Scandinavian Psychology of Religion: Past, Present and Future: A Personal Account

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W hen I talk of Scandinavia, I am really referring to the Nordic countries, a concept that emerged in the period following the second World War. Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland developed into a special passport-free area, with the right to move between the five countries and work in any of them. In the cultural sphere, as well as in the educational sector, there are many co-ordinating organs. These five countries have thus come to form a kind of common area which we like to emphasize. In more recent years, however, the European Union has to some extent split this area: Norway and Iceland have remained completely outside, whilst only Finland is currently a member of the EMU, or European Monetary Union.

Regarding psychology of religion in this area, it is something of an anachronism to refer to it in the period before the second World War since the region was not yet unified. Because of the fairly homogenous current situation, however, I would like to try and describe the psychology of religion there anyway, reviewing its origins and present situation, as well as speculating a little on how the future might look. But first of all, a few words about my own background and training.

I therefore carried a strong religiosity in my cultural baggage when, as a nineteen-year-old, I began to study theology at Åbo Akademi University. These were years of intense study, but years of intense student social life, too. Singing and music took up much of my time as a student.

The theological studies naturally questioned my entire religious tradition. There was biblical exegesis, which scrutinized tourism, although agriculture also plays an important role. On this island I grew up, went to school and passed my matriculation exam. My religious background was Pentecostal; other churches and congregations also influenced my upbringing, but it was the Pentecostal movement that I grew up in. My spiritual formation in the 1950s in a fairly small Pentecostal congregation of about a hundred members was – seen in today’s perspective – emphatically marked by strong feelings, conversion piety and apocalyptic tones. Speaking in tongues, prophecy, faith healing, visions and other revelations were not uncommon. And I identified strongly with all this during my formative years.

Positioning

I grew up on the island of Åland – Ahvenanmaa as it is called in Finnish – an autonomous Swedish-speaking region of Finland, with its own parliament and its own “government.” Åland is situated between Sweden and Finland and has a population today of about 25,000. The region is dependent on shipping and
the texts, making them seem highly human and flawed. There were church history and dogmatics, which illustrated the equally human history of the Christian church and its conflicts in matters of doctrine. It was not easy to retain anything of my childhood faith in all this academic universe. And I was stuck for a long time with the idea that I would never study the spiritual environment I had grown up in. I thought it was all too close to me.

But I was encouraged by one of my professors to take on the history of the Pentecostal movement in Finland, anyway. I carried out comprehensive fieldwork, above all in Swedish-speaking Finland, writing about the Pentecostal movement’s doctrine, spiritual life and entire development in the Nordic countries. Eventually, my research came to focus specifically on speaking in tongues (glossolalia). I made comprehensive field studies and recorded 200-300 religious meetings, analysing the glossolalia I encountered there as carefully as possible. In this context, I used linguistic methods and was able to show that glossolalia was a kind of abracadabra language bearing close similarities to the speaker’s own, although sometimes incorporating ingredients from other languages less familiar to the speaker.

Eventually I grew closer to the real core of the problem. I wanted to study the actual spiritual experience known as baptism in the Holy Spirit and examine its relationship to glossolalia. For this purpose I applied to Uppsala University, in Sweden, where the only Nordic psychologist of religion was then active. This was Professor Hjalmar Sundén. I became the last graduate student he supervised and submitted my dissertation in 1976. My doctoral dissertation dealt with experiences among Swedish-Finnish Pentecostalists of baptism in the Holy Spirit. In order to explain and understand these experiences, I used the role theory developed by Sundén, although the social constructivism of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann was also important.

Now I had scientifically analysed and, to a certain extent, explained the divine realities passed on to me in my formative years. I had moved a long way away from a spontaneous and purely spiritual approach to the great religious issues. All this was a painful process, but at the same time something I felt to be extremely necessary. I could not see any way back, but had to explain and understand the whole spiritual reality I had been given as a child. I had to see, analyse and understand, as far as possible, every personal and ecstatic experience.

The psychology of religion was of great help to me in this context. It dealt with central issues in the world of religion, the actual individual experience, often the most sensitive and personal thing we possess. And that was precisely what I wanted: to get to the mystical and ecstatic experience, see how it arose, describe the significance it assumed in a person’s life and understand how one could co-exist with it over the course of a long life.

At this point I had gone so far in my analysis of spirituality that everything seemed purely human. The supernatural element of religion, in other words, had practically disappeared. I did not, however, remain at this stage in my development. But before I continue my personal account of what the psychology of religion has meant for me and how I have tried to develop it, I shall say a few words about the discipline in the Nordic countries in general. I will return later to how psychology of religion has helped me personally.

Nordic Psychology of Religion during the First Half of the 20th Century

At the beginning of the 20th century there was great interest among theologians and students of religion in mysticism and intense experiences. Large revivalist movements had swept over the Christian countries, ecstatic experiences had been reported from various places and personal conversion was something very central to several Christian churches. Spiritism and such movements as theosophy and anthroposophy also contributed to this interest in the supernatural, whilst from India came reports of the remarkable things performed by gurus and sad-
hus. And when the Pentecostal movement made its world-wide breakthrough at the beginning of the twentieth century, glossolalia, prophecy and faith healing became much publicised phenomena.

After psychology had freed itself from philosophy some time in the middle, or towards the end of, the 19th century, religious experiences became central areas of research for the young academic discipline of psychology. We eventually got something which can be called psychology of religion. We all know how this field of research emerged in Germany and the USA, and it was precisely conversions, mysticism and ecstasy, which often attracted the attention of the first psychologists of religion. The people who became interested in these things in the Nordic countries were frequently theologians and students of religion. There was only a highly marginal interest in religious questions among those who represented mainstream psychology at this time. There are many reasons for this, but one important one was that everything connected with religion was the province of theologians and students of religion. There was thus a fairly strong territorial demarcation between subjects.

A decisive influence on the whole Nordic development of psychology of religion was provided by Nathan Söderblom. Söderblom had studied religious history at the Sörbonne in Paris and specialized in ancient Persian religion. He was nevertheless widely read and kept up with advances in the new discipline of psychology of religion. In 1901 he became professor at the University of Uppsala. There he was decisive for the development not only of the whole subject of religious studies but also for the psychological study of religion. He did not personally write much about psychology of religion, but he introduced a distinction between “infinity” mysticism, which was to be found above all in India, and personality mysticism, which was present in Christianity, Judaism and Islam. His interest in matters of psychology of religion nevertheless inspired several of his students, among whom special mention may be made of Tor Andrae, who wrote about mysticism and religious sensibility. His major work on mysticism, Mystikens psykologi [The Psychology of Mysticism], from 1926, is a comprehensive account of current research into mysticism, together with personal theoretical contributions. He distinguished, above all, between possession and inspiration, seeing mysticism as essentially a matter of inspiration. Since this work was written in Swedish, it never obtained the international attention it deserved.

After the Pentecostal movement won a footing in Sweden at the beginning of the 20th century and achieved notable success, research began into the real nature of glossolalia. Interesting contributions were made by, among others, the psychiatrist, B. Gadelius, the comparative religionist, E. Briem and the church historian, E. Linderholm. Many tended to view the phenomenon in relation to psychiatric cases and mental care. Individuals who spoke in tongues were thus regarded as having weak minds and representing “hysterical personality doubling.”

At Uppsala University, however, interest in psychology of religion advanced. The subject was bracketed with the general history of religion in the faculty of theology. It was not until 1967 that the university acquired a separate chair in the psychology of religion. As I have already mentioned, it was Hjalmar Sundén who obtained this chair, but now I am getting a little ahead of my time.

To shift our perspective slightly: the advance of depth psychology in the Nordic countries was fairly slow; it took a long time before the ideas of Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustaf Jung received serious attention. The earliest scholars in this field included Harald and Kristian Schjelderup in Norway. Harald was a psychologist, while his brother Kristian was a theologian and psychotherapist, who had also studied with Oskar Pfister in Switzerland. Above all, the two brothers studied religious experiences, finding various types. They thus made an early contribution to the classification of religious experiences.

In Sweden there was also the figure of Poul Bjerre, with his interest in depth...
psychology. He had been in contact with Sigmund Freud, but then went his own way in therapy at home in the Stockholm region. He was a prolific writer of more popular scientific works and made highly critical pronouncements about the Church and Christianity. He stressed that people had a mental self-healing process, just as they had a physiological one.

In Finland, a Finnish professor of theology, Aarni Voipio, became interested in the Finnish phenomenon of somnambulism, preaching in an ecstatic state, or so-called sleeping preachers. For several centuries in Finland there had periodically been women who entered a state of trance and then preached and prophesied in an elevated language. Audiences often understood this as a major miracle, something an uneducated young woman could never achieve by her own ability. Voipo’s work on this phenomenon appeared at the beginning of the 1920s, when one specific sleeping preacher of this kind was highly topical. Her name was Maria Åkerblom, and she was widely noted for her remarkable escapes from prisons, where she has been interned for a series of thefts and conspiracy to commit murder.

One figure in Finland who became interested in religion and developmental psychology was Jan Gästrin. In his doctoral dissertation from 1936 Gästrin used empirical material and took advantage of the theoretical advances made in psychology of religion, above all in the USA and on the European continent. He would later come to work as a psychologist in Sweden.

Research into mysticism, which had received a positive impulse from William James, James B. Pratt, James H. Leuba, Théodore Flournoy and others, took an interesting turn in Finland, in the person of Hans Ruin who, in the field of comparative literature, wrote a work entitled Poesins mystik [The Mysticism of Poetry]. This contained a broad survey of current myth studies in relation to psychology of religion and showed that there were parallels to mystical experiences in poetry, both in the texts themselves and in those who read poetry.

In Denmark there was already a major name in psychology of religion at the beginning of the 20th century. This was due to Harald Höfding, who in his work on the philosophy of religion paid great attention to issues connected with psychology of religion. He was well up with the research of his time, and his study, Oplevelse og tydning [Experience and Interpretation] from 1914, developed a personal research programme in psychology of religion. Another figure from Denmark who should be mentioned in this context is Villiam Grønbaeck, who belonged to the so-called Dorpat or experimental school. He was also for a time, during the 1960s, chairperson of the Internationale Gesellschaft für Religionspsychologie [the International Association for Psychology of Religion]. As early as 1935, he had written Om beskrivelse of religiøse opleveler [On the Description of Religious Experiences], where he analysed how experiences are remembered — what in more modern terminology has come to be called retention.

To summarize, we may note that, in the first half of the 20th century, scholars from the USA and continental Europe were well-known to a number of researchers and other figures in the Nordic countries. The latter also made their own significant contributions within mysticism research, developmental psychology and — to a certain extent — depth psychology. Interest in the psychological study of religion was nevertheless something mainly found among theologians and scholars of religion. This is a point which should be emphasized, since to a certain extent it distinguishes the Nordic countries from many other areas, where psychology of religion is studied by psychologists and social scientists.

Nordic Psychology of Religion during the Second Half of the 20th Century

After the second World War it took a long time before psychology of religion could be re-established. The mainly German-speaking Internationale Gesellschaft für Religionspsychologie had been obliged to suspend its activities during the war.
Nazi ideology and Barthianism in theology did not look kindly on psychology of religion as an academic subject. It was not until the 1960s that the above-named society for the study of psychology of religion could resume its conference activity and its publication of Archiv für Religionspsychologie [Archives of Psychology of Religion] and then under inspiration from Catholic circles. A leading figure in the resumption of activity was the Catholic bishop and professor, Wilhelm Keilbach, in Germany.

In the Nordic countries, the initiation of genuine research into psychological questions on religious studies was a very slow business. There was a clear suspicion towards such issues among theologians and philosophers. Among theologians there was an unwillingness to analyse religion in psychological terms, because in this way divine activity was “humanized,” whilst for many philosophers, especially those holding agnostic views, religion was not worthy of psychological study. It therefore took a long time before research in these areas got started, especially in Denmark, Norway and Finland. And when it eventually began to take its first steps, it was highly dependent on developments in Sweden. There, as I have already indicated, psychology of religion received a fresh impetus with Hjalmar Sundén. I will now therefore give a more detailed account of his contribution.

Hjalmar Sundén

Sundén was born in 1908 and died in late 1993, that is, almost ten years ago. He studied theology at the University of Uppsala and obtained his doctorate in 1940 with a dissertation on the religious philosophy of Henri Bergson. Sundén had also studied in Paris, where he had interviewed Bergson about the development of his religious philosophy. He was particularly interested in the sources of Bergson’s philosophy. He was able to demonstrate that Bergson—in most of what he wrote—referred to and commented on current work in psychology of religion, even if not always explicitly saying so. Sundén thus acquired a very wide knowledge of philosophy and psychology of religion in his day.

After completing his doctorate, Sundén could not obtain a university post, but worked as a teacher of religion and psychology in various schools in the Stockholm region. On a purely personal level, however, he was unable to abandon psychology of religion and continued to work on the problems it presented. He also studied social psychology as it existed in the mid-1950s, as well as perception psychology and depth psychology. Towards the end of the 1950s, he wrote his magnum opus, Religionen och Rollerna [Religion and Roles], which appeared for the first time in 1959 (Sundén 1966). This work was written in Swedish and is almost 600 pages long. It has been translated into German, but not—unfortunately—into English.

Religionen och rollerna (1959/1966) sparked off discussion of psychology of religion in Sweden with a vengeance. Efforts were made to obtain a personal professorship for Sundén at the University of Uppsala, and the Swedish parliament even decided to found a chair for him at this university. This happened, as I have explained, in 1967. Sundén had then written several works in psychology of religion, including a study of children and religion and another about old age. He later produced a monograph on St. Birgitta of Sweden and yet another on Zen and the Koan method, as well as several in which he used creative literature as material.

The creation of the chair in Uppsala initiated a boom for the whole subject, one might even say throughout the Nordic region. Various scholars were drawn to Sundén from the Nordic countries, and I was among these. At the beginning of the 1970s, then, I studied at Uppsala and obtained a doctorate—as I have already mentioned—for a dissertation on glossolalia and baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Sundén has become known for his so-called role theory, as the title of his major work suggests. I would nevertheless like

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to point out that he was by no means exclusively devoted to role psychology. He was at least equally interested in depth psychology in all its different forms and used theories from every area in his own work. Role psychology nevertheless became his trademark, and I would therefore like to discuss it at a little greater length. It should also be noted that nearly all the students supervised by him used this theoretical perspective. It is for this reason, among others, that his role theory has become known.

In his study of psychology of religion Sundén noted that there was a tendency among early 20th-century scholars to ignore the significance of tradition at the origins of religious experience. Such scholars liked to stress a religious experience a priori and argue that such experiences arose spontaneously if the external conditions for them were created. Sundén inverted the whole question and asked instead what tradition and religious learning meant for the origin of such experiences. He then found that religious personalities had often read themselves thoroughly into the Bible’s stories and other religious literature. He noted that it was important for people to be able to identify their experiences as part of a holy tradition, one that went back to the time of early Christianity. If one therefore studied accounts by contemporary men and women of their spiritual experiences, one saw that they often used a language which could be traced back to sacred texts of different kinds. Consequently, Sundén claimed, it was necessary to study closely what these individuals had absorbed before they underwent their spiritual experiences.

He then began to combine perception psychology and role psychology. Perception psychology had taught us that there are certain laws for how we understand and interpret stimuli received by our sense organs. We cannot then, with our nervous systems, understand all the stimuli that reach us, and we cannot ascribe meaning to everything going on around us. We learn certain interpretive patterns and, with the help of these, impose order on our experiential world. Religious narratives, according to Sundén, could also represent interpretive patterns of this kind. Many religious narratives in the sacred texts are of a kind where human beings enter into direct contact with God; they recount how people have previously understood God’s call and how they have reacted to it. Role psychology had taught us that we humans — in the context of social relations — assume certain roles ascribed to us by the environment. We thus play out these roles more or less completely. In this way, we become members of a group, are able to act independently and thereby acquire an identity.

If one transfers this to the religious sphere, it may be said that the narratives in the sacred texts can act as models and may also, in certain situations, function as perceptual patterns. Religious experiences could therefore be understood as the result of normal psychological processes within perception—and role psychology. It should be noted that the roles are taken from a whole complex of mythical narratives and that a strongly internalized myth can function as a perception pattern when the motivation for this is strong. Through a number of historical examples Sundén could also show that there was a clear preparedness for spiritual experiences in people who had left accounts of other strong experiences. They had quite simply become objects of a learning process which meant that they carried memory material which could be activated by a particular situation. Such situations were often anxiety-ridden or dangerous in nature. They were turning-points in people’s lives or points in time when something unexpected and incomprehensible could happen. In a situation of this kind all the learned memory material could be activated and become a perception model that structured the experience. Sundén showed that the individual often took on the human role in a sacred narrative, but simultaneously adopted the role of God. The latter role would structure the perception so that it was understood as something happening like an intervention from a supernatural power, from God. One undergoes a phase shift, as it were, entering a realm of spiritual experiences, where one sees the world in another light and with other eyes. In other words, one has a religious experience that can be decisive. After such an experience, one enters another phase.
shift and returns to a more everyday experiential world.

This effectively simple scheme where the roles have been freed from the immediate social environment and transferred instead to the mythical plane, but where they can still function in special situations as perception models, is Sundén’s role theory in simple terms. Role theory has been misunderstood by some people, but several of Sundén’s pupils have tried to apply it to the understanding of various religious realities. Thorvald Källstad used the theory to explain the experiences of John Wesley, Owe Wikström used it in order to understand old people’s experience of God’s guidance and Johan Unger tried to systematize the theory in his doctoral dissertation on different ways of experiencing God.

I myself used the theory to understand how the experience of baptism in the Holy Spirit occurred among Pentecostals. I was thus able to demonstrate that the Bible contains a clear account of the Whitsun miracle, when tongues of fire touched the disciples and they began to speak in foreign tongues, which those who had come to Jerusalem recognized as their own language but which no disciples had ever learned. This strange miracle then gave rise to the origins of the Christian church and the celebration of Whitsun. There were, in other words, clear role models in the sacred text for Pentecostalists. If one identified with this narrative and also had people in one’s immediate surroundings who spoke in tongues, then it was fairly easy to take on this behaviour oneself. The psychological inhibitions had to be overcome and this often occurred in a group context, during intercession and the laying-on of hands. It was then possible to adopt this behaviour, which is actually fairly easy for anyone who has learned a foreign language. It is simply a matter of losing one’s inhibitions and using one’s linguistic apparatus in a slightly novel and uncontrolled way. The result is a kind of abracadabra speech, based on one’s mother tongue and occasionally incorporating features from more exotic languages. Taking on this behaviour is easier for children than for old people. The effects of such speech in spiritual contexts are often very positive for the individual in question. He or she obtains a much longed for spiritual experience, becomes an object of God’s attention and — through the event — becomes at the same time a “fully worthy” Pentecostalist. The individual has, in other words, entered the role of “the one baptised in the Holy Spirit.” The capacity for speaking in tongues often remains, so that this person, by means of individual or group intercession, can speak in tongues at will. The effects are similar to what may be observed in connection with meditation. One becomes relaxed and has the force to move on with one’s life.

I had now therefore produced a psychological analysis and “explanation” of the very holiest of Pentecostalist experiences. The process could be seen exclusively as product of human activity and the human nervous system. It is also symptomatic of Sundén’s role theory that a number of people regard it as explaining away divine agency, while others can see its potential for religious experiences. But now, before I go on with my own relations to these questions, I would like to comment briefly on the state of psychology of religion in the Nordic countries today.

The Current State of Psychology of Religion in the Nordic Countries

There are no chairs specifically for psychology of religion in any other Nordic country except Sweden. The Sundén chair at the University of Uppsala was made permanent after its first holder retired. It was then occupied by Thorvald Källstad and is currently held by Owe Wikström. Wikström in recent years has been working in areas of popular science, where he likes to emphasize the positive effects of religion — as well as music — on people. At the same university, Valerie DeMarinis, because of her expertise above all in cross-cultural therapy, has been given full professorial status. The University of Uppsala thus has two professors in the subject. At the University of Lund in Southern Sweden there

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In Scandinavia we have begun to speak of the phenomenon of “God’s grandchildren,” individuals who have acquired a negative attitude towards religion because of an often strict upbringing.

In Finland we do not have any specific chair in psychology of religion, but at Åbo Academi University I have tried personally to promote interest in the field through my general chair in religious studies. Beside my work on glossolalia, I have also made empirical studies of intense experiences and mysticism, as well as young people’s life views. When I studied intense experiences I used the tests elaborated by Ralph W. Hood, Jr. My collaboration with the psychologist Kaj Björkqvist has resulted in a number of studies analysing the worldviews of the modern individual. Also active in my department is Siv Illman, who works mainly with depth psychology theories in relation to social influences, using material from creative literature.

At the University of Helsinki there are chairs in the pedagogics of religion and church sociology. The former position was previously held by Kalevi Tamminen, who has devoted himself to developmental psychology and religion, and has written several works in this area. Particularly appreciated are his broad overviews in English. In the same department, the interest in questions of developmental psychology continues. Recently Antti Räsänen completed a dissertation on the stage thinking of F. Oser. Pertti Yli-Vainio and Antti Oksanen, on the other hand, have worked on issues of developmental psychology seen from the perspective of attachment theory. Both of these scholars completed their doctoral dissertations in Sweden. Eila Helander is currently active in church sociology, writing about female evangelists and otherwise showing an interest in questions bordering on social psychology. Within practical theology, there is an interest in pastoral questions where psychology of religion is used in a therapeutic context.

Nordic Psychology of Religion in the Future

Psychology of religion in the Nordic countries has widely varying status. Sweden, with its three chairs, obviously occupies a special position. We may say that great responsibility rests with these three chairs if the subject is to flourish and become...
established. Owe Wikström gains much good will for the subject through his popular books and lectures in various contexts. Valerie DeMarinis’ orientation towards cross-cultural issues is important in today’s world, where immigration continues to increase. And Antoon Geels at Lund is working on issues connected with mysticism. He often does this in a world-wide perspective and has a good knowledge of religions in Asia.

There is, in other words, potential in Sweden for good research in the field. The theoretical aspects could be developed more, while very little research using tests and statistics has been carried out in recent years. There is currently a more qualitative and empathic direction in research and teaching. This is also quite natural in a situation where the subject is included in theological faculties. Teaching programmes here seldom have space for methodical study with the help of tests and statistics.

The other Nordic countries have shown, as suggested, more sporadic interest in psychology of religion. Everything depends on the interest of particular individuals for the subject. It would be important for the subject to develop on the academic level, but the prospects here are not encouraging in the present economically strained situation of today’s universities. We can only hope that people will emerge in different places and within different disciplines to take up research in this field. There are good signs of this in both Finland and Norway.

**My Final Position**

It is now time to gather the personal threads I have been spinning. I had thus scrutinized and analysed the holiest of Pentecostal experiences: baptism in the Holy Spirit and glossolalia. So now I could explain and understand the phenomenon from a scientific perspective, but I didn’t just leave things at that.

The major and often dramatic experiences which I had analysed with the help of Sundén’s role theory, and which clearly go back to the sacred text of the Bible, are not so frequent in today’s world. We have undergone a strong process of secularization, which has meant that the great traditions are no longer widely known. But human beings still have experiences of a spiritual kind, even if they are not so clearly identifiable within a given tradition, as Sundén’s role theory assumes. How, then, is one then to understand the phenomenon?

When one considers the modern human condition, it becomes apparent that people need a communication system which relates to existence on a deeper plane. We humans are not satisfied taking objects and things quite simply as natural realities. We need a symbolic language which captures the most profound aspects of human experience. Such a symbolic language has traditionally been provided by religions. These offer formulations on the cognitive plane and possess ritual or behavioural forms of expression. In today’s pluralistic world people often encounter such formulations and rites from different traditions. We can mix up religions in a way that makes theologians and scholars shudder; but we do it anyway. And if we have not had any tradition passed on to us in our childhood or formative years, then we create for ourselves, anyway, concepts and rites relating to life and death, love and hate, faith and the lack of it, as well as many other things. In this context, the modern world provides a broad spectrum of pop music, films and other stimuli. The modern individual ranges over all this vast area, in search of a path, a path where good and evil, the loved and the hated, the intimate and the distant, the lasting and the fleeting, the valuable and the worthless are hammered out. We can say that human beings seek a path where certain things acquire a sacral dimension. It is a question of what one respects, what one turns to in difficult situations, what one wants to preserve and maintain. And in order to express all of this, one must have recourse to a symbolic language both at the verbal level and in terms of behavioural models. Such symbols can be borrowed from the pantheons of traditional religions, including devils, angels and eternal life, or else an equivalent is found in modern culture.

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To understand the interaction with symbolic worlds of this kind, one must accept the fact that these symbols are charged with memory material, feelings and experiences over the course of a long life. We store such memory material in an internalized world, which I have called inner existence space, and we can produce it on different occasions according to our needs. We then reinforce our experiences continuously and deepen them. We do this in relation to outer existence space, what our culture with its symbolic formations provides for us. When we find a deeper inner correspondence between our own symbolic representations and those ones offered in the culture around us; we undergo experiences which exalt and far transcend our immediate physical environment. We rise, as it were, above our experiences and feel that they go beyond what is immediately given. This can happen with poetry, song, music or dance and—yes—in any communicative processes at all, even in our own inner world. I have called this theoretical perspective integrated role theory. We take models from our cultural surroundings at the same time as we charge them with deeply rooted personal material in our inner existence space (Holm 1995; Holm 1997).

I would like to conclude by saying that all religion follows our physical and psychological laws. Religion is in this sense extremely human. Even the most fantastic and extraordinary occurrences can be given a satisfactory natural explanation. But what we cannot reach as social scientists is the individual’s inner world, the place where the experience is formed and where the transcendental process takes place. We can, as social scientists, analyse and predict the conditions for spiritual experiences, but we can never penetrate the deepest human level where the experiential processes take place. We must therefore always have complete respect for the experiences of the individual and understand that these experiences can be transcendental and go far beyond what one might imagine at a first glance. To use theological language: God can thus be born in a person’s inner world. We can study various aspects as a symbol of god, but we never reach the deepest core, which is the individual’s own precise world.

References

ANNOUNCEMENT

2004 Division 36 Mid-Winter Conference
Please visit the Division 36 website to find the latest news concerning our 2004 Midwinter Conference. You may access this to review conference highlights and other important membership information at <http://www.apa.org/divisions/div36/>.
The APA Council of Representatives met from February 20 to 22 in Washington, DC. APA President, Dr. Diane Halpern, began by describing three initiatives for her presidency. First, Dr. Halpern is establishing a best evidence data base for work-family interactions. Contemporary social and technological trends have resulted in rapid changes in the nature of families and the ways families negotiate work responsibilities. Psychologists have been involved in studies demonstrating the efficacy of family friendly workplaces, affordable childcare, and workplace stress reduction programs. Dr. Halpern hopes to make these findings and others more visible and accessible to employers and policy makers through a best evidence data base. Second, Dr. Halpern has an initiative to address needs of retiring psychologists. With the baby boomers approaching retirement age, the nature of the Association will change as a result, and Dr. Halpern desires us to be proactive in how we anticipate and respond to this coming demographic change. Dr. Halpern’s third initiative is titled, “Prejudice in any language,” and is an effort to make quality materials about prejudice available in multiple languages on the Internet. Her working group is collaborating with Dr. Scott Plous, coordinator of a major website, (www.understandingprejudice.org), to accomplish this goal.

Dr. Norman Anderson then presented his CEO report. He described a 2003 central office reorganization that creates more logical groupings of the various functions of APA, and then provided an update on his points of emphasis as CEO. These include increasing non-dues revenues, increasing the influence of psychology in the world, meeting science and practice in a multicultural nation and world, helping psychology expand its role and capitalize on new opportunities, and making APA an even better place to work. Dr. Anderson also announced the hiring of Dr. Steven Breckler as the new APA Executive Director for Science. Dr. Breckler, a social psychologist, comes to APA from the National Science Foundation.

In addition to working through the regular Council agenda, a potential controversy emerged on the first morning of Council meetings that required a significant amount of Council’s attention. On February 20 the Washington Post ran a brief article on the highest paid CEOs in Washington. Included in the list was the 2002 salary paid to Dr. Raymond Fowler. Though the Post listed Dr. Fowler’s salary as over $2 million — an amount sure to stir up concern among the Association — his actual salary and benefit package was just over 15% of this amount. Jack McKay, APA’s Chief Financial Officer, explained that the remainder of this amount was related to other funds due to Dr. Fowler at the conclusion of his employment, some of which were deferred from previous years of employment. Council discussed this matter in detail, and was assured that the Board of Directors handled Dr. Fowler’s compensation in a prudent manner. The Board has been diligent in bringing in outside consultants to assess CEO compensation.

Jack McKay presented the current financial situation of APA and the proposed 2004 budget, which Council approved. Last year (2003) was a good financial year for APA, with stock and real estate holdings showing substantial gains after some challenging years in 2001 and 2002. Both the revenues and expenses in the 2003 budget were slightly under budget, resulting in a modest budget surplus. A small budget surplus is also anticipated in 2004.

Council members divided into smaller break-out groups to discuss matters of importance to various constituency groups. Issues presented on behalf of Division 36 — discussed on the listserv of the Executive Committee prior to Council meetings — included research on religion and health, prejudice and violence as related to religious beliefs, and professional competence in issues of spirituality and religion. This break-out format is likely to continue in subsequent Council meetings, and we encourage Division 36 members to contact their Council Representatives to communicate issues of interest and concern.

A citation was given to Drs. Larke Nahme Huang and Deanna Yates for their work.

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Council Report
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on President Bush’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. Drs. Huang and Yates then presented some of the work and recommendations of the Commission. For more information on the Commission’s work, see www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.

Various business items were reviewed and approved. These included accepting reports from the APA Task Force on Advertising and Children, and adopting the Task Force’s recommendations as policy. Council also received the Early Mental Health Intervention Working Group’s *Addressing Missed Opportunities in Early Childhood Mental Health Interventions: Current Knowledge and Policy Implications* and adopted as policy the *APA Resolution on Children’s Mental Health* and COPA’s (Committee on Psychology and AIDS) *Resolution on HIV Prevention Strategies Involving Legal Access to Sterile Injection Equipment*.

Thank you for the opportunity to represent Division 36 to the APA Council of Representatives.

Mark R. McMinn
William L. Hathaway
Council Representatives
Candidate Statements for Division 36 Offices

For the Office of President

Mark J. Krejci

Mark J. Krejci is a professor of psychology at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota where he serves as department chair. He received his Ph.D. in counseling psychology from the University of Notre Dame in 1987. His research is related to cognitive conceptualizations of God and the use of spiritual strategies in psychotherapy. His recent publications include work on sexual trauma and spirituality, forgiveness in marital therapy, and a reflection from a therapeutic perspective on James’ Varieties of Religious Experience. In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Krejci has a small private practice and is a licensed psychologist in the state of Minnesota. He served as editor of the Division’s Psychology of Religion Newsletter from 1997 through 2002.

“I have enjoyed my service to the Division in the past and look forward to an opportunity to serve as President. Our Division offers needed opportunity for developing relationships with colleagues who are interested in religious and spiritual issues. In order to facilitate these academic relationships as well as to develop greater recognition for the work of our Division’s members, I will continue our mid-winter conference as a means to provide more opportunities for scholarly contact. The original intention was to move the conference to different areas of the country, and so I would use my year as President-elect to explore other locations that could provide a similar level of support that we have received from Loyola College in Maryland. As President, my major initiative would be to organize information for undergraduate students as they attempt to locate scholars in the Psychology of Religion with whom they could pursue graduate study. I am also interested in supporting the work of the Exploratory Committee on certification for clinical work with religious and spiritual issues.”

Mark R. McMinn

Mark R. McMinn received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Vanderbilt University in 1983. He currently is the Dr. Arthur P. Rech and Mrs. Jean May Rech Professor of Psychology at Wheaton College in Illinois where he teaches in the doctoral program in clinical psychology and directs the Center for Church-Psychology Collaboration. Dr. McMinn is a licensed clinical psychologist in Illinois and a Diplomate of the American Board of Professional Psychology in clinical psychology. He maintains an active research program in clergy-psychologist collaboration, and has many publications in Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, Journal of Psychology and Theology, Journal of Psychology and Christianity, and other journals. He has authored, co-authored, or co-edited 9 books pertaining to the relationship of psychology and faith including Psychology, Theology, and Spirituality in Christian Counseling; Care for the Soul: Exploring the Intersection of Psychology and Theology (co-edited with Timothy R. Phillips); and Spiritual Formation, Counseling, and Psychotherapy (co-edited with Todd W. Hall). Dr. McMinn has a small private practice which he limits to clergy and their families.

“It is an honor to be nominated for President of Division 36 at this particular time in the history of APA. APA members and affiliates have shown an increasing openness to spirituality and religion over the past decade, due

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in large part to the excellent work of our colleagues in Division 36. Like the broader APA community, Division 36 consists of a diverse group of professionals and scholars with various understandings of spirituality and differing faith commitments. This diversity and our common commitment to the rigorous study of religion and spirituality give Division 36 strength and relevance in these times of increasing openness to religious ways of knowing. Serving as a Division 36 representative to APA Council has enhanced my understanding of APA governance and allowed me to gain valuable experience on the Division 36 Executive Committee. If elected, it will be a privilege and a delight to continue in a leadership role within Division 36.

For the Office of Council Representative

Mary E. Reuder

Mary E. Reuder holds a Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, M.A from Brown University, and B.A. College of St. Catherine. Dr. Reuder is Professor Emerita and past Chair of the Psychology Department and Academic Senate at Queens College of CUNY. She also is a Fellow in APA Divisions 1, 2, 3, 32, 35, and 36; and a member of APA Divisions 5, 9, 10, 15, 20, 24, 26, and 52. She has a long history of participation and distinguished service in Division 36 as a charter member of Psychologists Interested in Religious Issues (charter name of Division 36); President (1987–88); Council Representative (1979–83, 1991–97, 1997–2002); and member of its Executive, Fellows, and Elections Committees. In APA Division 1, Mary served as President (1987–88) and as member of its Executive, Fellows (Chair), Bylaw, and Elections Committees. Mary served APA Division 52 in the capacity of the Fellows Committee Chair (1997–99). She also is a Fellow of the New York Academy of Science and past member of the National Board of Directors of Sigma Xi (1972–75, 1977).

“I believe that it is important that all aspects of the Psychology of Religion be represented on Council. Our senior representative is a strong representative of the clinical-theoretical aspect. My background would help to reinforce the science-research aspect. I also believe that my past experience with Division 36 provides me with a perspective on the goals of the Division as they relate to the activities of Council.”

William L. Hathaway

William L. Hathaway, Ph.D., completed his doctorate in clinical psychology at Bowling Green State University. His graduate work with Ken Pargament focused on religion and the coping process. He spent several years as an Air Force psychologist, completed a post-doctoral fellowship in clinical child psychology at University of Massachusetts Medical Center, and then joined the faculty at Regent University where he is currently program director and professor of psychology. He has been active in professional service as a past Division 36 Program Chair and current Council Representative (2002–2004), journal reviewer, and as a member of the licensing board for the state of Virginia. His recent research has addressed various topics in the clinical psychology of religion.

“Spiritual and religious functioning is an important domain of human adjustment which is only recently beginning to receive a commensurate level of attention in psychological scholarship. It has been exciting to see developments in this area over the last few decades, largely due to the work of Division 36 members. I have been honored to serve a term as a
Division 36 representative to the APA Council. I wish to express my gratitude to the Division for this opportunity. During this period, I sought out numerous opportunities to promote the interests of our Division. I advocated for an APA resolution of the footnote 4 issue with relevant leaders in the education directorate and committee on accreditation. I have been authorized by the Division to establish a committee that would facilitate APA recognition of a proficiency in working with religious/spiritual issues in clinical practice. APA now has a formal recognition process for proficiencies and specialties. Our division is ideally suited to facilitate a non-sectarian recognition process for professionals who have special proficiencies in this area of practice. My re-election for a second term would prove an invaluable networking aide for moving this recognition process forward.”

For the Office of Member-at-Large

Brenda Cole

Brenda Cole obtained her PhD (1999) at Bowling Green State University where she began her research in the psychology of religion, assessing the role of spiritual coping and psycho-spiritual interventions for people coping with cancer. To continue her research and clinical work she completed an NIH post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute where she is now an assistant professor. Her current research includes: developing instruments to assess aspects of spirituality and religion that have not been fully assessed (e.g., spiritual transformations among people coping with cancer), developing and assessing spiritually integrative psychosocial interventions for populations at risk for spiritual strain (e.g., the medically ill, gay men, and lesbians). She has published on spiritual issues in journals like Psycho-oncology and Journal of Health Psychology and has contributed book chapters on health and spirituality. She serves as a reviewer for several journals including Psycho-oncology and The Journal of Applied Social Psychology.

“As a member of Division 36, I have benefited considerably from the generous exchange of ideas and supportive networking that are a hallmark of this Division. I would consider it an honor to participate within the Division at a more involved level to promote the scientific exploration of spirituality and religion as important forces within American society. This is an exciting time. Increasingly, within medical and clinical settings, practitioners and researchers are seriously considering spirituality as a vital aspect of health care. This is an open minded time, supporting the exploration of both the beneficial and harmful aspects of spiritual life and the understanding of diverse spiritual world views from Pagan to Presbyterian (although I have met a Pagan Presbyterian, in general the contrast stills stands, and I like the alliteration). As an example, Division 44 (concerned with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered issues) made spirituality its theme for the 2003 convention and sponsored a range of sessions on spirituality among sexual orientation minorities. This was an exciting and hopeful exchange for a segment of our population often stigmatized and vulnerable to spiritual trauma. As Member-at-Large of Division 36 I would work to generate further such exchanges, giving voice to the spiritual lives of individuals with both traditional and non-traditional spiritual world views.”

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Israel Silberman

Israel Silberman received her B.A. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in psychology and philosophy and her Ph.D. (with distinction) in social-personality psychology in 1999 from Columbia University. She is currently an Associate Research Scientist at the Psychology Department of Columbia University and an Assistant Professor at the Department of Jewish Studies of Yeshiva University’s Stern College. Dr. Silberman has written extensively on the relations between religion and individual and societal well-being, in general, and on the role of religion in recent world events, in particular. Her theoretical and applied research illuminates the importance of religion as a powerful system of meaning that can affect the lives of individuals in terms of their beliefs, motivations, emotions and behaviors, and can influence their interactions on both interpersonal and intergroup levels. She is the editor of a forthcoming special issue of the Journal of Social Issues on “Religion as a Meaning System.” Dr. Silberman received the Richard Christie Award for Research on Social Issues (1996), awards from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture (1999, 2000) to support her research on the psychological worlds of American Jewry, a teaching grant from the Columbia University Center for the Study of Science and Religion (2002) for her seminar on the psychology of religion, and the Margaret Gorman Early Career Award from the American Psychological Association, Division 36 (2004).

“Religion has been a vital and pervasive feature of human life throughout history. The role of religion in recent world events, such as the 9/11 attacks on the US, and in coping with these events, has demonstrated the importance of religion in current societies. It has also highlighted the urgent need for a comprehensive scientific exploration of the processes through which religion impacts individual and societal well-being in both positive and negative ways. Systematic scientific exploration of a wide variety of religions as dynamic systems of meaning could help identify ways of directing religious systems towards positive, peaceful and compassionate goals and away from hostile and destructive ones. It seems to me that the success of such theoretical and applied work on religion requires interdisciplinary collaboration among psychologists of religion, researchers from other fields within psychology and beyond (e.g., social-personality psychology, clinical psychology, peace psychology, anthropology, philosophy, international relations and political science), representatives of religious communities, and political and military leaders. I believe that the psychology of religion could contribute in unique and significant ways to such interdisciplinary efforts to explore religion and to direct it in positive ways. As a Member-at-Large of Division 36, I would do my best to establish the psychology of religion as one of the main contributors to such efforts and as the Arrowhead in some of them.”
Because psychology and spirituality are both interested in the human condition, integration of the two disciplines at one level or another is eventually inevitable. That is, knowledge about humanity is eventually bound to overlap between the disciplines as it is further developed, though the methods used to produce such knowledge admittedly differ between psychology and spirituality. However, although integration is inevitable, it is not necessarily automatic, for it requires the active engagement, collaboration, and interface of psychology and spirituality. In his book, *Integrating Psychology and Spirituality?*, Richard Gorsuch explains how psychology and spirituality can be integrated more effectively to enhance the human condition through the active engagement of both disciplines.

The title of the book is creatively and appropriately ended with a question mark because Gorsuch challenges readers to consider whether psychology and spirituality can and should be integrated. Since both disciplines have their own limitations, yet also have unique and important insights to offer about the human condition, the answer is undoubtedly “Yes.” In fact, Gorsuch argues that “integration is necessary. We already do it, so let’s do it well” (p. 167). Doing integration well involves an active, thoughtful dialogue between both disciplines, undergirded by an attitude of humility. “What we must be careful to do is realize that each discipline has its role and no discipline should usurp the other” (p. 54). Such themes are prominent throughout the book, which challenges readers to formally integrate disciplinary knowledge in their lives professionally and personally in order to enhance the human condition.

In Part I of the book, Gorsuch defines relevant constructs and explains the nature of integration as involving an active process by which psychology and a discipline concerned with spirituality (e.g., theology, philosophy, and ethics) are thoughtfully considered and simultaneously in dialogue to address a question. Two types of professional integration, commentary integration and integration as joint problem solving, are identified and explicated later throughout the book.

Gorsuch further elaborates on the nature of integration by describing the relationships among the disciplines of the sciences and the humanities. While each discipline has its own unique methods of inquiry, they are ultimately interrelated, at least to some degree, by their epistemological goals. Thus, disciplinary integration is possible and potentially beneficial in many circumstances, though it is not necessarily warranted in every situation.

In Part II of the book, Gorsuch elucidates interdisciplinary commentary integration, the process by which one discipline comments on and makes suggestions for another discipline and vice versa. First, spirituality is used to comment on the limitations of psychology. Because psychology aligns itself with the scientific disciplines, psychological knowledge is limited to only those things that are perceptible through the physical senses. As a result, psychological knowledge is limited to nomothetic principles that can only be discovered through science. However, spirituality considers other modes of acquiring knowledge, such as personal experience, history, and revelation, and thus, may offer idiosyncratic insights and complement psychological knowledge where science places limitations upon it. Next, scientific knowledge from psychology is used to make suggestions for spirituality. First, because of limits in human judgment, ethnocentrism, and the tendency to absolutize spiritual propositions, theological principles based upon Scriptural interpretations should be developed with humility. Second, psychological research can also be used to help develop interventions to enhance spirituality. Thus, interdisciplinary commentary integration involves a two-way dialogue whereby psychology and spirituality both learn from one another, rather than one discipline dominating the other.

In Part III of the book, Gorsuch describes integration as joint problem solving, the process by which knowledge from psychology and spirituality is collaboratively considered to ameliorate a particular problem. First, integration as joint problem solving within the realm of clinical

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psychology is considered. While psychology can offer valuable insights about the methods of treatment, spirituality may offer suggestions about the goals of treatment. In addition, spiritual resources such as prayer, meditation, spiritual readings, religious coping, and religious communities may significantly enhance the effects of treatment. Next, integration as joint problem solving is considered within a social psychological context. Both social psychology and spirituality can be used to understand, prevent, and resolve conflicts that occur within spiritual groups and religious organizations. Gorsuch suggests that conflicts may arise from two factors: labeling and competitive goals. As a result, conflict may be prevented or resolved by reducing the use of labels and developing superordinate goals that promote interdependence and cooperation. Furthermore, spiritual values such as love, humility, and acceptance may help increase motivation for conflict prevention and resolution. Thus, psychology and spirituality can be integrated in clinical and social contexts to solve specific problems and enhance the human condition more generally.

Integrating Psychology and Spirituality? is a thought-provoking book that challenges readers to formally integrate psychological and spiritual knowledge in their professional and personal lives in a sophisticated manner. Throughout the book, a series of creative exercises and reflective questions designed to stimulate critical thinking about issues related to integration accentuate the personal aspect of integration and bring a much needed human element to the integration process, for integration is done by human beings who “live not by ‘ologies’ alone” (p. 50). However, while the section on the relationships among disciplines sets the initial foundation for integration, Gorsuch’s comprehensive analysis of the relationships among various disciplines from the sciences and humanities seems to somewhat shift attention away from the book’s central premise: the integration of psychology and spirituality. Furthermore, some of the language may seem a bit abstruse for the average reader. Nevertheless, Integrating Psychology and Spirituality? is an informative and compelling book that stimulates critical reflection for students and scholars interested in integration. It represents an important contribution to various fields by breaking down academic barriers, facilitating collaborative discussion, and serving as an important bridge between disciplines concerned with psychology and spirituality.

Reviewed by Gene G. Ano
Bowling Green State University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Editor’s Note

The editor extends an invitation for submissions by members that may be of interest to our readers. For example: brief news items regarding members who may have received recognition for work in the psychology of religion; recent book publications by members related to the psychology of religion; brief articles by members that address current concerns for our specialty; or reviews by members of recently published books related to the psychology of religion.
Welcome...

Since the last newsletter issue, Division 36 has accepted more new members into its ranks. We would like to extend a special welcome to these newcomers.

**Regular Members:** Steven Doehrman (NY), Kevin Dugan (IN), Bruce Hartung (MO), Kalman Kaplan (IL), Mark Koltko-Rivera (FL), Ann Murakami (OR), Nalini Tarakeshwar (CT)

**Associate Members:** Leslie Francis (UK), James Meehan (NE)

**Student Affiliate Members:** LaQuitta Botkin (OK), Joeleen Cooper (NY), Douglas Johnson (FL), Neil Jones (NC), Shirley Liao (CA), Priscilla Lippincott (MD), Fredrick Norfleet (TN), Amanda Stewart (WA), Jessica Wolfman (NY)

**Professional Affiliate Member:** Augusto Legaspi (AK)

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Congratulations**


**Journal Discount for Membership**

Division 36 Members receive a 20% discount to the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* – For more information, please visit the journal’s website at <http://pippo.ingentaselect.com/erlbaum/10508619/>.
Our Mission...

Division 36, Psychology of Religion

- Promotes the application of psychological research methods and interpretive frameworks to diverse forms of religion and spirituality;
- encourages the incorporation of the results of such work into clinical and other applied settings;
- and fosters constructive dialogue and interchange between psychological study and practice, on the one hand, and religious perspectives and institutions on the other.

The division is strictly nonsectarian and welcomes the participation of all persons, without regard to personal faith, who view religion as a significant factor in human functioning.

The division’s quarterly Newsletter contains original articles, book reviews, announcements, and news of interest to division members.