# TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION: BY WAY OF FREUD AND TILLICH

*by Peter Homans*

Within theological studies today perhaps no question or problem has so successfully earned the indifference of the theological thinker as the "psychology of religion," and nostalgia for it understandably evokes a desire for at least some theological attention, be it constructive or even apologetic in nature. Yet many theologians—when in fact they do attend at all the psychology of religion—are more likely to see in it an apt and ready-made instance of precisely that from which they wish to dissociate themselves in defining the truly distinctive features of their professional theological work.

If pressed further, the theologian might reply that, after all, the psychology of religion is psychology and not theology and that for that matter religion is not theology either, so such an enterprise should best be pursued, if at all, by those within the discipline of psychology itself. And yet it is equally commonplace to note that psychological thought is, on the whole, easily as indifferent to the psychological study of religion. In fact, amid the many conflicts between theology and psychology, one finds this interesting point of agreement: theologian and psychologist join hands to say that there can be no psychology of religion, at least as far as they are concerned, short of contaminating principles basic to their respective disciplines.

Such a state of affairs might best be left alone. Yet I am reluctant to adopt this sense of certainty which pervades so much theological and psychological thought. First, the two terms in question, "psychology" and "religion," continue to be used in relation to each other. More important, they remain unavoidable terms for any theological thinker desirous of addressing himself in systematic fashion to the personality sciences. Whether he wishes to employ these sciences in some sort of

Peter Homans is assistant professor of religion and personality in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. This paper was given at the Divinity School's centennial conference in 1966 in the field of religion and personality. The collected papers from this conference are expected to be published by the University of Chicago Press in one volume, edited by Homans, of a series entitled *Essays in Divinity*.

constructive fashion or whether he wishes methodologically to stand over against them, he will make, implicitly or explicitly, a series of conceptual decisions with regard to the meanings he and others assign to "psychology" and "religion." The methodological question in theology, focused as it is on the sciences of man and, in our case, on psychology, remains formidable, and since the psychologist is likely to think of religion before he thinks of theology (if he ever thinks of theology), the theologian will be drawn into consideration of both.

This essay explores some of the theological hazards that present themselves when the problem of a psychology of religion is investigated. In doing so it argues for the possibility of a reinterpretation of approach, one that renders it useful for the theological thinker. It is, in brief, an attempt to develop an understanding of what precisely is theologically real in the life-history of the person and to explore the manner in which an interpretation of the theological can at every moment be responsible to psychological understanding. It is in this context that the word "religion" can be given a psychological meaning.

Freud has taught—and much theology too—that we must approach the present by way of the past. Let us therefore begin with a cursory inspection of available solutions to the problem of relating religion and psychology as these can be found in the immediate heritage of theological thought.

## Three Models for Psychology and Religion

There is a good deal of talk today about models—models for the study of personality, for educational theory, for scientific investigation, and the like. While catchy and probably too fashionable, it is also useful in lending perspective to the problem at hand. I shall use the term here to indicate a particular solution to or integration of this problem, such that those who work within a particular model feel themselves methodologically comfortable and at ease as regards both their sense of professional work and the conceptual stance they take toward their materials. In doing so I am assuming three facets in the use of a particular model, each of which has been integrated into a unity of life and work on the part of the thinker: first, a *conceptual* integration, quite strictly at the level of thought; second, a sense that the *professional* context in which one works facilitates rather than opposes the goals of conceptual integration; and, third, a sense of continuity between one's intellectual position, his professional work, and his *personal* identity as this emerges from his own psychological development.[1]

1. The first model available is of course that group of thinkers di-

rectly associated with the phrase "psychology of religion."[2] As already noted, it has been dead for some time, and students of theology concerned with psychology dutifully but impatiently visit its tomb in footnotes and bibliographic pauses, as they hurry on to more pressing and interesting concerns. Let us generalize briefly on some relevant features.

Immediately apparent in the work of this group is the close and mutually determinative relationship between the definitions of psychology and of religion. The particular understanding of the nature and methods of psychology as a discipline to a great extent sets or structures the manner in which one understands the nature and meaning of religion. William James and G. Stanley Hall were formative in the establishment of a broadly functional and adaptive American psychology, and both brought this psychological perspective to bear in determining precisely how and what one should study if he is to study religion. In this case the referent for the word "religion" consisted in a reality—understood as a power, force, or energy—experienced as phenomenologically other or beyond the person's immediate perceptual awareness, and the meaning assigned to this reality amounted in each case finally to its dynamic and functional facilitation of both inner (psychic) and social adaptation and adjustment. What is important here is the presupposed epistemological frame of reference, which was a predominantly subject-object one. A particular form or type of experience, properly called "religious," was simply and objectively given to the experiencing subject and was subsequently analyzed psychologically.

This stance toward religion made possible the most notable feature of this model, namely, that of the conversion experience as the favored paradigm for the "religious" in human experience. Such experiences usually took place during a time of interpersonal isolation—the individual was alone, often in a natural setting, unaware of any impending psychic crisis. In fact, it was often the case that the individual sensed just the opposite—that he was very much in control of things, and quite often he had just begun to pursue some activity that did not require the presence of others: reading a book, writing a letter, taking a walk. The onset of the crisis produced its dominant affective tone, namely, that of guilt, primarily with regard to prior acts, omitted or committed, or simply a pervasive and non-specific sense of worthlessness, remorse, and low self-esteem.

One notes with regard to dynamics that the force of the entire conversion experience was away from isolation and guilt and in the direction of resolution and adjustment, in relation to other persons, but more in relation to the psychic demands of the experience itself. The resolution,

like the onset, occurred in isolation. It was clearly a psychic event with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It was therefore an experience one went through as one goes through a tunnel, and while it remained forever memorable in the mind of the individual, it remained just as clearly an event in his past. For this reason it would not be entirely unfair to liken the typical conversion experience to a psychic thunderstorm, which appears suddenly, asserts itself violently, and then as quickly disappears. As such the experience was more that of a homeostatic stabilizing of psychic pressures than a transformation in either conscious awareness or social relatedness.

The psychology-of-religion group was able to sustain a professional sense of workmanship in the face of common problems because they were by and large psychologists or educators concerned with psychology. For our purposes here this means that they were not concerned professionally with institutional forms of Christianity or with theology. And when they were, both were considered proper objects of psychological analysis, rather than a community with which they might identify both personally and professionally. This was equally the case with the religious-education movement which, despite its concern with institutional Protestant Christianity, was never integrated into the theological community at the conceptual or professional level. Nor has the adoption of a different name—the replacing of religious education with Christian education—made its quest for theological acceptance and status a great deal easier.

The reasons for the rather quick and thoroughly undramatic decline of the psychology of religion are far more interesting than the work of the movement itself. It is often noted that the close of the nineteenth century, as an ideological synthesis, occurred at the time of World War I. Suffice it to say that the abandonment of the psychology of religion as a synthesis by psychologists and religious educators was due at least in part to that series of shifts in cultural modalities of self-understanding which produced psychoanalysis in psychology and existentialism in theology. In this sense the unity of religion and psychology, represented by the composite image of the conversion experience as this was constructed by the psychologists of religion, split, dissociating psychology and theology from any concern with religion. As a result, both theology and psychology underwent changes that at the level of content are quite different but that retain a certain dynamic similarity.

2. The functional-adaptive approach in psychology, the adherents of which did not consider religion entirely foreign to their interests, gave way, of course, to Watsonian behaviorism, removing permanently the

conversion experience and all that it implied from the proper domain of the science of psychology. Watson's work may be understood on this level in the sense in which he himself defined it—as a methodological reformulation of the nature and aims of the science of psychology. Yet, at the same time, his writings may be viewed from a more programmatic and ideological perspective. For in addition to the methodological contribution Watson also provided a rallying point for a new sense both of identity and of professional identity for psychologists, defining both in opposition to religious moralism and piety. The parting words of *Behaviorism* are to the point:

> Behaviorism ought to be a science that prepares men and women for understanding the principles of their own behavior. It ought to make men and women eager to rearrange their own lives, and especially eager to prepare themselves to bring up their own children in a healthy way. I wish I could picture for you what a rich and wonderful individual we should make of every healthy child if only we could let it shape itself properly and then provide for it a universe in which it could exercise that organization—a universe unshackled by legendary folk-lore of happenings thousands of years ago; unhampered by disgraceful political history; free of foolish customs and conventions which have no significance in themselves, yet which hem the individual in like taut steel bands. . . . The universe will change if you bring up your children not in the freedom of the libertine, but in behavioristic freedom. . . . Will not these children in turn, with their better ways of living and thinking, replace us as society and in turn bring up their children in a still more scientific way, until the world finally becomes a place fit for human habitation?[3]

Such programmatic and ideological—one should really say "eschatological"—rhetoric may be seen as an attempt to break out of the kind of psychic bewilderment and confusion produced by religious piety and moralism. In this sense, Watson's attacks on "religion" are really a flight from that particular kind of religious consciousness which so needed conversion and which received legitimation in the work of the psychologists of religion. In commending what in theological language amounts to a "kenotic" evacuation of the psyche in favor of the behavioral field, Watson sought a methodological (rather than a psychological) solution to the psychic problem that religious piety created and that it sought to solve through the experience of conversion. From this point of view, behaviorism may be seen as a methodological flight from the religious superego.

Psychoanalysis, in a very different way to be sure, produced a similar kind of critique. Whereas Watson evacuated the psyche, and with it the possibility of "religious experience," Freud created two levels of psychic reality, assigning religious experience to the repressed unconscious,

thereby like Watson removing it as a factor in any normative understanding or interpretation of psychic life. In commending a restoration of strength and function to the ego as over against the superego, Freud attempted to depotentiate the binding power of the harsh (religious) superego. In this sense, both behaviorism and psychoanalysis may be seen as revolutions in psychological method directing their critical power against the psychic organization implied in religious experience. Although they are first and foremost methodological reformulations within psychology, they also bear a dynamically similar relation to the conversion experience.

Theological existentialism performed the same function for theology that psychoanalysis and behaviorism performed for psychology. It rejected "religious experience" in favor of "theological existence," motivated in large part by the desire to transcend the problematic piety of mere religion. It is hardly accidental that when theological existentialism speaks of psychology it speaks almost exclusively of behaviorism and psychoanalysis. The theological and the psychological revolutions, respectively, eliminated religion, as this was understood by the psychologists of religion. This splitting of psychology of religion into theology and psychology made possible two additional models which can now be discussed.

*First is the pastoral-psychology model.*[4] Again, it is a model because its representatives have arrived at a working solution to the problem of the relation between religion and psychology, doing so in the context of a sense of both personal and professional identity and workmanship. Although pastoral psychology is administratively part of most theological curricula, a deeper integration is still awaited, recalling the earlier plight of the religious-education movement. Since it is a praxis rather than an academic discipline, its associations with psychology are more in terms of the clinical side of the personality sciences.

Its uses of psychology are relatively clear and unambiguous. It is deeply committed to a broad interpretation of what nevertheless remains fundamentally a dynamic, psychoanalytically oriented psychology, sufficiently broad to include not only neo-Freudian but even Rogerian perspectives. Theologically it is committed to neo-Reformation modes of thought, religious existentialism, and in some cases neoliberal religious thought.[5] From these sources it has acquired its concern for the theological implications of the pastoral role and its origins in the life of the church, its direct employment of Christian and biblical symbols and vocabulary, and the bearing of these upon a doctrine of man.

The distinctive project of pastoral psychology might be described in an oversimplified way as the use of psychodynamic principles and insights in the clarification of moralistic and idealistic distortions of Christian faith, understood in its more classical forms of statement. Through such clarification the power of the gospel can be released for appropriation in the inner life of the person.[6] Indeed, one of the outstanding marks of the pastoral psychologist is his insistence upon clarification of his own motives in order not to be drawn into the moralistic and idealistic claims of his parishioner's faith.

In such moralistic and idealistic claims we may detect residues of that piety which gave expression to the religious experience of conversion so carefully and thoroughly analyzed by the psychologists of religion. In lieu of such religious experience, however, pastoral psychology in effect substituted the psychotherapeutic experience; and for the inner demands and autonomy of the religious experience itself, pastoral psychology substituted the therapeutic relationship, the strategies of psychotherapeutic technique, and a dynamic psychological understanding of human development. In this way the earlier notion of religious experience, understood as an event with a beginning, a middle, and an end, was submitted to critical psychological analysis and related to the entire development life-span of the individual. The pastoral counseling process, claimed as a theological reality by its practitioners, is the formal heir to the conversion experiences of the psychology of religion.

Pastoral psychology was able to dissolve this understanding of religious experience into the psychological and developmental modalities of the dynamic psychotherapies because of its commitment to the theological presupposition that a dimension of faith transcends all forms of religious experience. This presupposition is drawn from what I wish to call the third model for integrating religion and psychology, the "theology-psychology" model.[7] The two would be identical except for the professional identity and orientation of the pastor. His commitment to some kind of disciplined reflection upon his practical work has in turn insisted that he submit his theology as well to psychological modes of thought; his academic-theological colleagues, however, working in a different professional context, have not for the most part felt obliged to do this.

3. The third model gives us a general and firm consensus with regard to the proper place of psychology in relation to the work of the theologian and to the place of psychological process in the normative formation and development of the person. That is to say, it has approached psychology with its own two most pressing problems in mind:

theological method and theological anthropology. As such this group provides a careful and sophisticated interpretive integration of the proper place and limits of psychology in the theological enterprise.

Whereas pastoral psychology focuses its immediate concern upon the power of dynamic psychology to purify and clarify distortions of faith in the parishioner's existence, this theological group is concerned with the possibly reductive effects of psychology upon an authentic theological understanding of faith. Like the psychology of religion, pastoral psychology attempts to keep a dynamic psychological perspective upon the experiencing of the person at all times, recognizing that the end point of his development is faith, as theological self-understanding. The theology-psychology model, however, while avowedly sensitive to the implications of psychodynamics for theological understanding, tends to view psychological growth, process, etc., as *part-process.* In its most distinctive moments, at least with regard to psychology, this model defines what are distinctively theological as over against psychological processes, for psychological knowledge is forever under the control of the subject-object relation.[8]

Such a point of view, although articulated by different theologians in very different and complex vocabularies, remains, at least in this respect, rather simple: theological reality in the person transcends psychological reality, just as the self transcends its environment. Psychology, it is said, can clarify distortions in the dynamics of the self; but in doing so it shows only part of the total meaning of the person and his existence. The favored theological formula here is of course "transcendence": anthropologically, the reality to which Christian theology points transcends the developmental and socialization processes of the person, as these are delineated by the psychological disciplines, just as methodologically theological method transcends the methods of inquiry employed by the science of psychology. One encounters God as one moves away from—or perhaps I should say as one moves "beyond"—the effects of development and socialization as exclusively formative of the self. In such fashion theologians protect theological meaning from being reduced to psychological interpretation.

### The Theology-Psychology Model Exhibited: Freud and Tillich

This third model in effect asserts that psychology can tell us about the dissociations within the self, but not about the self in its fulness, wholeness, and ultimate integrity. Therefore, any attempt to explore

the possibility of a psychology of religion must begin at this point. But since our discussion of each of these models has been cursory and superficial, we will analyze with greater care some of the intricacies of this third model by means of two thinkers clearly representative of it, Sigmund Freud and Paul Tillich. Freud, in addition to being the most influential figure in psychology today, is the only psychologist studied by this group of thinkers and has the still further advantage of having given us a psychology of religion matched only by those of James and Jung. Tillich has the added advantage of having explored depth psychology more thoroughly than other theologians.

We may review, briefly but also with precision, Freud's psychological understanding of religion by means of the notion of transference, which, while it rarely appears in theological discussions of his psychology, nevertheless brings together in a unique way both his psychology of the self and his psychology of religion.[9]

As is well known, Freud spoke for the most part of transference as an interpersonal phenomenon (although of course he did not use this "revisionist" nomenclature), defining it as the attribution by his patients of their unconscious attitudes and feelings to the physician. What is not so well known, however, and what I should like to attend to here, are his references to transference as an *intrapsychic* or internal phenomenon as well, which provide an important clue to the basic structure of his psychological anthropology. It is correct to think of the Freudian psyche as divided or alienated: inner division or alienation occurring between, for example, conscious and unconscious processes, primary and secondary processes, superego and id, pleasure principle and reality principle—that is, between what we could generically designate as "depth" and "surface" aspects of the total psychic life of the person. In this sense transference phenomena are simply the manifestations into surface awareness and consciousness of depth or unconscious factors. Unconscious or depth forces and energies are "transferred" or carried over into conscious or surface life. Transference understood intrapsychically is simply the perforation of the (repression) barrier between the unconscious and conscious systems. Dreams, slips of the tongue, various symptoms (such as those found in conversion hysteria), and the transference relationship itself were the four main forms of intrapsychic transference, the four ways in which the two different psychic systems became conflictually related.

Consequently, the therapeutic task consists in restoring a developmental or integrative relation between these two systems, to replace the regressive and repressive one. Such restoration occurs only on the

basis of continuity between the intrapsychic and interpersonal, because in the therapy the intrapsychic is transposed or embodied in the interpersonal in such a way that the transference relation itself becomes the disease. Through the resolution of the distortions and projections that appear in the transference relationship, the internal or intrapsychic conflicts are at least in part resolved in the interior life of the person.

But what is more important, and often overlooked, is that transference is an extremely helpful notion for understanding Freud's thought at the cultural level as well. For, while a certain amount of "the transference" can be worked through individual, one-to-one situations, at the social and historical level the possibility of working through remained, in Freud's estimation, an impossible task. His gloomy pronouncements on the psychic limits of social life are difficult to match: the transference remains formidable. And it is here that religion takes on its most important psychological meaning. Religion is really *cultural* transference, the binding together and gathering up of all the transference residues unresolved in individual living. In the formation of the image of god and in the subsequent ways of relating to this image, men collectively project, and then attempt to resolve, their individual psychic conflicts. All the wishes, longings, and nostalgias—everything unfulfilled, unlived, and unexpressed—appear in the guise of the god imago.

Freud put the whole matter quite succinctly in a remark to Oskar Pfister mingling both humor and irony:

> I note with satisfaction what a long way we are able to go together in analysis. The rift, not in the analytic, but in scientific thinking which comes on when the subject of God and Christ is touched on I accept as one of the logically untenable but psychologically only too intelligible irrationalities of life. In general I attach no value to the "imitation of Christ." In contrast to utterances as psychologically profound as "Thy sins are forgiven thee; arise and walk" there are a large number of others which are conditioned exclusively by the time, psychologically impossible, useless for our lives. Besides the above statement calls for analysis. If the sick man has asked: "How knowest thou that my sins are forgiven?" the answer could only have been: "I, the Son of God, forgive thee." In other words, a call for unlimited transference. And now, just suppose I said to a patient: "I, Professor Sigmund Freud, forgive thee thy sins." What a fool I should make of myself. To the former case the principle applies that analysis is not satisfied with success produced by suggestion, but investigates the origin of and justification for the transference.[10]

It would seem correct and helpful to allude to and to define Freud's psychology of religion as really a psychology of the "transference-god."

It is the transference-god, the sociohistorical fantasy of Western man, that must be "worked through," a "group" psychoanalysis to be conducted under the auspices of the corporate activity of science, especially the psychoanalytically scientific psychology. The notion of "curing" culture was foolish for Freud; but this implication nonetheless remains.

Therefore, at least from the psychoanalytic point of view, the psychological interpretation of religion becomes the most important problem for the psychological transformation of the person whenever this latter process is an anthropological consideration. For the (psychoanalytically) psychological interpretation of religion can produce a liberation of the psyche, freeing it from its deepest and most problematic conflicts. A psychology of the person is always, for Freud at least, a psychology of religion.

At this point another question moves into the center of the discussion, namely, the fate of the energies formerly invested in this imago. If liberation is from the transference-god, what does it move toward? And it is at this point that, according to the logic of the theology-psychology model, psychological analysis must yield to theological understanding.

The thought of Tillich illustrates a typical instance of this claim. His thought is almost as difficult to enter as Freud's, in spite of being more systematic. We may, however, find an adequate point of contact in the familiar discussion of "the courage to be"[11] and in the analysis of the subject-object relation that underlies this discussion. Here Tillich gives us what is, in effect, an analysis of precisely those energies formerly bound by the imago of the transference-god, and he is quite clear that this is a distinctly *theological* problem.

Looking at Tillich's thought with regard to its bearing upon the concrete life of the person, we are told that the courage to be emerges as a moral possiblity, and absolute faith emerges as a religious possibility, and transcendence emerges as the theological possibility, when and insofar as the God of theological theism gives ground, in the experience of doubt, to the "God above God." Tillich's critique of what he calls theological theism is of course rooted in his ontological analysis of the self-world correlation and his epistemological analysis of the subject-object relation and the dynamics of their transcendence. In these discussions he characteristically presses this theological analysis of the transformation of the person to a point beyond an understanding of God and ultimate reality that is under the control of the subject-object structure of reality. The object of theological statement must

not be conceived of simply in subject-object modes of thinking. Indeed, it is Tillich, perhaps more than any other theologian today, who urges that the transcendence of the subject-object relation permits the appearance of genuinely *religious* reality in the life of the person.

What we have called Freud's transference-god is presupposed in this (Tillichian) theological understanding: the God of theological theism *is* the transference-god, and therefore the latter gives us a dynamic, psychological basis for understanding the former. Tillich is quite clear about this.[12] The courage to be presupposes and makes its appearance as a dynamic possibility in the life of the person in a psychological movement in which the transference-god is called into question as the exclusively appropriate symbol for what is ontologically ultimate. Thus psychology must give way to theology, for the former speaks of man's existential plight but not of his essential possibilities. The latter are reserved for theology.

A better illustration of such a linkage between psychology and theology so characteristic of this model is found in a comparison of the superego (Freud) and the bad, moral conscience (Tillich). Tillich has distinguished between a bad, moral conscience and a good, transmoral conscience and indicated that the former is identical with the Freudian superego.[13] He also identifies the former with that crisis of conscience which appeared most intensively and received its most dramatic elaboration in the piety of Luther and which he believed has served as the occasion and condition of grace, at least in the Protestant tradition.[14] We may note, too, that the bad, moral conscience, as the occasion of a moral and spiritual crisis in the life of the person, appears in particularly exacerbated form in the experiences studied by the psychologists of religion, as well as in the moralistic and idealistic distortions that have so concerned the pastoral-psychology movement. The good, transmoral conscience is the fruit of self-acceptance (justification) and transcends its moralistic counterpart, just as the God above God transcends its theological counterpart, the God of theological theism.

This common focus permits the establishment of a series of linkages: first, the bad, moral conscience and the harsh superego; second, the fact that both represent phases of socialization in the life of the individual; and, third, that both Tillich and Freud commend a moral courage that lies dynamically "beyond" this phase of socialization. Both commend the necessity of moving developmentally beyond the superego to a higher form of integrated polarization of self and so-

ciety. Both set forth a moral and psychological imperative to transcend the superego.

The psychodynamic meaning of such transcendence lies in a reorganization of psychic energies, which are released as a result of the breaking up of the imago of the transference-god, the God of theological theism. Put in another way, both Freud and Tillich are concerned with "what remains" after an act of critical reorganization within the self, although they disagree just as clearly with regard to the creative possibilities resident in such a movement.

### Elaboration and Critique of the Theological-Psychological Model

Here the logic of the theological-psychological model appears most clearly: the proper task and object of theological understanding lie in the analysis of those personal and existential possibilities that lie "beyond" the bad, moral conscience and theological theism. Here the theologian "takes over," so to speak, from the psychologist; here psychological process gives way to theological meaning and reality; here theological method is deemed more appropriate to the human situation than the methods of psychology.

Such methodological segregation has anthropological parallels as well. Theological categories like "self-transcendence," "spirit," and "the encounter of the self with God" all refer to a dimension of personal existence that lies beyond the merely psychological modes of developmental achievement. Development, socialization, and integration of the ego into significantly meaningful reference groups, identity formation, etc.—these are all psychological processes that document the self's attempt to become part of society. Theological anthropology, however, asserts a realm of reality "beyond" the structures and processes discernible by psychological categories and methods.

So Karl Barth gives us an understanding of revelation as the "abolition of religion," and for his formula we may, correctly I think, substitute revelation as the "abolition of the transference-god."[15] Revelation, that reality of which Christian dogmatic statement speaks, lies beyond the psychological processes occurring within the self. In Emil Brunner's familiar delineation of the divine-human encounter[16] we are told that, while psychology can comprehend dislocations within the self, only theology can speak of their unity, for the encounter with God transcends this interpersonal sphere. Or, Reinhold Niebuhr assigns psychology to nature and to the study of individual psychopathology and adjustment but removes it from the analysis of the

dramas of the self and of history. Psychological analysis is incapable of penetrating to the uniqueness of spirit, as it appears in the dramas of history, in permanent myth, and in the familiar principle of comprehension beyond comprehension.[17]

In each case the equivalent of what has here been called the transference-god appears as the human side of man's relationship to God, the projected resultant of human will and desire, which must somehow be overcome, corrected, abrogated—transcended. The really distinguishing methodological feature in these positions is simply the degree of relative limitation imposed upon psychology and psychological understanding in the interpretation and management of the spiritual dynamics of the self.

Now I would like to suggest that this model provides the fundamental resources for what can properly be called a psychology of religion, provided it is critically expanded, for it contains both the possibility and the denial of the possibility of a psychology of religion. It contains the possibility of a psychology of religion if seen as an attempt to formulate what is in effect a phenomenology of self and self-transcendence, a delineation of that dimension of reality which lies beyond, while yet remaining dependent upon, development and socialization. Here we need the theologian to define, or at least begin to define, what in human life is characteristically religious.

Yet there seems to be no inherent methodological reason why this "object of study" cannot be approached in a fully psychological mode of understanding. Is it not possible to have a psychology—and, more especially, a dynamic psychology—of the self and of the processes of self-transcendence? That is to say, may we not approach in terms of psychological inquiry that area of human life which is the proper object of theological study?

We must note that such an approach is already implicit in certain representative instances in the psychology of personality and personality theory. Here one finds psychological theoreticians attempting to formulate a psychology of the person that considers processes lying beyond socialization and that, in so doing, attempts to study psychologically that realm of human reality which our theologians have so assiduously claimed for themselves.

For example, Gordon Allport's notions of functional autonomy and propriate striving seek to comprehend aspects of personal inwardness and uniqueness that emerge through the transcending of earlier, more tribal social integrations.[18] At this point Allport's methodological strategy is no different from Tillich's. Both speak for a realm of per-

sonal integrity and uniqueness lying developmentally "beyond" the superego, and Allport's critique of the Lockean and nomothetic methodological heritage of American psychology is identical with Tillich's protest against technical reason and controlling knowledge.

Abraham Maslow's work is clearly construed on a similar basis. The peak experiences—self-actualization, generic guilt, and the like—all attempt a psychology of a depth of personal inwardness and uniqueness, of "what remains" when the processes of acculturation and the meeting of lower needs has taken place.[19] Maslow's psychology is really a psychology of what theologians call "aseity," of the ontic self as it stands over against, albeit at the same time in relation to, social reality. Thus the notion of generic guilt suggests that the phenomenon of guilt need not always be simply a measure of the tension between internal psychic energy and social controls and expectations. And of course Allport and Maslow are further distinguished within the field of personality theory not only by their overt (i.e., professional) interest in religion but also by their assigning religion to precisely this sector of the psyche. Their theories of personality move them in the direction of the sort of psychology of religion that may also be understood as the expansion of our theological-psychological model.

Unlike Freud, Maslow, or Allport, Carl Rogers has displayed no formal interest in religion. Yet his psychology has engaged the theologian, at least the pastoral theologian, and as such it follows the pattern we are attempting to clarify here. Such Rogerian notions as the fully functioning person and the organismic experiencing process take their peculiar shape—as does the entire client-centered psychology, for that matter—in a critical stance toward Freud.[20] If we consider this psychology from the point of view of our distinction between the superego and a reality that lies developmentally beyond it, then the Rogerian notion of condition of worth corresponds to the superego, and the force of the client-centered psychotherapeutic process lies in feeling through (not, as Freud said, in working through) these imposed and introjected norms or conditions in order to arrive at a novel and more discrete sense of personal uniqueness as over against socialization norms. In so doing, Rogers has given us a psychology addressed to that dimension of personal existence claimed by the theologian for his own work and method. The more recent client-centered notion of "adient motivation" is still another case in point,[21] for it is a liberation or rediscovery of conceptual energies and images come upon by means of the imaginative transformation of conventional patterns of socialization and control.

Erik Erikson's work articulates perhaps most directly of all the drift of this argument. For his formulation of identity is mounted by definition upon a dialectical critique of the classical psychoanalytic understanding of the superego, while at the same time it is a systematically psychological attempt to explore higher integrative possibilities within the self. Thus identification, libido theory, oedipal organization, and morality (as opposed to ethics) are set in the larger context of identity formation.[22] Erikson's reservations about superego morality are clearly those of Tillich with regard to the bad, moral conscience. The extent to which the Eriksonian psychology of identity formation fully explicates the dynamics of the courage to be is not entirely clear; what is clear, however, is that identity, like the fully functioning self, self-actualization, and propriate striving, constitutes a psychological effort to delineate the dynamics of that sector of personal existence claimed as the proper territory of theology.[23]

## Implications: Some Problems in Moving toward a Psychology of Religion

We have suggested that the notion of a psychology of religion seems less irrelevant and out of place, and becomes perhaps even methodologically possible, as a result of examining critically the theology-psychology model, expanding it in the direction of the more fully psychological. In so doing we have accepted the theologian's testimony in behalf of the theologically real in personal existence, while remaining reluctant to pursue his corollary claim that such an aspect of human life ever eludes the power of psychological analysis.

The anthropological side of this discussion has largely centered upon the superego as an important psychological construct that serves the double function of drawing together our three models for relating and integrating psychological and religious notions, as well as of demonstrating the alleged points of continuity and discontinuity between psychological and theological meaning, which so deeply characterize the theology-psychology model. If the analysis of what lies beyond ("transcends") the superego, taken in this highly stereotypical sense, is in principle a theological problem, and if it can be approached psychologically, then we may ask, "What are some of the implications of such a conclusion?" Or, in the language of the third model itself, if the dissolution of the transference-god or the bad, moral conscience can be taken as a crucial event in the life history of the person—that is, an event about which it is possible to speak dynamically and developmentally—what problems are implied in the resolution of such a crisis?

Perhaps the outstanding dynamic question concerns the fate (or destiny) of those energies organized by the image of the transference-god and by the bad, moral conscience, the release of which creates such a moral and psychological crisis. What alternate images bind and give statement to these incipiently emergent and vagrant forces in the person and in his society? And how appropriate are such images to the intrinsic energies of the self? Clearly such images in many cases will be devoid of much, perhaps all, of the symbols, vocabulary, and rhetoric of classical Christian theology. Yet should this disqualify them as appropriate data for theological analysis? For example, one suggestive hypothesis asserts that energies formerly organized by religious ideation are now being absorbed into the popular mythologies and ideologies of mass culture. As such, these images necessarily become the object of theological analysis, calling as they do for a hermeneutical scanning of those images and symbols projected by various mass media.[24]

Implied in such a psychic transformation of images are two additional notions, those of regression and fantasy. And here Freud and Tillich, taken again as propaedeutic, agree. The psychic crisis of the transference-god produces regression, and Tillich's criticism and transformation of the God of theological theism will create a disruptive sense of anxiety and self-loss, even though it also produces the possibility of a new beginning. Indeed, the very notion of a new beginning implies a going back, a return to something fundamental. Freud of course saw in religion developmental failure, and finally even epistemological and moral failure, since it fixed the developmental energies of the person. His preoccupation with the transference-god, supported as it was by the religious situation of his time, prevented him from formally raising the question of a non-pathological form of regression. In the construction we are suggesting here, however, regression can be the source of rediscovery of a new beginning.

Image and regression suggest fantasy, and taken together these might well constitute elements in a psychology of religion, understood as a psychology of images of self-transcendence. For just as the psychology of religious *experience* provoked a dissociation between psychology and theology, perhaps the psychology of religous *images* can draw them together. Here the recent psychological study by Father William Lynch is apt.[25] He speaks of the phenomenon of hope as perhaps the most basic of all religious impulses, believing that it serves as the starting point for both a psychological and metaphysical understanding of the religious life. What he means by hope is, quite simply, the projecting of one's inward wishing and desiring in the form of images.

The capacity for hope, so understood, constitutes the first principle of mental wholeness, and its absence the most fundamental meaning of mental illness. This capacity for hoping or wishing he identifies with the capacity for fantasy, such that fantasy is the absolutely necessary and indispensable dynamic source for what can become a more stable and pervasive sense of self-transcendence. While it may not be the end point of the religious project, it is clearly the beginning, for it is a moment of opening up new ranges of energies and symbols, which not only lead to religious reality but which can also be understood psychologically.

Crucial for this understanding of fantasy in Lynch's study is the clear distinction between fantasy as the beginning of religion, on the one hand, and fantasy as the result of the "absolutizing instinct," the kind of fantasy that floods an object and blocks off any capacity to relate to it or to perceive the truth about it. This conception of the absolutizing instinct and its opposition to the hoping or wishing instinct resembles our distinction with regard to the psychological function and meaning of the transference-god and its dissolution. For the absolutizing instinct creates the transference-god. The capacity to hope, that is, the capacity for fantasy, which is blocked by the absolutizing instinct, is itself the imaginative core and psychological prerequisite for a sense of selfhood and self-transcendence.

Such notions as fantasy and regression reopen a problem familiar to all three models, one that has been solved by each in its own way, that of the "psychopathology" of religion. Here we find Tillich's distinction between neurotic and existential anxiety interlocking—as only the theology-psychology model can do—with an interpretation of Freud's psychology as primarily a psychopathology, rendering his psychology of religion as psychopathology of religion. Again the notion of the superego is instructive. Tillich finds it exclusively an "image of destructive power," an "existential distortion" of "the essential structure of man's being."[26] Yet if the superego or bad, moral conscience is set in the context of a courage, faith, or capacity for self-transcendence lying developmentally beyond this limitation, then both psychopathology and the anxiety of guilt and condemnation become the occasion and means of transcendence. Consequently, any final distinction between psychopathology and the psychopathology of religion is collapsed, for the theological dimension of the person's existence, rooted as it is in a criticism and transformation of the superego, becomes the controlling methodological and anthropological reality. And once regression and fantasy are understood in similar fashion—that is,

as psychological processes containing the possibility of opening up the imagination to this dimension of reality—then this theological dimension of the person's existence becomes amenable, although not necessarily exclusively amenable, to psychological analysis.

### The Argument Summarized: A Concluding Concrete Image

The drift of the discussion can be summarized in a direct and immediate way through the use of a concrete image taken from Rorschach psychology, for in such projective devices we have an extension of the psychoanalytic psychology into the realm of images. And one type of response in particular provides us with an image of transcendence. Needless to say, this use of the Rorschach psychology is an extrapolation of clinical findings into the realm of cultural and existential factors, rather than a simple application.

One of the well-known psychological findings noted by Rorschach and by Rorschach commentators[27] was the presence of a particular kind of response called perspective or "vista" responses and the close relation that obtains between this kind of percept and the psychological processes of self-evaluation. Samuel J. Beck, for example, cites as typical vista responses "a mountain pass, with a bridge"; "a promenade and a flight of stairs"; and "a lake, and reflection on the water." In each case the person projects himself into a relation to his spatial world characterized by a heightened sense of distance, separateness. and perspective.

What is most interesting here is the intrinsic connection between such a sense of vista or distance and the psychological processes of self-evaluation and sensing of self-worth and self-esteem.[28] Thus vista responses or associations project the more unpleasant and painful emotions as these are associated with feelings of inferiority, guilt, and loss of the capacity for confident and positive self-appreciation. In Rorschach psychology they are characteristically associated with superego affect, in contradistinction to the perception of color, which reflects the lively affects of social pleasure and enthusiasm. The imagery of distance is also, therefore, the imagery of the superego.

Now, were one to think more at the level of hunches and of let-us-suppose, and were one to extrapolate from the more focused clinical considerations to a broader cultural and historical context, would it not seem likely that there must be some connection between such a psychological analysis of self-evaluation and *any* experiencing in which the imagery of height and distance becomes problematic, wherever

this might be found, be it in biography, art, or religious experience? If we turn to religious experience and reflection, we may note that the Christian's characteristic religious concern has been precisely his proximity to or distance from God—at least historically in Protestant Christianity and currently in neo-Reformation modes of thought.

So it is that the highly distantiated, the radically transcendent god, the god rich in aseity—or, as is sometimes said, employing directly the imagery of distance, the high god—can become the source and occasion of religious anxiety, and an encounter with this god produces the characteristic states of guilt, condemnation, and the hope of justification. Opposed to this is the experience of a proximate god, the companion of man in his situations, projects, and decisions, a god who is the source and occasion of overcoming distance and of the establishment of self-esteem and self-confidence—that is, of the courage to be.[29]

What we have called the transference-god is a formidable source of anxiety with regard to self-evaluation. It is this—rather than the metaphysical question of the existence of God—that Freud really attacked under the auspices of insight into the workings of the harsh, cultural superego and that Tillich, under the auspices of the imperative to transcend the bad, moral conscience, also agreed "had to be killed," both thereby pointing to the overcoming of this anxiety. For in such a moment one comes to recognize that the source of courage is not "out there"—not, that is, distant or beyond—but is rather grounded in the structure of being itself, and that the emergence of the courage to be consists, dynamically, in the recognition and organic appreciation that this structure is open and accessible, not just in principle but also in fact, to each particular being or self. It is this sense, incidentally, that underlies Tillich's distinction between man as estranged from God and man related to God as a stranger.[30]

To turn again to the first two models: is it not this imago of the distant god and its consequent superego affect that have preoccupied the professional efforts and strategies of the pastoral psychologist and counselor in his therapeutic struggles to purify and free his parishioner's faith from moralistic and idealistic distortions? And is it not also this imago, to be detected with greater difficulty perhaps, that so often created that peculiar conjunction of self-worth and sinfulness and its subsequent violent resolution in the conversion experiences studied by the psychologists of religion?

If so, then the imagery of distance, so conceived and considered, becomes a thread of continuity, albeit in the face of many differences,

among our three models and permits reiteration in still one more way of the burden of this discussion as regards the possibility of a psychology of religion, understood as having its roots in an expanding of the theology-psychology model. For, as we have demonstrated, what theology takes as its methodological point of departure (the bad, moral conscience, theological theism) it also designates as "religious" and as amenable to psychological analysis, claiming to understand in a unique way those modes of personal transformation and unification that lead the individual beyond this problematic state. Surely such modes of transformation in personal existence—unification of self, courage to be, "faith," and the like—surely these can properly sustain an approach that is no less psychological.

NOTES

1. These three facets are drawn from Erik Erikson's work on identity, but especially from his analysis of the origins of psychoanalysis in Freud's person and work. See Erik Erikson, "The First Psychoanalyst," in Benjamin Nelson (ed.), *Freud in the 20th Century* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957).

2. Of the many names that come to mind, I am alluding primarily to James, Starbuck, Coe, Leuba, and Hall. See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903); E. D. Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903); G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916); J. H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1912); and G. S. Hall, *Adolescence* (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton, 1904). See also *The Journal of Religious Psychology, including Its Anthropological and Sociological Aspects,* published during 1904–16. For a collection of readings, see Orlo Strunk (ed.), *Readings in the Psychology of Religion* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1959). For a review discussion of this group and their approach see Seward Hiltner, "The Psychological Understanding of Religion," in Strunk (ed.), *op. cit.*, and Paul Pruyser, "Some Trends in the Psychology of Religion," *Journal of Religion,* XL, No. 2 (April, 1960), 113–29.

3. John B. Watson, *Behaviorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), pp. 303–4.

4. This reference is to what is sometimes called the American School of pastoral psychology. See, e.g., Carroll Wise, *Pastoral Counseling: Its Theory and Practice* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951); Wayne Oates, *The Christian Pastor* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1951); Seward Hiltner, *Pastoral Counseling* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1959); and Paul Johnson, *The Psychology of Pastoral Care* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1953).

5. The work of Carroll Wise and Paul Johnson is illustrative.

6. For an especially apt illustration of this general description, see Knox Kreutzer, "Some Observations on Approaches to the Theology of Psychotherapeutic Experience," *Journal of Pastoral Care,* XIII (1959), 197–208.

7. This third model comprises what is often covered by the rubric "Protestant theological existentialism." However, the specific figures in question from whose works these generalizations are drawn are Barth, Brunner, Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr. See John B. Cobb, Jr., *Living Options in Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), or Edward Farley, *The Transcendence of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

8. Specific references are made below.

9. For a concise and thorough discussion of this interpretation of Freud's notion of transference, see Heinz Kohut and Philip F. D. Seitz, "Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality," in Joseph M. Wepman and Ralph Heine (eds.), *Concepts of Personality* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1963).

10. *Psychoanalysis and Faith: The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Oskar Pfister,* ed. Heinrich Meng and Ernst L. Freud, trans. Eric Mosbacker (New York: Basic Books, 1963), pp. 125–26.

11. Paul Tillich, *The Courage To Be* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1952). See especially chap. vi, "Courage and Transcendence."

12. See, e.g., Tillich's own response to my discussion of this point in *Journal of Religion,* XLVI, No. 1, Part II (January, 1966), 194–96.

13. See Paul Tillich, "The Transmoral Conscience," *The Protestant Era,* trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

14. For an interesting and dissident discussion of this interpretation of conscience in the West, see Krister Stendal, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," *Harvard Theological Review,* LVI, No. 3 (July, 1963), 199–215.

15. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936–62), I, Part I (1936), 438; I, Part II (1956), 280–97; II, Part I (1957), 13–23, 56, 61; III, Part II (1960), 22–27. See also his *Prayer: According to the Catechisms of the Reformation,* trans. Sara Terrien (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), p. 36. These references point to key passages and are not intended to be exhaustive. For further discussion of the subject-object relation and the place of psychology in Barth, see James Brown, *Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber and Barth: Subject and Object in Modern Theology* (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

16. For one of the most concise statements of this point of view in Protestant theological thought, see Emil Brunner's essay, "Biblical Psychology," *God and Man: Four Essays on the Nature of Personality,* trans. David Cairns (London: SCM Press, 1936). See also his *Truth as Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), esp. pp. 78–83, 111–18. For a discussion of this aspect of Brunner's thought, see Fred Berthold, Jr., "Objectivity in Personal Encounter," *Journal of Religion,* XLV, No. 1 (January, 1963), 39–47.

17. See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Self and the Dramas of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), pp. 127–44; "The Tyranny of Science," *Theology Today,* X (January, 1954), 464–73; or "The Truth in Myths," in Julius S. Bixler, R. L. Calhoun, and H. R. Niebuhr (eds.), *The Nature of Religious Experience, Essays in Honor of D. C. MacIntosh* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1937). For a discussion of Bultmann's thought, indicating that his methodological sympathies also lie in this direction, see Schubert Ogden, "Myth and Truth," *McCormick Quarterly,* XVIII (January, 1965), 57–76.

18. Gordon Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), chap. x, and *Becoming* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 28–57.

19. Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954) and *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton, N.J.: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1962). In the latter see especially chap. xiii, "Health as Transcendence of Environment," and the discussion of generic guilt in chap. xiv.

20. Carl Rogers, *Client-centered Therapy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1951) and *On Becoming a Person* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1961).

21. See John M. Butler and Laura N. Rice, "Adience, Self-Actualization and Drive Theory," in Wepman and Heine (eds.), *op. cit.*

22. Erik Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* ("Psychological Issues" [New York: International Universities Press, 1959]) and *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1964).

23. The work of Helen M. Lynd, Allen Wheelis, and Erich Fromm could also be adduced in support of this point, since each attempts in his own way a critique of the superego in order to set forth more clearly his own reconstructive psychology of the self.

24. This point is the burden of much of Philip Rieff's sociological discussion of Freud. See *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: The Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). The familiar motif of the modern self, isolated by the absence of authentic images of social engagement and consequently thrown back upon its own inwardness, that characterizes much imaginative literature is not entirely unrelated to this problem. For a theological discussion of this motif see Nathan A. Scott, "Society and Self in Recent American Literature," *The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966).

25. William F. Lynch, *Images of Hope: Imagination as Healer of the Hopeless* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965).

26. Paul Tillich, "Existentialism and Psychotherapy," in Hendrik M. Ruitenbeck (ed.), *Psychoanalysis and Existential Philosophy* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1962).

27. See, e.g., Samuel J. Beck *et al.*, *Rorschach's Test: I. Basic Processes* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1961), chap. x.

28. See Alfred Adler, "The Problem of Distance," *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology* (New Haven, Conn.: Harcourt, 1924).

29. For a discussion of this problem from the point of view of religious existentialism, see Martin Buber, "Distance and Relation," *Knowledge of Man,* trans. Maurice Friedman and Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

30. See Paul Tillich, "Two Types of Philosophy of Religion," in Robert C. Kimball (ed.), *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).