familiar with the traditional



ways of native people to comprehend this and other ceremonies. The ceremony is not a “show” or an adventure or some other kind of “personal enrichment experience.” It is a real spiritual encounter, which has concrete effects. “Are you prepared to die?” sums up the seriousness of these effects. There have been instances where the spirits “came for the individual” where the faster actually died while undergoing this ceremony (Little Soldier, A. 2001, 2006, personal communication), so the ordeal of the vision quest is very sobering and needs to be understood as such. One does not enter into this without due consideration of the possibility that one may not come back or that one may come back changed by their vision – it may not be the vision that one wanted. Archie Fire Lame Deer discusses this, how he went on a vision quest and when he told his visions to the medicine man learned that he was *heyoka* or a contrary, a thunder dreamer, which meant he would have to do the opposite (1992, p. 193).

It is important for the non-Indian to be aware of the profound spiritual significance of the vision quest ceremony for traditional American Indians, particularly if it is used or appropriated without proper authorization or permissions and preparation as a clinical method or metaphor – realizing the depth of tradition associated with this ancient ceremony.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)

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## Visions

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Metaphorically, visions are often evocations of a scene – whether sordid or sublime. Whether they be of syphilitic agony, paradise, or bliss, the word is wedded to an infinitude of metaphor. More prosaic still, visions may refer to nothing more than mere hallucinations or the faculty of sight itself. But in the history of religions, visions are inspirational renderings, often experienced by shamans or prophets, that serve to guide and gild communities of faith.

The Bible is replete with descriptions of visionary encounters. Ezekiel dramatically recalls his experience of witnessing the Lord as a chariot wrought of living creatures with four faces and calf's feet. *The Apocalypse of Saint John* (canonically known as the *Book of Revelation*) describes in phantasmagoric detail the final struggle and apotheosis of the faithful. The previous two examples, along with Paul's vision of

Christ while on the road to Damascus, are but three of many visions recorded in the canonical Old and New Testaments.

In later theological developments, the concept of the Beatific Vision came to be of central importance. First expounded upon in painstaking detail in the thirteenth century by St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Summae Theologiae*, the Beatific Vision is understood to be the undistilled perception of the unrefracted light of God.

Visions suffuse the literary legacy of Western Esotericism as well. Emanuel Swedenborg's complex theology was both born from and unfolded through a series of visions in which he vividly witnessed the wonders of Heaven and the horrors of Hell. Jakob Bohme (another central figure in the history of Western Esotericism) similarly experienced an ecstatic vision of light reflected in a pewter dish that led him to construct his own mystical philosophy.

Vision Quests are integral to the mechanics of shamanistic societies; in many tribal cultures, they herald one's transition from boy- or girlhood into the arena of adults. Often, this unfolds along the following axes: He or she, upon reaching puberty, sets off into the wilderness to seek a vision, a vision that will direct his or her path for the duration of the life course. Frequently, these visions appear in the form of animal teachers, or totems, that become private spiritual guides and shape, in effect, the future of their charges. Once the newly minted man or woman reintegrates him or herself into the tribe, they are seen as extensions of the vision they experienced, and their life's work will unfold accordingly.

Various theoretical apparatuses have been advanced within the field of psychology to account for the occurrence and persistence of visions. Psychoanalysis tends to view them as externalizations of neurotic conflict or simply wish-fulfilling fantasies. Cognitive theories hold them as aberrations of normal mental functioning. Jungian psychology views archetypal images that are regarded as visions crucial to the process of individuation. Newer non-reductive psychoanalytic approaches view visions as transformative and psychically integrative within the interpretive paradigm of psychodynamism.

## See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Dreams
- ▶ Hallucinations
- ▶ Vision Quest

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## Vivekananda

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Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), born Narendranath Datta, became the most influential disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He carried the torch of his guru and established the Ramakrishna Order as well as the Ramakrishna Mission. Arguably the biggest hit of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he introduced Hinduism to America. As a great reformer and spiritual teacher, he has been called the “patriot saint of modern India.”

Living only 39 years, Vivekananda remains one of the most influential people in the history

of India and the history of religion. His journey, though brief, was deep and varied. He joined the Brahma Samaj in college, dedicating himself to its social reforms. Although his interest in social action never waned, he left the Brahma Samaj, seeking a more spiritual path, ultimately taking Ramakrishna as his guru. Trained in Western history and philosophy and passionate in his search for God, Vivekananda portrayed a keen duality of rationality and spirituality. He often challenged his master who, notwithstanding, appointed him as his spiritual successor. Today, the Ramakrishna Order and Ramakrishna Mission provide charitable, educational, and spiritual services in India and almost 50 other countries. These centers carry out the social and spiritual mission of Vivekananda, with special focus on the teaching of Vedanta.

The basis of Vivekananda's teachings has been characteristically grounded by four themes: the understanding that ultimate reality is non-dual, the soul is divine, existence is unified, and religions are really in harmony with each other. Vivekananda proffered both spiritual freedom and spiritual democracy as ideals to be lived by. He saw the various religions as all sharing the same goal – an experience of God. Replacing secular humanism with spiritual humanism, he taught that serving others was coterminous with serving God, who is visible in all beings. Humanity is one (Adiswarananda).

As a writer he is most recognized by his four classics of Hindu philosophy: *Jnana-Yoga*, *Raja-Yoga*, *Karma-Yoga*, and *Bhakti-Yoga*. However, he has an immense collection of lectures and other writings. Throughout both his works and his life, he displayed a rich connection between service to man and contemplation of God. Besides Sri Ramakrishna, he publicly praised Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, and many others. He has been honored by such people as Gandhi, William James, and Max Mueller (Nikhilananda).

## Commentary

The challenge of Vivekananda is the challenge of Vedanta – realizing unity and tolerating diversity. He invites us to see the divinity within each

individual and therefore relinquish the fear and ignorance caused by differences. From Vivekananda we can learn to give up our attachment to things, realize the need for community, and find a basis for genuine love and service to humanity and God. Jealousy and selfishness become obstacles to be overcome in the realization that injury to others is also injury to oneself. With Vivekananda, the differences are given less attention than the oneness that unites us.

## See Also

- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Ramakrishna Paramahansa](#)
- ▶ [Vedanta](#)
- ▶ [Yoga](#)

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## Vocation

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## Career or Calling?

A brief examination of dictionary entries for “vocation” reveals almost immediately the absence of any religious connotation that was once associated with the term. It is associated with a chosen career, trade, or profession which *may* include a call or summons to a religious profession or one of public service. Nevertheless,

the emphasis is placed upon a paid profession or career track. How one determines precisely what that call to a paid profession is in twenty-first century North American culture is largely determined by a combination of self-interests: strengths, which may be considered gifts, abilities, or personality traits; salary or compensation packages (which include benefits and paid time off); and the prestige associated with the profession (Schuurman 200, p. xii). There are personality inventories and aptitude tests administered to those with uncertainty, or those experiencing a life transition seeking a new career. The focus is on career as opposed to a call or vocation, and, as Masterson observes, “[m]ost people who come to therapy with problems relating to career decisions fall into three categories” (Masterson 1988, pp. 9–10). In short, they are individuals who are (1) indecisive about what they want to do; (2) successful but don’t enjoy their work; and (3) are able to decide what they want to do, have reason to believe they would be successful but are unable to take the initiative. A shortcoming of vocational testing, meant to identify strengths and abilities, is that it often becomes determinative instead of descriptive; thus, testing becomes restrictive rather than liberating, and as Masterson demonstrates, testing will not provide motivation or tell those who engage the process what they *want* to do.

### Discernment or Pursuit?

Individuals with a strong sense of self (Kohut), ego (Freud), or identity (Erikson) and a clear sense of purpose frequently *pursue* a vocation with determination. Yet this very act of pursuit is often determined to be an act of violence against the self because one cannot pursue what was given as a birthright from God. One needs to listen to the self or seek guidance from within (Palmer 2000, pp. 4–10). Here, one begins to witness the tension between work and career as a pursuit and work as a vocation or calling, which is discerned by careful listening to one’s inner voice. This inner voice may be understood as the unconscious, a stranger, innate talents, identity,

or the mark of one’s baptism. If one accepts Palmer’s thesis that pursuit of wealth and success or career is what jeopardizes the soul because the pursuit itself wreaks violence against the soul, then by analogy, one can draw comparisons with Freud’s work on “uncanny strangeness” (Freud 1919, p. 220) or Kristeva’s on the “stranger” (Kristeva 1991, pp. 181–188). The act of striving for success may silence the “stranger within” or set us at odds with our true self. We may live with what Palmer calls a dividedness that becomes part of our personal pathology because we don’t acknowledge our own identity while attempting to affirm another’s (Palmer 2004, pp. 3–11). This is an indication that we have not learned to make peace with the stranger or foreigner which is our unconscious. There is a strange familiarity when we meet an other who reminds us of the hidden self that lives in conflict with our public role or paid profession. The result of this meeting with the other who is strangely familiar may be that the other is now viewed as enemy. Why? We project our discomfort upon the other so as not to have to acknowledge our own inner conflict.

### Faith and Vocation

This is not to argue, however, that wealth and success are necessarily in conflict with vocation but if the pursuit of these things is a denial of true self, the cost may be untenable leading to the undermining of personal “morale, relationships, and the capacity for good work” (Palmer 2004, p. 17). The cost of living this way leads to an individual’s inescapable feelings of disingenuity, depletion, emptiness, loneliness, and despair. These feelings may then become the source of our projections which lead to further isolation. In order to manage living a divided life, one may put on a mask which inevitably becomes a sign or symptom of a deeper personality disorder. Even within Protestantism, as Shuurman asserts, there is no univocal agreement upon the meaning of vocation. He cites Christian theologians and ethicists who contend that it is unbiblical and “wrong” to bestow religious meaning or significance upon

a secular life (Schuurman 2004, p. xii). The point of conflict here is between vocation as a calling solely to a church-related occupation and the meaning of vocation as a calling to one's work whatever the occupation or career may be. Those who concur with Schuurman contend that "[v]ocation sets the obligations of one's social locations within larger ethical frames, such as God's revealed law, natural law, and the common good" (2004, p. xii). Schuurman sees "evoking a sense of God's call" for Christians in all aspects of their lives as a central task in pastoral ministry. Thus, Christians discern God's call in their lives "when the heart of faith joins opportunities and gifts with the needs of others" (2004, p. 4). One may want to raise the question: Are faith and vocation mutually exclusive of paid profession? Or, may life itself be interpreted as vocation? Paul Pruyser, in a discussion of alienation and religious beliefs, sees a convergence particularly when one is speaking of those who are called to a religious profession in that "the actual occupational role one plays in everyday life is one way through which to help realize the kingdom of God on earth" (1974, p. 35). If one takes the position that all career choices, paid or volunteer, religious or secular, are vocations, then all of life may indeed be interpreted as vocation. This would be to conclude with Schuurman that all of life is vocation and infuses the everyday and mundane with religious significance.

## See Also

- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Projection](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Soul: A Depth Psychological Approach](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Von Franz, Marie-Louise

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The lectures of Dr von Franz were brilliant and inspiring. I will never forget the first time I heard Dr von Franz lecture (on the *puer aeternus*). It was a numinous experience. I thought God was speaking. She seemed to know everything (Stein 2006).

Born some 40 years after Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, Marie-Louise (Marlus) von Franz (January 4 1915–February 17 1998) outlived her mentor and many of his closest collaborators, including his wife Emma and mistress Toni Wolf. Her career evolved from acting as Jung's research assistant through to becoming a major figure in the community of Jungian analysts and a founder of the Zürich Institute for training analysts. In Jung's later years, she became closer to him than almost anyone outside his family (Anthony 1990, p. 67) and "perhaps his closest collaborator and friend" (Freeman 1964).

Von Franz is frequently referred to by Jung's biographers (e.g., McLynn 1996, pp. 331–332) and by historians of psychology as an exponent of the Classical School of Jungian analysis, comprising those first-generation analysts who underwent analysis with Jung and propagated his work without making major contributions of their own. This underestimates her influence, which was considerable. Andrew Samuels (Samuels 1985, pp. 15–21) describes three

“schools” that have emerged from Jung’s work – the Classical, Developmental, and Archetypal. Marie-Louise von Franz is a transitional figure. She was a “Classical” exponent, who was at the same time a major source of inspiration for post-Jungian archetypal psychology, which builds on Jung’s later writings on alchemy and addresses cultural, spiritual, and religious issues.

### Early Life

Marie-Louise von Franz’s father, Baron Erwin Gottfried von Franz, served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Austro-Hungarian army during the First World War. Her mother Margret Susanne (née Schoen) was German (Kennedy-Xypolitas 2006, pp. xxxv-xxxvi). In the unsettled years following the war, the family moved to Switzerland where her father set up a lumber business, but the worldwide slump of the 1930s affected family finances and von Franz needed to support herself at university through paid writing and research (Ribi 2006).

Von Franz first met Jung in 1933 when she was an 18-year-old student. She was invited as one of a small group of young people to lunch at his country retreat, a stone tower he built at Bollingen on the shores of the Obersee basin of Lake Zürich. For von Franz, the meeting was a turning point that determined the course of her life. Although her major was in classical philology, she began to attend Jung’s psychology lectures at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology and entered analysis with Jung. He provided free analysis and in return she translated the Latin and Greek texts that he needed for his researches. Subsequently, she completed a Ph.D in classical philology, as well as training as an analyst.

Acknowledged as one of the most intellectually brilliant of Jung’s pupils (Anthony 1990, pp. 66–67), von Franz was Jung’s principal collaborator in his later years and helped him develop his most esoteric thinking, published in later volumes of his *Collected Works – Aion, Psychology and Alchemy, Alchemical Studies, and Mysterium Coniunctionis*, and elsewhere. Von Franz was also a prolific writer and some

40 of her works on dreams, myth, fairy tales, alchemy, and individuation are available in English.

### Fairy Tales

Von Franz’s first writing, as research assistant to Hedwig von Beit, resulted in three volumes of fairy tales written by von Franz, but von Beit as commissioner of the research took credit and published the work under her own name (von Beit 1952–1957). Von Franz’s interest in fairy tales lay, like Jung’s, in the idea that they represented archetypes in their purest form, emerging directly from the collective unconscious (von Franz 1970a).

### Puer Aeternus

Jung coined the term *puer aeternus* (literally “eternal boy,” who could also be a *puella aeterna* – eternal girl) to refer to the immature personality that refused to grow up. J. M. Barrie’s character Peter Pan and the eternal youths of vampire movies are fictional examples. Von Franz’s landmark book *The Problem of the Puer Aeternus* (von Franz 1970/1981) was a major influence on Jungian and post-Jungian thought.

For Von Franz, the “Peter Pan” syndrome typified the problems of psychological adjustment of the “Flower Power” Hippie generation of the late 1960s and 1970s. The *puer* focuses not on the mundane reality of the now, but on a yet unrealized future:

If this attitude is prolonged, it means a constant inner refusal to commit oneself to the moment. With this there is often, to a smaller or greater extent, a saviour complex, or a Messiah complex, with the secret thought that one day one will come to save the world; the last word in philosophy, or religion, or politics, or art, or something else will be found. . . . There is a terrific fear of being pinned down, of entering space and time completely, and of being the one human being that one is (von Franz 1970/1981, p. 2).

The *puer aeternus*’s yearning for what lies beyond the ordinary can lead to drug taking,



a love of exploration or dangerous sports, or a religious and spiritual longing for exotic spiritual experience. This yearning took the generations of the 1960s and 1970s eastwards to embrace Hinduism and Buddhism and led to the explosion of Buddhist practice in the west. These were also the years of the growth spurt of occultism, paganism, Wicca, shamanism, and other western esoteric practices.

## Alchemy

Another of Marie-Louise von Franz's major intellectual contributions was her translation of the alchemical text *Aurora consurgens* (von Franz 1966), in which she argues definitively for the author of the work being St. Thomas Aquinas. The *Aurora consurgens* concerns the creation of the Philosopher's Stone rather than gold. For von Franz, the Stone represents a transformation of the psyche that is at the same time the *Sapientia Dei*, a female personification of Divine Wisdom. Von Franz's translation has influenced all subsequent interpretations of the work. Von Franz often quoted the famous axiom of the legendary female alchemist Maria Prophetissa:

Out of the One comes Two, out of Two comes Three, and from the Third comes the One as the Fourth (von Franz 1974, p. 65).

For von Franz, the one, two, three, and four are the four personality functions that must be integrated into ego consciousness in order to accomplish the work of personal transformation that leads to individuation (Samuels 1985, p. 88).

## Image, Archetype, and Individuation

As a practitioner and teacher of Jungian analysts, von Franz was an exponent of the Jungian techniques of dream analysis and active imagination. Dreams were important because they reveal the slow process of psychological growth that is individuation, the process by which a wider and more mature personality emerges around an organizing center—that of the Self, which is the totality of the

psyche rather than the ego (von Franz 1964). Active imagination involves dialoguing with the images that arise out of one's dreams and fantasies in order to understand their meaning.

For von Franz, Jungian analysis was a deep process of personal transformation. The analyst was a mediator between the collective unconscious and everyday reality, and, in order to be effective, a training analyst must experience the equivalent of a shamanic initiation and a "breakthrough to the collective unconscious" (Kirsch 1982/1995).

## The Feminine, Religion, and Spirituality

Many of von Franz's most important writings were about the feminine (e.g., *Problems of the Feminine in Fairytales* (1972), *Animus and Anima in Fairy Tales* (2002), *The Cat: A Tale of Feminine Redemption* (1999), *The Golden Ass of Apuleius: The Liberation of the Feminine in Man* (1970b)). She argued that a greater understanding and integration of the feminine was important for women and men. Liberation of women would come about only if men changed too.

Much of von Franz's writing focused on religious, mythical, and spiritual symbols, but she was not conventionally religious, and her interest in the feminine emerges here too. When Emma Jung died, she was still working on her book about the symbolism of the quest for the Holy Grail. Carl Jung asked Marie-Louise von Franz to complete it. It is not possible to conclude how much *The Grail Legend* (Jung and von Franz 1970) is von Franz's and how much Emma Jung's, but von Franz's interest in the Divine Feminine is evident. The Grail is seen as symbolic of the unification of the Divine Masculine and Divine Feminine, "...the blood contained within it signifies the Three Persons of one Godhead, and the vessel can be compared to the Mother of God" (Jung and von Franz 1970, p. 339). The rapid development and immense popularity of the Grail mythology during the Middle Ages was due to the psychological need "... to complete the Christ-image by the addition of features which had not been taken sufficiently

into account by ecclesiastical tradition” (Jung and von Franz 1970, p. 104). Through the Grail symbol, the troubadours of Medieval Europe were attempting unconsciously to integrate the polarities of good and evil, masculine and feminine, and spirit and nature that had been split apart in institutional Christianity (Jung and von Franz 1970, p. 315).

Von Franz perceived a conflict between Christianity and the reality of our human urges. In a 1991 interview with Danish broadcaster Gorm Ramussen, she commented that in Northern European culture in particular:

We have been Christianized too soon; in the Mediterranean worlds paganism was tired and worn out, and Christianity superseded it at the right moment . . . But we of the north were still barbarians and paganism was a meaningful way of life . . . The missionaries called it devil worship and superstition, and Christianity was forced upon people. . . (Ramussen 2006).

Her early life was spent in a rural environment and she had a great love of nature and animals (Maguire 2006). She considered that Christianity had suppressed the feminine, both the Mother Goddess and Mother Earth:

. . . it’s the patriarchal religions that habitually spoil nature, take profit from nature, and are inextricably coupled to the problems of the environment and pollution (Ramussen 2006).

## Dreams, Death, and Dying

Dreams were for von Franz an important source of insight not only into past and present conflicts but also into future potential. In later life, von Franz suffered from Parkinson’s disease. A few weeks before her death, she dreamt that her disease had vanished, leaving her completely healed. This dream brought her great joy (Kast et al. 1998).

Towards the end of her life, she wrote *on death and dying*, in which she turned her skills in dream analysis to the dreams of the dying and intimates that she believes in some form of afterlife:

All dreams of people facing death, indicate that the unconscious, that is our instinct world, prepares

consciousness not for a definite end, but for a profound transformation and for a kind of continuation of the life process which, however, is unimaginable to everyday consciousness (von Franz 1987, p. 156).

One significant dream she had after Jung’s death featured a rare and expensive Chinese carved frog that she had given him as a gift. Jung wanted the frog to be returned to her on his death, which it was. A few weeks afterwards, she dreamt that she saw in a brook something that she took to be human excrement, but on stepping closer realized that it was the Chinese frog. Suddenly it lifted its foreleg and waved. She saw this as a sign that Jung’s life had continued after death and she died holding the frog in her hand (Isler 2004).

Von Franz was greatly admired as an inspiring teacher who mixed erudition with her sharp intellect, intuition, and a healthy portion of “down-to-earthness.” She demanded the best but could also accept the inevitable shortcomings and her students (Kast et al. 1998). Daryl Sharp, Jungian analyst and founder of Inner City Books, who attended her memorial service at the Swiss Reform Church in Küsnacht along with 600 others described it as a “joyful occasion” which included a sumptuous buffet and seemingly endless supply of wine, paid for in advance by von Franz herself:

In the midst of all this, I had a sudden realization. This dearly departed old woman, a self-professed thinking type who had often publically confessed her difficulty with her inferior feeling function – to the extent of having to memorize collective expressions of sympathy, congratulations on weddings, etc. – had done *this* for *us* (Sharp 2006).

## Contribution

In her collaboration with Carl Gustav Jung, von Franz was a major contributor to and catalyst of his thought. After his death, she ensured that his more obscure writings were transmitted to the world and was instrumental in the publication of his most popular book *Man and His Symbols* (Jung and von Franz 1964). Yet, her contribution

is often unacknowledged. Biographers concentrate on the more public relationship with Freud, often seeing Jung's relationships with female collaborators, which were more or equally important in the development of his thought, as simply sexual relationships. Marie-Louise von Franz was not his lover. Indeed, she has been described as the "spiritual daughter of C.G. Jung" (Jung 2006). Looking back on her work as writer, teacher, and analyst, she also emerges as a significant figure in her own right. Her work on individuation, the role of dreams as pointers to unfolding of the individuation process, and the role of myths and fairy tales in conveying the promise of individuation were an inspiration for post-Jungian psychology.

## See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Hillman, James, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Feminism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Post-Jungians](#)
- ▶ [Puer Aeternus](#)

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## Voudon

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*Voudon* (Haiti), also known as *Voodoo*, or *Voudou*, is the national folk religion of Haiti. *Voudon* is practiced in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora and is distinct but not inseparable from United States *Louisiana Voodoo*, also known as *New Orleans Voodoo*, which it is often confused with, especially as both share strong West African Dahomeyan roots that became synthesized with Francophone culture and Catholicism. A form of *Voudon* is also practiced in the South Carolina low country. *Voudon* religion should not be confused with Hoodoo, or root work, a folk magical tradition that is a loose amalgam of Congo with Christian and indigenous American elements that uses *gris-gris*, or magical ingredients, to elicit specific results, such as luck, protection, love, or revenge (Fig. 1).

Besides Haiti, *Voudon* is practiced in the neighboring Dominican Republic and central and western Cuba, along with a variation known as *Arará*. Haitian *Voudon* was brought to Cuba by slaves whose French masters were fleeing the Haitian slave rebellion of 1791. Additionally migration has brought Haitian *Voudon* to

Montreal, Canada, France, and the United States. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, *Voudon* gained a considerable foothold in the United States due to waves of Haitian immigrants who came to such places as Miami, Florida, Chicago, and Brooklyn and Queens, New York, as well as other urban centers, escaping the oppressive rule of "Papa Doc" François Duvalier and his Tonton Macoute paramilitary force.

*Voudon* is the national folk religion of Haiti, while Roman Catholicism is officially recognized as the state religion. Although more than 80 % of the Haitian population claims to practice Catholicism, most *Voudoun* practitioners also consider themselves Catholic and believe that both practices can peacefully coexist. However, the Roman Catholic Church discourages *Voudoun* practices but has brought *Voudoun* drums and melodies into the mass in an attempt to divest these of their *Voudoun* context. However, Protestant Haitians tend to take an even more uncompromising position against *Voudoun* practices, especially the growing population of Evangelical Protestants, who denounce *Voudoun* practices as satanic, and blame Haiti's economic and social woes on the existence of these practices.

As with other colonies, such as Cuba and Brazil, that were held by Catholic Spain and Portugal, historically French slaveholders were Catholic and baptism was mandatory for slaves in Haiti and Louisiana, a situation that resulted in individuals who were nominally Catholic. *Voudon* rituals were outlawed by the French in colonial Haiti, although sometimes dances were permitted, which unbeknownst to the slaveholders were actually *Voudoun rituals*. Slaveholders had a narrow sense of what comprises worship and belief. And unlike Christian belief, the West African religious worldview shared by the newly baptized slaves who arrived to Haiti and the Americas is one that did not exclude other beliefs and continued to maintain that the primal force that holds the cosmos together is accessible through different religious vehicles.

This West African spiritual orientation holds that a primal force animates all things and that there is a supreme albeit distant being who is



**Voudon, Fig. 1** Voudon ceremony preparations in Jacmel, Haiti, 2002. Public domain (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:JacmelVodou.jpg>)



above a pantheon of semi-divinities. These semi-divinities are said to interact with humans and sometimes depend on them for sustenance. Ancestor veneration is often inseparable from and on equal footing with semi-divinities, and animal sacrifice and herbal preparations and foods are used to elicit divine protection, obtain a boon, or appease a semi-divinity or an ancestor. Spiritual rites of passage are employed and consecrated drums are used to invite spirits to possess followers. Indeed this animistic African spiritual orientation does not readily fit into Western categories, such as the separation between secular and religious practice or between the spiritual and the material. Its concept of time is understood as communal rather than historical (Mbiti 1969) and the soul is not a singular phenomenon.

Family spirits are inherited both through paternal and maternal lines, and spiritual practices are blended with daily existence and the material world. African ancestor worship is central and pleasing family spirits is of paramount importance as these can aid and offer guidance when tended but can also cause disease or ill fortune if neglected. As with other West African-derived religious practices such as *Lukumí* and *Candomblé*, Christian images and rites, such as saints, were incorporated into *Voudon*, while African religious sensibilities,

such as ancestor worship, ethnobotany, and divination, were preserved.

*Voudon* is primarily an oral tradition whose teachings are communicated verbally from initiate to initiate. The language of *Voudon* is Haitian Creole (*Kreyol*), which is the common parlance of the Haitian people; it is employed along with extant West African phrases during religious ceremonies. The word “*Voudon*” is derived from the Dahomey Fon language and means “spirit,” “god,” or “deity.” Although the term properly refers to the important ceremony where spirits are called upon to come down and possess the devotee’s body, “*Voudon*” is now commonly used informally to denote all ritual practices, spiritual beliefs, philosophy, and ethics in what Wade Davis has characterized as “*Voudon* society” (Davis 1985). *Voudon*, however, is more properly referred to as “African service,” or *Sevis Gineh*, and *Voudon* practitioners prefer to refer to themselves as “they who serve the spirits.”

*Voudon* shares many elements in common with other Yoruban- and Dahomeyan-influenced African diaspora spiritualities. For example, *Voudon* has many cognate deities and practices with Brazilian *Candomblé* and Cuban *Lukumí*. Due to slavery, a similar pattern of clothing *Voudoun* semi-divinities as Christian saints emerged. While non-Christian spirit names can

often be traced back to their African counterparts, many spirits-deities have undergone change to reflect the exigencies of slavery and New World fauna and flora, such as the use of tobacco and rum in ceremonies as well as the creation of the category of *Rada* spirits. This is especially evident when it comes to offerings to these spirits or level of importance accorded each. If Christian iconography functions more as visual tradition and rite than at the level of intrinsic *Voudon* belief, some Catholic liturgy was borrowed to replace lost African elements, and Catholic saints easily became assimilated as loa, or spirits, the saints continued to also be venerated in the context of *Voudon*. After the Haitian revolution of (1771–1804), the Catholic Church was expelled from Haiti for 50 years, and during this time a veneration of the saints that was unmonitored by the Church continued.

Beyond Dahomeyan, Yoruban, other West African beliefs, and Christian influences, *Voudon* synthesizes Central African Bakongo, Masonic, and indigenous Caribbean Arawak elements. The *pierre tonnerre*, or “thunderstones,” of Arawak origin became repurposed by the *Voudonist*, and the medicinal uses of native non-African flora were learned by slaves from their Arawak neighbors and added to Bakongo botanical knowledge. Masonic imagery such as the all-seeing eye, the pyramid, skull and crossbones, pick, shovel, and top hat are prevalent in imagery evoking the *Gedes*, or ancestral dead, and the *Bawon Samdi*, or loa of the dead.

*Bondye* is adapted from French “bon dieu” and means “the good God” in Haitian Creole; he is the supreme *Voudon* being. *Bondye* is the creator and embodies the highest principles of universal order and is the origin of all life but is never directly invoked for aid. Similarly to other West African concepts of the godhead, such as the Yoruban *Olodumare*, *Bondye* is all powerful but also distant and aloof. One does not contact *Bondye* directly nor does one ever become possessed by him. For this reason practitioners see themselves as believing in one god and resist characterizations of their beliefs as polytheistic.

*Voudon* believes in reincarnation, but upon death, part of the deceased spirit is said to return

to *Bondye* and part to *Ginen*, or *Guinea*, signifying both Africa, and an inner earth mythical African island homeland of the spirits. As such the *Voudon* concept of the soul differs from Christianity in that it has two parts, the *ti-bon-ange*, or “little good angel,” which functions more as “conscience,” and the *gros-bon-ange*, or “big good angel,” which stands before *Bondye*. *Voudon* reincarnation and the nonmonolithic soul are similar to other West African diaspora conceptions of the soul, such as the Yoruban *Lukumi Eleda*.

Instead of directly invoking *Bondye*, or God, practitioners call upon the *loa* (also known as *lwa*). The *loa* are a category of not always clearly distinguishable divinities or spirits, who act as intermediaries between humans and *Bondye*. It is the *loa* through whom *Bondye* manifests his will. The *loa* embody natural forces such as the air, ocean, and sweet water and include African divinities, deified ancestors, and Roman Catholic saints; the *lemo*, the Dead, which include deceased family members; *lemiste*, the Mysteries, or various African spirits/deities; and *lemarasa*, or the Sacred Twins. The three main families of *loa* are known as the *Rada*, *Petro* and the *Ghede*. The *Rada*, in contrast to the *Petro*, are peaceful, much calmer, and cooler and are derived from Dahomeyan worship. They are an ancient class of spirits or deities brought to Haiti with the first slaves. Although they can behave aggressively and harsh at times, *Rada* loa are generally benevolent and associated with the color white. The *Petro* in contrast are a younger class of spirits who are much wilder, aggressive, and restless, since they embody the New World Haitian religious experience. *Petro* loa are associated with the color red. *Ghede* loa are associated with the dead and carnality; they are said to transport the spirits of the dead. Their color is black and their behavior is often bawdy.

The most important *loa* are the *lemarasa* and include *Ezili* and *Dambala*. *Ezili*, a *Petra* loa, who is clothed or dissimulated variously as Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of Czestochowa, and Our Lady of Lourdes, among others, is motherhood personified. *Ezili Danto* functions as the nurturing mother, who, when occasionally



a disciplinarian, will with little prompting go to extreme measures to protect her devotees. *Dambala*, the Serpent, is the Sky God who is the creator of life and carries the souls of the departed back to *Ginen*. *Dambala* embodies order and the intellect; he is a *Rada loa*, who is often portrayed as St. Patrick with snakes, Christ the Redeemer, and sometimes Moses, among others. Drumming is ceremoniously used to invite the *loa* to come down and possess the practitioner. *Rada* drumming tends to be measured and on beat whereas *Petro* drumming is offbeat and harsh.

The *loa* are said to mount or possess participants during these drumming. *Veve*, or patterns unique to a specific *loa* whose ritual is being performed and who is being called upon, are drawn with flour or cornmeal on the floor or ground. The primary goal of the *Voudon* ritual involves sufficiently intensifying or heating up – *chofe* – the situation through drumming, dancing, and chanting so that the *loa* will come down and possess individuals who become entranced. Someone who is possessed is referred to as a *chwal* or horse. When the *loa* manifest themselves during a drumming, they may demand ritual service such as animal sacrifice or certain foods and/or offer advice. The *loa* can attach themselves to individuals or families and function as protectors and guides. It is said that *loa* protect their “children” from misfortune and in return must be fed. In addition to drumming *Voudoun* utilizes initiation, divination, animal, food, and vegetative offering as a way of communicating with the *loa*.

Strictly speaking, there is no organized priesthood in *Voudon*, so individuals and families can “serve the spirits” without recourse to professionals. However, there is a loosely organized priesthood comprised of both women and men. A male *Voudoun* priest is called a *houngan*, and a female priest is called a *mamba*, and servants of both sexes are called *hounsi*. Priests are involved in the initiation of new priests, the preparation of potions, and the casting of spells, such as for protection against known and unknown enemies. “Voodoo dolls” that were popularized by Hollywood have no ritual value in *Voudon*. Practices differ throughout various regions in Haiti and also

from urban to rural settings. In urban settings, practices and community tend to center around a “temple,” whereas in the countryside it is extended families and family spirits, spirits of the dead, which are primary. An urban *Voudon* temple is called a *houfour*; its central *poteau-mitan* pole serves as a vehicle for the deities to communicate with participants. In the countryside, rituals tend to take place outdoors in small houses on family land specifically set aside for the spirits.

The *Voudon* worldview centers around healing and service to the spirits. The practicing psychologist and the scholar of psychology and religion should pay close attention to the extent to which the people with whom she or he is working engage in their ancestor’s social protocols and rituals. In studying or helping followers of African diaspora spiritualities such as *Voudon*, it should be noted that for reasons of economy and purported efficacy, adherents of these traditions often seek the advice of a priest or herbalist before or instead of seeking the advice of a physician, psychologist, or financial adviser. Priests or herbalists may recommend the use of herbal concoctions to remedy an ill. As with other African and African diaspora religions, ethnobotany has an important place in ritual healing, and botanicals are either individually picked from nature or purchased singularly or premixed at shops that cater to practitioners. Individuals’ communication with and reliance upon spirit entities must be considered during treatment since these inform the *Voudon* practitioner’s basic orientation toward reality, whether for good or ill. Indeed Métraux has noted when looking at ritual possession in *Voudon* that:

An important fact emerges from the study of these different methods of communication with the divine: whether basically possessions or chamans’ trances, . . . all try to reproduce psycho-pathological states. Hysteric crises and hallucinations are considered to be privileged situations which permit the comprehension and domination of nature. The artificial reproduction of these disorders is the basis of the techniques of ecstasy and possession. Among the agents of the supernatural are true neurotics as well as normal individuals. Thus are constituted those unprecise zones in which theological speculations mix with pathological experiences (Métraux and Labadie 1955).

## See Also

- ▶ [African Diaspora Religions](#)
- ▶ [African Traditional Religion](#)
- ▶ [Indigenous Religions](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)
- ▶ [Spiritism](#)
- ▶ [Yoruban Religion in Cuba](#)

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## Waiting

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Our current uses of the word “wait” carry derogatory meanings. Words used to define waiting, delayed, stopped or slowed down, postponed, and put off, all seem at odds with our Western preoccupation with doing, getting done, and action. Holding patterns are a waste, time that doesn’t count. Passively receiving or being available rather than achieving diminishes one’s dignity. There is discomfort in the ambiguity and disorientation of transitional periods involved in waiting. But in religion and psychology, waiting has not only been necessary and valued, it has been promoted. It is admired and considered a courageous state. Not that it is easy or even wished for, but all major religions and most psychological theories agree that waiting is usually needed and a respected aspect of the search that growth, faith, and change require.

Often in the spiritual search as well as the psychological one, the changes we are trying to make require that we wait. Making change is never easy. Unless we take time, we repeat patterns, use excessive will, and find counterfeits. Religion and psychology suggest we honor the process by waiting. In a new study, psychologist

Walter Mischel found that children who can wait, who can delay gratification, are more likely to be successful adults.

Every religion promotes waiting. Often we hear about the “slow work of God,” the work of the spirit. In the Bible, we read “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord” (Ps. 27:13–14). St. John of the Cross is writing about the difficulty of waiting when he describes the Dark Night of the Soul. Jews wait for Elijah at Passover. Every week in silent meeting Quakers “wait in the light.” The East has developed techniques for waiting. Buddhists sit in silent meditation. The Tao Te Ching asks “Who can wait quietly while the mud settles?” (Lao Tsu 1989). Sufis wait for God. References to waiting abound in Islam. In the Qur’an, 2:153 says, “Surely Allah is with the patient.” 2:155 admonishes, “Give good news to the patient.” And 3:200 says, “Be patient and excel in patience.” Great saints and heroes have always waited. Their “arrested” lives have inspired the world. Pauses can be divine gifts not to be avoided.

All therapies promote waiting by both patient and therapist. Self-realization, discovery, and exploration of one’s path share the common thread of waiting through all such inquiry. One must stay in the uncomfortable “in between” and wait. Hurrying through the process seems to defeat it and fosters not only mediocrity but a false answer. Haste implies

lack of interest and compromise. Waiting honors and implies caring and hope.

In Spanish, the verb to wait, *esperar*, is the same as to hope. Hope and waiting are intertwined. Waiting is required of both patient and therapist. Is it a coincidence that clients are called patients and that they often come through “waiting rooms?”

Therapists too must wait. D. W. Winnicott talks about waiting for the patient to make the interpretations. Otherwise, it is “stealing something away.” As therapists, it seems that we regret taking action more than we regret waiting. Waiting for things to emerge, the patient is able to reach for a more profound awareness. Waiting creates the time and space so necessary for this work.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Kohut, Heinz](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Water

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Water is an essential element for life and of deep spiritual and religious significance. It is an integral part of the ritual practice and symbolic structure of religions throughout the world. Used since antiquity for physical, psychological, and spiritual regeneration, water is sustaining, cleansing, and rejuvenating. Consistently in creation myths, water is the first principle and *prima materia* from which all else derives or is given birth. As such, it also provides a common and useful metaphor for the origins, evolution, and processes of human mind and consciousness, at the level of individual and species. Humans have developed complex relationships with water as natural resource, commercial commodity, and religio-spiritual symbol, and there is often conflict between the needs and aims of groups and individuals differentially invested in these various relationships. Most centrally, with respect to its spiritual and psychological significance, water is not only a mirror to our own nature but also a Levinasian *Other* with which to interact.

## Elemental Properties

Along with, variously, earth, fire, air, aether, metal, and wood, water is one of the five classical elements present in classical Greek, Hindu, and Buddhist philosophies, among others. Water is unique as an element because it may exist (sometimes simultaneously) in multiple states or “phases”: liquid, gaseous (vapor), and solid (ice). As such, it is commonly characterized as the most mutable of the classical elements.

In its liquid state, it is flexible, flowing, and malleable, taking on the shape of whatever contains it. The surface of liquid water is often

translucent or mirrored, reflecting the viewer and concealing much that lies below. In a gaseous state, water takes on an ethereal, transitory, and insubstantial quality, able to move into confined spaces and range freely over wide expanses. As ice, water becomes fixed and solid, brittle and sharp. Toward theological and psychological points of reference, it is water in its liquid state which most commonly forms the basis for themes of correspondence, metaphor, and symbolism and will be the primary focus for discussion here.

In many theological frameworks, in addition to its physical properties, water is also vital and alive, containing “elemental force” and some varied properties of consciousness and selfness. As an elemental force, water has been the subject of worship and deification from prehistory to current day.

### **As Part of Ritual Practice and the Symbolic Structure of Religions**

Water is the most common physical solvent and cleansing agent. In many religious and spiritual contexts also, water is cleansing and purifying. Water is sprinkled over objects, people, and places in order to bless and purify them. Among its many ceremonial uses, immersion of individuals in water (or the washing of water over some part of the body) to symbolize a renewal, rejuvenation, or rebirth of the self into a new spiritual status is one of the oldest, most familiar, and powerful of water rituals.

In Christian faith, the central sacrament of baptism washes away the stain of original sin and opens the gateway to spiritual life; in the New Testament, Jesus begins his ministry following his cleansing by John the Baptist. The ancient Celtic goddess Cerridwen would immerse fallen warriors into her magical cauldron (also known as “the grail of immortality”) to restore them to life. For Indian Hindus, ritual bathing in the Ganges River (a goddess deity itself) washes away sin and lessens the karmic burden for the next life. For Jews, the mikvah bath is used for a range of purification purposes, some pertaining

to ritual practice (e.g., consecration of priests, conversions to Judaism) and others, for example, to cleansing following menstruation, sex, or the eating of certain foods. Also in Islam, Shinto, Taoism, Rastafarianism, and other major faiths, ritual washing and ablutions are an important part of regular ritual practice.

At a symbolic level, immersion in water is initiation, regeneration, death and rebirth, and spiritual and psychological renewal. In immersion (or a token thereof), we return and regress to the waters from which we were born, to the sea, the briny abyss, and undifferentiated chaos from which life itself first stepped forth. As such, a ritual immersion and emergence reenacts creation mythology.

Creation myths and cosmologies, describing how the universe came into being and humanity’s relationship to the universe, are cultural artifacts which reflect the most essential theological framework of a collective. Since these myths are ultimately the projected products of human minds, they may be considered to reflect in a very real sense the structure of human nature at its most basic level. Thus, in the cosmologies of ancient and contemporary civilizations, we see versions of a theory of human nature, a description of how it is that the human psyche has arisen and is structured; we see in creation myths the emergence of human consciousness and self-awareness from the undifferentiated unconsciousness of the animal mind.

One of the most ancient creation myths is that of the Babylonians, transcribed in the *Enuma elish* approximately 2000 BCE, and recording a much older oral tradition. In this myth, Tiamat (also known as the Deep) is the originator deity: darkness and primordial chaos, the watery abyss and cosmic sea, and the womb from which all else has come. Personified as a sea dragon, she battles with her progeny, the Gods, in Babylonian myth. Leading the host of younger gods against her is Marduk, principle of light and order. Marduk ultimately slays Tiamat, forming from her body the dome of the heavens, and the other half he lays down to make a floor over the deep. Thus do the younger gods mount of an order of creation, including humanity.

In its essential form, as an archetypal struggle between order and chaos, there is clear parallel in the Babylonian creation myth to the Hebrew account of creation later recounted in Genesis and many others from cultures across the globe. The hidden depths of water – dark, mysterious, chthonic, and destructive – are typically associated with the unconscious roots of the human psyche and instinctual energies, in contrast to the *en-light-ened*, celestial, and manifesting qualities of a rational and differentiated consciousness.

In Jungian terms, the struggle between these forces, and the eventual victory of Logos over Eros, represents a fundamental ontogenetic process. In each of us, as we progress through cycles of individuation, there is a natural and necessary emergence and further development of individual consciousness and selfness from the undifferentiated abyss of unconscious material. So too does this inner human struggle between light and dark, mythologized in ancient, watery cosmologies of creation, also represent the phylogenetic progression of mind evolution (and which ontogeny recapitulates). Thus does the animal mind, instinct-driven, largely unconscious, and undifferentiated, evolve into a human, differentiated, directing, and self-aware consciousness.

### **As a Mirror to Human Nature and as a Levinasian Other with Which to Interact**

Mirrors are a common symbol for self-realization and knowledge of self. In everyday living, the reflective surface of water provided a tool for early humans to engage in self-examination, fostering self-awareness and the development of self-consciousness.

In becoming self-aware, our most basic human attribute, we develop a realization of separateness and duality – person from environment, individual consciousness from undifferentiated unconsciousness, self from universe and deity. With this separation can also come estrangement and alienation, and in certain spirito-religious and psychological paths of development and therapy,

we find the means to “reconnect” these separated parts once more, to experience the divine within and to communicate between the different levels of a multilayered psyche. This conflict between the human drive to individuate on the one hand and the pull to reconnect with that from which we have separated is reflected in many myths from antiquity, with water again providing the symbolic narrative.

Narcissus of Greek mythology, for example, boasted a watery lineage: born from the dark river nymph Liriope who had been ravished by the river Cephissus. Narcissus is most beautiful, and his mother keeps from him any mirror or reflective surface lest he might see himself and become vain from his own beauty. When Liriope asks of the prophetic seer Tiresias whether her son would live to a ripe age, he answers “yes, if he does not come to know himself” (Ovid 1955, p. 83). Narcissus, in his pride, scorns all and sundry amorous advances from boy and girl alike until, one day, separated from his companions in a forest hunt, he finds his way to a pool of water deep in the forest. It is a place, Ovid relates, undisturbed by bird or beast – a place of seclusion and aloneness. There, quenching his thirst in the heat of the day, he catches sight of and is enraptured by his own reflection in the pool. At first he does not realize that it is his own reflection he sees and attempts time and again to embrace and kiss the ravishing beauty he sees before himself, but eventually he recognizes the reflection for his own self and despairs. By the pool he eventually dies of unrequited love and starvation, unable to draw himself away from his own reflection, even for the talkative nymph Echo. In coming to know himself, Narcissus thus fulfills the prophecy of Tiresias.

At the surface of this myth is a moral tale warning young boys against the dangers of scornful vanity. But it is also a metaphor for the journey taken toward self-discovery and transformation. Born from the waters of the abyss, and being in a state of “not knowing of his self,” Narcissus represents the undifferentiated and unindividuated unconscious. In coming to know himself through seeing his own reflection, he undergoes the transformational process



which is the defining moment of all humanity – differentiation, individuation, and consciousness. Immediately thereupon he yearns for that which he has lost and finds oblivion in the further transformational process of death (of the conscious self).

In this way water reflects our own nature, allowing us to see our self. But from a religious perspective, water also has its own nature and vitality and has been deified and worshipped in various forms throughout human history. Extending Emmanuel Levinas' theory of "the face," water can thus be understood as an Other with whom humans interact. More than projection and reflection, water also has its own selfness and divinity.

## See Also

- ▶ [Abyss](#)
- ▶ [Celtic Religions](#)
- ▶ [Chaos](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Creation](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Myth](#)
- ▶ [Religious](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)

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## Watts, Alan Wilson

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Alan Wilson Watts (1915–1973) was an Anglo-American writer and lecturer on religion, spirituality, and psychology. Born in Chislehurst, Kent, England, Watts married an American woman, Eleanor Everett, in 1938, moving to New York the same year. He was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church in 1944, but left that vocation in 1950 to pursue the study and practice of Eastern mysticism. During his Episcopalian years, he had written *Behold the Spirit* (1947), an uneven but sometimes profound synthesis of Eastern and Christian mysticism, and *The Supreme Identity* (1950), articulating a highly monistic mystical philosophy. In 1951–1957, Watts was a member of the faculty of the American Academy of Asian Studies in San Francisco and, under a grant from the Bollingen Foundation, in 1956 published *The Way of Zen*, perhaps his best-known book.

With this influential study as a launching pad, Watts became an independent writer and speaker

or, as he liked to call himself, “philosophical entertainer.” He produced an unceasing series of lectures, radio addresses, and articles, together with such popular books as *Nature, Man and Woman* (1958), *“This Is It” and Other Essays* (1960), *Psychotherapy East and West* (1961), *The Joyous Cosmology* (1962), *The Two Hands of God* (1963), *Beyond Theology* (1964), *Myth and Ritual in Christianity* (1968), and *In My Own Way* (autobiography; 1972). Serendipitously flourishing in the years that the “Beats” of the 1950s and the celebrated “counterculture” of the 1960s were rediscovering the mystic East and going some ways to revolutionize the American spiritual quest, Watts quickly emerged as a major figure in popular culture. Whether speaking or writing, his flow of words was polished and elegant, with never an awkward phrase, and generally informed by just the right metaphor or image to make the piece sing.

Watts knew how to make hearers or readers feel he was letting them in on a great cosmic secret, something sacred hidden behind the scenes that turned the universe and one’s life as a part of it into a great and joyous dance. To be sure, in his later books he was sometimes repetitious from one work to another, and his depictions of the God of personal monotheism, whom he clearly disliked, often amounted to caricature. But many found his sparkling evocations of the divine within, realizable in moments of timeless mystical awareness and making all of life holy, to be wonderfully liberating.

Watts’ basic ideas were few and simple. Drawing from Hinduism, Zen, and perhaps above all Taoism, he emphasized over and over that we are all parts of the universe, like waves rising and falling on the sea. The universe itself, unceasingly flowing and changing though not “going” anywhere, is expressing itself through us; minds and bodies alike are natural parts of nature. The dualistic Spirit and Matter of philosophical Idealism and Materialism are mere abstractions. The cosmos in its wholeness cannot be reduced to either, but is what the Buddhists call “Suchness,” that indefinable, infinite reality enveloping both consciousness and form. It is known best not by words but, on the human

level, in wordlessly joyous activities like meditation, swimming, or dancing, wherein one can feel its flow. All these exercises are rightly done just to be doing them, not for the sake of any extraneous idea of “growth” or of attaining some outside goal. The swimmer does not swim just to get to other side of the pool or lake or the dancer dance only to reach the end of the number, but for the joy of the activity itself. Meditation too should not be thought of as a task or technique, but as pleasant way of attaining deep and quiet consciousness disconnected from bondage to past or future, and thereby one with the consciousness of the universe.

The good life, then, maintains a sense of joyous wonder toward the unfathomable mysteries of the universe, while enjoying good things as they come. The gift of spontaneity, and of living in the moment, is greatly to be prized. A way of life such as this must steer carefully between true freedom and the deceptive “freedom” of undisciplined self-indulgence. Watts had his inner demons and was not always responsible in family and other relationships or in the use of alcohol. But at his best he manifested the exuberant liberty and spiritual excitement of which he could write and speak so eloquently. He died at his home in Marin County, California. His books have remained in print long after his death.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Taoism](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, commemorates the destruction of the temple and is a Jewish religious day of mourning. The temple is supposed to be remembered in times of joy, too. For example, a traditional Jewish wedding ceremony includes the breaking of a glass, which among other things symbolizes the destruction of the temple. The temple represents irreplaceable joy, an idealized vision of past perfection.

### See Also

- ▶ [Jewish Mourning Rituals](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

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## Western Wall

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The Western Wall, in Hebrew, *HaKotel HaMa'aravi*, is the remaining wall of the Jewish Second Temple, the most sacred building in Judaism. It was built on the site of the first temple, also called Solomon's Temple, which was erected in the tenth century BCE. The Gate of Heaven is said to be located directly above *HaKotel*. Because it is so near to heaven, people inscribe prayers and wishes on pieces of paper and place them in the cracks in the walls in the hopes that their requests will be granted.

The Dome of The Rock, built in 691 CE, is directly above *HaKotel*. It contains the rock which is considered the foundation from which God created the universe and, later, where Abraham prepared to slay Isaac. Jacob is said to have slept on this rock and dreamt of a ladder leading to heaven, with angels going up and down on it. In Islamic belief this is the rock from which Muhammad ascended to heaven.

*HaKotel* is also sometimes referred to as "the Wailing Wall," a derogatory term that refers to Jews wailing about the loss of the temple and other many hardships.

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## Whitman, Walt

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Walt Whitman is widely known as the father of American poetry, a radical abolitionist, sexual liberator, poet of the common people and democracy, and he has a remarkably positive perception of a strong creative global religion, which he called Spiritual Democracy. Many today probably share his criticisms of conventional religion and are seeking positive alternatives. Whitman's shamanistic vision is an experiential contrast to the world's major religions. This contribution is important, because it anticipates modernity. Whitman viewed his visions of democracy as equal to, not greater than, anyone else's, since equality for him forms the basis of the religious democracy that he has faith in and hopes will help to develop the spirituality of the future. Whitman's visions of Spiritual Democracy include therefore all

religions. One of the ways he accomplished this was through his access to shamanism, which is deeply archaic, thus deep in the collective soul, and powerful. At the age of ten, Whitman had an opportunity to listen to the Quaker spiritualist Elias Hicks give a sermon with his parents, and I think this was the first time he was transported by the ecstasy that came upon him while listening to this preacher, who happens to have been half Native American, half Black. So there was this cross-cultural influence, you see, through an earth-based wisdom tradition, coming through Elias Hicks that deeply spoke to him and carried him shamanistically forward; he also saw Native Americans on his home base on Paumanok, the Indian name for Long Island, where he grew up as a boy.

As a poet-shaman, Whitman put forth his own personal vision of religion and his aim, as we shall see, is to lead readers to experience the soulful roots of all poems, by stopping to read him: “Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems” (Whitman 1992, p. 189). The origin of all poems as the starting point of world religion is ultimately what he teaches. In Section 43 of “Song of Myself,” Whitman sings:

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world  
over,  
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of  
faiths,  
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all  
between ancient and modern, / . . .  
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic proces-  
sion, rapt / . . .  
beating the serpent-skin drum,  
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was  
crucified, knowing assuredly  
that he is divine (Whitman 1992, pp. 236–237).

The “origin of all poems” is found in shamanism, and Whitman *beats his serpent-skin drum* for Spiritual Democracy here, where the “greatest of faiths and the least of faiths” are each placed on an equivalent level together, side by side. This is Whitman speaking at the inception of American poetry and as a poet-shaman. The drum is his driving instrument that sets his rhythm, like the rhythms of the sea, the breath, and the human heart.

Whitman never sought to destroy institutions. He sought to open readers up to the sound of the drum, to heal us from our industrialized disconnection from the Cosmos and Nature, Earth and Sky. The new religious attitude that can help heal our Global Village is what he offers; he calls it Spiritual Democracy:

I say to you that all forms of religion, without  
excepting one, any age, any land, are but mediums,  
temporary yet necessary, fitted to the lower mass-  
ranges of perception of the race—part of the infant  
school—and that the developed soul passes  
through one or all of them, to the clear homoge-  
neous atmosphere above them—There all meet—  
previous distinctions are lost—Jew meets Hindu,  
and Persian Greek and Asiatic and European and  
American are joined—and any one religion is just  
as good as another (Whitman 1984, p. 2089).

We may not know what the new religion is, but Whitman says we are each building on it, in our own ways. We each have a part to play. When he calls the religions “infant schools,” however, we have to ask: what is he getting at here? As we have seen, Whitman is attempting to enclose “ancient and modern” to make the world more democratic. Like Emerson before him, Whitman provides a *method* for achieving transcendence, regardless of one’s religion, whether Deist, theist, or atheist. This method is widely known today as American free verse, which he helped create. Through poetry creation, Whitman brought religion down to the physical domain of sex and the body for cosmopolitan society. And not only did Whitman divinize the body as the temple God dwells in, he embraced it, in “all ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes” (Whitman 1992, p. 318).

The cross-cultural objectivity Whitman achieves is what makes him so shamanistic. This spiritually crowned athlete’s trance – striding towards transcendence – is rooted in shamanism. Whitman never sought to replace the world religions with a new foundational ontological vision for society. He sought rather to jolt the churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples of the world with his own athletic spirit, to electrify them with living energy of the Bi-erotic soul and body he stood for, the scented herbage of his breast, his tongue, and his breath. He sought to broaden our views of philosophers, theologians, and priests of

the world, to open us all to the wisdom body. As a shamanic seer, visionary, and *healer* of the human tribe, Whitman arrives at the origin of all poems and therefore all religions; beating his serpent-skin drum, he serves as transport to broad vistas of spiritual seeing. “Why has it been taught that there is only one Supreme?” he asks. “I say that there are and must be myriads of Supremes” (Whitman 1984, p. 2043).

Whitman’s theology is not theistic; it is shamanistic in its instinctive (downward) and spiritual (upward) Ground/Sky. Shamanism is for him the divinizing factor in man. Whitman puts it this way: “There is nothing in the universe more divine than man. All gathers to the worship of man” (Whitman 1984, p. 2043). Not God, but man, is his final Spinal thought on the subject of religion:

The whole scene shifts.—The relative positions change.—Man comes forward, inherent, superb.—the soul, the judge, the common average man advances,—ascends to place.—God disappears.—The whole idea of God, as hitherto, for reasons, presented in the religions of the world, for the thousands of past years, or rather the scores of thousands of past years fifteen or twenty thousand past years of lands disappears— (Whitman 1984, p. 2097).

While this may appear to contradict my earlier idea that his intention was not to replace religious traditions, here he means to supersede all creeds with a new revelation of his own that is based on science. Whitman does not attempt to achieve an upward ascension of the soul and hover above the body in Bliss alone; he sinks down into the bodily regions of soul, where body and soul cannot be distinguished: where soul *is* the body and body *is* the soul, and he speaks out of this oneness of the soul’s body—*out of the language of the body which is the soul language*. Listen:

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzz’d whispers, love-root, silk-thread,  
crotch and vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the  
Passing of blood and air through my lungs,  
.....  
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from  
bed and meeting the sun (Whitman 1992, p. 189).

This is Whitman’s greatest teaching as a man in whom the Bi-erotic imagination is fully integrated, in whom spirituality is not divorced from sexuality, nor sexuality from spirituality, nor religion from athletics; for in “Song of Myself,” body, soul, and spirit are integrated as one. This oneness of a dynamic spiritual force thrusting evolution of the human species forward towards increasing consciousness, or superconsciousness, is Whitman’s greatest achievement.

And not only humans have a soul, in Whitman’s view. More, in “Song of the Redwood Tree,” Whitman chants: “I swear I think now that everything without exception has an eternal soul! / The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weed of the sea have! the animals!” (Whitman 1992, p. 557) Whitman writes further:

After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist,  
the geologist, ethnologist,  
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,  
The true son of God shall come singing his songs  
(Whitman 1992, p. 534).

Whitman’s contributions to world religion and modern psychology are spiritually relativistic. His vision is an outgrowth of shamanism; yet it cannot be limited to shamanism or any established religion, for it is essentially contemporary, democratic, post-scientific, and new. He provides for us a *living* bridge between East and West. “Joyous,” he says “we too launch out on trackless seas, / Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy we sail, . . . / Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God, . . . / Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee, / I and my soul to range in range of thee” (Whitman 1992, p. 537).

Whitman’s extension of shamanism is not a “new” religion, in the formal sense of the word. It’s a method of ecstasy and visioning which may lead to an *eclaircissement* of the way we suppose religion might evolve in the future. By wedding traditional world religious with the nontraditional vision of a feminine Deity, Santa Spirita, Whitman intuited a Masculine-Feminine Divinity as our “base and finale too for all metaphysics” (Whitman 1992, p. 275), “One common indivisible destiny for All” (Whitman 1992, p. 348). This is the final meaning of his term for his religion: “Spiritual Democracy.”

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [African American Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Black Elk](#)
- ▶ [Descent to the Underworld](#)
- ▶ [Eliade, Mircea](#)
- ▶ [Everson, William](#)
- ▶ [Participation Mystique](#)
- ▶ [Possession](#)
- ▶ [Prophets](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Rumi, Celaladin](#)
- ▶ [Shamanic Healing](#)
- ▶ [Shamans and Shamanism](#)
- ▶ [Trickster](#)
- ▶ [Vision Quest](#)
- ▶ [Visions](#)

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## Wicca

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Primarily the formation of Wicca, as a subcategory of pagan revivalist movements emerging in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, is the product of the efforts of Gerald

Gardner's attempts to construct an authentically "English" religious system that could revive the traditional religious and cultural practices of England's rich and diverse pagan heritage. It is also a religious tradition replete with archetypal forms, mythological structures, and appropriated alchemical models of ritual and religious practice that closely correlates with the analytical psychology of Carl Jung and, in this sense, is extremely significant to the development of psychological theory.

## Gerald Gardner and the Origins of Wicca in British Romanticism

Being heavily influenced by nineteenth-century Romantic representations of "merry England," Gardner integrated the ideas surrounding pagan beliefs and practices into a coherent, structured, and practical format. Particularly pertinent in his research was the theory of pagan survivals as propagated in the methodology and historical analytical practices of the Folklore Society in which the rituals, legends, and folklore of rural England represented cultural fossils of a primordial pagan past. Similarly, in creating the rituals, symbols, and practices of his Wiccan belief system, Gardner drew upon a broad range of established lore and ritual from the occultist and ritual magic traditions of English society. He integrated these strains of English culture within the ideological and cultural matrix of English Romanticism and, so doing, created a body of religious and magical practice that celebrated the Romantic idealization of the countryside, opposition to Enlightenment industrialism and the ideal of an authentic and eternal English national culture. Particularly important in Gardner's Wiccan religion was the centrality of the divine feminine as manifested by a triple-aspect lunar goddess of Maiden, Mother, and Crone set in symbiotic duality of a nature God, usually associated with the Saxon deity Cernunnos (Crowley 2002; Hutton 1999; Gardner 1959).

In the formative period of the 1940s, Wiccans, like their predecessors in the nineteenth-century



pagan revivalist movements, legitimized their beliefs by appropriating a variety of romanticist histories and interpretations of folklore. Writers such as James Frazer, Jules Michelet, and Margaret Murray were perhaps the most principal exponents of this approach. In this context, Gerald Gardner claimed that Wicca was a linear descendant of a pre-Christian pagan fertility cult, persecuted during the witch hunts of the Late Middle Ages. This model of witchcraft and Wiccan history, as postulated by Gardner, was an almost literal reconstruction (albeit with some significant departures) of the model of witchcraft persecutions presented in Margaret Murray's *Witch Cult in Western Europe* (Murray 1921) and manifested in a wide array of English folklore (Bishop and Bishop 2000; Gardner 1959, 1954).

### **Wicca and Jungian Analytical Psychology**

While there is little evidence that psychological theory influenced the construction and evolution of Wicca during its formative phase, the imagery, rituals, and religious expressions of Wicca resonated with powerful psychological symbolism. From the eternal duality of the sacred God/Goddess (anima/animas) duality to the use of powerful archetypes developed in romantic literature, folklore, and mythology, Gardner's Wiccan movement profoundly illustrated examples of archetypes associated with Jung's collective unconscious. Similarly, the rituals and religious practices of Wicca drew extensively on alchemical traditions relating sacred numbers, geometry, and mythology in forms and patterns that closely paralleled that of Carl Jung's use of alchemy as a representation of the search for psychological wholeness (Adler 1986/1979; Crowley 2002).

### **Jungian Archetypes and Wiccan Historicity**

While the parallels with Jungian thought are very evident in the powerful and pervasive imagery, ritual, and mythology associated with Wicca, the

practices and analysis of Wicca only became directly associated with analytical psychology at a much later date. The collapse of the historical and anthropological claims associated with Wicca in the 1970s was closely linked to the perception that empirically verifiable historical antecedents were peripheral to the experience of being a Wiccan. In this context, many Wiccan writers, most notably Starhawk, Vivianne Crowley, and Margot Adler, inspired by the increasing popularity of Jung's work in the 1960s and 1970s, took an alternative approach. Using Carl Jung's theories as a tool for understanding the role of the symbolic and the spiritual in human experience and relying on his concept of the collective unconscious, they described witchcraft history as representative of universal psychic truths, independent of empirical history. From this perspective, the increasingly problematic fixation on empirical history as the primary legitimizing factor in religious belief could be eschewed, and the rich network of symbolism, mythology, and spiritual belief could be explored in terms of psychocultural resonance of religious archetypes and mystical experiences (Adler 1986/1979; Crowley 1989; Starhawk 1989/1979).

Jungian understanding of the nature and function of the symbolic has proved to be an invaluable model for the legitimation of Wiccan rituals, mythology, and historical narrative as well as profoundly enriching the understanding of its religious practice and mythology. By giving priority to the psychic significance of symbols that have arisen from the collective unconscious, Wicca had attained a means of legitimating ritual outside of empirical history, while at the same time ensconcing itself within the framework of a coherent and relatively respectable psychological and epistemological framework. In this, it has found a contemporary authentication for pagan beliefs and practice. From this perspective, the rituals and symbols of the neo-pagan tradition are not so much valued in terms of their indexical relationship to a particular pagan tradition of the past but rather as indexes of a development into psychological maturity. If radically different cultural traditions are integrated together, such as those of Native Americans and pre-Roman

Celts, it is not perceived as a violation of cultural authenticity but rather, recognition of the common source of mythological symbolism in the collective unconscious and the universal search for psychological development.

### **The Use of Jungian Analytical Psychology in Wiccan Practice**

Vivianne Crowley's textbook for witches, *The Old Religion in the New Age*, is a particularly pertinent example of Jung's impact on the neo-pagan movement. While the book is certainly based on Gerald Gardner's Wiccan movement and the history of Murray's *Witch cult in Western Europe*, Crowley also incorporates Kundalini meditational practices and Hindu rituals into the practice of witchcraft. As a practicing Jungian psychoanalyst, she bases the rationale for her work firmly in Jungian theory. She argues that the capacity to integrate the practice of Wicca with the symbols, mythology, and rituals of other traditions is a metaphor of a person's rise to self-fulfillment through the attainment of psychological integration. For Crowley, the growth of neo-paganism is intrinsically linked with its appropriation of Jungian discourse, even as one's struggle to find religious expression is intrinsically linked to a search for psychological wholeness, Jungian discourse readily translates into the language of magic and mythology, and the language of Jungian analytical psychology flows naturally for practicing neo-pagans because it "reflects back to them their own spiritual experiences." She also argues that from a neo-pagan perspective, the central issue in Jung's model of religious experience is that of *religare* or rejoining. Through mythology and the embracing of the unconscious, as manifested through deeply resonant archetypal symbols, one can find wholeness and a sense of reconnection in a fundamentally alienated and disconnected world (Crowley 2002).

From the perspective of the Wiccan appropriation of Jung, the collective unconscious is a common, shared symbolic heritage to all human beings that gives meaning to people's

experience. There are certain shared symbols or archetypes that are perceived to represent universals in all human psychic experience. Perhaps the most common example is the concept of anima and *animus*, the masculine and feminine components of the human mind, possessed by both men and women. In Jung's analysis there are certain aspects to social and cultural behavior that can be ascribed to universal masculine and feminine qualities that are distinct from gender. These represent unique universal qualities common to both men and women. Crowley illustrates the use of the archetypes of masculine (animus) and feminine (anima) from a neo-pagan perspective as the underlying psychological truth of the Wiccan postulate that divinity is manifested in a symbiotic God and Goddess, representing universal masculine and feminine qualities intrinsic to both the psyche and the natural world (Crowley 1989). This is particularly well illustrated in Wiccan author Cassandra Carter's, comment on the significance of pagan ritual in terms of its capacity to explain Jungian models of psychic development.

In Jungian terms the descent of the Goddess teaches the need for a woman to go on her own quest in search of her *animus* – not waiting for the knight on a white charger who will rescue her from the need to make her own choices, but going to confront the Dark Lord and solve his mysteries – going of her own choice and will into the kingdom of the unconscious mind. For a man, he has been successful, with the help of the Goddess, his anima, in exploring and winning the battles within his own unconscious, and he and she are happily reunited in the underworld of the unconscious (Carter 1992, p. 6).

### **Wicca and the Search of Psychological Wholeness**

For many Wiccans the struggle for psychological wholeness and connectedness is a struggle against the enlightenment definition of progress and universal taxonomization, rationalization, and industrialism. It is, at the same time, a reshaping of the psychic experience of the

present as a means to progress. Similarly, Wicca, as a religious tradition tends to be intensely focused on representations of the past and the mythological as a means of coming to a sense of integration of aspects of the self and the *imago dei*. In this context, is not surprising that Wiccans have recognized aspects of Jungian theory with which they could identify and, consequently, incorporate into their own religious framework. This identification and incorporation has also provided the neo-pagan movement with a teleological orientation, a vehicle that enables their existence to span both the past and the future with intellectual and conceptual integrity.

## See Also

- ▶ [Anima and Animus](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Ritual](#)
- ▶ [Symbol](#)
- ▶ [Witchcraft](#)

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## Wilber, Ken

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## Wilber's Integral Psychology

Ken Wilber (1949) is the most influential writer in the field of transpersonal psychology (Wilber 1977, 1980, 1981a, b, 1983a, b, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000a, b, 2002, 2006), having for more than two decades been widely acclaimed as its preeminent theoretician. Working self-consciously in the tradition of such systematic philosophers as Hegel, Schelling, and Habermas, he has presented his readers with a cartography of *the spectrum of consciousness* which, in spite of much elaboration on his original speculative model of the development of consciousness, has continued to be one of the defining features of his *integral psychology*. Drawing upon an impressive variety of sources from the world's mystical traditions (particularly Hindu and Buddhist contemplative traditions, as well as twentieth-century Indian mystics such as Ramana Maharshi and Sri Aurobindo), developmental psychology (e.g., Alexander, Arieti, Broughton, Graves, Kegan, Kohlberg, Loevinger, Lowen, Piaget, Sullivan, Wade), psychoanalysis (principally Freud and Erikson), analytical psychology (Jung and Neumann), humanistic psychology and psychosynthesis

(Maslow and Assagioli), the history of Western philosophy, anthropology (e.g., Beck, Gebser, Lenski), and physics (e.g., Bohm, Capra, Jeans, Pribram), Wilber has consistently argued that human consciousness possesses a hierarchical structure. There are many different psychological and spiritual levels of development, and each level both integrates the properties and achievements of the lower level and transcends its limitations. Identifying an underlying metaphysical pattern assisting integration of the natural and human sciences with the spiritual perspective of the perennial philosophy (e.g., Coomaraswamy, Guenon, Huston Smith), Wilber introduces the concept of the *holon* which is simultaneously both a whole (in relation to the parts that are at developmentally lower levels) and a part (of a greater whole that is at a higher developmental level). According to Wilber, all human experience (individual and collective) is evolving through a hierarchically organized great chain of holons (or “Great Chain of Being”) toward the self-realization of spirit in non-dual mystical experience, although evolutionary fixation can occur at any developmental level (Cortright 1997; De Quincey 2000; Reynolds 2006; Rothberg 1998; Visser 2003; Wilber 1977, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000a, b, 2006).

### Wilber’s Cartography of the Spectrum of Consciousness

It is this vision of *holarchical integration* and the evolution of consciousness (including the correlation of ontogenetic with phylogenetic stages of development) which shapes Wilber’s assessment of the relationship between psychological and spiritual development. Wilber identifies many universal, *deep* structures (distinguished from *surface* structures) of consciousness which transcend all cultural conditioning: the prepersonal, prerational, preegoic (fulcrums 0–4: *primary matrix* [pleromatic, uroboric non-differentiation], *sensoriphysical* [autistic, symbiotic, psychotic], *phantasmic-emotional* [identification of the ego with the body, typhon, Freudian primary process, sexual energy, libido, *prana*,

magical worldview, narcissistic borderline], *representational mind* [impulsive, self-protective, punishment/obedience, preconventional, mythical worldview, psychoneuroses], *rule/role* [concrete operational, conformist, conventional, approval of others, law and order, mythical worldview,]); the personal, rational, egoic (fulcrums 5 and 6: *formal reflexive* [formal operational, individualistic, conscience, postconventional, identity neuroses], *centaur* [*vision logic*, integration of mind and body and of conflicting points of view, planetary consciousness, gateway to transpersonal]); and the transpersonal (or spiritual), transrational, transegoic (fulcrums 7–9: *psychic* [nature mysticism, body-based spiritual practices as in shamanism and *kundalini yoga*, paranormal abilities], *subtle* [deity or theistic mysticism, as in Christian mysticism, Sufism, and Indian *bhakti*], *causal* [formless mysticism celebrated by Hindu and Buddhist canonical literature]), beyond which lies the *non-dual* ground of all experience, of unmanifest formlessness and manifest form (often identified as level 10 and typically associated with the *sunyavadin* tradition of Mahayana Buddhism).

Moreover, he argues that by integrating the materials of Western depth psychology and developmental psychology with those of the Hindu and Buddhist contemplative traditions, he can delineate the different developmental competences and pathologies of each level of the spectrum of consciousness. Wilber claims that competing schools of psychotherapy and spiritual emancipation (with their different treatment modalities) address different levels of the spectrum and different developmental problems. Since depth psychology and developmental psychology address the prepersonal and the personal structures of consciousness and mystical traditions are concerned with the transpersonal levels, no school of psychotherapy or spiritual liberation is marginalized. Each is understood to convey partial and complementary truths about human consciousness (Cortright 1997; De Quincey 2000; Ferrer 2002; Reynolds 2004, 2006; Visser 2003; Wilber 1977, 1980, 1981a, 1995, 1996, 1997, 2000a, b, 2006).

## The Role of the Ego in Transpersonal Development

It is Wilber's claim that all types of psychotherapeutic and spiritual practice can be graded by being integrally embraced within the holarchical spectrum of consciousness, which has provoked such intense controversy among transpersonal psychologists. The issue at the heart of this controversy is Wilber's understanding of the role of the ego (the personal self) in transpersonal development. Wilber argues that the ego (fulcrum 5), with its capacity for detached witnessing of the conventional world, is not dissolved but preserved, and typically strengthened, by transpersonal structures. Although exclusive identification of consciousness with the ego is transcended (and thereby dissolved) during spiritual development, the ego, with its rational competences and its scientific worldview, is included within, and utilized by, all transpersonal levels of consciousness. This means, for Wilber, that the acquisition of the ego, as well as modern rationality and science, should not be viewed as an obstacle to spiritual development (the cause of alienation of consciousness from spirit), but rather as a very significant spiritual achievement, a necessary, evolutionary step toward spiritual maturity, a movement of spirit toward spirit. Accordingly, Wilber argues that the spiritual function of science and modern rationality is to strip us of our infantile and adolescent, prerational views of spirit, to dismantle the transitional, *archaic*, *magical*, and *mythic* worldviews associated with the prerational or prepersonal fulcrums, in order to make room for the genuinely transrational insights of authentic mystical traditions. Such a critique by modernity (and postmodernity, as in the *vision logic* of fulcrum 6) of premodernity enables us to realize that mysticism is evolutionary and progressive, not devolutionary and regressive, and thus lies in our collective future, not our collective past (Cortright 1997; De Quincey 2000; Grof 1998; Kremer 1998; Reynolds 2006; Rothberg 1998; Visser 2003; Walsh 1998; Washburn 1988; Wilber 1981b, 1983b, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000a, 2006).

## Wilber's Pre/Trans Fallacy

Moreover, it is this linear model of psychological and spiritual development and the pivotal role of the ego in spiritual transformation which leads Wilber to another defining feature of his integral psychology: his persistent disjunction of spiritual evolution from psychological regression. He criticizes many contemporary writers who confuse or equate spiritual development with regression, by obscuring the differences between prepersonal and transpersonal states and stages of development. Because prepersonal and transpersonal states and stages appear to share certain characteristics (e.g., the quality of fusion or union and the lack of a primary focus on rationality), these writers confuse or equate them, and thereby commit what Wilber calls the *pre/trans fallacy*. The pre/trans fallacy can assume two forms. The first (ptf-1) claims that transpersonal, mystical experiences are nothing but a regression to prepersonal, infantile states. It is Freud and his followers who are charged with ptf-1: the fallacy of reductionism. However, Wilber engages more passionately and persistently with ptf 2 than ptf 1: the fallacy of *elevationism*. He argues that Jung and the Romantic movement (and more recently much of New Age and countercultural spirituality) are responsible for the elevation of prepersonal, infantile fusion states (in which a stable personal ego has not yet emerged) to the transegoic and transrational "glory" of mystical union (in which the personal ego has already been transcended). More specifically, Wilber charges Jung with several types of elevationism leading to the misidentification of psychological regression with spiritual evolution: (1) the confusion of primary matrix (fulcrum 0) with causal level, formless mysticism (fulcrum 9); (2) the confusion of magic (fulcrum 2) with psychic level, nature mysticism (fulcrum 7); and (3) the confusion of mythic images (fulcrums 3 and 4) with subtle level archetypes (fulcrum 8). Wilber has repeatedly censured Jung for his failure to adopt a linear, evolutionary perspective which differentiates between the "ape side" and the "angel side" of human nature, the prepersonal and the transpersonal levels of the collective

unconscious. For Wilber, this elevationism is particularly evinced by Jung's assumption that archetypes are images of instincts and by Jung's failure to discriminate between experiences of prepersonal mythic images (which are more self-centric and narcissistic than egoic experiences) and those of transpersonally located archetypes. Wilber concludes that Jung's archetypes are actually a pre/trans fallacy mixture of divine and primitive psychic contents, which "wobble between transrational glory and prerational chaos" (Cortright 1997; Grof and Grof 1989, 1998; Odajnyk 1993; Reynolds 2004, 2006; Visser 2003; Washburn 1988, 1998; Wilber 1983b, 1991, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 2000a, 2002, 2006).

### Challenges to Wilber's Integral Psychology

Many transpersonal psychologists have challenged the metaphysical, soteriological, and psychotherapeutic assumptions of Wilber's *integral psychology*. Wilber's Neo-Perennialism, in particular his reification and elevation of deep structures of consciousness to transcendental status, has been questioned because it is not susceptible to empirical verification and falsification but rather appears to depend on Wilber's experience of meditation for its authority. The essentialism and subtle objectivism of Wilber's metaphysical perspective, which perpetuates false dichotomies between universalism and postmodernism, impose severe constraints on the variety of forms of spiritual evolution, leading to a misleading homogenization of religious traditions and an unjustifiable privileging of nondualistic religious traditions. Wilber's claim that progress through the transpersonal levels or fulcrums of consciousness is sequential and unalterable (from psychic to subtle to causal to nondual) has been challenged, because it is supported neither by clinical materials nor by those of the world's mystical traditions. In the spiritual domain a single invariant sequence of development does not appear to exist. Moreover, some transpersonal psychologists have insisted,

contrary to Wilber, that regression can be a powerful tool for spiritual transformation; spiritual evolution typically does not follow a direct linear trajectory, but involves a combined regressive and progressive movement of consciousness. Because the therapeutic process addresses the prepersonal (including the biographical) and the transpersonal bands of the spectrum of consciousness simultaneously (rather than progressively), it is impossible to clearly delineate between psychotherapy and spiritual development (Cortright 1997; De Quincey 2000; Ferrer 2002; Grof 1998; Heron 1998; Kremer 1998; McDonald-Smith and Rothberg 1998; Rothberg 1998; Washburn 1988, 1998).

### See Also

- ▶ [Altered States of Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Consciousness](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Jungian Self](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Nonduality](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Psychology and the Origins of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Reductionism](#)
- ▶ [Religious Experience](#)
- ▶ [Transpersonal Psychology](#)

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## Winnicott, Donald Woods

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Donald Woods Winnicott (1896–1971) was a prominent British pediatrician and analyst who came to prominence, especially in North America, only after his death. Using understandable terms, he introduced concepts and phrases such as “the good-enough mother” (Winnicott et al. 1987), “the true and false self” (Winnicott 1994), “holding environment” (Winnicott 1993; Winnicott et al. 1994), “the transitional object

and transitional phenomena” (Winnicott 1993), and “there is no such thing as a baby” (Winnicott 1994). Winnicott never established a school of thought, but his ideas inform especially psychoanalytic thinking about the pre-Oedipal child and the importance of the parent/infant relationship.

## Object Relations Theory

As an object relational theorist, he joined others (most notably Margaret Little, W.R.D. Fairbairn, Charles Rycroft, and Masud Kahn) to form the Middle or Independent Group within the British Psychoanalytic Society. This group argued that seeking relationships, and not intrapsychic drives, constitute the fundamental building blocks of mental life.

Described as the master of the in-between (or paradox), Winnicott found a home between the opposing viewpoints of Anna Freud and Melanie Klein. Winnicott’s in-between character and especially his interest in transitional objects, transitional phenomena, and the intermediate area of experiencing led him to dialogue extensively with culture.

## Area of Faith

Winnicott grew up in a Christian (Methodist) family but, as a self-identified nontraditionalist, showed little interest in religious doctrine. Rather, he stated that tradition and doctrine are things persons should grow out of. Scholars have identified an “area of faith” (Eigen 1981) in Winnicott’s thought. The area of faith is the transitional space between objectivity and subjectivity from which music, art, and religion receive their power to transform. It is an area where transitional experiencing takes place, and it speaks to difference and aliveness amidst patterns of destructiveness and survival which lead to new psychic awareness. The area of faith addresses the capacity to project the existence of a god and to experience relationship with that god.

## Capacities and Maturity

Winnicott identified six developmental capacities, each enriching our understanding of maturity and the area of faith. Achieving these interrelated capacities requires a nurturing holding environment and is for most persons a lifelong maturational process: (1) *The capacity to believe* (Winnicott et al. 1986) speaks to being trustful and loving, being able to engage the world confidently with one’s complete being – body, mind, and spirit. (2) *The capacity to imagine* (Winnicott 1993) describes the ability to address realities that are neither purely subjective nor purely objective, but transitional in nature. Seeing imaginative activity as healthy, Winnicott distinguished himself from the classic psychoanalytic tradition and seeing religious belief as infantile or neurotic. (3) *The capacity for concern* (Winnicott 1994) addresses the integration of one’s constructive and destructive potential. It describes an individual that cares or minds and both feels and accepts responsibility. (4) *The capacity to be alone* (Winnicott 1994) in turn, speaks to being alone in the presence of others while experiencing significant emotional, spiritual, and relational anxiety. It is overcoming loneliness and experiencing solitude without fleeing into false relationships. (5) *The capacity of object usage* (Winnicott et al. 1994) is the ability to discover others for who they are, resisting projection and other projective mechanisms as ways of knowing. In usage, an object becomes valuable when it survives our destructiveness. (6) Lastly, *the capacity to play* (Winnicott et al. 1994) indicates entering a sacred space where a person can effortlessly move into the intermediate area of experiencing.

Achieving these capacities implies becoming an emotionally, spiritually, and relationally mature person who can live life with hope and creativity. For Winnicott, a mature person can engage all aspects of culture as forms of play of the imagination. This includes participating in a religious tradition and experiencing religious symbols and recognizing the relationship between transitional phenomena and religious experience.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)
- ▶ [Music and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)
- ▶ [Transitional Object](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods, and Religion](#)

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## Winnicott, Donald Woods, and Religion

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## Being and the Feminine Ground

Winnicott grounds his theory on the female element of being as the center of gravity in the relationship between mother, child, and environment. “Holding” is important in that it helps the baby to integrate experience and prepares the foundation for what becomes a self-experiencing “being.” Holding, for Winnicott, refers to the mother’s capacity for identification with her infant as well as the literal physical holding of the child – feeding, bathing, and dressing – in the phase of “absolute dependence,” which includes the mother’s empathy, touch, and attentiveness to the infant’s sensitivity to falling.

Winnicott also believes that the mother should embrace the infant figuratively in her own being to prevent holding from becoming a mechanical act. Without this experience of being, the infant can feel quite empty. The baby may experience unthinkable anxiety, primitive agonies, or the experience of falling and annihilation. The baby's subjective experience of being merged relies upon the mother's flexibility, which promotes a continuity of being. This merger or unintegration offers a state of rest crucial to creativity and play. As the child integrates the experiences of unintegration and being, these contribute toward doing.

Even before the merger of subject and object, Winnicott speaks of "being" as antedating the merger state because the infant "is" before it feels. Thus, having a good holding environment gives the infant an ability to "be," an experience that contains the child during the period of "absolute dependence." The mother being in a state of "primary maternal preoccupation" provides the ground for this complete dependence. Most important in the early experience of feeding is being and the female element. When a mother offers her breast, and the baby responds to this offering, they share in this element. If the mother does not or cannot provide the baby with a breast that "is" but only with a breast that "does," the child may develop with a crippled capacity to be. The early mother-infant container of unintegration and merger lays the foundation for projective and/or introjective identification and leads to a healthy separation between subject and object, "me" and "not me" in which the object-mother becomes more objective: an "objective-object." As the infant matures, it moves out of the world of subjective-objects, recognizes objects as external to itself and as outside its "omnipotent control." From this sequential development, the child becomes a self who feels real and who can experience empathy based upon the experience of being at the beginning of his or her own life.

The female element that Winnicott stresses as a crucial container of being for an infant from the beginning moments of life lays the foundations for a strong sense of self. Undergoing human

development within a good-enough mother and a sensitive "facilitating environment" gives us access to the creativity that contributes to the formation of culture. In contrast, those who have not known the freedom of healthy omnipotence within the transitional space of early life may experience life as empty compliance to an external reality that is devoid of value and meaning.

### **Dependence as a Concept of Being**

Winnicott's concept of being and the feminine principle has specific developmental shifts or stages through which an infant evolves. In the first to second stage – from absolute dependence to relative dependence – the infant adapts to the failures of the mother in gradual, manageable increments. Provided there is good-enough environmental provision, these first two stages usually are negotiated adequately toward the third stage of independence. This stage lasts roughly into adolescence and adulthood. The external world begins to reflect the person's internal life of external-others. Ideally, the individual develops a sense of confidence in his or her maternal environment and has introjected these memories, which has allowed him to take over part of the mother's function.

The concept of dependence and its stages offers the infant the opportunity to get what he needs because he has *created* it. This function provides the necessary omnipotence to grow and move beyond the subjective-object stage of merger, followed by the psychological ability to use the object ruthlessly (objective-object), and the development of the capacity for creativity and play.

### **Being and Doing**

The facilitating environment also refers to the id and its instincts, and the ego defenses that relate to the instincts but are developmentally important only in the context of the overall relationship with the mother. The infant has to have gone through absolute dependence and the successful negotiation of the subjective-object stage for the

instinctual demands to become experienced as part of the self. This successful negotiation gives the infant a strong-enough ego to house the id instincts. Otherwise, the growing child can feel that something is coming “at-it” from outside, which transforms from id-excitement and is experienced as traumatic and without meaning.

In Winnicott’s view, being informs doing, the drives as male elements, which come later than being. The male element comes into play as the infant begins to separate from the mother. With the process of separation, there also comes the experience of instinct-backed drives and with this, frustration and anger when the child’s id satisfactions are not met. The male element evolves along with the formation of the objective-object and how the child internally is or is not able to bring together the two aspects of mother.

### **The Developmental Sequence in the Use of the Object: Two Mothers**

Winnicott addresses the development of what happens in infancy in terms of the use of the object. His idea of the facilitating environment includes maternal care as well as the instincts and ego defenses. In this dual context, he originated the theory of “two mothers.” The mother of the holding environment is the “environment mother” and the mother of the drives, and the objective-object stage is the “object-mother.”

The environment mother is experienced by the infant when he is in an unintegrated state, a state associated with rest, being, quiet, and an environment that is safe and empathic. The mother receives the infant and is one with himself/herself.

The object mother is experienced as the one who the infant knows in his excited states. The mother is fully present to him, as she is in the unintegrated state but now becomes the target for his crude instinctual-tension, his raw aggression, and his ruthlessness. Both of these aspects of “mother” are needed to modify each other intrapsychically. The mother of eros, resting, and

feeding is not sufficient enough to empower the child with all the aggressive energies needed for life.

The object mother introduces the masculine element. The goal, for wholeness and health, is for the infant to achieve fusion internally while separating from the real mother. Fusion represents the primary unity that Winnicott believes precedes the development of infant ego. To acquire fusion—to have both aggression and eros—the baby has to become aware that the two mothers in his fantasy experience are the same mother.

Winnicott conceptualizes how fusion plays out in infantile life by speculating upon what happens internally for the baby during its feeding time at the breast. The infant ego experiences an instinctual id impulse which is spontaneous and impersonal, imaginal and physical: the nipple is in front of the baby, and he feels the urge to bite it. The actual breast is not destroyed. Both parties may experience destructive impulses but mostly in fantasized (although sometimes actual) attacks. The mother’s survival from these “attacks” helps the infant to separate fantasy from objective reality. The mother is placed outside the arena of projections, outside of the infant’s omnipotent control. This separation helps the child to develop an external arena in the sense of relating to objects outside his subjective world.

Further, after the ruthless biting-sucking feed, he not only becomes apprehensive about the hole he has created, he grows anxious about what feels good and what feels bad. An adult example of this anxiety might be going to the grocery store and filling a cart with mounds of incredible food and then, suddenly, feeling really empty, anxious, and awful at the checkout stand. Such a feeling relates back to infantile anxiety: “I am feeding, I am fed, I feel good, but there is this hole. I think I feel good, but maybe I feel bad. Now there is stuff coming up from my stomach, and I really feel bad. Or, do I feel good? I am being held. I am being, I am. I think I am?”

An infant has to surrender to his environment. The body is totally hooked into the internal psychic process and vice versa. To assist with this perceived hole and the struggle which becomes



overly personified at the adult level, the mother needs to hold, receive, and accept whatever gifts, “good and bad,” that the baby gives: his burping, elimination of food, and his cries. What is going on in his body is an important part of the development of a psyche-soma unity.

This maternal acceptance is crucial in the joining of the two mothers, aggression and eros. The mother’s receiving helps to heal the imagined hole he made in her breast. If she accepts his biting as a gift, no matter how messy, or sloppy it is, this facilitates his gift gesture in being reparative in terms of lessening his anxiety. As with the other instinctive gestures, his anxiety is accepted and tolerated so that he can join the two mothers inside, in fusion, eventually to see the mother as outside, external. This developmental achievement informs the child’s capacity to give because he has been helped to sort out the good and bad in the struggle with anxiety that he has experienced within himself. He can tolerate the imagined holes he creates with his instinctual impulses and yet, there is reparation available because these energies have been housed as acceptable. The mother’s tolerance enables him to be able to imagine that something can be done about the hole he has created.

In the evolution of this early ruthlessness and aggression, as associated with the fusion of the two mothers, comes a stage of concern. If the mother has been good-enough, the infant comes to experience concern for her even while he becomes aware of his aggression toward her. A healthy guilt begins to form in relationship to his aggression and destruction toward his mother. He learns how to repair when he bursts out with impulses of excitement by giving in social situations.

If the mother is perceived as not surviving, for instance, punishes the baby, the infant can experience her reaction as impingement. The infant fantasizes that his spontaneous impulse-energies have destroyed his source of sustenance and, in its place, he has created a hole. At a baby level, this induces raw anxiety. If the growing ego cannot house this impulse, the infant experiences its own impulses as assaults, which leads to the establishment of a compliant, false self. The false self develops out of what a child is punished

for – what is bad or wrong – and this badness is internalized.

Thus, infant development first begins with the subjective-object world and then the objective world which is destroyed but survives. The infant’s aggression serves a developmental purpose. His developing ability to use her as an object fuses instinctual love (aggression) and erotic love (appetite) in him in the act of dependency at the breast. The infant is not aware of his ruthless, destructive intent toward his mother during the first 2 years or so, but at this stage of primitive ruthlessness is simply expressing and releasing instinctual tension.

The importance of aggression is that if there is no space for housing aggression and the destructive, the bad gets split or dissociated. This is extremely difficult to work out in one’s body. In adult life, without aggression at the ego’s disposal, one has to keep thinking up instances to keep the other person bad. This necessity for projective living is exhausting and uses up energy that could be used more constructively. Without the good-enough mother and environment, primitive ruthlessness and aggression can become antisocial. The child, and later, the adolescent can become destructive in reaction to frustration based upon what he did not receive in terms of mothering.

The ego space of early childhood needs to grow big enough to house these destructive impulses so they do not become permanently unhoused. In such cases, one day one’s id impulse might arise in a therapy session. This impulse will need to be received as a spontaneous gesture to help repair the dissociation. Only when attention has been given to the destructive impulses in both love (erotic) and aggression (hate, destruction, instinctual love) can the aggressive drives (masculine) become wedded to vulnerable eros (feminine) and become circulated more consciously into a whole-object existence.

### **Social and Religious Implications of Being and Doing**

How do Winnicott’s stages of dependence relate to religious concerns and social issues? For us to



be able to give continuity of being to another, we have to have experienced it ourselves. If we have not experienced this connection, Winnicott emphasizes that we need to go back to the place of original hurt and suffer through the feelings and images of loss and relive the missed part in the present for the first time.

If we are to engender and pass on an embodied image of a world that “mothers others,” we need to internalize the capacity for being. Then, without resentment or envy, we can pass it on and give it to others. Without accepting our needs for dependence, we miss the healing efficacy of gratitude. Gratitude is acknowledged dependence. Our ability to introject unconditional love enables us to mature into a fourth stage: interdependence, a mutuality of giving.

Winnicott’s stages of dependency with the added fourth – interdependency – is a ground for thinking about how to work our way in and out of experiences of resentment within our communities. For clergy persons, faith communities, educators, and caregivers in the psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic field, the issue of dependence and being informs our means of survival. If we deny our dependence on God and each other and pretend to be able to hold ourselves, our “false self” independence can result in all sorts of disasters, in the body, or in the psyche as a result of our pride. When we cannot get our dependency needs met, we are left frightened. One of the best defenses against fear is pride.

Winnicott’s emphasis upon being as an inherited potential has implications for religion if we consider the human individual to be created in the image of God. As we grow and develop toward living in the image of God, we are dependent upon a quality of transcendent being that makes it possible for us to develop outward from an internal reality. For example, a seed finds incarnation because it has been housed by being in the first place. Otherwise it has no life.

With religious concerns such as mission and outreach, Winnicott’s “without being, doing is irrelevant” is a pertinent phrase: who do we include and exclude in social justice concerns? Do our motivations toward fairness arise from being or from doing?

The concept of being pertains to the depth of prayer. Do we pray for things to be done for us, to be on earth as they are in heaven? We cannot do to our neighbor unless we first have been done to. Offering acts of reparation and compassion that are not rooted in being can make our actions superficial and lacking in integrity. If we “are” before we “feel,” we can act out of a subjective reality that proceeds to objective reality and then extends to otherness in the world. Thus, “doing unto our neighbors as we would have done unto ourselves” means we do because we have “been,” not because we have been “done to.”

Winnicott’s notion of fusion and the two mothers pertains not only to our relationship to God but our images of the divine. Prayer is not just passive. Relating to God through prayer, which often includes imagery, expands to become both erotic and aggressive. We begin with whatever images we have and, suddenly, the free-flow of instinct-backed impulses can carry us into the most fleshly, tangible places, infusing the wounded body with long-lost energies.

In faith communities, clergy persons might include some healthy aggressive impulses in their sermons and not just tip-toe through the tulips. If a pastor cannot house aggression and eros, such a split can lead to watered-down programs and ineffective sermons: God with no sex appeal. Clergy needs to recognize the constructive need for opposition. Conflict plays an important role in objective-object differentiation. We need a certain amount of resistance or disagreement to develop our aggressive potential and for healthy aggression to then lead to a community of concern. Sometimes we have to hate and create a hole in the breast before love can occur.

Too much opposition, however, may prevent fusion, in that it can be received as impingement, a disruption of being. Then we get reactivity instead of responsiveness. Ideally we should be able to use our neighbor for some good and healthy opposition in an interrelated network of dependency.

On an even larger scale, pride, as it is informed by fear, can play into big political systems. Instead of working through our inner fantasies

of fear of merger, we instead buy into some autocratic or authoritarian mode of political control. For certain groups and individuals, the energies of ruthless aggression needed for healthy development have been forcibly held down by nations, other groups, hierarchies, and/or governments. For those who never had the opportunity to have this stage negotiated, to just forgive may mean a recapitulation of centuries of compliance.

Hostility, anger, and their consequences have roots in maternal/environmental frustration. The mother helps the infant to house aggression, assisting the transformation of this instinct into reparative functions (guilt, giving). In adulthood, if this developmental function is absent, the gap can lead to a defensive splitting of love and hate creating further polarization. The result is that love has less aggression and hate gains more destructiveness. Hostility (racial and relational) can become perpetuated endlessly. We see the unfortunate results of such splitting in Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea, Palestine, in gangs clustered around urban environments, and in hundreds of other national and global situations. Most unfortunately, if negotiating the ruthless-aggression phase failed, we cannot say, "I'm so sorry that you are deprived. Here, take this hundred dollars and buy yourself a pair of Nikes, or take this welfare check, or accept this affirmative action job and now go get your destructive aggressive energies together." This action does not work and relies upon understanding a much more complex intrapsychic insufficiency.

Winnicott believed that the fear of dependence, specifically absolute dependence, is behind the fear of women and discriminatory acts against them. This fear can pertain to the feminine in either sex and arises in the phallic phase of development according to classical psychoanalytic theory. Dread of the feminine arises particularly in persons who never passed through the stage of absolute dependence successfully with sufficient trust of the primary parent. Or, perhaps the mother was depressed or physically absent for the early months of the child's life because of her own life-traumas. Such a gap can leave a residual apprehension rooted in the primordial fears of our early years.

Winnicott speculates that there exists a male envy of the feminine based upon the fantasy that women possess the female element and can take it for granted. Envy, however, has to do with failure in being and failure in the maternal environment. Both sexes need both elements. Either sex suffers when we lack being and the feminine because being fuels and informs profoundly grounded doing.

Within the context of depth psychology, much could be done to enable people to better house instinctual impulses and aggression toward fusion within the various maternal/environmental containers we have available in the way of faith communities, social services, therapeutic containers, and social institutions. Both polarities must be housed: eros and aggression. Otherwise, we might buy into a graduate educational institute or a psychoanalytic training institute that needs to dominate the psyche based upon secular modes of doing while interpreting feminine modes of being, passion, and creativity as unresolved preOedipal needs.

If we can tolerate our destructive impulses, we can learn to enjoy ideas, creative projects – religious, social, personal – which include destruction. The body is involved because the bodily excitements that belong to destructive id impulses get activated and add gusto to a person's creative endeavors. This kind of ruthless commitment in the passionate, creative act, receiving and destroying and allowing things to break, carries over to many other creative enterprises in life. Different from Freud's pleasure-seeking principle, the sexual act is considered not so much the erotic desire that needs an object but more the aggressive destructive element of the impulse toward fusion. In mature love, there needs to be enough space for aggressive penetration, and we need to know that the object survives our ruthlessness.

This experience of being leads to a continuity of generations. Being is passed on between generations through the female element of both men and women. We hold as we were once held. Our ability to bring these two elements together provides us with the potential for living creatively. If either of these elements is split off, this

dissociation interferes with the resources that inform productivity. We do not want to miss the fullness of experience that feminine being has to offer.

## See Also

- ▶ [Active Imagination](#)
- ▶ [Defenses](#)
- ▶ [Eros](#)
- ▶ [Mother](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## Wisdom

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Wisdom is a virtue that combines proper understanding with the prudent application of knowledge; it is often believed to be a product of right relation with the Divine. In psychospiritual terms, wisdom melds both acceptance and insight and thereby results in judicious action. Often, wisdom is characterized as having a feminine dimension. It has also been associated with elders at the end of life. Throughout the ages, wise ones have been revered not only by

their peers but also by successive generations who recognized the wisdom of previous generations as timeless wisdom.

Personifications of wisdom have abounded for millennia. In the Greek pantheon, Athena was the embodiment of wisdom; her totem was the round-eyed owl that was able to see through darkness and at wide angles (Warner 1985). In her nativity myth, Athena springs fully formed from Zeus' head, suggesting the relation of wisdom to flashes of insight. She is a feminine archetype of good counsel, sound strategy, clear thinking, and practical solutions, all of which have frequently assumed to be masculine aspects (Bolen 2004); rather revealingly, she is the only of the Olympian goddesses to ever be depicted wearing armor.

In the Hebrew scriptures, Wisdom makes several appearances as a goddess-like figure (Cole Ronan and Taussig 1996), most notably as Hokma in the Book of Proverbs. "Is not Wisdom calling? Is not Understanding raising her voice?" (Ps 8:1). Throughout Proverbs, Wisdom is simultaneously inviting and insistent. "All the words from my mouth are upright, nothing false there, nothing crooked, everything plain, if you can understand, straight, if you have acquired knowledge," she proclaims. "Accept my discipline rather than silver, and knowledge of me in preference to finest gold" (Ps 8:8–10).

Preciousness and primacy alike are repeatedly stressed as characteristics of Wisdom. She declares, "Yahweh created me, first-fruits of his fashioning, before the oldest of his works. From everlasting, I was firmly set, from the beginning, before the earth came into being." Essentially, Wisdom represents the thought that is first creation; a consort of the Creator God, she knows the ways of God and the children of God who constitute humanity (Schroer 2000).

Proverbs is classified with other "Wisdom books" in the Bible as part of a larger sapiential tradition, including Job, Psalms, and Qoholeth/Ecclesiastes (Crenshaw 1998), as well as Ecclesiasticus/Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom contained in the Septuagint. In the Book of Wisdom, King Solomon, the greatest sage of ancient Israel and its purported author, exclaims,

“Wisdom is brilliant, she never fades. By those who love her, she is readily seen, by those who seek her, she is readily found. She anticipates those who desire her by making herself known first” (Wis 6:12). Her accessibility and nurturing spirit again make Wisdom a maternal figure who is glad to take into her tutelage those who remain educable.

In the Greek New Testament, in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, Jesus identifies himself as child student of Wisdom in the Jewish tradition (Fiorenza 1994). He understands Sophia to be the lost mother of Israelites who have tragically forgotten their parentage. “Yet,” Jesus concludes, “Wisdom is justified by all her children” (Lk 7.35). His Sophia bears less resemblance to a Hellenic oracle than to those Hebrew prophets who promulgate teachings that ultimately prove countercultural and occasionally counterintuitive.

Biblical scholars have noted that Sophia subsequently receded from early Christian writings, becoming a more esoteric figure, almost a theological obscurity. Despite the metaphors depicting Wisdom as mother and sister, bride and wife, Wisdom represented knowledge that refused to be domesticated for convenience or to conform to conventional thought. What has been termed Sophiology quickly became submerged. In the dominant Christian religious discourse, Sophia was replaced with Logos, popularly translated as “the word” but perhaps more aptly rendered as “the reason.” Effectively, a masculine principle of knowledge supplanted a feminine one.

Medieval mystics such as Hildegard of Bingen exhibited an attraction to the Divine Feminine they saw expressed through Sapientia (Newman 1987). They understood Wisdom to midwife the manifestation of God’s intention, in many senses to actually be the mother of/to God. In Orthodox churches, devotion to Ouisa-Sophia, the Spirit of Wisdom, was once open and institutional (Bulgakov 1993); icons of her were venerated and Hagia Sophia built in her honor. Only recently have feminist theologians begun to reclaim these stands of thought from the weave of historic Christianity (Camp 1996; Johnson 1999).

The recognition of major world religions as “wisdom traditions” has come greater permission to translate more freely what those traditions might have to say to people in the modern era. Wisdom is still heard speaking through various religions, Eastern as well as Western, and seeking after it is seen as a powerful antidote to the existential anxiety that pervades contemporary society (Watts 1951). Indeed, one of the ten Buddhist perfections is panna; in allowing its practitioners to witness events with great detachment, panna curbs human affliction.

Perhaps those who most explicitly seek after wisdom in America today are members of a movement that bills itself as spiritual and not religious, members of the programs of 12-step recovery modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous. In a redaction of a longer prayer authored by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr during the Second World War (Sifton 2003), those in 12-step programs pray: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” The Serenity Prayer has become formative in both popular and psychospiritual formulations on the meaning of wisdom.

What the Serenity Prayer seems to recommend is that people become reconciled with those things they must reconcile themselves to and resist those things they ought to, either for their own good and for the greater good (Alcoholic Anonymous 1952). Wisdom becomes grounded in a radical acceptance of a sometimes stubborn reality. The challenge is one of discernment: how can divine guidance be channeled to direct (or at times, correct) the course of human events?

Ultimately, Wisdom occupies the intersection of horizontal and vertical concerns, where the highest human ideals meet the most immediate demands of the here and now. In her Biblical personifications, Wisdom is hard working and intimately engaged, calling out to listeners busy with the activities of daily life. Wisdom remains quite distinct from either contemplation or resignation.

In his schedule of virtues, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson positions wisdom as the terminal virtue,

maintaining that its antithesis is disdain. In a life review of insights gained, Erikson contends, persons have the choice of adopting an attitude of disgust or a philosophical outlook that leads to deeper understanding of the human condition. The last of the major stages in psychosocial development allows adults to develop into “elders,” those defined by being both older and wiser, not merely aged (Erikson 1982).

According to Erikson, not all elderly persons are able to master this final developmental task and attain wisdom. They are asked to fulfill a demanding grand-generative role, to teach successive generations to live with integrity and die with dignity. This involves a willingness to acknowledge the life cycle itself as somehow purposive, despite the considerable hardships encountered the later years of life, the losses that must be endured. Wisdom is marked by a capacity to vigorously construct some unifying meaning of what may at times appear to be disparate events and experiences; in the end, it serves an integrative function.

Borrowing from Eriksonian schema, psychologist James Fowler posits that wisdom emerges in the penultimate stage of his six theoretical stages of faith development over the life span, the stage which he terms “conjunctive.” Conjunctive faith is sensitive to the organic interrelatedness of things in a dialogical reality (Fowler 1981). It blurs boundaries, recognizing how context dependent and provisional much of human knowledge is, how dimly it apprehends the scope of that which is truly transcendent. Wisdom contains both a comprehension and appreciation for all that is not currently known and may never be known. It may even question what is knowable, humbled by its acquaintance with mystery, simultaneously tolerant and aware of its limits.

Recent psychological research has tried to operationally define and quantify wisdom, but has not yet succeeded in standardizing any metrics or even in delimiting its subject matter satisfactorily. The field of positive psychology has exhibited special interest in wisdom as a “core virtue,” exploring material that once seemed to be the purview of transpersonal psychology and

acknowledging the possibility of transcendent experience (Cloninger 2005). Research has suggested that wisdom seems to involve maintaining a sense of perspective, especially in the face of adversity, and maintaining a degree of emotional equanimity; it does not necessarily appear to be an age-related trait, although people can be educated by experiences that accumulate over a lifetime.

## Commentary

Personifications and definitions of wisdom appear to share commonalities, mirroring the affective and cognitive aspects alike. Wisdom generally reflects a highly relational way of thinking, one that has stereotypically feminine features. It is often characterized as an experiential mode of knowing.

In sacred scripture, Wisdom is intimately acquainted with the Divine and always desirous of connecting with humanity on a deeper level. The work of Wisdom is to speak some eternal truth in a vernacular that can be easily understood in context, some truth that bears repeating to others. Wisdom simultaneously recognizes and dignifies the human predicament.

In psychological terms, wisdom is demonstrated by a higher comfort level with mixed emotions and ambiguous situations. Those whose sagacity is noted by others are able to put their knowledge base to pragmatic use. They serve a larger cause than narrow self-interest, exhibiting a capacity to take a long-range view of matters, often taking into consideration the welfare of future generations. They have the power to facilitate moral uplift in others.

By exercising empathy, wise persons are able to be tutored by others’ experience, as well as their own. For this reason, in many spiritual traditions, the wise are commonly directed to keep the company of the wise. As a religious concept, Wisdom is often represented as somehow accounting for the compendium of all human experience and, in doing so, achieving ultimate consciousness. Presumably, even the wisest people can only glimpse this.

## See Also

- ▶ [Biblical Narratives Versus Greek Myths](#)
- ▶ [Biblical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Twelve Steps](#)

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## Witch, The

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The witch is a character or image of a spell-caster associated with night and death which has manifestations in every world culture and epoch.

Examples include (*inter alia*) Euripides' *Medea* in Greek Mythology and Shakespeare's triumvirate in *Macbeth*; cinema has innumerable versions, notably *The Witches of Eastwick* (Dir. George Miller II, 1987), *The Wizard of Oz* (Dir. Victor Fleming, 1939), and *Batman Returns* (Dir. Tim Burton, 1992) where in modern guise the witch has been merged with her "familiar" and becomes "Catwoman." Pearson (2002) provides an impressive review of (*inter alia*) a raft of artistic and cultural variants.

There are likewise copious fairy-tale witches which help children cope, psychologically with feelings of envy and hatred (e.g., Hansel and Gretel, Cinderella).

Witches feature in certain religious traditions such as Voodoo, of which there are several geographical variants.

The images and emotions associated with the witch are generally repellent.

## In Mythology and Fairy Tale

The Greek moon goddess Hecate (goddess of witches) is sometimes depicted as having three heads: one of a dog, one of a snake, and one of a horse. Cerberus, the three-headed hound of Hades, is said to have belonged to Hecate. Mythologically witches are often depicted in groups of three. Hecate is said to hold dominion over heaven, earth, and under the earth, and this triune quality is often represented in statues showing her as a threefold woman (Harding 1935/1955, p. 218) (see, e.g., the frontispiece to Harding (1935/1955) depicting the "Hectarian of Marienbad" from Pausanias, *Mythology and*



*Monuments of Ancient Athens*, 1890). A Classical Jungian amplification of this image (a method whereby an image is filled out by exploring the mythical/fairy tale and archetypal associations to it) might go on to think about this threefold nature as pointing towards the *Moirai*, or Fates, which might suggest there is something *fated* about such a connection, linking also to “past, present, and future” and Karma (Harding 1955/1971, p. 218). Hecate is also usually seen with two ghost hounds that are said to serve her. Hecate is sometimes known as “sender of nocturnal visions” (Harding 1955/1971, p. 114).

Classical Jungian writers explore the witch in the guise of her many mythical and fairy-tale manifestations (e.g., Birkhäuser-Oeri 1977; von Franz 1995, 1999, see also Koltuv 1986). The most significant Jungian work in this area has been done by Ann and Barry Ulanov in *The Witch and the Clown* (1987).

The witch is seen as appearing in a gap in time. Until the Middle Ages the witch was known as a “hagazussa,” meaning the one riding on the fence (Duerr 1978/1985, p. 243, n14). According to Duerr (German anthropologist), “the witch is born on the boundary” is a Dinka (African) saying (Duerr 1978/1985, p. 243, n14). (Hecate is known (inter alia) as a goddess of thresholds).

## Psychological Exploration

Dykes’ (1980) hypothesis is that the witch occupies the most remote aspect of the psyche making it difficult to access in any psychological exploration. Dykes describes the mental paralysis associated with the witch’s menace as less destructive than aimed at the *prevention* of life (1980, p. 52). This connects with the witch’s mythological solitude (perhaps the source of her loneliness which may fuel her negativity) when she malevolently broods on the objects of her envy and hatred, hatching plans for revenge and retribution. Her bile and envy are represented symbolically in certain examples of witch (e.g., Wizard of Oz) by a green face. She is seen as irritable, power-hungry, malevolent, and greedy.

Jung describes the Shadow, under which rubric the witch would be categorized, as “the thing a person has no wish to be” (1946, par. 470).

Büßmann makes a link to depression (1987b, p. 276). Büßmann reports that the victims of witchcraft feel that life is being crushed out of them and they are facing complete annihilation (1987a, p. 142). This corresponds to the problem when dealing with the witch as an intrapsychic phenomenon in that, during possession, there is similarly a feeling of *metaphorically* being crushed and annihilated.

## In Psychoanalysis

Heinemann (2000) provides an excellent psychoanalytic deconstruction of the phenomenon of the witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, arguing against Freud’s “hysterical” formulation. She sees the witch as both a “phallic mother” and an early superego imago.

In witchcraft transmission of the witch is seen as being inherited through the maternal line.

In a paper looking at (1) the witch/vampire, (2) the spider, and (3) the shark, the images are seen from a psychoanalytic perspective as “three symbols of overwhelming terror” (Lane and Chazan 1989, p. 326). Theoretically the images are seen by Lane et al. as symbols deriving from “the earliest levels of human development [c.f. Dykes 1980], originating in the preoedipal phases of life. Each symbol expresses a dimension of oral sadism. The witch/vampire bites, the spider stings, and the shark devours its victim totally. All three symbols rely heavily on the use of splitting mechanisms and the polarization of principal identifications (e.g., parasite/host, victim/attacker, idealized/demonic)” (c.f. Dykes 1980).

The witch is also, more usually, seen as a phallic image: “with a pointed, peaked nose, sharp long fingernails, and a broom between her legs; she is capable of flying or of going up. She struggles to be like a man and engages in mannish behavior, rivaling and threatening men, argumentative, controlling, casting spells over the potency

of men, and the fertility of women. Her evil deeds are carried out by the devil, *the man who resides within her*. Her dark and dirty side is this masculinity” (c.f. Dykes 1980) (emphasis added).

Further papers in the psychoanalytic literature which talk of a witch mother are Fenichel (1931), Dahl (1989), Lawson (2000), and the witch as nightmare figure (Jones 1931, 1949).

## And Sexuality

The image of the witch carries vital characteristics of dark sexuality (her voracious and aggressive appetite, her insatiability and love of control as opposed to vulnerability and intimacy) and for a woman’s place in society as an aging crone or shrew with all that implies about her viability as a sexual being.

Brinton Perera views engagement with this “dark” aspect of femininity as being of profound importance in retrieving repressed values (1981, p. 15). She discusses the feminine by amplifying the Sumerian myth of Inanna whose process into the underworld metaphorically parallels the psychological individuation process. Brinton Perera concludes that it is only by embracing the full, even demonic, range of affects associated with the “dark” feminine that a woman can truly individuate and make a soul connection in her partnerships on an equal footing (1981, p. 94).

## Mythology

Baring and Cashford (1991) like Neumann (1955) elaborate in exhaustive detail accompanied by copious images, the “eternal feminine” in her many historical manifestations from Paleolithic times. They amplify the image of the witch in her many guises from Ereshkigal (Inanna’s “dark” sister and Queen of the Underworld in Sumerian mythology) to Hecate (Queen of the night in Greek mythology), to Lilith (their counterpart in Hebrew mythology) (1991, p. 192) as well as to Medusa (who quite literally petrified).

## Jungian Shadow

De Castillejo places importance on taking responsibility for the Shadow. She believes that, with all women, if you scratch the surface, you would find a witch. She sees the witch in terms of a power complex which perhaps paradoxically often manifests in women in the guise of giving (De Castillejo 1973, p. 42).

In her study of *Athene* in tracing the heritage of the feminine, Shearer highlights the importance of the psychological work and regards the need to understand the dual nature of the feminine as being an inescapable task: “in the great cycle of creation we now live in the Kali Yuga, an age as dark as the age of iron” (1996, p. 52). The Kali Yuga refers to the Hindu goddess Kali (Yuga meaning age or era in Sanskrit) and invokes the dark goddess who is depicted as a destroyer:

[s]he stands on a corpse and wears a necklace of skulls . . . She is devourer: her long tongue thrusts out to lick up the blood of sacrifice, her fearsome laughter shows her dreadful teeth, her maw receives all that is created. . . . In one of her hands she wields a sword and in another she carries a severed head. She is always young, bursting with blood, and always ancient, an emaciated hag, whose hunger will never be satiated. She stamps on the body of Lord Shiva (1996, p. 54).

Shearer tracks the denigration of women and their so-called wickedness which linked them to witchcraft down to the very Fall of Man and her creation from a bent – defective – rib (1996, p. 165), as did Roberts (1985).

## Medusa

Shearer goes on to discuss Medusa (whose severed head Athene wore on her breast) who forms part of yet another triumvirate, the Gorgon sisters:

They are a manifestation of the ancient moon goddess (as the Orphics knew when they called the moon ‘the Gorgon’s head’). The sisters’ names honor their power - Stheino means ‘strength’, Euryale ‘the leaping one’, and Medusa herself is ‘Mistress’, ‘Queen’, ‘Ruler’ and ‘the Cunning One’

... they have great brazen wings, staring owl-like eyes, serpents for hair and sometimes for girdles as well, tusks like boars and long lolling tongues (1996, p. 64).

Neumann (in his *magnum opus* *The Great Mother*) links the negative pole of the feminine with all the dark mythological witch characters so that snake-haired Medusa is seen as belonging to this realm in that “to be rigid is to be dead” (1955, p. 266), with blood-drinking slayer-of-men, Kali (1955, p. 72) who is also represented as having three eyes, said to symbolize past, present, and future (“Kala” in Sanskrit meaning time), “mad”-making Hecate” (see above) and licentious Ishtar. These are placed in direct opposition to “mother” and “virgin”: Mary, Demeter, and Sophia. Although each of the former category is seen as “negative,” there is also a transformational quality inherent in the symbol. For instance from Medusa’s dead body the giant Chrysaor and the winged horse Pegasus (her son by Poseidon) sprang forth; the blood from Medusa’s severed head was given to Asclepius (god of healing), and while blood from the veins on the Gorgon’s left side brought harm, that from her right side could raise the dead (March 1999); Kali’s usual proximity to cremation grounds where all worldly attachments are dissolved points to the cycle of birth and renewal.

### Mother, Depression, and Aging

Jung, with his own problematic relationship to his personal mother as described in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1963), was himself only too aware of the dual aspects of woman:

Not in vain are little children afraid of their own mothers in the night. Primitive mothers can kill their children. It is absolutely incompatible with the daytime, for then they are most devoted mothers. But in the night they take away the mask and become witches (Jung 1984, pp. 144–145).

On a more ordinary level, a depressive mother may be seen along a continuum which leads to the “Terrible Mother” which links to the witch, particularly in the aging process and menopause.

Bührmann makes the connection between the Terrible Mother and depression when she records:

This regressive pull of the elementary feminine is also seen in serious depressions. The ego suffers marked loss of libido, lacking drive or will power, inability to concentrate on work . . . It can be said that the ego is drained of energy, that it is being submerged in the negative world of the elementary feminine in its terrible or devouring aspect (1987a, p. 151).

Aging women in certain circumstances tend to take on characteristics which are associated with the archetype of the witch. (This has been a cliché in popular culture but perhaps has more serious ramifications.) This can occur when the lacunae associated with this stage of life mean that one is left alone, or children leave the nest, or disappointments build and death comes into one’s thoughts. This can be associated with lack of sexual fulfillment, perhaps metaphorically connected to the witch’s remoteness from society and engagement with life.

There are also neo-pagan “white” witches influenced by Wicca.

The nearest equivalent to the witch for men is the vampire, devil, sorcerer, wizard, or warlock.

### See Also

- ▶ [Archetype](#)
- ▶ [Devil](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Individuation](#)
- ▶ [Psyche](#)
- ▶ [Shadow](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Witchcraft](#)

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## Witchcraft

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## The Politicization of Witchcraft History

Witchcraft and its associated imagery is one of the most powerful, pervasive, and multifaceted symbols in Western culture. That being said, evaluating the complex webs of representations associated with the image of the Witch and Witchcraft is an enormous task. The issues raised by the historical experience and study of Witchcraft further compound the bewildering array of symbols and themes associated with it. Of particular importance in establishing the links between representations and symbols of Witchcraft with the historical phenomena is the intensely Anglocentric domination of Witchcraft studies and literature, not least of which is the broad association of multiple divergent themes, images, ideas, and mythic forms under the category of Witch. This is despite the radically different cultural and historical contexts and localized meanings associated with the diverse network of terms which come together under the English term “Witchcraft” (Ankarloo and Henningsen 1990). Similarly, studies of Witchcraft in both its historical context and as a form of archetypal representation, have long served as a battleground between different sectors of society according to a wide array of ideological agendas and religious beliefs (Purkiss 1976).

Despite this problem of over generalization and politicization, representations of Witchcraft do share certain common themes that link both the term and archetypal image of the Witch together. Essentially, the Witch represents an iconic form of the feminine other and as such lies at the center of a network of social forms, morality, constructions of gender, and social order, thus serving as the focal point of a wider array of social projections. Typically, the Witch is associated with the organic, the feminine, and

the disorder, and there is a close association with the anti-rational and the supernatural in the social, natural and supernatural world, (Purkiss 1976). In this sense, the Witch is both reviled as threat to the social order and associated with anti-human practices and vices yet at the same time can be held up as an iconic antidote to the social ills wrought by sources of authority and social structures symbolically associated with patriarchal control (Briggs 1996). Similarly, the association of Witchcraft and Witchcraft beliefs with the anti-rational and the supernatural has served as a rallying point for enlightenment models of social structure, warning of the dangers of religious thinking overwhelming the rational/scientific worldview with the shadow side of unrestrained superstition and mass hysteria. This contrast is very evident in anthropological interpretations of Witchcraft, especially in the African and Polynesian contexts where the superstition of Witchcraft beliefs is unfavorably contrasted with white rationalism, and Witchcraft is used to label magical practices associated with organic or endemic powers applied emotionally distinct from the learned skills of the sorcerer (Marwick 1970).

### **The Witch as a Symbol of Genocide and Oppression**

Another important model of Witchcraft is the use of representations of the Witch trials of the early modern period as a vehicle to understand the contemporary experiences of genocide via the work of Norman Cohn (1975) and of the patriarchal oppression of women, primarily through the work of Mary Daly and Robin Morgan (Daly 1979; Morgan 1977). In both cases, while the historical parallels are extremely dubious in empirical terms and are subject to much criticism, they have both become pervasive mythologies in contemporary Western culture, holding significant emotional appeal and symbolic resonance. Indeed, the images of martyrdom and sexualized tortures implied to both have had a deeply powerful visceral and psychological impact which has afforded this construction of Witchcraft-

significant popular appeal. Similarly, the model of Witchcraft as a surviving pre-Christian fertility cult, established by Margaret Murray and popularized into modern Wicca and Witchcraft revival movements, also has enormous visceral impact and popular appeal despite the theory being largely discredited in historical terms. In these cases Witches, as the ultimate manifestation of the feminine other, have served as both the projected shadow of mainstream culture and a rallying point for those disaffected by the mainstream social order and patriarchal systems of authority (Purkiss 1976). Additionally, in much psychological literature and recent anthropological analysis, Witchcraft, as a form of demonization and persecution, is interpreted as a social feedback phenomenon created out of social anxiety, rumor, and gossip akin to phenomena like the satanic ritual abuse panic of the 1980s, McCarthyism of the 1950s, and recent panics over suspected terrorists (Stewart and Strathern 2004; Hicks 1991).

### **The Witch in Western Culture**

The Witch is a particularly unique figure in Western symbolic construction as it is the iconic symbol that stands astride the romantic/enlightenment divide of Western culture. For some sectors of society, the Witch represents superstition, evil, irrationality, and the primitive, i.e., that which limits the potential for human progress and autonomy from nature. To others, the Witch represents beauty, nature, freedom, and cultural autonomy from the corrupting and limiting influences of scientific rationalism, commodification, and industrialization. In both constructs the Witch serves as the iconic underbelly or shadow side of Western enlightenment associated with femininity, the tribal other, religious superstition, the anti-rational, the magical, sexuality, and our organic relationship with nature. As such its psychological impact is enormous, and its emotional and archetypal significance is one of the most pervasive and powerful of contemporary symbols emerging from the underbelly of the past.



## See Also

- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Witch, The](#)

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## Women and Buddhism

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The Buddha warns against “walking in the jungle of opinion,” suggesting that all concepts of the self are nothing but cultural constructs imposed on various experiences of the mind-body continuum. In this way, then, as Buddhism moves from country to country, the Buddhist view of the human condition derived from early experience sheds its old “constructs” or cultural trappings and, in its accommodative mode, takes on new ones.

In exploring the place of women in Buddhism, there is canonical evidence that the Buddha held a positive view of women as potential beings of enlightenment but that this view came to be

reframed within more negative Brahmanic constructs contemporary to the canon's compilation (Findly 1999). Thus, the self-understanding and self-esteem of women engaged in Buddhist practice has varied considerably from culture to culture and is at high “therapeutic” levels in environments like that of the North America where women are [theoretically] free and religiously efficacious beings.

The negative views about women found in the Brahmanic setting of early canonical texts focus on women's character, ability, and polluting nature. Women were imagined to be unclean because of the blood of menstruation and childbirth and therefore to be kept physically at bay during certain periods. They were often portrayed as seductive, irresponsible, and of diminished intellectual capacity. Monks were not allowed to be in close proximity to women for fear of being led astray, and women were not allowed to guard the storage of goods because they were thought to be untrustworthy. Worse, women were closed out of the educational system due to the Indian caste system and views about early marriage for women to prevent unwanted pregnancy.

Despite this, it seems that the Buddha's aunt led a group of clanswomen desiring to become nuns to the Buddha and asked if they could go forth into the homeless life. The Buddha said “no” each of the three times the question was asked. In despair, the aunt came upon one of the Buddha's favorite disciples, his cousin Ananda, and asked him to intervene. He did, first, by asking thrice if women could go forth and thrice being denied. He then took a new tack: if, he queried, women were to *already have gone forth* might they then be able to experience enlightenment? To this question, the Buddha answered “yes” (Findly 1993). This suggests that the first question (Can women leave their homes to wander?) is a question about cultural mores, while the second (Can women experience enlightenment?) is a question about the nature of women that they are equal to men in being able to experience enlightenment. The Buddha's permission to allow women to go forth, however, depended upon their willingness to live under



the Eight Rules, which stressed the submission of nuns' monastic lives to those of monks.

Although the Eight Rules required that women seek higher ordination from both male and female orders and that nuns be disciplined for important offenses by both orders, there were numerous cases, for example, where nuns were taught solely by other nuns. Some of these teaching nuns, in fact, like Patacara, became quite famous in a period in which women philosophers in Brahmanic society were concurrently well known. In early canonical texts, in fact, it is said that the Buddha had a number of female Arhats (a renunciant who had experienced *nibbana*) in the congregation of his followers, though, unlike male Arhats, they appeared nameless. Women Arhats do not start being named until much later in the tradition.

While, in the early years of Buddhist development in India, women were not only well known as generous donors and important supporters of the community – e.g., Visakha and Ambapali (Findly 2000; Horner 1990) – but could also achieve high status of seniority within the community by becoming a Theri, or senior nun. Later, the Buddhist nuns' order died out in India, probably due to the harshness of the Hindu social structure for women, especially around the issue of pollution – encouraging a donor to Buddhism not to give to a nun whose body, polluted by the possibility of menstrual blood, would weaken the amount of merit due to a donor who gave food and support to her.

An excellent example of the problem appears in the two texts, the *Theragatha* and the *Therigatha* (Murcott 1999; Norman 1971). Taken on face value, these verses reflect why the renunciants chose the Buddhist path, their cognizance of the transitoriness of experience and of suffering in the face of that transitoriness, and their recognition that nonattachment relieves that suffering. Both senior monks and senior nuns experienced *nibbana*: they underwent the annihilation of the fetters, the transcendence of death with no renewed existence, and an attainment of the triple knowledge. The experience for both monks and nuns was one of quenching, cooling, stilling, peacefulness,

fearlessness, sorrowlessness, loss of ignorance, loss of desire, contentment, and the release from causally determined states.

There are, however, some *differences*. While senior monks wrote more abstractedly about their experiences with lots of references to Buddhist doctrine, senior nuns wrote more personally and intimately, detailing the troubles they encountered along the way and the encouragements they received from others. While monks focused on the mental states of mindfulness and meditation, of having concentration and skill in calming the mind, nuns were aware of mental deficiencies and inabilities to find peace of mind. In this respect as well, nuns were exceptionally mindful of the weaknesses of their own bodies; of its being diseased, impure, rotten, smelly, and foul; and of the visible decay in thinness, gray hair, sagging breasts and earlobes, wrinkled skin, yellow teeth, and faltering voice. While monks were intensely aware of the natural world and its wonders, making references to their isolated life in the forest and the details of their wandering lives, nuns made references to their families; to how they had abandoned their fathers, mothers, husbands, sons, and daughters; and to how they had watched each of these die. Finally, while monks used images of conquering, taming, and striking down and refer to chariots, armies, bows and arrows, battles, and heroes, nuns used images of homes, houses, kitchens, cooking pots, mortars and pestles, vegetables, and weaving.

These texts are good examples of locally specific self-understandings among Buddhist women as, on the one hand, they reflect cultural details of women's lives in given settings, and, on the other, they clearly affirm the equality of women with men in the search for enlightenment. Each of these are constructs of self-understanding, but the second, more positive one, is more likely to lead to the abandonment of *all* such constructs in seeing the true nature of the "self."

Today, one of the great marks of North American Buddhism is the visible presence of women as nuns, teachers, laywomen, donors, and scholars across the range, for example, of Theravada, Tibetan, and Zen Buddhism. American Buddhist women are not likely to denigrate their birth

as women, but rather to celebrate it as part of human diversity, allowing full Buddhist experience across all divides. The result of this is the development of self-understandings that are clear and strong and mindful of the particularities of the American context where, in theory, the values of equality, fairness, and justice prevail.

Currently, there are new opportunities for ordination as a *bhikshuni*, nuns. While *bhikshuni* life varies widely in the forms of robe color, language, dietary habits, mendicant status, meditation practice, involvement in the work force, and leadership roles in the temple, ordination as a nun is now more fully available. In Theravada's past, women's ordination died out in India, Sri Lanka, and Burma and was never established in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Now, however, there is a sizeable community of nuns in Sri Lanka as well as development towards full ordination for women in Thailand. In the historical Mahayana tradition, the lineage of nuns was transmitted from Sri Lanka to China and then to Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam. And today, nuns in countries that have no ordination tradition for women receive precepts from Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese nuns, and this practice has resulted in the reinstatement of *bhikshuni* ordination in Sri Lanka. Ordination in these Mahayana traditions is practiced by women in North America, and there is hope that the Dalai Lama's interest in full ordination for Tibetan nuns will come to fruition someday soon.

Opportunities for Buddhist women in North America are plentiful. Academic life as a scholar of Buddhism has been possible for some time, and today women can also be recognized as high-ranking teachers of the Buddhist *dharma* in many of the traditions. Buddhist women, like Ayya Khema, Pema Chodron, Thubten Chadron, and Joan Halifax, run monasteries, dharma centers, meditation retreats, "engaged Buddhism" programs in prisons and hospitals and, on behalf of the environment, against human rights abuses, and against war (Fig. 1). Buddhist women can live solitary lives of contemplation, can take up writing and *dharma* teaching, can be chaplains at colleges and universities, and can design buildings for Buddhist practice and create art of all kinds.



**Women and Buddhism, Fig. 1** Joan Halifax and Tenzin Gyatso (Photograph owner: Joan Halifax. This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Joan\\_Halifax\\_and\\_the\\_Dalai\\_Lama.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Joan_Halifax_and_the_Dalai_Lama.jpg))

While concepts of "female self" are constructs (positive and negative) imposed upon human experience, these constructs, nevertheless, shape what opportunities are available for women's spiritual development and how women respond to them. To the degree, then, that the constructs for self-understanding are more positive in contemporary times for women practicing Buddhism, they are likely to become more fully therapeutic in promoting a self-understanding that is consonant with the early intent of Buddhist practice: in which the "self" is seen as a constructed identity – an understanding that brings calm, insight, and equanimity.

### See Also

- ▶ [American Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddha-Nature](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Buddhism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Dalai Lama](#)
- ▶ [Enlightenment](#)
- ▶ [Esoteric Buddhism](#)

- ▶ Gender Roles
- ▶ Mindfulness
- ▶ Women and Religion

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## Women and Religion

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## The Basic Findings

The greater religiosity of women, demonstrated in numerous and consistent research findings over the past 100 years, is arguably the most important fact about religion. Most research on religion is in reality research about women, who are the backbone of religion globally, and are actively supporting, maintaining, and sometimes keeping alive religious establishments, institutions, and organizations everywhere. If we do some basic ethnographic observations, and visit churches in Rome, Paris, New York City, or Moscow, we will immediately realize that (older) women make up the majority of those in attendance. Anthropological observations in India indicate that women make up the majority of those attending Hindu temples. Only in those traditions where ritual attendance by women is discouraged, such as Islam and Judaism, the majority of those attending will be men.

In the Islamic world, while women are discouraged from attending mosque services, they dominate among those who follow various popular practices, such as pilgrimages to saints' tombs. In these sanctuaries, a popular "women's religion" is practiced, but men are not officially excluded. Television rituals are the perfect opposite to pilgrimage, but we know that among viewers of US televangelists, women are quite overrepresented.

When we look at data on levels of religiosity for men and women in all cultures that have been looked at, women are more likely to describe

themselves as religious, as compared with men. When it comes to beliefs, the differences between men and women in belief are not always large, but they are the most consistent. Women are more conservative or orthodox; they more often say they hold rather firmly to the central and traditional beliefs in any religion. The differences are especially striking in cultures with an overall low level of religiosity, such as post-Communist Russia. When we look at those with little or no religious beliefs, agnostics and atheists, the probability of finding women among them is extremely low.

The generalization is statistical, which means that not all women are more religious than all men, but any woman chosen randomly anywhere in the world will be more religious than a man similarly chosen. The findings are clearly not tied to Christianity or Western culture, and are just as pronounced in such cultures as India, Japan, China, Israel, Ethiopia, and Turkey.

Research has supported the notion of differential meanings in religion, with women holding different images of deities. For them the gods are seen more as supportive rather than instrumental and as loving, comforting, and forgiving, while males see him as a supreme power, a driving force, a planner, and controller.

Activities which are often noninstitutionalized, but nevertheless express a belief in a world inhabited by spirits, invisible powers, and miracles, do not differ psychologically from officially recognized religiosity. This view is increasingly found among contemporary theorists.

When it comes to popular and para-religious beliefs, the differences between men and women are even more robust than those relating to institutional religions. Women are the majority of customers for all magical coping practices. The global, thriving, business of fortune-telling, miracle drugs (alternative medicine), spiritualism or "spiritual channeling," etc. caters mostly to women. They are the customers of practices which offer unofficial contacts with the world of the spirits or claim to operate with the help of invisible powers and energies. Women are much more likely to report beliefs in "telepathy,"

"psychic healing," and "fortune-telling," as well as being readier to believe in various "miracle drugs."

## Explaining the Findings

The greater religiosity of women is often viewed as a puzzle and a paradox. That is because religious organizations, institutions, and traditions are developed and controlled by men. Cross-culturally we can say that women are rarely in positions of power and influence in religious institutions and organizations, and in many cases they are formally excluded from positions of liturgical and clerical leadership.

Religious pantheons, which include gods, angels, saints, demons, founders, prophets, priests, and mystics, have little room for women. It is the creation of men, reflecting their wishes and fantasies. When it comes to what religious doctrines everywhere say about women, the content and nature of male fantasies is clear and uniform. Women are the target of taboo and derision in many traditions, described as evil and impure. If the world of religious figures and ideas was created by men, reflecting their wishes, why are women so willing to adopt this masculine universe and commit themselves to it? Attempts to create an alternative female pantheon (Goddess religions) have clearly failed to attract women. If religion is created by the male psyche, does it reflect the male psyche or the human psyche (which should be more female than male)? Our challenge is to explain the significant receptivity of women to messages of the miraculous in various guises, where the common denominator is the illusion of control or understanding.

The most common explanation for female religiosity refers to the reality of deprivation and victimization. Most women in this world are poor and powerless and have little or no education. We should keep in mind that a 7-year-old illiterate Dalit (untouchables) girl in India, already working from dawn to dusk to help her family, is a true representative of womanity and of humanity, rather than a woman with a Ph.D.

living in the United States. When we speak of women's religiosity, the Dalit girl is the one we have to understand.

It is clear that while both men and women share the human condition, their location, real and imagined, in human power structures is far apart. Men control all human institutions and organizations, and the status of women in religion, both in the imagined pantheon and in real organizations, reproduces the lot of women in most human collectivities.

Sexuality is the area where women are most deprived and victimized. Women in all cultures suffer from predatory male sexuality. Coercive sexual experiences create lifelong suffering. Early childhood sexual abuse is a relatively common occurrence in the life of too many girls. This is a shattering experience, leading to depression and other problems. This victimization naturally leads to increased fear and insecurity, reinforcing any earlier dispositions.

Religion sometimes offers women a shelter from the male way of defining and controlling sexuality, which views women as sex objects and regards unattached women as easy prey. Religion sacralizes maternity, which is another shelter from male advances. We know that in some religious movements founded or dominated by women (see the Shakers), chastity becomes the rule, and sexuality is avoided. Such groups will have few male members.

Women are more commonly diagnosed as suffering from disorders of internalized conflict, such as anxiety and depression, cyclothymic disorder, panic disorder, attempted suicide, and phobias, with men suffering from acting-out disorders, such as completed suicide, substance abuse or schizotypal, narcissistic, and antisocial personality. Women are more than twice as likely as men to suffer from stress-related disorders, including major depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and several anxiety disorders. The lifetime prevalence of PTSD for women, about 10.4 %, is more than twice that for men. Females are more prone than males to panic disorder with agoraphobia and to phobias about animals. Data from large-scale epidemiological surveys

indicate that panic disorder is 2.5 times more common in women than in men.

There is much evidence for significant personality differences between men and women; some of which may be relevant to the differences in religious activity. Men and women differ in emotion processing, including perception, experience, and expression. Women clearly are readier to express feelings and admit dependence. They are also readier to demonstrate interpersonal caring, sensitivity, and warmth. In all cultures males are less nurturant and less emotionally expressive, while women are more submissive and passive, anxious, and dependent. Empathy, defined as the vicarious affective response to another person's feelings, is more prevalent in females. The greater empathy of women acts to reduce critical thinking, and female neurohormones lead to the suppression of negative emotions or judgments. Love is the enemy of critical judgment and creates acceptance, especially when there is a yearning for consolation, reassurance, and some hope for the relief of suffering.

Studies of the reported contents of dreams have consistently found females to be significantly more interpersonally oriented than men. Women's dreams involve relationships and loss, while men are likely to dream about fighting, protecting, and competing, almost always with other men. And when ready-made fantasies are consumed, as in watching television, women constitute the audience for soap operas, while men watch aggressive sports (or follow political and economic news, which are often far from fantasies). In popular romance novels, women vicariously live family and relationship conflicts, as well as happy endings.

David Bakan described the dichotomy of orientations in females and males as communion versus agency. Communion is the tendency to be concerned about closeness to others, while agency is the tendency to be self-interested and assertive. Evolutionary psychologists have observed that women feel threatened by isolation and diminished intimacy, while men feel threatened by anything that smacks of diminished prestige and authority.



Looking at the involvement of adult women in the world of spirits, invisible powers, and miracles, we find that many of their activities have little to do with eternal damnation or bliss but with counter-sorcery ideas such as the removal of the evil eye and securing good fortune for one's family. The human condition puts us all in situations of risk and insecurity. Our anxiety and helplessness leads to coping through ritual and fantasy, rather than instrumental action. Men do engage in such acts sometimes, but the challenge is to explain why women do it more often.

Most personality differences seem to be innate, such as greater male aggressiveness, verbally and physically, and risk-taking. Males are much more likely to die violently and to commit homicide and suicide at any age. They are responsible for 90 % of violent acts in all cultures. Males exceed females on physically risky forms of sensation seeking, and these in turn correlate significantly with a variety of physically dangerous activities such as involvement in crime, dangerous sports, injury proneness, and volunteering for drug experiments and hazardous army combat. The difference in aggressive tendencies together with the greater conformity of women is reflected in the large differences that have been noted in the occurrence of antisocial behavior, which is so much rarer among women.

The feminine coping strategy may be characterized by anxiety, risk avoidance, and a search for real or imagined security, using comforting others. The male psyche, on average, will be dominated by developmental vulnerability, risk-taking, aggression, independence, and relative skepticism, showing the effects of masculine neurohormones. Reacting to distress men will react by externalizing, sometimes harming all involved. In the female psyche, fear, which leads to aggression in males, will lead to attachment, internalization, and help seeking. Low aggression, empathy, suggestibility, guilt, and sympathy will lead to love, but taking care of children and men, and tending to their needs, rather than one's own, is a heavy burden, growing with the victimization of women by violent men.

Turning to the world of supernatural agents and miracles fits with many "feminine" traits

and conditions. Women's people orientation leads to dependence on real and imaginary objects, from fortune-tellers to angels. Those who nurse and nurture humanity seek their compensation in imaginary objects in the absence of real support and the presence of much deprivation. We should think again of Dalit females in India, who may hope for a future incarnation as a male Brahmin (the official version of their own "Pascal's Wager") but will settle for much less than that, protection from evil spirits for their own children. Any illusion of control will serve to relieve their constant desperation, as the world of spirits and miracles expresses indeed the sigh of the oppressed creature.

### See Also

- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Shakers](#)

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## Women in Chinese Religions

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In traditional Chinese culture, or late imperial times before modernity in the early twentieth century, the gender division of labor had men in the public sphere, working in the fields, pursuing



trade, or sometimes serving in bureaucratic office. The vast majority of Chinese women were illiterate, and they worked in the domestic sphere, engaged in child-raising and housework. Women could not inherit property nor sit for the imperial examinations that would endow only men with official positions in the state bureaucracy. In the patriarchal kinship system, the birth of a girl was a great disappointment, as women could transmit neither kinship identity nor property to their children, and they could never go out into the public sphere and bring fame or wealth to their family or lineage. Instead, women were married out to live with their husband's family, thus benefiting another lineage with their labor and childbirth. The dominant Confucian tradition enjoined women to be self-effacing, filial, chaste, and obedient to their husbands and in-laws and to stay at home. Indeed, in late imperial China, they were often banned from going to worship in the temples (Goossaert 2008). The historical record generally shows that although there are many examples of female piety and goddess cults, there were very few women who were ritual experts or religious leaders or had roles as temple managers or festival organizers (Overmyer 1991). Thus, the systematic cultural suppression of women's voices, social ambitions, and sexuality all suggest that perhaps more than men, women had more reasons to turn to the divine world of gods for solace and escape from their worldly sufferings and frustrations.

Two apparent exceptions to this patriarchal pattern can be found in the shamanistic and early religious Daoist traditions. Ancient Chinese texts such as the third-century BCE *Discourses of States* (*Guo Yu*) talk about female (*wu*) and male shamans (*xi*) as if they were equal. Their bodies served as hosts to gods and ancestors who descended and spoke through them, and they sometimes served in royal courts as ritual leaders. The enigmatic text, *Dao De Jing* or *The Way and its Power*, supposedly written by Laozi in the sixth or fifth century BCE, is full of exhortations to adopt the ethos of the feminine, passive, or the weak, as opposed to the hard, strong, willful, or militaristic. Feminine metaphors are scattered throughout the text, such as the enjoinder to

imitate the softness of water or the descent into deep river valleys, which is the "return to the mother's womb" or the return to the simplicity of infancy. With the Celestial Masters' religious Daoist movement (*Tianshi Dao*) of the third through fifth centuries CE, there are references to women priests and female religious officials with rank, leading local parishes along with men. However, later Daoist development seems to have succumbed to the stronger patriarchal tradition (Overmyer 1991).

The Chinese Mahayana Buddhist tradition was also strongly patriarchal and dominated by male leaders and monks. Except for the rare female emperor Wu Zetian of the seventh century CE, who was a great patron of Buddhism and built some major Buddhist monuments and temples, women rarely appear as major players in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Women figure mainly as pious lay followers, pilgrims to holy sites, or humble nuns. From the perspective of Buddhist monks, women were a constant threat to their vows of celibacy and their pursuit of detachment and enlightenment. Thus, in Chinese Buddhism, women were associated with the secular, profane, and the imperfect, while the sacred is associated with men (Paul 1979). Indeed, Mahayana texts say that in order to attain the exalted status of a bodhisattva (a being who attains enlightenment but comes back to earth to save others), women must first change their sex to male.

However, the image of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara underwent a major gender transformation in the opposite direction in China, from his original masculine image in Indian Buddhism to a female image of gentle maternal compassion sometime in the twelfth century CE (Sangren 1983; Yu 2001). This cult to Guanyin as the feminized Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is known in China, is the most influential and pervasive worship of a Buddhist deity in China from the late imperial era to the present. Within the patriarchal culture of Chinese Buddhism, the cult of Guanyin has carved out an important space for female worshippers, who appeal to her motherly kindness and solicitousness for help in their difficult lives, especially around issues of fertility and childbirth. The hagiography of the life of

Guanyin has its genealogy in the Chinese legend of Princess Miaoshan, dating to the tenth century CE or earlier. Miaoshan was a devout Buddhist and resisted marriage, defying her father in refusing to marry the man he had chosen for her. In anger, he had her killed, but she came back to life and selflessly gouged out her eyes and cut off her hands to feed him her flesh as medicine when he became ill. When he realized her sacrifice, he repented and had his whole family convert to Buddhism, while she became the apotheosis of the thousand-eyed, thousand-handed Bodhisattva Guanyin.

While motherly images and filial self-sacrifice do not threaten patriarchal culture, marriage resistance *does* represent a challenge to it, since in marriage, a Chinese woman leaves her natal family and her usually close relations with her mother to enter an alien family and come under the authority of her husband and in-laws. It is interesting that Mazu (meaning “mother and ancestor”), a maritime goddess worshipped up and down coastal China, also resisted marriage and died single. Like many gods in Chinese popular religion, Mazu was once a human being, and through her good deeds and miracles saving drowning sailors and fishermen, she became a goddess after death, and a large cult grew up around her that spread to Taiwan and even Japan and Vietnam (Watson 1985; Yang 2008). Another coastal goddess named Chen Jinggu, known in Fujian Province as the Lady of Linshui (Baptandier 2008) and in Zhejiang as Mother Chen the Fourteenth, did get married and pregnant, but in order to conduct exorcism rituals to beg the gods for rain and save people from a terrible drought, she aborted her 3-month fetus. Chen Jinggu was skilled in martial arts and regularly did battle with different demons, slaying two white snake demons to avenge her brother’s death and defend the people. The births of both goddesses are said to have resulted from their mothers’ immaculate conception through the Bodhisattva Guanyin. The deep emotional appeal of these three goddesses to Chinese women, who form the great majority of their worshippers today, may be due to a number of psychological factors. First, their maternal images of nurture and protectiveness invoke the usually close relationships



**Women in Chinese Religions, Fig. 1** Goddess Mazu greeting her Taiwan “daughter” Mazu goddesses visiting her on Meizhou Island, Fujian Province (2000). (photo taken by the author)

between mother and daughter in Chinese families. Second, the marriage resistance and self-abortion may appeal to women as female assertiveness and autonomy from the patriarchal family and kinship system, although this female desire is seldom expressed explicitly. Third, all three goddesses exhibit female prowess, whether through the performance of rituals or miracles, upholding justice and punishing wrongdoers, or saving people, especially helpless men, from drowning, from demons, or from disasters. Thus, through seeking solace with these powerful goddesses, Chinese women may also come to identify with and yearn to model themselves after them (Fig. 1).

With the May Fourth Movement of cultural reform in the 1920s and the Communist Revolution of 1949, with its stated project of “women’s liberation,” the situation of women in contemporary Chinese society is much better than premodern times. However, traditional

patriarchal thoughts and practices still plague rural and small-town areas, and there are new exploitations of women, in employment discrimination and the commodification of women and sex, making the situation for Chinese women today complex. The goddess cults continue to draw female worshippers, although men also join in. Now women have no problems in going to temples to worship, attending public rituals or church services if they are Christians, helping to conduct rituals, becoming Buddhist or Daoist nuns, or organizing the activities of small local temples (Cao 2010; Kang 2009). However, the general pattern is that they form the bulk of devout worshippers, temple helpers, and religious festival workers. Major decision-making roles, such as temple and church organizers and managers, religious leaders, ritual masters who head ritual performances, and the abbots of large Buddhist or Daoist monasteries, are still usually in the hands of men. There are some exceptions to this rule, such as the Buddhist nun Master Cheng Yen in Taiwan, who founded the globally influential Buddhist lay organization Tzu Chi Merit Foundation, with its many branch temples, charities, hospitals, disaster relief, and universities in different countries (Huang 2009). At this writing, there are a few other women religious leaders in China, such as the Head of the Chengdu City Daoist Association in Sichuan, a Daoist nun, and the Abbot of the Taiping Buddhist Temple in Wenzhou.

Three developments for women and religious participation can be detected. One is that in different parts of China, shamanism is becoming more feminized. This may be due to the fact that shamanism and spirit mediumship in the modern era is looked down upon as “superstitious” and low class, and men tend to have more opportunities for upward social mobility. Or men tend to have more secular pursuits and better education; thus, their bodies and tongues are less receptive as the vessels or voices of deities or ancestors. Another gendered religious phenomenon is that women tend to be the majority of those who go on long-distance pilgrimages to sacred sites. Finally, in rural and small towns, most sutra-chanting groups performing in temples, Christian church choirs,

and lay Buddhist volunteers who chant sutras and comfort dying patients tend to be women. Women are said to be more sensitive to the presence of spirits and believed to be more compassionate and self-sacrificing.

Now that the first generation of China’s one-child policy (in rural areas, two children if the first is a girl) has come of age, there is a growing problem in recruiting men into the Buddhist and Quanzhen Daoist clergy. When families have only one son, they are very reluctant to allow their son to become a monk, for that would mean that their descent line will be ended and they will have no one to support them in old age. Increasingly, new recruits are women or men from poor families. This new development may mean the gradual feminization of the Buddhist sangha or Daoist priesthood, as we already see in Taiwan’s Buddhism (Huang et al. 2011:118).

### See Also

- ▶ [Amita Buddha](#)
- ▶ [Avalokiteshvara](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Popular Religions](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Guanyin](#)
- ▶ [I Ching](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)

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status of women. In the same way that religion and culture are inextricable, cultural variables must be taken into consideration along with location in religious tradition. A primary example is the Gospel New Testament story of the woman caught in adultery in John 7:53–8:11.

Early in the morning [Jesus] came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” When they kept on questioning him, he . . . said to them, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” . . . When they heard it they went away. . . Jesus. . . said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir/Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.”

The consideration of religious participation, as well as any other social and cultural activity and agency, is an integral part of the ongoing psychological debate of nature versus nurture. People are born into a religious or nonreligious environment, family, society, and religious tradition and practice and are imprinted and impacted by their environment with all of its variable influences. Religion is one major aspect of the nature/nurture continuum, influenced by all of the other factors. Gender psychologically is first weighted heavily on the nature side of the scale, but over the life course, gender experience is weighted more and more heavily on the nurture side of the scale. The gender balance on the nature/nurture scale shifts with life experiences and the psychological imprint and social influence of religion can have enormous effect on the balance. The role of women in Christianity has changed drastically and evolved greatly, from the women in the life of Jesus throughout the tradition over time and continuing into sweeping changes today and toward the future.

## Women in Christianity

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### Introduction: Considering Women in the Christian Religious Tradition

The consideration of women in Christianity is a broad consideration, so it is given broad treatment here, including Jesus and women, particular women in scripture and in the tradition, roles of women in various denominations and over time, theological developments, and changing roles today including ordination and priesthood. It must be kept in mind that the consideration of women in Christianity should include social location of time, geographic location, society, culture, economic, and political factors. Such factors as these social conditions and social organization of the family are contextually integral to understanding the roles and

### Jesus and Women in Christian Scripture

The way Jesus related to women during his lifetime is described in the New Testament Gospels:



Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Jesus in his ministry taught that the mystical inner relationship of the person to God exists by spiritual nature in everyone. The spiritual, mystical teachings of the Cosmic Christ are central to Christianity and culminate in the final, prophetic book of Revelation. The deepest spiritual nature and mystical process is psychological more than physical, so it is not gendered. Jesus was well aware that ancient social stature, role, and context had much to do with the way people of both genders differed in manifesting themselves in society. He always went to the internal spiritual core of the matter yet always understood the external cultural context. Jesus in the resurrection story appears to women first, they are receptive to what he tells them, and they spiritually understand.

His mother, *Mary of Nazareth*, had accepted God's calling to be the mother of Jesus as delivered by the Archangel Gabriel. She was receptive to the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit and kept faith that God would put her family and social situation right in the world to reflect the spiritual rightness on which it was based. "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:38). Psychologically, she was able to be spiritually receptive to the Spirit of God and was willing to transform herself and her life accordingly, an extraordinary feat of self-willed psychosynthesis. Mary began her famous Song of Praise, now known as the Magnificat, by saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant" (Luke 1:46–48). She was a devoted mother to Jesus throughout his life and supported him emotionally and spiritually in his growth, life, and untimely death, standing by him even through the crucifixion (Fig. 1).

Some other prominent women in Christian scripture include *Elizabeth*, who was a blood relative of Mary the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth was the wife of priest Zacharias and the mother of John the Baptist and prophetically and intuitively understood the significance of Mary's pregnancy.



**Women in Christianity, Fig. 1** Mary holding baby Jesus. Library of Congress (<http://publicdomainclip-art.blogspot.com/2008/12/virgin-mary-holding-baby-jesus-christ.html>)

Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. . . For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord (Luke 1:42–45).

*Anna* was a Jewish prophetess who prophesied about Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:36–38). *Martha of Bethany* was known for her hospitality, self-discipline, and devotion (Mark 14:3–9, Luke 10:38–42, John 11, John 12:1–8). The poor widow gave 2 *lepta* ("mites") at the Temple at Jerusalem and Jesus exalted her gift because with it she had given all she had (Mark 12:41–44). Mary Magdalene was loving, devoted, and faithful throughout Jesus' life and resurrection (Matthew 27:55–61, Matthew 28:1–10, Mark 15:40–16:11, Luke 8:1–3, Luke 23:49–24:12, John 19:25, John 20:1–18).

Many women were also there [at the crucifixion], looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph (Matthew 27:55–56). . . . Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb (Matthew 27:61). . . . After the Sabbath. . . . Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. . . . the angel said to the women. . . . “He is not here; for he has been raised. . . . go quickly and tell his disciples” . . . . Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me” (Matthew 28:1–10).

*Mary, the mother of John also called Mark*, held a prayer vigil for Peter in her home, to which he fled after his delivery from prison (Acts 12:12–17). *Dorcas* of Joppa, also known as Tabitha, a “disciple,” was known for her charity and her companionship to widows, and Peter raised her from the dead (Acts 9:36–43). *Lydia of Thyatira* was a wealthy merchant who was the first convert to Christianity in Europe. She opened her large home to meetings of Christians, was visited by Paul and Silas when they left prison, and she was instrumental in establishing the church at Philippi (Acts 16:11–15, 40).

Characteristic activities, gifts, and ministries of women in Jesus’ times included prayer, in church gatherings, homes, and personal prayer lives; prophecy as a gift of the spirit; and spiritual mentoring – older women passed on religious values and training and encouraged psychological gifts of the spirit in daughters and in raising of children. Prominent women gave personal, financial, and other supports of ministries in society as well as in homes. Hospitality of all women of all social strata was an outstanding virtue of generosity and loving activity characteristic of women, often Jewish in heritage and tradition, as followers of Jesus. Witnessing and testifying were ongoing activities of faithful women in whatever sphere they moved. These characteristics and ministries have persisted over time and are integral to activities of women in Christianity today.

## Women in Various Denominations and Over Time

The evolution of Christianity since the Christian Scriptures has been the development of

denominations. The Roman Latin tradition grew next to the Greek and other Eastern Orthodox traditions, after a schism divided them in 1054 CE. The Eastern Church allowed priests to marry. John Wycliffe (1330–1384) translated the Bible into English as a primary step toward the Protestant Reformation, followed by Martin Luther (1483–1546), Ulrich Zwingli (1484–1531), and sixteenth-century reforms in England by King Henry VIII, King Edward IV, and Queen Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) is one of the most well-known and pivotal women in the history of Christianity. At the beginning of her reign, she codified beginnings of the autonomous Church of England and spent her lifetime and reign struggling to balance Protestant Reformation with Catholic tradition. Post-Reformation Protestants also accepted clerical marriage.

Throughout the history of Christianity, there have been well-known women prophets and mystics. Among the most well known are:

- 1098–1179 Hildegard of Bingen, Benedictine nun and mystic
- 1193–1254 *Clare of Assisi*, founder of the Poor Clares
- 1208–1282 *Mechtilde of Magdeburg*, Beguine mystic
- 1303–1373 *Birgitta*, Swedish mystic
- 1342–c.1416 Julian of Norwich, English mystic and anchoress
- 1347–1380 *Catherine of Siena*, Italian mystic (Fig. 2)
- 1515–1582 Teresa of Avila, Spanish mystic and reformer of Carmelites

Some of these women, such as Catherine of Siena, came to prominence and influence because of their profound spiritual lives, great teachings, and complete devotion to the Church and to Jesus and God. Known for her letters, in her earliest letter to Pope Gregory XI at Avignon in 1376, she gave advice to him.

Don’t be afraid, for divine help is near. Just attend to spiritual affairs, to appointing good pastors and administrators in your cities, for you have experienced rebellion because of bad pastors and administrators. Do something about it! And take heart in Christ Jesus and don’t be afraid.





**Women in Christianity, Fig. 2** Catherine of Siena. From Church of Santa Maria del Rosario in Prati, Rome ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Catherine\\_of\\_Siena.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Catherine_of_Siena.jpg))

Psychologically, the mystical and spiritual processes are internal, intrapsychic processes, so there are countless numbers of people who have been deeply engaged in mystical divine union and spiritual meditation through the ages, about whom we will never know. Those who have become well known, particularly women, are those who have been writers, spiritual teachers, and reformers engaged in social justice as manifestation of spiritual principles or in some way have been noticed and remembered for their outward behaviors, achievements, and legacies. This is especially true for women, because historically the primary domain of women has been the home and the convent or monastery. As women's roles in society and literature have increased, more women have come to prominence in Christianity.

Today there is a range of women's traditions, ministries, and practices within each denomination – Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and

Protestantism, which includes Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Quakers. Within each denomination, women's roles continue to evolve and transform, such as in the long-standing debate over ordination of women, which varies from denomination to denomination. Most Protestant denominations now ordain women as clergy, and the Roman Catholic *Womenpriests* are a part of movement within Catholicism to ordain women as priests. In Christian denominations that ordain women, the percentage of women clergy has grown into double digits, and growth continues to increase, according to the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

Major women's ministries have grown into modern and contemporary times in areas such as human rights, women's rights, social justice, economic justice, women's entrepreneurship, women's health, and more. Pioneers include Joan of Arc; Elizabeth Cady Stanton and her *Woman's Bible* of 1895; Antoinette Brown Blackwell, first woman minister ordained 1853; St. Bernadette of Lourdes; Mother Teresa; Dorothy Day; and Barbara Harris, first woman Episcopal Bishop of 1989.

Recent theological trends include womanist theology as an outgrowth of liberation theology and feminist Christian theory. In psychology, Christian feminist scholars have made contributions to what is known today as Christian feminism, with prominent theorists such as Mary Daly and Sallie McFague, forging new directions in theory, research, and practice. Christian feminist theory and practice is integral to feminist theory and practice, which is integral to and at the leading edge of women's psychology.

### See Also

- ▶ [Augustine](#)
- ▶ [Charity](#)
- ▶ [Christ](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Evangelical](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)

- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Our Lady of Guadalupe](#)
- ▶ [Roman Catholic Women Priests](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Virgin Mary](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)

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## Women in Hinduism

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Hindu definitions of the nature and role of women are rooted in classical images from philosophy

and mythology. Such images have held cultural authority as ideals for centuries in Hinduism's 3,000 years of literate tradition. Today, they serve as touchstones for the appreciation, critique, and transformation of traditional ideals of womanhood in the modern world (Pechilis 2012). The study of women in Hinduism contributes to our understanding of the psychology of cultural paradigms and expectations of women and their transformation.

## Classical Paradigms

The ancient philosophy of Samkhya, one of the six orthodox schools in Hinduism, describes two principles that interact with each other to produce everything in the universe: *purusha*, which is associated with spirit, stasis, and maleness, and *prakriti*, which is associated with matter, energy, and femaleness. The necessity of these principles and their complementary relationship informs Hindu ideas on the nature and relationship of man and woman. Traditionally, the social value of women centers on marriage: "From the orthodox point of view the only rite of passage (*samskara*) that is particularly marked for women is marriage" (Findly 1999, p. 418). In revealing contrast, the key *samskara* for men was their initiation into studenthood with a guru (teacher), which preceded marriage.

The role of wife in the household context was the dominant social identity for women, and girls were married prior to puberty, though only resided with their husbands after its onset. The *Laws of Manu (Manusmriti)*, which was probably composed between 200 BCE and 200 CE and was cited as authoritative by later texts purporting to systematically discuss social duties and responsibilities (the *Dharmashastra* genre of texts), located women as necessarily under male supervision throughout her lifespan:

I will tell of the eternal duties of a man and wife who stay on the path of duty both in union and in separation. Men must make their women dependent day and night, and keep under their own control those who are attached to sensory objects. Her father guards her in childhood, her husband guards

her in youth, and her sons guard her in old age. A woman is not fit for independence. A father who does not give her away at the proper time should be blamed, and a husband who does not have sex with her at the proper time should be blamed; and the son who does not guard his mother when her husband is dead should be blamed (*MS* 9.1–4; Doniger and Smith 1991, p. 197).

This text can be viewed as both empowering and oppressive: The woman is protected, yet ever supervised; she is due parental care, sex from her husband, and support from her son, yet she lacks independent recourse.

Wives are a cultural icon in Indian tradition, being likened to Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune. Wifhood is *the* auspicious status for women: “They are the creators and the maintainers of life, the sources of prosperity, well-being, and pleasure. Furthermore, they are the ones upon whom a man’s fulfillment of the three aims of life—*dharma*, *artha*, and *kama*—depend” (Marglin 1985, p. 299). Classically, a wife played a supporting but essential role at the performance of the fire sacrifice (Young 2002, pp. 6–9). The conservative eighteenth-century *Stridharmapaddhati* (“Guide to the Duties of Women”) repeats classical codes for the modern era, emphasizing that marriage for women is the equivalent of the *upanayana* (initiation) for men and that a wife’s primary duties are to be devoted to and obey her husband (wife as *pativrata*) and produce sons (Leslie 1989, pp. 29–37).

## Modern Hindu Women

The modernization of Hindu women’s roles was self-consciously attempted by nationalist male reformers in the context of high British colonialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Changes included an emphasis on educating women, permitting the remarriage of widows, the emergence of women’s organizations, advocacy for women’s rights, and opportunities for women’s professional employment (Forbes 1996; Young 2002, pp. 19–22).

Today, more influential than the proscriptive texts on *dharma* is the beloved classical epic story

of the *Ramayana*, in which the marriage of Sita to Rama plays a starring role: “It is a very important source of values for familial interactions and marital relationships” (Sherma 2005, p. 23). Sita is understood to capture concerns and realities of Indian women today:

There are several practical reasons why Sita-like behaviour makes sense to Indian women. The outcome of marriage in India depends not just on the attitude of a husband but as much on the kind of relationship a woman has with her marital family and extended kinship group. If, like Sita, she commands respect and affection from the latter, she can frequently count on them to intervene on her behalf and keep her husband from straying, from behaving unreasonably. Similarly, once her children grow up, they can often play an effective role in protecting her from being needlessly bullied by her husband, and bring about a real change in the power equation in the family, because in India, children, especially sons, frequently continue living with their parents even after they are grown up. A woman can hope to get her marital relatives and her children to act in her favour only if she is seen as being more or less above reproach (Kishwar 2001, p. 305).

The moral power of fulfilling the role of obedient wife (*pativrata*) permits women to take a stand, yet such stories of female role models “assimilate the power of the female within the framework of rules for everyday living . . . a fundamentally compromised attempt, for it must co-ordinate submission and transgression within a single agenda” (Bose 2004, p. 115).

Many challenges face Hindu women today. Marriage and procreation is a universal expectation for both women and men. The tradition of bridal dowry may have begun as a trousseau for the bride that provided her with a safety net, which was then transformed into a vulnerability for women by the British colonial system (Oldenburg 2002); in present-day India and the Indian diaspora, it has for many become an onerous obligation on the bride’s family and even one fraught with danger if the groom’s family decides to take physical revenge on the bride for what is perceived to be an inadequate dowry. Such problems persist even though the practice was prohibited under Indian Civil Law in 1961, as well as subsequent sections of the Indian Penal Code. The burden of the bridal dowry and ritual customs invested in the son

contribute to the preference for a son. The 2011 Census of India, similar to the 2001 Census, shows that there are 940 females per 1,000 males, strongly suggesting election to abort female babies; Amartya Sen has called this “natality inequality” (Sen 2005, pp. 226–232). Not bearing children, especially sons, is also a danger, and this is indexed in the gendered language of terms of abuse, in which “to be sonless” and “to be a widow” are insults specifically directed at women and without parallel in terms directed at men (Shabadi 2005, pp. 260–264).

Ethnographic studies of women who enact traditional definitions and ideals indicate that they use tradition not to conform but to respond to such challenges. For example, ethnographies of women’s rituals today discuss women performing vows (*vrat*) and fasts with the explicit aim to promote long life for their husbands and for the health of their families, which support traditional constructions of women’s *dharma*, but these studies also foreground the space such performances allow women for discussion and social exchange. In such discussions, they may make their own claims, including validation of the feminine as positive, women’s liturgical authority, and connections rather than opposition between private and public space (Knight 2011; McDaniel 2002; Pintchman 2005). Ethnographies of women’s traditional performance of folksongs disclose the women’s awareness of the received structures of gender and power and their criticisms of it. Examples include songs as women’s celebrations of their own sexual pleasures and motherhood as well as their voicing of their perspective that patriarchal structures are obstacles to maneuver around (Rahejia and Gold 1994) and in women’s use of song to reflect on everyday relationships (Jassal 2012).

## Psychological Aspects

“What psychoanalysis offers to the larger project of the interpretation of Hinduism is an additional perspective, another point of reference, an exploration of possible subtexts of Hindu texts and practices” (Courtright 2008, pp. 311–312).

Scholars have undertaken analysis of a variety of Hindu myths and cultural stories; those that focus on women have explored the relational aspects of their roles. Sudhir Kakar, the foremost psychoanalytical clinician and theorist of Hindu culture in terms of psychology, has explored women on several levels. He has discussed the “inner world” of feminine identity, emphasizing the distinctive Hindu promotion of goddess traditions, with reference to the Sita as an “ego ideal” and the mythological images of “good” and “bad” mother (Kakar 1978, pp. 52–112). He has explored the “selfobject” of lower-class women’s ideals of marriage (Kakar 1989, pp. 65–84). He has also discussed the strong impact mother-goddess traditions have on the development of male children (Kakar 1997, pp. 72–99). Other scholars have built on Kakar’s foundation. The many myths about the doubled and split nature of Sita as both sexual and chaste reveal tensions in perceptions of female sexuality (Doniger 1999, pp. 9–28). The images of women and goddesses as revered “mother” reveal the primacy in Hindu culture of an extended family context in fostering self-development rather than a nuclear family (Kurtz 1992). The conflicting desires of fusion and separation between mother and son find “therapeutic expression” in the mythology of Krishna and the cow-herd women (Jain 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [Gender Roles](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Hindu Women Gurus](#)
- ▶ [Relational Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)

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## Women in Judaism

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Women's current position within Judaism is multi-determined, a synthesis between the views of women in the Hebrew Bible and its interpretations within the Oral Law and the influence of cultural and sociopolitical factors. Within every denomination of Judaism, the status of Jewish women represents a dialectic between the respect for tradition and the pull to adopt modern values. Even Jewish tradition is conflicted. Throughout much of Jewish history, women within Judaism suffered limited rights under the law, had fewer religious obligations than men, and were not counted as equal members of a religious or legal community. Yet, women were simultaneously glorified. Modern Jewish tradition has responded by creating countless creative solutions.

## Women in the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew Bible includes representations of women as devout, pious, and God-fearing but



also as seductive, wily, and deceitful. Eve, the archetype of woman and the starting point for a discussion of womanhood in the Judeo-Christian tradition, epitomizes the latter description, while Sarah and Ruth are models of the former. The struggle within Judaism between these conflicting images infuses the entirety of Jewish writing on women. As the second telling of Creation is generally understood, women are an afterthought, fashioned from Adam's rib for his benefit (Gen. 2:20–21). Later, in the Ten Commandments, the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17; Deut. 5:21) prohibits coveting your neighbor's possessions and lists your neighbor's wife alongside your neighbor's ox and ass. Wives were described as little more than men's chattel (though there were biblical prohibitions against selling wives). Even one of the Hebrew words for husband, "ba'al," means both husband and master, explicitly signaling a gendered power hierarchy within the infrastructure of marriage.

Alternatively, women were praised and deeply respected. Cursing one's mother (or father) was punishable by death (Lev. 20:9; Deut. 27:16). An oft-quoted section of Proverbs (31:10–31) enumerates the qualities of a woman of valor (*ishet chayil*). She works hard for her family and for her community, she is wise and kind, her actions enable her husband's success, and she is praised accordingly.

Women during the Biblical period suffered limited rights in divorce (Deut. 24:1–4), the courts (Deut. 1:13), and inheritance (Num. 27). However, women were also protected from men (e.g., Deut. 21:14), and their assertiveness and leadership was at times presented quite favorably (e.g., Bathsheba, Deborah). Women were obligated to observe many of the positive commandments ("thou shall") to which men were obligated, such as dietary laws and the Sabbath, and were commanded to observe the negative commandments as well ("thou shall not").

## Women in Rabbinic Law

The canon of Jewish law was interpreted and established almost exclusively by male Rabbinic

scholars and recorded within the first six centuries CE. Women were thus passive receivers of their tradition, and with men as their mouthpieces, women remained silent even as Rabbinic law provided greater protections for them in certain domains. For example, in order to make women's legal and financial rights in marriage binding, the *ketubah*, a written document of marriage, was established. However, in legal discussions, women were often placed in the same legal category as children and Canaanite slaves, a clear example of how women were seen as the other and even as categorically inferior. Even within this category, women were at a disadvantage; unlike children and slaves, women were the only individuals who could not alter their lesser status (Adler 1973).

Rabbinic law curtailed women's obligatory religious involvement as well. Women were exempt from positive commandments that must be performed at specific times (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Kiddushin, Folio 29a), including the three daily prayer services at their respective times and donning phylacteries, and were exempt from other non-time-bound commandments (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eruvin, Folio 96b). There are three exceptions to women's exemption from time-bound positive commandments: *challah* (removing a piece of the dough from the Sabbath bread as a reminder of the priestly tithing), *niddah* (observing laws of family purity), and *hadlakah* (lighting the Sabbath candles). Women were also exempt from studying religious texts. The Babylonian Talmud expressed disdain for female religious education, stating that teaching one's daughter *Torah* is akin to teaching her lasciviousness (Tractate Sotah, Folio 21b); the Jerusalem Talmud was no kinder, stating that it would be better for the *Torah* to be burned than for a woman to study it (Tractate Sotah, 3:4). Therefore, women were placed at a perpetual disadvantage in a religion that consistently values learning above all else. Additionally, since religious-legal decisions are made by the most learned and engaged in the community, women have been excluded from the decision-making process even in communities that would accept female



decision-makers (*poskim*). Interpretations of these exemptions vary slightly. Whereas most commentators have understood them as akin to forbiddance, others have allowed women to disregard these exemptions and make these commandments binding. These Jewish texts have had profound implications for women's status, but women's role and place in Judaism has varied dramatically depending on the customs and mores of the societies in which Jews have lived (e.g., Jewish women in Muslim lands were more home bound and dressed more modestly than women in Europe).

### Women in the Enlightenment

The Jewish Enlightenment (*Haskalah*) spread from Germany to Western Europe beginning in the late eighteenth century and by the end of the nineteenth century, this receptivity to modernity and European culture had spread to Eastern Europe as well. The leaders of the *Haskalah* insisted that acculturation and traditional Judaism were compatible and that Jewish religious, political, and social life could be enhanced rather than corrupted by modernity. As Judaism was influenced by the Enlightenment, the positions of Jewish women were transformed. For much of Jewish history, women's lives revolved around rearing Jewish children, keeping a Jewish home, and assisting the family economically. However, as women in Central Europe began receiving formal education, Jewish girls were educated at unprecedented rates. During the nineteenth century, liberal women entered Jewish and state-supported elementary and secondary schools, and Jewish women in Germany and Austria made up an extraordinarily high percentage of the early generations of women who sought university education. As women received secular education, many rabbis feared that, without providing women with a complementary substantive religious education, these women would assimilate. Communities mobilized to offer serious educational options for girls.

For example, in the Orthodox community, Sarah Schenirer founded *Bais Ya'akov* in 1917

to provide religiously influenced secular and strictly religious education to girls. *Bais Ya'akov* quickly spread throughout Europe, North America, and Israel, clearly serving an educational, economic, and spiritual need.

Jewish women, even before they were formally educated, had a rich inner religious life. Already in the sixteenth century, women recited prayers of supplication (*tkhines*) that were voluntary and not time bound and, by the seventeenth century, read popular religious literature such as the *Tsenerene*, an adaptation and discussion of the weekly *Torah* portion, popularly known as the "women's Bible." By the modern period though women wanted to engage with texts that required greater formal Judaic knowledge and were written in the original language, and education provided them with these opportunities.

### Women and Identity

Throughout Jewish history and among many Jews still today, Jewish identity was transmitted through the maternal line exclusively: you were a Jew if your mother was a Jew, regardless of your father's religion. Moreover, women, particularly in the modern period, were charged with cultivating and sustaining Jewish peoplehood as the primary educators of their children in the home and as key transmitters of ethical values. Yet, whereas Jewish boys and men were commanded to participate in identity rituals – ritual circumcision and the *bar mitzvah* – girls and women were neither commanded nor permitted to publicly attest to their Jewish identity within a religious context. In fact, throughout most of Jewish history, women's Jewish experience was confirmed not through public displays but through private, primarily domestic, rituals. Many felt that this conformed with the natural order. Citing a verse from Psalms (45:14) in which the princess' honor comes from within, rabbis interpreted women's glory as originating in the home. Historically, women's Jewish identity was also inseparable from their roles as wives and mothers. Within Judaism, marriage is considered sacred and essential. The Talmud notes

that a life without marriage is joyless and devoid of blessing (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yevamot, Folio 62b), and the Code of Jewish Law (*Shulchan Aruch*) even states that marriage is an obligation for men (Even Haezer, 1:1). Not only can marriage provide women with a means of personal fulfillment, but it also affords them a means of observing rituals vicariously, the husband performing certain commandments that the wife can observe by proxy. Single and lesbian women within traditional Judaism must then continue to rely on their fathers, regardless of their age, to serve as their proxy.

Jewish women's bodies are also remarkable canvasses for expressing identity. Modest behavior within Judaism is dictated for both men and women, but the requirements have fallen primarily upon women. Women's bodies, hair, and voices have been considered forms of sexual enticement, and thus, it has become incumbent upon traditional women to cover their hair when married, to cover their legs and arms in dress, and to guard against singing in public so as to curb men's sexual desire. Distinct from these religious considerations, different modes of modesty exist in different communities – the length of the skirt or the type of hair covering – and women are communally identified and defined by these observable expressions of identity. By far the most intimate way in which women's bodies are used is through the laws of family purity (*niddah*). The woman is obligated to observe the laws of family purity – the prohibition against union with a menstruating woman until she, 12 days from the start of her menstrual cycle, immerses in a ritual bath (*mikveh*) (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Niddah, Folio 66a). The proper observance for the couple falls to the woman, and even as it is a means of religious self-expression for many women, *niddah* has defined parts of women's reproductive identity as being inherently impure. Therefore, while many Orthodox Jewish women (and some women of other denominations) continue to strictly observe the laws of family purity, others have reimagined this ritual, seeing it as a way to provide purification and healing after miscarriage, serious

illness, or rape or to mark other milestones in a woman's life, such as menopause, that are not traditionally ritualized.

## Women in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Modern Jewish women have fashioned a variety of ways of expressing their Jewish individuality. In Israel, there has been limited change because the Orthodox rabbinate has the exclusive claim over religious doctrine, including laws of marriage and divorce. In the United States and Europe though, second-wave feminism heightened women's consciousness about their second-class status within Judaism. Blu Greenberg (1981), Cynthia Ozick (1979), Judith Plaskow (1990), and others gave voice to this fury and to the rage of other observant Jewish women. Each provided a similar account of sitting in synagogue and understanding that she was not considered a full member of the Jewish community. In response to women's frustration with traditional Judaism, modern Jewish religious movements have initiated changes in women's education, ritual, leadership, theology, history, and Jewish law. Many of these changes involve extending male religious opportunity and access to women. For example, in many liberal communities, either in mixed-gender or in women's-only prayers, women are counted in the quorum of ten required for public prayer and are called up to the *Torah* as are men during prayers. Gradually, new traditions have emerged as complementary identity rituals for women and girls; while boys must be circumcised and then have a *bar mitzvah* at the age of 13, many liberal Jews mark their daughter's birth and coming of age with a *simchat bat* [celebration of the daughter] and the *bat mitzvah*. Additionally, women have reimagined and reformed other traditions, such as *Rosh Chodesh*, the celebration of the New Moon, as a way for them to connect to Judaism. Women were always connected to the cycles of the moon as they were reminiscent of their own menstrual cycles, but since no standard form of celebration existed outside of special liturgical additions, modern

women in various communities created uniquely female religious rites. Women have also chosen to create new traditions that give voice to the female experience. In some homes, a cup of water accompanies the traditional cup of wine that is placed on the Passover seder table for the guest, the Prophet Elijah. The cup of water represents Miriam, Moses' sister, a spiritual leader for the Jews, and according to lore, the maintainer of a well that provided water for the Jewish people throughout their time in the desert.

### See Also

- ▶ Bible
- ▶ Conservative Judaism
- ▶ Gender Roles
- ▶ Jewish Law
- ▶ Jewish Sexual Mores
- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Matriarchy
- ▶ Orthodox Judaism
- ▶ Reform Judaism
- ▶ Rites of Passage for Girls
- ▶ Talmud

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## Women in Shi'ism

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Shi'a Muslims are the second largest sect of Islam, following the Sunni majority. Unfortunately a number of disputes following the Prophet Muhammad's death disagreed about who should be the rightful successor to Islam. Shi'a believe that Muhammad appointed his first cousin and subsequent son-in-law, Ali, to be his successor. Sunnis believe that the companions of the Prophet were the appointed leaders. The assassination of Ali's son and successor, Imam Husayn and followers in 670 CE in Karbala, Iraq, provoked a long-lasting split and the psychology of lamenting Husayn's death by Shi'a. The women's role in this is psychologically and spiritually interesting.

Shi'a women's rituals secure an important dimension in developing and sustaining their personal and community psychology, allowing these women spiritual and religious agency and authority. Although men and women practice devotional rituals, this entry pertains exclusively to women's ritual participation. Although the Quran argues for women's rights, these rights are often overlooked or oppressed in certain cultures. Shi'a women, however, have been afforded the opportunity to facilitate their own, segregated religious rituals. Many of these rituals are practiced during the month of Muharram and commemorate the *ahl al-bayt* (people of the house), the Prophet Muhammad's immediate family. This family consists of his first cousin Ali, his daughter Fatima who married Ali, and their children Husayn, Hassan, and Zaynab. Zaynab was, in fact, the first to lament their martyrdom and has since been emulated by Shi'a women for centuries.

The role models Fatima, daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, and her daughter Zaynab are extremely important in the development of Shi'a women's spiritual and psychological lives.

For centuries, Shi'a women have respected Fatima as the exemplary female role model of the *ahl al-bayt*, the true descendants of Islam. Fatima, known as *al-Zahra* (the radiant) and the "Mother of Sorrow and Celestial Light," holds a position most highly regarded by Shi'a Muslims because her father, the Prophet Muhammad, bestowed the greatest honor upon her as a girl (Shariati 1996), so that his lineage would be created through her (Hosayni 2003). Her daughter Zaynab embodies the same outstanding qualities, which were passed to her as a birthright. Zaynab, who not only offered the first *majlis* (the mourning ritual of Muharram) but also fought for her family and for what she believed to be the true Islam (Hyder 2005). Her strong and powerful roles as angered sister, outraged mother, and daughter of Fatima and Ali led Zaynab to assume a majestic defiance of the limitations assigned to her by her culture and religion; to betray their political, social, and religious agenda; and to transcend gender expectations and regulations (Thurkill 2002).

In the very process of immersing their lives in the pursuit of these transcendent qualities, Shi'a women find authority, agency, and empowerment in their own lives, particularly in times of suffering and oppression. Beyond the strength that Shi'a women gain for facing the challenges of daily life, their devotion to Fatima and Zaynab bestows on them psychological and spiritual confidence. Salutations addressed to Lady Fatima and Zaynab will be graded in heaven on the Day of Judgment, and each person will receive credit or debit according to Allah's judgment. When they stand at the gates of paradise, they can be assured of Fatima's intercession, which will win them full pardon for any offenses against God that remain unforgiven. They participate as Muslims through ritual action not merely through a profession of faith (Winter 1995). Psychologically they are able to idealize the martyrs memorializing them into heroes. The fact that the holy family sacrificed their lives for all Shi'a creates a psychologically redemptive function for the believer (Fields 2004).

The religious gathering called *majlis* (plural *majalis*) is held year-round, but during the lunar

months of Muharram and Safar in the Arabic calendar, Shi'a commemorate the deaths of the Prophet Muhammad's family and most notably the martyrdom of his grandson Imam Husayn, who died in Karbala. The first 10 days are the most intense, when *majalis* are offered daily. From the first to the tenth of Muharram, the practitioners reenact the suffering of the family and members of the Shi'at Ali (followers of Ali).

The fundamental ritual of the Ashura rituals is the *azadari*, which means sorrow. By enacting the *azadari* ritual, women are able to express individual sorrow and put their own suffering into context, giving their personal struggles meaning. During the month of Muharram, the sorrow over the deaths at Karbala is grieved until the tenth day called Ashura, the day Imam Husayn was murdered. Multiple times each day, women gather to grieve and commemorate the *ahl al-bayt* as they participate in the *azadari* ritual. Covered in black, the participants retell the narrative of how and why the holy family was martyred, as they recreate the suffering at Karbala. The ritual space is created in homes, or special centers dedicated to the rituals and small altars are created with flowers, *alams* (standards), and other memorabilia. These symbols psychologically help to negotiate loss and death (Kristeva 1987). Women, young and old, recite prayers, laments, and stories about the events at Karbala. Often women move in a circle chanting and weeping as they offer salutations to members of the family. Rhythmic physical movements accompany most of the rituals as the participants chant, poetic elegies depicting the suffering of the Prophet's family. Special food is prepared for the event commemorating the thirst and hunger of the martyrs. Water is passed to the participants in honor of those who died of dehydration. Among the rituals practiced is the ritual pounding of the chest. The ritual culminates as the women sit and weep. These ritual gestures are familiar and common to all Shi'a differing slightly between cultures.

Reenacting such sorrow bonds the practitioner to the suffering family and hence washes away her presumed sins. Through the weeping and wailing inspired by the *azadari*, the suffering is

made real and is embodied in the female participants. Whether the tears are shed for the symbolic loss of the past or current sorrows in their lives today, the lamenting process allows women to express the emotion of grief, to shed sympathetic tears that are healing for self as well as the community (Blomfield 2010a, b). Shi'a women define themselves through these powerful rituals every time they are reenacted, giving voice to historical and current oppression and suffering. The women's bodies are ultimately the sites of the rituals embodying the piety of their role models. They protest against oppression and injustice, and the tears they weep are considered to be spiritually and psychologically cleansing. Women's lives are made meaningful through participating in the *azadari* ritual as each woman gives voice to her religious convictions. Themes that emerge are piety, intercession, sacrifice, redemption, relationship through ritual to the *ahl al-bayt*, and the spiritual and emotional cleansing properties of the rituals (Blomfield 2010a, b).

Through the development of the Ashura rituals in the Shi'a community, there is not a fixed ritual that is always identically practiced, and there are nuances in each community that create rich spiritual lives and a template in which to live and function. By participating in the Muharram rituals, women develop identities that empower and nurture them as they create sacred space externally in their homes and centers and internally through the use of their own bodies. Their bodies express the lamentation process, in which agency and authority are found in their commitment to piety. Through the use of their bodies as the ritual site upon which the ritual is performed and through which it is experienced, they embody the qualities and attributes of the *ahl al-bayt* while they create a set of religious behaviors that are culturally accepted. Through the weeping and wailing inspired by the *azadari*, the suffering is made real and is embodied in the female participants. Their formalized crying has been a form of commemoration and is deemed worthy of accruing spiritual merit.

Psychologically these rituals have grown out of a need for personal and collective expression

so that they can have a context for their own suffering as well as the suffering of their ancestors. The suffering is made real in the participant's body rather than just conceptualizing the idea of suffering (Cooney 1994). Because martyrdom plays a key role in the history of Shi'ism, women today can still commemorate the martyrs while giving themselves space and time to acknowledge their personal and collective sorrow and grief. By emulating these martyrs, especially the female members of the Prophet's household, Fatima and Zaynab, Shi'a women petition them for intercession. By enacting the *azadari* ritual, women are able to express individual sorrow and put their own suffering into context. This gives their personal struggles significance, transforming the self, an encounter between suffering and hope giving voice to meaning (Csordas 2002). By implementing such rituals they also continue to fight the cosmic struggle between good and evil, demonstrating and resisting oppression and injustice. These rituals address historical and current suffering of these women as they have sometimes escaped war torn environments or regimes that have persecuted Shi'a practitioners. With them come psychological issues that their religion can address (Blomfield 2010a, b). The rituals psychologically intensify the relationship between the living and the deceased, rather than separating them (Lutzky 2008).

By observing the ritual each participant does her part to keep herself, her family, and her community intact spiritually. Through merit gained in performance of the ritual, she ensures redemption. The rituals and the participants become markers of the never-ending cycle of humanity's relationship to the divine. Through their religious commitment these women build a bridge between heaven and earth on which there is safety for them in this world and the next.

Passed from generation to generation, Shi'a women use collective images from the past organizing the rituals and melding them into current affairs. The ritual, therefore, creates and maintains an identity. Reproducing and valorizing this religious tradition keeps it alive and active, allowing it to dominate the present and honor

the past. The expression of psychological suffering, pain, and grief is addressed in the rituals using the body as a site to access the divine (Grimes 1982). Reenacting the suffering is a choice. Beyond the narrative of Karbala, their suffering is imagined. They believe that their reenactment of suffering spiritually and psychologically bonds them to the martyrs offering hope in the afterlife.

## See Also

- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Muhammad
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Shi'ite Islam
- ▶ Women and Religion

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## Women, Sex, and Religion

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Sex and religion have long been masculinist purviews. As women come increasingly into ownership of their own bodies, and as their voices increasingly shape religious discourse, judgments about what are healthy, good, natural, and holy expressions of sexuality are in flux. What women understand as “good sex” is beginning to emerge thanks to feminists in many religious traditions who have made it a research and action priority (Jung et al. 2001).

Feminism as a worldwide movement is largely responsible for this change. Feminism is the theory and practice of overcoming sexism as a part of larger efforts to dismantle the complex interstructured forms of oppression that include racism, economic injustice, ageism, ableism, and colonialism, as well as unjust discrimination based on sexuality and gender identity. Feminists in religion bring this analysis to their respective traditions, in order to reshape moral discourse within them. They also seek to reform public policy on the basis of the well-being of all men, women, and children, supplanting as decisive the validation given to some men's power over and control of everyone else's sexuality. They put the focus on the health and safety, agency (especially bodily integrity), and pleasure of everyone.



For instance, currently in the United States, new coalitions between conservative Catholics and their evangelical Protestant colleagues are lining up in strong backlash against previously debated and, for many people, settled moral and policy matters regarding contraception. Under the guise of protection for the religious liberty, Roman Catholic bishops are resisting health-care proposals that would make public funding for contraception widely available, with only limited religious exemptions. Feminists, including many women religious, bring to the debate about what constitutes legitimate religious exemptions from such regulations many additional considerations, including a woman's body right to determine when, if ever, and whether to carry a pregnancy to term (Maguire 2001).

Sex is a public as well as a personal matter from a feminist perspective. It is as much about decisions made in state legislatures and police headquarters as in the bedroom. Should public policy target prostitutes or those who profit from the global trafficking of women and children into sexual slavery? How can the business side of Internet pornography be addressed?

Across the globe, the list of such "hot" political topics is wide ranging. Feminists seek to engage debates over marriage equality, as well as arguments about whether and how best to eliminate domestic violence, honor killings, dowries, female genital cutting, anti-lesbian activities, date rape, compulsory pregnancy, and the like. All such practices shape the common good or what for many women is experienced as the "common bad." Especially in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the upsurge in venereal diseases, it is clear that the tendency to treat sexual conduct as a purely private matter rests on a lie and can be dangerous for everyone's health. Sexual practices involve a public wider than one's individual partner(s). They either form or deform the whole social fabric.

If religious communities wish to help their members make informed decisions as citizens about such matters, then sex education programs based in religious communities need to address these realities in their full breadth (Unitarian Universalist Association 2012). To continue only to

wage internal struggles over matters such as the ordination of women or to address these issues with parochial arguments that fail to address our religiously plural context is problematic. Feminists argue that if faith communities do not build on the values we may hold in common, then religions will inevitably simply end up blessing the status quo in the political sphere.

To date, feminist work on sex and religion focuses on three areas: erotic desire, its potential costs, and the ethical rethinking of pleasure's relation to other important sexual values. For example, consider the Roman Catholic Church's neglect of women's sexual delight (Jung 2001). The Church's official teachings elevate the heterosexual penile erection as the sine qua non of morally good sex. Along with other morally important features, this leaves the matter of women's sexual pleasure irrelevant to the determination of what makes for good sex. And yet, important as it is to emphasize the value of women's pleasure, to uphold it alone would prove inadequate from a feminist perspective.

The creation of desire takes place in specific socioeconomic, cultural, and religious contexts. The results are exported and imported like other commodities in a globalized economy. So even the recent feminist emphasis on women's pleasure, traditionally a much-neglected concern across Christian denominations, needs to be held in balance with other important goods related to sexuality. From a feminist perspective, the embrace of pleasure ought to be woven into a collective embrace of rights to food, clothing, shelter, bodily integrity, and meaningful work. Otherwise, the celebration of sexual pleasure will play into the hands of those who market sex tourism and the sexual exploitation of women, girls, and boys. Severed from this larger framework, the sanctification of women's pleasure could give birth to further injustice (Jantzen 2001).

Sex and gender are often socially constructed in ways that burden women. These become major religious issue as well. Among some Muslim women, for example, the economic and political conditions that shape marriage, reproductive decisions, bride price, polygamy, and child and

forced marriages are all part of the high cost of being female (Ilkkaracan 2008). In some contexts, Christian women are particularly burdened by denominational teachings that sanctify the prohibition of contraception or remarriage following divorce.

Very few countries have laws based on women's well-being. Only as women and girls are educated about their options can violations of their human rights be prevented. Sexual mores are culturally sensitive matters that require that women in each setting be taken seriously as protagonists of their own lives capable of and legally able to make decisions about their bodies. While it is important to recognize how it is that cultural and religious forces can reinforce one another in such matters, it is crucial to note as well that religious women from around the globe – including many women religious and their communities – are courageously challenging the wisdom of such traditional judgments. Consider as representative of such prophetic efforts the commendation by a Sister of Mercy of “just love” as an ideal for sexual ethics that presses beyond both some traditional Catholic teachings and the minimal, though crucial, feminist effort to establish relationships that “do no harm” (Farley 2006).

Feminists have for a long time recognized the ways sexism and heterosexism reinforce one another, hinging as they both do on unsubstantiated and distortive claims about what is natural in a normative sense for women and men. The civil recognition and religious blessing of the rights of same-sex loving persons to express themselves sexually as well as legally in domestic partnerships and marriages are part of the feminist approach to the renewal of sexual ethics (Salzman and Lawler 2012). This is especially crucial for many lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women who, like all women, are disadvantaged economically and socially.

In some countries those who engage in homosexual activity face criminal prosecution, even execution, while other countries – including Argentina, Canada, and Sweden – already permit same-sex marriage, though even in these latter contexts, virulent religious opposition to such expressions of equality can be found. Affirmation

of the moral legitimacy of same-sex love is a relatively new phenomenon. This work is still in its infancy, as marriage equality is but one of the rights that LGBTIQ people want. Fairness in regard to housing, jobs, adoption, inheritance, and other areas are all part of the often heated discussion, which leads away from the validation of only heterosexual forms of house holding.

While there is no social or religious consensus about what sexual lifestyles are virtuous, there is a great deal of constructive discussion, which serves to widen the options for women. Congregation Beth Simchat Torah is the largest “inclusive” synagogue in the world with a lesbian rabbi, Sharon Kleinbaum, as its senior pastor. Presbyterian, Lutheran, Episcopalian, United Church of Christ, and Unitarian congregations have openly LGBTIQ clergy. More will follow. Here too, women religious have been prominent among Roman Catholics' voices challenging that communion to grant full membership and leadership rights to same-sex loving persons (Rick 2006).

Reconstructing sexual ethics is a major task. Feminist scholars believe that it cannot be done adequately on the basis of a single religious tradition. Rather, insights gleaned from solidarity with communities of resistance and accountability beyond one's own community are thought to strengthen resistance to and criticism of the oppressive aspects of one's own tradition and to encourage its reimagining (Plaskow 2005).

There are female-friendly strands in most religious traditions – like the monastic movements in Christianity led by women – that are being reclaimed for this work of reimagining. Consider how the mikveh or purifying ritual by immersion has been returned by many Jewish women into a way to enjoy women's company and draw upon one another's wisdom and strength. It is on those strands that religious feminists hold while charting new territory in the expansion of their religious traditions.

What is it that women want in terms of sexual ethics? One feminist concludes “just good sex.” This formulation weaves together sexual delight and women's moral agency with other parts of a justice-seeking agenda (Hunt 2001). Safety is first when it comes to a feminist sexual ethics.

This includes choice about birth control and disease prevention, as well as freedom from coercion and commercialization. Mutual consent is critical. Sexual decisions should be made in light of the common good. The commoditization of love and desire, à la the wedding industry, that plagues the vision of both same and opposite sex couples requires closer ethical scrutiny.

Also valued are the friendship and fidelity, sometimes called “fierce tenderness,” that may mark just expressions of sexual love (Hunt 1991). However, many if not most women still do not even know that they can choose what they want sexually. Efforts to claim sexual rights for homosexual men, women, and children as human rights are still nascent; much work remains to be done to move these concepts from the academy to the streets (Ellison 2012).

Many and diverse voices are part of feminist religious ethical discussion on sex. Virtually every tradition is undergoing a thorough revision of teachings that cast women into inferior, only receptive, submissive positions with regard to sexuality, both figuratively and literally. Exciting egalitarian approaches conform to contemporary religious teachings about the created equality of women and men. Moreover, data on the fluidity of sexual identity over a lifetime and the variety among people in terms of sexual choices point to what will focus future feminist conversations on sexuality with the religions of the world.

## See Also

- ▶ [Body and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Christianity and Sexuality](#)
- ▶ [Ecstasy](#)
- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Goddess Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sex and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and American Religions](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Religion: Feminist Views](#)
- ▶ [Sexuality and Wicca](#)
- ▶ [Song of Songs](#)
- ▶ [Women and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Women in Christianity](#)

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## Wong Tai Sin

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Point, Hong Kong

Known in Hong Kong as Wong Tai Sin (the Great Immortal Sage Wong), where his cult of worship

has been flourishing since the 1950s, Wong Chopping was born in Zhejiang Province, China, in the late third century. Legend has it that under the tutelage of a mountain-dwelling Taoist deity, he mastered the alchemical process of refining cinabar into a drug which when ingested conferred immortality. Although temples dedicated to Wong Tai Sin exist in Canada, the United States, and Mainland China, it is the Wong Tai Sin Temple in Hong Kong – after which the surrounding neighborhood is also named – that annually attracts over five million visitors who seek the god's blessings, proffer donations, and thank him for previous kindnesses. The Cantonese pronunciation of his name is Wong Tai Sin (黃大仙) whereas in Mandarin, it is pronounced Huang Daxian.

In the early 1890s, when both Guangzhou and Hong Kong were beset with outbreaks of the bubonic plague, a group of seekers made contact with Wong Tai Sin by means of spirit writing. The god's early messages indicated his original intention was to save humanity. Worshippers believed that the spirit of Wong Tai Sin prescribed combinations of herbs that would invariably cure those who sought his help. Availing themselves of the free prescriptions and traditional Chinese medicine provided by the temple, a large following of commoners who could not afford to see a doctor when ill began to form in his name. From several reported healings, Wong Tai Sin's reputation grew.

The legendary miracle attributed to Wong Tai Sin is his having transformed an outcropping of rocks on the side of a hill into a flock of sheep after his older brother – who had spent years trying to locate him – inquired as to the whereabouts of the flock entrusted to the younger Wong as a teenager. After witnessing his powers, the elder brother became Wong Tai Sin's pupil and eventually also attained immortality.

Within this modern day cult of worship can be found a rich legacy of alchemical imagery that thematically informs worshippers' requests for transformation across spectra including luck, riches, and health. The cult of Wong Tai Sin has enjoyed a recent surge in growth on the Mainland since 1990. Due to the mass destruction of most

Wong Tai Sin temples and shrines in the 1950s (some dating back 1,000 years), it is interesting to note that images of the god in most of the new and reconstructed Mainland temples are emblematic of the Hong Kong version of the cult.

### See Also

- ▶ [Astrology and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Chinese Religions](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Alchemy](#)
- ▶ [Spirit Writing](#)
- ▶ [Taoism](#)

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### Worcester, Elwood (Emmanuel Movement)

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### Worcester's Life

The Reverend Dr. Elwood Worcester, an Episcopal priest, was the inspirational force and prime mover behind the Emmanuel Movement

located at the Emmanuel Church in Boston's Back Bay neighborhood where he was rector from 1904 to 1929. Worcester was born in Massillon, Ohio, into a clerical family. He was educated at Columbia College in New York after which he attended the General Theological Seminary where he completed the 3-year-course of study leading to ordination in 1 year as opposed to the normal 3 years. Beyond his theological training, he received a Ph.D. in psychology at the University of Leipzig in Germany. There he studied under the great experimentalists Wilhelm Wundt and Gustav Fechner. After returning to the United States, he took up a position at St. Stephen's Church in Philadelphia where one of his congregants was the eminent neurologist Weir Mitchell. Worcester records in his autobiography, *Life's Adventure*, (1932) that it was in conversations with Mitchell that he became stimulated to think intentionally about the church's role in the care of the mentally ill or sick of soul. Upon coming to the Emmanuel Church in Boston, he became acquainted with Richard Cabot, M.D., then Chief of Medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Isador Coriot, M.D., his psychiatrist colleague who endorsed his idea of a clinic for treatment to be housed at the church. With the support of his clerical colleague at Emmanuel, the Reverend Dr. Samuel McComb, who, like Worcester, was both a priest and a psychologist, the doors opened of Emmanuel for treatment in November of 1906. On the first day there were 198 persons awaiting consultation. The numbers grew as did public interest and use of the clinic. Its success far exceeded any expectation. Worcester wrote and spoke to both professional and lay audiences about the Emmanuel experiment, and its program was replicated in several cities across the United States. Its prestige and success were such that it drew heavy criticism from the psychiatric establishment most notably in the person of James Jackson Putnam, M.D. who questioned the use of nonmedically trained persons in the provision of treatment. In spite of these objections the Emmanuel Movement continued successfully until Worcester's retirement in 1929.

## Worcester's Achievement

Worcester and Emmanuel's accomplishments and contributions were wide and varied. He was ahead of his time by at least a generation in the area of pastoral counseling where he employed a variety of therapeutic techniques that demonstrated his resourcefulness, skill, and familiarity with psychoanalysis. He was able to utilize the processes and perspectives of uncovering, dream analysis, and catharsis as well as more short-term approaches to therapy in the case of treatment for grief reactions. The Emmanuel Movement appropriated small-group techniques that resemble contemporary modes of psychoeducation. And the Emmanuel Movement became the scene for use of small groups for addressing issues in alcoholism several years before the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935. The Emmanuel Movement and Worcester in particular also took a dynamic interest in public health matters related to prevention and treatment of tuberculosis in their urban environment and an open interest in and concern for non-Western religion, most particularly Buddhism, and what they might have to say regarding religion and health.

## Emmanuel's Legacy

Worcester and the Emmanuel Movement are largely forgotten in the contemporary world. Their legacy emphasizes the importance of the cooperation between clergy and other health care professionals and the potentially beneficial role of religious institutions and clergy in relation to issues of both mental health care and public education. Palpable signs of their historical influence may be best seen in the way numerous pastoral counseling centers, and 12-step groups find a home for their activities within the walls of churches and other religious institutions. Though it is unfortunate that the Emmanuel Movement could not survive without Elwood Worcester's inspired leadership, its symbolic importance and actual contributions should never be forgotten or overlooked.



## See Also

- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)

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## World Center

- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)

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## Worldview

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Worldview is the outlook one has about life. It is a paradigm by which the individual or group interprets reality and acts upon life. It is how we normally view and conceptualize the world. It can be a personal-subjective endeavor or a communal-collective enterprise, depending on the social context and subculture – whether it is predominantly individualistic or collectivistic. Worldview represents our pragmatic framework on existence and shapes our beliefs, attitudes, actions, and philosophies.

The term worldview is used broadly to entail a collection of impressions and phenomena and has roots in anthropology, sociology, morality, spirituality, mortality, and cosmology.

The scope and nature of worldviews can be general or specific, reflecting a global perspective (transnational-multicultural) or local heritage (indigenous-monocultural). Worldviews can be informed by religious thoughts and teachings or by scientific persuasions and premises. In addition, their orientation can be Eastern or Western, heterogeneous or homogeneous, simple or complex, naturalistic-atheistic or theological-theistic, etc. In most cases, a worldview is multilayered and has a combination of views, spheres, and realities, which constantly interact and overlap with each other.

At times, worldviews clash significantly creating further tensions and divisions. Depending on the people involved in sorting out their similarities and differences, discussions can result in a mutual understanding and bridge building or in stereotyping and complete divorcing. Therefore, the underlying sociocultural heritages and religious-ideological beliefs can be complimentary – enhancing reconciliation and cooperation or contradictory – polarizing relationships and coexistence.

This concept of worldview has its roots in old German word *weltanschauung* which means a system of thought or an extensive ideology. It refers to how people perceive and conceive the world. Somewhat, worldview has a specific quality which characterizes a particular group living in a certain space in time. It is how people view time, nature, self, society, history, and the universe (Toelken 1996). Virtually, no one can claim a totally correct, comprehensive, or holistic worldview that summarizes all timeless realities.

Mainly, a worldview refers to people's set of broad assumptions and ways of life. It represents a cluster of approaches and an underlying description how things fit all together and how they construct the temporal and historical existence. The way we view ourselves often shapes the way we act upon the world and, in return, the way we act upon the world shapes the way we view ourselves. Eventually, this process has an impact on how we classify and relate to others.

A certain worldview may be constructed of several integrated components, categories,



terminologies, schemes, and experiences. According to Koltko-Rivera (2004), it is a set of assumptions about the physical and social realities, which may have a powerful effect on cognitions and behaviors. Although there is no one comprehensive definition or psychological dimension of worldview, it is possible to construct a collated model. The author also distinguished between worldviews and schemas and promoted an integrated theory relating worldview as a concept and a function of personality traits, motivation, affect, cognition, behavior, and culture. Inspirations from positive and peace psychologies can be utilized to modify a personal or a communal worldview.

Johnson, Hill, and Cohen (2011) tried to formulate a psychology of worldview as an integrative framework for the study of culture and religion. They proposed six aspects or dimensions, each influenced by national and religious cultures (Johnson et al. 2011, p. 137): ontology, existential beliefs; epistemology, what can be known and how one should reason; semiotics, language and symbols used to describe the world; axiology, proximate goals, values, and morals; teleology, ultimate goals and the afterlife consequences of action; and praxeology, proscriptions and prescriptions for behavior. The authors suggested giving more attention to the concept of worldview in order to help remedy the lack of awareness to the following (p. 137): (a) mutual influences of the different kinds of cultures, including social, national, and religious; (b) transnational religious groups; (c) nonreligious belief systems; and (d) psychological predictors of cultural conflicts.

Most people are not aware of their own worldview(s) until they meet another person or party with a different set of assumptions and perceptions. Suddenly, they become aware of the similarities and differences between them. Therefore, worldviews can complement or contradict each other. They can provide a more nuanced understanding of religious-cultural phenomena and provide an ideal platform for constructive interdisciplinary, interfaith, and international dialogues (cf. Johnson et al. 2011).

According to Kuhn (1996), the notion of worldview is related to a variety of ideas and structures. One of the key concepts is *paradigm*, which is a shared collection of beliefs and approaches to problems. Paradigms can be shared on an inter- and intragroup level (tribes, families, teams, scientists, etc.). Kuhn emphasized the priority of paradigm patterns and argued that *paradigm shifts* do occur, even though rarely. This happens when an existing paradigm is replaced by a new one and when an existing worldview is replaced by another. An example would be when a person or a group shifts from an Aristotelian to a Newtonian scholarly position. Kuhn cautioned against overuse of the term “paradigm shift” and emphasized that it does not occur too frequently. However, if and when it occurs, it is not usually in a sudden, exhaustive, or conclusive manner. All mental maps, social structures, and religious cultures dynamically overlap since by nature they are not totally exclusive (Chopra and Mlodinow 2012; DeWitt 2010; Smart 1999). Other social thinkers argue that a complete alteration of belief systems, mental operations, and fundamental paradigms is practically possible. Examples are drawn from the dynamics of establishing sects and cults, street gangs, radical religious conversions, fanatic political parties, indoctrinating mentalities, and militant groups (cf. Abi-Hashem 2007, 2012a, b).

There are several levels and depths to a worldview, but many social analysts recognize three main ones: philosophical-theological, scientific-empirical, and social-cultural. The first level reflects the religious beliefs, existential frameworks, and spiritual practices of people. The second is informed by people’s exposure to natural science, physics, mathematics, and technology. And the third is informed by people’s cultural backgrounds, generational experiences, and societal heritages (Abi-Hashem 2013a, b). These three spheres are certainly interconnected and interdependent. They mutually and reciprocally inform, influence, and feed into each other.

The process of discovering and understanding a different worldview can actually be a cross-cultural experience. Such encounter requires empathy skills and cultural sensitivity

as well as a wide and creative imagination. Culture and interactive communication are closely related. Inter- and intra-cultural communications are essential for people to relate meaningfully and to understand each other adequately, especially in our diverse and transnational world. These skills are vital for the counseling and therapeutic services and for all helping, teaching, and caregiving professions (Abi-Hashem 2013a; Chung and Bemak 2002; Gerstein et al. 2009; Perdersen 2009; Smart 1999).

Currently, the process of globalization and digital revolution are changing human relationships and local subcultures. Identity formation and social bonding are taking different meaning. Communities and nations alike are experiencing the stress of change and are struggling with psychological and existential adaptation. The level of stress and the speed of transformation are noticeably overwhelming individuals and families across all boundaries. Digital technology is contributing to the growing complexities of our times. In addition, people are trying hard to cope with the overload of information, the exceeding multiple choices, and the acceleration of change (Heylighen 2000). These new trends and developments are altering one's sense of self (intra-psychically) and one's broader view of reality (socioculturally). Thus, the worldviews of individuals, groups, and societies are being constantly revised, redefined, and reconstructed over and over again. Some people enlarge and modify their perceptions and cultural maps to include others, who are diverse and different from them, thus broadening their views and attitudes toward balanced realism. Other people embrace total changes and enjoy riding the waves of acceleration with no safety guards so they end up with less boundaries or foundational roots and find themselves adopting extreme modernism, secularism, and materialism. Yet others tend to react with strict caution and take rigid self-protective measures, therefore they move toward severe traditional values, emotional inflexibility, and mental legalism.

Developing and maintaining a healthy worldview is actually an art and a challenge,

which is eventually much needed in our culture today. It is a skill that requires time and effort on the part of the individual or group and a willingness to check their actions and perceptions against the emerging realities. It is also an ability to learn from wise mentors and experienced figures along the way. Finally, a healthy, balanced, and integrated worldview ultimately reflects a seasoned personality, a rich journey, and an attitude marked by humility, thoughtfulness, and maturity.

### See Also

- ▶ [Allah, The Concept of](#)
- ▶ [Atheism](#)
- ▶ [Collective Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Communal and Personal Identity](#)
- ▶ [Cultural Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Existentialism](#)
- ▶ [Fate](#)
- ▶ [Immortality](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychospiritual](#)
- ▶ [Purpose in Life](#)
- ▶ [Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism](#)
- ▶ [Selfobject](#)

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## Wounded Healer, The

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In 1972, a Catholic priest and psychologist, Henri Nouwen, wrote a book that urged ministerial counselors to make their own emotional wounds a source of healing for those they counseled. He called this book *The Wounded Healer*. While the concept of the wounded healer wasn't new, the book's title captured, in a phrase, a perspective of the therapeutic relationship that crosses counseling theories and treatment modalities. Research of the literature suggests that regardless of the counseling theory or technique in play, a therapist who is aware of, and has worked to accept his own wounds, has much to offer a client.

## Historical Framework

The concept of the wounded healer is quite old. Seen throughout ancient Greek mythology, healers are portrayed as inseparable from their own persistent wounds. The figures of Chiron and Asklepios are especially prominent as Greek gods and healers who themselves are wounded. Chiron, a centaur and master of the healing arts, was hit with a poisoned arrow by Heracles. He could not heal himself and thus gave up his immortality. Asklepios is struck by lightning while trying to raise the dead; Asklepios' son is wounded in battle while striving to heal others (Kirmayer 2003). The concept of the wounded healer appears in medieval Europe in the myth of Parsifal and the Fisher King. The Fisher King, who despite possessing the Holy Grail which can cure all ills, cannot cure his own wound until the Holy Grail is liberated (Miller and Baldwin 2000). In many primitive societies, the concept is visible in the tradition of the shaman, a healer and often a priest, who represents the wounded healer. In Shamanism,

being wounded is linked to knowledge, and the display of wounds represents an authenticity of skills (Miller et al. 1998). According to Miller and Baldwin (2000), the shaman might be referred to as the “ultimate” wounded healer because he is viewed as actually taking on himself the wounds and illnesses of his people. One of the first of the modern healers responsible for advancing the wounded healer paradigm was Carl Jung. “Only the wounded doctor can heal” (Jung, 1951, as cited in Miller and Baldwin 2000, p. 246). In 1985, psychologists Remen, May, Young, and Berland described wounded healers as those with resolved emotional experiences that sensitized them to working with others (as cited in Gladding 2004).

## Polarities

Fascination with the polarities of life, along with attempts to resolve and connect them, is as old as recorded time. Many cultures created single deities to name opposites, such as *Kali* in India, the goddess of both pox, and the healer (Miller and Baldwin 2000).

The bridging of these polarities in one’s personality is of central importance in the wounded healer model. Jung suggests the critical nature of these bridges often, especially in his writings referring to embracing the “shadow,” the distinct, and the “bad/ineffective/wrong” part of one’s personality. According to Jung, it is necessary to accept and embrace the shadow as a step toward self-actualization (Dunne 2000). In considering the bridging of polarities as a facet of healing, it is useful to mention the origin of the word “heal,” which derives from the Anglo-Saxon word *hal*, meaning whole. To heal is to make whole through a process of unifying all of the elements in a person, good and bad, sick and well (Miller and Baldwin 2000). Gestalt therapy, with its emphasis on unification, and alcohol and drug counseling, where often the most effective counselors are those who have themselves survived addiction, are examples of this process (Miller and Baldwin 2000).

Environments in the counseling setting that support wholeness in healers, however, are often

difficult to come by. A survey of 229 nurses who experienced depression revealed that 30 % did not disclose their condition to their colleagues even though as individual nurses, they expressed the importance of healing from within as having great potential to make an impact on the healing of patients (Jackson 2004). In a study by Cain (2000), 10 psychotherapists with a history of psychiatric hospitalization reported the stigma associated with their psychiatric histories as the reason for not revealing their illnesses. According to the study’s participants, reduced stigma would encourage the disclosure of one’s problems and thereby increase the possibility for therapists to explore their own wounds as a means of self-healing and as a technique to use in their professions.

## The Inner Healer Archetype

Another concept that emerges in the wounded healer paradigm is that of inner healer. This is the concept that describes a part of the process that promotes healing in either a patient or a therapist. It is labeled an archetype because it implies an elemental or universal quality that reflects basic human patterns (Kirmayer 2003). The archetype of the inner healer is activated whenever a person becomes ill, and healing occurs only if the patient gets help from his inner healer (Guggenbuhl-Craig, 1978, as cited in Miller and Baldwin 2000). This does not always happen, however, according to Grosbeck (1975, as cited in Miller and Baldwin 2000), because the discomfort of his wounds blocks the patient from reaching an awareness of his healer within. The patient instead projects the responsibility of healing onto the therapist. The task of the therapist, then, is to help release the inner healer in the patient, a process characterized as “activating dormant or malfunctioning mechanisms of healing and resilience” (Kirmayer 2003, p. 250). He says alternately the healer can acknowledge his own wounds as a way of helping the patient to mobilize his inner healer. However, activated functioning inner healers are vital in both the patient and therapist (Miller and Baldwin 2000).

## Wounded Healers

Cain's study (2000) of psychotherapists with personal histories of psychiatric hospitalization reports that Carl Jung was just one of several mental health theorists who sought help in a quest for mental well-being and relief from suffering. Others include Sigmund Freud, Alfred Adler, and Henry Stack Sullivan. Jung might be considered the classic example of the wounded healer, because much of his work was devoted to describing his life struggles or wounds and how he used these struggles to develop his skills as a healer (Dunne 2000). In her recent biography of Jung, Dunne (2000) describes the wounds and later the healing associated with Jung's troubled childhood, his break with Freud who had designated Jung as his heir apparent, and Jung's efforts to establish his own psychological theories. Albert Ellis (2004) describes himself as "anxious" in an essay entitled "Why I (really) became a therapist." He says that while he wanted to help others and in so doing create a better world, foremost in his choice of psychotherapy as a career was to study and experiment with techniques to help himself. He describes a childhood and adolescence rife with phobias about speaking in public and rejection by girls. He says that having figured out how to solve these phobias in himself, he was able to develop a theory and techniques that could be applied in the healing of others.

### On "Wounded" Healing

Carl Jung's view that only wounded doctors can heal is shared by Miller and Baldwin (2000), who say that only healers deeply touched by personal experience of illness can truly heal and that vulnerability is an integral part of this process (Miller and Baldwin 2000). They say that an awareness of one's own wounds or conflicts leads to a state of vulnerability which in turn connects the patient and therapist. According to Kirmayer (2003), that connection, and the woundedness and healing in both the patient and therapist, serves as a mechanism for mobilizing the all-important inner healer of each.

It is intuitive that someone who has been afflicted and survives is in the best position to understand illness and cures (Kirmayer 2003). Kirmayer describes five stages in the development of wounded healers. The first is the healer who will not, cannot, or does not confront his own woundedness and instead identifies with the power of healing, seeing himself as different from the patient. The second stage brings the healer into contact with his own problems. The third describes an overwhelming and dark stage where the healer sees himself only as his wounds, loses his identity as healer, sees himself as incurably wounded, identifies with the patient, and seeks help. The fourth stage describes the acceptance of the wound which invokes the inner healer. In the fifth stage, the healer realizes that wounding can only be partly healed and that he must descend again and again into his suffering. He realizes that his strengths and weaknesses are one and the same. It is important to note that healing does not occur as a result of the healer describing his own pain or stories about illness and pain to the patient (Nouwen 1972). Nouwen says healing happens when healer and patient are able to *share the depth* of pain and together experience the action of rising from it. It is this connection, at its deepest level between therapist and patient that is responsible for healing the wounds universally caused by alienation, separation, isolation, and loneliness. "I recognize some of the same issues that I grapple with for myself and I discover our shared human condition, even though it is lived somewhat differently by each of us" (van Deurzen 2001, p. 49). Thus, a clinician's willingness to remain in contact with the parts of self that are wounded or in pain allow him to meet the patient where the process of true healing may begin (Kirmayer 2003).

### Implications of the Wounded Healer in Counseling

A major concept, which must be emphasized when discussing the wounded healer in the counseling setting, is that of self-knowledge. Miller and Baldwin (2000) describe a medical resident who had grown up with an alcoholic father and who was unsuccessful in counseling an alcoholic patient



because of his own anger. Mander (2004) says that self-awareness, evidence of the ability to empathize, and life experience are major qualities sought in candidates applying for professional counseling training programs. Mander (2004) notes that while on the surface there seems to be a recognizable difference between those wanting to study to be therapists and those who want to enter into therapy, both groups are in fact quite similar because both express a desire to understand the psychic process, to explore internal conflict, and to repair life wounds.

In the counseling setting, if the wounded side of the healer is devalued, the clinical experience is likely to be distorted (Kirmayer 2003). Thus, it is vital that counseling training and practice environments encourage safety for the expression of a clinician's wounds and vulnerabilities (Mander 2004) and that practitioners regularly be not only encouraged, but required, to engage in regular self-care behaviors (Jackson 2004).

Another side of the wounded healer which must be attended to is that of unresolved conflict. A healer's own neglected wounds can result in an inability to activate the inner healer in both the therapist and the patient and in the pathologizing of a patient by the therapist (Kirmayer 2003). In addition, therapists must always be watchful for their own motivations in the counseling relationship and recognize whether a wish to help is really motivated by immature narcissism (Mander 2004). The great challenge for healers is to learn to live with their brokenness as a blessing rather than a curse (Nouwen 1972).

Study findings clearly support the value of "wounded healers" in the field of counseling because consumer/professionals have the potential for modeling collaborative treatment and recovery (Cain 2000) and because an acceptance by the therapist of his own wounds, through conscious awareness of his own vulnerability, leads to wholeness, which enables a patient to achieve wholeness too (Miller and Baldwin 2000).

Kirmayer (2003) paraphrases a Pablo Neruda poem when he says that to accept the power of the archetypes of inner healer and wounded healer, we must turn inward to our darkest place and experience confusion until that which hides in us comes out.

A bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garment.

The great roots of night

Grow suddenly from your soul

And the things that hide in you come out again

(Neruda, 1969, as cited in Kirmayer 2003).

## See Also

- ▶ Archetype
- ▶ Daimonic
- ▶ Dark Night of the Soul
- ▶ Forgiveness
- ▶ Holy Grail
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Shamanic Healing
- ▶ Shamans and Shamanism

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## Yahweh

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“Yahweh” is the English pronunciation of the Hebrew YHWH, with vowels added. This is the holy name of the Hebrew divinity that is too sacred for many Jews to picture or pronounce. So the name “Adonai” (“My great Lord”) replaces it in Jewish readings, or G-d in writing. Some texts trace the earliest use of the name to Genesis 4:26, but others attribute the first use to Moses in Exodus 6:2–3, where it is translated “I am the Lord.” The meaning of the name is debated, but some say it means: “He causes to be what exists” (Browning 2009). But in order to avoid a gender reference, we could say: “The source of all existence,” or in Greek philosophical tradition, “Being” (Fig. 1).

The history of Yahweh is in the story of the struggle of the ancient escaping slaves who fled Egypt about 1250 BCE. Moses led these tribes out of Egypt into the Sinai desert, when they became the Hebrews. They slowly made their way north, according to the book of Exodus, with Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from Yahweh at Mt. Sinai, destined to shape a new religion and society. He had to struggle against his people, who wanted to retain Egyptian religions like that of the Golden Calf (probably the Egyptian goddess Hathor). Psychologically,

even though relieved of evils like slavery, people may refuse to abandon familiar customs, especially if they believe that they are images of absolute reality, in the face of an uncertain future in Moses’ Promised Land.

They ended up in the lands of Canaan and other tribes, and their prophets fought for centuries for the land and to replace the existing archaic polytheistic gods with their monotheistic, patriarchal divinity: Yahweh, a single God of Law, not nature. But the Hebrew people were more casual, and absorbed both the languages around them, and the gods and goddesses. Monotheism was a rare type of religion then, known before as a solar god Aten, briefly in Egypt under Pharaoh Akhenaten (1379–1362 BCE).

So Yahweh’s struggle against the older religions was long and slow. Ancient Near Eastern goddesses such as Isis, Ishtar, Anat, and Astarte were common and especially worshipped by women. Ashtoreth was a Canaanite goddess of nature’s growth, called “Yahweh’s wife” at times, and symbolized by sacred trees that even appeared in Hebrew temples. In the Hebrew Holy Scrolls, or Tanakh, people’s reluctance to adopt Yahweh is given. They like their queen of heaven and feel secure:

...we will do everything that we have vowed, burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out libations to her, both we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, for then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no evil (Jeremiah 44:17).



**Yahweh, Fig. 1** Creation of the sun and moon by Michelangelo, face detail of God (imagined as a man). Sistine Chapel Ceiling, the Vatican. Public domain. This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Creation\\_of\\_the\\_Sun\\_and\\_Moon\\_face\\_detail.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Creation_of_the_Sun_and_Moon_face_detail.jpg))

The Canaanite Baal, son of the bull-god El (“Him”), was one of the many dying and rising gods symbolizing the life-giving ultimate spirit in plants and animals (Pritchard). Appearing as both life and thunder and lightning, Baal required, like most gods of the time, blood sacrifices to feed the process of dying and rising life-forms. Baal and Ashtoreth both were long believed to make the wheat and sheep flourish only if they received sacrificial rituals. This bloody theme in religions was a practical give-and-take exchange psychology of serving gods who returned to them needed food. But the widespread theme of sacrifice was too much for Yahweh’s priests. Some ancient gods, such as the Canaanite Moloch, required the sacrifice of children to pacify the gods. This horrible demand was apparently intended psychologically to ask people to give off their most treasured

possessions, their own children, in exchange for food and peace. But the Jewish Holy Tanakh responded firmly: “You shall not give any of your children to devote them by fire to Moloch, and so profane the name of your God” (Lev. 18:21).

The Hebrew prophets were horrified at this practice and urgently struggled against this with Yahweh on their side. The prophet Isaiah taught that Yahweh wanted justice in a court of Law, not bloody sacrifice (Isaiah 1). Psychologically, this humanizing of religion by rejecting human sacrifice was a great step in religious history, but a difficult one. The story of Abraham about to sacrifice his son Isaac, but stopped by God, is the Hebrew testament of the will of Yahweh to stop human sacrifice (Genesis 22).

In the ninth century BCE, queen Jezebel (Hebrew “Izavel”), a priestess of Baal from Phoenicia, married Ahab, king of Northern Israel. She had many Hebrew prophets killed and angered the Hebrew prophet Elijah, who, in the Hebrew account, challenged prophets of Baal to a contest, which Yahweh won, so Elijah had the Baal prophets and Jezebel killed (I Kings, 18).

This kind of conflict illustrates the difficult psychological struggle that Yahweh’s monotheism had against older polytheistic nature gods. Women resisted giving up their familiar goddess religions, who understood women’s needs (Daimant). The Hebrews continued to offer blood sacrifice to heaven, but only the blood of animals. The prophets, such as Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, had long been trying to persuade the Hebrews that Yahweh was allowing their conquests by major imperial armies, such as Babylon, as punishment for their loyalty to other gods. Yet this punishment psychology was long ignored.

But this denial finally stopped when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans about 70 CE, after which the Yahweh tradition was continued by the Rabbinic tradition of synagogue teaching, rather than temple sacrifices. This was a major elevation of Near Eastern religion from polytheistic, bloody sacrifices to a valuable intellectual focus. And the goddesses, which had served women’s needs, as well as nature’s, were pushed aside for a patriarchal God. But to force this change psychologically, it seems that it took the total destruction of

Israel and the beginning of the diaspora – the spreading of Hebrews, now called Jews, around Europe, until their return to Israel in 1948.

This tradition of monotheism developed into major world religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. When Christianity adopted the Jewish Bible, added the New Testament, and spread as Rome collapsed, Yahweh's monotheism became a more widespread religion. The psychology and theology of monotheism is that God is the highest principle of truth and goodness in the universe, unlike polytheistic gods, each of which had their own varying principles of good and evil. Yahweh "elevated the absolute" of goodness to a single divinity of Law who ruled all the universe. This clarification of ultimate goodness in one God's dominion helped spread Christianity and, over time, though sometimes by force, unified many diverse cultures. Muhammad established the monotheistic tradition under the Arabic God Allah in his lifetime, by 632 CE, also unified many diverse tribal cultures and suppressed polytheism.

This major theological shift served to support another major psychological development in the west. Yahweh's separation of religion from nature opened a gap that was, by the Renaissance, formulated by Descartes' subject/object dichotomy and the development of science, when nature came to be seen as stripped of spiritual forces, and thus left available for technological exploitation and domination, which has now developed into a very serious ecological crisis. Furthermore, since Yahweh is portrayed as male, now feminists are having difficulty with this and are challenging the psychological and political preference that Yahweh's monotheism gave to men for millennia. Some are reawakening the goddess traditions. These two trends are bound to have major future impacts on monotheistic religions.

## See Also

- ▶ [Allah, The Concept of](#)
- ▶ [Ashtoreth](#)
- ▶ [Deity Concept](#)
- ▶ [Dying and Rising Gods](#)
- ▶ [God](#)

- ▶ [God Image](#)
- ▶ [Isaiah](#)
- ▶ [Male God Images](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Moses](#)
- ▶ [Muhammad](#)

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## Yggdrasill

- ▶ [Axis Mundi](#)

## Yoga

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As yoga has swept the west, it is now estimated that nearly 20 million people in the United States

practice some physical aspect of yoga. But beneath yoga's modern popularity lies an ancient tradition that illuminates knowledge of the self.

## Definition of Yoga

Yoga deals with the most profound of mysteries, the essential nature of the human being in relation to the universe. The term Yoga has its root in the Sanskrit word "yuj" which means to yoke, unite, and integrate. What is being united? Yoga is the union between the individual soul and the universal soul. It is the split between the two that is viewed as the root of all sufferings.

Many paths evolved in the yoga tradition, originating in India. These include bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion, karma, the yoga of selfless service, jnana yoga, the yoga of wisdom, and raja yoga, also known as the "royal union." Within the umbrella of raja yoga is the Eightfold Path (astanga yoga) outlined by the great sage, Patanjali, in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, a treatise written about 200 BCE. Astanga Yoga, the eight-limbed path offers a systematic way of cultivation of the mind so as to ultimately achieve liberation. The first four limbs guide the seeker on a path toward evolution of consciousness, including yamas, ethics, and morals that teach about living in relationship, niyamas, individual practices necessary to build character, asana, physical postures, and pranayama, breath control. The second four limbs teach the path of involution and relate to the true state of Yoga. These include pratyahara, withdrawal of the senses, dharana, concentration, keeping the mind collected, dhyana, meditation, and samadhi, profound meditation or complete absorption.

It is interesting to note that Patanjali pays only passing attention to the practice of asana, the third limb of yoga, also known as hatha yoga. Yet, it is hatha yoga, the practice of postures, or asana that has so gripped modern attention. Many individuals are initially drawn to hatha yoga for truly tangible benefits such as stress reduction, increased flexibility, stamina, improved concentration, and overall health and well-being. Hatha yoga also refers to the yoga of willpower. It is the

way toward realization through rigorous discipline. The power aroused by this discipline clears the energy centers of the body/mind so that union with the supreme is possible.

Patanjali defines yoga more specifically as *yogas citta vritti nirodah*; yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. What are these mind fluctuations? All the stuff of the mind, memories, thoughts, feelings, beliefs, judgments, and the many objects of awareness. It is identification with these objects of awareness that causes suffering. In his yoga sutras, Patanjali shows us a way to free ourselves of this suffering.

## Is Yoga a Religion?

Is Yoga a religion? BKS Iyengar (1979), master teacher of hatha yoga, whose book *Light on Yoga* has been a foundation text for the practice of Yoga, says the following:

Yoga is a subject which cultures the mind and the intelligence of the individual to develop religiousness through practice. It has nothing to do with the man-created religious order; yet it is a religion of human beings, a religion of humanity, as it is filled with the message of goodwill to one and all.

Instead of prayer to a particular god, Patanjali's sutras offer a pathway toward opening to the divine. This divine is referred to as Ishvara, the Universal Soul. This divine essence is not bound by place, space or time, not subject to cause and effect, and not subject to suffering or the seeds of suffering. This divine nature is, however, not of this religion or that. It is instead a universal truth understood by all religions.

## Yoga and Psychology

Patanjali, in a clear, systematic way put forth a treatise to help us understand the nature of mind, its many pitfalls, and misidentifications that are the roots of day to day suffering. In modern psychology, we try to comprehend the impact of trauma, archetypal defenses, and dissociation as a form of survival, projection, individuation, etc. We have on the other hand, an examination

of the mind written centuries ago that sheds light upon the nature of the psyche. But Patanjali takes us beyond psychology to a path of freedom from the entanglements of the mind.

## The Five Afflictions

Patanjali enumerates five afflictions (*klesas*) that disturb the equilibrium of consciousness and perpetuate a state of bondage or suffering.

The first is ignorance, *avidya*, which is the root cause of all afflictions. This is the ignorance of our own true nature. We make the mistake of identifying that which is impermanent as permanent. It is taking the day to day self we know, the self that works each day, the self that raises children, the self that succeeds in the world or fails it, the self that takes pride in great accomplishment, and the self that feels defeated; it is believing that all these various selves are more real than that which unites them into wholeness.

The second affliction is *asmita*, or pride, ego, which is called an affliction when we misidentify with the ego. A sense of confidence and belief in who you are is essential to accomplish anything in the world. But ego can trap you into “you’re not good enough; you don’t deserve to be here,” or “you’re so great, they don’t know anything.” The ego can ensnare you in the “greatness” of your accomplishments, or minimize you into a small suffering being, and lead you into endless comparison between you and the rest of the world. Patanjali warns us not to get ensnared by these voices of ego, for these voices affirm separateness rather than wholeness.

The third and fourth afflictions, *raga and dvesa*, attachment and aversion, likes and dislikes, can easily rule our lives and utterly exhaust us. We run toward what we like and run from what we don’t like. Once we attain the possessions we long for, we fear losing them. In order to avoid the pain of what we don’t like, or avoid the pain of past suffering, complex defense systems might surface, like acting aggressive when you feel vulnerable, dissociating, disappearing when threatened, and turning to addictions like food or alcohol when life doesn’t offer what you long for.

Chasing after what we long for and running from what we wish never came keeps us in a state of agitation, restlessness, and yearning. Yet, if we can practice stillness, witnessing mind with its potent pull in one direction and another, if we can, as referred to in Jungian psychology, hold the tension of the opposites, freedom from misidentification, freedom from suffering is possible.

The fifth and final affliction, *abhinivesah*, is clinging to life or fear of death. It is the subtlest of all afflictions. Even the wisest of beings are plagued by this affliction and naturally so, it is our instinct to stay alive at all costs. “While practicing Yoga, the aspirant penetrates deep within himself and realizes the life-force, active while one is alive, merges with the universe when it leaves the body at death. Through this understanding, the aspirant can lose his attachment to life and conquer the fear of death” (Iyengar 1996).

In summary, Patanjali discusses the false identification of thoughts and Self. He teaches that false identification is at the root of all misery. He further teaches that the practices of yoga are about dissolving this false identification.

## Asana Practice or Hatha Yoga

Since the Western world has embraced yoga as a mainstream activity, it is worthwhile to examine the nature of asana practice. How can the practice of asana teach us about false identification? Often as we move into a pose, the various tight and resistive places in the body reveal themselves. These places of resistance can easily stay hidden from us, if not challenged by touch, movement, or some method of conscious awareness. The body, connected to matter, to earth, readily houses our struggles in patterns of tension. These patterns deepen over time and if left unaddressed (unconscious) long enough, will ultimately lead to disease. The body is an extraordinary reflection of the mental/emotional patterns of mind. Yogic practice can help heal the split between the two.

Tightness and resistance can come from many sources and often interweave with one another:



(1) physical – structural tightness, injury, repetitive wrong actions, habit patterns, and overdoing; (2) chemical – improper diet, drugs, and environmental toxins; (3) emotional – distressing thoughts, feelings, memories, and anxieties; and (4) spiritual – disconnection from the source of one's being.

Whatever the source of resistance is, the body will attempt to express it, often in the manifestation of pain. Whenever we resist the present moment and try to deny what we are experiencing, a split occurs. This split holds energy. It holds tension. It manifests as suffering. By connecting to the body, by witnessing the split, this cutoff energy can return to us as wholeness. Asana practice offers us the opportunity to return to ourselves.

Sometimes in practicing an asana, we want to come out of the pose, to jump away from the discomfort that might rise. Or we use too much willfulness and harden the body so that we overdo. Here lies a marvelous analogy to Jung's "holding the tension of the opposites." This has to do with the willingness to be in the pose, the willingness to be with the difficulty or ease and not identify with either. "If we are able to be with what rises, that is, remain still long enough to perceive the discomfort, rather than react to it, we can begin the path toward union, Yoga" (Lasater 2001).

Asana practice can change physiology, brain chemistry, and organic function. Backbending poses open the heart, forward bending poses support the digestive organs, twists ring out toxins from the liver and kidneys, inversions support circulation, clear the mind, and rejuvenates one from fatigue. "Yoga was invented by our sages in order to overcome bodily impediments, emotional and environmental disturbances of the mind and the wavering qualities of the intelligence, so that the practitioner comes closer and closer to the Self" (Iyengar 2001).

How can asana bring one closer to the Self? For example, we can look at *adho mukha virasana*, (downward facing hero's pose, sitting with legs folded under you, and forehead to the floor); if done with full presence of being, this pose evokes a sense of humbleness. The pose has its own offering.

Another pose, *Virabhadrasana II* translated as warrior pose, where one stands with legs wide apart, arms fully extended, legs firm, chest and heart open, and expansive. The pose itself invokes a sense of power, extension, and stability, the feet rooted and core of body centered over the pelvis. When fully entering this pose, empowerment manifests, inertia is shed, and a sense of energy and will to go forth into the day with vitality rises up.

The notion that poses generate particular patterns in the mind is a more modern interpretation of the powers of yoga. Such ideas are not mentioned by Patanjali. Yet, as asana practice has evolved in modern times, we can see that each asana has the capacity to teach us the art of silence. Silence in the brain allows for effortless work. If the effort offered to a pose is done wholeheartedly, effortless practice manifests.

## Yoga and Jung

Our past experiences, perceptions impact the nature of our practice. These experiences, instincts, and hidden or subliminal impressions make up what is known in Sanskrit as *samskaras*. If these imprints are good, they act as stimuli to maintain the high degree of sensitivity necessary to pursue the spiritual path. If the imprints are not good, rooted in trauma, abuse, or neglect, the seeker has a more complicated journey of learning to see, to perceive habitual reactions to life's events. This might be paralleled to Jung's notion of the "complex," which when activated, triggers an individual to react in a way similar to the initial imprint of wounding. The process of integrating past impressions, so that they no longer trigger unconscious behavior, is an important goal in psychotherapy. The yogic tradition understood this long ago. As long as one stays rooted in reactivity to life's phenomena, one is caught in the wheel of "dharma," or an existence bound in cause and effect.

But through practice, these imprints can be transformed. Practice involves the eight limbs of yoga discussed earlier, asana practice being the third limb. Practice, *abhyasa* involves repeated,



committed, devoted effort. Patanjali points out that one must not only practice but also practice with detachment, “vairagya” the discarding of ideas which obstruct progress. Vairagya is a practice where one learns to gain freedom from desires and to cultivate non-attachment to things which hinder pursuit of union with the soul.

It is important here to clarify the difference between the psychological term dissociation and the use of detachment in the sutras. Sometimes withdrawing sense awareness, turning inward, practicing yoga, meditation, and silence can appear as if one was withdrawing from the world at large, retreating from society. This withdrawal, this penetration into silence is necessary to hear the internal voice, the voice of the soul.

But if one gets so captivated by that silence, or so dependent upon it that withdrawal becomes the end of the journey rather than a pathway, the seeker has then cultivated withdrawal as an end rather than the means of realizing the Self.

Practice and detachment are the means to still the movements of consciousness. This sutra brings us back to Patanjali’s earlier definition of yoga. Yoga is the cessation of the fluctuations of the mind. Whenever the mind is fully focused, one pointed, and one is acting in harmony with the nature of all things, one is practicing yoga. Life is filled with moments to enliven this practice.

## See Also

- ▶ [Hinduism](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Psychotherapy](#)
- ▶ [Self](#)

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## Yoruban Religion in Cuba

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Cuban slavery has a long history that spans from 1517 until its abolishment in 1880. During this time the greatest number of African slaves was Yoruba brought from what is now mostly southeastern Nigeria. Cabildos helped to preserve the roots of Yoruba belief and cosmology in Cuba. Cabildos were nation-specific mutual aid societies for Africans that were run under the auspices of the Catholic Church and modeled on European ones already operating in Cuba. A priest was assigned to oversee each cabildo. As early as the 1700s, African tribes were allowed to form cabildos, and by the mid 1700s there were already more than 20 cabildos operating outside the Cuban capitol city of Havana. Cabildos served as the locus for celebrations, the practice of medicine as ethnobotany, and the practice of ritual.

Lukumi religion emerges out of a cultural milieu where Roman Catholicism is the official state religion, yet tribal identity is preserved to a great degree through membership in a cabildo, while there is ongoing contact with other African nations. Lukumi believes in an elemental principle called Ashe that is in all things throughout the universe yet is specific to each thing. The human soul also has a unique Ashe, a destiny that it seeks to fulfill through multiple lifetimes. Using various divination techniques that may involve a quartered coconut, cowry shells, or an oracle, the individual is able to ascertain what their destiny is and what

obstacles are in the way. Lukumi holds spiritual and blood ancestors in very high regard and divination techniques are employed to learn both what they desire and would like to communicate to the individual. Also, for good or ill, spirits can become attached to one and can make demands of the individual. To protect one in life, clear obstacles, and help one attain one's destiny, a patron Orisha, or semi-divinity, is assigned to each individual before birth. If the individual is ordained, this Orisha must be cared for as a living entity and fed its favorite foods and the blood of animals when called for by, for example, the cowry shells. Animals ordinarily sacrificed include barnyard animals such as chickens, goats, roosters, guinea hens, and also turtles, doves, hutia (a Cuban rodent), among others. There is no central governing body in this oral tradition, and the specific manner in which ritual is carried out depends on each Ile or what was preserved and handed down through a spiritual lineage. This mostly Yoruba belief system became indigenized to Cuba as Lukumi and has noticeably spread to Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

As noted, Lukumi (loo-koo-mE) refers to Yoruba (YO-roo-bah) religion in its Cuban form. Other names including Santeria (san-teh-rE-ah), Ayoba (ah-yo-bah), Regla de Osha (reg-la deh Osha), and affectionately La Religion (reh-lee-hE-On), or "the Religion," are also used to refer to Lukumi. "Santeria" is a misnomer that properly refers to the unrelated Spanish cult of the veneration of saints; the term was adopted when Yoruba slaves in Cuba dissimulated their outlawed practices by clothing their Orishas (oh-re-chAhS), or semi-divinities, in the guise of Catholic saints. Catholic priests derisively tagged as "Santeria" the slaves over preoccupation with the saints, as there seemed to be little concern for Jesus. Because of name recognition, practitioners often informally use the term Santeria to refer to their beliefs, but quickly point out that it is a pejorative term and that their beliefs are neither borrowed from nor dependent on Christian theology. Non-practitioners often erroneously refer to all Cuban African-based religious practices as "Santeria." Regla de Osha loosely translates as "Orisha worship." According to oral tradition the term Ayoba

names a Yoruba tribe who were the first to practice the religion in Cuba, and Ayoba, along with Lukumi, are the terms preferred by adherents of the religion. "Lukumi" is the abbreviated form of the traditional Yoruba salutation "Olukumi," meaning, "we are friends" – a necessary greeting among slaves who had often been tribal enemies in West Africa. Lukumi also refers to the liturgical tri-tonal Yoruba language used in Lukumi rituals, greetings, chants, botanicals, and the naming of artifacts. Some practitioners also hold that oral tradition has it that Lukumi hearkens back to Ulkumi, a part of the Niger River in West Africa.

Lukumi is primarily a Yoruba-based religion that also incorporates elements of belief from other West and Central African peoples, such as Araras, Carabalies, Congos, Dahomey, Fon, Mandingas, and Macuas, as well as adapting, to a lesser degree, beliefs from Kardecian-based Spiritism and Catholicism. The two main entangled strands in Lukumi are Orisha (oh-rE-chah) worship and Egun (eh-gOOn) worship. Orishas, literally meaning "owners of the head," refers to hundreds of Yoruba tribal deities of which only a fraction survived the Middle Passage to slavery in the New World, although some practitioners hold that the various paths of Orisha signal a time when each path was a separate deity. Primary Lukumi Orishas are Obatala (oh-ba-ta-lAh), Eleggua (eh-le-guAh), Chango (shan-gO), Ochun (oh-chOOn), Yemaya (yeh-ma-yAh), and Orunmila (oh-rOOn-me-la), followed by Ogun (oh-gOOn), Oya (oh-yAh), Osain (oh-sa-een), and Ochosi (oh-sho-si). Orishas also represent the forces of nature. Each Orisha has specific colors, number(s), plants, and animals it "owns," and during ordination a Lukumi priest has their head, the seat of the soul, consecrated to a specific Orisha for protection. Egun is a general term for the dead, who take precedence over the Orishas when they are either an individual's deceased blood relatives or spiritual ancestors who must be appeased.

### **Ashe (ah-chEh)**

Central to Yoruba-Lukumi belief is the ineffable pantheistic concept of Ashe, which collectively

refers to a divine generative force, essence, existence, grace, knowledge, wisdom, and destiny. Oral tradition holds that it is Ashe which coalesced as the Godhead Olodumare (oh-loo-da-ma-rAy) and in turn gave rise to all the universe, the Orishas, and humans. Ashe is the presence of the divine in all things. It is a gift of the sky god Olorun (oh-low-run), who is the personified aspect of the Godhead Olodumare, also known as Olofin (oh-low-feen). Although practitioners ordained to a specific Orisha must care for their Orisha, adherents consider themselves monotheists and appeal to Ashe in its aspect of Olodumare as the governing principle for their religion. A priest must possess Ashe as both knowledge and wisdom to properly execute their office when they take on the role of diviner or have ahijados (Sp., “godchildren”) who seek guidance in Lukumi. Olorisha (oh-low-re-sha), and not santero or santera, is the proper appellation for someone ordained to Lukumi. Olorishas are considered Alashes (a-la-shAys), persons entrusted with the care and revitalization of Ashe whenever it is required. A competent Olorisha must have the requisite knowledge to properly interpret and then provide wise advice after reading el Meridilogun (el merry-de-low-gOOn), or the 16 cowry shells used in one form of divination. Similarly an Oriate (oh-ree-ah-tAy) must understand the shells, and the machinations and deeper meaning of rituals in their role as master of ceremonies. An Italero (ee-ta-leh-rO) is an Oriate in the role of master of the shells. If specifically ordained to the Orisha Orunmila, then the priest is called a Babalao (baba-la-oh), or “father of the faith,” and instead of the shells works the Oracle of Ifa (ee-fA) and the Opele (oh-peh-IEh), or nut (or concave shell) divination “necklace.” Olorishas can be male or female whereas Babalaos are always male. Babalaos do not refer to themselves as santeros or Lukumi practitioners although they clearly subscribe to and are within the Lukumi belief system. Iyawo (ee-ya-wO), or bride, is the designation for a newly consecrated Lukumi priest. Iyawos spend a year dressed all in white and with their heads covered; the white garments are thought to deflect negative energy and keep bad spirits from



**Yoruban Religion in Cuba, Fig. 1** Cuban *Babalao* (priest of the Orisha Orula), consulting the Oracle of Ifa, Cuba, 2009 (This figure is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Babalawo-of-cuba-consulting.jpg>)

becoming attached, while the head must especially be protected as it is the seat of Eleda, or “the soul.” Ashe, like wisdom or knowledge, is said to accrue. Ashe as destiny signals that before reincarnation an Eleda (eh-leh-dAh), or soul, is said to kneel before Olodumare and given its patron Orisha to protect it in a journey to earth that is beset with peril and then to continue protecting it throughout life. More specifically, oral tradition, Patakies (cosmogonic myths), and Odu (oh-doo, teachings) relate that before incarnation the Eleda is informed of its destiny and seeks out a patron divinity to help accomplish this destiny on earth and safeguard it from obstacles and potential enemies (Fig. 1).

Ashe is said to give rise to all things. In another sense, an animistic system of beliefs, Lukumi holds that both animate (e.g., flora,

fauna) and inanimate (e.g., stones, water) things possess a piece of the divine, possess Ashe. For example, “Otan” (oh-tAn) is the Lukumi word for stone. In a ritual that employs Obi (O-be), a quick form of divination using a quartered coconut, Otanes (pl.) collected from a riverbed for certain characteristics are then tested for their Orisha-specific Ashe. These stones are then used as a primary component in a soup tureen, along with certain plant life, sometimes water, where it is considered the personified Orisha and cared for as alive, including being fed sacrificial animal blood to recharge Ashe, when required. However, Christian artifacts have no ritual value in Lukumi. The presence of Catholic statuary in Lukumi households is traditional and used as visual stand-in for the Orishas and as a way to celebrate the saints’ Ashe for helping to preserve the religion. Lukumi holds that all religions have Ashe and so have truth. Lukumi has no proscription against practicing other faiths. Many Lukumis also consider themselves Catholic but do not mix the two faiths. Christian artifacts, or Budhas, or, indeed, relics from any religion may also be present due to the need to appease the Ashe of a non-Lukumi attached spirit or spirit guide. It must be understood, though, that although the artifact may not be Lukumi per se, its reason for display is Lukumi.

Lukumi cosmology does not posit a struggle between good and evil, and Ashe can be redirected for good or ill. Misfortune, disease, difficult interpersonal relationships, or economic hardship are often attributed to an imbalance of Ashe. This imbalance can exist for numerous reasons and manifest itself as physical, spiritual, or emotional malady in the individual. An imbalance of Ashe can be caused either through one’s actions, such as by not being true to one’s roles in life or by causing physical or emotional harm to others and thus not possessing good moral character, Iwa Rere (ee-wAh-reh-rEh), or through not observing good speech, Afudashe (ah-foo-da-shAy). This imbalance may also be traced to an Idembe (ee-dem-beh) or spell cast by another individual. An

Idembe can be neutralized or sent back to the initiator, but care is always employed because Ashe establishes an eternal bond between both parties. Lukumi belief in reincarnation means that an imbalance of Ashe can also be attributed to one’s actions or the actions of others in a previous lifetime. Blood relatives, alive or deceased, can be the cause of an imbalance in the individual arising from negative things they engaged in the past, such as abortion or suicide, or, if deceased, because they desire something from the individual and their needs have not been met. Spirits in one’s Ile (ee-laY, literally “house”), or spiritual lineage, can also require something, and an imbalance is maintained until their wishes are fulfilled. A spirit, such as an Iwin (Ee-win), considered the evil spirit of someone who died through sorcery or suicide, can become attached to one in Lukumi. One of the functions of Lukumi Elekes (E-leh-ques), or Orisha color-specific necklaces, is to provide protection to the wearer either from the evil eye, against Idembe, or from spirits becoming attached. Good or evil attached spirits can serve to help or hinder the individual, but in either case they may make demands that if not met can have negative manifestations ranging from vivid dreams and nightmares to angst or physical disease, even death. “Ashe” is also used as a greeting and to bid one farewell.

## Eledda

*Eledda*, or the Lukumi soul. Lukumi practitioners often refer to Eledda in Spanish as “el angel de la guardia,” or one’s guardian angel. Although one of its functions is to protect one from harm, it is more closely akin to the Christian notion of the soul as something incorporeal and unique. Yet Christian nomenclature fails to capture what is at stake in this specific Lukumi concept. If unique to every person and what is said to define the individual, unlike the Christian soul, practitioners understand the Lukumi Eledda as a composite and symbiotic phenomena having at least two distinct

parts that function together and that must be considered as a whole. The seat of Eleda is said to be one's Ori, which is the Yoruba/Lukumi word for head. Renowned Lukumi elder Oba Ernesto Pichardo characterizes the Eleda as the "vital self" and as "one source that is split in two": Eleda Orinu and Eleda Oriche. Eleda Orinu signals the specific incarnate vital essence (Ashe) of the person. Eleda Oriche refers to vital essence (Ashe) as held by the Godhead, Olodumare; it is that Ashe which is held in "heaven" and connects with the individual person's Ashe. An individual's personal Ashe, Eleda Orinu, in turn is understood to include an Ashe unique to the individual while at once being an extension of a specific Orisha's Ashe. Like every person, every Orisha also has an Eleda with a unique Ashe. In other words, the universal vital energy of Ashe is captured by the term Eleda Oriche, while the Orisha component in Eleda Orinu signals the component of self-preservation and individual destiny. In addition to Eleda Oriche and Eleda Orinu, there can be spirit guides and attached spirits who inform one's Eleda. Taken together, the Eleda is understood as the embodiment of Ashe as a unique individual, with unique spiritual requirements and with an individual destiny. There are no blanket prescriptions or proscriptions for ritual action or diet in Lukumi. If ordained, the ritual of Ita (ee-tAh) that is performed on the third day of ordination and which involves the reading of the cowry shells of the seven main Orishas is what determines what foods one must eat or abstain from, if alcohol consumption is permitted, and what daily rituals one must practice or what further initiations one must undergo. Lukumi holds that one does not have to be a practitioner to have a patron Orisha and that in fact everyone has an Eleda and a patron Orisha "assigned" before they were born. For Lukumi the ceremony of the identification of a patron Orisha is done soon after birth in a rite that involves a reading of the cowry shells. For non-Lukumi practitioners, this ceremony can be done at anytime during life.

## El Meridilogun

*El Meridilogun* (or, shortened to, *el Dilogun* [*de-low-gOOn*]) refers to the 16-cowry shell form of divination. Dreams, visions, Orisha possession, and strange occurrences are all regarded as sources of knowledge or advice from deceased blood relatives or spirit guides, but, if important, must be checked against a reading of the shells for legitimacy. El Dilogun, along with the less sought out Oracle of Ifa, is the premier diagnostic tool used in Lukumi to ascertain the source of spiritual or physical malady, economic hardship, as well as a means for the dead to communicate their wishes. Cowry shell reading (and the Oracle of Ifa) is a structured practice that specifically examines the unique spiritual frame of the Lukumi practitioner or the non-practitioner who seeks a reading. The shells interrogate the spiritual, emotional, physical, and financial requirements for the well-being of the individual. El Dilogun prescribes ritual action to rectify any imbalance found and offers guidance to the individual regarding how to live in terms of their unique spiritual requirements. It can take several readings of the shells to establish a clear spiritual picture of any imbalances. Advice from a reading is specific and far ranging and can include performing an Ebbo (eh-bow), or offering to an Orisha, or offering to appease an ancestor, to desisting from certain behaviors, to using botanicals, and to seeking Western medical advice. If a profound imbalance is found, and the Orishas ask for it, the individual may need to receive the necklaces, which, followed by receiving the warriors, and then Kariocha (ka-re-oh-sha, "seating Oricha," or, ordination), is the first formal step to becoming a Lukumi practitioner. Anyone can seek a reading of the shells without being considered a Lukumi practitioner.

## Yoruba-Lukumi in the United States

The landmark decision by the Supreme Court of the United States on June 11, 1993, in favor of the



Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye in Hialeah, Florida (Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah), legitimized Lukumi practices, such as animal sacrifice, before the law and made it possible for Olorishas and Babalaos to be recognized as clergy. Lukumi remains primarily an oral tradition without any central governing body. Care should be taken when consulting a priest. Unscrupulous individuals have been known to perform unneeded expensive ceremonies for financial gain. There are also individuals claiming to be Lukumi clergy who have never been formally trained or ordained. A good reputation and an established Ile help individuals choose priests for divination and any resulting ceremonies. For reasons of economy and purported efficacy, individuals in the Latina/Latino community, both Lukumi practitioners and non-practitioners, often go for a reading of the shells before or instead of seeking the advice of a physician, psychologist, or financial adviser. The fee for a cowry shell reading is around 25 US dollars. Ethnobotany plays an important role in Lukumi practice.

## See Also

- ▶ [African Diaspora Religions](#)
- ▶ [Santería](#)
- ▶ [Spiritism](#)

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# Z

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## Zazen

- ▶ [Koan](#)
- ▶ [Zen](#)

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## Zen

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I need to repeat that Zen refuses to be explained,  
but that it is to be lived (Suzuki 1949, p. 310).

### Limitations of Explanation

Keeping the limitations of explanation and the value placed on the primacy of experience in mind, the following will provide an outline sketch of Zen Buddhism. Zen is the Japanese translation of the Sanskrit term, *dhyana*, which means concentration meditation or meditative absorption. However, this linguistic definition is not completely accurate. *Dhyana* is typically associated with meditation on a specific object, sound, or image and implies a transcendent state. *Zazen*, the basic generic term for Zen meditation, functions differently depending on the specific sect and understanding of religious realization.

For instance, *shikantaza* (just sitting, nothing but sitting) serves as the central practice of the Soto Zen lineage founded by Eihei Dogen during the thirteenth century in Japan based on teachings that he received in China. This practice is an all-inclusive practice that functions through a choiceless awareness of “being-as-it-is” (Suzuki 1970). In contrast, The Rinzai tradition is centered on *kanna-zen* (koan concentration). This technique, developed by Ta-hui during the twelfth century in China, requires that the practitioner concentrate on a specific word or phrase of a koan.

It is important to keep in mind that differences of emphasis on particular techniques or religious activities do not define the entire sect. Historically, the inaccurate exaggeration of differences between sects served to fuel disputes. A more accurate approach would be to view these different sects as “equivalence classes” or sets with differences, similarities and identities. Variations between individual groups are often determined by the emphasis, interest and personality of a given Zen teacher.

Zen is also known as C’han (Chinese), Thien (Vietnamese), and Seon (Korean). However, as Zen is not a monolithic structure, it is important to keep in mind that while there is a historical continuity between C’han and Zen, and that the terms are typically used interchangeably, there are many fundamental sociocultural and doctrinal differences between these systems as they developed regionally and that integrated various influences of indigenous religions. For example, C’han incorporates elements of Taoism and

Confucianism. Recently, a rapidly expanding “interfaith Zen” movement in the United States has integrated many Christian elements (Johnston 1976; Kennedy 1996).

## History

Historical accounts attribute the Indian monk Bodhidharma with the introduction of C’han into China during the sixth century. Bodhidharma taught what has been described as a mind-to-mind transmission, outside scriptures, that does not rely upon words or letters. His teachings were then transmitted through a series of Chinese patriarchs. Given this emphasis on direct transmission, the role of the teacher is essential and supercedes the study of the scriptures. This direct teacher-to-student “dharma transmission” follows a lineage that can be traced back to preceding generations to the historical Buddha. Thus, not unlike psychotherapy, Zen is interpersonal, experiential, and relies on direct dialog.

## Practice and Religious Salvation

The primary experiential activities of Zen are zazen (sitting meditation), dialogues with a teacher, koan study, and moment-to-moment mindfulness during all daily activities and chores. Zen practices engender a liberating awareness of reality through an alteration of perception that includes the derailment of cognitive linear thought, which engenders access of our capacity for prajna (quick knowing, intuition, intimate knowing). From the Zen perspective, this liberating awareness can be known or intuited experientially, but not known in the cognitive sense. This salvational intention, expressed in the notion of *satori* (enlightenment, literally: “to understand”) and engendered through personal experience, qualifies Zen as a religious endeavor. However, it is not a religion in the sense of the word that religion is typically understood in a Western civilizational context. On this point, Masao Abe writes, “In one sense, Zen may be said to be one of the most difficult religions to

understand, for there is no formulated Zen doctrine or theological system by which one may intellectually approach it” (1985, p. 3).

This soteriological intention along with supporting practices defines Zen as a religion. The striving for *satori* (enlightenment) in the Rinzai tradition reflects this salvational goal and has resulted in an emphasis on the wisdom or insight aspect of meditation. Similarly, in the Soto tradition, practice awakens the student to the reality that practice and realization are one. This emphasis has generated a critique of quietist leanings among certain Buddhist sects. Without an emphasis on the wisdom aspect of zazen, such critics assert that meditation becomes an empty and useless endeavor that can be equated, for example, as “polishing a brick to make a mirror.”

Regarding salvation, the Zen scholar D. T. Suzuki notes: “As I have repeatedly illustrated, Buddhism, whether primitive or developed, is a religion of freedom and emancipation, and the ultimate aim of its discipline is to release the spirit from its possible bondage so that it can act freely in accordance with its own principles” (1949, p. 74).

## Zen and Psychoanalysis

The influence of Zen has run through psychoanalysis for over a half of century as a result of D. T. Suzuki’s involvement with Eric Fromm (1950, 1956), Fromm et al. (1960), Karen Horney (1945), Harold Kelman (1960), and others. This group of psychoanalysts approached Buddhist religious experience and associated meditation practices with the true spirit of open-minded inquiry distinctive of the psychoanalytic dialog that Freud fathered and began to look eastward in a search for expanding their psychoanalytic vision. Karen Horney, for example (1945, p. 163) discusses the “impoverishment of the personality” and refers to the Buddhist notion of “wholeheartedness” or “sincerity of spirit.” Susan Quinn (1987), Karen Horney’s biographer, chronicles a close association between Horney and D. T. Suzuki.

Harold Kelman, a close colleague of Horney, argued in his paper “Psychoanalytic Thought and Eastern Wisdom” (1960) that psychoanalysis is experientially “eastern.” While deriving from fundamentally different theoretical assumptions, Kelman observed that Buddhist thought and technique can deeply enhance psychoanalytic technique, particularly regarding the analyst’s attentional stance.

Erich Fromm, who was deeply interested in Zen Buddhism, also shared a close association with D. T. Suzuki. He included detailed meditation instructions in his very popular book, *The Art of Loving* (1956). Fromm believed that meditative experience can expand the psychoanalytic process through a positive conceptualization of human potential that goes beyond addressing symptoms. When asked about the benefits of Zen meditation in relation to mental health, Fromm reportedly responded that “It’s (Zen) the only way to enduring mental health” (quoted in Kapleau 1989, p. 14). He viewed both systems as potentially mutually enhancing. A thirst for expanding their vision and looking eastward to do so forms a common thread that ties together the above representative psychoanalysts. They thus paved the way for contemporary contributions, which has expanded to include a wide range of applications from a Zen-influenced short-term crisis intervention (Rosenbaum 1998), a depth psychoanalytic approach that integrates basic Zen principles with contemporary Intersubjectivity theory and Self-Psychology (Magid 2000), and more recently, to in-depth studies of Zen influenced by Wilfred Bion’s ideas (Cooper 2010), and Zen and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Moncayo 2012).

An examination of the “foundational” (Nagao 1989) Buddhist principles of emptiness and dependent-arising reveal parallels to the “totalistic” (Kernberg 1976) understanding of countertransference and can serve as a link between classical and totalistic models. This means that all experience, including the psychotherapeutic encounter, emerges contextually, subject to causes and conditions.

Eihei Dogen’s notion of *gujin* or “total exertion” holds important treatment implications for

the psychotherapist who is informed by Zen practice (Cooper 2011). That is, as the philosopher Joan Stambaugh writes, “Looked at from the standpoint of the situation itself, the situation is totally manifested or exerted without obstruction or contamination” (1999, p. 6). With regard to the psychoanalytic situation, the notion of goal or a stance of removed passivity both contaminate the situation and interfere with presence. Stambaugh asserts that “The person experiencing the situation totally becomes it. He is not thinking *about* it; he *is* it. When he does this, the situation is completely revealed and manifested” (1999, p. 6). Thus, total exertion refers to an opening that calls for a response that “... is never anything passive but can be quite strenuous” (Stambaugh 1999, p. 7). From this perspective, the psychotherapist’s activity becomes decisive, clean, clear, and precise, not encumbered by guilt, anxiety, convention, or goals.

In recent years, the conversation between Zen and psychotherapy has been continuously expanding and holds promise for a mutually beneficial cross-fertilization through the open-minded spirit of inquiry that characterizes present studies.

## See Also

- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Chinese Religions
- ▶ Koan
- ▶ Psychoanalysis
- ▶ Self Psychology
- ▶ Taoism

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## Zionism

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What is Zionism? Does psychology of religion have anything to offer to the understanding of Zionism?

### What Is Zionism?

The term Zion has traditionally been viewed as synonymous with Jerusalem (Roth and Wigoder 1971). The most commonly understood use of the

term Zionism is the belief that the land of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, and every effort is to be made to return Jewish people to the land. There is a detailed biblical definition of the territory in Numbers 34: 1–15, and the territory was then expanded in the time of David and Solomon.

The historical precursors of Zionist ideology are to be found in Jewish history from biblical times, including promises that the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) will inherit the land of Canaan, the process of Jewish settlement of the land, and various persecutions and forced movements of population. Despite the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE and the creation of diaspora Jewish communities in the former Roman Empire, there continued to be Jewish communities in Israel (called Palestine by the Romans) until the present. This included the retention of important Jewish intellectual centers.

Thousands of Jews in Jerusalem were killed by the Crusaders in 1099, who accused them of helping the Arabs. During the later Middle Ages, the holy sites in the land and particularly Jerusalem were the focus of pilgrimages, and the Jews who lived in Palestine were supported by charitable donations from diaspora communities. References to Israel, Jerusalem, and Zion, and the hoped for return, occur prolifically throughout Jewish liturgy and sacred texts, and the direction of prayer has been towards Jerusalem following a verse in Daniel (6: 11).

In the sixteenth century the northern city of Safed became an important intellectual center, with leading scholars of all traditionalist aspects of Jewish thought among its inhabitants, and this became a significant model for later Cultural Zionism. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the pace of Jewish return to Israel speeded up with the expansion of the settlements of pious Jews (Hasidim and also followers of the Vilna Gaon), particularly in Safed, Tiberias, and Jerusalem. The Hibbat Zion (Love of Zion) movement was prominent in supporting such settlements philanthropically. Later in the nineteenth century, in the face of persistent pogroms and other persecution in the European diaspora, Zionist passion assumed a new, politicized form, sometimes

known as “synthetic” Zionism, with active attempts to achieve a political solution and to develop and support Jewish agricultural settlements. “Cultural” Zionism developed Jewish national awareness and support for the Jewish homeland among diaspora Jews. Landmarks in the history of modern Zionism include the first Zionist congress in 1897 in Switzerland; the Balfour Declaration (1917), asserting the support of the British government for a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine; the founding of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1925; the UN vote to partition the land between Arabs and Jews (1947), followed by war since the Arabs did not accept the partition; and the declaration of the state of Israel (1948). This beleaguered state remains the focus of Jewish immigration from all parts of the diaspora and also of hostility and repeated attacks from surrounding Arab neighbors. Zionist philosophy has continued to develop pragmatically in response to these developments (Seliktar 1983).

Secular forms of Zionism, sometimes with a socialist flavor, sometimes purely nationalist, proposed that Jewish religious observance was needed to preserve Jewish identity and longing for Zion only while in the diaspora. But once in the Jewish state, Jews were said to no longer need religious observance in order to maintain their identity as Jews. Some observers of the contemporary Israeli scene believe that secular Zionism is no longer the force that it once was, and love of the land is tempered by the complex political difficulties with Arab neighbors, particularly the urgent need to keep peace and survive. Thus, modern secular Zionism may entail a willingness to make territorial concessions for the sake of peace. Religious Zionism is based on the philosophy of Rabbi Kook (e.g., 2005) and involves settlements in territories that fall within the biblically defined boundaries of Israel. Religious Zionism is associated with the view that national security is best served by preserving the biblical boundaries.

## Zionist Attitudes

Anti-Zionist attitudes have been noted among Jews. Some strictly orthodox Jews, mainly

associated with the Satmar group of Hasidim, believe that the time for the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel is premature and can only happen after the coming of the Messiah. At another point on the religious spectrum, early Reform Judaism eliminated references to Jerusalem, Israel, and Zionism from its liturgy in an attempt to produce truly acculturated citizens of Germany. However, the founding of the State induced a contrary trend. Attitudes which are generally consistent with Zionism have been reported among the majority of Jews. In Seliktar’s (1980) study, 75–81 % of the 700 young Israelis surveyed were committed to each of the five aspects of Zionist ideology (enumerated below). The majority of American Jews in Cohen and Kelman’s (2007) survey considered that “attachment to Israel is an important part of being Jewish,” though the percentages agreeing with this statement varied with age, being higher among older Jews: 80 % of the over-65s and 60 % of the under-35 s agreed.

The themes and concepts of Zionism have had a strong impact outside Judaism. In the United States, Zionism is an important feature of fundamentalist Christianity, in which it is held that the settlement of Jews in Israel is foretold by biblical prophecy and is a precursor to the coming of the Messiah. This in turn has impacted on foreign policy attitudes (Cummergen 2000). In sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Swaziland, Zionism is widely practiced as a religion. African Zionism was based originally on Christianity but incorporates many indigenous practices and beliefs including animism (Guth et al. 2000).

There has been much debate about whether anti-Zionism is a form of anti-semitism: Wistrich (2004), for example, has argued that the delegitimization and defamation of Israel in the Muslim world, and among sections of both the political Left and radical Right, has promoted a revival of anti-semitism worldwide, leading to a rise in anti-semitic attacks.

## Zionism and Psychology

What light can the psychology of religion throw on Zionism? There has been negligible study of

Zionism as such by psychologists of religion. Nevertheless, there are psychological perspectives which may be brought to bear on Zionism among Jews.

Territorial claims are often strongly bound up with national and religious identity: social identity theory offers important discussions on this theme (e.g., Hewstone and Stroebe 2001).

Band (2005) has discussed the dilemmas faced by religious Zionists in relation to their identities, amid the political complexities of twenty-first-century Israel. For example, their pragmatic and religiously founded wish for peace conflicts with their pragmatic and religiously founded need to maintain the boundaries of Israel.

The frequent Jewish liturgical and textual references to Israel and Zion reinforce the package of Jewish identity, spirituality, and love of the land. In Jewish sacred texts, the land of Israel is given to the Jews and said to be imbued with a special level of holiness (e.g., Genesis 15:18; 2 Chronicles 6: 5–6; Shneur Zalman of Liadi, 1796–1973) and given by God to the Jewish people. There are many specific religious commandments associated with the land, for example, relating to its agricultural produce, such as observance of the sabbatical year, specific blessings to be pronounced on fruits for which Israel is renowned, and the priestly blessing, recited daily in Israel, and only on festivals in the diaspora. The quantity and spiritual force of biblical and other references to the sacredness of Israel deserve closer study, perhaps using discourse or other linguistic analysis, particularly with the view to the question of the uniqueness of Zionism as a form of nationalist philosophy.

The possible impact of liturgical and religious textual references was supported in a careful study in political psychology examining the socialization of Zionist ideology among young Israelis: Seliktar (1980) studied the cognitive and affective aspects of five features of Zionist ideology – loyalty to the state of Israel, continuity (of Israel) across time; unity of the Jewish people; Israel as a Jewish national center; and the integrative role of the State of Israel (in absorbing new immigrants). Respondents indicated extent of agreement and of emotional commitment to

statements relating to these five features (e.g., “We should always think of Israel as a continuation of the ancient kingdom of Judea”). There were significant effects of family religious observance, and of religiosity of the school attended, on strength of commitment to Zionist ideology.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be seen that Zionism in all its forms contains powerful ideas about the sacred status of the land of Israel. Although the psychological and spiritual impact of Zionism has not been studied by psychologists of religion, there are conceptual frameworks – for example, in social identity theory, attitude theory, and forms of linguistic analysis – which may facilitate closer study.

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## See Also

- ▶ Judaism and Psychology
- ▶ Psychology of Religion

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## Zoroastrianism

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Zoroastrianism, also called Zarathustrism, Mazdeism, or Parsism, is the religion founded by Zoroaster in Ancient Persia, with approximately 150–250 thousand believers worldwide, mainly concentrated in India and Iran. It is in the *Zend-Avesta*, which literally means *Commentaries on Knowledge*, the holy book of Zoroastrianism, that one can find the principle assertions of this faith. The *Avesta* is divided in the three parts: *Yasna* (sacred *Liturgy* chapters), *Visperad*, *Vendidad* (constituted of purifications laws), and *Khorda*.

### Zoroaster's Early Life

Zoroaster (or Zarathustra, as He is known in the West or Zartosht in Persian) is the founder of Zoroastrianism, considered one of the first non-panteistic and monotheistic religions. Zoroaster apparently lived in ancient Persia, at an uncertain time in the first millennium before Christ. Joseph

Campbell (1991) describes Zoroaster as “the earliest prophet” (7–8). According to Fatheazám (1972), even at the age of 15, He was respected by His fellow countrymen because of His charity work and His kindness to the poor and to animals. At 20, He left His house, spending 7 years in solitude in a cave in the Persian mountains. His family origin, lineage, and the context of His birth are unknown; nonetheless, it is said that He was born of a virgin mother, like Krishna and Jesus. Campbell pinpoints the mythological birthplace of Zoroaster beside the river Daiti, in the central land of the “seven lands of the earth.”

### Zoroastrian Cosmology

Arguing that tradition stagnates and knowledge is movement, Zoroaster preached doubt and the need for inquiry to attain knowledge. At the age of 30, he received divine illumination through seven visions that confirmed Him as a demiurge. After 10 years of preaching, miracles, cures, and only one confirmed disciple (His own cousin), Zoroaster was incarcerated for disturbing tradition and for the influence and confusion His laws and spiritual and scientific principles caused among the people. Among these laws was the concept of spiritual duality or cosmic dualism, between the spirit of good Ahura Mazda (or Ormuzd) – meaning Supreme Knowledge – and the spirit of evil Ahriman, both preexistent spirits (according to Dual Theology), or twin brothers born of Zurvan (according to Zurvanism). From this dualism comes the “complete freedom of choice exerted by spirits and the consequent responsibility that corresponded entirely to this choice” (Ling 2005, pp. 87–88). It is this concept that would distinguish Zoroastrianism from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, inasmuch as individuals in Zoroastrianism were not mere receptacles of superior decisions, but the lords of their own destinies, free to act before life’s conditionings, what could be seen as “a vision of intentionality” (Frankl 2002, p. 214), “without the fundamental supposition that man, simply, ‘is’, but that he always decides what he is going to be at the

next moment” (Frankl 2001, p. 73). Decisions are individual responsibilities; hence, it is this individual responsibility that permits his spiritual, mental, and psychic growth.

Possibly the concept of duality is Zoroastrianism’s greatest contribution to modern civilization, manifesting itself in the manifold areas of human knowledge. It is, nevertheless, interesting to note that, perhaps due to Persia’s geographical and historical position, we have now what we could speak of as two forms of dualism: oriental dualism, characterized by the intrinsic relationship of good and evil, as in the case of yin and yang, the idea that inside good there is evil, and vice versa, according to the principles of mutations; and occidental dualism, in which evil and good are inter-excluding, until, for instance, the final victory of God over the Devil. In the field of psychology, one can find examples of human duality in such concepts as Rotter’s internal and external loci of control, Freud’s principle of pleasure vs. principle of reality, Piaget’s symbolic and logical thoughts, Jung’s anima and animus, Nuttin’s object-mean and object-end, and Roger’s ideal and real self, among others. It is important to underline, however, that these examples are not mere replicas of Zoroastrian dualism. Rather, they are simply useful to illustrate that human thought structure appears to be rooted in the concept of categorization by opposition, a reflection of Zoroastrian cosmology.

## Human and Social Progress

Another traditional Zoroastrian element, as quoted here from the *Zend-Avesta*, is the need of three things for human progress: “I celebrate my praises for good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. . . . With chanting praises I present all good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, and with rejection I repudiate all evil thoughts, and words, and deeds” (Mills 1898, Chap. 11, No. 17). In short, the three elements – thoughts, words, and actions – should be coherent and congruent. This idea can be found in the lines of Rogerian psychological thought, which postulates the principle of congruence as based on the

need of the therapist to feel and express these feelings to the client, as in the work of Messer and Winokur (1980) whose objective is to be able to help the patient to convert *insight* into action.

In Christianity, in the words of Saint James (2:17) “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” and, in the Bahá’í religion in a text that Bahá’u’lláh forwards to a Zoroastrian, “Words must be supported by deeds, for deeds are true test of words. Without the former, the latter can never quench the thirst of the yearning soul.”

The effect of Zoroaster’s vision was stupendous in human history. It allowed the moral, agricultural, and economic development of Persian society, inasmuch as its assumptions were based on logic and ethics. Zoroastrianism’s best known symbol is fire, an example of the articulation between the material and the immaterial spheres: fire symbolizes true human integrity, in which Zoroastrian psychology is rooted. It is by observing the virtues of fire, the symbol of constancy, purity, and sustainability of life created by Ahura Mazda, endowed with movement and creative capacity, that human beings can obtain a true example to follow.

In this sense, hell could not be a place dominated by fire, but by a state of pain:

On the very first time when that deed has been done, without waiting until it is done again, down there in hell. The pain for that deed shall be as hard as any in this world: even as if one should cut off the limbs from his perishable body with knives of brass, or still worse; down there the pain for that deed shall be as hard as any in this world: even as if one should nail doubtful his perishable body with nails of brass, or still worse; down there the pain for that deed shall be as hard as any in this world: even as if one should by force throw his perishable body headlong down a precipice a hundred times the height of a man, or still worse; down there the pain for that deed shall be as hard as any in this world: even as if one should by force impale his perishable body, or still worse (Darmesteter 1898a, Fargard 4, IVb, No. 49–53).

Hell is a state and not a place, because it is a consequence of incorrect thoughts, words, and actions that should be prevented before they happen again:

The first step that the soul of the wicked man made, laid him in the Evil-Thought Hell; the second step that the soul of the wicked man made, laid him in

the Evil-Word Hell; the third step that the soul of the wicked man made, laid him in the Evil-Deed Hell; the fourth step that the soul of the wicked man made, laid him in the Endless Darkness (Darmesteter 1898b, [2], No. 33).

A wise person, therefore, is defined as one who chooses the path of good thoughts, says good words and practices good actions, and does not possess useless thoughts, speak lies, or practice unjust actions.

At the social level, Zoroastrianism is perhaps the first religion to recognize total equality among all, regardless of creed, race, or gender. Zoroaster was also the author of a chart of animal rights and taught that forests should be open and lands cultivated. At an individual level, He also implemented five daily obligatory prayers, preceded, each one, by ablution.

### Zoroastrian Influence in the West

Zoroastrian cosmology, philosophy, and faith have had definite historical influence. In Christian culture, besides the previously described confluence, we find in a brief passage in Matthew (2:1–13) the figure of the wise men or three kings, possibly members of the sacerdotal order of Magi who, according to some historians, were looking for the “Holy Saoshyant” (Visperad, 22:1), an awaited prophet. Historical sources would mention different versions, describing the Magi as being from Persia, Arabia, Chaldea, Yemen, China, and other oriental regions, but the term “Magi” itself suggests the astronomically oriented sacerdotal/philosophical order that articulated, syncretically, Zoroastrianism with its preceding paganism. Ancient paintings and mosaics depicted the Magi in Persian outfits, as in the cases of the Basilica of San Vitale and the Basilica of Sant’ Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, the Nativity Church in Jerusalem, and Rome’s subterranean catacombs.

During the first century of the Christian era, another development of Zoroastrianism resulted from a meeting of Persian and Roman traditions. The result was a form of Mithraism, in which Mithra and Ahura Mazda seemed to be associated

with the Gods Apollo and Zeus, respectively. This new movement became popular among the Roman soldiers who propagated it, through their legions, in Britain, Germany, and elsewhere (Zeppegno 1980). The sense of fraternity, hope for a new and better life, and equality among all humans before one single God of love seems to have captivated parts of the Roman population (Spoto 1995). For Romans, Mithra was a divinity born from immaculate conception, on December 25th, the day of the winter solstice, the same day that, later on, was defined as the birthday of Jesus. Thus, Zoroastrianism possesses influence, even if indirect, in the context of the yet-to-be-born Christian theology.

In the Hellenic and Greek world, it has been suggested that Socrates was in contact with Zoroastrian clergymen, and also with Hebrews in Palestine, assimilating, there, the principles of divine unity and the soul’s immortality, concepts foreign until that period to his own cultural background. In his turn, Heraclitus defined *arché* (world’s constituent element) as fire and described both divine reality and human existence as possessing dual vision by affirming that *we descend and don’t descend in the same rivers* or that *God is day-night, winter-summer, war-peace, satiety-hunger*.

### See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Bahá’í Faith](#)
- ▶ [Bahá’í: A Psychological Perspective](#)
- ▶ [Campbell, Joseph](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Jesus](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Locus of Control](#)
- ▶ [Monotheism](#)
- ▶ [Pantheism](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)
- ▶ [Taoism](#)

- ▶ [Virgin Birth](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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