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## Chapter 3

# Religion and Psychology

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A Psychological Approach to Religion

The Beginnings of a Psychology of Religion

Psychoanalytic Approaches to the Psychology of Religion

The Objectivist Approach to the Psychology of Religion

Transpersonal Approaches to the Psychology of Religion

Conclusions

### A Psychological Approach to Religion

There is a well-known story about a psychology tutor who planned to spend the first few minutes of his first lecture defining psychology. This task proved to be so mammoth that months later, at the end of the whole course, he and his employer were shocked to find that he was still defining psychology! With this in mind the definition of psychology presented here will be as succinct as possible. "Psychologists are concerned with understanding thought and behavior." It is thankfully short but inevitably this definition cannot do justice to the breadth of methods and approaches used in the discipline of psychology. It is reasonable to say that psychology is not really a unitary discipline at all, but instead is multidisciplinary in nature. In the very early days of psychology, the subject was characterized by a number of different schools of thought and even though the schools themselves have perished, the tendency for many different approaches has remained and possibly multiplied. The difficulty of providing a good definition of psychology probably arises because of the multidisciplinary nature of the subject.

Psychologists seek to explain thought and behavior, adopting in the process a range of explanatory levels. Some psychologists take an **objectivist** standpoint, measuring objective biological, **cognitive** or social behavior; still others adopt a **psychoanalytic** approach where subjective interpretation is very important. **Transpersonal** psychologists may try to explore the transcendent experiences themselves, sometimes using experiments but often relying on the stories or narratives provided by the person reporting the experience.

Table 3.1 Showing the different approaches taken to studying religious behaviors/experiences by different orientations in psychology

|                             | Objectivist                                         | Psychoanalytic                                      | Transpersonal                                             |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mode of research</b>     | Experimental<br>Correlational                       | Interpretative<br>Phenomenological                  | Experimental<br>Interpretative<br>Phenomenological        |
| <b>Method of analysis</b>   | Quantitative<br>Qualitative                         | Qualitative                                         | Qualitative<br>Quantitative                               |
| <b>Level of explanation</b> | Personality, Social<br>Behavioral,<br>Physiological | Personality<br>Unconscious needs<br>and motivations | Extended abilities<br>Alternate realities<br>Spirituality |

The choices of which levels of explanation and particular research approaches to adopt are influenced by the paradigms or worldviews which inform the researchers' work. The objectivist paradigm is usually characterized by a belief in a materialistic universe where reality is single and is best understood by reducing it to its basic components. From this perspective science is value-free and knowledge is context-free. On the other hand, a transpersonal paradigm is more likely to be holistic, with different, multiple, interacting levels of reality which require sensitive, participatory forms of investigation that are inevitably context- and value-bound. Psychologists will necessarily adopt different approaches to studying religion depending upon their worldview and the research methods which are seen as appropriate within that paradigm (see table 3.1 for a summary and examples).

If a psychologist is concerned with a biological level of explanation then it is likely that she will devise experiments to gather data; for instance, she might record brain activity during meditation or prayer. If, on the other hand, the preferred level of explanation is social then she may conduct and analyze interviews, for example comparing people's experiences during prayer. If she wishes to examine differences in personality between religious believers and agnostics it is likely that she will use survey methodology and questionnaire measures. The type of investigation and the type of data gathered will inform the analysis process. Statistics are commonly used to analyze data from experiments and correlational studies employing questionnaires. Where the data was obtained from interviews or has a narrative form, interpretative or qualitative methods will probably be used. The empirical method is usually associated with experiments and quantitative assessment, while a more interpretative or phenomenological approach is associated with interviews and qualitative assessment.

The early approaches to a psychology of religion were interpretative but as the decades went by and psychology became gripped by the positivism of behaviorism, many psychologists turned their attention to the study of religious behavior rather than religious experience. The early books on the psychology of religion such as William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience* were more concerned

with the interpretation and understanding of the experience itself (the phenomenological), whereas later studies focused upon the observable and ultimately quantifiable nature of religious behavior (the empirical). There are signs that this strict division between research approaches is no longer tenable and that the phenomenology-empiricism debate can be transcended with both methods contributing to a psychology of religion.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of transpersonal psychology since the 1960s has indicated that different research methods which have usually been thought of as mutually exclusive, can actually be used in a complementary way. Furthermore, this combination of methods is necessary in order to fully understand the richness and complexity of a subject, such as religious or spiritual experience and behavior.<sup>2</sup>

The methods of investigation and analysis used in psychology have also seen great changes in recent decades, as psychology, like many of the social sciences, has been strongly influenced by postmodern perspectives. Postmodernism argues that a pluralistic view of the world is a more appropriate and realistic aim than the ambitious grasping of singular truth that is the objective of positivist science. A postmodern approach in psychology recognizes that the time and culture in which we live help to construct our understanding of mind and behavior, and that our knowledge about them do not constitute absolute facts. Within psychology, the objectivist position is most closely allied with the modernist way of thinking (which places great faith in rationality, logic and a uniformity of truth which transcends culture) and perhaps the transpersonal position is nearest to a postmodern paradigm.

In this chapter some of the main psychological approaches to religion will be introduced along with their different perspectives, concerns, theories, methods and conclusions. After providing a brief account of the early days of the psychology of religion, the major contributions of some of the best known thinkers in psychoanalysis will be examined. Following this the objectivist approach will be examined. Psychologists working within this paradigm have adopted a skeptical view of religion and have aimed to account for religious experience, behavior and belief in terms of physical, personality or social explanations. Finally, the transpersonal psychological approach will be explored, in which researchers consider religious and spiritual experience as an important and fundamental human experience and, more importantly, accept that it may have some basis in reality.

### The Beginnings of a Psychology of Religion

At the beginning of the twentieth century there was a growing interest in the application of psychology to religious behavior, experience and beliefs. Psychology at this time was just a couple of decades old and still to find its feet, the discipline being characterized by a range of competing schools of thought. Some of the very early books on the psychology of religion were in fact written by scholars outside of the field of psychology. By the turn of the century, however, a number of psychologists were turning their attention to the subject of religion.

In 1902, one of the earliest, and probably the most famous books in this area was published; it was by William James (1842-1910) and was called *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. James' arrival in psychology was circuitous. As a young man he had intended to study art; he later obtained a medical degree and went on to teach physiology at Harvard. He was strongly influenced by his father who was intensely interested in philosophy and religion. The young James was brought up in a lively intellectual atmosphere and was able to listen and participate in the many religious and philosophical discussions between his father and visitors to the house. From his childhood right through to old age, James suffered regular bouts of physical as well as psychological illness including dark periods of despair and depression. Some writers have argued that these factors were instrumental in his portrayal of religion in the *Varieties*. In his book, James attempted to explore the factors influencing religious belief and experience, such as the role of personality and the conscious and unconscious mind. Like many of the early writers he was concerned with religious experience and consciousness rather than religious behavior. Not all the works at this time were interpretative however; there were also some early efforts to gather quantitative data. Edwin Starbuck, for example, published his *Psychology of Religion* in 1899 and in it made extensive use of numerical data such as the frequencies of conversion, by age, sex and theological background.

James' approach involved submitting the experiences to a sensitive and penetrating analysis based on empathizing with the people who had experienced them.<sup>3</sup> This approach can be seen as both interpretative and phenomenological. James' approach is unsurprising considering that he felt that the essence of religion was to be found in the deep and moving personal experience of the individual. In accord with this he collected a range of experiences and instead of generalizing from these, as is usually the aim in such research, he chose instead to focus on the more unusual and extreme cases of religious experience. The experiences were taken from biographies, confessions and inspirational works. Some were obtained from the earlier survey research by Starbuck.

James examined religious experience in relation to the factors of health and sickness, and he explored the processes behind religious conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. One of the main themes he developed was that of the sick and healthy-minded soul. He used this to characterize two different personality orientations in experiencing the world; the sick soul always sees the darker side of nature, including its own sinfulness, and this plays a fundamental role in one's experience. The healthy-minded soul concentrates on the importance of good and yearning for union with the divine, almost entirely neglecting the negative aspects of life.

Another important aspect of James' work is the importance that he attributes to subliminal or subconscious dimensions of the mind. He asserts that there is "more" to the human personality or the self than that which is expressed through the physical form. The farther reaches of the personality stretch into the subconscious and it is here that religious experience has its origins. He saw this subliminal region as "the fountain-head of much that feeds our religion."<sup>4</sup> He proposed that religious impulses and experience begin in this unseen and uncharted territory, but that in

spite of this, they have very real effects in this world, and if they have an effect then they must be classed as real. This approach is fundamentally a pragmatic one and entirely in agreement with James' own pragmatic philosophy.

James' book was undoubtedly influenced by his own experiences. His critics argue that he took a very individualistic position on religious experience, ignoring both historical and cultural factors. For all intents and purposes, the *Varieties* is about Christian religiosity. It also emphasizes the strong link between pathology and religiousness, and by adopting the subconscious as the center for this he anticipated the development of psychoanalysis.

### Psychoanalytic Approaches to the Psychology of Religion

The publication of books with titles relating to psychology and religion increased in the years leading up to and immediately following World War One. Many of these began to respond to the growing impetus of the "new psychology" of Psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) provided the basis for a therapeutic psychology which recognized that health required a free flow of psychic energy between conscious and unconscious aspects of the personality. The Freudian unconscious was a repository for all those experiences and ideas which were unacceptable to the conscious self and which, as such, had been repressed. Therapy consisted largely of identifying these contents through accessing the client's unconscious: initially through hypnosis and later through dreams, then engaging the symbolism of the unconscious mind and isolating the underlying cause of the problem. The cause was usually some form of trauma experienced early in life. In examining the unconscious, Freud was directly concerned with the symbolism of the human mind. He had recognized that this symbolism could also be seen in the myths and stories of antiquity and could be interpreted, with the right keys, to illuminate the human personality. Religion was an example of this symbolic attitude; charged by a child-like need for security it involved the projection of these needs onto mythological deities. From a psychoanalytic perspective God shares the same function as a parent for a child. In essence, God is set in the role of supreme parent.<sup>5</sup>

Freud had read many of the anthropological works of his time and noted that in "primitive" populations there were similarities between those objects and areas of life designated as taboo (out of bounds within tribal life) and the phobias associated with neuroticism (associated with nervousness, hysteria, and other mild forms of mental instability). Magic and religious ritualistic practices share a similar sense of the omnipotence of thought characteristic of the childhood mind and offer, according to Freud, an illusory sense of control. Freud saw the possibility of tracing religion back to its roots. These roots existed, according to Freud, in the prehistory of humankind. Drawing upon the accounts published early in the twentieth century by anthropologists, he imagined early human communities to have a patriarchal structure, with a primeval father leader who headed the community and fought off challenges to his position of authority from the other young men in the tribe. The

only way in which these young men could rise to a position of power was through killing this father figure. Freud used the Oedipus myth to structure his ideas here. In Greek legend, Oedipus killed his father and married his mother. This story played a fundamental role in Freud's thoughts about the critical developmental stages of childhood and the feelings associated with these that led to the development of religious belief.

For Freud, religion and ritual serve the same purpose as the obsessional acts of the neurotic, primarily the reduction of anxiety and the sublimation of harmful social, egoistic and sexual impulses. Freud considered the obsessional neurosis as being equivalent to a private religious system and religion as a universal obsessional neurosis. In his book *Totem and Taboo* (1913) he drew parallels between the prohibitions (taboos) attached to killing certain sacred animals (totems), those which prevented sexual relations between members of the same clan, and the submission to prohibitions in obsessional neurosis. According to Freud, these features of tribal life support the application of the Oedipal myth in relation to religion. The totem represents the common origins of a tribal group – it is in a sense the original parent – and in tribal life it is unlawful to kill the totem animal or to have sexual intercourse with members of the same tribe (descendants of the same totem). These are the two main features of the Oedipal myth: the fear associated with wishing to kill the father and the adoption of his role.

Religious experience, in common with many other pathologies, was located by Freud in primary rather than secondary processes. Primary processes refer to those subconscious activities such as dreaming; while secondary processes refer to the more conscious volitional activities such as problem solving. Primary processes are activities associated with a level of the personality Freud called the id; the other parts of Freudian personality include the ego and the superego. The id relates to the passions, desires and subconscious activities, the ego to the normal level of consciousness, and the superego to the conscience and the incorporation of a parent-like image into consciousness. So for Freud, religious experiences and beliefs derive from the irrational regions of the mind. These kinds of experiences should be subjugated to the higher will and aims of the ego.

Roberto Assagioli (1888–1974) is one psychoanalyst who interpreted religious experiences in a very different way from Freud. Whereas Freud saw himself as a "God forsaken 'incredulous Jew'" who was "profoundly irreligious,"<sup>6</sup> Assagioli was centrally concerned with the spiritual. He developed the psychic structure of the personality even further, subdividing the unconscious into different domains, and adding structures such as "the transpersonal self" which participates directly in a spiritual reality. Assagioli's psychosynthesis is concerned with personal development, employing visualization and interaction with the subconscious mind in order to reach self-realization. Assagioli has moved a long way from the beginnings of psychoanalysis and would now be more appropriately seen as a member of the transpersonal psychology movement.

A more mainstream development of Freud's work can be seen in the writings of Erik H. Erikson (1902–94). Erikson's work centered around the principle of

"epigenesis." This term relates to the process of psychological growth and development of the individual. The term was borrowed from embryology where it referred to the development process of foetal organs. In both senses, the term describes the developmental process and the requirement for the proper and timely appearance of certain functions. Any developmental problems can adversely affect the overall functioning and health of the individual. This psychological process, unlike its biological equivalent, stretches over the entire lifespan from infancy to old age, and is condensed into seven stages. At the various stages in this developmental process, the individual has to overcome certain tensions described in bipolar terms. For instance, the first stage, occurring in infancy, is that of "basic trust versus mistrust" and requires the child to feel comfortable and trusting of the world, others and self. This process mainly occurs during the feeding and nursing of the child and any division between the mother and the child, such as the mother returning to work, or another pregnancy, can lead to division and mistrust.<sup>7</sup> The resolution of these feelings and the development of trust occurs through a strong satisfying sense of unity in the relationships, and by a gentle and gradual separation.

Another example of one of these important stages in Erikson's theory is that of "intimacy versus isolation" experienced in young adulthood. Having attained a sense of identity the individual is now adequately prepared to enter into intimate relationships where that identity can be combined with another's. Again it is important to recognize that the trust, sense of self, and confidence that were achieved in earlier stages are necessary to be able to enter fully into these intimate relationships successfully. If this stage does not proceed normally the individual may fail to enjoy successful relationships and become isolated and self absorbed.

The final stage, in old age, is one where the opposites of integrity and despair are pitched against each other. Assuming the individual has developed positively and fully there should be a sense of integrity, of coherence, order and spiritual meaning. Where the individual has failed to incorporate the qualities from the experience of the previous stages, he feels that time has passed too quickly, and is unable to accept closing of the life-cycle. This stage leads to a spiritual or religious awareness in which the wisdom of the experience of life brings the cycle to completion, resulting in a sense of hope. The qualities and issues associated with this final stage of life are traditionally linked with the role of religion. The same can be said of some of the earlier stages; for instance the development of a trusting relationship, the care and rearing of children, which are both events which are celebrated within religion and are often marked by ceremony and ritual.

Ritual and ceremony take on a particular meaning in Erikson's theory of development. He uses the term "ritualization" to describe a regular and repeated agreed-upon interplay between individuals which fosters the growth of the individual ego. These ritual elements occur again at different stages of life from infancy to old age, providing positive or negative outcomes contingent upon the success of the individual in developing the right relations between self, others and environment.

Erikson took aspects of psychoanalysis and placed them in an interpersonal developmental context, one which centers upon the resolution of life challenges in order

to live as fully as possible. The psychology of religion in Erikson's view is placed firmly in the realm of day-to-day living.

Like Freud, Carl Jung (1875-1961) came from a medical background and specialized in psychiatry. He was an early ally of Freud's but eventually abandoned Freud's ideas as he became more and more dissatisfied with Freud's unidimensional and positivistic interpretation of the psychological. He redefined Freud's term "libido," extending it to cover psychic energy in general rather than the specific definition of sexual energy which Freud had supplied. Jung initially agreed with Freud's position on religion but he eventually took a much more sympathetic view than Freud; he saw religious experience as playing the most important role in the development of human consciousness. Jung also took the concept of the unconscious much further than Freud. He saw the unconscious less as a closet in which the skeletons of the past were kept and more as a dynamic and interactive guide for each individual's development - which Jung called "individuation." This development responds to the influence of archetypes, which are the constituents of a collective level of the unconscious. Archetypes are very difficult to conceptualize and define; however, they may be seen as preformed patterns and images which exist in potential for all humans (and probably other organisms). These preformed patterns and images are inherited in a similar way to instincts but, to be more accurate, in the case of archetypes we inherit the possibility of ideas. Archetypes include among others: the mother archetype (encompassing both the human and goddess mother and representing all those ideal characteristics such as nurturance, sustenance and fertility), the wise old man archetype (which represents wisdom and insight) and, perhaps the most important archetype for Jung, "the self" - the core of the personality which balances the unconscious and the conscious mind - representing the totality or whole. Jung was firmly convinced that archetypes existed and that these included images of God; however, he was reluctant to take these as proof of God. He did argue, however, that they are proof of a psychological representation of God.

As Jung's upbringing was religious and his father was a minister it is perhaps not surprising that much of his work was concerned with exploring religious experience. Jung's ideas were guided by his own personal experiences and he remarked that all of his work was really an outgrowth of the religious experiences he had in his adolescence. Although, like many of the early psychologists, his work was largely interpretative he considered himself an empiricist, remarking that he could only comment on the psychological aspects of the spiritual. However, in one of his final interviews when asked if he believed in God, Jung replied that he did not believe, rather, he knew that God existed.

For Jung, it was entirely natural and functional to turn towards religious concerns when the middle of life is reached. Jung saw this as a process much like the rising and setting of the sun. During the early part of life the individual establishes a career and family and develops their place in society, but after these have been consolidated inner concerns and spirituality should dominate. These inner concerns sometimes make themselves known of their own accord without any attempt to seek communion, since in Jung's view the psyche is a dynamic self-organizing

system. These intrusions of the self might even involve images, events and forms far beyond normal religious imagery; they may, for instance, allude to the old alchemical processes of the transmutation of base metal into precious gold. In Jung's view, the religious rituals and ceremonies of different institutionalized religions all draw their life from these deep unconscious representations.

Jung placed great emphasis upon the importance of spiritual experience:

No matter what the world thinks about religious experience, the one who has it possesses a great treasure, a thing that has become for him a source of life, meaning, and beauty, and that has given him a new splendour to the world and mankind. . . . Is there, as a matter of fact, any better truth about the ultimate things than the one that helps you to live?<sup>8</sup>

James Hillman (1926– ) who became Jung's successor in terms of archetypal psychology, went so far as to say that Jung's archetypes, the patterns or metaphors in our imagination, are the primary reality and that there is a pandemonium of such images and a plurality of gods. These images are the source of religion and morality. As long as we are still in touch with these images we have a true religious response, but once we lose these images we become moralistic. According to Hillman, it is religious faith which endows these contents of the imagination with life. Like Jung, he sees religious orientation as extremely important for grasping and understanding the world.

The psychoanalytic view of religion clearly focuses on the internal world of the individual as he or she learns to live with him/herself and develop relationships with others. Most psychoanalytic theories incorporate a sense of development and inevitably identify psychopathology as the consequence of the failure to live appropriately. Religion for these psychologists is either an indication of pathology (Freud) or a central aspect of development (Assagioli, Erikson, Jung, and Hillman); either way, it plays an important role in the psychological health of the individual. Whereas psychoanalysis intended to be an empirical science, its theories derived partly from the preferences of individual theorists and drew support from subjective interpretation of the phenomena concerned. Most academic psychologists who take an empirical approach to the study of mind and behavior reject the claims of psychoanalysis to objectivity and empirical rigor. These psychologists, wherever possible, set their research in the laboratory or aim at least to quantify religious belief, experience and behavior. This movement is termed here the "objectivist approach" because of its strict concern for the empirical facts.

### The Objectivist Approach to the Psychology of Religion

It has already been mentioned that psychologists occupy a wide range of philosophical and theoretical positions and may approach the same phenomenon in a number of ways. In this section we will examine some of the objectivist or empirical

approaches taken in relation to religious phenomena. In the very early years psychology was influenced by the physical sciences like biology, which meant that many psychologists saw experiments as the natural way to investigate mind and behavior. It was this approach above all others which prevailed during the period from the 1920s through to the early 1950s when psychology was dominated by the strong positivistic approach of behaviorism. Proponents of behaviorism, such as J. B. Watson and B. F. Skinner, saw religious behavior as existing on the same level as any other behavior; it was learnt through association and had little reality beyond this. In a sense, for the behaviorists, religion and religious thinking is simply a matter of superstition and social control because it supports and encourages dogmas which are beyond rational verification.

The behaviorists adhered strongly to the philosophy of positivism, that is, the belief that only those facets of the world which yield to the senses can have any place in science. Unobservables such as the mind and thought cannot be discussed consensually and therefore should be left out of a truly "scientific" psychology, instead the behaviorists' aim was to fully describe and understand the observable aspects – behavior. They developed relatively simple models of behavior which consisted of chains of stimulus and response events (S–R). The co-occurrence of two events (a stimulus event and a response event) can become associated. We and other animals (most research in this paradigm was conducted on animals and the findings generalized to humans) learn to respond to situations by trial and error, eventually finding a response which resolves the situation. In some situations responses may be adopted which seem to provide solutions but which are in fact totally unrelated to the original event; these irrational associations, according to the behaviorists, are the origins of religious and superstitious behavior.

To give a specific example seen from this perspective, prayer is a behavior learned in childhood and often encouraged ("reinforced" and "rewarded" in behaviorist terms) by parents. Over time it also becomes associated with the relief of hunger (for example prayers are often said before meals), relaxation and the reduction of worry (prayers may also be said before sleep). Eventually, through association, the act of prayer by itself may bring about feelings of relaxation, satisfaction and the reduction of worry in the absence of those original conditions (relief of hunger and sleep) which previously preceded prayer.

Although the accounts of behaviorism must inevitably be seen as a simplification of psychological processes, it dictated the path that academic psychology took during the decades between the 1920s and the 1950s. Mainstream academic psychology has kept close to the ideals of complete objectivity, dealing only with behaviors that can be measured and avoiding discussion of anything subjective. Inevitably with this shift in philosophy from the more subjective efforts of the early psychologists and the psychoanalysts, the approach to religious phenomena also changed. Religious beliefs are beliefs about phenomena which do not exist for objectivist psychology, since the philosophy that underpins the discipline is one of reductionistic materialism – the same philosophy that motivates most contemporary science. This means that rather than looking at the spiritual issues themselves, the objectivist

psychologists have turned their attention to how people practice their religiousness, what might motivate this, what everyday benefits they obtain from religiousness and so on.

### *Different ways of being religious*

Researchers have found that there seems to be good evidence for people having different ways of being religious. For some people, religion is very closely related to their own personal subjective experience and belief; for others, it is more related to creating an impression and acquiring social acceptance and support. A range of researchers have proposed similar categorizations: for instance, Gordon Allport<sup>9</sup> explored religion in terms of an "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" division. From the intrinsic position, religious faith is important in itself, but from the extrinsic position the religious practices are utilitarian, they grant safety and social standing. A third orientation has since been added to Allport's intrinsic and extrinsic division by Batson and Ventis (1982): they call this the "quest" orientation. The quest orientation is characterized by an individual who constantly relates his or her beliefs to the physical and social environment, confronting difficult existential questions that ensue but without necessarily expecting to obtain absolute answers.

Other psychologists have offered similar categories of religious behavior. For instance, "primary" religious behavior is directed by personal inner experience of the divine. "Secondary" behavior may have had a primary source but has become a routine and uninspired obligation. "Tertiary" religious experience is used to describe religious routine which is accepted entirely on the basis of the authority of someone else.<sup>10</sup> Another similar formulation distinguished between "committed" and "consensual" religion: the former refers to a set of religious beliefs which relate to daily activities while the latter refers to a simplified and personally convenient view of religion.<sup>11</sup> Each of these dimensions relates to the degree to which religion is informed by personal experience or adopted from an external source, the degree to which they are actually "lived" rather than simply "acted" and the degree to which the consequences and implications have been explored by the individual.

Allport suggested that the extrinsically motivated individual "uses" his religion, and the person motivated from an intrinsic point of view "lives" his. This division between these two main characteristic religious behaviors has been further explored in terms of personality of the religious individual. The authoritarian personality research project<sup>12</sup> identified the authoritarian personality as having very orthodox religious beliefs. This relationship is a little clearer when we consider some of the underlying traits of the authoritarian personality, which include a low tolerance of ambiguity (a preference for clear and distinct concepts and instant solutions) and tendencies toward ethnocentrism, dogmatism, rigidity and prejudice. These tendencies suggest that religiousness in this respect serves a protective function by providing a formal framework for the interpretation of personal and social experience. There is evidence that both the intrinsic and the extrinsic orientation is related to

these kinds of traits. The quest orientation seems the least likely to be involved in such relationships.

It can be seen from this work that different people become involved in religion for different reasons. It is likely that personality and social situation play a role in influencing the kind of religious orientation taken. It is also likely that religiousness has other adaptive functions, especially in terms of providing a belief structure which provides protection for the individual against the unknown.

- 1 Discuss the three orientations and use these to describe the personality of three people, where each is led by an intrinsic, extrinsic, or quest orientation.
- 2 Having discussed the features of these three orientations, identify three public figures who perhaps exemplify these three orientations to religion.

### Exercises

### *Religious belief*

In the Aristotelian view of the world – the philosophy which sustained the western world up to the Enlightenment – everything had its place; the world was like an organism, each part related to the whole, to God. Following the writings of Galileo, Descartes and Newton, a new view of the world as a machine became increasingly popular. At first this machine provided evidence of a grand architect, but as science developed there was less and less reason for including God in the equation. As the direct link with religion and spirituality had been severed, another reason for religious behavior had to be found. The interpretations offered by some anthropologists are valuable here; they saw religion as functional, offering social cohesion and control. Psychologists soon followed and saw religion as offering personal psychological benefits as well.

Religious beliefs can be seen as helping to reduce anxiety and fear; probably the greatest anxiety that anyone experiences is the anxiety related to thoughts of their eventual demise, the fear of death. The main contributor in this area was perhaps Ernest Becker,<sup>13</sup> who thought that if humans attained a full awareness of their condition they would be driven insane. So from this perspective, religious beliefs are like lies which act as a buffer against the otherwise paralyzing reality of impending death. According to Jack Schumaker:

Magic, religion, and all forms of reality distortion are simply species-specific responses unique to the human animal. These act in our service. Paranormal belief did a great deal for us: it did nothing less than save us from extinction.<sup>14</sup>

According to Schumaker the oceanic feelings associated with mystical and religious experience are no more than a rush of endorphins (the body's natural opiates). Not only is religious belief a necessary cognitive deception, but he presumes we also evolved a biologically-based mechanism for deception.

Death and religiousness have also been associated in a much more positive sense. People who have had near-death experiences (NDEs) often report sudden and significant life changes which often include a new or renewed sense of religiousness and spirituality, although this will not necessarily mean a new commitment to a religious institution such as a church. The NDE seems to have a reasonably robust set of characteristics with strong similarities across individual cases. The experience is often marked by an out-of-body-experience and continues with the experience of traveling down a tunnel, a sense of transition, the acquaintance with an all-loving entity of light and perhaps the meeting of deceased family and friends. Many people who report NDEs report religious feelings and content, although this is not always the case. From a transpersonal psychological view this might be seen as evidence for a spiritual reality. From an objectivist position they are explained to a large extent through biological processes such as the increased production of endorphins, which account for the feelings of peacefulness and euphoria, and oxygen starvation which creates the tunnel effect as the outer areas of the brain die before the central regions.

#### *Mental health and religious experience*

As we have already seen, the psychoanalytic view of religion is closely tied up with mental health. From the perspective of objectivist psychology spiritual experience can have nothing to do with reality, so it is often interpreted as an indication of mental illness. These comparisons between mental health or illness and religious experience are an important and recurrent theme in the psychology of religion.

William James noted that "mystical ideas are often cited as characteristic of symptoms of enfeebled or deluded states of mind. In delusional insanity, paranoia as they sometimes call it, we may have a kind of diabolical mysticism, a sort of religious mysticism turned upside down."<sup>15</sup> Freud considered religion as a mass neurosis. Religion was an obsession evidenced in ritual, which was very much like the compulsive and obsessional behavior of neurotics. For Jung, the religious outlook was the key to mental health. He noted that people often came to him for help because they had not found a religious outlook. Erikson similarly described the importance of developing spirituality and wisdom, especially in later life. Allport recognized that beliefs were extremely important in a healthy life and of these beliefs it was religious belief that was most essential. Even the origins of the term "mental illness" can be traced back to St. Teresa of Avila; there is good reason to believe that the term "mental illness" was introduced by her in order to redefine religious fervor, which may have otherwise been interpreted as possession and laid the subject open to investigation from the Inquisition.<sup>16</sup>

The empirical evidence for a relationship between mental health and religious involvement was summarized by Batson and Ventis (1982).<sup>17</sup> This relationship should be considered as correlational rather than causal; that is, it is not possible to say that religious involvement can bring about mental health or sickness, it can only be said

that they are related. They reviewed 67 findings from 57 empirical studies of religion and various aspects of mental health. They found that the majority of the studies (37) showed a negative relationship, with higher levels of religious involvement associated with lower levels of mental health. There were 15 studies which showed a positive relationship, with higher levels of religious involvement associated with higher levels of mental health, and 15 that showed no marked direction of relationship. This would suggest that the overall pattern of relationship involves lower levels of mental health among those who reported higher levels of religious involvement. This provides evidence to support Freud's contention that religious involvement was related to mental illness.

Exploring the problem more closely, Batson and Ventis note that a finer level of detail can be obtained by examining seven particular conceptions of mental health. These conceptions include: absence of illness; appropriate social behavior; freedom from worry and guilt; personal competence and control; self acceptance and self actualization; unification and organization (linked by Allport to a mature personality); and open-mindedness and flexibility. The pattern suggested above is not always consistent for all the conceptions of mental health. They suggest that this is the reason why different researchers have held contradictory interpretations, with both positive and negative relationships being identified between religious involvement and mental health; this results from measuring different aspects of mental health, some of these being negative and some positive.

Clarifying these relationships, Batson and Ventis conclude that the relationship is largely positive with more religious involvement being associated with absence of mental illness. However, religious involvement is negatively related to personal competence and control, self actualization, open-mindedness and flexibility, and freedom from worry and guilt. This seems to oppose the view of religious involvement as beneficial to mental health. The relationship between mental health and religious involvement is also modified by the way in which the participants in the study express their religiousness, with the extrinsic orientation being the one that generally involves the negative relationship with mental health. The intrinsic and quest orientations are positively related to mental health, although for different reasons; in the intrinsic orientation a sense of competence and control is based on a reliance on God, while the quest orientation seems to derive control from a sense of self-reliance. Although the links between mental health and religious involvement do seem to exist, they are not as simple as previously thought.

Religious concerns and ideas often play a large part in the symptoms of mental illness. This is not too surprising if we assume that there is an increased openness or sensitivity to material from the unconscious mind – a common characteristic of both religious and psychopathological experience. Often the experiences associated with psychotic breakdown are accompanied by delusions of a religious or mythical character. It may be that these religious interpretations, which even include the patient having delusions of being Jesus Christ or the Son of God, have a therapeutic value. One study of these kinds of delusions suggested that they were essential to a meaningful and valued view of life.<sup>18</sup>

Julian Jaynes in his book *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*<sup>19</sup> draws parallels between the auditory hallucinations of schizophrenics and the voices of the gods as mentioned in the ancient Greek myths. He proposed that the Greeks as represented in Homer's classic *The Iliad* experienced their own thoughts as a divine presence, as conversations with the gods. According to Jaynes, the modern mind evolved only recently and the consequence of its development was that it distanced the gods from us. Jaynes views the "voices" heard by schizophrenics as historic remnants of another time and another form of mind. It is interesting to note that a large number of the people who hear voices in this context have at one time or another interpreted the voices as having a supernatural origin, identifying them as gods, angels, or spirits.

Psychologists who adopt the psychoanalytic and objectivist approaches to the psychology of religion have regularly drawn parallels between religious experience and psychological illness. Some of the psychoanalytic and most of the objectivist psychologists assume there is no spiritual reality. Religious experiences and beliefs are at best adaptive illusions, at worst they are superstitious and irrational and perhaps indicative of mental illness. There are, however, dissenters to these views who champion the possibility of a psychological understanding and exploration of the spiritual. The humanistic movement, which began in the 1960s and which has since developed into transpersonal psychology, has challenged orthodox views of human psychological nature and has called for an expanded view of the psyche which can incorporate many of the attributes of spiritual or religious experience and belief.

### Transpersonal Approaches to the Psychology of Religion

As we have already seen, the early psychologists of religion were predominantly concerned with the spiritual experience itself. After a period of concentrating on the behavior associated with religion it seems likely that transpersonal psychologists are taking the psychology of religion full circle, back to the experience itself. As with most interesting and complex phenomena, religious experience is not easy to define or operationalize. William James saw religious experience as a solitary venture where the individual confronts God. Drawing together an overall pattern for these experiences, James suggests that they represent an initial discontent and a favorable resolution and that without regard to their truth they are amongst the most important functions of humans. Jung also saw religious or spiritual experience as an important opportunity for the holistic development of the self. During the 1960s there were moves in psychology to try and move beyond the reductive methods of behavioristic psychology and the newer but equally limited perspective of cognitive psychology. Humanistic psychology and its eventual development into transpersonal psychology attempted to take the first few brave steps into what Abraham Maslow called "the farther reaches of human nature."<sup>20</sup>

In Maslow's opinion, spiritual, religious or in his own terms "peak" experiences were not at all pathological, instead they occupied the upper regions of a needs

hierarchy. This hierarchy is usually represented as a triangle with the basics of life such as food and shelter positioned toward the bottom, and with peak or spiritual experiences right at the very top, standing for something exceptional and life enhancing. This same view is echoed throughout the transpersonal psychology movement. Spiritual experiences have been classed as one example among many forms of exceptional human experience, which Rhea White has described as seeds leading to new ways of living and seeing the world.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most important attempts to catalog and explore religious experience has been undertaken at the Religious Experience Research Unit at Manchester College, Oxford University, England. Beginning in 1969, Alister Hardy began to collect accounts of religious experiences. These experiences came from ordinary people who responded to requests in newspapers and on radio and TV. The experiences initially consisted of informal accounts, only later were questionnaire methods used. He published a book in 1979, summarizing the findings of this venture for a pool of 3,000 experiences which had been gathered up to that date.<sup>22</sup> Hardy used a classificatory framework consistent with his background as a biologist and at odds with the early discussions of such experience, for example, the approach of William James who preferred to let the experiences speak for themselves.

The experiences are categorized according to the form of the experience, for instance, whether it was visual or auditory. Each experience is further categorized in terms of other characteristics, for instance, a visual experience may be further described as a vision, or illumination, or a transformation of surroundings. There are hundreds of combinations available and Hardy likens this categorization process to that which involves the combination of molecules in chemical compounds. According to Hardy, the main characteristics of religious and spiritual experiences revolve around the feelings of a transcendent reality where "something other" is longed for, sensed, or desired in a relationship. This feeling of "something other" can lead to a resolution of "uneasiness" as William James called it. Certainly some of the experiences recorded at the Manchester College testify that many people who have such experiences have been led to fresh, creative perceptions that replace old, stagnant viewpoints. According to Hardy, it is through this kind of research that the spiritual nature is shown to be a reality and he argues that we need a new philosophy which will address this by studying consciousness as the fundamental attribute of life.

In spite of the many different categories of experience provided by Hardy it seems likely that there are some core features of such experiences. These features include:

- 1 Unifying vision, all things are one, part of a whole.
- 2 Timeless and spaceless.
- 3 Sense of reality, not subjective but a valid source of knowledge.
- 4 Blessedness, joy, peace and happiness.
- 5 Feeling of the holy, sacred, divine.
- 6 Paradoxical, defies logic.
- 7 Ineffable, cannot be described in words.
- 8 Loss of sense of self.<sup>23</sup>

Most of these features point to a state of mind which is quite different from our normal one. It is the characteristics of this different state, one where logic and rationality have no place, which fuels the prejudice of some psychologists. It is, however, in the investigation of these altered states of consciousness that the transpersonal movement really came into its own.

### *Exploring the psychology of religious experience*

Transpersonal psychologists have tried to map out religious experience by altering aspects of an individual's sensory, cognitive and physiological environment. Here the concept of physiological arousal has played an important role. A cartography of religious states was tentatively mapped out by Roland Fischer in 1975.<sup>24</sup> He found that low or high arousal could bring about unusual experiences which included hallucinations and delusions but also mystical feelings and insights.

It is well established that unusual visual and auditory experiences occur in response to changes in arousal. Sensory deprivation techniques were used extensively in the 1960s and 1970s to explore changes in arousal and consciousness. This "sensory deprivation" took place in rooms with no light or sound, and in conditions where reductions in tactile perception were possible. After relatively short periods of time most people perceive simple visual patterns, images, and sounds. More complex imagery is also experienced when the isolation conditions are longer in duration, or when a suggestion, or expectation, of such phenomena exists. Religious people have reported religious imagery and these seem more readily seen by those with an intrinsic rather than extrinsic orientation. Although this is a rather artificial way of inducing religious imagery it may tell us something about the conditions in which such experiences occur naturally. For instance, reduced social contact is often encouraged in the pursuit of religious experience; usually this is attained by retreating from the social group to a location which is low in sensory stimulation. These conditions make it more likely that spontaneous religious imagery will occur, especially when it is expected. Add to these conditions the tendency to engage in fasting and absorbed or repetitive acts and we have a good recipe for the occurrence of powerful inner experiences.

William James had noticed that substances available in his own time, such as Nitrous Oxide, induced experiences which were not unlike those termed as religious. He noted that there seem to be other potential states of awareness which are hidden by the film of our normal consciousness. These altered states of consciousness (ASCs) are characterized by a loosening of normal ways of thinking and social norms, an increase in associative thought, a blurring of boundaries between self and other, a sense of unity between subject and object, changes in the perception of time and space. As we can see, these have a good deal in common with the core features of mystical experience.

During the 1960s, a number of psychological studies were conducted using hallucinogenic drugs. These included drugs such as cannabis and LSD-25, which brought about changes in awareness which ranged from mild elevations of mood

to intense visual and auditory sensation, depending upon the drug, its dosage, and the conditions under which it was administered. Psychoactive substances which occur naturally in the environment (two examples include hallucinogenic mushrooms and the peyote cactus) have played an important role in the religious ceremonies of many cultures. Studies indicate that the interpretations of the experiences arising from the use of such drugs were intimately related to the belief systems of the individuals involved. It seems that the drugs deepened the specific religious commitment of those involved.

Probably the most famous of these studies on psychedelic drugs and religious experience was that carried out by Walter Pahnke in 1964. Using a double-blind procedure (where neither experimenter nor subject know whether the subject has been given the drug or a placebo), twenty first-year theology students were given either psilocybin (a hallucinogenic mushroom) or nicotinic acid (a stimulant). The drugs were administered on Good Friday evening and the students went to a private chapel where they listened over loudspeakers to a religious service taking place in another part of the building. A good number of the psilocybin students reported the features of mystical experience while the students who received the nicotine reported significantly fewer of these features.

The Pahnke study indicated that drugs can help to generate experiences with features that correspond to some features of mystical experiences. For some religious groups their rituals are heavily dependent upon the use of such substances. For instance some Mexican Indian tribes used the peyote cactus in their religious ceremonies to seek visions and guidance. One well-known popular example of this practice is represented in the writings of Carlos Castaneda<sup>25</sup> who allegedly became the apprentice of a Yaqui Indian sorcerer. In the early days of his apprenticeship with don Juan, Castaneda was exposed to a range of hallucinogens, including jimson weed, mushrooms and peyote. These had the effect of confusing and loosening Castaneda's normal conceptions of the world. After a number of years of these experiences and other practices which did not involve the use of drugs, he became convinced of the existence of alternative realities. These alternative realities could be accessed through changing awareness or entering altered states of consciousness; in these altered states the mind seems to experience a world governed by different rules of nature.

Religious and mystical experience have also been facilitated by other practices such as meditation, which has played an important role in a wide range of western and eastern religious disciplines. Meditation typically involves the focusing and control of attention exclusively and tenaciously on one object, image, phrase or word. This focused activity is sometimes accompanied by dancing and chant in some traditions, or by the repetition of a simple prayer. These techniques, although all from different traditions, seem to share a complete directed absorption in the process, a one-pointedness which exhausts the usual perceptions of the object and opens up fresh insights. This is most readily seen in the Zen tradition where contemplation of a Koan (a logical or paradoxical puzzle such as: "what is the sound of one hand clapping?") can lead to a resolution involving a new understanding of the puzzle.

Batson and Ventis (1982) propose that religious experience is very much like creative experience, and that both experiences are reality transforming. They suggest a number of propositions which encapsulate the nature of both creativity and religious experience. The main proposals are: that reality is constructed, that is, humans only know the world through their own constructions and interpretations; that these interpretations depend upon the development of our cognitive structures (for example, very young children forget about an object when it is moved out of sight, indicating that a sense of "object permanence" has not yet been incorporated into the cognitive structures of the child); and that the organization of these cognitive structures is improved through creative acts. Creativity seems to be composed of identifiable stages, *preparation*, *incubation*, *illumination* and *verification*. This account of the creative process resonates with William James' formulation of religious experience as being composed of two parts: an uneasiness and its solution.

In terms of spiritual or religious experience this can be summarized as a sequence involving an *existential crisis*, *self-surrender*, and the perception of a *new vision* and *new life* which removes the old worries and concerns, replacing them with a sense of assurance. However, not all religious experience leads to a restructuring of cognition and provides the means to overcome the initial existential crisis. It is possible that the experience could lead to a "flight from reality" into personal fantasy, or to the development of rigid and dogmatic beliefs about conduct.

#### Exercises

- 3 In the light of these comments think about the various techniques which have been used in your culture to attain religious experience and discuss what kinds of effects they may incur.
- 4 Compare the following accounts. One is drug-induced, the other is the experience of a famous religious mystic.

Suddenly I burst into a vast, new, indescribably wonderful universe. Although I am writing this over a year later, the thrill of the surprise and amazement, the awesomeness of the revelation, the engulfment in an overwhelming feeling-wave of gratitude and blessed wonderment, are as fresh, and the memory of the experience as vivid, as if it had happened five minutes ago.

All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud. For an instant I thought of fire... the next, I knew that the fire was within myself. Directly afterward there came upon me a sense of exultation of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe.<sup>26</sup>

#### Parapsychological research and spirituality

Paranormal phenomena such as telepathy (thought transference) and psychokinesis (mind over matter) have been systematically studied since the late nineteenth

century. These human abilities have been hotly debated and the area is not without controversy, because it seems to challenge the very essence of science by exploring conjectural immaterial processes which many see as related to magical, spiritual or religious thinking. In fact, Joseph Rhine, the founder of experimental parapsychology, firmly believed that parapsychology would allow the scientific investigation of religion. William Braud, a contemporary parapsychologist, provides a powerful poetic image of these abilities.<sup>27</sup> He likens them to flowers in a garden, the existence of which is in dispute, but over the years enough evidence of these flowers has been collected and examined by parapsychologists for them to assert that these flowers and the garden exist, although they were previously considered as mythical. If they exist, this opens up the possibility of finding other more fabulous flowers in the same garden.

The existence of flowers such as telepathy and psychokinesis could provide evidence for more miraculous phenomena such as the healings and powers described in spiritual traditions. Accounts of such experiences are frequently reported in the general population, but it is likely that many of these experiences are attributable to misinterpretation and coincidence and many fewer to fraud; only a minority of these reports would be considered as being due to ostensible paranormal causes. However, it is clear that these special phenomena could be used to argue for the existence of a spiritual dimension, one in which there may ultimately be an intangible connection between individuals and also one in which there is survival beyond physical death. The experimental evidence for extrasensory perception and mental influence seems to suggest this interconnectedness. A range of studies have revealed that concealed targets can be successfully guessed (without any sensory contact) at significantly higher than chance rates, and also that two individuals remote from each other can influence and respond to each other's emotional states. These results are difficult to explain in normal terms and seem to suggest something which has been overlooked in mainstream psychology and science in general.

Another central question for many parapsychologists has been that of the survival of death. Early parapsychology researchers investigated displays of mediumship in their efforts to identify evidence for survival. The findings were mixed; some of these investigations yielded evidence which seemed to suggest contact with someone who had died, many others offered nothing of interest. More recently, some researchers have explored the question of survival using a situation based on the ancient Greek "psychomanteum" – a chamber in which the spirits of the dead returned to speak and advise the living. A modern day psychomanteum involves the use of a dark room, and a mirror into which the percipient gazes. The mirror is angled to the dark ceiling and offers a sense of depth but no identifiable visual features. A relatively large proportion of the people who have taken part in these studies have reported experiences ranging from a sense of presence, visual and auditory perceptions in some cases, to specific encounters with deceased relatives. A recent attempt to conduct a psychomanteum session under experimental conditions revealed interesting correspondences in terms of changes in the temperature and background radiation in the physical environment at times when participants reported a sense of

presence.<sup>28</sup> The evidence for these abilities is accumulating; it suggests that the world is more interconnected than was suggested in the mechanistic images of the modernist philosophers and scientists. This interconnectedness may suggest the basis for a recognition of wholeness and future spirituality.

#### Exercise

- 5 How might society and different religions react to the news that parapsychologists had proved that a life after death exists? Discuss the initial reactions and the more long-term consequences of such a claim.

### Conclusions

This discussion of psychology and religion has focused on three broad perspectives: psychoanalysis, objectivist psychology and transpersonal psychology, drawing out the differences in approaches, findings and interpretations of religious behavior, belief and experience. It has also exclusively focused on western psychology: nothing has been said about eastern approaches to psychology. A different set of historical and cultural antecedents have provided a context for Indian psychology for instance, which permits the concepts of spirituality and religious experience to be accepted as real in a literal rather than just a pragmatic sense. Although Indian psychology has borrowed the experimental and quantitative analysis techniques from the West, it accommodates in its tradition many phenomena which are less amenable to such modes of measurement. In its development of transpersonal research methods western psychology has begun to accommodate some of these phenomena which it could not submit to experimental methods.

Psychological interpretation of religion has not always been welcomed by psychologists or theologians, and the case of religion informing psychology is quite rare. Interestingly there is something of a recent trend for a reversal of this position, with psychology itself being influenced by Buddhist theories of mind. In modern cognitive psychology and philosophy, especially that deriving from computer models of mind, there has been some acceptance that self as we usually experience it does not exist, i.e., it is illusory. This is not unlike some of the central insights about the impermanence of self in Buddhism. This is a positive development, indicating that psychology and religion can learn from each other.

It is impossible to separate the methods of any discipline from the culture and time in which it exists. In fact, the time and the place in which a scientific practice developed can tell us a lot about the practice itself. Here we have briefly and selectively reviewed some of the ways in which psychologists have touched upon the subject of religious behavior, belief and experience. For psychology, religion is inevitably multi-faceted with many possible interpretations, and it often seems difficult to draw general conclusions from often opposing and contradictory evidence and theory; to choose one broad and central concept that frequently appears in direct

religious or mystical experience and which may also lie behind religious affiliation and participation in worship – a feeling of connection and at-one-ment. This seems quite close to one interpretation of the origins of the term “religion” – “religion” comes from the Latin “religare”, which means “to bind” – in this case to “bind to the whole.” This binding to the whole can lead to surges of creativity and new perceptions, as William James writes:

When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change.<sup>29</sup>

As Wulff suggests in his book,<sup>30</sup> a reconsideration of the meaning of religion is important at this time since we are currently experiencing an ecological crisis, one which institutional religion has contributed heavily to and which perhaps a new sense of spirituality must retrieve us from. It is likely that a psychology of spirituality will help to inform these efforts. There are signs that seeds for this psychology are already being sown; its roots lie in scientific endeavor but its concern will be with the soul.

### GLOSSARY

**Authoritarian personality** A personality type with a cluster of personality traits which relate to closed and rigid thinking styles.

**Behaviorism** Movement in psychology which emphasized the understanding of behavior in strict empirical terms.

**Cognitive** Refers to mental aspects of the personality; thinking, memory, decision-making.

**Interpretative** An analysis based on personal or theory-guided interpretation of qualitative data.

**Neurosis** A common and mild form of mental instability involving recurrent self-referent ideas about guilt and self-worth. Symptoms might include depression, compulsions and obsession.

**Objectivist** Scientists who are generally concerned only with objective “hard” data, usually in numerical form.

**Paradigm** An approach to science or particular scientific investigations which is informed by particular agreed or implicitly accepted work practices and assumptions.

**Paranormal** Ostensible phenomena such as telepathy and psychokinesis which are currently unexplained in terms of mechanism but which have experimental and statistical evidence strongly supporting their existence.

**Parapsychology** A multidisciplinary subject which explores the possibility of human abilities involving communication and influence outside of the currently understood normal channels.

**Phenomenological Approach** which is concerned with understanding and describing the features of personal experience.

**Positivism** The approach in science and philosophy which emphasizes that only directly testable phenomena can be examined by science.

**Psyche** Greek term for soul from which the term psychology derives.

**Psychoanalytic/psychoanalysis** The movement started by Sigmund Freud

which assumes that mental illness derives from the resurgence of repressed material in the unconscious. Psychoanalysts treat such problems using the "talking cure" psychotherapy.

**Qualitative/quantitative** Refers to textual and numerical types of data and analysis.

**Transpersonal** Beyond the normal conception of self, perhaps including a spiritual self or soul, or the experience of some self-transcending state characterized by a sense of "otherness."

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