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## Facing Death

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### Physical Death Versus Psychological Death

In the book titled *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker (1975) says that “the idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a mainspring of human activity – activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man.” (p. ix). So “we admire most the courage to face death” (p. 11). These explanations are right, but they are not enough to understand the truth of death. Because the physical death is not the only way of dying; another way is the psychological death. It also haunts human beings. But this haunting is not paralyzing; rather it is essential to born as a Person. From this point of view, we will focus on why “facing the psychological death” is a commendable activity, and we will search for the answer from the perspective of Sophia-Analysis.

## Psychological Death in Sophia-Analysis

According to Sophia-Analysis, not only the idea of physical death that is in us but also the psychological death influences our actions in every stage of our lives, and we need to face these two types of death effectively. For this reason, Antonio Mercurio, who is the founder of Sophia-Analysis, proposes a new way of facing death and says that this new way is one of the essential steps to become a Person. In this step, we must meet six kinds of death: The first death is related to the acceptance of the choral group will and the abandonment of one’s own will during the Sophianalytical group experience. The person experiencing this kind of death does not consciously or unconsciously impose own wishes, needs, or demands, and he/she does not make other members of the group do anything against the group will. The second death is the deaths of narcissistic I and Ideal I (these structures are the parts of Psychological I). Both the narcissistic I and the Ideal I ask to be God, and they do not need building meaningful bonds with other people. So, they create a person like Narcissus who only loves himself and needs his mirror image (Mercurio 2011a). But after the deaths of narcissistic I and Ideal I, “I is transformed, and the SELF can emerge” (Mercurio 2009a, p. 22). The third death requires to reconsider the tragic Oedipus

myth. In the Oedipus myth, the son chooses to kill the father because of the desired love object whereas during the Sophianalytical group work, one metaphorically prefers own death rather than the other. So, one consents to share desired love object with the other and begins to approach the love object as a Person, not a private property. The fourth death is to renounce the ideal of perfection. When a person abandons the ideal of perfection, he/she is not afraid of showing his/her own weak or negatives traits or qualities to the others anymore. One believes that the beloved people will continue to love him/her although he/she has negative sides. The fifth death is associated with the loss of the ideal love object. Having the ideal of perfection, people search for a perfect love object which has all beauty and goodness, and they believe that one day they will find this ideal being. But in the real world, each person has weak or negative sides, and they are not the complete beings. During the Sophianalytical group work, one is aware that only God is perfect and human being is not God. So, searching for a perfect human being is not a reasonable demand. The sixth death is related to the loss of the real love object. Both in the actual life situations and the Sophianalytical group work, people are confronted with the losses of their real love objects, and they experience pain and suffering. These pains are the inevitable parts of human life. When people accept to suffer due to these deaths, they have a chance to create themselves as Persons (Mercurio 2011a).

As mentioned above, there are six ways of facing death and overcoming it in Sophia-Analysis. These deaths contribute to creating a new way of acting although they bring sufferings. In other words, pains and sufferings are new deaths and new births that people face (Mercurio 2011b). As stated by Mercurio (2011a): “there is no authentic birth without an authentic death” (p. 94). “Death allows one to give oneself to oneself” (Mercurio 2011c, p. 143). That is to say, one can “free oneself” (Mercurio 2011c, s.107), have an opportunity to “contact the SELF” (Mercurio 2009a, p. 103), and open “the doors towards a new life” (Mercurio 2009b, p. 60) through facing the psychological death.

## See Also

- ▶ [Death Anxiety](#)
- ▶ [Existential Unconscious](#)
- ▶ [Narcissism](#)
- ▶ [Oedipus Complex](#)
- ▶ [Sophia-Analysis](#)

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## Fairbairn, W.R.D.

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W.R.D. (“Ronald”) Fairbairn was born in Edinburgh in 1889, an only child. His father Thomas was a Scottish Presbyterian, and his mother Cecilia was Anglican but raised him strictly according to the Calvinist beliefs of his father. Surprisingly for a child, he enjoyed the lengthy sermons and mandatory church services, and after a serious and scholarly youth, he enrolled in Divinity studies at the London University and then his ministerial training in Edinburgh. His study was interrupted by the outbreak of WWI. He fought in Palestine and North Africa

throughout the war years, and after observing numerous cases of “war neuroses” (PTSD), he returned to Edinburgh determined to change his focus of study to psychiatry. He read the works of Freud and Jung, and the Swiss analyst-pastor Oskar Pfister. He entered analysis with E.G. Connell, an Australian Anglican whose beliefs in a “full-blooded Christianity” rather than doctrinal preoccupation deeply influenced his view of both faith and psychoanalysis.

He began practicing psychoanalysis in 1924 and worked at the Clinic for Children and Juveniles where he treated “delinquent” youth who suffered from sexual abuse trauma. In 1927, he became a specialist and lecturer on adolescence at Edinburgh University. He joined the British Society as an associate in 1931 and a fully certified analyst in 1939. He was already highly regarded in Scotland in 1931, when he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. He resigned from teaching in 1935 order to devote his time to full-time psychoanalytic practice. Although it is often observed that he was geographically isolated in Edinburgh, and he mostly refrained from engaging in the “Controversial Discussions” between the Freudian and Kleinian factions in the 1940s, he was involved in strenuous mutual critique through his papers and international psychoanalytic conference presentations, and his work was influential on the development of British psychoanalysis and the whole school of “object relations,” a term he introduced. His theory is in many ways unique and did not evolve into a further line of theoretical innovations, but his contributions to the concept of object relations have been influential on subsequent generations of psychoanalysts from several separate schools of thought (from the classical analyst-theorist Otto Kernberg, to object relations specialists David and Jill Scharff, and some contemporary relationalist psychoanalysts.) In the 1930s, Fairbairn became fascinated with the work of Melanie Klein, and although he joined the “Independent” or “Middle Group” of the British Psychoanalytical Society after Anna Freud’s arrival in 1938, “Klein’s notion of an inner object world freed Fairbairn to elaborate an entirely new notion of psychic structure” (Rubens 1996, p. 430).

Fairbairn was married twice, first to Mary Ann Gordon, the mother of three children including the Conservative MP Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (1933–1995), whose reputation was eventually tarnished by sexual misconduct and addiction. After Mary Ann’s death, he married Marion Frances Archer (1907–1995). Fairbairn died on New Year’s Eve, 1964, at his home in Edinburgh, at the age of 75, and is buried with both his wives. Shortly after Fairbairn’s death, his biographer John Derg Sutherland wrote of his character,

It would be quite wrong if any impression were to be given at this point of Fairbairn as taking the human scene with a kind of puritanical sense of duty. Quite the contrary. This concern for, and care of, others, for the dignity of the individual, were deeply spontaneous in him and he combined them with a marked feeling of enjoyment and a good sense of humour. . . . [He] had a great feeling for beautiful things. . . . Art and religion were for him profound expressions of man’s needs and for which he felt a deep respect. . . . Ronald Fairbairn was a full man – a rich personality, a man of great integrity, and, in the best sense, of great dignity. He valued the worth of every human individual and he would fight for, and go into the wilderness for, his convictions. (Sutherland 1965, pp. 245–246)

Fairbairn’s theory of human motivation is summed up by the phrase “object-seeking.” His thought developed and changed subtly over the course of his career; his book *Psychoanalytic Studies of the Personality*, published in 1952, represents a mature summation of his settled theoretical edifice (Fairbairn, 2001/1952). In deliberate distinction from Freud’s drive theory, Fairbairn stated that the primary drive of life, retaining the term libido but completely redefined, was the need for other persons. This need is simultaneously biological and psychological. Contra Freud, there is no separate Helmholtzian packet of energy operating within the psyche and creating pressure for discharge. The sexual aspect of the libido is a process of maturational development from a natural oral expression in early childhood (a mouth seeking a breast, and then a whole mother) to genital expression in adulthood (a person seeking a whole person with love expressed through genital eroticism). For Fairbairn, there was no distinct anal phase between oral and genital – only a phase of

transitioning from mother to other love objects. Further, Fairbairn believed that the drive of aggression, much elaborated from Freud by Klein, was not innate but was instead a by-product of frustration due to a failure of the parent(s) to meet the child's needs. The Oedipus "situation" (as he termed it), so central to Freud's theorizing, and adapted by Klein to the first months of life, Fairbairn believed was an instance of the social nature of development and object-relating. Neurosis would arise from this phase, not because of unresolved pent-up pleasure-seeking aimed toward the mother and thwarted by the father, but rather, a much more relational and complex "theory of the personality conceived in terms of relationships between the ego and objects, both external and internal" (Fairbairn 2001, p. 153). "For Fairbairn, internal objects are not (as for Klein) essential and inevitable accompaniments of all experience, but rather compensatory substitutes for the real thing, actual people in the interpersonal world" (Mitchell and Black 2016, p. 17). Health, for Fairbairn, was not autonomy or "individuation," but with respect to object relating as the universal motivating force of human life, health was characterized by mature dependence: "a relationship involving evenly matched giving and taking between two differentiated individuals who are mutually dependent, and between whom there is no disparity of dependence" (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983, p. 145).

The initial impetus for Fairbairn's theory-building was his thorough exposure to Freud's works through his psychoanalytic training, and from the 1930s on, the theorizing of Melanie Klein (which saturated the British Society in the 1930s). The works of a contemporary member of the British Society, John Bowlby, and the Hungarian émigré, Michael Balint, the first exponents of "attachment theory," were also centrally important to his developing theory of "object seeking" and separation anxiety as central factors in children's development. An equally important influence was his clinical work with patients. As he himself observed, classical psychoanalytic interpretation simply did not seem to meet patients' real needs (Fairbairn 2001/1952, p. 137). He wrote,

[T]he ultimate principle from which the whole of my special views are derived may be formulated in the general proposition that libido is not pleasure-seeking but object-seeking. The clinical material on which this proposition is based may be summarized in the protesting cry of a patient to this effect – "You're always talking about my wanting this and that desire satisfied; but what I really want is a father." (Ibid.)

In particular, his exposure to the terrors of war and "war neuroses" among his comrades, as well as his work with abused youth who were considered "delinquent," caused him to think beyond the theoretical foundations of his training, and to bring the impact of real relationships between parents and children, the outer world and the inner world, back into the psychoanalytic discourse (picking up a thread Freud had long left behind when he abandoned the "seduction theory" of hysteria). The systematic nature of Fairbairn's model of mind also reflects the early influence of his fascination with philosophy in his youth.

Fairbairn's metapsychology revolves around his concept of splitting of the ego. He proposed that a central ego (more analogous to a self than to Freud's embattled ego) is present from birth but soon begins to split. This splitting of the ego occurs when the ego identifies with two main types of external object: the "libidinal" or "exciting" object, which stimulates desire and tantalizes (and in Winnicottian terms also impinges), and the "antilibidinal" or "rejecting" object, which frustrates and denies gratification. As these are cathected by the ego and internalized, the ego itself in a sense is torn apart as it identifies with these two objects, creating in turn a libidinal ego and an antilibidinal ego (or "internal saboteur"). The central ego is thus alienated from parts of itself, which are conflicted between desire and repression – now not repression of internal drives but repression of the self and its desires for growth and satisfaction. In this way, everyone is "schizoid" (a term he redefined from Klein), because splitting of the ego is inevitable due to the inevitability of imperfect parenting. The super-ego is no longer formed from parental prohibitions (Freud), but from a combination of the ego-ideal (the goodness of the parents) and the antilibidinal ego. Contra Freud, he posited that

the Oedipus situation is essentially built up around the internalized figures of the exciting mother and the rejecting mother. How ever, in his attempt to adjust to two ambivalent relationships at the same time, the child seeks to simplify a complex situation by concentrating on the exciting aspect of one parent and the rejecting aspect of the other...; and in so doing the child really constitutes the Oedipus situation for himself. (Fairbairn 2001/1952, p. 175; see also p. 150.)

Psychopathology, according to Fairbairn, is a result of two dynamics within internal object relations. The first has to do with his conception of the super-ego as a complex of the ideal object/ego-ideal, the antilibidinal ego (internal saboteur), and the antilibidinal (rejecting/frustrating) object. A harsh super-ego, internalized from a harsh parental milieu, can create obsessional and even paranoid neurotic tendencies. The second and more generalized theory of pathology has to do with his conception of splitting and projection, adapted from Klein. As in Klein, the individual projects his or her internal world of objects onto external relationships, mobilizing defensive techniques formed during the transitional period of early ego development between the oral and genital stages: paranoid, obsessional, hysterical, or phobic (e.g., Fairbairn 2001/1952, pp. 146, 162). These four techniques were all “schizoid states,” characterized by a neurotic sense of being trapped in one’s habitual self-defeating patterns. Following fairly closely to Klein’s formulations, Fairbairn assigned the more serious psychopathologies of schizophrenia and depression to disturbances in the earlier oral period, with schizophrenia arising from problems with feeding (= loving) and depression related to biting (= hating). He also made a distinction between two general personality types, the “schizoid” (or introvert) and the depressive (or extrovert) – paralleling Klein’s paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, but for Fairbairn, both could be maladaptive. The schizoid person neurotically fears a repeat of earlier pain from others; the depressive person neurotically fears inflicting pain on others (Fairbairn 2001/1952, p. 164).

The patterns and dynamics inherent in real relationships with real other people (external objects) were internalized by the child from

infancy onward, to form enduring patterns and dynamics of unconscious expectation. Internal conflict in Fairbairn’s model (in contrast with Freud’s conflict model of repression of impersonal mechanical drive energies) refers now to conflicts between the neediest split-off parts of the self contained in the internal exciting object/libidinal object and the most punitive split-off parts of the self contained in the frustrating/antilibidinal object. Repression now is the mechanism by which the central ego is pulled apart by these opposing objects, and intolerable aspects of early childhood relations are preserved and encapsulated in the unconscious, in unconscious identification with the tantalizingly good and frustratingly bad aspects of the real parents. Because children cling to their attachment to early caregivers, in spite of neglectful and even abusive behavior, and they will develop means of coping that are not necessarily helpful in later social interactions (or even antisocial at the extreme), Fairbairn believed that they grow up to “persist in their maladaptive behaviors, because such a repetition maintains a[n unconscious] connection to early caregivers” (Hoffman 2010, p. 142). The extent and quality of pathology depend upon a complex interweaving of external and internal dynamics, including. . .

the extent of bad objects and degree of badness of objects; the extent of the ego’s identification with the bad objects; and the nature and strength of the defenses protecting the ego from objects. . .[T]he severity of psychopathology was understood to be contingent upon the extent of this splitting. . .how much of the ego is still available for real and potentially fulfilling relationships with others and how much is bound up with ungratifying, unreachable aspects of the parents which have become enshrined internally. (Greenberg and Mitchell 1983, p. 171.)

Greenberg and Mitchell summarize by stating, “Perhaps the most broadly characteristic feature of all psychopathology is its self-defeating quality” (Ibid., 72).

Fairbairn did not write extensively about clinical technique. However, his empathy for war veterans, “delinquent” youth, and persons suffering from “borderline” states suggests that, like Winnicott, he created a safe and containing space for patients by listening attentively and with

emotional attunement. It is likely, given his training in London, that he was aware of his contemporaries' discussions of countertransference, and was able to notice what feelings were being invoked in himself, and the patterns of relating that were developing in the analysis through projective processes and projective identification. The goal of therapy for Fairbairn would be to allow formerly sealed-off parts of the self that were preserved in the form of the exciting and frustrating/rejecting internal objects to come to conscious awareness so that the patient's habitually unhelpful patterns of relating could gradually become less rigidly enacted, and eventually change. "Fairbairn located analytic change not in the dawning of insight" (as with Freudian reliance on accurate interpretation), "but in a changed capacity for relatedness, an ability to connect with the analyst in new ways" (Mitchell and Black 2016, pp. 22–23).

Of particular interest for psychology and/of religion is Fairbairn's case, "Notes on the Religious Fantasies of a Female Patient (1927)," published in (Fairbairn 2001/1952, pp. 183–196). In this case (which eventually failed, and the patient died), Fairbairn shows how the patient's hysterical fantasies and psychotic hallucinations reflected her inner object world, with split off exciting and rejecting aspects of both father and mother. This is an early paper which still reflects a considerable influence from Freud, but also shows Fairbairn's increasing interest in schizoid phenomena and internal object relations as the etiology of pathology. This case likely represented an undiagnosed condition of PTSD resulting from childhood sexual abuse by the patient's alcoholic father, who was eventually banished from the household and never spoken about in the family.

Marie Hoffman's research into the influence of Christianity on Fairbairn and Winnicott provides some interesting insights into the possible degree of congeniality between Fairbairnian psychoanalysis and pastoral theology/spirituality. Hoffman considers that Fairbairn's emphasis on the infant's "innate inclination to seek the parent – born object-seeking not simply for survival in the Darwinian sense, but for relationship" stems from Calvin's emphasis on God's love (not only God's sovereignty), and the nature of human

love as a "mirror of God's own desire for relationship" (Hoffman 2010, p. 139). In addition, she sees in Fairbairn's model of psychopathology an echo of the Fall from a state of perfection (impossible for real human parents to provide). The internalized battle between good and bad objects would then create a state of "alienation" (Calvin again) from other persons, and theologically, from God (the state of "human depravity" and inability to save ourselves.) "For Fairbairn as for Calvin, the endpoint of humanity's fall from grace is the fall from relationship" (Ibid., 144).

Given Fairbairn's rather dour Scottish Presbyterian upbringing and worldview, then, it stands to reason that while he had a rather dim view of human nature in general – in which badness is pervasive – he had a corresponding longing for a humane and non-dogmatic Christianity, which he experienced with Connell. His attraction to Pfister's writings suggests that he would have viewed analysis, even if he never spoke of it directly to his patients or wrote about it in his professional works, as a kind of *Seelsorge* in which the patient could attain some hope as his/her condition of internally imposed alienation from self and others was gradually transformed by the experience of a relationship with a "new object" with the analyst. Like Pfister, Fairbairn also wanted to help people with harsh and over-weening super-egos to find a more mature and less self-punishing form of personal morality, more governed by the central ego and the ego ideal than the unconsciously object-driven super-ego. In existential theological terms, if sin is alienation, then healing is a form of restoration to faith and trust in grace – which can come in and through other human beings in mature object relations.

## See Also

- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Klein, Melanie](#)
- ▶ [Object Relations Theory](#)
- ▶ [Pfister, Oskar](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods, and Religion](#)

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## Faith

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Faith, *fides* in Latin and *pistis* in Greek, can be understood within a spectrum ranging from the content of a particular set of beliefs to the act of trust, usually in a particular community, doctrine, or Deity. In fundamentalist religions, the understanding of faith leans toward an emphasis on the content of belief, especially one's assent to a

certain set of *beliefs*. In these contexts, faith has a noetic quality and is fixed within boundaries to define what is inside or outside its scope. To assent to the appropriate propositions of religion means to have faith, and to be outside these limits is to be unfaithful (or an “infidel,” a term which derives from the Latin root of *fides*).

On the other side of the spectrum, faith is simply characterized as synonymous with trust, an attitude of believing, and thus refers more to the act of trusting than to the specific content of one's beliefs. Within this pragmatic emphasis, the psychological effects of comfort and release from anxiety and insecurity seem to be highlighted, even to the extreme of a marked absence of noetic content.

Most expressions of faith seem to exist in the middle, including an act of trust, with the corollary of the promise of hope, and some particular content in which one's trust is placed (i.e., Deity, religious community, and sacred text). For both religion and spirituality, faith seems to have some particular, specific content that is reflected in the trust of believers. In Buddhism, the believer takes the “refuges,” stating that “I take refuge in the Buddha, the *dharma* (Buddhist teaching), and the *sangha* (the community of monastics).” This tri-fold affirmation of faith points to the importance of the divine figure, the doctrine, and the community as the component location of spiritual strength and protection. In this affirmation, the individual/community dichotomy is addressed, in that the individual makes the affirmation of faith, placing trust in that tradition, in the midst of the tradition and in continuity with it.

## Commentary

Freud explained belief in a Deity as meeting the needs for a projected father figure, in service to cultural ideals of control and manipulation (Freud 1928/1961, pp. 21–22, 1957). Freud was critical of the potential for faith to be used as denial and suggested that the more mature person would face fate (which he personified as the Greek goddess *Ananke*) without recourse to divine escapism

(Rizzuto 1998, p. 170). Jung more positively identified with faith, but without an emphasis on its social or doctrinal aspects. He understood it primarily in terms of *gnosis* (literally “knowledge”), as directly apprehended spiritual knowledge which the individual encounters and which brings about psychic healing through reconciliation of the opposite poles of one’s experience (Melanson 2002, p. 168). Object relations theorists modified Freud’s theories about projection and understood faith as arising from the liminal space between the mother and child in which the child creates and is grasped by transitional objects.

Perhaps no one used Freud’s theories with a more sympathetic eye to faith than Erik H. Erikson, whose developmental theories, formulated from his work with children and based upon a revised Freudian schedule of child development, led him to conclude that basic trust was the result of a positive resolution of the first childhood developmental struggle, between trust and mistrust. He concluded that an adult who had developed basic trust in this first stage would be more likely to have faith than one who did not. Therefore, the early experience of a child set the stage for a positive experience of religious faith in adult life.

Understood as a transformative experiential encounter of the individual, faith had strong significance in William James’ influential *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He suggested that persons who were divided, or troubled by psychic conflict, were more likely to experience surrender of oneself to an outside “something MORE” (James 1902/2007, p. 441). Faith can be seen, in Jamesian terms, as a resolution of a divided self through self-surrender, and thus a source of contentment and joy.

However, faith often occurs alongside doubt, and it could be suggested that the two belong in a dialectical tension. If these are seen in fruitful tension, faith can often be an expansive, life-giving experience. However, faith can also include a great deal of anxiety, about the potential for continuing in the faith and about being outside the limits of faithfulness. The Protestant Reformation can be seen as a way that this anxiety was

addressed historically, with profound cultural and religious implications.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buddhism](#)
- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav, and Religion](#)

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## Faith Development Theory

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### Faith Development Theory: An Overview

Faith Development Theory is an interdisciplinary approach to understanding the evolutionary process of the development of religious/spiritual values and behavior in the human life cycle. The articulation of faith development theory began in the 1980s with the work of James Fowler and colleagues, and it has found a significant place in theological discourse and in some cases cultural



studies as well. Its genesis took place when Fowler was involved in his doctoral studies and was immersed in the work of theologian and ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr. Niebuhr's prototype of a faith development paradigm had in turn been stimulated by his contact with a portion of the work of Alfred North Whitehead. Fowler's theory is typically taught to theological students and is shared with practicing clergy and interested laypersons as a means of providing a process-based understanding of the way that faith changes and transforms in the lives of individuals. Feminists and others have criticized Fowler's theory for its perceived patriarchal bias and its dependence of on an exclusive Christian framework and anthropology. Application of faith development theory arose originally in the analysis of important historical figures and the life narratives of individuals who undertook to describe how their own religious/spiritual perspectives, values, ideals, and ethics had evolved over the course of time. Faith development theory has also been the subject of cross-cultural study investigation and comparison as well. It has been of considerable value to religious educators and pastoral supervisors for seminarians, both of whom are engaged in offering guidance and promoting insight in matters pertaining to spiritual formation.

### Framework of the Theory

The framework of faith development theory is organized along developmental lines and phases. It actively employs Erik Erikson's epigenetic principle, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, and Piaget's theoretical observations regarding cognitive function and development. Briefly stated, the process of faith development must be understood both theoretically and functionally as different from "belief" as that term denotes assent to propositions, traditions, rituals, ways of thinking, and hermeneutical approaches to sacred texts of a more or less consistent and often sectarian character. Faith, according to Fowler and colleagues, is a process that may or may not draw on a number of resources within and outside a tradition. It may

have a traditional theistic focus or it may not. Faith development theory may be understood as a highly naturalized concept of revelation that attempts to describe how a person moves through a series of psychospiritual conflicts and challenges needing to be engaged, if not resolved, and sometimes revisited. It is best understood as fluid and organic as it evolves over time in the direction of a nonstatic, though coherent, whole. While not teleological in a formal sense, faith development theory retains a retrospective epistemological methodology that may sometimes uncover patterns and intentions that are at once illuminating and may also be viewed as ontologically significant.

It is important to note that Fowler's theoretical framework has been modified over the years and yet has maintained its essential character. The theory begins with what Fowler calls "undifferentiated faith" that occurs in infancy. It is felt to be a pre-stage in that it is pre-conceptual and largely pre-linguistic. Fowler here relies on Ana Maria Rizzuto's description of the way self knowing first experienced in infancy shapes the information of consciousness and awareness of the other. Its conceptual value lies in its locating the basis of mutuality, strength, autonomy, and hope or their opposites that underline or undermine what takes place later on in the life cycle. It mirrors Erikson's understanding of *basic trust* and Winnicott's notion of *transitional space*. Stage 1 in the faith development paradigm is called Intuitive-Projective faith (ages 3–7) and is a fantasy-filled period whose emergent strength has to do with imagination. Stage 2, Mythic Literal faith, is identified with childhood until adolescence and is the occasion for the enhancement of the child's imagination through storytelling. It often demonstrates a tendency toward literalism and a moral sense that sharply divides "good" from "bad." Stage 3 is called Synthetic-Conventional faith and is identified with growth into adolescence. In fact, some individuals may not progress much beyond this point. Here persons form an individual "myth" in self-understanding in relation to both self and world. It is understood as a "conformist" phase where a person becomes more or less comfortable and

avoids looking critically at their motivations, attitudes, values, and religious/spiritual commitments. Stage 4, Individuative-Reflective faith, describes the transition from late adolescence to young adulthood. Here relationships to others and commitment to vocation become central, and there may be a necessary reevaluation of values and attitudes rooted in the thinking and behavior of adolescence. Perspectives of other traditions on matters of spiritual and ethical significance may likewise become important. Conjunctive faith (stage 5) represents the potentially transitional experience of mid to late adulthood where one reviews, reworks, and rediscovers one's past. There may emerge, according to Fowler, what the philosopher Paul Ricoeur calls a "second naivete" which requires a fresh look at symbols and stories formed during earlier periods of life. It is highlighted by an opening to the voices of a deeper self. This review and reworking of symbolic meanings and commitments resembles some of what William James meant by one's becoming "twice born." It results in a willingness to expend oneself in actions and relationships that embody the ethical norm of "respect for persons" and in an overarching responsibility in the caring for others. The last phase is what Fowler calls "universalizing faith" (stage 6) and it is extremely rare. Persons who reach this stage become "universalizers" of ideas and movements that come to have lives of their own. "Universalizers" become persons endowed with a "special grace" that makes them even more revered once they have died or passed from the world scene. And they often die or are eliminated by those they most wish to save or help. Their number might include such persons as Malcolm X, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Martin Luther King.

## Conclusion

Even though faith development theory is transparently psychological, it remains possible to connect Fowler's stages to religious/spiritual terms, ideas, symbols, texts, and historical figures outside the boundaries of its Protestant and Christian origins. The challenge to faith development theory is to

help persons from a wide variety of backgrounds and traditions make these connections. The theory is both pragmatic as a tool or "map" though the life cycle even as much as it is a methodological and theoretical challenge to more traditional and academic theological anthropologies.

## See Also

- ▶ [Erikson, Erik](#)
- ▶ [Faith](#)
- ▶ [James, William](#)
- ▶ [Revelation](#)
- ▶ [Winnicott, Donald Woods](#)

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## Faith Healing

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Faith healing refers to processes of restoration of well-being through religious rituals and submission to divine intervention. It involves the conviction that mystical power can remedy mental and physical affliction either through material medicines or without them. Private or communal rituals and devotion intended to influence supernatural beings to miraculously counteract affliction are key features of faith healing. However, the afflicted may or may not actively solicit the mystical healing as their faith makes them take for granted the solicitude of God or other divine beings. Believers may expect divine beings to reciprocate people's trust, faith, and obedience

with compassion and well-being. Similarly, human agents such as doctors or faith healers may not necessarily mediate the healing process (Dickinson 1995, p. 97). Faith healing is therefore a type of religious, magical, or symbolic healing resulting from direct or indirect ritual manipulation of supernatural forces (cf. Dow 1986, p. 57). Faith in an authority within a religious system defines quests for wellness and confidence in divine intervention (Sykes 1976). Faith has mental (cognitive) or intellectual and emotional or affective components that compel afflicted people to engage in religious actions to protect or restore their health (Levin 2009). The relationship between faith and expected positive health outcomes may be unintelligible, uncertain, and not be easily knowable (Clarke 2003). However, faith underpins the conviction that something ordinarily incomprehensible, such as miraculous healing, can materialize.

## Healing

Healing denotes a process of restoring and sustaining wellness (Mulemi 2010). The process reestablishes physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health and growth. It repairs and regenerates body organs and neutralizes forces that may undermine soundness or normal function (Dickinson 1995). Beliefs and religious practices related to healing shape the complex interactions between lived experiences of suffering and faith in mystical restoration of health. Therefore, healing provides a means for expression of suffering and hope, which may elude articulation in ordinary language. The expression brings to the fore concrete, physical, psychological, and social effects of therapeutic practices. Therefore, healing processes may help in determining what counts as illness requiring treatment and when health restoration has been effected (cf. Csordas 2002, p. 11).

Healing practices and beliefs manifest the reality of health as both a subjective and objective reality, which goes beyond wellness of the body to include vitality of the psyche. These aspects involve psychological dimensions in conceptualization of *salutogenesis* (Antonovsky 1979; Levin

and Mead 2008). Salutogenesis constitutes a paradigm for comprehending and harnessing underlying causes of comprehensive health and well-being, with regard to the body, soul, and spirit. Salutogenesis may account for why some people fall ill under stressful conditions while others do not (Billings and Hashem 2010). In this sense, healing provides coping resources that people may effectively use to prevent or deal with a variety of subjective psychosocial and objective physical stressors.

Belief in the agency in faith healing practices of divine forces and entities is ubiquitous because many forms of healing across cultures are religious (Csordas and Lewton 1998). This implies that healing is a prominent universal aspect of religious experience, and it is the most significant symbol in any religion (Sullivan 1987, p. 226). However, both religious and secular belief systems in most cultures primarily attribute a natural capacity for healing to biological processes in organisms. Cure of the body and the quest for wholeness through healing is an important expression of beliefs and attitudes about the invisible powers of the universe (Sullivan 1987). Adherents of religious traditions often extend beliefs about therapeutic power to ordinary agents and institutions associated with representation and transmission of supernatural healing power.

Where people anticipate or perceive delays in objective natural healing processes, they actively or passively pursue divine intervention. The quest for expedited healing and cure shapes people's patterns of resort to different forms of healing, including faith healing. However, medical reference to healing restricts its meaning. The biomedical use of the term refers to empirical signs of wound recovery and granulation of lesions. In this sense, healing denotes the biomedical perspective of treatment; attempts to stop the pathogenic process and the quest to prevent further tissue and organ damage (cf. Levin 2009). However, healing per se entails comprehensive restoration of health by reversing or neutralizing the pathogenic process, restoration of prepathogenic states of health, or attainment a complete state of physical, psychological, and spiritual wellness. This constitutes

the milieu in which faith healing as a process of reestablishing holistic equilibrium is embedded.

### Faith Healing and Equilibrium

Belief in miraculous power intrinsic in both medical and nonmedical resources characterizes faith healing. For Christian faithful, for example, a doctor may draw on God-given and divinely effective resources of wisdom and skill. Healers and patients use the resources to restore or preserve bodily or mental health and vigor necessary for active and purposeful life (Dickinson 1995). Faith healing thus provides an opportunity for people to assign meaning to their experience of suffering and recovery. In relation to this the inexplicable hidden power of healing and curing mechanisms are often the subject of faith and religious awe. Believers attribute the power of both medical and nonmedical processes to definitive divine sources. Curing results from technical work drawing on the esoteric knowledge of how to harness and utilize medicines. The medical expert – a physician, surgeon, or traditional herbalist – may enjoy divine favor of privileged access to cure and healing power, and this may present their work as an aspect of faith healing.

Faith healing is a long process involving interaction between human beings and among individuals with the community, environment, and divine beings. This implies efforts to reinstate stability in strained relationships between humans and fellow humans, environment, ecology, and the supernatural. The equilibrium people seek in healing activities includes physical, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions (Appiah-Kubi 1981, p. 81). Belief and trust in as well as commitment to safeguarding health through the agency of supernatural beings, environmental elements, and fellow human beings typify faith healing. The putative power that underlies healing derives from belief in invisible therapeutic energy in the universe, which flows through and is mediated by mind-body interactions. Hope about the efficacy of faith healing derives from the convergence of belief, trust, and submission to God or the authority of a mystical entity.

### Faith Healing Behavior and Activities

Rituals of communal or private prayer, offering, sacrifices, laying on of hands, and ecstatic chanting characterize faith healing. These activities produce possibilities of healing through suggestion, which may counteract health inhibitions in the body or mind. The healing activities may also induce varying degrees of altered states of consciousness. The hypnotic effect, for example, contributes to self-sooth psychological adaptation, which mitigate pain and malaise. Healing activities affirm the conviction that participants can increase contact, communion, and personal relationship with supernatural beings that protect health and counter illness. Healing rituals reflect the belief that patients and their caregivers can effectively harness mystical power to restore health. The faith healing practices may also enhance believers' resiliency in the face of daily life stressors that burden and drain the mind.

Faith healing sessions and practices grant an afflicted person the opportunity to resolve issues that affect mental stability, body function, and immunity to illness. Communal faith healing sessions may facilitate disclosure of personal needs, pent-up emotions, and experiences to God or other divine beings and fellow believers. Healing communities, such as Pentecostal Churches, emphasize the practice of claiming healing. Believers not only experience healing privately but also have the obligation to testify about it publicly (Peacock 1984, p. 41). The declaration of healing reinforces it; hence faith healing activities may be expressions of psychological dispositions.

Transactional symbols such as sacred ideas, divine beings, and objects mediate faith healing. This relates to the belief that mystical entities can bestow different agents including human beings – with power to promote health miraculously. Faith particularizes the symbols from generalized figurative media in cultural mythic worlds that link the social and the self-systems (Dow 1986, p. 63). Religious symbols shape hope and positive illusions that enhance health. The illusions affect physical and mental health through faith and their ability to control undesirable events through

submission to supernatural authorities (Taylor 1983). In this sense faith healing practices contribute to composure that facilitates behaviors that improve both physical and emotional well-being in spite of stressful events.

Faith healing practices produce expected results through behavioral events (Kleinman 1980). Perceived efficacy of healing events materializes by uniting individual (psychobiological) and collective (sociocultural) aspects of the healing process (Peacock 1984). Consequently, faith heals through at least five mechanisms. First, it induces behavioral or conative processes that stimulate health promoting behaviors, such as therapeutic acquiescence. Second, an interpersonal mechanism ensues to connect the sufferer to people who encourage him or her and offers material and emotional support. By involving other participants apart from the patient, faith healing transforms private experience of affliction into collective experience (Peacock 1984). This results in action that partakers of the healing events believe can expedite healing. In the third place, a cognitive mechanism establishes a mental framework that strengthens the natural ability of the human mind and body to heal through self-renewal. Fourth, the affective mechanism links faith to healing by stimulating self-soothing emotions, which may prevent or ease pain and negative effects of stress. Finally, faith contributes to healing through a psychophysiological mechanism, which underpins hope. The psychosocial mechanism is an important aspect that defines resilience and endurance that make health-seeking behaviors meaningful and beneficial.

## Conclusion

Faith healing connotes processes, actions, and experience of health restoration drawing on religious rituals and belief in divine intervention. The congruence in faith, trust, and hope in the power of the supernatural and its agents motivate adherence to faith healing practices, behavior, and beliefs. This facilitates subjective experiences of health restoration, which essentially materialize by psychophysiological means. However, the

Supreme Being and other divine agents demand believers' submission in exchange with the promise of mystical or miraculous healing. Faith healing is in effect consistent with the notion of "healing of the whole person" (Berg 1980). It addresses the complex interdependence among mental, social, spiritual, and physical aspects of well-being.

## See Also

- ▶ Faith
- ▶ Healing
- ▶ Jesus
- ▶ Possession, Exorcism, and Psychotherapy

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## Fall, The

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### Orthodox View

The term given to the mythical event described in Genesis 3:1–24 in which God cast Adam and Eve out of the paradisaical Garden of Eden because they had disobeyed God in eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In casting Adam and Eve out, God said that in so eating the forbidden fruit, humankind had become “like one of us, knowing good and evil.” Although God had told the primal couple that if they ate the forbidden fruit they would die, instead God banished them from the Garden of Eden declaring that thenceforth Adam would have to work hard to produce food from the earth and Eve would be subservient to her husband and undergo great pain in producing offspring. The orthodox Augustinian interpretation of this event is that Adam and Eve’s condition in the Garden of Eden was one of paradisaical perfection but that their rebellion against God led to a separation from God and hence a “fall” into sin, pain, and death. This theology understands the present reality of sin, evil, suffering, and death as flowing from this first dramatic rebellion – the

exercise of the first humans’ God-given “free will” in disobedience of God. In a related line of thought, Augustine also developed the theology of Original Sin, contending that sin was transmitted from generation to generation through the act of procreation, beginning with Adam and Eve. It is often contended that Paul’s writings (Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22) lend scriptural support to Augustine’s understanding of the fall of humankind.

### Feminist Reframing

Because Eve was first tempted by a serpent to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, with Adam eating the fruit only after Eve had already done so and offered it to him, ancient Christian fathers blamed Eve – the first woman – for original sin and hence all evil, sin, suffering, and death since the Fall. This reading of Genesis 3:1–24 has been zealously contested by contemporary feminist theologians who contend that this is a misogynist reading of the story of the primal couple. Rosemary Ruether lambasts Augustinian theology of the Fall and Original Sin as “patriarchal anthropology” (Ruether 1993, pp. 94–99). Reframing the story of Adam and Eve has sometimes led to an understanding of Eve’s action in eating the fruit as being a sign of creativity, curiosity, and initiative and the beginning of culture (see generally Susan Niditch 1992, p. 14 or Mary Daly 1973, pp. 44–68).

### Other Views

Although the orthodox theology of the Fall and original sin have descended from Augustine through Aquinas to Catholicism and into Protestant orthodoxy, there have been many other detractors and alternate lines of thought. For example, Irenaeus, the second century Bishop of Lyons (c. 130–202) saw Adam and Eve not as perfect beings who “fell” into sin, but rather as imperfect, immature creatures who were at the very beginning stages of a long process of moral development which would eventually be

brought to perfection by God. This approach was later developed by the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher who believed in a progressive development of God-consciousness in humankind from a mere potentiality to a reality in the future. A prominent contemporary proponent of this line of thinking is John Hick (1977), who contends that humankind, “created as a personal being in the image of God, is only the raw material for a further and more difficult stage of God’s creative work. . . . God’s purpose for [humankind] is to lead [it] from human *Bios*, or the biological life of [humankind], to that quality of *Zoe*, or the personal life of eternal worth, which we see in Christ. . . .” (pp. 256–257).

Paul Tillich saw the mythical eating of the fruit by the primal couple as the end of “dreaming innocence.” Prior to the Fall, he contended, “freedom and destiny are in harmony, but neither of them is actualized” (Tillich 1957, p. 35).

### Psychological Perspectives

Harold Ellens points to the array of Freudian symbols in the story of the Fall: “the serpent, virgin, flaming sword, nakedness, anxiety, shame, the phallic deity, and the initially non-phallic humans.” However, Ellens’ primary interest is in the use of developmental models of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erikson, and Fowler to understand the story of the Fall as paradigmatic of “human growth from the childlikeness of Eden to mature kingdom building and cultural responsibility. In that growth process, the story plays the role that has equivalents in the human growth process of birth and adolescent disengagement from parents, both inherently healthy processes, and the subsequent independent adulthood” (Ellens 2004, p. 32).

Another line of thinking regarding the mythical significance of the Fall is that the mythic episode of Genesis 3:14–24 represents the developing human animal’s first experience of the *shame* affect which, through the process of evolution, became part of humankind’s hardware script (McNish 2004).

### See Also

- ▶ Adam and Eve
- ▶ Augustine
- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Evil
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Myth
- ▶ Original Sin
- ▶ Shame and Guilt

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### Family and Religion

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Scholarship documents close connections between psychology and religion, as well as between psychology and family, manifest in part by the existence of two journals sponsored by the American Psychological Association, namely *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* and the *Journal of Family Psychology*. Yet there is no APA journal at the nexus of family and religion. However, hundreds of scholarly

articles (see Mahoney 2010) and a few scholarly books (see Marks and Dollahite 2017) indicate that religion and family are also closely connected. Space will not permit mention of all the ways that family and religion are deeply entwined, based on psychological research. Here we mention only a few of the most important recent findings.

Religion can be powerful and religious involvement has been shown to have both positive and negative effects on marriage and family life. There are various dualities at the nexus of religion and family life that create the potential for religious involvement to be beneficial, harmful, or both across families and in any given family (Dollahite et al. 2018).

**Religion and marriage.** A large and growing body of scholarship indicates that religion has a number of important associations with marriage. Across many studies, a positive relationship between shared religiosity and marital quality, marital stability, and marital satisfaction has been documented (Mahoney 2010); however, there are both exceptions and complexities. For example, when more religious husbands enjoy good mental health, the couple enjoys higher marital satisfaction, but when a religious husband has lower psychological functioning, the marital quality of his wife suffers (Sullivan 2001). Further, those in interfaith marriages typically report higher levels of conflict and lower levels of marital stability (Curtis and Ellison 2001) – in some faiths, the interfaith divorce rate at the 5-year mark is double or even triple the within-faith divorce rate (Lehrer 2008).

In summary, married couples who take their faith seriously are more likely to report being emotionally close, more likely to say they have resources to draw on to resolve marital conflicts, less likely to abuse each other, less likely to be unfaithful to each other, and are more likely to remain married (Marks and Dollahite 2017). Even so, these benefits appear to be constrained to same-faith marriages. Recent work indicates that not only shared denomination but similar levels of spousal commitment to a faith tend to yield positive marital outcomes (Marks and Dollahite 2017).

### **Religion and parent-child relationships.**

Longitudinal studies have found that religion can benefit family relationships across generations and that the religious lives of parents have a significant influence on the lives of their children (Bengtson et al. 2013; Spilman et al. 2013). Many parents and children have meaningful conversations about religious matters (Boyatzis and Janicki 2003). Both mothers and fathers influence the religious identities of their children, sometimes in different ways and to different extents. Parental influence is based on parental identity and behavior but is especially influenced by the warmth and closeness of the parent-child relationship. Indeed, various studies have shown that in families with greater warmth in parent-child relationships, it is significantly more likely that children will remain in the faith of their parents (Bengtson et al. 2013; Kim-Spoon et al. 2012; Petts 2014).

**Divorce and the religion-family nexus.** Even in the event of divorce, parents continue to have an influence on their children's lives, either toward or away from faith (Uecker and Ellison 2012). Indeed, parental divorce typically has a reported affect on the religious identity of children of divorce, as they are more likely to either leave their faith community or switch to another religious group (Uecker and Ellison 2012). On average, adults whose parents divorced are less likely to attend religious services, although some children of divorce become more religiously involved than their parents were (Marquardt 2005). Divorce does tend to disrupt the involvement that children of divorced parents enjoyed in their faith community life, with divorced fathers playing an especially large role in whether or not their children remain involved in a faith (Marquardt 2005). Thus, in addition to the disruption of their parents' marriage, many children of divorce also experience the disruption of their involvement with their faith community. Since this second disruption is often harmful to children of divorce and so rarely discussed in the scholarly literature and in the public discourse, this separation from a supportive faith community has been called both a "spiritual trauma" and a "second silent schism" (Mahoney et al. 2010). On the



other hand, some children of divorce turn to God and to religious communities to help them heal from the pain and loss of their parents' divorce.

**Religion and parenting style.** Despite religious parents often being negatively portrayed in popular media, empirical research has shown that religious parents are more likely to spend time with their children, more likely to manifest warmth toward their children, more likely to monitor their children, less likely to abuse addictive substances, and less likely to abuse their children. In other words, more religious parents are more likely to manifest a more positive style of parenting, often called authoritative parenting, although Evangelical Christian parents are more likely to consider corporal punishment to be an appropriate disciplinary technique. The research indicates that more religious fathers tend to manifest a range of positive parenting approaches, leading one prominent scholar of religion and parenting to argue that religious men are more likely than non-religious men to manifest the characteristics of the idealized, gentle, and highly involved "new father" that many have called and hoped for (Wilcox 2004).

**Religion and family processes.** One important intersection of religion and family is regular family prayer, a practice that reportedly influences family relationships in various ways (Chelladurai et al. 2018). Religious belief and practice can also help families to reconcile following normative conflict and distance (Dollahite et al. 2019a). Religious belief and involvement can help couples engage in "transformative processes" that can serve to allow couples to self-correct without clinical intervention (Fincham et al. 2007b; Goodman et al. 2013). Preceding adulthood, religious beliefs, practices, and communities can significantly influence adolescent development (Hardy et al. 2019). Many parents draw on religious teachings and faith communities in their efforts to help their children develop moral principles and practices (Hardy et al. 2019). A growing body of research indicates that religious beliefs and practices help to facilitate relational forgiveness in the face of relational harm in marriages and families (Fincham et al. 2007a).

**Religion and coping in families.** When families experience stressors and strains, many turn to prayer, seek help from their religious community, find solace and predictability in religious ritual, or seek counsel from religious leaders (Marks and Dollahite 2017; Pargament 1997; Schafer 2013). Research has found that religious coping can have either positive or negative outcomes depending on the type of coping employed. Pargament (1997) identified three major approaches to religious coping which can be applied to families. A *self-directed approach* would involve a family that believes in God deciding to try to cope without any divine assistance; a *deferring approach* would involve a family passing the burden to God and doing little themselves; while a *collaborative approach* would involve a family combining active belief in God with family efforts to find ways to cope with the stressful situation. Recent studies (e.g., Chelladurai et al. 2018; Schafer 2013) have found that, in efforts to cope with the vicissitudes of life, individuals and families engage in a variety of types of prayer, including petitionary prayer (asking for specific outcomes for oneself and loved ones) and intercessory prayer (praying on behalf of someone else without asking for anything for self). A large body of research has found that during stressful times and situations, many people also find significant social support from their religious communities.

**Calls for greater diversity.** There are important similarities and some important differences in the ways different religions influence families among various religious, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups – and recent empirical work is increasingly exploring these realities by pushing beyond the white, middle to upper-middle class, Christian samples that have historically dominated the psychology of religion literature (Dollahite and Marks 2020). Since at least the turn of the century, leading scholars have called for more research on religion and family that focuses on minority faiths and ethnic minority families. Given the tremendous diversity across and within world faiths, it is important to better understand how families of various faiths go about living out their faith in their marriage, parenting, and family life (Dollahite and Marks

2020). And given that the vast majority of research that has been done on religion, marriage, and family life has been done with samples of majority faiths (e.g., Christianity in the USA), it is important for research to also study religious minority individuals and families in context (Marks et al. 2019). In addition to more study of ethnic and religious diversity, we need greater understanding of how spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and faith communities intersect with families reflecting various structures and compositions (e.g., single-parent families, remarried families, gay and lesbian families).

**Clinical implications.** Well-informed psychologists will bear in mind that serious religious involvement can promote both psychological and social benefits for individuals, couples, and families as well as psychological and social harms depending on how religious beliefs are applied and lived out relationally (Burr et al. 2012). Thus, scholars have encouraged clinicians who work with religious families to remember that both potentialities are possible both across families and within the same family.

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## Family Therapy and Pastoral Counseling

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Every religious tradition attends to family life through sacred texts, codes of behavior, community memory, and practices of spiritual care. These organize gender roles, sexual practices, intergenerational relationships, and how power and resources are allocated. How a religious tradition understands “family” is dependent upon its history and its perceived social problems, social and economic structure, and local mores. Historically, religious and spiritual care of families has taken the shape of moral instruction to reinforce a tradition’s ethical vision for family life. This pattern changed in the early twentieth century, particularly for Jewish and Christian traditions in Europe and North America [The pastoral counseling movement emerged primarily as a North American Christian and Jewish phenomenon in the twentieth century (Townsend 2009)]. New knowledge from social sciences provided religious leaders with expanded knowledge about families that informed religious care of families. In the mid-twentieth century, family therapy was an important part of this new knowledge. Pastoral counseling developed as a professional specialty during the same time and benefitted from family therapy’s concepts, theories, and treatment methods. Contemporary pastoral counseling

embraces family therapy as a significant model of treatment. It is common today for pastoral counselors also to be licensed as marriage and family therapists.

Contemporary professional pastoral counseling developed as clergy counselors pursued training in psychiatric contexts influenced primarily by psychoanalysis (see “► [Supervision in Pastoral Counseling](#)”). For much of the twentieth century pastoral counseling was defined as theologically informed individual psychotherapy (Townsend 2009). In contrast, family therapy evolved as a dissident movement within the medical psychiatric establishment. Prevailing psychoanalytic and early humanistic models of treatment assumed that psychological problems often were related to neurotic conflicts and subjective beliefs patients had about their families. However, psychotherapeutic orthodoxy required that therapists follow Freud’s dictum: treatment is always an individual process. Therapists must have no contact with a patient’s family. Between 1930 and 1960, this insular paradigm was challenged by “pioneers, iconoclasts, and great originals who somehow broke the mold of seeing life and its problems as a function of individuals and their psychology” (Nichols and Schwartz 2001, p. 13). Examples include Paul Popenoe (family planning specialist, Los Angeles), Emily Hartshorne Mudd (social worker, Philadelphia), and physicians Abraham and Hanna Stone (New York), all of whom opened counseling centers for married couples in the early 1930s. By 1940, child psychiatrist Nathan Ackerman was attending to family emotions in treatment and later experimented with therapist-family contact (Ackerman 1958). In the early 1950s, psychologist John Elderkin Bell developed a model of therapy that regularly included family members in treatment. Research in schizophrenia (1950s) prompted anthropologist Gregory Bateson to question the epistemological foundations of psychoanalysis. In its place, he proposed an ecological, interdisciplinary approach to psychological problems and their treatment based on communication theory and cybernetics. Research in schizophrenia also led psychiatrist Murray Bowen to develop natural systems theory as a replacement for psychoanalysis.

By 1970, family therapy represented a substantial paradigm shift away from traditional psychoanalysis and individual therapy. Family therapists rejected traditional views that (1) psychological problems are internal and personal, (2) relational problems are a result of individual pathology acted out in relationships, and (3) individual psychotherapy is the treatment of choice for most problems in living. Instead, family therapists claimed that problems must be evaluated and treated in the context of family and other human relational systems. All treatment – whether a single individual or an entire family was present in the therapy room – used and influenced relational systems. Family therapy rested on a multidisciplinary foundation that produced new models of therapy, strong leaders, and several influential training centers. Gregory Bateson, Jay Haley, and others founded the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto where they applied communication theory and cybernetics to brief psychotherapy. Murray Bowen taught natural, intergenerational family systems at Georgetown University’s medical school. Child psychiatrist Salvador Minuchin developed structural therapy at the Philadelphia Child and Family Therapy Training Center and highlighted the importance of family organization in human problems. Carl Whitaker (Emory University and University of Wisconsin-Madison) taught symbolic-experiential family therapy. Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy (Philadelphia) developed Contextual Therapy based on intergenerational relational ethics. Through the 1980s and 1990s, family therapy became a vigorous discipline maintained by accredited academic programs and regulated by state licenses. Family therapy theory has evolved to accommodate new research, changing social conditions, multicultural understanding of the family, postmodern epistemology, and integrative theoretical models. Today, family therapy is a licensable discipline, an interdisciplinary approach to human problems in a relational context, and a constellation of diverse treatment methods.

Pastoral counselors have a history of concern for marital and family problems. However, prior to 1980, most central teaching texts interpreted pastoral counseling exclusively as individual

therapy guided by variations of psychoanalysis (Wise 1951, 1980), Rogerian client-centered therapy (Browning 1966; Oates 1962, 1974), or humanistic growth therapies (Clinebell 1966). Premarital counseling, marital counseling, and intervening with family problems were based on models of “enrichment” suggested by these individual therapies. One exception was Clinebell’s (1966) *Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling* which described new resources emerging from the family therapy movement that might be helpful to pastoral counselors. By the end of the 1980s, most pastoral counselors were aware of family therapy. Many saw it as a helpful secondary method of counseling, useful when counseling couples or families with problems. Pastoral counselor training programs began to require at least rudimentary knowledge of family theory and couple or family intervention. Some pastoral counselors enrolled in family therapy training programs mentioned in the previous paragraph. For these pastoral counselors, family therapy became a primary commitment rather than an occasional alternative to individual therapy. This paradigm shift was not universally welcomed by the pastoral counseling community. First, it challenged a theological preference for individual experience found in the liberal protestant theology that supported pastoral counseling theory (particularly Tillich and Niebuhr). Second, it questioned the ethics of a theology and psychotherapeutic approach to care (psychoanalytic and Rogerian) that prioritized depth, individual psychological analysis available only to the socially and economically privileged and which tended to ignore relational systems. Though willing to use some family therapy techniques for specific couple or family problems, most pastoral counselors resisted this significant shift from their historic and theological roots.

For pastoral counselors, interest in family therapy as a paradigm shift increased with publication of Rabbi Edwin Friedman’s book *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (Friedman 1985). Friedman’s elegant application of Bowen’s intergenerational family systems theory to congregational life showed that family systems theory could be a

sophisticated, theologically informed alternative to individual psychological models. This text quickly became a standard for clergy training. It provided pastoral counselors an accessible introduction to “systems thinking” and lent legitimacy to assessment and treatment that was not based in depth psychology. In the 1990s, systemic epistemologies gained enough momentum to challenge long-standing preference for individual psychological paradigms. For example, feminist and LGBT pastoral counselors found contextual, systemic models helpful for evaluating power structures, challenging patriarchal systems, and deconstructing pathological concepts like the “schizophrenogenic mother” (Fromm-Reichman 1948). Multicultural family therapy (Hardy and Laszloffy 1995) offered pastoral counselors new ways to interpret gendered, racial, class, and sexual orientation differences in social context. Systemic family theory also began to influence the pastoral theologies that supported pastoral counseling (Graham 1992).

Since 2000, pastoral counselors have constructed important integrative connections between postmodern family therapy and postmodern theologies. These theological and therapeutic models pay careful attention to how all social meaning, including family interactions and beliefs, are constructed in specific social contexts. Instead of universal principles of counseling that fit all people or families, these postmodern integrations use, for instance, narrative and collaborative family therapy to interpret care of women (Neuger 2000, 2001), stepfamilies (Townsend 2000), and lesbian couples (Marshall 1997). They also directly critique pastoral counseling’s historic bias toward long-term and individualistic models of therapy (McClure 2010; Stone 2001).

Perhaps the greatest stimulus to connect family therapy and pastoral counseling was political. As healthcare changed in the mid- to late 1990s, payment for services required that a counselor be licensed. In all fifty states, family therapists lobbied successfully for licensure. Pastoral counselors gained licenses or certifications in only five states, which meant that most pastoral counselors needed a license in another discipline to

qualify for jobs in interdisciplinary counseling centers or to receive payments from health insurance companies. Many sought training that would allow them to obtain a marriage and family therapy license. Several theological seminaries and freestanding pastoral counselor training programs developed educational models that were theologically integrated and license eligible in marriage and family therapy. Increasingly, pastoral counselors are finding a vocational home by integrating pastoral values in their work as licensed marriage and family therapists.

Professional pastoral counseling is a discipline that has always borrowed psychotherapeutic theory and reflected theologically on its application to ministry (Townsend 2004). Today, pastoral counselors may choose a family therapy technique as an auxiliary to individual-oriented therapy practice or see marriage and family therapy as their primary theoretical commitment. In either case, theological or spiritual integration will define the pastoral counselor’s work. Pastoral counseling guided by family therapy will at minimum: (1) frame individual life in a family context; (2) assess and treat problems as systemic (a product of family and social systems) rather than individual psychopathology; (3) observe how families and problems are structured and maintained through intergenerational patterns, repetitive interactional sequences among family members, organizational/structural patterns, or the shape of family narratives within specific cultural contexts; (4) attend carefully to the family life cycle in assessment and treatment; (5) consider the entire family as the unit of treatment in counseling; (6) describe change as ecological – that is, it is intricately related to changes and influences in the whole family, community, and cultural system; and (7) expect the therapist to be a facilitator of systemic change rather than a psychological healer.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Friedman, Edwin](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)

- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Postmodernism
- ▶ Rogers, Carl
- ▶ Supervision in Pastoral Counseling

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## Family-Based Religious Abuse

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Partner abuse may be physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and/or spiritual in nature. In addition to any physical injuries, abused individuals may experience both short-term and longer-term emotional and psychological effects. Initial psychological responses may include shock, denial, confusion, fear, and depression. Resulting longer-term effects may include anxiety; fatigue; sleeping and eating disorders; feelings of loss, betrayal, and helplessness; and, in some cases, suicide. The injuries caused by physical violence, which may lead to disability and chronic physical pain, may intensify and/or prolong the psychological effects.

The relationship between religion and partner violence may not be easily apparent. Some scholars have speculated that individuals who adhere to a literal reading of scripture may be more likely to abuse their partner in some form. Numerous scriptural passages from the Old and New Testaments and the Qur'an, when taken out of context, have been used to explain or justify physical violence against a partner. As an example, Ephesians 5:22 provides "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as you are to the Lord," and, when read literally, suggests that wives owe obedience to their husbands. While this might suggest that those with more fundamentalist religious beliefs would be more inclined to endorse and/or to utilize physical violence against their partners, research has not found this to be the case. In fact, weekly church attendance has been found to be associated with lower rates of partner violence.

In other instances, a partner's refusal to perform or respect a religious ritual may constitute a form of emotional or spiritual abuse. As an example, a husband's prevention of an Orthodox Jewish woman from visiting the mikveh (the ritual

bath) following a period of menstruation or his insistence on engaging in sexual intercourse before she has had an opportunity to attend the mikveh may be emotionally abusive. Similarly, a refusal by the wife to attend the mikveh following menstruation may be emotionally abusive of a religiously observant Orthodox husband who, according to religious precepts, may not engage in sexual relations with his wife following her menstruation until after she has attended the mikveh.

Researchers have found that abused individuals who are members of religious communities appear to be more vulnerable than abused individuals who are not members of religious communities. Victims of partner violence who are members of religious communities may turn first to their clergy and other religious leaders for support and guidance. However, many clergy are ill-prepared to address the violence effectively or to intervene and may respond to such requests for assistance by reference to scriptures and their understanding of scripture. Consequently, the victim of the abuse may be told to forgive the perpetrator of the violence and return to their marriage because marital vows are for life, to better adhere to the precept of the male headship of the home, and/or that he or she must have provoked the violence. A clergy member may also “spiritualize” the problem, suggesting that the violence was visited upon the victim as a punishment from God for his or her transgressions or moral failings.

Religion and/or spirituality may aid the recovery of survivors of partner violence. Researchers have found that institutional religious involvement by survivors of partner violence is associated with a higher quality of life, lower levels of depression, lower levels of posttraumatic stress, and reduced risk of suicide. A number of non-denominational interventions that incorporate elements of spirituality have been developed to support individuals as they recover from partner violence. In general, such interventions may incorporate elements that focus on the individual’s areas of strength, their image of God or a higher power, spiritual connection, spiritual struggles, and their spiritual journey and transformation. Interventions that are more rooted in a

particular religious perspective may also incorporate religious passages that provide support for recovery.

## See Also

- ▶ Couples, Marriage, and Family Counseling
- ▶ Crisis Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Pastoral Psychotherapy and Pastoral Counseling

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## Fantasy

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The world of fantasy in general is believed to be an imagined “other” world created by an individual inside his mind. The individual is also the

protagonist in this world who accomplishes all his desires, new situations, possibilities, personal role, or a pattern of behavior in the inner framework of his mental screen. According to the Oxford dictionary, fantasy is a faculty of mind which indulges into an imaginative activity produced for the fulfilment of repressed desires and needs or future possibilities by an individual. The set of perceptions the subject envision are conscious or unconscious wishes, and fantasy acts as a mediator in articulating these images which are improbable in reality. The word fantasy is derived from the Greek word "*phantasia*," literally meaning "to make visible" and is also spelled as "phantasy." Fantasy and phantasy can be used interchangeably but the latter is used more in the psycho-analytic discussions. In one hand, fantasies are referred as the conscious wishes which are the part of everyday stream of thought, conscious day dreams, fictions, and so on which one creates and recounts in waking state. Whereas on the other hand, the term "phantasy," adopted into Freud's writing, entirely meant of the unconscious wishes which remain repressed in our unconscious and is not much in control.

Consequently, the term phantasy is placed in contrast with reality, and the importance of phantasy is undervalued as something only imagined or unreal. In general, reality is characterized by objective facts; likewise, phantasy reflects the psychical reality of the mental processes. But, Freud understood that the inner world of the mind has a reality of its own, with specific characteristics and laws, different from those of the material reality. The term psychical reality appears in Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) which means a subject's resistance to material reality. In simple words, the psychical reality overpowers the material reality and the elements which overpower the reality are the subject's internal imagination which pictures the fulfilment of the both unconscious desires, controlled by the libidinal and aggressive instincts, and conscious desires like future possibilities, basic needs, and desires. Therefore, fantasies are an alternative reality which arises against the adversary situations of the material reality. It is also regarded as one of the defense mechanisms in psychoanalysis,

when a person uses fantasy as a motivation and an act of escape against unpleasant situations occurring. The concept of defense mechanism is originated by Sigmund Freud in his works, *The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence* (1894) and *Further Remarks on the Neuro-psychoses of Defence* (1896), and was later propounded by his daughter Anna Freud in her seminal work, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (1937). It creates an "as if" world where the individual animates his wishes. For example, after being punished by his parents, a child may fantasize about running away from home as an act of retaliation against her parents.

The term phantasy is also significantly found in the works of Melanie Klein, she refers to phantasy as a prime motivator during a child's early stages of development. According to her, phantasies originate from genetic needs, drives, and instincts and appear in symbolic form in dream, play, and neurosis. Phantasy in an infant is modified by emotions in reaction to the internal and external reality and is projected in relation to the imaginary or real objects. Phantasies allow the ego in establishing object relationship and the infants make sense of the external world through introjection and projection, of the relatable object. Therefore, phantasy allows the infant to create an identity of their own and of the other, constructed through projection and introjection. Mitchell (1986) describes Klein's concept of how phantasies are the mental expression of instincts and phantasies derived from them are both physical and mental phenomena; "phantasy emanates from within and imagines what is without, it offers an unconscious commentary on instinctual life and links feelings to objects and creates a new amalgam: the world of imagination. Through its ability to phantasize the baby tests out, primitively 'thinks' about, its experiences of inside and outside" (23). Furthermore, Phantasies does not underlie only in dreams but also shapes the mental and physical activity and also modify the expressions of internal object relation and external event. Phantasies continue through infantile stage to adulthood offering an important part in identity formation. Klein (1975) expounds this statement as, "Infantile feelings and phantasies leave, as it were, their imprints on



the mind, imprints that do not fade away but get stored up, remain active, and exert a continuous and powerful influence on the emotional and intellectual life of the individual” (290).

Fantasy for infants takes shape in the symbolic form of play like pretend and pretense. Both are mental activities of imagination which creates an alternative identity projecting onto the reality. Pretend play is a physical and behavioral manifestation of pretense, and pretense is a mental activity. Few examples of the symbolic form of pretense are self-pretense, object substitution, animation of objects and pretending about imaginary other, pretending to be someone else, object substitution. Pretend play is a universal occurrence and pretending about imaginary other or fantastical being is one common pretend play exhibited by children across cultures. In this pretend play, initially the family provides themes for young children’s pretense but later as they grow up, they create the play themes of their own. Both adults and children are equally involved in the creation of the fantastical beings. Similarly, few cultures also create fantastical characters and introduce them to the children. In Western culture, there are several event-related beliefs in which fantastical characters become important. Few examples of such are, Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy or some other fairies or monsters. Children involve in these rituals which are culturally supported by fantastical beings like hiding cookies for Santa Claus and believing that Santa will secretly leave gifts for them on Christmas Eve or searching for Easter eggs. By participating in such rituals serves a purpose for both the children and parents like, Santa ritual may serve as a behavioral control for parents, as in, if the child does not behave accordingly, the Santa will not give him any gifts. Many researchers believe that a child’s experience with these fantastical beings play an important role in the development of the faith and religiosity. Because through involvement in the rituals children start believing these fantastical or imaginary beings which cannot be seen, but through stories and myths they can be experienced. This idea of believing the fantastical is thought by many researchers as a facilitator to the belief in gods and other religious entities in the later growing stages of children.

William James in his work *The Principles of Psychology* (1981) was the first to identify the fantasy processes occurring within the stream of thought of an individual. He explicated this further as an image appearing in response to the recently perceived object, which triggers a set complex processes in the ongoing stream of thought. In earlier days, people believed that day dreams and fleeting imageries on the mental screen are actual visions, as omens or appearances of deities (Jaynes 2003). Few researchers explain that prophetic visions like John’s “Apocalypse” or Eizekiel’s “wheel” are expressions of fantasies. But with the development in the field of modern psychology, fantasy is perceived as a mental faculty which serves as a mediator for wish fulfilment. Likewise, faith, divine beings, and rituals also become a symbolic medium of wish fulfilment. Religious traditions and rituals are imaginative mode of expression for wish fulfilment. Critics such as Paul Avis in his book *God and the Creative Imagination* (2005) postulates that Christianity is an imaginary religion by deducing the works of thinkers like Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. He further moves on to claim that beliefs and rituals in Christianity are nothing but illusion, projection of unconscious psychological tensions or conflicts. For example, Nietzsche asserts in his book *The Anti-Christ* (1968) that Christian ethicality and devotion has no contact with the reality, “. . . Imaginary, occult causes (god, spirit, soul) were supposed to produce imaginary effects (sin, redemption, forgiveness) within the framework of an imaginary purpose or teleology (kingdom of God, last judgement, eternal life)” (125). Therefore religion, like an imaginary process of mind, works as a compensatory for wish-fulfilment. The rituals, sacraments, and other traditions are a medium for bestowing god’s grace in the impression of wish-fulfilment.

### See Also

- ▶ [Dreams](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Religion](#)

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## Fate

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The concept of fate is as old as there is recorded literature about human interactions with the gods, crossing multidisciplinary boundaries. Whether natural phenomenon is anthropomorphized as shapers of life directions, or belief in supernatural providence as an explanation for wonders and woes, the experience of how one's life unfolds and of who or what (if anyone or anything) orchestrates it must certainly rank as the most primary of questions for human beings across history and culture. Embedded in any account of fate, Homeric, Shakespearean, sacred literature, or otherwise, is an accompanying declaration or puzzlement about fate's relationship to choice, agency, and freedom (Anonymous 2150 BCE/1960; Eliade 1959; Homer 600 BCE/1999; Shakespeare 1623/1937). Moreover, fate is usually discussed with a melancholic intonation signifying the limitations of averting tragedy, perhaps a hasty conclusion that could overlook liberating factors that ease the burden of existence when fated in the world.

Fate was originally understood as the pronouncements of the gods about how one's existence was to proceed. Along with this preordination of task and vocation came a melancholic resignation believing that fate equaled doom. Fate was either discerned through premonition, such as in dreams, or was an interpretation of one's life offered retrospectively, the latter process, of course, establishing a frame of reference for understanding future projections of existence.

There are several important points to explore about fate that are central to the field of psychology and religion. Some of these points of discussion include the place of freedom in fate, the possibilities of alternative views of fate other than despair over impending doom, and the relationship of ancient understandings of fate to more contemporary expressions of fate. The latter issue necessitates addressing whether or not existence is fated by macrosystemic, biochemical, or genetic determinants: our postmodern pantheon of gods.

An original pondering on whether or not we have freedom in the face of fate is what the ancient world considered as the "idle argument" in relation to illness and remedy. One can seek the care of a physician by choice, but if one recovers or not, the seeking of the physician is irrelevant. Recovery or illness is fated, no matter what one does in response to it. The same conundrum can be found in various theological positions related to predestination and providence and in how one views developmental theory. Are events the result of random chance or are they predetermined? Are they *absolutely* determined, even if one's development includes tragedy and suffering, and, if so, what would this imply about the gods? Is development and the place of divine – read as Otherness in various ways – intervention in that development a compromise between moderate determinism and free will?

These are ancient questions. Wisdom literature, Homeric literature, the Muslim will of Allah, Shiva's dance or Vishnu's Maya, ever-present and directing God, and the will of God the Father are only a small list of fateful descriptions that include wrestling with what seems to be fated. Struggling with what seems to be fated presupposes, as disclosed by the struggle itself, that one can argue with God, disobey the gods, or accept one's fate.

The latter advice is what came to be known as *amor fati*, or the admonition to love one's fate. Acceptance, though, is a choice, even if the aftermath of one's choice is inevitable or not. Fate, though, need not be explained as the effects of historical causality and, instead, can be described as the factual givens of our "thrownness" in any given situation, to use Martin Heidegger's (1889–1976) language (1962). Our existential givens as human beings situate us in each moment of our lives.

One may think that since the rise of scientism and logical positivism, and thus, the jettisoning of imaginal worlds populated by the gods as dictators of our daily happenings, we must be rid of external controls of freedom. On the contrary, causal displacement continues in full force. We are who we are as a result of our neurochemistry, our familial upbringing, our social construction, and our unconscious, among other unmoved movers and newer gods in our present situation. Moreover, there are fated aspects of choice itself. Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) speaks of the condemnation to choose and the inescapability of deciding (1943/2003). Martin Heidegger (1962) wrote of the omnipresence of the call of conscience and the necessity of response, even if the response is an inauthentic privation of our projected being-in-the-world. Most importantly, for Heidegger, we are fated to die, which paradoxically invites a choice to live more fully. Life becomes full in our embrace of our situatedness.

It is paradoxical indeed when that which is given brings forth one's ownmost possibilities. Hence, despair need not be the only attunement to one's limitations and doom need not be the only outcome. Situatedness relieves us of our aspirations to be as the gods, which may be where most of the frustration lays for those whose like in kind projects are frustrated by fate. Even the gods fated to be as gods struggled with wishes for "more than" what was available to their situation. The irony, then, is that perhaps the most fated aspect of our lives is the inescapability of our freedom.

Resoluteness, for Heidegger (1962), is a comportment of agency within fated thrownness. Yet, fate, from this perspective, is not a causally driven phenomenon. It is created in my very resoluteness. I commit with openness, thus authentically

embracing my historicity. We are fated by our thrown situations in history, but we are also "fating" in our decisive and authentic commitments to and Sartre allegiances with our given *existentialles* as human beings. This kind of *fait accompli* is not merely an acknowledgment of where I find myself as a recipient of thrownness but also as one called to respond and thus historicize ones accomplishments. To be fated is to be historical, and to be fating is to be free and able to own our ownmost possibilities amidst our limitations as well as to co-create our situatedness through our resoluteness.

## Commentary

The central aspect of discussions about fate related to the field of psychology and religion rests on the ancient understanding and critical redaction of how fate is a quality of relationship between the gods and humankind. Misunderstanding the meaning of being in this mythology and reducing these interactions to bicameral mindedness, as Julian Jaynes (1920–1997) (1976/2000) saw it, have not ceased politics with the gods – now understood as any external force that is presumed to determine one's destiny – neurology and macrosystemic influences being the two most prominent gods today. We now know of the plasticity of the brain and that its dendritic branching rewires itself throughout our lives, particularly in dialogue with how we make sense of situations. As much as we find ourselves fated by existential givens, we can also create fate that is not there, as when we disown accountability for our moment to moment decisions in co-construction of our various situations. Liberation from oppression would not occur at all without the capacity to descend, overthrow, or cease participation in hegemonic patterning.

Therapeutic responses to fatalism need not find themselves pinned between the false dilemma of free will versus determinism. Theologically, those in therapy speak of providential intervention in their lives and most often not explicitly using that word. Instead, we hear statements signifying varying degrees of providential influence with comments such as "there is a reason for

everything,” or “why did it have to happen this way, and why me?” or “this is simply not fair,” and, finally, “it’s all my fault.” We are still talking with the gods. When all is said and done, however, we are recipients of fate as much as we shape it. One could say that fate is surely co-constructed, even in each novel occasion’s invitation to create life as Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947) would put it (1929/1979). Moreover, there are more available responses to us regarding our situatedness and historicity than hopeless resignation to impending tragedy, an interpretation made by our ancient predecessors to retrospectively make sense of traumatic experience. Even in the worst of traumatic experiences, we still have the burden or beauty to respond, and in doing so we find ourselves phenomenologically – though paradoxically – fated with freedom.

## See Also

- ▶ [Daseinsanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Frankl, Viktor](#)
- ▶ [Hermeneutics](#)
- ▶ [Lived Theology](#)
- ▶ [Meaning of Human Existence](#)
- ▶ [Phenomenological Psychology](#)

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## Father

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## Ancient Significance

Symbols of male and female parentage have been connected with the structure of the universe in religious and mythical imagination. In the understanding of many ancient cosmologies, the sky is seen as the father and the earth the mother, corresponding to the impregnation of the ground with rain and the earth’s generative capacities in producing plants (Jackson 1983, p. 88). In other ancient mythologies, the sun represents the male figure, while the moon represents the female (Jung and Kerényi 1949, p. 130). This identification of the terrestrial and heavenly forces with parental figures shows the importance of the original imprint of the parent upon the psyche of the culture.

However, the influence of the father has also come under close scrutiny. In discussions of pre-historical understandings of parenting, the debate has centered on questions about the father’s role in procreation. On the one hand, some scholars suggest that the father had no understanding of his role in the conception of children, and women were seen as having mythical powers which

sustained humanity, and that “man’s part in this process was not as yet recognized” (Stone 1976, p. 11). Such a perspective is reflected in the Christian narrative about the birth of Jesus, in which the ostensible human father plays no procreative role. On the other hand, some scholars insist that the lack of understanding about biology in ancient times lent itself to the interpretation that men were the sole progenitors of children, women being simply receptacles for the man’s creative powers (Morton 1985, pp. 35–36). This interpretation is reflected in Zeus’ conception of Athena from out of his head or the birth of Aphrodite from a severed phallus. As speculative as these debates have been, they reflect the ambivalence surrounding the relationship of the male parent to his progeny.

### The Changing Images of Fathering

In modern times, the father’s role in the family has been equally uncertain. Moving away from a unified idea of masculinity, the current period is experiencing flux as traditional patriarchal societies around the world come under challenge (Morgan 2002, pp. 280–281). The significance of the father has changed with the shifting involvement of fathers with their families and the cultural conditions in which the father interacts with a particular family. Psychology and culture are interrelated, as repeated patterns of fathering have psychological effects that produce sons who father in similar ways (Chodorow 1978, p. 36). Nevertheless, significant shifts have also occurred over the last several centuries in how men in the United States father their children (Lamb 2000, p. 338).

In the early history of the United States, the father’s primary responsibility was “moral oversight and moral teaching,” namely, the cultivation of education for the purpose of studying of Scripture (Lamb 2000, p. 338). Many Asian cultures continue to retain the image of father as moral guide and authority, with strong meanings associated with fatherhood and obedience (Zhao 2007, pp. 72, 128). In the United States, this vision of fatherhood changed as industrialization moved

fathers out of the home with their primary role becoming that of providing financial support. As many Black American men had to travel long distances to work in northern cities, this created a “father absence” for the sake of this breadwinning role (Lamb 2000, p. 338). The 1940s brought a new understanding of fathering which depicted the necessity for fathers to be a “sex-role model, especially for [their] sons” (Lamb 2000, p. 338). This interpretation, and the literature which it spawned, highlighted the “presumed or declared inadequacy of many fathers” (Lamb 2000, p. 338). Finally, as a result of the feminist movement, there has been a stronger emphasis on the nurturant roles of fatherhood. This has corresponded with more actual involvement of fathers in the lives of their children, especially when both parents work outside of the home (Lamb 2000, pp. 338–339).

All four of these images of fatherhood continue to play significant and often interchanging roles in the actual practices of fathering. Fathers often feel pressure both from within themselves and from the wider culture to exhibit aspects of these fathering styles that are consistent with cultural expectations of fatherhood.

### Psychological Views of Father and Religion

Freud believed “God” reflected the projection of a wished-for father figure, so that “the longing for the father was the root of the need for religion” (Freud 1927/1961, p. 28). Freud calls God a “father substitute. . . a copy of the father as he is seen and experienced in childhood,” before one’s ideal image of one’s father is challenged (Freud 1923/2001, p. 46). This need for a father substitute came with a great deal of ambivalence, as can be seen in the mythology that Freud proposes. He suggests that in ancient times the “primal horde” of brothers conspired together and killed the father and that his power entered a totem animal that was sacrificed and shared so that his power could be distributed to all participants (Freud 1927/1961, pp. 28–29). In a similar vein, Freud suggested that Moses, as the father figure of the

Jewish faith, was actually murdered by the Israelites and that his invention of monotheism was the great act of religious genius through which the image of the “repressed” primal father who had been killed could again be returned to consciousness (Rizzuto 1979, p. 20). This theory was a direct reflection of the oedipal drama, a “competitive sexual and aggressive conflict” in which the boy desires to take the place of the father in the family constellation (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 47). The ambivalence which attended the psychic representation of God the Father required that the “Devil” appear to absorb those qualities of envy and fear which were not adequately addressed in worship of a single God (Rizzuto 1979, p. 20).

Freud’s original hypothesis has been revised in a variety of directions by subsequent psychoanalytic thinkers. Most agree that the father becomes represented in the psyche in an important manner which is reflected in the person’s image of the Divine. In one case, David Bakan highlighted the father’s ambivalence about his children, including his fear of being rejected by them, suggesting a hidden theme of infanticide in the book of Job (Bakan 1968, pp. 110, 116). Ana-Marie Rizzuto claimed that Freud’s religious ideas were based upon the projection of his own disillusionment with his father and described how the God representation should be able to transform beyond the image left by a particular parent (Rizzuto 1979, pp. 46–47; Rizzuto 1998, pp. 51–52). In a quite different approach, Jung saw the male element and female element as universal oppositional principles within the personality that needed to be reconciled (Jung and Kerényi 1949, p. 130). For Erik Erikson, the absence of a father to idealize led to his emphasis upon identity and the challenges that interfere with its formation, a theoretical agenda which found its fullest expression in his treatment of Martin Luther’s father complex (Capps 1997, p. 210; Erikson 1958, p. 70).

With the advent of ego psychology and object relations theory in the middle of the twentieth century, the emphasis within psychoanalytic psychology shifted from the oedipal phase to the preoedipal, and increasing significance came to

be placed upon the mother (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 47). The significance of the shift cannot be separated from the sociocultural factors of the postwar period, in which the enshrinement of “motherhood” was connected with an effort to preserve the stability of the nuclear family within society (Chodorow 1978, p. 5). One result of this was that fathers were seen to have little place in actual caregiving but were a “third” element, which introduced the child to the outside world, establishing the gender identity of sameness with the boy child (Mitchell and Black 1995, p. 257). Recent psychological discoveries have shown that fathers may have a more important role in the development of children, even in the preoedipal period (Phares 1999, p. 26; Lamb 2000, p. 340).

### Implications of Changing Views of Father

The Judeo-Christian religions have traditionally portrayed God as a male father figure, but the hegemony of this imagery is breaking up. Accordingly, fathers are in the midst of a shifting position, both in terms of their gender roles and self-definitions. As cultural trends continue to move toward equality between genders, fathers are increasingly providing care for children (Lamb 2000, p. 339).

The historical legacy of fatherhood has emphasized competence and power outside the home but immaturity, weakness, and volatility at home. Fathers are frequently portrayed as incompetent in their fathering by the media, and they often seem to struggle with an internalization of this image (Mackey 1985, p. 126). Fathers also contend with issues of rage and abuse, as the cyclical patterns of violence are handed down disproportionately by men (Cooper-White 1995, p. 165).

With all of these indictments admitted, not enough attention has been paid, especially in depth psychology, to the significance of the father’s expanding caregiving role in the lives of his children or the manner in which this caregiving becomes a part of the father’s identity (Lamb 2000, p. 339). Positive psychological outcomes are associated with high involvement of fathers in

caregiving practices (Lamb 2000, p. 340). With the increase of caregiving behavior among men in our society, along with a refashioning of traditionally patriarchal religions through an encounter with feminist thought, it remains to be seen whether the personal influence of fathers in the home will lead to a transformation of both psychoanalytic theory and the forms and symbols of religion.

## See Also

- ▶ Erikson, Erik
- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Jung, Carl Gustav

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## Fear

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After a brief definition of fear, this entry will explore functions of fear, spiritual and psychological meanings of fear of God, and religious responses to fear of death. It concludes with a summary of how religious ritual addresses fear.

## Definitions of Fear

The medical dictionary definition of fear is “an unpleasant often strong emotion caused by anticipation or awareness of danger and accompanied by increased autonomic activity” (Merriam-Webster.com 2012). This raises several concepts that require further examination and discussion. The first is that there is a difference between fear and anxiety.

Fear is a normal and healthy response to a real threat to one's life or well-being. If I am walking in the woods and I am confronted by a bear, my aroused alertness allows me to make a response for survival or protection. Anxiety is the fear of something that may or may not happen. If I never go hiking in the woods because of the fear of confronting a bear, I am controlled and limited by my anxiety.

Fear is processed in the human brain's amygdala, which controls memory and emotional reactions. This means that fear is a learned or conditioned response; certain stimuli raise the emotion of fear based on past associations with those stimuli. We learn what is dangerous to us, and certain events, objects, and situations become associated with fear. If fear of a certain stimulus is a conditioned response, it can be reduced or extinguished by techniques such as systematic desensitization.

A frequent goal in pastoral counseling is helping persons to discern the difference between fear and anxiety and to decide upon a healthy response to each. A person might be afraid of the reaction of parents, spouse, siblings, or co-workers to their opinions, decisions, or behavior. The task is to move toward a realistic perception of these threats and thus be less controlled by unnecessary fear in living their life.

Another example is the fear experienced by persons with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). A post-combat soldier with PTSD reacts with fear at the sound of hometown holiday fireworks because the sound takes him or her back to the battlefield, with all of the attendant feelings and fears associated with that experience. A person who has been physically or sexually abused will react to an aggressive individual with the feelings associated with the abuse instead of the present reality that is faced. A goal of therapy is to help the person develop skill and perception in staying "in the present" and thus make a realistic distinction between present situations and situations that trigger fear based on past experiences.

## Functions of Fear

As suggested above, fear, like anger, can function as a positive emotion. Anger that is not managed well becomes destructive to relationships and health, but it also functions as a motivator to correct an injustice. Likewise, overwhelming fear can cause paralysis and an inability to act, whereas healthy fear is necessary in order to

function effectively and decisively in the face of real danger; it is a necessary component of survival.

Austrian skydiver Felix Baumgartner, nicknamed "Fearless Felix," recently completed an 18-mile skydive in which he reached a free-fall speed of 536 miles before deploying his parachute and landing safely. This was done in preparation for a 23-mile jump from space that will break all records for skydiving, including reaching a free-fall speed that will break the sound barrier with his body. To complete this, he will be using a newly developed space suit that must remain completely airtight in order to prevent his blood from boiling in the rapid descent. Baumgartner, a very experienced skydiver, is fully aware of the dangers and risk of life involved in this dive. When asked if he was afraid, "Fearless Felix" responded that of course he is afraid but that healthy fear is necessary in order to properly prepare. He went on to say that his fear is overcome by courage – the courage to contribute to the successful development of a suit that will make space travel more safe for future astronauts (ABC News 2012).

## Fear of God

In psychology of religion, "fear of God" might be seen as the same positive force in one's life as Baumgartner's healthy fear that literally spurs him to greater heights and contributions in life. Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Bible viewed fear of the Lord as the source of wisdom and knowledge; it leads one to depart from evil (Prov. 1:7, Job 28:28). In Christianity, the Apostle Paul used this phrase in 2 Corinthians 5:11 to refer to the believers' faith and devotion to God in the same way that it was used to describe the postexilic faithfulness of the Israelites. It reflects a full awareness of the majesty and power of God, who promotes justice, opposes wickedness, and expects accountability. Like Baumgartner, living "in fear of the Lord" means respect for the power of God that motivates one to do the



right thing and take seriously what is required of us.

German theologian Rudolf Otto (1958) was among the first to clearly articulate the relationship between nonrational feeling and ethical practice in religious experience. He referred to the nonrational awareness of the tremendous, the awful, and the mysterious as the *numinous*, the *mysterium tremendum*. *Tremendum* (tremor or fear) contains the element of awe or dread of the demonic-like wrath of God that can destroy enemies or those who disobey God; this is the primary basis for the Hebrew understanding of “fear of God” as described above. *Tremendum* also involves an overwhelming sense of the majesty of God as described in Psalm 8. Otto (1958) notes that this is akin to Schleiermacher’s understanding of “creature-feeling” or feeling of dependence upon the Creator for one’s very being and existence. It is the mystical awareness of the self in relationship to a transcendent reality. It is an awareness of a divine Energy that can powerfully love or powerfully destroy in the same fashion as Goethe’s view of the demonic.

A primary dimension of Otto’s view of *mysterium*, or mystery, is God as “wholly other.” This wholly other is a divine being, a divine presence that is beyond human rational comprehension. That which we don’t understand invokes fear in the negative sense; the phrase “knowledge is power” infers that we are less afraid of that which we understand. Especially in the Western world, any supernatural power, involving spirits or “ghosts,” is feared for its possible connection to evil or the demonic. Christianity reframed the cultural view of “spirits” with the concept of the Holy Spirit as an aspect of the nature of God. The Holy Spirit functions to defend one in time of trial or danger (the Paraclete in John 14:26) or to empower individuals or the body of believers (Acts 4:31). The transcendent but empowering nature of this wholly other God is felt but not fully understood; it inspires ethical practice in the positive meaning of “fear of the Lord” (Otto 1958).

## Fear of Death

A primary fear in human experience is fear of death or, perhaps more accurately, fear of one’s mortality. Fear of mortality can cause compulsive work or activity, with the mistaken assumption that the more we do or produce, the more we have discounted the power of our mortality. Compulsive work is fueled by a religion that believes in salvation and righteousness only through works, through which one can maintain an illusion of omnipotence. Wayne Oates pointed out that this illusion “tends to erase awareness of personal death and leaves us with the assumption that we are not only all-powerful but immortal” (Oates 1971).

In psychology of religion, religious ritual and practice serve as a buffer against the fear of death. Wink (2006), in a study of 155 Christian men and women in their 80s, found that traditional, church-centered religiousness, as opposed to deinstitutionalized spiritual seeking, served to allay fear and anxiety about death. This raises the question debated in psychology of religion as to whether fear of death brings people to religious belief. Citing several studies on this question, Fontana (2003) concludes that “there is no strong evidence that religion is particularly sought as a defense against fear of death, even by those who have been or currently are close to death.”

Related to fear of death is fear of eternal damnation as a basis for religious practice. The Roman Catholic Church developed an elaborate doctrine related to the fate of souls after death. Catholics were required to receive the sacrament of last rites before death as a last chance to repent and receive forgiveness before their postmortem journey. However, this practice still did not guarantee direct entry into heaven; most souls would spend time in a state of purgatory to expiate their sins. The faithful would gather after death for a mass of Christian burial, asking God to mercifully shorten this purification period (Garces-Foley 2010). In the Middle Ages, the misrepresentation and selling of indulgences to speed this process was one practice that led to the Protestant Reformation.

Following the Reformation, the Puritans who settled the early colonies of the United States lived in anxious fear of eternal damnation, fueled by the Calvinist teaching that all humans are utterly depraved and only the elect would be saved. Because no human knew who the elect were, vivid teachings of hellfire and damnation dominated religious practice in the early colonial period as people made every effort to be spiritually prepared for death, still uncertain of their ultimate fate. The evangelical revivals of the early nineteenth century proclaimed that salvation was available to all who repented, not just the elect, and death became seen as a homecoming, where all could enjoy the presence of the Lord and other loved ones who had died before them (Garces-Foley 2010).

## Fear and Religious Ritual

Although Freud famously proposed that religion was a neurotic defense against fear and other feelings and impulses, Fontana (2003) cites other evidence to show that “far from being neurotic, ritual is an inborn psychological propensity, shared by all cultures, to mark life’s transitions, to strengthen social relationships, to cope with misfortunes, and to respond to life’s mysteries.”

This conclusion is reinforced by multiple studies of the use of religious ritual across cultures and faith traditions. In the Jewish tradition, life’s passages as well as a person’s relationship to God and to family are celebrated with careful observance of regular rituals such as the Sabbath, Passover, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, in which Jews prepare for the inevitability of death by taking account of their life and making restitution with God and with other persons for misdeeds of the prior year (Alpert 2010).

In the Hindu tradition, the death ritual is considered the most important life cycle event. The death ritual confirms the Hindu belief that death is a part of life that happens to everyone. These rituals facilitate the deceased soul’s transition from this world to the next and ensure the continuity of family lineage. As in other traditions, the rituals are performed for the living as well, so that

they can go on with their lives in the assurance of this continuity and transition. Finally, the rituals allow Hindus to maintain their cultural identity, even in the midst of primarily non-Hindu societies (Murata 2010).

## See Also

- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Breathing
- ▶ Death Anxiety
- ▶ Defenses
- ▶ Hinduism
- ▶ Immortality
- ▶ Religious Experience
- ▶ Surrender
- ▶ Trauma
- ▶ Violence and Religion

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## Feeling

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The conscious registration of an emotion or affect. Emotion is a physiological state of arousal governed by the brain's limbic system that places the body in an attitude of fear, rage, lust, disgust, etc. Emotions are automatic responses that occur before an individual has a chance to think about what is going on. Feeling occurs as the conscious recognition that an emotional state is already in effect.

In Jungian psychology, feeling is – along with thinking, sensation, and intuition – one of the four “psychic functions” for apprehending the two worlds: inner and outer. While “sensation” (the five senses) determines that something is there before me and “thinking” determines what it is, feeling *evaluates* the people, situations, and objects that I meet. Feeling establishes that something is attractive or disgusting, benign or threatening, gratifying or enraging, etc., and it does so on a hierarchical basis, determining which object is more lovable or inspiring than another. Because it sets the world in order, Jung calls feeling a “rational” function, along with thinking. Sensation and intuition are “irrational” in that they only register the psychic facts that come before one, establishing no order among them.

In using the rational, ordering capability of feeling, an individual may remain self-possessed and take charge of the circumstances that present themselves in the moment. By contrast, emotion occurs as a psychological “shock” that lowers the level of mental functioning and narrows the field of awareness. Adequate everyday living, therefore, requires a capacity to use one's feeling in order to survey in detail the full world picture unfolding before one without the distortion of an overwhelming emotion. A differentiated and dependable “feeling function” is essential for satisfying and nuanced interpersonal relations and for social behavior, in general.

All schools of mysticism devote significant attention to training their students in differentiating the “introverted” aspect of the feeling function – that is, in applying the feeling function to make accurate assessments of one's own states of consciousness. Eastern schools take prominent note of the fact that an unmitigated emotional response always involves an attachment to a certain outcome or favored states of affairs. In training for detachment and the cultivation of equanimity, they make the differentiation of the feeling function possible. Meanwhile, most Western mystical traditions place “discernment” among the most valuable tools for advancement. For example, St. Ignatius of Loyola's “rules for the discernment of spirits” employs a detached feeling evaluation of one's own recent mental states – whether they are relatively “consoling” or “desolating” – to assist one in removing obstacles to advancement and in determining “the will of God” for one in the present moment.

Feeling is arguably the most important psychic function for every religion, from the decisive experiences of its founders to everyday decisions in the lives of its adherents. Longing for succor and transcendence; awe, fascination, and trembling before that which is wholly other; bliss in union; and abasement in shame, guilt, and unworthiness – at bottom, it is feelings like these that characterize religious attitudes and inspire mythic narratives, theological constructs, and ethical codes.

### See Also

- ▶ [Ignatius of Loyola](#)
- ▶ [Introversion](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychotherapy](#)

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## Female God Images

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Female God images can serve to balance the predominantly male God images of Western monotheism. Women who have not been equally supported to see themselves in personal relationship with the divine may need to express anger at the dominant religious paradigm and explore alternative images that express their sense of connection to the divine as female.

The lack of feminine God images in contemporary Western society is a common stumbling block for women's spiritual development. Religious historians wonder why God is so commonly depicted as male when feminine God images are as prevalent throughout history and may actually precede masculine ones (Baring and Cashford 1991; Leeming and Page 1994; Billington and Green 1996). Those who seek images of the feminine divine discover an abundance of goddesses and female archetypes in the historical record. Ancient images of the divine are frequently primitive art celebrating generativity and birth. Archaeologists have uncovered pottery and cave art of the round fecund female figure, earthy and full of life. In countless early paintings, a pregnant female body gives birth to the family tree. Finds like these substantiate the claim that the divine feminine was worshipped prior to a shift towards masculine images of God (Edinger 1996).

In Eastern religious traditions, goddess images are still abundant. In Hinduism, there is Devi, Shakti, and Kali. In Buddhism, the goddess Tara

has a variety of faces and traits. In the ancient West, the Egyptian goddess Isis and Sophia, the Gnostic goddess of wisdom, enjoyed popular appeal. In the modern West, female God images have dwindled. As the West coalesced into the major monotheisms, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, God became a unified male figurehead.

The lack of female God images in the Judeo-Christian West dates back to Biblical times. Female references to God in the Bible never occur as names or titles for God. They occur only in the form of similes (Isaiah 66:13), metaphors (Numbers 11:12; Deuteronomy 32:18), analogies (Isaiah 49:15), or personifications (Proverbs 8).

It appears that although the goddess Sophia had a rich lore surrounding her, Jesus and the male Logos later supplanted her identity and role. In *Mirror of His Beauty: Feminine Images of God from the Bible to the Early Kabbalah*, historian Peter Schafer (2002) asserts that both Jewish and Christian traditions have wrestled with the question of God's feminine nature from the time of the Scriptures throughout the Middle Ages. Schafer argues that Jewish mystical conceptions of wisdom and God's femininity share attributes with Gnostic Christian writings and even reveals cross-pollination of ideas between the religions. He identifies similarities between the Christian cult of Mary and the Jewish Bahir, which stresses the feminine nature of Shekhinah, God's earthly presence.

Female God images tend to focus on the maternal role, rather than other sexual/personality gender differences. Propagation and nurture are emphasized. For example, Virgin Mary is preserved as a maternal rather than a sexual female figure. Erich Neumann (1955/1963), a Jungian analyst, believed that there were two major characteristics intrinsic in the archetype of the Great Mother: the elementary (belly/womb) and the transformative (breast). These images call to mind the fertility icons of ancient civilizations and do little to bring sources of feminine identification outside the traditional role. Women have been traditionally linked with the body and the earth, thus representing humans' lower functions. Because of this, women have often been

associated with the dark, irrational, or corruptible aspects of our personalities, such as the Genesis story depicting Eve's role in the Fall of Man. Yet it seems appropriate and natural to link feminine images to the earth and to God's indwelling presence in the world. Fecund and sensual, women and earth share generative capabilities in acts of creation and renewal, giving birth and bearing fruit.

Although feminine God images have likely existed for as long as religion itself, in Western culture they represent an undercurrent rather than the mainstream. Cults of the Goddess thrive in pagan or nature religions. Goddess imagery is willing to acknowledge the sexual power of women and the sex that leads to motherhood.

Feminist authors have provided resources for the exploration of the divine feminine in books such as *The Feminine Face of God* (Anderson and Hopkins 1991) and *A God Who Looks Like Me* (Reilly 1995). These authors challenge our indoctrination into a masculine theology. Reilly proposes that the masculine God image, culturally dominant for centuries, leaves a damaging legacy for women. That legacy is a learned belief in the exclusion, inferiority, and dependency of their gender. Girls imprint these cultural mores at an early age: Boys can be like God; girls cannot. Girls can be part of mankind, but not the part that is mentioned. Without available identification with God, girls can grow up feeling second rate. This legacy of male religious privilege enjoys mutual reinforcement with patriarchal political and familial power dynamics, perpetuating a culture of gender inequality.

For example, in the Catholic Church, where exclusively male priests preside over the Mass, girls and women are deemed unfit for the Church's highest calling. Traditions of male leadership serve to reinforce the maleness of Jesus and God the Father, who together are the ultimate creator, authority, and redeemer. In contrast, the female Catholic icon, Virgin Mary, is in a comparatively peripheral support role, valued mostly for her maternal function. Since both the Father and Son of the Holy Trinity are male, girls may learn to believe that females need men to save them. When these girls become women, they may chafe under

these gender dictums and seek the balancing, corrective experience of female God images.

Many find that female God images offer a warm acceptance that sets them at ease, feeling cosmically protected and cared for. Good mothering makes children feel nurtured and accepted, and as adults, we can derive a sense of safety and security from a protecting maternal God. Some people have replaced the doctrinal male God with a warmer, more maternal personal God. Perhaps surprisingly, this shift often occurs without leaving the community offered by their organized religion; instead, a quiet internal knowledge of the feminine nature of God is carried within. This occurs either consciously, for women who are tired of bearing an indirect image of God, or unconsciously, as men and women call upon God for maternal comforting and understanding.

## Commentary

When a person cannot feel a sense of identification with her God image, her sense of self is weakened. Many women have been raised with a masculine God image that may have felt patriarchal, distancing, and demeaning. A God image with characteristics of both genders is part of a healthy, balanced spirituality. The preeminence of masculine God images can be dangerous and destructive to religious culture as well as our larger society.

While a man can relate to a male God by identifying with an idealized God image, a woman's relation to the deity is more indirect and even implicitly sexualized. There is a once-removed complexity to being a woman in relation to God when God is a gendered male, requiring a mother, daughter, or lover relationship instead of a simple identification. In the Gospels' Jesus narratives, women such as Mary Magdalene are hailed for their support roles, but not for their leadership. These traditional examples are offensive to many contemporary women for the way they influence current and future gender roles.

It is interesting to examine the roots of this gender inequality. In *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: The Conflict between Word and Image*,

author Leonard Shlain (1998) proposes that the written word is essentially a masculine enterprise, based on its “linear, sequential, reductionistic and abstract” characteristics; thus, all “writing subliminally fosters a patriarchal outlook.” In contrast, our mental images are perceived wholly all at once, as a synthetic gestalt, which Shlain identifies as essentially feminine. Evidently, our methods of perceptions and communication are as influential as its content.

Do writing and the alphabet cause or reflect the masculine skew of the collective psyche? Shlain argues that his causal theory is the most plausible explanation for the correlations he reveals between alphabetic writing and patriarchy. Although it would be extreme to suggest that language is a tool of the patriarchy, Western language patterns reflect a clear masculine skew that affects all people’s psychological constructs.

In therapy, if gender issues are behind a woman’s negative relation to her God image, it is helpful to examine the sources of this alienation on the larger culture. The therapist can then point out some alternative images, examples of the divine feminine that are present in the culture of the individual experience of the client.

Culture and religion, whether consciously or unconsciously, are engaged in mutually reinforcing gender bias. Influences of the ambient culture shape the individual’s religious expression. This helps us understand why many Christians unconcernedly attribute feminine traits to the male-gendered God images, subsumed under a masculine Godhead. A common example is the tendency to credit a masculine God for acts of creation and generativity, ignoring the feminine nature of these important roles. Rather than subsuming feminine traits within the masculine identity of God, it is psychologically healthier to acknowledge and celebrate the presence and contribution of both the male and female aspects of the divine.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Femininity](#)
- ▶ [God Image](#)

- ▶ [God Image and Therapy](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Male God Images](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Sophia](#)
- ▶ [Tara](#)

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## Femininity

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## Introduction

Femininity or womanliness refers to the physical and behavioral qualities characteristic of and considered appropriate for women. In recent years, these attributes have fallen under the label of socially constructed “gender” and as such have been distinguished from the biologically

determined features of the female sex. This view has attempted to argue for an androgynous psychosocial quality of human nature and to relocate masculine and feminine functions in all human persons. However, in Western cultures femininity and masculinity have been treated as the two opposite ends of the spectrum of human personality and furthermore that the former resides in females, while the latter resides in males.

### **Current Views on Femininity**

In general, the popular understanding of femininity is made up of an amalgam of factors. In the biological category, femininity or femaleness consists of genitalia, high voice, less body/facial hair, less muscle mass and more fat (though thinness has become a new desired characteristic), and more estrogen than testosterone. In the category of parenting roles, femininity is associated with mothering which consists of providing nurturance, warmth, and care. In the social sphere, femininity is associated with the public role of worker (as opposed to boss) and the private role of wife and mother. Finally, in the personality category, feminine behavior has been associated with emotional expressiveness; feminine attributes have been generally classified as soft, tender, and vulnerable; and feminine attitudes have been characterized by more subjectivity than objectivity. While these comparative differences between femininity and masculinity are relative, Western cultures have generally reinforced conformity to these dichotomous norms.

The fact that some of the above characteristics of femininity are purely biological, while others have clearly been socially designated, has had a confounding effect on colloquial designation of what is female (or male). Thus, beginning in the 1970s, the term “gender” has been used in psychological and sociological research to refer to the nonbiological traits, norms, and stereotypes that are considered typical and desirable for those who are designated as female or male. Since then, the academic literature has made efforts to clearly separate the terms “gender” and “sex” although colloquially they frequently continue to be used

synonymously. While it may not be possible to fully separate the biological aspects of human identity and experience from the social, cultural, and psychological ones, many attempts have been made to discriminate between them so as to understand the relationships between them and to correct the misrepresentations of women and men that have been at the root of much of history of oppression and violence towards women.

While some of the representations of femininity can vary from culture to culture, such as the specific physical features as well as behaviors that are considered desirable, certain common themes, such as beauty, gentleness, and nurturance, appear to underlie its diverse expressions. In recent years, the concept of femininity has come under the close scrutiny of feminists who have pointed out that the cultural prescriptions for ideal feminine qualities have been carefully scripted to serve the perpetuation of the patriarchal order. As such, the complex aspects of the feminine gender which appear to be mysterious and threatening to the established male order are split off and rejected and replaced with seemingly benign ideals of feminine docility, domesticity, and conformity. However, such restrictions have in fact been violently suppressive and have engendered oppressive attitudes towards women as well as men who do not conform to the traditionally patriarchal stereotype of masculinity. More recently, feminists have sought to challenge any universal definitions of femininity since no matter how empowering they may seem to be, they can always be turned into oppressive labels and scripted roles that ultimately restrict women’s freedom.

### **The Role of Religions in Shaping Femininity**

Since religious beliefs and rituals have always played a crucial part in the formation and transformation of culture, their influence on sex and gender roles cannot be overstated. In the ancient polytheistic world, goddess worship was widely practiced. Some scholars have argued that goddess worship began much earlier, during the

prehistoric era when matriarchal social systems are also believed by some to have existed. However, while there is not any clear evidence of a single “Great Goddess,” in cultures outside the Judeo-Christian traditions, the Feminine Divine was an intuitive and prevalent concept and some cultures have maintained it to this day under different names and shapes (Schaup 1997).

A cult of a prominent goddess as well as her loving union with a male god was present in all ancient Oriental religions. In ancient Egypt, the Goddess Isis was the creator of the world, and her sacred wedding with the male god, Osiris, was believed to hold the secrets of life and death. In the southern Mesopotamian civilization of Sumer, the goddess Inanna was worshipped and her union with son-lover Dumuzi and later the Assyrian-Babylonian Ishtar and Tammuz. The goddess Kybele was revered in Asia Minor and in Rome under the name of Magna Mater, the Great Mother. The main goddess of the Phoenicians, Philistines, and Moabites was Astarte or Asherah whom some of the Israelites worshipped as well. The Greeks had the powerful goddess of fertility and transformation, Demeter; the Greek Goddess of Wisdom, Pallas Athena; and the jealous and vengeful goddess of marriage, Hera.

The goddesses worshipped represented a myriad of associations which indicates that the ideas about femininity in the ancient world were quite diverse. One goddess alone could serve a variety of functions. For example, in Egypt, the goddess Isis was the goddess who gave birth to the heaven and earth, the source of pharaoh’s power, and patron of nature as well as magic; the goddess of orphans, slaves, and the downtrodden; as well as the goddess of simplicity. Corresponding to these powerful and influential goddesses, women appeared to have the opportunities to hold positions of honor such as in ancient Egypt where women could be traders, craftswomen, priestesses, and queens.

The semblance of a goddess appears in the Old Testament as the concept of Wisdom – Chokhma (Hebrew) – Sophia (Greek), an autonomous female figure which emerges in the books of

Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, as well as the apocryphal books depicting the Wisdom of Solomon. The Wisdom tradition featuring this female figure developed after the Babylonian captivity which seems to support the view that she was an adaptation of the foreign customs of the cult of the Goddess practiced in Babylon. This Divine Wisdom is depicted in the biblical text as authoritative, gracious, lovely, powerful in action, and a beloved of God and of mankind. At times she is portrayed as a divine person in her own right (Proverbs 8, Wisdom of Solomon, 7–8), but at other times she represents instruction, admonition, and fear of the Lord (Proverbs 2). Although the Old Testament authors could not conceive of a distinct Feminine Divine as in the old religions, they did however apprehend of a certain feminine Divine Wisdom which was close to God, sat besides God’s throne and would decide for him what to do, was implicated in creation, loved human beings, and bestowed bountiful gifts on them. Overall, one may observe that this feminine figure wavers between a godlike figure endowed with attributes of regal power and loftiness and the image of a homely housewife, virtuous and industrious, a model faithful fulfillment of the law. Some have pointed out that a split took place; on one hand the idea of Great Goddess of the ancient religions, the source of all life and wisdom, continued to exist in the biblical figure of Wisdom, but on the other hand she was modified and reduced by Old Testament authors to narrow morality, submission, and prudence. Furthermore, in an implicit fashion, on one hand the feminine idea depicted in the Wisdom literature has divine qualities, but on the other she is depicted as rotten, the beginning of all sin (the “foreign woman,” the harlot, the idolatress, the temple prostitute, and other derogatory terms that were used for the priestesses and other female worshippers in the temples of the pagan goddesses).

The case of Lilith is a possible illustration of this split. Lilith, Adam’s first wife, was the woman who rejected her position of sexual and social subjection to man. While originally she represented female strength and autonomy, over



time, Lilith incorporated a myriad of dreadful qualities and thus became the shadow of the feminine which Israel was no longer able to integrate because it had split off and rejected along with the entire cult of the great pagan goddesses. Lilith became the antithesis of Eve, the submissive helpmate of Adam, and the positive model of a Jewish wife. From an interpretive standpoint, for the Jewish men in captivity, Lilith raised potency fears and threatened to endanger the physical survival of the nation in exile. She was henceforth transformed from a figure of female autonomy to one of purely evil qualities so as to make her abhorrent to women (one who murdered children and pregnant women) as well as men (the woman who withholds herself and causes semen to be spilled). The myth of Lilith entered many cultures under various forms from a witch to a beautiful seductress.

The split between an ideal virtuous femininity and a sexual, desiring, mysterious, and powerful woman was perpetuated in Christianity through the veneration of the Virgin Mary. As various feminists have pointed out, the image of the desexualized, suffering, and silently loving Virgin Mother who is lifted into heaven continued to pose problems for ordinary women since it constituted an ideal that alienated women from their real selves and from the realities of the misogynistic cultures in which they lived. The mild, gracious, and ethereal Madonna could only offer women redemption and access to heaven through suffering motherhood, suppression of all negative emotions, and complete disembodiment of sexuality.

## Commentary

From a psychological standpoint, the patriarchal disparagement of the feminine figure in all of her complexity reveals a deep-seated male fear of the mysterious and uncertain aspects of female sexuality and personality. The archetype of the “evil anima” as well as the subdued “Mater Dolorosa” (suffering mother) reflects the disturbed

relationship between man and woman. This alienation and hatred is explained in part by the historical suppression of the pagan goddess through monotheism as well as by the cultural subjection of women through the establishment of patriarchy. The evil anima archetype is an expression of man’s fear of the feminine revenge, a fear that may be rightly justified, while the altruistic, asexual mother poses as the benign ideal of femininity that provides for the emotional needs of men but has no life of her own and as such poses no threat to the established patriarchal order.

For contemporary women, the psychological implications of the culturally inherited constructions of femininity have led to the dilemma between their desire for societal competence and their fulfillment of the feminine roles expected of them in their personal lives but devalued in society. Those who attempt to juggle the demands of both competence and sex-role identity are met with the burdens of physical and psychological burnout that accompany the efforts to embody the colloquial “superwoman.” Feminists have argued that women need a redefinition of femininity (some have proposed a plurality of meanings, of “femininities” and “sexualities,” rather than any one universal definition) as well as of cultural expectancies for competence which will necessarily have ramifications for definitions of masculinity and societal expectations of male competence. Finally, since cultural concept of God has been shown to form the underlying connection between patriarchal religion and a society of violence, many have argued that no social, scientific, or ecological paradigm shift can take place unless the theological shift occurs which moves away from exclusively patriarchal images of God and includes the feminine aspects of the divine.

## See Also

- ▶ [Female God Images](#)
- ▶ [Great Mother](#)
- ▶ [Mary](#)
- ▶ [Sophia](#)

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## Fluid Sexuality

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### Introduction

The term “fluid sexuality/sexual fluidity” has many denotations, such as sexuality is not fixed but unstable; sexuality is not innate but a matter of choice; sexuality doesn’t exist and there are only preferences (Sexuality is Fluid 2015); and so on and so forth. The contemporary psychologists and religious gurus provide explanations to sexual fluidity, and they emphasize that it is not only fluid but also a complex field (Sexuality n. d.). The Hindu philosophy has a concept *Tritiya Prakriti* “third nature” (also the term employed for “third sex” and “third gender”), which includes people with different sexual orientations, including transgenders, transsexuals, masculine females, effeminate males, androgynes, intersexed, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and alike. The *Tritiya Prakriti* can roughly be translated as pansexual in English. To understand sexual fluidity, psychiatrists have devised sexual orientation grids, which divide sexual orientation into different categories (Sexuality n.d.). This chapter will provide psychological explanation

juxtaposing religious references to fluid sexuality in detail.

### Discussion

The Hindu religious literature is full of narratives of gods and goddesses where changing their biological gender occurs. The androgynous form of Shiva and Parvati, aka *Ardhanarisvara*, which represents “that the masculine and the feminine are equally divided within yourself” (Ardhanarishvara 2018). Also, the half-man and half-woman form of *Ardhanarisvara* represents creation and fertility symbolically. Shiva is the *Purusha* “source of creation” and Parvati is *Prakriti* “nature.” When masculinity and femininity fit perfectly well, creation happened (Ardhanarishvara 2018). The homosexual and transgender communities in India worship the *Ardhanarisvara* form of Lord Shiva. Also, there are other Hindu deities which are connected to sexual fluidity, such as *Aravan* with whom Lord Krishna married after changing gender; *Harihara* is a combination of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu; *Bahuchara Mata* is worshipped by eunuchs and transgenders; Yellamma and Gangamma are connected with disguises and cross-dressing. Gender diversity is also displayed in the *Mohini* avatar of Lord Vishnu, and *Vaikuntha Kamalaja* represents the androgynous form of Lakshmi and Vishnu.

Psychologists believe that sexuality is influenced by genetic and social factors. Klein created a sexual orientation grid, which categorizes orientation into seven different types, namely, attraction, behavior, fantasies, emotional preference, social preference, lifestyle, and self-identification. This grid helps people with gender diversity to find out why they are and what they are without falling prey to labeling themselves in LGBTQ. So, there is a possibility that a man is sexually attracted to men but is emotionally attached to women. Or a woman enjoys the company of women sexually but fantasizes about men and so on (Sexuality n.d.). Also, Aaron argues why “the most popular forms of porn for

heterosexual men is ‘T-porn,’ or porn featuring pre-op trans women” (Sexuality n.d.). Further, he explains that heterosexual males get arousal by thinking of a woman with a penis. So, there is a possibility that some men or women who engage with same sex or who experiment themselves with gender diversity is due to the fact that they have some fetish appeal than an orientation (Sexuality n.d.).

Historically speaking, fluid sexuality was never unnatural in India (Babur to Dara Shukoh 2018). The Mughal era is full of such references. Babur wrote about a love for a boy openly in his memoirs. Jahanara Begum was in love with a slave girl and also being accused of incestuous relationship with her father. Mehmed, the Ottoman ruler, had sexual fluidity, and he desired young men (Babur to Dara Shukoh 2018).

## See Also

- ▶ Sex and Religion
- ▶ Sexuality and Hinduism
- ▶ Sexuality and Islam

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## Folk Magic

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Common to most, if not all preindustrial cultures, is a vibrant tradition of folk magic and ritual tradition closely linked to established mythology, folklore, and archetypal associations. These traditions vary enormously and are closely linked to a variety of social, historical, cultural, political, and economic factors. The many and complex networked structures of belief, ritual, and mythology that coalesce in magical traditions have long been studied and documented by anthropologists and folklorists.

From an analytical psychological perspective, one of the key ingredients of folk magical practices and rituals is that they serve as prima facie expressions of emotion. Malinowski, in his analysis of folk magic in Melanesia, argues that magical ritual is invariably constructed in patterns that evoke emotion and resonate symbolically within a culture. In this sense, emotion, and thus psychology, is at the heart of magical ritual (Malinowski 1948). The ritual serves as a symbolic representation of the desired ends, and the emotions that led to it are rendered symbolically through powerful and pervasive archetypes in that culture and thus directly relate to the social, cultural, and political issues that led to the rituals perceived necessity. Subsequently, each type and form of folk magic is derived from its own network of social formations and cultural forms and is fundamentally integrated with localized politics, social structures, conflicts, and economic uncertainties. This localized experience also serves to distinguish folk magic from ceremonial magic in that it is not born of an attempt to create abstract structures granting access to divine power, in a philosophical manner, but is an organic socially derived network of practices and beliefs relating to deeply felt anxieties (Jung 1964).

However, while there are a vast array of bewildering forms, rituals, and beliefs surrounding folk magic practices, it is generally accepted that there are certain universal features and commonalities between varying magical traditions. One key issue identified by Frazer is that folk magic practices are often *sympathetic* in nature. That is to say, the items and rituals used in magic typically either symbolically resemble the target of the magical practice (*law of similarity*) or have come into contact with them and become ritually polluted with their essence (*law of contagion*) (Frazer 1922). From a Jungian perspective, these forms also relate closely to symbolic archetypes, whereby the symbols, the target of the magic, and its ritual practice are linked through archetypal association in the collective unconscious. Subsequently, these magical rituals also serve as a means to grapple with complex psychological issues and serve as an avenue into the unconscious (Jung 1938).

In this sense, folk magic is both derived from the heritage of past traditions and mythology and is also a living tradition which creates its own body of myth and folklore. Thus, folk magic is an intrinsically organic construct that both shapes and constructs its own mythology and folklore, yet is profoundly influenced and shaped by its contextual mythological base, politics, and culture. Consequently, the rituals, symbols, and cultural artifacts of folk magic serve as a powerful avenue into the complex interconnections of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the psyche as manifested in lived experience within the social, cultural, and physical worlds.

## See Also

- ▶ [Analytical Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)

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## Forgiveness

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Every major religion endorses forgiveness as a virtue. The religious perspectives have brought forth numerous practical and theoretical understandings of forgiveness for centuries. In the last 20 years, the field of psychology has pursued the scientific study of forgiveness. Can this study add to what millennia of religious thought and practice has taught humankind?

## Science as a New Tool

Peter Galison (2003) has put forth an understanding of scientific revolutions in understanding, which attributes the seeds of change to the development of new tools. The invention of the telescope paved the way for observing phenomena that were not observable in Newtonian physics. The new data eventually created problems for the old paradigm. According to Galison, a revolution in a scientific field is due more to applying new tools to a phenomenon than simply to providing a re-conceptualization of the phenomenon.

The scientific study of forgiveness has brought a new tool to its study and practice – the method of

careful, analytical science. Science forces us to define variables precisely and then subject the understanding of relationships among variables to empirical testing. Whereas theology and philosophy are likewise careful at defining concepts and test their definitions against logical criteria, authoritative texts, and teachings, science relies on a different source of authority – empirical observation.

## Basic Definitions

The results of the scientific study of forgiveness have been astounding. In 20 years, there has been a ten-fold increase in scientific interest, from 529 citations in PsycINFO for *forgiv\** on December 31, 1997, to 5337 on October 24, 2017. Our understanding of forgiveness has become more precise as science has focused on it, and perhaps the most well-supported theory of forgiveness is the stress-and-coping theory (Strelan and Covic 2006; Worthington 2006). Transgressions (i.e., violations of psychological or physical boundaries) are stressors. They are appraised as to the threat of harm and to the amount of injustice inflicted – called the injustice gap (see Davis et al. 2016). The injustice gap is the difference between the way a person would like to see a transgression resolved (i.e., “I’d like to see her come crawling on her knees begging my forgiveness”) relative to the way the situation is perceived to be currently (i.e., “She’s so cold. She seems to have no remorse at all, and I’m afraid she’ll betray me again”). Bigger injustice gaps are harder for the person to resolve and are related to higher stress reactions, of which more unforgiveness is key to the person’s reaction. Unforgiveness is a complex combination of negative emotions, like resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred, anger, and fear, rolled into an emotional experience interpreted by a person’s working memory as feeling unforgiving.

A person can reduce the injustice gap (and hence reduce unforgiveness) in many ways that do not include forgiveness. The person might inflict vengeance (i.e., a kind of vigilante justice), see justice done societally, observe a person

getting her just desserts, or see an authority like the courts administer justice. Or the person may reduce the injustice gap through passive acceptance. For example, the person might also simply accept that “stuff happens” and moves on with his or her life. The person might forbear, suppressing negative emotions, or turn the matter over to Divine justice or simply relinquish the matter into God’s hands.

Forgiveness is one way of reducing the injustice gap and unforgiveness (Worthington and Scherer 2004). Forgiveness involves internal changes that recognize the offense but choose not to hold it against the offender and (perhaps) to seek more positive feelings and motivations toward the offender. There may be related interpersonal experiences around forgiveness, such as the offender asking for forgiveness, the victim communicating forgiveness to the offender, or either party telling others of the forgiveness. Thus, the context of transgressions is intrapersonal, but forgiveness is intrapersonal. Forgiveness is often confused with reconciliation, but forgiveness occurs within the skin of a person, while reconciliation is the restoration of trust between two people, through trustworthy behavior by the parties.

Forgiveness is of two types (Exline et al. 2003). *Decisional forgiveness* involves making a decision to change behavior intentions from negative to positive. It is not motivation, for the person can be motivated for revenge but still adhere to behavioral intentions to treat the person positively. Likewise, decisional forgiveness is not actual behavior, for a person could forgive a dead parent, but no longer has the option to act directly with benevolence or conciliation toward the parent. *Emotional forgiveness* involves the experience of replacing negative unforgiving emotions with positive other-oriented emotions toward the offender. The replacement emotions most commonly discussed among forgiveness researchers are empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love. The replacement emotions begin by neutralizing unforgiveness, gradually reducing it. Usually, that is where people stop trying to forgive – especially in unilateral forgiveness, which is forgiveness where the transgressor is either dead or no

relationship continues. However, when a relationship is expected to be ongoing (i.e., interpersonal context), then people often continue to seek to experience more positive emotions in the relationship in order to make it “stronger in the broken places.” Decisional and emotional forgiveness may occur independently, but generally they affect each other. Thus, it is possible to forgive decisionally but not experience full emotional forgiveness and to forgive emotionally but never to have made a conscious decision to forgive. However, usually the two are psychologically linked.

Full forgiveness is usually better talked about as full decisional forgiveness, which usually occurs at a moment of decision. The person might ponder whether to make a decision to forgive for minutes or years, but usually the decision is dichotomous, like switching on a light. Or a person might experience full emotional forgiveness, which might involve merely getting to a place of neutral feeling toward the offender (in unilateral emotional forgiveness) or getting to a net positive experience toward the offender (often in interpersonal forgiveness). In contrast to decisional forgiveness, emotional forgiveness happens piecemeal, or more herky-jerky, as emotions are gradually replaced and influenced by the ebb and flow of any ongoing interactions with the offender. There is a time course within which most emotional forgiveness occurs. Usually, much forgiveness occurs early after a person begins to try to forgive, and then the rate of emotional forgiveness tapers off.

### Self-Forgiveness

When concepts of forgiveness are applied to the self, self-forgiveness often does not parallel forgiveness of others (for summaries, see Woodyatt et al. 2017). When one transgresses and experiences shame, guilt, and self-condemnation, typically, one sees oneself more as an offender than as a victim (Fisher and Exline 2006). Namely, before dealing with self-condemnation, people should seek to make things right with the Sacred (as one understands the Sacred). Then, one needs to try to

make restitution with those harmed. Then, the person might forgive himself or herself for the wrongdoing (Hall and Fincham 2005, 2008; Woodyatt and Wenzel 2013). However, forgiveness might still not take care of the self-condemnation because self-condemnation might be due more to a failure to accept oneself as a flawed person than to guilt for a specific wrongdoing. For example, if a person steals money from the coffee room at work, the person might confess the crime to God, make restoration to the coffee fund, and forgive the self. However, even though self-forgiveness is complete, the person might still be self-condemning because before committing the theft, the person was not a thief. Now, the person is. Accepting a new self-definition might lead to self-condemnation even though the person has forgiven himself or herself for the actual theft. Psychotherapeutic (Cornish and Wade 2015) and do-it-yourself workbook interventions (Griffin et al. 2015) have been developed to promote self-forgiveness.

### Religions and Forgiveness

The various religions treat forgiving differently (Rye et al. 2000). These cultural differences affect how forgiveness is understood and practiced.

In Judaism, forgiveness is usually seen within the context of *tseuvah*, or repentance of the offender. If an offender demonstrates true repentance – usually undergoing a series of demonstrations of sincerity of change and return to the path of God – then a victim is obligated to forgive. One tenet of Judaism is that victims must grant forgiveness, and forgiveness cannot be granted on behalf of the victim. Thus, logically, one who has murdered will never obtain forgiveness from the victim.

In Christianity, forgiveness is the centerpiece of the religion. Jesus’ crucifixion is said to have paid the full demands of justice for any person’s injustices against God, and God compassionately and lovingly forgives any person who accepts that forgiveness. This is usually termed as Divine forgiveness, and it refers to the adoption of a person as a child of God. Jesus tied Divine forgiveness of

individual sins to a person's forgiveness – probably what we now think of as decisional forgiveness – of the transgressions experienced at the hands of others. In Christianity, God requires decisional forgiveness and desires emotional forgiveness.

In Islam, God is seen as the all-forgiving God, and forgiveness figures prominently in the Qu'ran. However, generally justice is seen as one's due, and forgiveness is seen as virtuous. It is reward-worthy if one wishes to forgive instead of exacting the justice that is one's due from a transgression.

In Buddhism, there is no explicit word for the concept of forgiveness in original Buddhist texts. Nevertheless, the notion of forgiveness is inherent in compassionate responses to wrongdoing or mindful responses to wrongdoing. Forgiveness is also a concept that is employed in order to help promote loving-kindness during meditation.

In Hinduism, forgiveness is valued. While there are a variety of understandings of forgiveness, it is generally seen as in line with dharma, the path of right living. It is often associated as a means to drive away sin and transgression.

Thus far, we have focused mostly on forgiveness within the bounds of organized religions, briefly alluding to the largest religions. Many people, however, consider themselves as spiritual and not religious. Spirituality can be rooted in an elevated view of humanity or attunement with nature. Thus, transgressions against oneself or perpetrated by oneself can disrupt the person's sense of harmony. This disrupted sense of harmony can motivate a drive for forgiveness or seeking forgiveness to restore a sense of positive spirituality.

Whereas religion is a body of beliefs, values, and practices endorsed by a particular community, spirituality is the personal sense of closeness or connection with the Sacred (Zinnbauer et al. 1997). Davis et al. (2013b) meta-analyzed the empirical research on forgiveness and religion/spirituality. They found religion to be more related to forgiveness of others, but spirituality to be more related to forgiveness of oneself.

A curious finding has been uncovered in the relationship of religion and forgiveness. People who are more religious, as a group, report themselves to be more forgiving than do people who do not endorse religion. However, when asked to recall a transgression, they often are not much better at granting decisional forgiveness or experiencing emotional forgiveness than are people who do not endorse religion. There are methodological reasons that such a finding occurs. Generally, people are asked to recall a hurt and they most easily recall one that is still an open transgression. It has been shown, however, that if people are asked to recall several hurts and the amount of forgiveness is aggregated over the variety of hurts, then the more religious a person is, the more likely he or she is to forgive individual hurts deeply and quickly.

## Promotion of Forgiveness

Applied psychological science has shown that people who struggle to forgive can be helped to forgive faster and more deeply by participating in individual forgiveness therapy, couple therapy to promote forgiveness, or psychoeducational groups to promote forgiveness (for a meta-analysis, see Wade et al. 2014). Most interventions have been aimed at experiencing empathy and greater understanding of the offender's perspective. The more deeply empathy is experienced, the more deeply emotional forgiveness is experienced. Effortful thinking about forgiveness is generally needed to forgive, which puts some due stress on the self. In examining almost 60 groups that sought to promote forgiveness, there was a strong dose-response relationship between the mere amount of time trying to forgive and the amount of emotional forgiveness a person actually felt. In addition to promoting forgiveness, the same dose-response relationship was found in lowering depression and anxiety and increasing hope when people attended forgiveness treatments.

Forgiveness is truly a concept that now can be claimed by both religions and psychology. The tool of psychological science has provided more

nuanced understandings of forgiveness than was available a quarter of a century ago.

## See Also

- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Confession](#)
- ▶ [Forgiveness and the Brain](#)
- ▶ [Islam](#)
- ▶ [Judaism and Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology](#)
- ▶ [Psychology of Religion](#)
- ▶ [Religious Coping](#)

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## Forgiveness and Religious Tradition

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### Introduction

Forgiveness has been defined as the “forswearing of negative affect and judgment by viewing the wrongdoer with compassion and love, in the face of a wrongdoer’s considerable injustice” (Enright et al. 1991, p. 123). Forgiveness has been defined as “the disposition to abort one’s anger (or altogether to miss getting angry) at persons one takes to have wronged one culpably, by seeing them in the benevolent terms provided by reasons characteristic of forgiving” (Roberts 1995, p. 290). Forgiveness is thus an overall disposition that manifests itself in most circumstances in life. Forgiveness, by contrast, only applies to particular circumstances (particular offenses).

By religious tradition, we have essentially considered Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam, without distinguishing between variants of these traditions (for a review, see McCullough et al. 2005). These are only a limited set of studies that have examined, separately from the effect of culture, the effect of religious tradition on forgiveness. These studies have been conducted in specific areas such as Lebanon or Macau where the two effects can, to some extent, be disentangled. We essentially focused on these studies.

### Islam Versus Christianity

#### Willingness to Forgive

Azar and Mullet (2001), using a technique of realistic vignettes, examined willingness to forgive under different circumstances in Muslim and Christian adults living in Lebanon and

sharing the same Arab culture. An example of vignette used with the Muslim sample is the following: “During the civil war, a child from the Hamed family was seriously wounded by a bullet. The family knows the identity of the gunman: His name is Daniel (religious dissimilarity information). He fired deliberately at the child (intention information). Today, the child has completely recovered (cancellation of consequences information). The gunman has come to ask for forgiveness for his act (apologies information). If you were a member of the Hamed family, to what degree would you be disposed to forgive him?”

Overall, Muslims and Christians were, to the same extent, willing to forgive, and this finding was not the result of lack of statistical power because educational level had, by contrast, a strong effect: The better the participants were educated, the more they were willing to forgive. In addition, the positive effect of cancellation of consequences and the negative effect of intent to harm had, in both groups, a similar impact on willingness to forgive. The effect of apologies was stronger among Muslims than among Christians. Finally, participants considered that religious similarity/dissimilarity with the offender was irrelevant at the time of forgiving. Similar findings were reported by Vinsonneau and Mullet (2001) in a study conducted among young Muslims and Christians living in France and by Ahmed et al. (2007) in a study conducted among young Kuwaiti.

#### Dispositional Forgiveness

Mullet and Azar (2009), examined, through confirmatory factor analyses, the extent to which the three-factor structure of forgiveness found by Mullet et al. (2003) on various samples of Europeans from Christian background fits the data obtained on samples of Lebanese Muslims and Lebanese Christians. The structure tested was (a) lasting resentment, which expresses the victim’s tendency to hold negative emotions, negative cognitions, and exhibiting avoidance behaviors toward the offender, even in the presence of positive circumstances (e.g., I keep being resentful even if the offender has apologized);

(b) sensitivity to circumstances, which expresses the victim's ability to analyze the pros and cons of harmful situations and to build on the many circumstances of these situations for deciding whether to forgive or not to forgive the offender (e.g., I feel it easier to forgive once the consequences of the harm have been canceled), and (c) unconditional forgiveness, which expresses the victim's tendency to harbor positive attitudes toward the offender even in the absence of positive circumstances (e.g., I can easily forgive even when the consequences of the harm were serious).

Regarding the Lebanese Christians, the fit was acceptable, whereas regarding the Lebanese Muslims, it was not good. Nevertheless, a slightly different three-factor structure in which a special status was given to repentance and apologies fit the Muslim data. In this alternative model, the meaning of sensitivity to circumstances was reduced to circumstances that did not imply the offender's behavior or the victim's mood, and the meaning of lasting resentment was that the presence of apologizing behavior from the offender was a necessary condition for the resentment to weaken, for the mood to improve, and for a first step toward forgiveness to be taken. In addition, the Lebanese Muslims' unconditional forgiveness score was significantly lower than the corresponding Lebanese Christians' score.

### **Dispositional Seeking of Forgiveness**

Neto et al. (2013) examined the extent to which the three-factor structure of dispositional seeking of forgiveness that was found by Chiaramello et al. (2008) in various samples of Europeans from Christian background fits the data obtained on a sample of Muslim students living in Indonesia. The structure tested was (a) inability in seeking forgiveness, (b) sensitivity to circumstances before seeking or not seeking forgiveness, and (c) unconditional seeking of forgiveness. The fit was good. The sensitivity to circumstances score was higher among Muslims than among other groups. However, as in this study, religious tradition and country were confounded this difference may also reflect an effect of culture. Similar findings were observed in a study by Bugay

et al. (2013) on a sample of Muslim Turkish students.

### **Conceptualizations of Forgiveness**

Bugay et al. (2013) assessed the extent to which the four-factor structure of conceptualization of forgiveness found by Mullet et al. 2004 on a sample of participants from Christian background fits the data obtained on a sample of Muslim Turkish students. The four conceptualization factors were (a) forgiveness as change of heart, (b) forgiveness as a broad process that is not limited to the victim-offender dyad, (c) forgiveness encourages repentance, and (d) forgiveness is an immoral behavior. The fit was good. Overall, participants from Turkey tended to agree with the ideas that forgiveness encourages repentance and that forgiveness is a broad, more-than-dyadic process, significantly more than participants in the study by Mullet et al. (2004). As in the previous section, this difference may also reflect an effect of culture.

### **Reasons to Forgive**

Ballester et al. (2011) assessed the extent to which the five-factor structure of motives to forgive that was found in a sample of Western European adults fits the data from a sample of Muslim adults living in Morocco. These motive factors were called (a) forgiveness through the restoration of sympathy, (b) forgiveness as challenge, (c) forgiveness as the recovering of mastery, (d) forgiveness through morality, and (e) forgiveness through love. The fit was good. Moroccans essentially differed from Western Europeans regarding the importance attributed to morality (e.g., one of the reasons why I have forgiven in the past was that my religion or my philosophy of life commanded it), and the importance attributed to the restoration of sympathy (because the offender had sincerely begged for forgiveness).

### **Importance of Apologies and Contrition Among Muslims**

This set of findings is consistent with the view that even if most faiths encourage forgiveness, the exact circumstances under which forgiveness

must be granted vary from one religious tradition to the other. In the Muslim tradition, as opposed to the Christian tradition, forgiveness must not be unconditional (Moucarry 2004). The Muslim community is conceived as a political entity as well as a religious community. In a tradition that is aimed at governing daily social life, elevating forgiveness to the level of a categorical imperative would be unworkable. Human natural reluctance to forgive as well as interpersonal and social justice considerations has to be taken into account. In particular, for forgiveness to be granted, the offender is strongly expected to demonstrate repentance and contrition and explicitly, sometimes repeatedly, to beg for forgiveness from his or her victim. In contrast with the Muslim community, the Christian community is conceived as a religious community only. In such an ideal community, forgiveness can, without much resistance, be erected as a moral imperative (Rye et al. 2000). As a result of these theological differences, apologies and contrition may be attributed different statuses. Among Christians, apologies and contrition may be considered as mere circumstances of the offense in the same way as harm's intent and offense's severity. Among Muslims, apologies and contrition may be attributed a specific status, and apologies and contrition may be held as a basic requirement for forgiveness to be considered as an option among other possible behaviors.

## Hinduism Versus Christianity

### Dispositional Forgiveness

Tripathi and Mullet (2010) have examined the extent to which the three-factor structure of forgivingness fit data obtained on a sample of Hindu students living in Chandigarh. The fit was good. The Hindu showed themselves rather sensitive to circumstances and moderately prone to forgive but also moderately prone to resent. The finding was consistent with findings by Suchday, Friedberg, and Almeida (2006) who have found high-alpha values for their measures of forgiveness and rumination on a sample of Indians.

### Conceptualizations of Forgiveness

Tripathy et al. (2010) have also assessed the extent to which the four-factor structure of conceptualization of forgiveness fits the data obtained on their sample. The fit was good. Overall, Hindu agreed with the view that forgiveness encourages the offender's repentance, moderately agreed with the view that forgiveness is a broad process possibly also encompassing third parties, tended to slightly disagree with the view that forgiveness corresponds to a "change of heart" and disagreed with the view that it is an immoral behavior.

The relationships between Hindus' conceptualizations about forgiveness and Hindus' forgivingness were highly similar to the ones that had been found among Europeans. Change of heart and broad process were positively associated with unconditional forgiveness, and immoral behavior was positively associated with lasting resentment. These associations were found beyond the well-documented association between forgivingness and personality factors that was also present in the Hindu sample.

### Forgiveness and Karma

These findings were consistent with Hindu views regarding forgiveness. In the Hindu tradition, forgiveness has always been considered as a great virtue. The word most commonly used to signify forgiveness is *Ksama*, which means compassion or mercy. As central tenet of Hindu spirituality, forgiveness has been defined as mental strength in the face of offenses; it implies lack of emotional upset or impassivity and tolerance under difficult circumstances (Kodandaramayya 2004). Lack of forgiveness, negative feelings, and unresolved anger can be expected to spill over into future births, as, through karma (law of cause and effect), individuals face consequences of their actions in subsequent reincarnations. Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and spiritual leader, declared forgiveness as a great virtue and stated that the weak can never forgive because forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

## Buddhism Versus Christianity

Paz et al. (2007) examined the extent to which the three-factor structure of the forgivingness questionnaire mentioned above fits data obtained on samples of Buddhist Chinese, Christian Chinese, and Buddhist-Christian Chinese living in Macau. They found that, in all three samples, the model fits the data. The Buddhists were found to be significantly more resentful and less forgiving than the Christians whereas the responses of the Buddhist-Christian were closer to the Buddhists' responses for lasting resentment and to the Christians' responses for willingness to forgive.

The good fit of the three-factor structure in a Buddhist sample was consistent with their views regarding what Westerners call forgiveness. In Buddhism, the renouncing of anger and resentment toward the offender (possibly corresponding to the lasting resentment factor) and the removal of an expectation of retribution (possibly corresponding to the unconditional forgiveness factor) are considered as distinct virtues (separate factors). In addition, in China, being able to take into account the opinion of others and the social circumstances of every event and being able to conform to social duties are crucial qualities inherited from Confucianism, hence, the emergence and the high value of the sensitivity to circumstances factor.

Overall, the whole set of comparative findings supports the view that “despite religious, cultural, and linguistic differences, there is universality to certain concepts such as forgiveness” (Suchday et al. 2006, p. 87).

## See Also

- ▶ Atonement
- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Buddhism and Positive Psychology
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Compassion
- ▶ Cultural Psychology
- ▶ Emotional Intelligence
- ▶ Empathy in Humans
- ▶ Forgiveness

- ▶ Hinduism
- ▶ Islam
- ▶ Karma
- ▶ New Testament
- ▶ Psychology of Religion
- ▶ Qur'an
- ▶ Sharia

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## Forgiveness and the Brain

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The decade of the brain in the United States, 1990–2000, unleashed remarkable work on the dynamic of brain activity. It has remained for those in England to focus on the implications of brain studies for the dynamic of forgiveness. A major center for this work is the Sheffield Medical Center in Sheffield, England. Key names in this work are those of Thomas Farrow, Ph.D., and Peter Woodruff, Ph.D.

The development of brain studies moves at a pace that one can hardly keep up with it. Although one could reference books, the Internet appears to be the best resource for keeping in touch with the discussion.

Common to all these studies is first the discovery that the act of forgiving involves certain areas of the cerebral cortex – mostly in the left side of the brain. In what might be called the “executive” section of the brain, there is action that deals with feelings and dynamic activity in all of the brain – including healthy brains or brains afflicted with problems such as schizophrenia. The particular area where there appears to be the most activity when forgiveness becomes active is the left superior frontal gyrus, the orbitofrontal gyrus, and the precuneus.

Also common to all these studies is the discovery that the dynamic of forgiveness leads to certain degrees of health or improvement.

Across the world spectrum of religious or theological writings on the area of the brain and forgiveness, case after case has developed of the positive effect of the teachings of Jesus and Paul.

From a theological standpoint, two cautions, however, need to be noted in relation to these studies: the first is the fact that Paul seldom uses the word “forgiveness” and more often speaks of “freedom in Christ.” The second is that there are cultures in African and south Asian parts of the world that do not have the word “forgiveness.” Therefore, when talking about the experience of forgiveness, as Feldman of the University of California has observed about all neurological discussion, precision is required. For the purpose of discussion, this entry recommends the view of Dr. Farrow that we follow the definition of the Oxford Dictionary: “Forgiveness is ceasing to feel angry or resentful to another.” To this we also do well to add, “forgiveness of self means a ceasing of being angry with oneself.”

Today, some of the most profound work in relating brain studies and religious practice is that guided by the current Dalai Lama. In that work, guilt and forgiveness get little if any mention. Yet considerable attention is given to meditation and processes that contribute to our understanding of the use of forgiveness in such matters as forgiving oneself and accepting the forgiveness of others – including God.

## See Also

- ▶ Dalai Lama
- ▶ Forgiveness
- ▶ Jesus

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## Fox, Matthew

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Matthew Fox (b.1940) is a preeminent creative American spiritual theologian who cuts a bold swath through thickets of rigid religious opposition to create “Creation Spirituality.” He is a leader and shaker in awakening Christianity to a renewed ecumenical spirituality that puts human beings in touch with their deepest cosmic souls, free of stifling religious traditions, patriarchal domination, and mechanistic industrialism and open to the wonders of creation. He was influenced by Leo Tolstoy, Thomas Merton, Teilhard de Chardin, and others; he studied at the Dominican Aquinas Institute of Theology, then the *Institut Catholique de Paris* (1967–1970) (Fox 1996).

To Fox, the mystics resonate with his own insights. In Thomas Aquinas, Fox found support for his creation-centered theology. In Meister Eckhart and Teilhard de Chardin, Fox found a mystical connection with nature and science. In Hildegard of Bingen, Fox found feminism, music, art, healing, ecological spirituality, and

courage to stand up to oppressive church authorities.

Fox was drawn to the writings of the post-Freudian psychologist Otto Rank. In Rank he found a profound connection between art, creativity, and spirituality. As Rank explored the intimate relationship between human creativity and psychological wholeness and well-being, he articulated a deep and powerful spirituality that Fox uncovered (Fox 1995).

With the help of Meister Eckhart (Fox 2000b), Fox developed a framework for an articulation of Creation Spirituality in *four paths*, elaborated in *Original Blessing* (Fox 1983/2000):

- (a) The *Via Positiva* is the path of awe, wonder, joy, and praise. This path celebrates the beauty and sensual delights of creation, nature, food, dance, and sexuality. In this experience and celebration of creation through our human senses, we experience ecstasy and the divine.
- (b) The *Via Negativa* is the path of letting go and emptying, of silence and of darkness, suffering, despair, and grief. The *Negativa* includes silence, the peace in meditation, stargazing, the dark womb before birth, and the soil where seeds sprout.
- (c) The gestation period of the *Via Negativa* gives birth to the *Via Creativa*, the path of creativity. In their creativity, humans are closest to God/Goddess and most in touch with their own divinity. God is divinely creative, humans are creative, and the Universe is creative. When humans forget or deny their divine nature, they become destructive (see Rank on the *artiste manque*).
- (d) The *Via Transformativa* is the path of justice, compassion, and coming home. The *Transformativa* fosters community and calls us to action in creating environmental, economic, and social justice. The *Transformativa* is where we express the prophetic “No” to injustice that defends our mystical “Yes” to peace, compassion, and justice.

Matthew Fox is known for his theology of *Original Blessing* (Fox 1983/2000), a direct

counter and biblical alternative to Augustine's doctrine of original sin. He criticizes the flawed doctrine of original sin as a means to keep church members in line, shamed, guilt ridden, and afraid by making the Church into the indispensable dispenser of grace.

Fox sees the relationship between science, religion, and Creation Spirituality a creative path for knowing nature and ourselves fully and embracing the interconnectedness of all that is, including cosmic spirituality. He sees in the scientific story of evolution our own postmodern creation story, The New Cosmology, and has worked with scientists Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and Rupert Sheldrake (Fox and Sheldrake 1996).

Fox has brought fresh vision with new language such as:

- Deep ecumenism – All the religions of the world, as well as art, science, and all manners of creativity, are born of our common experiences as human beings on the planet Earth. World religions do not need to be *bridged* as much as simply returned to the common source of our origins, as explained in the deeply ecumenical *One River, Many Wells: Wisdom Springing from Global Faiths* (Fox 2000a).
- Reinventing work – In *The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time* (1993), Fox invites us to find work that is not simply industrial cog-in-the-machine “jobs,” but meaningful work big enough for our souls, our Great Work. Those doing good work in the world constitute a “priesthood of all workers.”
- Reinventing education – Education cannot be narrowed down to the “mind.” If the body is sacred, education must include the body and touch all the chakras. *Body prayer*, which includes dancing, drumming, Tai Chi, Yoga, chant, song, prayer, is playful meditation and celebrates the body while stimulating both sides of the brain, facilitating full engagement of academic material. Fox founded the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality (ICCS) at Chicago's Mundelein College in 1976. In 1983, he moved ICCS to Holy Names College in Oakland, California. In 1996, he founded the University of Creation Spirituality in Oakland that includes Masters and Doctor of Ministry programs. Fox's current educational project is YELL AWE (Youth and Elders Learning Laboratory for Ancestral Wisdom Education), a program for inner city youth where kids learn about meditation, martial arts, and creativity. See *The A.W.E Project: Reinventing Education, Reinventing the Human* (Fox 2006a).
- Art as meditation – Art requires focus that all meditation does. Thus, Art as Meditation can give access to deeper levels of creativity for doing study and work in the world, whether it is in theology, mathematics, and science, fighting injustice, or peacemaking and community building. *Creativity: Where the Divine and Human Meet* (Fox 2002) develops this theology of spirituality and art.
- Feminist theology/feminine images of God – Fox spent much of his time as a Catholic priest answering to authorities for his bold use of feminist images of the divine, primarily God as Mother. His use of “Kingdom/Queendom of God” in *Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality* was an example of Fox's constant attention to gender-inclusive language and balanced images of the divine.
- Men's spirituality – As each wave of the feminist movement serves to reorient the world to what it means to be female and feminine and empower women anew after centuries of destructive patriarchy, men must reinvent themselves also. This requires exploring new, postmodern mythologies of manhood/masculinity. Fox does this in *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine* (2008).
- Reinventing worship – Fox has taken issue with what he deems boring worship and ritual by rote. To counter the failings of ritual to keep up with the needs of modern/postmodern communities, Fox created the Techno Cosmic Mass (TCM), combining worship with rave-style dance and a multimedia visual experience.

Later called simply the Cosmic Mass or Cosmic Celebration, this exciting, dynamic, and constantly evolving form of ritual includes projected imagery representing the theme of the Mass which has as a structure of the *four paths* of Creation Spirituality; intense “techno” dance music associated with rave culture; and representation of various religious traditions, music and drumming, rap, poetry, and grieving together. For many participants, the Cosmic Mass was their first experience of feeling a deep spiritual connection with any form of religious ritual or celebration. (<http://www.thecosmicmass.com>)

- Ecology and Cosmology – Fox’s Creation Spirituality is necessarily protective of the planet, because it is about resacralizing our relationship with nature and recognizing how it is through this relationship that we experience the divine. The New Cosmology – the 13.7-billion-year Universe story as told by science – provides a cosmic context from which humankind is invited to be as creative as the great universal mystery, a passionate panentheism, that gave birth to us. Cosmology, ecology, and theology/spirituality are intimately related in *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ* (Fox 1988).

Fox’s most profound theological contribution is overcoming the stale subject/object dualisms and naming of the interconnectedness of humankind with all of life on the planet and with the great divine mystery of the entire Universe. In Fox’s case, once we have seen, named, and experienced the intimate relationships between what were previously considered separate categories, such as gender, science, cosmology, religion, art, and spirituality, we come to understand them as a complex, interrelated ecosystem. The disciplines are not separate pieces bridged by long-winded philosophical arguments; rather they are elements of a healthy, balanced spirit-body ecosystem that cannot be separated without causing harm to the whole.

Fox has endured much criticism for his activism in the world. Cardinal Ratzinger silenced Father Matthew Fox in 1989 for a year from

teaching or writing because of Fox’s teaching on God as Mother. Fox saw this year as a welcome sabbatical and visited liberation theologians in Latin America who were similarly silenced. After 1 year, Fox published prolifically and began his popular lectures saying: “As I was saying 14 months ago when I was so rudely interrupted. . .” The standing ovations that Fox so often inspires in his audiences are testaments to the hunger for his message of spiritual activism and the mission to return deep communal and individual spirituality to religious life. In 1993, Fox was dismissed from his Catholic Dominican order. Fox came to see that “the Vatican had made me a *postdenominational priest in a postdenominational era*” (Fox 1996, p. 246). In 1994, Fox was welcomed into the Episcopal priesthood at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco (Fox 1996, p. 250). In 2005, Fox and friends went to Wittenberg, Germany, where Martin Luther nailed his inflammatory 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church calling for a New Reformation, including No. 11: “Religion is not necessary, but spirituality is” (Fox 2006b, p. 65). He continues his challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, as in *The Pope’s War: Why Ratzinger’s Secret Crusade Has Imperiled the Church and How It Can Be Saved* (Fox 2011). In Spring, 2011, he nailed the 95 Theses in Italian to the door of Basilica di Maria Maggiore in Rome, overseen by Cardinal Law, formerly of Boston, and notorious for his role in the pedophile priest scandal.

Matthew Fox continues his work as a visiting scholar with the Academy of the Love of Learning in Santa Fe and as author, freelance speaker, educational innovator, and social activist, connecting with the growing Occupy movement. His social activism includes inviting spiritual seekers into exciting new possibilities as a relevant postmodern spiritual force. Fox validates what many people intuit to be good, true, and beautiful, and he invites them to make positive, healing changes in the world. Matthew Fox’s spiritual activism is the monumental work of a spiritually devoted, exceptionally gifted thinker who dares to cut through the museum-like institutional rigidity of a past era’s remnants of religion and generate central



elements of an exciting, bold new visionary era of cultural renewal.

## See Also

- ▶ Merton, Thomas
- ▶ Rank, Otto, as Mystic
- ▶ Teilhard de Chardin

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## Frankl, Viktor

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Viktor Emil Frankl, M.D., Ph.D. (1905–1997) is founder of logotherapy – meaning-centered psychotherapy. He is best known for his short book, *Man's Search for Meaning (MSFM)*. It was released in 1946 by Deuticke, Freud's Viennese publisher. It appeared in English in 1959 as *Death Camp to Existentialism*, and for more than half a century, it has remained an international best seller, published in over 30 languages, numerous English editions, audiobooks, and Braille. In 1991 the United States Library of Congress/Book-of-the-Month Club survey of lifetime readers named it one of the ten most influential books in America. Karl Jaspers labeled it “one of the great books of mankind”; Gordon Allport called it “a compelling introduction to the most significant psychological movement of our day.” Of Frankl's 32 books, others have been translated into multiple languages, including English.

Frankl first visited the United States in 1954 at the invitation of Norman Vincent Peale. Frankl lectured at Marble Collegiate Church, New York, where Peale had arranged for Christian symbols to be covered with drapery out of respect for his Jewish guest. From that beginning, Frankl made 92 speaking tours to the United States and lectured worldwide – at 209 universities and to large public audiences on all five continents.

## Life and Context

Viktor Frankl was born March 26, 1905 at Czerningasse 7 in Leopoldstadt, the mainly Jewish quarter of Vienna. His parents were humble, pious Jews. At that time, the city was seat of a great empire and an international wellspring of music. The University of Vienna was a hub of creativity and at the forefront of medical science.

But there was also a strong and longstanding current of anti-Semitism in the city.

In the year of Viktor's birth, 50-year-old Sigmund Freud was living near the University. Alfred Adler (1870–1937) was a founding member of Freud's inner circle and was living and practicing medicine at Czerningasse 6, right across the street from the Frankl home. Today tablets on the two buildings note the famous former residents.

When Viktor Frankl was a little boy, an obscure Adolf Hitler – in his 20s – was living in a men's hostel in the next district. No one could have imagined the future for Jews in Vienna, certainly including the Frankls and the older Freuds. Both lost close kin and friends to the Holocaust.

Sigmund Freud, Gabriel Frankl (Viktor's father), Alfred Adler, and eventually Viktor himself all attended the same high school in Leopoldstadt. Viktor was captivated by Freud's theories and writings, even introducing his classmates to psychoanalysis. All four of these men, in turn, attended the University Medical School; only Gabriel could not afford to finish. Though Viktor met Freud only once, they did corresponded with one another; and when Viktor sent one of his high school papers, Freud published it in the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*.

While still a medical student, Frankl almost joined Freud's Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, but already he was becoming disillusioned with psychoanalysis. Freud became intolerant of Adler's criticism and inventive ideas and had excluded him from the Society. The young Frankl joined Adler's new Society for Individual Psychology. But in the end, when Frankl expressed his own novel ideas, Adler expelled him. So Jung (who had parted with Freud in 1913), Adler, and Frankl started their own rival psychological movements. But of course the creative influence of Freud on them, on psychology and psychiatry, and on Western civilization was enormous.

By the time Hitler and National Socialism seized Austria and engulfed Europe, Frankl already had established his practice in neurology and psychiatry. But for the Frankls and for

millions, life as they had known it came to an end. In September 1942, Viktor and his wife Tilly, his father and mother, and mother-in-law were forcibly deported in one of the ongoing trainloads of Jews from Vienna. During 2 years in the Theresienstadt ghetto, Frankl's father died from illness. The rest of the family were transferred to Auschwitz in October 1944, where Viktor and Tilly were separated and where his mother Elsa was sent immediately to the gas chambers. Viktor's brother and other family and friends met their deaths in the camps. He did not know the fate of his mother or of Tilly, who died at Bergen-Belsen, and he held out hope that he would be reunited with them after the war.

Frankl spent 3 days at Auschwitz (in Poland), then 7 months at Kaufering and Türkheim in Germany, where he nearly died of typhus. After two and a half years in the four camps, he was liberated from Türkheim by American forces in April 1945. On his return to Vienna, he learned that his loved ones had perished.

Now alone, Frankl threw himself into reconstructing his first book, *The Doctor and the Soul*, and wrote his second, *MSFM*. These tasks kept him going for a time. Then he married a young dental assistant, Elly Schwindt, at the Polyclinic where he had become chief of neurology. For more than 50 years, Viktor and Elly lived as spouses, parents, and colleagues in logotherapy, corresponding, writing, traveling the globe, and seeing the endless stream of visitors coming from around the world. Viktor died in Vienna following open-heart surgery in September 1997 at the age of 92.

### Logotherapy and Existential Analysis in Context

Frankl's thought was shaped not only by the psychologists of Vienna but by great philosophers – the ancient Greeks, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel, Jaspers, Buber, etc. – and a number of the contemporaries he knew personally. What Frankl created, starting in the 1930s, is what he eventually called “logotherapy and existential analysis” (Frankl 1986, 1992; Frankl

1997a, 2004; Gould 1993; Klingberg 2001). “Existential analysis” in his scheme referred to its philosophical foundations in contrast to psychoanalysis and “logotherapy” to its therapeutic methods. When the term existential analysis was adopted by others and used more widely, Frankl simply used logotherapy to identify his body of work.

The Greek *logos* connotes, among other things, *meaning* – hence, therapy through meaning. By 1948 Wolfgang Soucek had identified logotherapy as the third Viennese school of psychotherapy, a designation that endures. The first school is Freud’s psychoanalysis, marked by the “the will to pleasure” and by Freud’s ingenious expedition into the unconscious and its sexual and aggressive forces – “depth psychology.” The second is the individual psychology of Adler, distinguished by the “will to power”, striving to overcome feelings of inferiority in our relations with other people, to achieve success and status. While Frankl acknowledged the work of Freud and Adler as foundational to his own, he asserted that the unique and most significant human motivation is the *will to meaning* – “height psychology.” Frankl was fond of quoting Nietzsche: “He who has a *why* to live can endure almost any *how*” (Frankl 1992).

This cornerstone of logotherapy was tested in the crucible of the death camps. Frankl never claimed that simply having a reason to live could keep a prisoner alive against the odds. In *MSFM* he identifies many factors in his own survival in addition to his desire to see his loved ones again, to write his books, and to lecture again on logotherapy (Frankl 1992; Klingberg 2001). But he did insist that having a reason to live helped to keep up one’s spirit and finding meaning in suffering could help one to bear it. Meaning was necessary but not sufficient for survival and could – all other things being equal – make the difference between life and death.

Logotherapy aims to help by assisting people in finding meaning in their lives. Frankl identified three primary ways to discover personal meaning. The first way is by *doing a deed*. This may include creating art or music, nursing a child, baking a pie, accomplishing a task, or loving another person.

The second way is by *experiencing life*. One can enjoy the art and music of others, witness a sunset, accept kindness from someone, or rest in the affection of a loved one.

The third path to meaning is an anchor point of logotherapy: *meaning through suffering*. To suffer for nothing or to suffer when there is no point to it is unbearable. But if one can find a meaning in unavoidable suffering, it becomes possible to bear it, even to rise above it (Bulka 1998; Frankl 1978, 1992; Klingberg 2001). This helps to explain why so many people in life-threatening circumstances turn repeatedly to *MSFM* and give copies to others who are suffering. Logotherapy is complementary to other psychotherapies and fills a gap for people who no longer can take action to change their circumstances or who face an unavoidable fate.

*Transcendence* is a unique aspect of human nature, making it possible for us to rise above ourselves and our circumstances. Logotherapy has techniques that may apply to particular psychological disorders and mental illnesses (Frankl 2004). But it directly addresses the despondency of living life without meaning, especially amid setbacks and disappointments. The emptiness experienced by many in our time is what Frankl called “the existential vacuum.” And he insisted that despondency over the meaninglessness of life is no mental disorder at all, but rather a sign that one is truly human, by nature summoned to tasks, causes, and relationships beyond self. This, then, is the opening for faith.

## Logotherapy and Religion

Logotherapy has a distinctive affinity for religion and for people of faith. But Frankl steered away from the sectarian, striving to make logotherapy useful to all people, religious or not, since the quest for meaning characterizes human nature. Individuals find meaning for themselves in many ways, and faith in a Supreme Being or adherence to a particular religion may be paths to meaning. So psychotherapy should respect this, as well as other paths to what he called *ultimate meaning* (Bulka 1979; Frankl 1997b; Tweedie Jr. 1961). It never prescribes a particular meaning for another

person but rather assists and encourages each person to pursue and discover both ultimate meaning and the moment-by-moment meanings of life.

Early on, Frankl identified the characteristics of being human: spirituality, freedom, and responsibility. Frankl clearly intended that those who choose faith in God be affirmed and assisted in bringing religious resources to bear upon their lives and struggles. Frankl's own writings reflect his openness to religion, though he remained steadfastly private as a person of faith. (Only a few very close to him knew of his daily prayers – without fail – from the time of his liberation from the concentration camps to the day of his death.)

Regarding human nature, Frankl rejected the negativity of psychoanalysis. He also criticized the unbridled optimism and self-centeredness of the American “human potentials movement” inspired partly by Adler. Ever since the Holocaust, Frankl has been reproached as too forgiving of the perpetrators and for his repeated assertions that good people and bad people are found in *every* race, *every* nation. All individuals and all groups are capable of great good and great evil, and we must be on guard against all evils, holocausts and “ethnic cleansings.”

Frankl stands out among European psychologists of religion for placing *transcendence* at the center of logotherapy. Erich Fromm (1950), himself a Marxist atheist, asserted that both Freud (1961) and Jung (1938) had missed the point on religion. For Freud, the unconscious is the worst that is in us; for Jung, the unconscious is the best that is in us. For Fromm, the unconscious is simultaneously the best *and* worst in us, neither “a God whom we must worship nor a dragon we must slay” (Fromm 1950). In contrast, Frankl's insistence on transcendence leads away from unconscious processes toward the human ability to take a stand toward circumstances and to rise above them, as well as to address faith in transcendent terms. That is, the fact of transcendence in human nature points away from self and circumstances toward something or someone, some cause *other* than oneself, *beyond* oneself, and *greater* than oneself.

Thus, from Frankl's perspective it can be said that Freud, Jung, as well as Fromm – and William

James (2002) and others, for that matter – *all* miss the point. Frankl might characterize them as reducing religion to merely psychological phenomena, to experience, conscious or unconscious, and ignoring the transcendent nature of human spirit, which may address or apprehend – or be apprehended by – a transcendent God existing in reality beyond. Frankl insisted that to find meaning, a person *must* go beyond oneself to a purpose to fulfill, a cause to serve, a person to love, or a God to trust if they so choose. And in transcending ourselves we become fully human and find meaning in our lives that carries us even above suffering.

## See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Depth Psychology and Spirituality](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Heidegger, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Jung, Carl Gustav](#)
- ▶ [Kierkegaard, Søren](#)

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## Freud and Jung as Natural Complements

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Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Carl Jung (1875–1961) were physicians who created psychologies to address issues of human suffering and, to a lesser degree, of human fulfillment in their patients. They shared the view that making previously unconscious material conscious was central to achieving the stated goals. They also shared the view that the interpretation of dreams is a fundamental tool for access to unconscious processes that are often not observable elsewhere in a person's life or observable to only a limited degree. The empirical basis for their shared views was their work with the details of their patients' lives and with aspects of the world's literature, including myths and fairy tales, sacred writings, anthropology and the works of gifted authors such as Shakespeare or Goethe. Both regarded psychological suffering as rooted in developmental arrest, whether this is understood in an environmental, organic or other sense. The natural complementarity of Freud and Jung begins to emerge by examining what each meant by making previously unconscious material conscious as well as by the meaning of developmental arrest.

Freud's approach to the psychoneuroses, as they were then called, was biological and led him to hypothesize three successive but

overlapping developmental stages from birth to approximately age five. Each of the oral, anal, and phallic stages enters additional structure and adaptive capacity into the emerging personality and in his model arrest within any of these stages results in psychoneurosis. He accounted for the psychoneuroses with a mechanistic model for the emergent structure seen in the first five years of life. The components of his model are the id, ego, and superego. He defined the id as the seat of the instincts, both sexual and aggressive, where instinct refers not to innate patterned behavior but rather to drives, often felt as needs. The ego is the adaptive center of the psyche that manages fulfillment of id impulses subject to the constraints of reality and of the superego. The superego has esteem granting power for compliance with parental requirements and the power to punish via guilt for violation of said values. Freud also felt that the superego could have phylogenetic parts (Freud 1920, 1933). Using these primitives, Freud defined a neurosis as an ego/id conflict, a psychosis as an ego/reality conflict, and manic-depressive illness as an ego/superego conflict, where all such conflicts correspond to developmental arrests in the first five years. Each form of conflict features the use of defense mechanisms by the ego to prevent id or superego trends that are perceived as dangerous by the ego from integration into the personality as a whole and especially from integration into the conscious part of the ego (Freud 1923, 1926).

The goal of therapy for Freud was the work of lifting defenses, such as repression, denial, reaction formation and regression, so that the associated, unconscious blocked material could begin to enter consciousness and enable further integration of personality. This brings symptom formation to an end and results in the previously blocked material resuming its original growth into further adaptive structure and capacity. It is here that the idea of making the unconscious conscious enters as a therapeutic concept and that the idea of transference as a means to expedite such making enters. Transference refers to the patient's tendency to repeat early emotional attachments to key figures with the analyst. For Freud, this was an opportunity to observe a repetition of early life events and

to discover the roots of the patient's pathology. The analyst's work is to interpret how the patient's transference distorts his experience of the analyst so that the patient can create the capacity to consciously reexperience the original pathogenic material from early life. Freud regarded the use of dreams in the same light. In his model, dreams are fulfillments of long-standing frustrated wishes from childhood, these being the pathogenic roots of the patient's disorder (Freud 1910). The idea of interpreting dreams and the transference for therapeutic results come together in Freud's model because he regarded the mechanism for the formation of symptoms, whether repeated in the transference or not, and that of dreams as the same (Freud 1900).

The biological character of Freud's approach is seen in his concepts of id, ego and superego in the idea of psychoneurosis as rooted in conflict, in defense mechanisms, in the transference, in dream interpretation and in the equivalence of the mechanisms of dream and symptom formation. It is also in evidence in his nosology for psychological disorders which relates each of them to a specific id, ego and superego developmental arrest, clearly following a medical model in the psychological domain.

Jung's psychology emphasizes man's relation to nature and the cosmos far more than it does mechanism or even structure. Nature refers to the life-creating aspect of the cosmos and the cosmos to the entire human environment both locally and otherwise. A fundamental primitive of Jung's psychology is his concept of the ego, referring to the conscious part of the psyche. Although his concept of the ego includes elements of the person's adaptation to life, his is not the same as Freud's definition of the ego (Jung 1954, 1969a).

A second important primitive of Jung's model is the concept of an archetype. He often referred to an archetype as a pattern of behavior because he tended to emphasize not the inner nature of an archetype itself but rather the structure and capacities it generates when activated. To a good approximation, an archetype is an inherent organizer of aspects of the psyche and can be understood in much the same way as organizers in the context of embryology. Two of the most used

archetypes are the anima and the animus, referring to the feminine aspect of a male and the masculine aspect of female, respectively. The unfolding of the feminine in a male is governed or ordered by the anima and similarly for the unfolding of the masculine in a female by the animus. Some other archetypes Jung often referred to are the self, rebirth, mother, spirit, wise old man and trickster, the last common among Native Americans (Jung 1969a, b).

Jung postulated a collective unconscious, consisting of the archetypes conferred by nature and the cosmos on the human race and held in common by everyone. The adaptive demands of life could, in Jung's model, stir one or more archetypes to generate fresh structure in a person's psyche. Jung, however, did not regard this as the only form of activation and, at many points, left the activation to yet to be identified forces and principles in nature. He regarded the psyche as an interacting sum of the ego and the unconscious where the ego, though evolving, is ever finite and the unconscious unlimited, both in potential and in its relation to nature and the cosmos. The idea of interaction refers to that between ego consciousness and the archetypes of the collective unconscious. This begins to locate the meaning of making previously unconscious material conscious and of developmental arrest in his model (Jung 1954).

A developmental arrest or failure to achieve more wholeness arises because ego consciousness opposes the unfolding of one or more needed archetypes. This can happen at any point in a lifetime and tends to happen repeatedly in the course of a lifetime. Jung hypothesized that a person's ego avoids conscious contact with archetypal contents by attributing them to others, a mechanism he referred to as projection. Jung's use of projection is similar to but different from Freud's where projection means attributing one's own emotional state to others in order to deny its presence in the first person. The making of previously unconscious material conscious corresponds to the therapeutic task of opening the ego to assimilation of the unconscious archetypal contents, that is, to resolving the projections. Where conflict between or among the id, ego and

superego is a centerpiece of pathology in Freud's model, it is an opposition between ego consciousness and the collective unconscious that is central to Jung's. Transference between patient and analyst is one of the ways Jung felt that such opposition could be resolved, leading to desired growth. He regarded transference as bidirectional so that each of patient and analyst transfers onto the other (Jung 1966).

Transference refers mostly to the patient projecting archetypal contents onto the analyst. Some of the analyst's work is to bring a patient to see that what is projected belongs, in the first instance, to the patient and indeed corresponds to contents that are seeking assimilation into his conscious ego. This is an instance of Jung's idea of conjunction, where opposites meet in the psyche – here the conscious ego and aspects of the collective unconscious. The conjunction gives rise to something new in the psyche, built from the opposing parts. The conjunction is an essential part of individuation, understood as a movement toward greater psychic wholeness. Since the process is bidirectional, the analyst also projects contents onto the patient; the analyst's training is presumed to be adequate for him to resolve his own projections. The contents that enter projection are not limited to ideas on neurosis or psychosis but include the subject's spiritual orientation (Jung 1966, 1967).

As with Freud, the interpretation of dreams is a basic tool for divining aspects of the subject's unconscious experience within the transference and elsewhere in his life. Freud's concept of dreams as wish fulfillments is generalized in Jung's model to dreams as compensations. For example, a female who is under-assertive could have dreams that feature images of great strength and ferocity, these images being compensatory in the dream to the person's conscious, waking attitude. Jung identified another kind of a dream, termed a "big dream" in which the dreamer experiences images that indicate an archetypal awakening. Such dreams are of great moment in the subject's life and would be unlikely to occur with frequency.

The complementary nature of Freud's biological to Jung's cosmic perspective now emerges

more strongly. Freud's medical model divides the psyche into id, ego and superego and locates consciousness dominantly in the ego, the psyche's adaptive center. The goal of psychotherapy is to make the unconscious conscious by lifting defenses as manifested in the transference. Jung's model divides the psyche into a finite ego defined as the conscious part of the personality. The goal of psychotherapy is again to make the unconscious conscious but by dissolving projections onto the analyst within the transference. With Freud the outcome of successful psychotherapy is the ending of conflict between or among the id, ego and superego followed by the maturation of previously blocked material into further capacities for adaptation. The outcome features the ego's expansion via the assimilation of id contents as well as modification of the superego. With Jung the outcome of successful psychotherapy is the ending of conflict between the ego, as defined within his model, and unconscious archetypal contents followed by the maturation of previously blocked material into further capacities for conscious adaptation. However, the outcome also sees an expansion of the subject's conscious spiritual aspect via the assimilation of archetypal contents that direct the psychic expression of nature and the cosmos (Jung 1970).

Freud used his concept of a superego to account for the roles of self-esteem and guilt in healthy and unhealthy development as well as in self-regulation. Although Jung offered no systematized concept of guilt, he did postulate that both good and evil are real in the cosmos, rejecting the idea that evil is the absence of good. In developing his concept of the conjunction and archetypal unfolding, he held that the resulting new psychic contents could work for well or against it, a complementary image of Freud's superego.

The fundamental research unit for Freud was an object relationship or how one's interactions with significant others, especially in childhood, shape the psyche. His core ideas of id, ego and superego arose from his research into object relationships (Freud 1923, 1933). A basic research unit for Jung was man in relation to the cosmos. Where Freud addressed pathology versus adaptation, Jung addressed pathology versus

connectedness to the cosmos. The complementary nature of Freud and Jung can be summarized by noting that where Freud regarded a person as healthy if he could work and love, a point on which Jung agreed, Jung regarded health as an outcome of a sound relatedness to nature and the cosmos (Jung 1967, 1970).

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## Freud, Sigmund

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Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) is most often mentioned today in relation to psychology and psychiatry, but he had little no training in these fields. In reality he was a well-respected neurologist who developed an approach to human behavior known as psychoanalysis. Freud was a man of enormous learning and huge capacities and talents. His writings, which fill up about 30 volumes, cover all aspects of human experience, culture, and history.

The creation of psychoanalysis offered at once a theory of the human psyche, a proposed treatment system for the relief of its ills, and a method for the interpretation of culture and society. Despite repeated criticisms and rejections of Freud's work, its influence remained powerful well after his death and in some fields far removed from psychology as it is narrowly defined.

Freud was trained as a physician and was drawn to neurology and psychiatry, but he was always more interested in theory than in practice. After starting his work with neurotic patients, he came to believe that many mental disorders are the product of unconscious conflicts. Freud suggested that humans are born with sexual and aggressive instincts, but starting early on in life, they must repress such desires, driving them away from conscious awareness. Some repressed desires do not disappear but unconsciously haunt our behavior and thoughts. Dreams, slips of the tongue, and neuroses are, Freud argued, distorted reflections of repressed desires that originate in childhood. Psychoanalytic practice aimed to uncover such hidden mental processes. Thus, dreams are the disguised expression of wish fulfillments. Like neurotic symptoms, they are the effects of compromises in the psyche between desires and prohibitions in conflict with their realization. Slips of the tongue and similar everyday errors, Freud claimed, had symptomatic and thus interpretable importance. But unlike dreams they need not betray a repressed infantile wish yet can arise from more immediate hostile, jealous, or egoistic causes.

Another kind of everyday behavior Freud analyzed was humor. Seemingly innocent phenomena like puns are as open to interpretation as more obviously tendentious, obscene, or hostile jokes. The powerful and joyful response often produced by successful humor, Freud contended, owes its power to the release of unconscious impulses, aggressive as well as sexual.

Two assumptions were suggested by Freud to characterize his approach. The first states that all psychic processes are strictly determined (no accidents, chance events, or miracles can be referred to as explanations), the second that



unconscious mental processes exist and exert significant influences on behavior. These unconscious forces shape much of the individual's emotional and interpersonal experiences.

We all are ready to admit momentary, fleeting, childish, and irrational thoughts, but we consider these experiences marginal. Psychoanalysis claims that they may be much more than trivial or marginal and that unconscious processes are possibly the main determinants of observable behavior.

The emphasis on unconscious processes in personality can be summed up as follows:

1. Large parts of the personality are unconscious, and these are the more important ones.
2. Unconscious memory is the repository of significant early experience.
3. In an adult, unconscious ideas are projected, creating severe distortions of reality, especially interpersonal reality.

Freud did not invent the idea of the conscious versus unconscious mind, but he certainly was responsible for making it popular. The conscious mind is what you are aware of at any particular moment, your present perceptions, memories, thoughts, fantasies, and feelings. Working closely with the conscious mind is what Freud called the preconscious, what we might today call "available memory": anything that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not at the moment thinking about but can readily bring to mind. No one has a problem with these two layers of consciousness. But Freud suggested that these are the small and marginal. The largest part by far is unconscious. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we cannot bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma.

According to Freud, the source of our motivations is unconscious, whether they be simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist. And yet, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming

conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in disguised form.

Freud devoted much attention to the development of sexuality in the individual. He described how this development is prone to troubling maladjustments if its various early stages are unsuccessfully negotiated. Confusion about sexual aims or objects can occur at any particular moment, caused either by an actual trauma or the blockage of a powerful urge. If this fixation is allowed to express itself directly at a later age, the result is what was then generally called a perversion. If, however, some part of the psyche prohibits such overt expression, then, Freud contended, the repressed and censored impulse produce neurotic symptoms. Neurotics repeat the desired act in repressed form, without conscious memory of its origin or the ability to confront and work it through in the present.

One great insight we were led to by classical psychoanalysis is that the child is totally confused by the notion of parenthood and family relations. Learning that we have two parents and that father and mother are also man and wife is beyond the child's comprehension at first blush. This Oedipal confusion stays with all of us forever, processed, accepted, and sometimes denied. The denial of birth is no less important than the denial of death in the making of cultural fantasies. Both lead to much psychic tension and sometimes to real violence.

Focusing on the prevalence of human guilt and the impossibility of achieving unalloyed happiness, Freud contended that no social solution of the discontents of mankind is possible. The best to be hoped for is a life in which the repressive burdens of society are in rough balance with the realization of instinctual gratification and the sublimated love for mankind. But reconciliation of nature and culture is impossible, for the price of any civilization is the guilt produced by the necessary thwarting of man's instinctual drives. Psychoanalytic ideas have been immensely influential in Western thought over the past 100 years, since the inception of this intellectual movement by Sigmund Freud.

Psychoanalysis is a theory of struggle, conflict, and compromise, assuming the dynamic nature of

human behavior, always resulting from conflict and change. Additional assumptions reflect the idea of overdetermination and the multiple functions of behavior. The overdetermination assumption states that any segment of behavior may have many preceding causes. This is tied to a developmental or historical emphasis, leading us to seek first causes in any individual's personal history and unique experiences.

Psychoanalysis proposes a universal sequence of psychological development, which becomes a basic epistemological ordering of the world and of individual personality, culture, and humanity. The universal experience of the human infant includes a developing awareness of three realms, always in the following order: first, one's body and its experienced needs; second, awareness of the existence of another human; and third, knowledge and emotional investment in relations between itself and other humans. All further experiences must be based on these early experiences, acquired in that order, and will be assimilated into that order. The existence of such a universal sequence cannot be challenged, and therein lies the attraction of psychoanalysis for those wanting to understand not only the human personality but also human society and culture.

The problem of childhood is a central issue defining psychoanalysis. The infant's unrealistic drive for wish fulfillment is supposed to be left behind by the adult, but childhood is always alive behind adulthood facade. The legacy of childhood is far from marginal, and it is coexistent with adult functioning. We can observe it on both the individual and the cultural levels.

Freud's ideas about development focus on what has come to be called psychosexual development, that is, the transformation, molding, and sometimes perversion of biologically determined erotic drives in early childhood. The focal point of psychosexual development is the Oedipus complex, woven around the child's attachment to its parents as love objects or identification models between the ages of 3 and 6. Early childhood experiences serve as historical precedents in every individual's life, and in the life of every human culture.

The psychoanalytic view of human motivation is often regarded as utterly pessimistic, but we have to admit that it is realistic. Judging by their conscious and unconscious drives, humans are undeniably nasty and brutish, aggressive, and infantile. However, beyond this bleak picture of immorality and perversity lies the capacity for sublimation, love, and cultural creativity.

The psychoanalytic view of maladaptive behavior emphasizes its continuity with adaptive behavior and leads to viewing pathology as a useful analogy of cultural structures. Moreover, maladaptive behavior is analyzed through the detailed recognition of defensive sequences, that is, not only the final outcome – symptoms – but the internal sequences leading to it are carefully outlined.

The theory presents us with an ideal of flexibility and moderation which is presented, as opposed to rigidity which is pathological but inevitable. Rigidity in the form of rituals and ritualized defenses become one the sources of analogies for religion. The analytic starting point of symptom and syndrome, and their unconscious background, serve as the model for looking at religion.

Psychoanalysis assumes the psychic unity of mankind, which is significant when we deal with cultural traditions. Universality is found at the most basic level of body, birth, sex, and death. This working assumption has a particular relevance to the phenomenon of religion. Universal themes in religious mythology are the result and reflection of the psychic unity of mankind, which in turn is the consequence of common psychological structures and common early experiences shared by all mankind. The same basic psychological processes and complexes are expressed in individual products (dreams, stories, daydreams) and in cultural products (art, literature, folklore, wit, religion, law, science), because these complexes are basic and central to human experience.

Freud's writings are among the most ambitious attempts in history to present a comprehensive interpretation of religion. The topics Freud dealt with include, first of all, a developmental theory of religion, for humanity as a whole and for each individual. Freud also attempted to explain the

functions and consequences of religion, for both society and the individual.

Freud's theoretical explanation for the origin and existence of religion is based on certain presumed universal psychological experiences and processes: the universal experience of helplessness, the tendency for compensation through fantasy, and the experience of early relations with protective figures. Every individual is psychologically prepared by these universal experiences to accept religious ideas which are obviously culturally transmitted. The question about the world of spirits is: Does this world exist "out there" and if it does not where is it. The psychological answer given by psychoanalysis is that it exists within, in our own mental apparatus and our own mental abilities to fantasize and project. The world of spirits, the supernatural world unseen and somehow felt in religious experience, is a projection of the internal world. Psychoanalytic theory explains both the origin of supernaturalist ideas and their specific contents.

Freud's theory does not suggest that the individual creates his religion on his own, out of nothing, but that childhood experiences within the family prepare the individual for the cultural system of religion. Belief in omnipotent gods is a psychic reproduction of the universal state of helplessness in infancy. Like an idealized father, God is the projection of childish wishes for an omnipotent protector. If children can outgrow their dependence, he concluded with cautious optimism, then humanity may also hope to leave behind its prevalent and immature fantasies.

Psychoanalysis has had more to say about religious actions than any of the various traditions in academic psychology. It is the one psychological approach to the understanding of religion which has had a major effect on both religion as an institution and on the study of religion. Psychoanalytic approaches to the question of culture and religion, and to the question of individual integration in society, have affected all social science disciplines. The psychoanalytic study of religious beliefs and institutions has drawn considerable attention on the part of scholars in the fields of religion, history, sociology, and anthropology. Psychoanalysis is the only major psychological

theory which offers an explanation of religion as part of a comprehensive theory of human behavior, in which religion is presented as an instance of general psychological forces in action.

In this area, as in many others, Sigmund Freud's writings offer a rich variety of hypotheses regarding various religious beliefs and practices. Some of the better-known hypotheses derived from psychoanalytic theory are the father-projection hypotheses, i.e., the idea that the images of the gods are derived from childhood experiences with paternal (and maternal) figures, and the superego projection hypothesis, i.e., the idea that the gods are a reflection and echo of the unconscious and severe conscience which all humans share.

Judging by their immense influence in all the academic fields which study religion, psychoanalytic ideas seem to be of truly enduring value for the psychological understanding of religion. We really have no other theory that matches the scope of psychoanalytic interpretations of culture and religion. Enlightening, that is the greatest compliment we can pay psychoanalytic ideas and that is exactly what psychoanalytic approaches wish to be. They represent the continuation of Enlightenment tradition in regard to human activities around ideas of spirituality and the sacred.

## See Also

- ▶ [Ego](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund, and Religion](#)
- ▶ [Id](#)
- ▶ [Primal Horde Theory](#)
- ▶ [Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Superego](#)
- ▶ [Transference](#)
- ▶ [Unconscious](#)

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## Freud, Sigmund, and Religion

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Freud was notorious for his antireligious stance. He seems to have gone out of his way to offend believers, referring to the “barbarous god of volcanoes and wildernesses whom I grew to dislike very much” (Freud 1970, p. 102). Despite this, he accepts that in some cases the mild neurosis of religion was preferable to a more complex and distressing disorder and argues the parallels between religion and psychoanalysis are striking.

### Neurosis

Religion itself for Freud is a form of madness (Freud 1995a, SE XII: 269). He draws an analogy between the faith-based belief of the religious believer and that of the paranoid, who clings to his or her paranoid delusion in spite of any and all evidence to the contrary. He draws another between the ceremony and ritual associated with religious practice and the obsessive’s need to engage in repetitive behavior. Religion can rescue people from an individual neurosis, although it

does not cure them: it merely substitutes a universal neurosis for a personal one:

In view of these similarities and analogies, one might venture to regard obsessional neurosis as a pathological counterpart of the formation of religion and to describe that neurosis as an individual religiosity and religion as a universal neurosis (Freud 1995a, SE XII: 11126–11127).

The distinction between religion and what is commonly accepted as neurosis is merely in the numbers of participants involved: the paranoid indulges in a *folie à un(e)*, the religious in a *folie à tous*. The ritual inherent in religion makes it an obsessional neurosis: as a result of the unresolved Oedipus complex in the adult, the rituals of religion are aimed at propitiating the father and preventing his anger. Alternatively, religion can be seen as illusory: a wish fulfillment through projection. A strong desire can be externalized and become a belief in the same way that, when we sleep, a strong wish fulfillment is projected as a dream. In the case of Christianity, the prospect of eternal life is a fulfillment of the wish not to die.

Freud’s assertion is that the Oedipus and Elektra complexes are at the psychological core of all human beings. This sort of incestual tension necessarily has a negative effect on the family, and so the tension is neutralized through the transference of the desire for the parent onto a less divisive recipient.

In Christianity, God replaces the father figure and Mary the Mother of Christ the mother. The desire to kill the parent and thus escape the threat of castration is also accounted for in Christianity, argues Freud, through the crucifixion of Christ as part of the Holy Trinity. Christianity also allows for the expiation of guilt through its transference onto Christ, the perpetual sacrificial lamb. Religion is a sign that the Oedipus complex has not been successfully overcome.

### Transference

The key issue at hand here is that of transference: it is the mode of healing in both psychoanalysis and religion. Jung wrote of his first meeting with Freud: “Suddenly he asked me out of the blue,

‘And what do you think about the transference?’ I replied with the deepest conviction that it was the alpha and the omega of the analytic method, whereupon he said, ‘Then you have grasped the main thing’” (Jung 1954, p. 8).

In transference in psychoanalysis, the analyst takes on the role of the parent, which is the role taken on by God in religious belief. This parallel was not lost on Freud, who despite his avowed disdain for religion recognized its potential as a healing mechanism as well as a symptom of neurosis.

Freud’s letters imply an uncertainty in his criticisms of religion that are not reflected in his work: he comments in a letter to Ferenczi that “I regard [*The Future of an Illusion*] as weak analytically and inadequate as a self-confession” (Jones 1962, p. 587). Also, when he found analogies to be insufficient proof against religion, he searched for historical proofs and delayed the publication of *Moses and Monotheism* because he was unable to find them and was therefore displeased with the work: “there is also the consideration that my contribution does not seem to me well founded enough nor does it please me much. So it is not the right occasion for a martyrdom. Finis for the time being” (Jones 1962, p. 622).

Freud attempted to dismiss the historicity of religion a priori with no regard for any information he might have received suggesting alternative theories to his already-concluded conclusion. For Freud, the belief in God is understandable to an extent, although he considered the belief to be unworthy of modern human beings and “to be understood on the pattern of the individual neurotic symptoms familiar to us” (Freud 1995b, SE XXIII: 58):

We understand how a primitive man is in need of a god as creator of the universe, as chief of his clan, as personal protector . . . A man of later days, of our own day, behaves in the same way. He, too, remains childish and in need of protection, even when he is grown up; he thinks he cannot do without support from his god (Freud 1995b, SE XXIII: 128).

What he found objectionable was not that these early and primitive people chose to accept the existence of a powerful God who would

protect them, but that the character of that God was changed to suit their own changing purpose:

[T]he Persian government of Egypt (of the fifth century BCE) conveyed information to them of the new rules of worship issued from Jerusalem. Going back to earlier times, we may say that the god Yahweh certainly bore no resemblance to the Mosaic god. Aten had been a pacifist . . . No doubt Yahweh was better suited to a people who were starting out to occupy new homelands by force (Freud 1995b, SE XXIII: 63).

## See Also

- ▶ Freud, Sigmund
- ▶ Oedipus Complex
- ▶ Psychoanalysis

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## Friedman, Edwin

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Edwin Friedman (1932–1996) broke new ground in pastoral counseling by using Murray Bowen’s theory of intergenerational emotional family systems to explain complex interactions between religion, politics, and psychotherapy. Combining Bowen’s theory with his own rabbinical

experience, Friedman developed a model of congregational analysis and leadership that was broadly embraced by American church leaders.

A native of New York City, Friedman earned a doctorate of divinity from Hebrew Union College where he was ordained as a rabbi in 1959. During his distinguished career, he acted as Community Relations Consultant for the White House on desegregation issues (1964–1966), founded the Bethesda (MD) Jewish Congregation where he served as Rabbi until 1979, established a post-graduate training center for clergy and mental health professionals (Center for Family Process), and maintained a practice as a marriage and family therapist. Dr. Friedman was well known for his workshops for clergy, businesses, political groups, and military leaders.

As a family therapist, Friedman trained with Murray Bowen, a family therapy pioneer and professor of psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C. His landmark book, *From Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue* (Friedman 1985), is based on his observation that clergy stress is related primarily to family dynamics. He observed that clergy are involved simultaneously in three families: families within the congregation, the congregation as family, and the clergyperson's own family. These systems interlock and are governed by identical emotional processes that can be understood using concepts like differentiation, homeostasis, and triangulation drawn from Bowen's theory of family therapy. Friedman applied these concepts to clergy self-understanding, congregational life, and leadership.

*From Generation to Generation* (Friedman 1985) became a standard for clergy training and a platform for extending Bowen's theory through workshops and lectures. *Friedman's Fables* (1990) is a collection of stories that highlight family emotional dynamics in problematic human interactions. In his book, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (1997, published posthumously), Friedman integrated Bowenian theory with 40 years of observations about American politics and organizational systems. He proposed a universal

principle: all social and organizational pathology is related to denial of emotional processes. This denial results in a widespread, regressive, counterevolutionary trend that is countered only by differentiated leaders who understand emotional process. Such leaders manage their own anxiety while taking unpopular stands that are automatically resisted by others' reactivity. Friedman's model is sustained through the Center for Family Process, Healthy Congregations, and a host of books and workshops based on his work (Richardson 1996; Steinke 2006).

Friedman's work has been widely embraced by church leaders. However, his model faces at least three substantial critiques. First, Bowen and Friedman's concept of differentiation can be interpreted as an embodiment of masculine values rather than a universal emotional principle (Leupnitz 2002). Second, Bowenian theory overvalues culturally specific nuclear family emotional process. Third, Friedman's model assumes that universal nuclear family processes can be generalized beyond family functioning to organizational and societal functioning. There is little empirical research to support either universal nuclear family processes or generalization of principles to organizations and society.

## See Also

- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Emotional Intelligence
- ▶ Individuation
- ▶ Pastoral Counseling
- ▶ Psychotherapy
- ▶ Psychotherapy and Religion
- ▶ Religion
- ▶ Religion and Mental and Physical Health

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## Fromm, Erich

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Erich Fromm, though one of the most prolific authors of social psychology and psychoanalytic theory, is oddly less well known than others of this period. This is largely due to Fromm's multifaceted, interdisciplinary approach, which makes it challenging to locate him within a particular camp of thought. Fromm brought together Freudian theories with humanism, existentialism, Marxism, neo-Kantian thought, elements of Biblical prophecy, Talmudic writings, mysticism, and Zen Buddhism (Burston 1991). Nevertheless, Fromm is most simply known as a sociopsychological theorist and analyst, who combined Freudian psychoanalytical thought with Marxist social critical theory.

Fromm's intellectual interests and pursuits were likely influenced by his upbringing as the only child in a pious, orthodox Jewish home, where he received extensive Jewish religious education. Although Fromm did not remain active in his Jewish faith, its imprint remained as he studied sociology at the University of Heidelberg (receiving his Ph.D. in 1922). After his studies at Heidelberg, Fromm underwent psychoanalytical

training in Frankfurt, Munich, and Berlin and then helped form the Frankfurt Psychoanalytic Institute. In Frankfurt he became acquainted with the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research and later was an early leader in "The Frankfurt School," a Marxist and Freudian influenced group of social scientists who developed social critical theory.

Fromm emigrated to the United States in 1934 and taught and worked with others who were critiquing and expanding Freud's thought – particularly in terms of interpersonal or social psychology – such as Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, Clara Thompson, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, and other "neo-Freudians." Following this he moved to Mexico City and taught the first courses of psychoanalysis as a part of the medical faculty at the National Autonomous University of Mexico.

Fromm defined himself as a nontheistic "radical humanist" yet acknowledged religion as a universal in human life (Fromm 1967). He did distinguish between authoritarian and humanistic religion but also asserted that religion in general has admirable goals for life and standards for living, such as truth, the decrease of suffering, autonomy, responsibility, the unfolding of human powers of love and reason, and the development of the higher nature or "soul" (Fuller 2008). Therefore, psychological disturbances occur because persons neglect the demands of the soul (Fuller 2008). Additionally, Fromm touched on similar existential tensions as theologian Paul Tillich and the ethical implications of Martin Buber.

Fromm's contributions were vast. First, Fromm was one of the first theorists to assert that the psychoanalyst is not a blank mirror as Freud believed; rather he or she must engage one's self and one's passion for his or her life and have the capacity for genuine empathy for the client in order to be helpful. Second, Fromm stated that self or "character" is developed and/or constructed socially and not merely via libidinal forces. Third, Fromm taught that a critical (social) theory is a prerequisite for contextualizing care for its hermeneutic of suspicion and deconstructive impetus towards meta-discourse(s). All of these elements were very early forms of what are now

common features of a postmodern psychological theory and practice.

### See Also

- ▶ [Buber, Martin](#)
- ▶ [Freud, Sigmund](#)
- ▶ [Mysticism and Psychoanalysis](#)
- ▶ [Talmud](#)

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## Fundamentalism

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The term fundamentalism has been associated with a variety of meanings since its inception into the English language during the early twentieth century through Christianity. At the outset, it was intended to convey a belief in the need to return to *the fundamentals of faith* (González 1985). Increasingly, fundamentalism has been associated with a narrow, rigid approach to religious belief across various world religions. It is also commonly associated with conservative

religious, and sometimes political, beliefs. Fundamentalism, which originated as a term within Christianity, is now often applied to Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish, Hindu, and other religious groups. When used in popular culture today, fundamentalism often is intended to have a pejorative connotation to it. When considering fundamentalism, it is important to recognize how its meaning in popular, religious, and scholarly literature has evolved overtime.

### Origins of Fundamentalism

The term fundamentalism emerged in the 1800s as a response to what was perceived as threats to Christianity (González 1985). These threats, which included evolution, were generally perceived as emerging from liberalism. Conservative theologians began focusing on the idea of the *fundamentals of faith*. This parallels the role of the creeds in early Christian history that sought to identify concise summaries of the essence of Christianity. The fundamentals, however, had a more specific purpose distinguishing Christianity from perceived liberal threats, which included liberalism within Christianity. Gonzalez notes that in 1895 the emerging movement identified five fundamentals that served as the initial cornerstone of fundamentalist Christianity: “the inerrancy of Scripture, the divinity of Jesus, the Virgin birth, Jesus’ death on the cross as a substitution for our sins, and his physical resurrection and impending return” (p. 257).

### Fundamentalism as a Reaction to Modernism

Fundamentalism can be understood partially as a response to modernity and the secularism that accompanied it (Noll 1992). Several perceived threats to religion accompanied the development of modernity. First, religion was displaced from its privileged position in Western culture (Hoffman and Kurzenberger 2008). In premodern times, the church and religious authority retained the most influential positions of power in shaping the



masses. As modernism emerged, scientists, academics, and politicians became the new sources of authority and influence. Fundamentalism, in part, can be understood as an attempt to reclaim an authoritative place for religion.

Second, religious ways of knowing, which were generally based in claims of revealed knowledge from God or an ultimate authority, were called into question (Hoffman and Kurzenberger 2008). In premodern times, religion did not need to defend its ways of knowing; they were accepted as given. Fundamentalism served as a way of clearly defining what should be a given, or a fundamental of faith, that does not need to defend itself against scientific scrutiny.

Third, religion was changed by modernity. In premodern times, faith was sufficient. However, in modern times faith needed to be supported by science and rationalism. Systematic theology was replaced by apologetics, or a rational defense of faith. During modernity and into postmodernity, there was an increasing popularity in creationism in popular books, such as *The Case for Christ* by Strobel (1998), which claimed scientific evidence of the truth of religion. This represents a significant epistemological shift. Reason, which was considered an inferior way of knowing as compared to revelation or faith in premodern times, was now being incorporated into Christianity as a way of defending faith. Fundamentalism attempted to refute the need to consider these modernist ways of knowing through asserting that the fundamentals of faith were sufficient and did not need a rational defense.

### **The September 11, 2001, Terrorist Attacks and Fundamentalism**

Although fundamentalism had already begun accumulating negative associations, the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center Towers in the United States on September 11, 2001, powerfully impacted the way fundamentalism was understood. The terrorists were labeled “Islamic fundamentalists” and “Islamic extremists” by many in the news media and academic community. Through this, a polarized

extremism and fundamentalism became synonymous in popular culture as well as the academic literature.

The contemporary usage of the term fundamentalism is often used to distinguish a particular way of being religious or type of religiosity. Psychological measures, such as Fundamentalism Scale-Revised and Religious Fundamentalism Scale, have been developed to identify fundamentalism (Hill and Hood 1999). In these, fundamentalism is conceived as more absolutist and rigid. Fundamentalism is defined as being related to a less critical and more literal interpretation of sacred texts, more antagonistic and critical views of other religious groups, defensive of the correctness of a particular religious group or belief, and increased evangelistic fervor. These characterizations of fundamentalism have a degree consistency with the early religious attempts to define fundamentalism; however, they also incorporate new components as well.

### **Research on Fundamentalism**

Since September 11, 2001, psychological theory and research attempting to understand and explain fundamentalism has become prolific. Most of this research can be seen in two broad categories: social-psychological research and personality research. Common to both approaches is the assumption that fundamentalism is often personally and socially dangerous and that fundamentalism tends to be a product of social and psychological forces more than religious factors.

Social psychological research emphasizes the role of the group or culture (Rogers et al. 2007). Terror management theory, one social psychological approach, suggests that mortality salience (i.e., reminders of death) increase in-group identification; these in-groups are often conservative or fundamentalistic. Friedman (2008), for example, found an increase in fundamentalism associated with mortality salience. Self-esteem, however, is conceived as an intervening variable. Low self-esteem increases the influence of mortality salience, while high self-esteem serves as a buffer therefore lowering the impact. From the

social psychology perspective, various personal factors such as psychopathology, tendencies toward conformity, and self-esteem may interact with contextual factors, such as mortality salience, to increase the likelihood of one developing a fundamentalist perspective.

Hood et al. (2005) represent one of the most thorough perspectives from the individual or personality side of fundamentalism. This is a more balanced perspective on fundamentalism, recognizing both the positive and negative sides of fundamentalism. From a more sympathetic viewpoint, fundamentalism often is part of a search for meaning and community. In general, however, fundamentalism has been associated with more negative concepts including authoritarianism, a rigid cognitive style, narrow-mindedness, and defensiveness against doubt (Spilka et al. 2003).

Empirical research has also associated fundamentalism with a number of outcomes. For instance, it is generally thought that individuals identifying with a fundamentalist worldview have a more oppressive patriarchal worldview, increased likelihood of prejudice, and a higher proclivity toward domestic violence (Spilka et al. 2003). As has already been discussed, there is also a frequently hypothesized link between fundamentalism and terrorism.

### Positive Aspects of Fundamentalism

Although fundamentalism typically has been viewed as something negative, there is also evidence that fundamentalism can be connected to psychological well-being. Phillips and Ano (2015) found, for example, that religious fundamentalism was associated with beneficial approaches to religious coping. While religious fundamentalism was associated with better adjustment to stress, this was mediated by certain religious coping strategies. In the study by Carlucci et al. (2015), fundamentalism was positively associated with life satisfaction and psychological well-being. This demonstrates that fundamentalism is a complex concept that should not be reduced to something that is perceived as solely negative or solely positive in regards to intrapersonal and interpersonal well-being.

### Conclusion

Fundamentalism is a complex topic that often is presented in an over-simplified manner. It is important to recognize that this is a term that has evolved over time and is understood differently in different contexts. The negative connotation that is typically associated with fundamentalism in contemporary popular and scholarly literature should not be generalized to all usages of this term. Furthermore, the research reviewed demonstrates that there are both positive and negative aspects of religious fundamentalism as it pertains to psychological and interpersonal functioning.

### See Also

- ▶ [Christian Fundamentalist Pastoral Care](#)
- ▶ [Religious Fundamentalism and Terrorism](#)

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historical barriers that would normally apply to the hermeneutics of ancient texts (Richards and O'Brien 2012; Thompson 2016). These particular doctrines are unique as found among evangelical and conservative Christian communities; they have not been central or influential identifiers within mainline Christian, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox faith traditions.

Following developments in the twentieth century, such as the fundamentalist–modernist controversy and the scopes trial, evangelical Christian movements began to respond to the practice of secular psychology and psychiatry, trends which, from the Biblicist perspective, favored science and medication over Scripture and church membership (Adams 1984). From this perspective, to make use of clinical science would be to deny the doctrines of inerrancy and perspicuity, as innovations within evidence-based approaches could render the Bible lacking in “*everything* needed for life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3, New Revised Standard Version, emphasis added).

In step with Jay Adams’ *Competent to Counsel* published in 1970, evangelical pastors and nonlicensed helping professionals began developing theories centered upon “biblical” or “nouthetic” counseling, wherein Scripture is used as a handbook or dictionary to identify psychological issues and to describe methods of treatment (Powlison and Coe 1999). Critical of values-neutral, nondirective, or evidence-based approaches, the biblical/nouthetic therapeutic helper is tasked with the role of a pastor-instructor, able to admonish the counselee from a position of relational authority for the purpose of educating the counselee toward better care of their soul (Powlison 2010).

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## Fundamentalist Pastoral Care

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### Overview and Context

Fundamentalist pastoral care refers to sets of helping professions and ministries that derive methods and techniques from biblical exegesis or application within the context of church and pastoral interventions. Adherents to fundamentalist pastoral care practices are often within the spectrum of conservative and evangelical Christian communities which provide care based upon theories such as biblical or nouthetic counseling, and by utilizing practices such as reparative therapy.

### History, Introduction, and Definitions of Terms

Christian fundamentalism subscribes to a belief system and is bound to a worldview which describes the Holy Bible as infallible, free from all errors, and true “in all it affirms” (Mohler 2013, p. 36), in part as a response to perceived theological and ethical liberalism (Antoun 2010). This fairly recent viewpoint, known as Biblicism (Smith 2012), also includes the doctrine of perspicuity, which states that Christian Scripture must be able to be understood by any and all readers, regardless of cultural, linguistic, or

### Techniques and Theory

Augsburger and Malony (2007) outline a five-step model representative of many forms of biblical/nouthetic therapies: an opening prayer for guidance and direction, invitational worship or prayer to invoke God’s presence in the counseling session, proclamation to “speak truth” regarding God’s protection and guidance, a “creative

middle” where pastoral interventions may be included, and a closing benediction wherein the client is charged to walk in holiness and incorporate interventions from the session.

The role of the Bible is central in these counseling scenarios, both as handbook for learning useful life lessons (such as pithy quotations from the book of Proverbs) and also as a tool from which to gain prescriptive treatment plans. In these sessions, prayers are often read directly from Scripture, and the interventions often take on a homiletical or sermon-like form. Biblical narratives which relate to the client’s situation may be read as case studies, and if the narratives contain applicative principles – if there is a “moral of the story” to be found – these may be suggested to the client as action steps.

Fundamentalist pastoral care differs from other Christian frameworks of psychological practice. Integrative approaches may allow for modern scientific breakthroughs to affect or adjust one’s application of Scripture in counseling, whereas nouthetic approaches maintain that Scripture should be used exclusively, or that cognitive or clinical science may only play a subservient and secondary role (McMinn and Campbell 2009).

## Concerns and Controversies

Fundamentalist pastoral care ideologies often maintain a suspicion toward modern trends within clinical science, particularly within the self-help movement and positive psychology. According to Adams, the language of self-care does not provide enough emphasis toward the Christian responsibility to take up one’s cross, to mortify the flesh, or to have sorrowful repentance for sinful actions (Collins 2007). The focus on occasionally strong language surrounding concepts of Christian guilt and shame within fundamentalist pastoral care may be damaging to traumatized populations, such as sexual abuse survivors (Fouque and Glachan 2000).

A further concern within fundamentalist pastoral care models is a direct or indirect rejection of evidence-based practices in psychology. Some fundamentalist pastoral care providers

may assume that clinical psychological methods originate from anti-Christian psychologists and psychologies, the results of which could nullify fundamentalist Christian beliefs in personal responsibility for sin, in a traditional view of human sexuality, or even in theism in general (Haque 2001). In these cases, there is a rejection of research and practice on the grounds of theological and biblical incompatibility. Indirect or passive rejection of evidence-based practices comes as a result of a lack of training in these scientific psychotherapeutic interventions (Worthington et al. 2013). Fundamentalist seminars for pastoral (nonprofessional) counselors generally focus student curriculum within pastoral, biblical, and ecclesial subjects rather than within statistics, research ethics, and clinical topics.

An example of these applied fundamentalist pastoral care is found in the practice of conversion therapy, an approach which describes LGB experiences as sinful and disordered, and seeks to provide pastoral interventions to “convert” behaviors and thought processes into traditional fundamentalist ethics (McGeorge et al. 2015). However, in recent years, legislation for banning conversion therapy has been introduced in several US states (Hudson 2014), citing harmful outcomes in LGBTQ+ populations (Flentje et al. 2013).

## See Also

- ▶ [Bible](#)
- ▶ [Christianity](#)
- ▶ [Evangelical](#)
- ▶ [Fundamentalism](#)
- ▶ [LGBTQI Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Pastoral Counseling](#)
- ▶ [Spectrum of Pastoral Counseling](#)

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