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—**HAROLD G. KOENIG, MD,** professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, Duke University Health Systems, and director of Duke's Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health

"This book is fascinating. By covering a range of assumptive frameworks, it gives insider perspectives on mental health and healing from different faith traditions. It also encourages us to examine some of our own Western assumptions and understand the prominence of spirituality in nearly all indigenous psychologies."

—**KATE LOEWENTHAL, PHD,** Emeritus Professor of Psychology, Royal Holloway University of London, and visiting professor at Glyndwr University, Wales, and New York University in London

"An amazing and timely work providing an emic perspective on religious and spiritual psychology. The authors have challenged the limitations of methodology and provided a psychological perspective on each religion from the 'inside,' while acknowledging that it is but one of many perspectives within the religion. The authors must be lauded for their expertise and the humility with which they have presented their material. A true masterpiece which will help advance dialogue not just in the psychology of religion and spirituality but in the field of psychology and its applications."

—**SONIA SUCHDAY, PHD,** Professor and Chair, Psychology Department, Pace University

"Such a timely resource that incorporates world religion into understanding human psychology. The various chapters provide profound insights and understanding of the psychology of different faiths from insiders' perspectives, which makes *The Psychology of World Religions and Spiritualities* an excellent resource for researchers, clinicians, and students! A wonderful book for readers to understand, digest, and contrast the rich diversity of world religions."

—**KENNETH T. WANG, PHD,** professor and PhD Program Chair, Clinical Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WORLD RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITIES

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WORLD RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITIES

AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

Edited by Timothy A. Sisemore
and Joshua J. Knabb

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To the memory of P. J. "Paul" Watson: professor, scholar, psychologist of religion, mentor, friend, and role model. You embodied the best of being human.—*TAS*

This book is dedicated to my wife, Adrienne, who regularly lends me her ear to talk about all things transcendent.—*JJK*

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FOREWORD

With this edited volume on the indigenous psychology of religions, Timothy Sisemore and Joshua Knabb are breaking new ground in the field. In contrast to the scene of indigenous psychology (IP), in which the IP status of Western mainstream psychology is still being debated, the psychologies of Christianity and Judaism—religious traditions that constitute the building blocks of Western culture—have joined the ranks of the indigenous psychologies of world religions. This is a big step forward toward a more equalitarian community of global psychology (see Pe-Pua, in press).

The contributors generally agree that mainstream psychology of religion impedes the development of a psychology that aspires to capture more fully the religious scene of humankind. The permission granted in this volume for free expression of religiosity does much to foster the delightfully unique styles and panache with which each contributor presents a particular religious tradition. The result is a rich tapestry of religious diversity, a mosaic of religious traditions based on the insider's experience. Before I go over the insider's unique contributions to psychology of religion, I would like to start with a few caveats.

DEMYSTIFYING THE INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

The insider does not necessarily know best (see Sundararajan, 2019). Depending on the depth of insight and breadth of knowledge, some insiders may know better than other insiders, but the insider's role or identity itself is no guarantee of quality or validity of knowledge. It is safe to say that the insider and the outsider point to each other's lacunae in knowledge, such that neither is sufficient in and of itself.

Another caveat of the insider's perspective is homogenization. The insider tends to give a homogenized account of her religious traditions, which are intrinsically heterogeneous. Along this line, the believer's perspective constitutes only one of the possibilities of being an insider of a

tradition. This has practical implications for the clinician. Do not assume that the client in front of you subscribes to everything you have read about her tradition, since the insider has a full range of possibilities, as adumbrated by the anthropologist Edward Sapir (1924):

> Those … of us who take their culture neither as knowledge nor as manner, but as life, will ask of the past not so much "what?" and "when?" and "where?" as "how?" and the accent of their "how" will be modulated in accordance with the needs of the spirit of each, a spirit that is free to glorify, to transform, and to reject. (p. 423)

UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE BELIEVER'S PERSPECTIVE

Mostly authored by adherents of religious traditions, this edited volume is a treasure trove of local, that is, indigenous, categories. This constitutes a major contribution to psychology of religion in many ways. First, local categories of religion can be used to test the universality of conventional psychological concepts (Sundararajan, 2015). For instance, the standard notion of religion in terms of a trajectory marked by points of entry (conversion) and exit (deconversion) is not universally applicable. For many non-Western traditions, religion is a way of life, a tradition that one is born into, and from which there is normally no exit. This has implications for theory and research. Most of the standard measures in the field are based on the notion of religion as a matter of choice, thereby obliterating the distinction between institutionalized and diffused religions (see Ting et al., this volume)—only the former, not the latter, factors in choice.

The contributors have made it amply clear that religious categories in general do not readily fit the secular, scientific framework in psychology of religion. Take for instance the possibility that a person is not atomic but rather composed of layers of being, or that life in the present body is only one of the many permutations of a soul that spans multiple lifetimes. Asking someone with this type of orientation to focus on the here and now as the only reality of consequence is akin to forcing an astronomer to abandon her interest in the galaxies to become an accountant. Such a shift of framework entails a drastic reduction in dimension and scale of the human as *homo religious*, yet this is routinely done in psychology of religion. For instance, when we measure the health "benefits" of

faith, we have cast the spiritual yearnings of the believer in the framework of instrumental rationality. Similarly when we reduce love for God to attachment styles, we fail to address the question of why humans have such passion for the transcendent in the first place.

In the final analysis, the insider's story broadens the horizon of the psychology of religion by posing the more fundamental question: What makes us human? Consider the following dialogue between the first human and the Raven, according to the creation myth of the Yup'ik People (Dalton, 1999):

> "What am I doing here?"
> "You are here to be," Raven said.

The story goes on to show that one of the hallmarks of being human is to question the ground of one's being. Put another way, the being of a human being is never taken for granted. Furthermore, there seems to be a need to ground our being in something beyond what is readily available in the world of facticity. This point is best articulated by an Islamic analogy, in the words of Fatemi: "beings operate as prepositional modes: A preposition loses its sense of being the moment it is placed outside a sentence" (this volume).

This analogy sheds some light on the power of a religious tradition in which believers may feel at home like prepositions functioning properly in a well-constructed sentence. Conversely, people who are displaced in a foreign context—for instance, migrants—may feel useless, like prepositions without a sentence. In sum, the hallmark of our being human lies in the question we raise about the ground of our being. The world's religions constitute answers from various cultures to this fundamental question. By taking an inventory of these answers, this volume opens up multiple new possibilities in the psychology of religion.

First, when we take an inventory of world religions, we see more clearly the questions and concerns that reverberate throughout the ages across cultures and populations. This invites investigation of the social-cultural consequences of the answers to these universal questions. For instance, where does life come from? Many creation myths are attempts to tackle this question, with answers ranging from ancestors and mythical animals to the creator God. What are the social-historical

consequences of these answers? For another example, is God singular or plural? Now that we have a well-conducted study of the far-reaching social and cultural consequences of monotheism (Norenzayan, 2013), a comparable study of the consequences of polytheism would be an imperative next step for the psychology of religion.

Second, answers from religious traditions are among the most useful tools we have in meeting the challenges posed by the twenty-first century. For instance, throughout history different religions have advocated for the supremacy of the heart (Islam), of awareness (Hinduism, Buddhism), of kinship-based relations (reverence for the ancestor), or of cosmic unity (animism), but the supremacy claim of the intellect has prevailed in the secular age of modernity. The unbridled cognitive supremacy has given us unprecedented advances in science and technology, and also an escalating global crisis in the destruction of the biosphere, the loss of bio- and cultural diversity, and the widening gap between the haves and have-nots. As we teeter on the edge of this global crisis, we may need to regain our balance by keeping open other dimensions of being human above and beyond the dazzling purchase of the intellect.

On a less grand and more practical level, this volume is a valuable resource for clinicians in their endeavor to restore a culturally displaced client to her rightful site of being. It can also be a source of inspiration for anyone interested in the possibility of a genuine world peace. To get a glimpse of this possibility, let us go back to the dialogue between the first human and the Raven, as told in the creation myth of the Yup'ik People (Dalton, 1999):

> The Raven told the inquisitive creature (the first human): "You are here to be."
> "Be what?" the creature asked.
> "To be yourself," Raven replied.
> "Who am I?" the creature asked.

Now we are on familiar ground: This is the question we ask ourselves all the time. We also know the conventional answers to this question: I am a lawyer, doctor, parent, student, Chinese, Baptist, and so on. But Raven's answer is different—it takes us beyond all identities of ethnicity, culture, and religion:

You are a human being. Human is your form, the part of you which looks the way it does and moves in the way it moves. It is the physical part of who you are, but it is not all of you. By asking who you were, you showed that you know you are more than your form, more than just the physical. This something more is the being. It is your beingness that makes you different, makes you special. (see Gray, pp. 226–227, this volume)

Religious discourse such as this may open up the possibility of grounding world peace on something that all religions share in common, namely the question: What makes us human?

Enough said. Wherever you are heading as you journey through the twenty-first century, I think you will be glad to have packed this book with you.

Louise Sundararajan
Rochester, New York

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PART 1

CONCEPTUALIZING RELIGIONS FOR WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY

TIMOTHY A. SISEMORE AND
JOSHUA J. KNABB

SEEING RELIGIONS AND SPIRITUALITIES FROM THE INSIDE

Problems for Western Psychology That Can Be Addressed with an Indigenous Psychological Perspective

Modern technology is wonderful. Having just moved to a new part of the United States, I am frequently trying to find new places. (First-person singular references ["I," "me"] in this chapter are to Timothy Sisemore.) Modern science makes this easier than ever as I simply dictate my destination to my trusty phone, and it tells me how to get there. While not infallible, the technology is accurate and dependable. In its place, science is a boon to contemporary society.

But my phone has limits. While it will navigate me from place to place based on detailed maps and access to satellites, it is quite useless when it comes to telling me where I want to go. Even more so, it is useless in telling me *why* I want to get there. If I ask my phone to tell me where I should go, what I should do, or the meaning of the places to which I travel, I ask in vain. These questions are beyond the responses of what a navigation system is designed to offer.

Psychology as a science faces similar limitations. As a discipline it has helped us gain considerable insight into human behavior, from methods designed to peek into the unseen recesses of our minds to a better ability to understand and predict behavior. Science has even given us consider-

able insight into religious and spiritual behavior and thinking.[1] But the science of psychology is limited when it interprets what is it like to be a person of faith, or to act within a specific cultural context, and can lose perspective on its limitations and overreach its area of competence.

This is seen, as beautifully explained by Dueck in the chapter that follows, when psychology tries to study other cultures scientifically. It can lose its sense of boundaries and actually colonize other cultures when it strives to pursue a global understanding of local psychological functioning. After all, science is a Western way of knowing, and Western psychology views others through its methods shaped by efforts to be objective and agnostic. Indigenous psychology (IP) arose in response to this, arguing that people and people groups should be viewed from within their categories and concepts and not squeezed into the categorical boxes of Western psychology. To state it differently, psychologists have often utilized an *etic*, outsider, "top-down" approach to studying psychological phenomena, employing purely secular theories that are divorced from the very populations they strive to empirically investigate (Kim, Park, & Park, 2000, p. 66).[2]

This Western strategy becomes even more problematic when we try to look at religions and spiritualities. If science struggles to understand human cultures, it will have an even more difficult time grasping the nature of beliefs in the transcendent that mark most cultures. When psychologists encounter groups that believe something other than science provides an epistemology, be it a divine being, spirit, ancestors, or tradition, they tend to colonize these "backward" beliefs; a solid indigenous approach seeks to learn and understand from these. For example, Christianity values humility and meekness, yet psychology has pathologized that at times to assert that Christians lack "self-esteem," for that is the Western value at present (Watson et al., 2003). With this approach, "indigenous knowledge" is viewed as a legitimate foundation for conceptualizing religion and spirituality, rather than merely "auxiliary" to the secular assumptions of Western psychological theories (Kim et al., 2000, p. 65; Kim, Yang, & Hwang, 2006).

INTENTION FOR THIS BOOK

An indigenous approach to understanding all peoples is at the heart of this volume. We have compiled this collection to be a one-stop resource for a thorough orientation to religious and spiritual diversity, covering the major religions and spiritualities as presented from within the cultural framework of such faiths by persons who also are familiar with scientific psychology. The reader thus receives these summaries from a perspective that can be understood by a student of Western psychology, yet spoken in a way amenable to these indigenous faiths. It is an exploration of the psychology of religions and spiritualities that is broken down by religion (not topics) and intentionally gives equal voice to the various faiths (whereas most psychology of religion books built solely on research are imbalanced in favor of Christianity, which has received by far the most scholarly attention—itself a reflection of the Western bias in science). This book also summarizes the available psychological science for each faith system while giving the indigenous context to fill in the areas lacking current research.

Moreover, this book also offers Western psychological scientists ways to better understand the "ideological surround" (Watson et al., 2003) of religious groups and individuals so that Western constructs are not inappropriately forced, like square pegs into round holes, onto indigenous groups. This sets the stage for a more accurate understanding of the groups and better approaches to research these groups while also making a case for the inadequacies of scientism (the overreaching of scientific methods) as a way of understanding them.

Overall, we offer an introduction to the psychologies of religion and spirituality for specific groups, spoken from an inside perspective, and incorporate the current research while opening doors for further and more appropriate research. Here, it is important to mention that the authors or coauthors writing from within each faith system offer one of many possible interpretations. Given that there is no way to fully capture the lived experience of billions of people from around the world, no one indigenous perspective exists for each world religion or spirituality. Rather, our hope is that these insider discussions will serve as a catalyst for subsequent theory building and research from an *emic* perspective,

recognizing that the vast array of diverse indigenous perspectives from around the world can deepen our understanding of the psychology of the human experience.

We wrote this book with three audiences in mind. The primary audience is psychologists and other mental health professionals seeking to gain a working multicultural knowledge of the psychology of the major world religions. These include psychologists and others in practice and in training, as well as the broader group of psychologists in nonclinical settings desiring to be more competent in this field. This volume is also for graduate students to receive a scientifically founded yet culturally sophisticated perspective on persons of faith and thus gain more knowledge in this area. Even undergraduate students can benefit from this work as a cultural resource. Third, this book is written for researchers who may be drawn to a fresh perspective on ways to study faith groups and believing individuals. Finally, this book should find an audience in students of religion in seminaries and other religiously oriented schools, hopefully springboarding a discussion on viewing religions with more care.

PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, AND LOOKING AHEAD

For this initial chapter, we examine some of the problems science—particularly psychological science—must address. Like a car's navigation system, science must concede its limitations but, moving beyond that metaphor, also learn to adapt to better understand the majority of humans who believe in some sense of the transcendent. We briefly trace a history of how science supplanted religious ways of knowing, then consider in detail the limitations of Western psychological science as a way of knowing. Then we survey some approaches to IP that may help bridge this gap and lead psychology to a better understanding of the beliefs, thoughts, actions, and cultures shaped by shared views of the transcendent. We conclude with some clinical implications of this shift in method, framing the following chapters that detail how this applies to some of the world's major religious and spiritual groups.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RISE OF SCIENCE

Western science is a relative newcomer as a way of knowing. For most of history up until some 500 years ago, the world was "enchanted" (Taylor, 2007). A realm of the spiritual crossed the boundary into our everyday lives and influenced us. Most people assumed that this enchanted dimension had to be reckoned with if we were to truly understand the way the world really was, and many assumed that the transcendent not only existed but interacted with the material in a variety of ways, such as by revealing itself into the world. Thus, the three major monotheisms—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—are built on the belief that a transcendent God has spoken into our world, and these faiths draw knowledge from the supernatural. Other faiths and spiritualties have other views on how the transcendent enters the mundane.

In the West, Christianity dominated culture for centuries. Its authoritative text, the Bible, was seen as the primary source of truth and knowledge, with the study of it, theology, being coined the "queen of the sciences" due to its examining God's revelation to humanity. *Science* itself was a term used consistently with its original meaning of "knowledge" until the nineteenth century, being applied to any area of knowing. It then came to refer to natural science, or the knowledge of nature, and then to mean science as specifically empirical science (Hutchinson, 2011).

As has been well documented (particularly in the work of Taylor, 2007), the Enlightenment effectively dethroned knowledge as in any sense determined by anything outside ourselves, at least in most of the West, and operated on the idea that we do not need "enchantment" to understand and master the universe. Science arose in the humanistic environment of the Enlightenment, donning a methodology that was committed only to the observable and measurable in an effort to objectify knowledge apart from a belief in enchantment. This new naturalistic methodology would bring about unprecedented progress in technology and multiply knowledge in the physical sciences, revolutionizing industry and even health care.

The areas of science's impact were largely physical—understanding how the elements of the world act and interact. Emboldened by this success, proponents of the new, empirical, and agnostic methodology

set their sights on other areas. Psychology came into view around the turn of the twentieth century (Lamiell, 2018). No less a psychologist than Wilhelm Wundt (2013) expressed concern with the shift of psychology away from philosophy and toward science as it would divorce the empirical from the metaphysical. To borrow again from Taylor (2007), psychology became disenchanted. This became a move into what Lamiell (2018) has called "statisticism," the effort to explain human experience and psychological functioning by numbers, based on the assumption of science that human psychology can be known in the same way that we know how water boils. The drive for psychology to be deemed an objective science and thus earn respect meant that other approaches to knowing how persons think, feel, and act were essentially abandoned in service to empiricism. Over the past century, statistics have become more and more sophisticated, while it seems we languish in the genuine understanding of human nature. Yet only a few (e.g., Gantt & Williams, 2018; Polanyi, 1962) have challenged its orthodoxy and authority.

A position of holding science as essentially *the* way of knowing has led to a place where the method itself supplants religion. While those of the enchanted world had religions that were the source of knowledge, science became its own religion in a sense, one that has been called "scientism" (Williams & Gantt, 2018, p. 6). Scientism is the pushing of Enlightenment science beyond its bounds, with the intent of revealing our own humanity to ourselves and the hope of this understanding leading to a solution to our problems as a species. "The key aspect of religious conviction that scientism shares with most organized religions is that it offers a comprehensive principle or belief, which itself cannot be proved (certainly not scientifically proved) but which serves to organize our understanding and guide our actions (Hutchison, 2011, loc. 113).

The survey of this problem in Gantt and Williams (2018) is summarized by Wertz (2018). Scientism excludes mental life from the scope of science, as it is ultimately not observable or measurable (despite attempts to infer mental life from data). Moving beyond scientism will require seeing science as its own project having "teleology, meaning, emotions, values, and communal practices," which embraces "humility, egalitarian openness, and accountability rather than assumed superiority in relationship to humanities, the arts, professional expertise, and personal

experience" (Wertz, 2018, p. 110). We touch on several of these points again later in this chapter.

We would add to this that science's Western heritage also leaves it ill equipped to consider other cultures of people who do not share its presuppositions and values, points that we see in Dueck's comments in Chapter 2.

The key issue of science's role in how we understand the transcendent is that the disenchanted scientist is required to understand the enchanted realm with only the tools of disenchantment available. While important information has come from the psychological study of religion, this fundamental disconnect is prohibitive of genuinely understanding human spiritual life and its encounter with the transcendent.

THE CHALLENGE OF SCIENCE IN CONSIDERING RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY: EPISTEMOLOGY

Science operates on the assumptions that only the observable and measurable can be studied, given its presumption that only objective knowledge that can be corroborated is permitted into the discussion of what is real. Science peels back the subjective aspects of humans attending to nature as best it can, leaving the (virtually) raw data of nature to be comprehended, and in so doing, rendered more useful for human thriving. Ultimately, science prioritizes empiricism above all other epistemologies.

This method of objective observation has been applied to religion since early in the history of psychology. William James (1902/1985) produced what was in many ways the seminal work in the field as he attempted to describe and explain some of the more colorful types of religious experience. Despite his being somewhat sympathetic, his survey was largely lacking in grasping what the experience was like *for the person*, given the etic perspective of science that he used. While he brings us some insight into these experiences, what we learn is not from within the person's experience, but as an outside observer not privy to the nonempirical facets of the experience.

In the ensuing years, the psychology of religion has continued the trend of trying to understand human religious and spiritual experience, but largely from the outside in, consistent with an empirical approach.

In my (Sisemore, 2015) extensive review of this literature, an impressive amount of information is helpful. The important distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity is an example, as is the insight into spiritual struggle. But the research ultimately falls short of grasping the lived experience of persons of faith. The situation is further complicated when one considers how some of the scholars who have studied religion have had the ulterior motive of dismissing it, proudly looking down at persons who believe from the new faith of scientism that "knows better." Yet others have approached the study of religion to prove religion true, and while much is covered in my review about the positive aspects of believing, this still falls short of apprehending the nature of faith in the lives of humans.

Science is incredibly important and useful, yet it is not equipped to give us direction for our lives—a *telos* toward which we move—though many draw this from their faith in an enchanted world. We turn now to consider some of the challenges science faces in studying religion and spirituality.

FOUR PROBLEMS

We focus here on four problems with empirical science, and psychological science in particular, that impair its ability as an epistemology to provide accurate and truly useful information about religious and spiritual persons and groups.

SOCIAL ISOLATION. Empirical science is a product of Western philosophy via the Enlightenment yet purports to be universal in reach and application. That works well in the physical sciences, for oxygen is oxygen wherever you go. Granite is granite. A pancreas is a pancreas. An electron is an electron. People are not all the same psychologically, however, and people in the West are not like people in other parts of the world. The people who dominate the academy in the West are shaped by the agnosticism (if not atheism) of the scientific method. That assumption shapes a common worldview for scientists but may not jive with the perspectives and beliefs of many peoples of the world.

These suppositions in turn isolate science to the West. Many indigenous ways of knowing do not fit the scientific approach, and these are

not easily studied from Western science. Thus we risk being deceived by science's universality in the physical world to believe it is an adequate method to study all the world's people as though they are the same. Clearly people are different, and as Western psychological science attempts to broaden its horizons past its preoccupation with American college freshmen, it must concede there need to be adaptions and accommodations to its methodology when examining those outside its social milieu, and even more so when attempting to address the transcendent.

PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE. Leaving aside for the moment the challenges science faces in moving beyond its cultural context, science qua science is not as objective as it might want to believe. We are indebted to Michal Polanyi (1962; this discussion follows the comparable section in Sisemore, 2018a), who boldly asserts his intention is "to show that complete objectivity as usually attributed to the exact sciences is a delusion and is in fact a false ideal" (Polanyi, 1962, p 18). Notice he takes aim at the "exact sciences," so his critique is even more applicable to the "less exact" science of the psychology of religion and spirituality. For example, emotion moves us to choose topics of study and even impacts how we frame the questions that we ask. The study of religion is rife with this problem, with prejudices of those seeking to use science to prove religion and, very often, those who endeavor to use science to disprove religionists. Either way, the study can be far from neutral.

Scientific explanation has to break down information into bits and then impose an interpretation on it post hoc, which creates more problems. For example, one can observe a person riding a bicycle and describe their efforts and actions as they move. The observer can survey them on how they felt while riding the bicycle. But whatever the observer concludes will still fall short of understanding the full experience of riding a bicycle and thus be subject to that person's own "take" on the data. One's personal inclinations supplant the actual experience of riding a bicycle.

Part of the problem of interpretation is in its dependence on language to describe experience. All of us know that words often fail us, particularly in those most ineffable moments of life. Yet religion and spirituality are plentiful with appeals to the mystical nature of experience that cannot be expressed in words. Language fails us as we try to explain such experiences.

Polanyi (1962) used three "*I*"s to summarize the language problem in science. First, language is inherently *interpersonal* and so must resonate with the person for whom it is intended. As I write this, I assume the reader speaks English even as I am conscious of the fact that English lacks nuances found in other languages. The study of ancient spiritual texts scuffles with this issue: How do we differentiate how certain words were used in the original context versus how we use them today? Nuance is lost. How, then, do we study religions intelligently if we have no regard for their language and constructs?

Second, science is *impassioned*. As observed earlier, science begins with a curiosity about its subject and often a motive to prove something that has emotional value to the scientist, commonly being a drive to reduce anxiety associated with not understanding something. This can be key in the scientific study of religion—going back to William James (1902/1985), who was fascinated by unusual religious experiences as he sought to find explanations for them.

Third, language is *imprecise*. The first two "*I*"s ensure that what we know will never be precise. Especially in studies in psychology, we aim for the $p < .05$ outcome, but that is a probability and by no means precise. Even if it were, it is shaped by the subjectivities of the experimenters.

The role of personal knowledge in science leads scientists to explore "a vision of reality, to which our sense of scientific beauty responds" and thus suggests "to us the kind of questions that it should be reasonable and interesting to explore" (Polanyi, 1962, p. 135). What is beautiful from this scientific perspective may miss the beauty as perceived by other subjects. For example, James's (1902/1985) fascination with religious experiences seeks a beauty in explaining them, often a far cry from the beauty of those who experienced them in the context of their religious meaning system.

THEORY CONSTRUCTION AND THE HYPOTHETICO-DEDUCTIVE METHOD. Somewhat related to the previous problem, much of scientific psychology relies on a hypothetico-deductive approach to research, starting with a theoretical understanding of the psychological phenomenon of interest, followed by the generation of study hypotheses and collection of data via empirical observation (Haig, 2018). These theories within the psychological sciences, to be sure, are meant to explain the world, offering a "blue-

print" for understanding and testing the relationship between variables (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 2008). Therefore, prior to observing a psychological phenomenon, we must have some sort of theoretical understanding of what we are going to examine (Farrell, 2014). Yet this very theoretical knowledge is supposed to come from observation, leading to the problem of circularity—theory comes from observation and observation comes from theory.

Interestingly, many of the most popular theories in personality psychology seem to (at least in part) come from the lived experiences of the supposedly neutral theorists. For example, in *Faces in a Cloud*, the psychoanalytic authors George Atwood and Robert Stolorow (1993) argued the following:

> The ultimate aim of personality theory is to arrive at comprehensive principles to account for human experience and human conduct. But the empirical phenomena of the human world present themselves differently according to the perspective of the observer. The particularity of the psychological context from which the personality theorist views reality guarantees that his [*sic*] interpretations will be focused on selected features of the empirical field, and that the specific dimensions of human conduct bearing a correspondence to his [*sic*] own pretheoretical vision of man [*sic*] will be magnified in his [*sic*] eventual theoretical constructions. (p. 10)

In this important work, the authors explored the ways in which personality theorists' subjective life experiences shaped the grand theories they attempted to build and project onto the world. The highly subjective nature of theory building, then, seems to beg a fundamental question—if secular psychologists can start with their own lived psychological experience to build a theoretical understanding of the human condition and use the scientific method to empirically confirm a set of operationalized variables within such a theoretical understanding, why cannot indigenous religious groups do the same by drawing upon their own lived experiences (and sacred texts) as a starting point for subsequent empirical observation (Pankalla & Kosnik, 2018)?

A PRIVILEGED EPISTEMOLOGY. Concurrent with the rise of science in the Enlightenment and an overreliance on the hypothetico-deductive method to the current day, there has been an increased secularization

of Western society and the loss of enchantment mentioned above. Postmodernism, with its skepticism about the very possibility of objective knowledge, has only served to move science into a more entrenched posture regarding epistemology. In an unenchanted world, if we give up science, we run the risk of having no basis for knowing other than our own subjectivity.

Science is thus the sole hope for knowledge in the West. As it touts its successes in many areas, it expands its reach. In so doing, science becomes the privileged epistemology, with empiricism being the way of knowing accepted as the only one in the secularized West. It expects all people to submit to its models and methods, and for others to be seen only in the light of its worldview.

Here is common ground for religious and spiritual persons in the West and similar persons and groups around the world. They share the notion that there are ways of knowing outside of science and naturalism. These ways of knowing permeate their views of the world and shape their understanding and their very psychology. This exposes the point of tension in the psychology of religion and spirituality: believers studied by a methodological atheism (Watson, 2019).

The privileged epistemology of science also shows up in the efforts to find a scientific basis for morality. Hunter and Nedelisky (2018) traced the quest of science to address morality and determine right and wrong. This also is a field historically populated by theology and philosophy, but recently infiltrated by a variety of scientists, evolutionary and others, who have sought out the roots of morality and even to determine what the moral is. In other words, science then tries to move from describing what is to what ought to be. Their careful critique concludes the following:

> It seems fair to say that much of the current science of morality is no longer really a science of *morality*. Instead, part and parcel with the metaphysics of philosophical naturalism, the bulk of the new moral scientists do not think there is any such phenomenon as morality, as traditionally conceived. (p. 196; emphasis in original)

Here again science confronts indigenous ways of knowing. Most cultures have determined morality from other sources, be it divine revelation, guidance of the spirits, or tradition. Science is clearly out of its element in claiming it can derive the "ought" of life based on its methodologies.

This overreach leads it to attempt to colonize spiritually minded peoples into its methodological atheism. This is already a tense area for people of faith in communities in the West with a shift in morality based on spiritual traditions to one based on humanism. Science tries to give authority to the latter, but fails because it is trying to do what it is not intended to do. To retrieve our opening metaphor, science now tries to tell us where to go, not just the most efficient route to get us there.

This need not be. Science can inform us of the ways of religious and spiritual groups by adapting its methods and empathizing with the adherents. Hood (summarized in Hood & Williamson, 2008) has spent much of his long career learning of serpent-handling groups, religiously motivated communities who act on faith to fulfill a promise they attribute to Jesus, who stated they could safely pick up serpents by faith.[3] In his work, Hood earned the trust of these often-reclusive groups and was welcomed into their rituals even as he sought to adapt scientific methodology to understand them. He did not go to judge or change them. If anything, he went to better understand and give them a voice through his research. Here is a model for an indigenous psychology of religion, honoring those studied, taking an emic approach, and adapting empirical methods to do so.

Reiterating a vital point, science is of great value, and nothing in this chapter intends to deny that or diminish its importance. Yet it easily oversteps its bounds and takes on the characteristics of a religion, impairing its ability to provide accurate and useful knowledge about many topics, including the psychology of religion and spirituality.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE OVERREACH OF SCIENCE

Science's failure to stay within its purview and to acknowledge its imperfections and limitations has consequences when it attempts to study religious and spiritual groups. We consider a few here.

"RELIGIOUS GLOSS." In other areas of diversity, *gloss* refers to a stereotyping of all people of a certain type into a specific category, oblivious to subtle differences. In the psychology of religion, this is the erroneous assumption that all faiths are essentially the same and that constructs that apply to one will apply to others (based in part on the notion that the

spiritual is not real, they are merely various manifestations of the same psychological construct). I encountered this when my colleagues and I (Bufford, Sisemore, & Blackburn, 2017) developed a scale to assess the nature and import of the Christian construct of the grace of God. One reviewer of the article suggested it was of value only if it applied to other religions and not just Christianity. This is an example of religious gloss. If only constructs true across all religions can be published, we will miss out on much we need to know.

COLONIZATION. This term, of course, comes from the notion of moving in among an indigenous people and establishing control over them. This might involve imposing language and customs. Colonization is an apt description of what science, if left unchecked, will do to indigenous religious groups. Here again scientism can act like a religion, with scientists as missionaries going to religious peoples with the intent to explain away their beliefs and customs and to replace them with a superior scientific worldview. For example, prayer does not serve to approach the divine so much as to produce positive psychological effects in the pray-er. Scholars who study religion do well to assess themselves as to hidden motives, agendas, and biases when applying science to religious groups. Polanyi (1962) acknowledged we have our motives when we scientifically study something; yet minimally we should be self-aware and be good enough scientists as to endeavor not to be biased, nor to seek to colonize the groups we explore.

HUBRIS. Science, when it becomes scientism, becomes too proud of itself. As helpful as empiricism is as a way of knowing, when applied to understanding the psychology of persons, it provides knowledge that at best is asymptotic. That is, carefully conducted, science can get closer and closer to an accurate understanding of spiritualities, but it will never reach a perfect understanding. Given that, science does well to approach others humbly with an openness to the value of other ways of knowing and of forming morality and community.

One can appreciate the scientific humility of the popular science book *We Have No Idea* (Chan & Whiteson, 2017), wherein the authors admitted that we know something about only 5 percent of the universe, leaving 95 percent to mystery. To be honest, as psychologists of religion, we probably do not know more than 5 percent about the peoples we study. How

much better would our efforts be if we approached these groups with due humility and openness to learn.

BIASES AND MICROAGRESSIONS. All of this adds up to science often being biased when it studies persons of faith, possibly even displaying microaggressions (e.g., microinsults and microinvalidations; Sue et al. 2007) toward religion and spirituality in the psychology literature. For example, some authors may engage in (a) microinsults when they generate study hypotheses that religion and spirituality will be linked to psychopathology and express surprise when their results do not confirm their expectations, or (b) microinvalidations when they either develop theories that suggest the purpose (or *teleology*) of religion is to merely function as a stepping-stone toward mental health (Slife & Reber, 2012) or solely pursue an etic understanding of the psychology of religion with global measures that combine all religious groups together. With the former, a "subtle snub, frequently unknown to the perpetrator, but clearly convey[ing] a hidden insulting message to the recipient" (Sue et al., 2017, p. 274) may arise, reminiscent of someone saying with surprise, "You are so articulate for your race," to another with a different racial identity. For the latter, authors may "exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a [religious] person," similar to comments like, "I don't see color" or "We are all human beings" concerning race (p. 274). These biases and microaggressions contradict the basic principle of science that it is objective. Objective means it is open to the results and will adapt theory to them, not impose the theory on the methods and interpretations of results. This is particularly the case when we look at groups with which we are most likely to disagree. As longtime researcher in the psychology of religion Peter Hill (2018) observed, at times, "fundamentalists are being studied not in terms of what they believe, but in terms of what we as psychologists believe about them." How, then, will we ever understand fundamentalist groups? We risk bias with such etic approaches to religious and spiritual groups and are compelled—if we are to be consistent with the objectivity required of good science—to move to more emic approaches.

Given the limitations of science in general, and the psychology of religion and spirituality in particular, as we try to understand the myriad faith traditions of our diverse world, science can own its weaknesses

and adapt. Indigenous psychology has afforded a more emic approach that still provides scientific knowledge that may be less pure empirically but more accurate as a reflection of reality. We consider now some of the ways indigenous psychology can resolve the problems we have considered and lead us to better ways to understand the psychology of religion and spirituality.

SOLUTIONS FROM AN INDIGENOUS PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

The concerns about applying empirical science to understand the psychology of religious and spiritual persons and groups that we have covered call for a fresh approach to our efforts to understand the nearly ubiquitous aspect of human life and society: the transcendent. Here is a summary of a few ways an indigenous approach addresses the challenges we have presented.

CULTURAL HUMILITY

The notion of cultural humility comes out of clinical work and the effort to develop multicultural competencies (Hook et al., 2013), building from the American Psychological Association's (2003) guidelines. Hook et al. (2013) summarize these nicely:

> APA MCCs guidelines encourage psychologists to (a) develop an understanding of their own cultural background and the ways that their cultural background influences their personal attitudes, values, and beliefs (i.e., attitudes/beliefs); (b) develop understanding and knowledge of the worldviews of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (i.e., knowledge); and (c) use culturally appropriate interventions (i.e., skills). (p. 253)

These apply well as part of the remedy to the biases of science we have been discussing, though we might alter the third to use culturally appropriate research methodologies. Those authors define cultural humility as "the ability to maintain an interpersonal stance that is other-oriented (or open to the other) in relation to aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the client" (Hook et al., 2013, p. 355), though again we might

adapt that to be the subject of our research rather than the client. We mention clinical application later.

To apply these directly, such an approach sees Western psychology as the culture of the researcher (and only one of many psychologies in a pluralistic literature base) who then needs to see how that culture impacts their approaches to populations who do not share its agnostic, empirical epistemology. Rather, the researcher needs to adapt to understanding the worldview of those of other religious faiths under scrutiny, and adapt methods to provide the best chances of understanding the groups from within (an emic approach). The shift is to be other-oriented and seeing research as a service to the group being studied more than promoting a conflicting agenda being pursued by the researcher.

OPENNESS TO OTHER EPISTEMOLOGIES

Openness to other epistemologies can certainly be viewed with suspicion in the psychology literature, but those who study religion and spirituality do well to be open to these groups' epistemologies as genuine sources of insider knowledge that shape their worldviews, cultures, and psychological functioning (Pankalla & Kosnik, 2018). This openness entails not trying to frame these within the agnosticism (or even atheism) of science in an effort to explain them away within the Western framework. Doing so will be a challenge when one considers that none of the major religious and spiritual groups that are presented in this book arose in the Western philosophical mind-set and culture of science, which has alienated the major religions of the West (Christianity and Judaism) and had a distant relationship to all of the groups we consider.

Yet, if we approach the task with cultural humility, we will not assume Western empirical science is the road to all knowledge, but more realistically see it as a vital tool to many aspects of knowing the physical world and affording some insight into the psychology of those who live in a more enchanted world. We might even place more of an emphasis on exploring the influence of other epistemologies on these religious groups.

WORKING FROM AN IDEOLOGICAL SURROUND MODEL (ISM)

An exemplary project in trying to accommodate the scientific method to those who have differing worldviews was the Ideological Surround Model (ISM) of the late P. J. Watson (Watson, 2019). Watson shared the asymptotic metaphor described earlier, saying that the way to come closest to "truth" and "objectivity" when two competing social rationalities encounter one another is through a never ending dialogue aimed at understanding one another more than merely observing the subject. We all know in relationships we can study another person's attire, features, demeanor, and behavior, but to truly understand that person, dialogue has to occur. I found my wife attractive when we first met, but only in spending time with her and talking with her have I come closer to understanding her. Scientists might take a similar tack in approaching persons who differ in how they see the world. (This, of course, approaches the realm of qualitative research.)

The core of the ISM is to consider that science is a social rationality, and as such, it emerges from a set of ultimate standards that cannot rationalize themselves by any higher logical standard (Watson, 2019). It is thus an ideology at heart and its assumptions surround its understanding and interpretation of the world. Science then encounters a religious group that has a different ideological surround built on different assumptions and standards that are incommensurable with science (MacIntyre, 1988). So, Watson explains, science sees nature as the ultimate standard while religionists see God as the ultimate standard. For these to be commensurable, one or the other would have to subject their standard to that of the other group—something not likely to occur on either side. The ISM posits a methodological theism that gives space for both from a meta-perspective (Watson notes that an atheist version might also be developed). Given this, dialogue can occur that moves toward understanding.

Watson's (2019) theory is difficult to summarize in brief, but adapting it to our context would entail science opening up the possibility of a theistic realm so as to create space for dialogue and subsequently for research, with a goal of understanding others within the context of their ideological surround while being mindful of our own.

MULTIPLE EPISTEMOLOGIES

The ISM is only one example of a way to work around this epistemological dilemma. Even scientists who are honest concede there is more than empiricism as an epistemology, for empiricism cannot be demonstrated empirically, and so we admit it as a source of knowledge based on a social rationality that lies outside of science itself. Stated bluntly, empiricism makes sense as a way of knowing. But now we have reason and science as ways to know. This reason aspect, however, is where the trouble of personal knowledge enters, about which Polanyi (1962) wrote. An indigenous psychology of religion and spirituality calls us to be aware of this epistemological problem and to be open to other social rationalities that allow for epistemologies that are not as bound to nature and embrace the transcendent.

FIRST-PERSON PERSPECTIVE

In the piece mentioned earlier, Hill (2018) argued for a “first-person” perspective, with psychologists of religion seeking to see the world from the eyes of the subjects we study rather than see them from our own eyes. In short, this is an emic, rather than etic, perspective. In a study of Pentecostalism (Sisemore, 2018b), I found that early research on this group stigmatized them as surveys showed they lacked self-esteem because of their religious views. Better research from a first-person perspective later clarified that what was being tapped was a sense of humility before God—quite a different conclusion.

INNOVATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

These indigenous approaches largely advocate for more creative methodologies when studying people whose faith is part of their identity and indigenous to their culture. The most obvious one not mentioned is the need for sensitive, careful qualitative research that could lead to mixed methods. We need to learn the constructs of faith groups and what they mean to the groups, then construct measures around these rather than

forcing them into our categories like round pegs into square holes (see, e.g., Knabb & Wang, 2019).

Beyond that, Pe-Pua (2006) has outlined five principles for research in indigenous psychology that could be used for studying religious and spiritual groups indigenously. First, there needs to be a good relationship between the researchers and participants being studied if the data are to be useful. Also, "researchers should treat research participants as equal, if not superior" (p. 123). This will flow naturally from adapting cultural humility and becoming more open regarding epistemological differences. "We should give more importance to the welfare of the participants than to obtaining data from them" (p. 123). This third principle fits well with research ethics. Dismissive attitudes toward persons of faith have led to misunderstanding as we saw in the case of Pentecostals. Fourth, methods should be adapted to be appropriate to the population and suited to cultural norms. This may entail showing respect for traditions and sacred places and honoring practices that are unusual to Western scientists. Finally, "the language of the people should be the language of research at all times" (p. 124). We want to understand constructs from within their worldviews, not force them into ours.

One note to point out here is how many of the religious groups we examine in the remainder of the book are consistent with, if not definitive of, the culture surrounding them. For example, in many nations Islam frames the nature and laws of the government. However, this is not the case in the West, where Jews and Christians in particular often state they hold to a faith but may live and think more like the surrounding culture than different from it—even though the culture is increasingly secular. This contrasts with the Amish, for example, who have created and preserved their own culture in a largely coherent whole with their religious beliefs. Many persons who value faith, particularly in the West, may not hold it indigenously but actually be more in tune with the surrounding secular culture than their own religious faiths, unaware of the role that syncretism has played in shaping their view of the world. These are the exceptions to our argument in this book, given we are presenting an "insider" conceptualization of the psychology of each faith system.

CLINICAL APPLICATIONS

Most of this chapter has focused on research, but all of this has profound clinical implications. Psychologists are to respect religious and spiritual beliefs as part of their ethics (Principle E; American Psychological Association, 2017), treating persons of faith with respect as they do persons of any type of diversity. The disconnect between largely irreligious psychologists and a largely religious population has left many clinicians to take a "don't ask, don't tell" approach, where clinicians do not ask about faith, and clients, assuming faith is not a topic for the therapy office, do not speak of it. In response to this problem, some psychologists are moving to develop spiritual and religious competencies (Vieten et al., 2016). The attitudes of cultural humility, openness to dialogue, understanding multiple epistemologies, first-person perspective, and respecting the client over self that we have described apply quite directly to psychotherapists working with religious or spiritual persons.

Slife, Ghelfi, and Fox (2018) surveyed the problems of scientism when it comes to psychotherapy research, noting the problems with a single methodology for this important applied area of science. Particularly in the area of evidence-based treatments, overcommitment to these methods is less helpful than when used in developing medication. Psychotherapy does not lend itself as neatly to controlled methods of randomized trials given how humanness means each therapy session will have uniquenesses and inconsistencies far more than simply giving a medication to a subject or not. Slife et al. point to a need for methodological pluralism, including an openness to methodologies that may not even be known yet. The complex process of understanding psychotherapy may require more flexibility, such as with the use of qualitative studies. One could add the need to incorporate an indigenous understanding of those in therapy, including attention to their religion.

Many faiths offer a telos for life, a reason for living around which meaning is shaped. This serves as a motivation for action and an interpretive framework for events. For many persons of faith, this is *the* factor that shapes their actions and directions. Therapy has historically been more focused on fixing problems, but helping reorient persons of faith to their spiritual telos is another area where clinicians should be attentive,

and researchers may need to see how this shapes not only symptoms, but interpretations and movement in therapy toward these spiritual ends—one might say a *teleology* for therapy. Recalling our opening metaphor, science struggles to provide a telos for life, the destination toward which we travel. Therapy, like our GPS, may help guide us, but we depend on the destinations of our clients, and for persons of faith, these are often rooted in their belief systems. Overall, balancing scientific psychology's "how-does-it-work" question with religion's "why-is-it-there" question (Cummins, 2002, p. 165) can only strengthen efforts to optimally respond to the unique needs of religious clients in psychotherapy.

There is also a place for specific faith traditions to develop their own indigenous clinical psychologies, working from a particular faith worldview to address clinical problems and their treatment. Examples of such are emerging, such as York Al-Karam's (2018) volume on Islamic psychology and Knabb, Johnson, Bates, and Sisemore's (2019) recent textbook on Christian psychology. The chapters that follow may open doors to further developing these across a range of religions and spiritualities.

As psychologists better understand their own attitudes and values regarding the transcendent and so enter the therapy office more self-aware, they are better equipped not only to invite the client to mention the client's spirituality in therapy, but to incorporate it as part of the process that attends to all the aspects that constitute that client's psychology. Much is being done in the area of how religion and spirituality impact psychological health and psychological therapy (e.g., Pargament, 2013), and as more psychologists and other therapists appropriate these approaches and insights, people of faith will be better served.

MOVING FORWARD

Having established the value of indigenous psychology, its applicability to the psychology of religion and spirituality, and the problems of science overreaching its area of expertise when indigenous factors are neglected, we now give voice to some of the world's major religions and groups of spiritualities. The following chapter provides a foundational history of the study of indigenous psychology, and each subsequent chapter provides an inside-out look at a specific faith tradition framed by six key

issues: history and concepts of the faith, epistemology or how knowledge is acquired in the faith, views of the person or self, views of health and well-being, views of mental disorders, and clinical applications for those in the field. Moreover, each of the chapters on a specific world religion or spirituality is authored (or coauthored) by a psychologist who either practices or has roots in the designated faith system. None of these groups arose in the secular West, which gave rise to empirical science, so there is a tension between empirical science and these groups. We offer the following in an effort to enhance the understanding of people of faith and to promote collaboration and improved psychological understanding and treatment for them.

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ENDNOTES

1. Summarized in Sisemore (2015).

2. Although some psychology of religion authors have recently advocated for a more balanced approach—that is, employing both etic and emic strategies (Hall, Shannonhouse, Aten, McMartin, & Silverman, 2018; Hill, 2013; Zinnbauer & Pargament, 2005)—additional work remains, given that the vast majority of peer-reviewed publications tend to simply import secular theories when studying the psychology of religion, then slightly adjust them to align with the religious culture of interest. When used excessively, this strategy, an "indigenization from without" (Enriquez, 1993; Kim et al., 2000, p. 65), can prevent scientists from fully understanding the unique daily experiences of those who identify with a specific faith tradition.

3. Mark 16:18, though literary critics note this is not likely part of the original manuscripts of Mark.