classroom, the pulpit, or the media. One does not promote authentic conversion by misrepresenting the problem.

Rather than being advocates for tradition or innovation, religious educators should function as facilitators of conversion. And they can do this by communicating the best of both inherited beliefs and of human dynamism. It is the symbols, stories, songs, liturgies, and persons of the tradition that may be the instigation of a move toward authentic religious faith. It is confidence in one's creative autonomy that will give impetus to the yearning for authenticity. In addition, the reality of evil and the need for conversion can be communicated through stories of tragedy, of failed options, of bad decisions, and of death. The ways in which these tragic events have led to new life must be passed on as well. In doing this the educator does not "program" conversion, nor insure against doctrinal heresy.[29] Rather, the religious educator provides tools by which the conversional shifts required throughout life can be negotiated, if not with ease, then at least with a sense of hope.

Perhaps the best way to facilitate conversion is for the educator herself to communicate an attitude of openness. Every educator is herself at some point in her religious journey, and therefore has negotiated the interface between heritage and achievement in some manner. The more the educator maintains a healthy balance of the two at the same time that she keeps an open eye towards the distortion embodied in both, the more she will promote authentic transformation. Most important, the educator herself must be aware that her conversions may not be complete, that there may yet be something in her believing or her creating that is evil. Put quite simply, the educator who is most open to being converted herself will be the most successful in encouraging conversion in others.

Let us recall again the story of the fifth grade class standing in the sanctuary of a local parish church. They are surrounded by a rich religious heritage that needs to be explained and made relevant to them. Yet, as the story illustrates, spontaneous questions arise that challenge the teacher's assumptions and reveal gaps in her explanation. This interaction between tradition and discovery is fertile ground for conversion. Whether that fertile ground yields fruit depends in large measure on the teacher herself, on her appropriation of the tradition in light of her own critical questions, and on her willingness to confront the distortions of her own live religion. To the extent that this teacher is herself engaged in conversion she will be able to encourage conversion in her students, guiding them not toward becoming worshipers who "die" at Sunday services but believers who live a vibrant faith.

[29]While there are some Christian traditions in which conversion plays a minor role, there are others in which conversion is such a dominant expectation that one is considered deviant unless one has a conversion experience. Conversion thus is "programmed" and becomes a kind of initiation rite into the community or into adulthood. On programmed conversion, see Oates, 163-64.

PSYCHOLOGY AS A RESOURCE FOR CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Janet Ruffing, S.M.
Fordham University

Abstract

Psychology is a valuable resource for spirituality when researchers incorporate mutually critical correlations in their use of this discipline. It can be used to identify pathological elements in religious practice, uncover unconscious motivation, provide developmental schemas, and describe responses to meditative experiences. Researchers in spirituality will most likely draw on different schools of psychology in relationship to the particular phenomenon under investigation. Their critical perspective will uncover the presuppositions of psychologies that are either hostile to religion or neglect relationship to transcendence within their theories. Researchers in spirituality will want to retain a religious vocabulary and theological perspective.

I. Introduction

At the present time, the disciplines of spirituality and of psychology are inextricably related to one another. Practitioners of spirituality as a discipline are confronted with determining the most fruitful relationship between these two fields for the study of spirituality. As an academic discipline, the study of Christian spirituality is a recent development although the phenomena and texts which are the objects of its study date back to antiquity.[1] Among the behavioral sciences, the discipline of psychology emerged late in the nineteenth century and has contributed significantly to our understanding of religion and religious phenomena. Psychology can and should be an important resource for spirituality. However, no one school of psychology is either universally illumining or is without benefit for the study of spirituality. The particular phenomenon, figure, or movement under investigation from the perspective of spirituality requires the researcher to choose which psychological frame of reference offers a potentially significant contribution to the study.

[1]The study of spirituality is, of course, not limited to the Christian tradition. For the purposes of simplifying my argument, I am focusing on the relationship between various schools of psychology and the study of the religious experience of western Christians.

Janet Ruffing, S.M. is Assistant Professor of Spirituality and Spiritual Direction in the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education at Fordham University (Bronx, NY 10458). Her most recent publication is Uncovering Stories of Faith: Narrative and Spiritual Direction *(New York: Paulist, 1989).*

HORIZONS, 17/1 (1990), 47-59

In this essay, I advocate that more than one school of psychology is needed as an explanatory tool for spirituality. I do not propose to evaluate every school of psychology I mention but to suggest that various schools of psychology serve different functions within the study of spirituality. First, both depth and developmental psychology contribute to our understanding of pathology. Psychology's function of revealing pathology in human behavior serves as a critical check on theory and on practice in spirituality. Second, psychology offers a number of developmental theories which influence our understanding of various stages of growth toward transcendent reality and the interaction of the self with the Holy throughout the life cycle. Third, the psychology of meditation and of religious experience illuminate the reactions of the self to its own consciousness as well as to the Holy. These three areas do not exhaust the specific contributions of psychology to spirituality but exemplify something of the variety of relationship between these two disciplines.

Throughout the essay, I contest a tendency in some approaches to the study of spirituality which uncritically assumes a greater compatibility or agreement between these two fields of study than actually exists. The result often emphasizes psychological interpretations to the exclusion of important themes in theological anthropology or mysticism within an explicitly Christian frame of reference. In other words, psychological explanations cannot replace theological ones. Rather both disciplines need to maintain a reciprocal and mutually critical relationship to one another.[2]

Before discussing the three main areas of psychology's contribution to studies in spirituality, it is first necessary to identify in a more general way the relationship between these two disciplines.

II. Problematic Relationship Between Spirituality and Psychology

The relationship between Christian spirituality and psychology is problematic. There are differences in the presuppositions and methods of both fields as well as overlapping subject matter and interests. The most central issue is the difference between the way these two fields

[2]Examples of scholars who in their work in spirituality have drawn on psychological theories in the service of understanding a particular aspect of spirituality in this critical way are notably Sebastian Moore, Joann Wolski Conn, Walter Conn, John McDargh and others. See Sebastian Moore, *Let This Mind Be in You* (New York: Seabury, 1985) and, more recently, *Jesus the Liberator of Desire* (New York: Crossroad, 1989); Joann Wolski Conn, ed., *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development* (New York: Paulist, 1986) and *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* (New York: Paulist, 1989); Walter E. Conn, *Christian Conversion* (New York: Paulist, 1986); and John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion: On Faith and the Imaging of God* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1983) and "The Life of the Self in Christian Spirituality and Contemporary Psychoanalysis," *Horizons* 11/2 (Fall 1984): 344-60.

view transcendent reality and the nature of the relationship of the human person to transcendence.

As indicated above, psychology is a useful and necessary tool for spirituality. Conversely, spirituality is frequently a source for psychology, providing numerous topics for exploration. Freud offered a devastating critique of religion when he asserted that all religious faith and practice is an illusion to be outgrown. A host of psychopathologies are available for investigation within the hagiographical sources, and introspective texts amply describe altered states of consciousness.

The Christian spiritual tradition has consistently encompassed psychological reality before the emergence of psychology as a distinct discipline. Texts within the spiritual tradition, often rooted in individual experience, describe psychological experience and offer prescientific theories about it. For example, as early as the fourth century, Evagrius Ponticus in his *Praktikos* gives a subtle analysis of the eight passionate thoughts which he treats as demonic afflictions. George Tavard credits Richard of St. Victor's twelfth-century treatise on prayer, *Benjamin Minor*, with making psychological content in such works mandatory thereafter.[3] Both fields have been concerned with the same phenomena which are often interpreted from quite different perspectives. The contemporary investigator in spirituality is challenged to take psychological explanations and critiques into account because both fields are explicitly concerned with human selves and their interiority. At the same time, depending on the particular school of psychology, the researcher in spirituality may contest the adequacy of a theory that denies the reality of the transcendent and the possibility of relationship with it.

In addition to views of transcendence, there are significant differences in the origins, presuppositions, and methods of these two overlapping fields of study and their views of the human person. And it is conflicts among these views and presuppositions which provide both challenge and resources for spirituality.

"Spirituality," as a word, according to John Farina, has become a symbol for the "numinous," for that aspect of the human being which is self-transcendent and oriented to God or ultimate reality.[4] Spirituality as a field is necessarily concerned with the divine/human relationship and requires a theological anthropology as well as a psychology to adequately account for the self in relation to transcendent reality. A Christian view of spirituality presupposes the self to be rooted in a faith community, supported by ritual practices, informed by theological

[3]George Tavard, "Apostolic Life and Church Reform," in Jill Raitt, ed., *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 3 and 10.

[4]John Farina, "The Study of 'Spirituality' in North America: Some Problems and Opportunities" (unpublished paper read at the Catholic Theological Society of America

beliefs, and guided by the ethical norms of the community.[5] Many psychologies are either hostile to religion as a positive factor in human life or so focus investigation on the individual that faith becomes simply a structure of consciousness which gives meaning to life without reference to particular communities of faith or contents of faith.

The history of the Christian spiritual tradition is extremely diverse and encompasses different stages of human consciousness from oral, preliterate, urban and rural traditions to literate and technological ones. Walter Ong makes a convincing argument that persons who function primarily in oral cultures inhabit consciousness differently than do persons whose consciousness has been shaped by literacy. Consciousness in oral cultures tends to be extremely concrete, close of the life world of experience, dependent on interpersonal interaction, empathetic and participative rather than distanced and abstract. The primary experience of language is of the power and action of the spoken word. The experience of our own preliterate childhoods provides a good analogy. Certain forms of abstract, detached, thinking are simply not available before the development of a culture of literacy. Attention to the quality of orality in a culture is extremely helpful in interpreting texts produced by people who are making the transition from orality to literacy. Features of this basic experience of primary orality will then be interpreted in relationship to this form of consciousness rather than pathologized or taken as evidence of limitation in relationship to contemporary consciousness.[6]

"Psychology" as a word bears reference primarily to the human domain and seeks to understand mental and emotional processes and the behaviors which result. It is empirical, scientific, and medical in its origins and emerged only in the late nineteenth century. Its emergence corresponded with enlightenment thought and its view of the self is a product of the enlightenment. Early in its history it corrected the overly rational enlightenment view of the self with a theory of the unconscious to account for irrational behavior. In its origins, psychology was hostile to religion and tended to reduce religious phenomena to psychological regression or as evident of pathology.

C. G. Jung was among the first to break with this negative view of religion in the psychoanalytic tradition. Despite his basic sympathy for religion, the constraints of his scientific model resulted in a tendency in his writings to reduce God either to an archetype (a dynamic image) in

[5]Any other spirituality rooted in a religious tradition such as Buddhism or Sufism makes the same assumptions. However, new age spiritualities which are often eclectic and divorced from a religion would not hold these assumptions. Thus their practitioners often engage in meditational practice without the character formation, content of faith, or ethical norms provided by a faith community.

[6]Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: Technologizing the Word* (New York: Methuen, 1982) and David Toolan, *Facing West from California's Shores* (New York: Crossroad, 1987).

the human psyche or to the collective unconscious itself. The science of psychology even for Jung cannot say anything about the reality of God. It could only register an *imago dei* in the human psyche.[7]

Because psychology is rooted in a scientific world view and its object of study is the human reaction to various phenomena, it tends to be reductionistic when it treats of religious experience.[8] It is unable to account for the divine-human interaction as a verifiable cause of phenomena that may be observable or reportable. It can rule out secondary causes, but it can never affirm or discover exactly how it is the divine works in and through psychology or physiology. This type of experience is simply outside its domain according to its methods.[9] Its proper object of study is the human reaction to various phenomena, not aspects of a divine-human encounter. This methodological limitation is often either ignored or unacknowledged in psychological studies.

In the study of spirituality, some investigators emphasize a contemporary psychological reading of the historical material.[10] Unfortunately, when this is done, the analysis of behavior and unconscious motivation does not sufficiently account for the conscious role of beliefs, values, and meanings within very different social milieus. For instance, Rudolph Bell develops his thesis that a disorder very similar to anorexia affected numerous medieval saints such as Catherine of Siena. As a historian, he carefully shows the medieval version to be a religious phenomenon which the contemporary mental illness is not. Hence, he adds the "holy" to his title. Caroline Bynum, however, by including an analysis of the devotional and theological literature of the times, combined with a cultural analysis of women's role and relationship to food and food preparation, offers explanations which encompass a broader

[7]This reading of Jung, of course, requires a more nuanced argument about a point hotly debated by scholars than these brief reflections allow. See the following authors for discussion on this point: James Heisig, *Imago Dei: A Study of Jung's Psychology of Religion* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1979); Wallace Clift, *Jung and Christianity: The Challenge of Reconciliation* (New York: Crossroad, 1982); Peter Homans, *Jung in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979); Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper, 1957), 133-37; and Gerald May, *Will and Spirit* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 293.

[8]William James admirably investigated religious experience in such a way as to make it a reputable object of investigation for psychological study. Yet he is limited by his own empirical methods from the sort of claims a theology of religious experience can make.

[9]Gerald May makes a similar assertion although he is a psychiatrist. "As a group, the behavioral sciences are inveterately stuck in seeing everything from a humanistic standpoint. Everything is mind or the effect of interactions among minds and environments. Therefore if psychology is going to have anything to say about spirituality, it must reduce spirituality to a mental phenomenon. . . . The problem with mind-centered psychology is that it cannot get beyond itself. Union . . . must be reduced to a kind of recollection of fragments within oneself. . . . God, then, has to be a Jungian archetype at best, a Freudian symbolic invention at worst" (293).

[10]See, e.g., Michael P. Carroll, *Catholic Cults and Devotions: A Psychological Inquiry* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989) or Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

range of meanings in the fasting of medieval women than a diagnosis of "holy anorexia" can explain.[11]

Not only have the meanings of behaviors changed dramatically from century to century, but one might also argue that the conception of the self as well as the interpretation of the goal of human existence have also changed. Life spans were shorter, often half of the modern life-span. And consciousness itself seems to have functioned differently. For instance, although medieval people considered some behaviors symptomatic of madness, hallucinations were not so categorized, and visionary experiences were highly valued.[12] The entire cultural matrix affects people's responses to a variety of such experiences and must be taken into consideration in psychological interpretations of historical sources.

III. Reciprocal Relationship

Despite the humanistic limitations of psychology's view of the human, practitioners or researchers in Christian spirituality will want to utilize psychological perspectives in their work because their use is one way of interpreting the tradition in relationship to the culture. For these researchers, the lived tradition and its theological suppositions will serve as the primary interpreter and evaluator of the phenomenon in question, although they will incorporate psychological theories which contribute to the analysis. Generally speaking, researchers will appropriate a view of the unconscious and accept psychological analyses which reveal the morbid and the pathological in religious practice as well as study the conscious aspects of religious practice. Secondly, they appropriate or modify developmental theories which help them construct a framework for psychological and spiritual growth which does justice to both versions of growth. And they will utilize recent work on the psychology of meditation and religious experience as one tool for understanding processes of contact with the Holy and processes which deliberately focus energies in various ways.

However, this appropriation will not be an uncritical one. David Tracy's theory of "mutually critical correlations" can easily be appropriated in the relationship involved.[13] Investigators in spirituality need to identify clearly whether the case in question exhibits clear parallels on the level of experience despite contradictions between the particular psychology and the perspective of spirituality. In other instances, there

[11]Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast/Holy Fast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

[12]See Bynum; also see Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach, "Medieval Visions and Contemporary Hallucinations," *Psychological Medicine* 12 (1982): 709-21.

[13]"Any theologian who has interpretations of two distinct phenomena (tradition and situation) must somehow correlate those interpretations: whether through claims for identity, radical nonidentity, similarities, continuities or analogies" (David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination* [New York: Crossroad, 1981], 88, n. 44.

may be really identical accounts from both perspectives, and at times clear divergence.

Because psychological theories enhance our understanding of some aspects of religious experience and the person who constitutes the subject of such experience, investigators in spirituality may assume any combination of four relationships to the findings of psychology. (1) They can use psychological theories and findings to enhance their understanding of the range of phenomena in their purview. (2) They can propose to psychology further questions for investigation from their own critical perspective. (3) They cannot ignore or contradict empirically established findings proposed by psychology. (4) They can critique problems with psychological theory or findings on the basis of theological discipline, historical evidence, or the faith experience of contemporary people.

One helpful criterion which governs this reciprocal relationship I describe as adequacy of explanation. In investigating a complex phenomenon a given psychological explanation accounts for some features in the experience and not for others. The investigator will attempt to combine whatever theories or perspectives are necessary in order to give the most adequate account of the phenomenon in both its historical and contemporary understandings.

As I discuss the three areas of psychology's contribution to spirituality, I will pose questions which suggest how these correlations might work.

IV. Revealing Psychopathology

The original hostility of psychology to religion had the positive effect of revealing the morbid and the pathological in religious practice. Psychology especially unmasked the ways in which authentic and/or distorted religious beliefs can be used to foster lack of autonomous development, reinforce obsessive-compulsive guilt complexes, strengthen the tyranny of the super-ego, and encourage masochistic or self-destructive behavior. As a result, behaviors which are patently psychotic or even mildly neurotic in their religious manifestations are rather clear for most researchers in spirituality. Psychology's function here, as resource, is to demonstrate what can go wrong psychologically within the practice of religion.

The revelation of psychopathology is not, however, the whole story. For instance, Carl A. Mounteer interprets both martyrdom and monasticism in the fourth and fifth centuries as "the most atavistic forms of aggression, exhibitionism, and self-hatred which the darker side of human nature is capable of expressing."[14] Although the unconscious

[14]Carl A. Mounteer, "Guilt, Martyrdom and Monasticism," *Journal of Psychohistory* 9 (Fall 1981): 145.

pathology he ascribes may well have been present in some martyrs and monastics, the investigator in spirituality will most likely point out that the historical and theological literature reveals that the Christian community developed its own discernment between appropriate and inappropriate behavior and motives for those threatened with martyrdom and rejected the extreme cases Mounteer examines as a group who did appear to be "rashly seeking or provoking martyrdom."[15]

Further questions need to be explored if one is to understand additional features of this particular phenomenon. Can one account for a psychologically healthy form of martyrdom? What theological beliefs motivated individuals to participate? What was the nature of the religious experience reported in these accounts: experience of union with Jesus, mass hysteria, or both a personal and communal religious experience? What motivation is psychologically or spiritually adequate to justify loss of life for a cause? What sociological factors contributed to the behavior of some of the martyrs? What theological and historical reasons accounted for different valuations of martyrdom in Christian communities? How do contemporary persons respond to situations which may require a "suffering witness" because of one's beliefs or commitments? Once the pathological or unconscious motives or appeal of a phenomenon is taken into account, the investigator in spirituality will seek to account for other features, such as the ones suggested above.[16] Nonetheless, psychology's revealing of the pathological is both a service and a challenge to spirituality's account of the issue.

V. Developmental Perspectives

The recognition of various deformations of religion required people working in spirituality to come to new understandings about the purposes of ascetical practices and to examine them in the light of various developmental theories—psychoanalytic as well as psycho-sexual ones. In the Christian tradition in which much of the inherited teaching is transmitted through the written records of individual experience, it is necessary to distinguish between ascetical means which are formative of the adult, responsible self and those which have as their purpose deconstructing a false or excessively conditioned social self. Developmental

[15] See Boniface Ramsey's brief survey of the literature in "Martyrdom and Monasticism" in *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (New York: Paulist, 1985). 122-48. Notably *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* and *Origen's Exhortation to Martyrdom* exemplify this refinement in the community's theology of martyrdom.

[16] Carroll's recent book, *Catholic Cults and Devotions*, is a good example of a careful psychoanalytic analysis of the unconscious appeal of a broad range of Roman Catholic popular devotions. Carroll is the first to acknowledge that his analysis is one limited explanation of these practices. Once one is alert to unconscious forces at work within these devotions, there remain many complementary features which are not explained at all by this analysis.

theories provide important clues to the various ego responses people make to common teaching based on the specific developmental tasks facing persons. At the same time, developmental theories themselves may stand in need of correction by the spiritual tradition if they cannot account for the development of both adult autonomy and adult surrender, capacities required for spiritual maturity.[17]

The increasing attention psychoanalytic theory is giving to the pre-oedipal stages of development is beginning to yield important insights about the formation of both constructive and destructive images of God and images of the self. This school of psychology has also been concerned with describing through object-relations theory the establishment of a sufficient sense of self that is required to ground contemplative practice.[18]

At the same time, the spiritual tradition has consistently suggested a variety of developmental schemas of the soul's journey into God. The processes of purification and transformation witnessed to by texts from the mystical tradition require some consonance with theories of adult development if human maturity and spiritual maturity have any correspondence with one another. Texts which deal with advanced stages of the spiritual life assume a level of self-formation that can bear to be relativized by prolonged encounter with transcendent reality. A person must first possess a self in order to be able to relinquish it. Researchers in spirituality can use developmental theory as one way of understanding the psychological development that is a prerequisite for such transformation and will be indebted to one or another psychological school for their developmental perspective.

Just as investigators in spirituality may adopt a theory of psychological development, be it Jung's, Erikson's, Kegan's, Gilligan's, or another, questions can still be put to each of these theories which question identity, parallels, or divergences with interests in spirituality. For instance, a number of questions and issues can be raised within a Jungian perspective. Is "individuation," the goal of Jungian development, in any sense equivalent to or identical with "union with God" in the classical Christian sense? Not necessarily, although there are many points of covergence, and many people adopt a Jungian interpretation to describe some forms of spiritual development. Jung never adequately accounts for the possibility of extra-psychic religious reality. Can one achieve individuation and not experience union with God? Different readings of Jung will suggest diametrically opposed responses. Indi-

[17] See Joann Wolski Conn, *Spirituality and Personal Maturity* for an example of this type of correlation and critique.

[18] See McDargh, "The Life of the Self in Christian Spirituality and Contemporary Psychoanalysis." McDargh makes the point that spiritual practices designed to lessen ego controls may not be particularly helpful to the borderline personality or those with other forms of narcissistic disturbances.

viduation is an intra-psychic process, not necessarily a relational one. From the perspective of spirituality, one could argue that the individuation process, especially the encounter with the shadow, bears a striking resemblance to the passive night of sense—a necessary prerequisite for mystical transformation. Can the patterns of symbolization which accompany and indicate the individuation process transpiring illumine similar symbolism produced in visionary experiences in the divine-human encounter? Of course.

From broader developmental perspectives, other examples of the "mutually critical correlations" follow. Can one have profound religious experience and not yet be fully integrated or even fail to complete all the stages of psycho-sexual development? Most likely. To what extent is holiness the same as wholeness in the sense of human integration? Or does holiness implicitly suggest a right relationship with transcendence as well as normal human development? To what extent can psychologically distressed people live a vital faith life despite their psychological disorders? How are our models of holiness changing to accommodate the requirements of psychological health? Has this corrected, distorted, or invalidated earlier cultural models of holiness? Is our culture's therapeutic norm for what is pathological making it increasingly difficult to legitimate self-donation to and for others without some kind of tangible return? On what basis can we construct a non-pathologized version of self-denial and service for the sake of the common good or a higher good for which self-interest and even the self may suffer?

VI. Psychology of Meditation and Transpersonal Psychologies

Another positive contribution of psychology to spirituality has been the work of psychiatrists and psychologists such as Claudio Naranjo, Robert Ornstein, Lawrence Le Shan, and Arthur Diekman on the psychology of meditation.[19] Experimental research with hallucinogens, notably that done by Stanislov Grof, Robert E. Masters, and Jean Houston, have furthered our understanding of visionary states and predictable patterns of the release of psychic contents which may also be applicable to mystic experiences which occur without the use of external chemical triggers.[20] In addition, other research comparing contemporary schizo-

[19]Claudia Naranjo and Robert Ornstein, *On the Psychology of Meditation* (New York: Viking, 1971); Lawrence Le Shan, *How to Meditate* (New York: Bantam, 1974); Arthur Diekman, "Bimodal Consciousness and the Mystic Experience" in Philip R. Lee, et al., *Symposium on Consciousness* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1976); "Deautomization and the Mystic Experience," *Psychiatry* 29 (1966): 324-38.

[20]Stanislov Grof, *Realms of the Human Unconscious: Observations from LSD Research* (New York: Dutton, 1977) and Robert E. Masters and Jean Houston, *Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* (New York: Delta, 1966). Recently, Grof's schema of Perinatal Matrices has been applied to Teresa of Avila's mystical development in attempting to

phrenic episodes with medieval visionary experiences seems to suggest both similarities and important contrasts. Both medievals and moderns exhibit similar response to intense psychic states. In contrast to modern schizophrenics, medieval visionaries exhibit little dysfunction at the termination of the experience and demonstrate the capacity to integrate the messages or effects of their experiences into their lives and mission.[21] The work explicitly on the psychology of meditation has been helpful in analyzing and describing practices, structures, goals, and interrelationships among a number of spiritual contemplative practices. This categorization and generalization of methods and procedures in comparative traditions has generally contributed to a rediscovery of the potentials and methods of Western Christian meditational practices often scattered through texts on prayer. The result has been a better understanding of how some processes work quite apart from a specific belief system.[22] It has also contributed to the rapidly growing tendency for Christians to incorporate meditational practices from non-theistic or non-Christian world religions into their own practice.

This intense psychological interest in contemplative practices from Transcendental Meditation to Zen has also resulted in the development of transpersonal psychologies. Anthony Sutich introduced transpersonal psychology to the world with this description.

> Transpersonal Psychology is interested in those *ultimate* human capacities and potentialities that have no place in positivistic or behavioristic theory, classical psychoanalytic theory, or humanistic psychology. The emerging Transpersonal Psychology is concerned specifically with the *empirical* scientific study of . . . becoming, individual and species-wide meta-needs, ultimate values, unitive consciousness, peak experiences . . . mystical experience . . . transcendence of self, spirit and species-wide synergy . . . and related concepts, experiences and activities.[23]

Notable examples of transpersonal psychologists who tend either to incorporate or create contemplative practices for therapeutic ends are Fritz Perls, Roberto Assagioli, and Ken Wilber. In Gestalt psychology,

refute previous categorizations of hysteria; see Christopher M. Bache, "A Reappraisal of Teresa of Avila's Supposed Hysteria," *Journal of Religion and Health* 24 (Winter 1985): 300-50.

[21]Kroll and Bachrach, "Medieval Visions."

[22]The temptation that follows this understanding of process is a tendency among some to assume one can deracinate "spiritual disciplines from the communal context, ritual practices, metaphysical foundations, and ethical guidance which were their originating ground and living matrix" (McDargh, "Life of the Self," 348). See John H. Engler, "Vicissitudes of the Self According to Psychoanalysis and Buddhism: A Spectrum Model of Object Relations Development," *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Culture* 6/1 (Spring 1983), 29-72, who resists this decontextualizing of meditation in the Buddhist tradition from its living matrix.

[23]Anthony Sutich, *Journal for Transpersonal Psychology* 1 (1969): 13.

Perls incorporates a supervised practice of present moment awareness similar to Vipassana meditation.[24] Assagioli's system of Psychosynthesis aims at contracting the transpersonal self and utilizes guided imagery extensively.[25] And Ken Wilber's very helpful spectrum of consciousness provides a schema for indicating at what levels of human development specific therapies and/or contemplative practices facilitate growth.[26]

It is clear from this rather cursory description that the objects of study of transpersonal psychology and spirituality overlap to a significant degree. Transpersonal psychology, however, studies these phenomena within an empirical mode which brackets belief systems. This tends to detach the phenomena from the exoteric religious traditions in which they originate and whose faith they express. This emphasis on the interior, psychological experiences of people often obscures the social and political implications of such religious experience when it occurs within and is understood in relationship to historical communities of faith.

For many people, these transpersonal psychologies and their therapies constitute an alternative secular spirituality. This tendency to replace a religious tradition with privatized practices and an exclusively therapeutic conceptual frame of reference constitutes a very subtle danger. While the effort to promote and encourage participation in some form of contemplative practice is certainly helpful for many people, the shift of training in such practices from religious communities in Bellah's sense of the word "community" to the privatized therapeutic setting tends to strengthen the particular form of the illusory self which is already socially unrooted in community in American culture.[27] This adoption of the privatized self as the prevailing model of the self may undermine the very practices transpersonal psychology advocates. A consequence is that the practices themselves may be cultivated purely for tangible pragmatic ends rather than for their larger goal of supporting and encouraging a change in consciousness which relativizes the small ego in favor of that larger reality in which we live and have our being.

[24] Frederick S. Perls, *Gestalt Therapy Now* (New York: Harper, 1971).
[25] Roberto Assagioli, *Psychosynthesis* (New York: Penguin, 1965).
[26] Ken Wilber, *No Boundary* (Boulder, CO: Shambala, 1981).
[27] "... a *Community* is a group of people who are socially interdependent, who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain *practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it. Such a community is not quickly* formed. It almost always has a history and so is also a *community of memory*, defined in part by its past and its memory of its past" (Robert Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], 333).

VII. Conclusion

Psychology provides considerable resources for the study of spirituality. We are constantly challenged to distinguish pseudo-spiritualities from authentic ones partially on the basis of pathological assessments. Developmental theories illumine our understanding of the usual human development which can support processes of mystical transformation and lives lived in the service of others. And the understanding of the psychological processes manifested in altered states of consciousness, including those which are specifically religious in cause or content have sharpened our approaches to ascetical practices and techniques related to prayer.

From the perspective of spirituality, the tendency of psychology either to reductionism or to abstraction requires a critical assessment which clearly identifies the methodological limits of particular theories. While some schools of psychology are sympathetic to the claims of spirituality, other psychological analyses continue to remain hostile to those claims. Spirituality needs to continue to challenge psychology's account of the goals of human development to include the possibility/desirability of mature divine-human relationship. And it will continue to posit and encourage the development of the communal or social self as a constitutive dimension of a human self over and against the privatized therapeutic self. In order to maintain this creative tension and mutual critique between these two fields of inquiry, the study of spirituality will continue to require a religious vocabulary as well as a psychological one to interpret and foster development, experiences, and commitments which reflect an adequate theological anthropology in the context of communities of faith