Don Browning's Christian Humanism

with Don Browning, "Reviving Christian Humanism: Science and Religion"; Terry D. Cooper, "Psychology, Religion, and Critical Hermeneutics: Don Browning as a 'Horizon Analyst'"; Wesley J. Wildman, "The Artful Humanism of Don Browning"; Don S. Browning and John Witte, Jr., "Christianity's Mixed Contributions to Children's Rights"; and Don S. Browning, "A Natural Law Theory of Marriage"

REVIVING CHRISTIAN HUMANISM: SCIENCE AND RELIGION*

by Don S. Browning

Abstract. A possible consequence of the dialogue between science and religion is a revived religious humanism—a firmer grasp of the historical and phenomenological meanings of the great world religions correlated with the more accurate explanations of the rhythms of nature that natural science can provide. The first great expressions of religious humanism in the West emerged when Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scholars sat in the same libraries in Spain and Sicily, studying and translating the lost manuscripts of Aristotle in the ninth and tenth centuries to understand his ethics, epistemology, and psychobiology. In our day, the science-religion dialogue—exemplified by interaction among psychology, spirituality, and psychotherapy—will best support such a revival if guided by the philosophical resources of critical hermeneutics (sometimes called hermeneutical realism) supplemented by William James's brand of phenomenology and pragmatism. Here, I develop primarily the contributions of Paul Ricoeur to hermeneutic realism and his unique ability to find a place for the natural sciences within hermeneutic phenomenology in his formula of understanding-explanation-understanding.

Keywords: Christian humanism; explanation; hermeneutics; humanism; Paul Ricoeur; psychology; spirituality; understanding

---

By *Christian humanism*, I have in mind various historic expressions of Christianity that were concerned with the spiritual goods of salvation and justification as well as the finite and inner-worldly goods of health, education, and sufficient wealth to sustain a decent life in this world.

Don S. Browning (1934–2010) was the Alexander Campbell Professor of Ethics and the Social Sciences, Divinity School, University of Chicago.

*This contribution is adapted from the Preface and Chapter 1 of *Reviving Christian Humanism: The New Conversation on Spirituality, Theology and Psychology* by Don S. Browning

Furthermore, when Christian humanism is vital, it generally is in conversation with science and philosophy in an effort to further clarify the finite goods of human life. Christian humanism gains insights from science and philosophy about the rhythms of nature that Christian theology must necessarily assume when developing its ethics and social theory.

My central argument is that Christian humanism in particular, and religious humanism in general, can best be revived if the conversation between science and religion proceeds within what I call a "critical hermeneutic philosophy." I try to explain and illustrate what this point of view can contribute to both the science-religion discussion and the strengthening of religious and Christian humanism.

I distinguish Christian from religious humanism. Christian humanism takes as its point of departure the multifaceted strands of the Christian tradition. It tries to relate to science out of the depths of this complex tradition—a tradition that has dominated in the West, shaped many of its institutions and much of its law, and placed a stamp on most of its academic disciplines. Because of the influence of Christianity on Western culture, it deserves to be much better understood than it currently is in much academic and cultural discourse. We should study this Christian heritage because it is in our bones—even the bones of the unbeliever—in ways we often do not understand. It comes down to this: we cannot understand ourselves unless we understand what historical forces have shaped us, and Christianity is certainly one of those central influences.

By *religious humanism*, I mean to suggest that many of the other great religious traditions of the world—for example, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam—also have their humanistic dimensions. They have, at times, had their dialogues with the science and philosophy available in their respective cultures. They too can cultivate, strengthen, and revive their historical moments of religious humanism. But even here, I recommend working within the resources of specific traditions to revive the various religious humanisms. I do not advocate trying to develop some general religious humanism that transcends specific traditions and offers some homogenized and nonhistorical spirituality that is unrecognizable from the perspective of any specific religious faith. I say, instead, that in conversation with the sciences—particularly the psychological and social sciences—we should revive the humanistic dimensions of our various grand religious traditions and then enter into an interfaith dialogue with a sharper grasp of our various world religious humanisms.

My colleague and lunch partner, William Schweiker, works more with the category of theological humanism in contrast to religious or Christian humanism, although he appreciates these labels as well. By *theological humanism*, he means a critical perspective on Christian theology that includes but goes beyond confession and thereby enters into a reflective dialogue with both nontheological disciplines and other faiths (Klemm

and Schweiker 2008, 20). He believes that elements of this agenda can be found in other religions as well as Christianity and that this critical reflective attitude should be encouraged in both interfaith dialogue and the emerging field of comparative religious ethics. I agree. When I use the term *religious humanism*, I mean to include the possibility of this critical reflective stance as central to the strategy of strengthening and revival that I am proposing.

Implications of the New Interest in Science and Religion

For over 150 years there has been a vital, and often contentious, dialogue between science and religion. In recent years, new energy and fresh public interest have been injected into this conversation. This largely has come about due to the new insights into religion and ethics achieved by collaboration between evolutionary psychology and cognitive and social neuroscience.

What are the likely social consequences of this new interest in the relation of science and religion? There are at least three possible answers. One might be the new atheism exemplified by the writings of Richard Dawkins (2006), Daniel Dennett (2006), Sam Harris (2006), and Christopher Hitchens (2007). In this approach, the alleged defective thinking of the world religions is exposed, and a worldview and way of life based strictly on science are offered as replacement. A second option might be the return of a hegemonic dominance of religion over science. A third might be the emergence of a revitalized religious humanism of the kind that has happened on several occasions in the past in most of the great world religions. This last option is the one I will advocate.

What would this religious humanism be like? The major world religions would remain visible and viable as religious movements. But the contributions of science would help these religions refine their interests in improving the health, education, wealth, and overall well-being of their adherents and the general population. In addition, the sciences would help them refine their grasp of the empirical world, about which they, such as humans in general, are constantly making judgments, predictions, and characterizations. In my vision, the attitude of scientists toward religion would be first of all phenomenological; they would first attempt to describe and understand (in the sense of verstehen) religious beliefs, ethics, and rituals in their full historical context. But their interest in explaining some of the conditions that give rise to religious phenomena would not be inhibited by either religion or the wider society. Yet, the wiser scientists would understand the limits of explanation, would hesitate to skip lightly over the initial phenomenological moment, and would be reluctant to plunge headlong into speculations about the ultimate truth or falsity of religious ideas and practices in the way exhibited by the new scientific atheism.

On the other hand, the religions themselves can contribute to the sciences by offering hypotheses about how social and religious ideas, behaviors, and rituals can shape experience, even neural processes, often for the good but sometimes not. The religions can offer a more generous epistemology and ontology than science is inclined to find useful for the tight explanatory interests of the laboratory or scientific survey. This too might generate new hypotheses for scientific investigation. These would be some of the ground rules for how a dialogue between science and religion might stimulate a revived religious humanism.

Religious Humanisms of the Past

To speak of a revival of religious humanism acknowledges that there have been many expressions of religious humanism in the past. I will limit myself to speaking primarily about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The synthesis between Greek philosophical psychology and Christianity can be found in the use of Stoic theories of desire by the apostle Paul (Deming 1995; Engbert-Pedersen 2000), the presence of Aristotle's family ethic (Aristotle 1941, book 8, chapter 10) in the household codes of Ephesians and 1 Colossians, and the Gospel of John's identification of Jesus with the Platonic and Stoic idea of the preexistent "Word" (*Interpreter's Bible* 1952, 465). A more intentional religious humanism can be found in Augustine's use of the neoplatonic Plotinus, especially in the philosophical psychology of remembrance in his Confessions (397 A.D.; see Brown 1969, 178).

But the most dramatic example of a religious humanism that spread simultaneously into Judaism, Christianity, and Islam can be found when the lost texts of Aristotle were discovered, translated, and appropriated by scholars from these three religions who worked at the same tables in Islamic libraries in Spain and Sicily during the ninth and tenth centuries. Richard Rubinstein, in his timely book titled *Aristotle's Children* (2003), tells the story well. This study gave rise to forms of Aristotelian religious humanism in the works of Thomas Aquinas in Christianity, Maimonides in Judaism, and Averroës in Islam. On the American scene, one sees another form of Christian humanism in the synthesis of philosophical pragmatism, with all its influence from Darwin, and various expressions of liberal Christianity and the social gospel movement (Ames 1929).

Religious humanisms have not always flourished and are subject to attacks from both fundamentalists and scientific secularists. They need constant updating and vigorous intellectual development. But at their best, they make it possible for societies to maintain strong religious communities as well as integrating symbolic umbrellas that protect the productive interaction of the scientific and philosophical disciplines with the wider cultural and religious life.

Epistemological Frameworks for a Revived Religious Humanism

But on what epistemological and ontological grounds could such a dialogue between science and religion proceed today, especially if they were supportive of a revived religious humanism? In this book, I will address this question as a Christian theologian. Furthermore, most of my illustrations will come from the Christian tradition. Although I am interested in the possibility of a more widespread revival of religious humanism in Judaism, Islam, and the other great world religions, my illustrations and arguments will feature the tradition I know best. This will be useful for another reason. Of all the great world religions, for a variety of internal and external historical reasons, Christianity has doubtless had the most vigorous encounter to date with the challenges and stimulations of the rise of science in the modern world.

In my effort to demonstrate how the dialogue between science and religion can be productive, I will go two directions at once with varying degrees of evenness. To say it crassly, like the philosophical pragmatist that I am, I will try to show the payoff for both Christianity on the one hand and selected psychological disciplines on the other. I will attempt to show what Christianity can learn from some aspects of science that will refine, and in this sense improve, its grasp of its own religious beliefs, ethics, worship, healing, and spiritual practices. But I will also suggest ways in which these scientific disciplines can profit. By "profit," however, I do not mean just getting more money in their research accounts, although that may happen as well. As I have already indicated, the modern psychologies, even in their properly naturalistic forms, can gain new hypotheses about how experience, including religious experience, shapes feelings, motivations, neural processes, and behaviors. With the advent of positive psychology in the work of Martin Seligman, Jonathan Haidt, Joshua Greene, and many others, an entire range of new research topics has emerged around love, forgiveness, wisdom, virtue, and spiritual transformation that was almost entirely absent from the psychological disciplines as recently as a decade ago.

We live in a period of wider and more fruitful epistemologies that open new possibilities of research between science and religion, even between psychology and Christian theology, that need not threaten either and could indeed strengthen them both. I have been retired from the Divinity School of the University of Chicago for over 6 years. Since the time of my official departure, several new collaborative research projects involving the natural sciences and the humanities—including theology and religious studies—have emerged around this university, which historically has been dedicated to graduate education and research. Today there are collaborative projects involving the natural sciences and the humanities that are proceeding on such diverse topics as spirituality and health, a

science of virtue, wisdom, decision making, and anthropomorphism. They involve social neuroscientists, philosophers, political theorists, medical doctors, philosophers, social psychologists, sociologists, and theologians. Such collaboration at this university between science and the humanities would have been unthinkable during the peak of my active teaching years. It is interesting to note that the stimulators of much of this collaboration come from the burgeoning field of social neuroscience and such innovative and ecumenical scholars as John Cacioppo and Howard Nusbaum. Their knowledge of the neural plasticity of the human brain leads them to be as interested in how the external influences of social, cultural, and religious experience shape the physical base of our mental processes as they are in how these brain processes project themselves into our thoughts and behaviors.

I recall a prediction made to me by a distinguished New York University psychologist in the early 1990s. He believed that the rise of the neurosciences would relegate most of traditional psychology to the humanities and that departments of psychology would become branches of biology and medicine. I can remember leaving his office in a slight fog of depression over hearing this possibility. In many places, however, just the reverse has happened. A new conversation between psychology as a natural science and the humanities has risen that may have immense fruitfulness for both fields of study.

But what epistemological and ontological frameworks should guide such a conversation and possible collaboration? I will propose in these lectures the resources of what the late French philosopher Paul Ricoeur would call either critical hermeneutics or hermeneutic phenomenology. I can imagine that the very sound of these technical terms sends icy chills down the spines of some readers. I will try to explain them the best I can as I develop my arguments.

I can say this much now. There have been in recent years important and powerful proposals about the significance of phenomenology for the psychological disciplines, especially the clinical disciplines. These have been advanced by Frank Richardson, Blaine Fowers, and Charles Guignon in *Re-envisioning Psychology* (1999) and by Philip Cushman in *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy* (1995). But, from my perspective, these proposals move too far in the direction of making psychology a thoroughly interpretive discipline, nearly losing the element of objectivity, or what I will call, following Ricoeur, the moments of distanciation and explanation that psychology as a science also must always include. But I say these things now only to chart the course I will travel. I will say more about these cryptic remarks in a moment.

I start first, however, with the term hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is an offshoot of the European hermeneutical and phenomenological movements. The hermeneutic side ran through

the work of German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, the historian Wilhelm Dilthey, and the philosophers Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur. This movement was concerned with questions about the appropriate interpretation of texts. It held that the quests for meaning by the human spirit were objectified in the great texts of the past, and that to retain this fund of meaning and insight, these texts required interpretation and internalization (Palmer 1969, 31). The hermeneutic movement arose from the disciplines of history, literary studies, philosophy, and theology as part of the Geisteswissenschaften (the cultural or moral sciences) in contrast to the Naturwissenschaften (the natural sciences) (Palmer 1969, 98–99). The hermeneutic movement was particularly concerned to resist the naturalization of mind, that is, the modeling of mind after the objectifying sciences of the neurobiology, physiology, and physics of that era. To say it bluntly, the hermeneutic movement was a strategy in the humanities to counter what my New York University psychologist friend thought was certain to happen when he made his prediction in the early 1990s.

The hermeneutic movement had an interest in phenomenological description but primarily in the description of meaning housed in the great literary classics that were formative in shaping Western civilization. Phenomenology in the more rigorous sense of that term began with late nineteenth-century German philosopher Edmund Husserl. Husserl, however, advocated a kind of transcendental phenomenology that pursued a stringent description of the objects of consciousness when both the presuppositions of the existence of the personal ego and assumptions about the existence of objects in the external world were bracketed, suspended, or set aside (Ricoeur 1967a, 9–11, 87–89, 107f).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is different from Husserl's transcendental reduction of both the existence of the objects of description and the perceiving and describing personal ego. Hermeneutic phenomenology should even be distinguished from William James's kind of phenomenological psychology, which allowed the personal ego and its unique experiences as legitimate subject matter for phenomenological description (Linschoten 1968; MacLeod 1969; Stevens 1974; Wild 1970; Wilshire 1971). Husserl was too influenced by Descartes for my taste. He, like Descartes, founded epistemology on the pure ego that had been stripped of its linguistic and historical constitution. Early in his career, Ricoeur had published profound transcendental phenomenological studies of the essence of the will in *Freedom and Nature* (1966) and the fallibility of the will in *Fallible Man* (1965).

But when Ricoeur decided he wanted to study the actual experience of human fault, in contrast to the mere possibility of fault, he turned to hermeneutic phenomenology and studied the epigenetic history of the Western symbols and myths of fault and evil in his monumental *Symbolism of Evil* (1967b). The presupposition of this turn from pure

phenomenology to hermeneutic phenomenology was the conviction that from the beginning the ego could not be the pure ego of Descartes and Husserl. It was, instead, both an embodied ego located in a desiring body and an ego constellated by language, tradition, and symbols from our inherited cultural past. We are feeling and desiring creatures who project our feelings through mediations of linguistic metaphors and symbols.

This is why Ricoeur, as do metaphor and cognitive theorists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999), believes that philosophy should anchor itself in the deep avowals and confessions of human consciousness that express themselves in metaphors and symbols. As Ricoeur wrote: "The symbol gives rise to thought" (Le symbole donne à penser, Ricoeur 1967a, 19). By this he means that philosophy, and by implication psychology, studies a human consciousness and unconsciousness that are mixtures of desire constellated, however vaguely, by the great metaphorical and symbolic resources that have formed a cultural tradition. If this is true, there is hardly any way that either philosophy or psychology can avoid the subjects of spirituality and religion. These symbols and narratives from our various cultural traditions already have in some way shaped the minds of both the psychological investigators and the subjects they study and try to heal.

So, Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology starts not in describing pure consciousness, as does Husserl's, but in describing the embodied consciousness shaped by the metaphors, symbols, myths, and narratives mediated by interpersonal, social, and cultural traditions. But before we review how he brings into his hermeneutic description the distanciating and explanatory interests of the natural sciences, we need to learn a bit more about how hermeneutic phenomenology works. Hermeneutic phenomenology has four core ideas.

The first core idea is Gadamer's important theory of "effective history," a concept that Ricoeur freely appropriates (Gadamer 1982, 267–74). This idea points to the situated character of all thinking and investigation. Historical texts, events, and monuments are not simply things that linger in the past and have no effect on us today. The past is mediated to us today and shapes us in myriad ways that we often cannot name or easily bring to consciousness.

Second, this effective history shapes what Gadamer called our "pre-understanding." These preunderstandings are the inherited frameworks that we rely on when attempting to understand our experience of the world, especially that which has already shaped us (Gadamer 1982, 135–37). We would not understand our everyday experience if we did not have this fund of interpretive frameworks accumulated through repeated successful understandings of past generations. From one perspective, these preunderstandings function like prejudices, but from another perspective they are comparative references that make sense of our experiences. They may need to be tested and, as I will argue, both science and

religion can play a very important role in testing and refining some of these preunderstandings of our inherited cultural, spiritual, and religious traditions. But these preunderstandings from our effective histories should not be denied and suppressed, as more positivistic philosophy and science are inclined to do. They serve a purpose, and they cannot be tested if they are not interpreted and understood. Such testing and interpretation is part of the task of religious humanism and, as I will argue, both philosophy and the various psychologies can contribute much to this testing process.

The third concept is about the most basic character of all human understanding. From the perspective of hermeneutic phenomenology, all understanding is like a dialogue or a conversation. In fact, understanding is a dialogue and conversation. The structure of a dialogue is an ontological feature of human consciousness. Understanding anything—be it a past or present event, a behavior, a conversation, a therapeutic exchange, a spiritual exercise, or a ritual process—is first of all a matter of dialogue. This may sound trivial, but the point is profound, especially when making this assertion to scientists. It is asserting, in effect, that understanding something is not first, and not fundamentally, an objective process. This claim is often difficult for scientists to comprehend, but this is precisely what the Richardson team and Philip Cushman are contending in their respective books reinterpreting the entire range of psychology and psychotherapy as hermeneutic disciplines.

The fourth concept is closely associated with the idea of all understanding as dialogue. It makes an important tie between understanding as dialogue and the nature of moral thinking. Gadamer and Ricoeur believe that moral interests shape the understanding process from the beginning. This means that we do not first determine the objective nature of experience and the world and then determine how to apply this objective knowledge to concrete situations of moral action, even when these situations take the form of therapeutic interventions or care. Gadamer (1982, 330–31) says it well when he writes: "We, too, determined that application is neither a subsequent nor a merely occasional part of the phenomenon of understanding, but co-determines it as a whole from the beginning." By using the word "application" in this passage, Gadamer means practical moral application. This is my favorite passage from Gadamer. It asserts that there is an unbreakable tie between understanding and practical moral reason. Understanding can never be totally neutral nor objective; our practical interests and preunderstandings will always enter into the picture, shaping understanding from the very beginning.

The Role of Objectivity or Distanciation

I can imagine by now that many of you are becoming nervous. Is not science about objectivity, explanation of causes, controlled observations, and, if possible, experimentation so that variables can be controlled and

manipulated? And, of course, the answer must be yes. These are legitimate interests of science, and they make science what it is. This leads me to advocate not only a hermeneutic phenomenology as a beginning point for both philosophy and psychology but a particular version of that point of view called critical hermeneutics or hermeneutic realism. This view is also associated with the hermeneutic philosophy of Paul Ricoeur in contrast to the hermeneutics of Gadamer and his teacher Martin Heidegger. Critical hermeneutics finds a place for explanation and the kind of epistemological distance that we mistakenly call objectivity (Gadamer 1982, 189). In other words, Ricoeur's view of hermeneutics finds a place for what we call science. But for him, and for me, the explanatory and distancing objectives of science do not stand on their own foundation. They evolve out of a prior understanding of the effective history that shapes us all and then returns to that history with refinements and adjustments to the massive funds of wisdom and insight that tradition delivers to us from the tested, and sometimes not-so-tested, experience of the past.

Ricoeur is actually critical of Gadamer for his neglect of science in his dialogical view of human understanding. In his book *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981), Ricoeur suggests that the very title of Gadamer's magnum opus reflects a neglect of science. He writes: "The question is to what extent the work deserves to be called Truth AND Method, and whether it ought not instead to be entitled Truth OR Method" (1981, 61). By the word method, Ricoeur is referring to Gadamer's neglect of the role of distanciation and causal explanation in the larger framework of understanding. Gadamer, Ricoeur explains, was so concerned with what he called "alienating distanciation" (Verfremdung) and its influence on disconnecting modern consciousness from tradition that he unfortunately neglected science and explanation altogether (62). Gadamer's concern has been transmitted to Frank Richardson and his team, who see the alienation of modern consciousness from tradition wrought in part by scientific psychology and psychotherapy as resulting in a kind of "ontological individualism" that gives "primacy to individual self-fulfillment," dissociated from the wisdom, and claims of tradition (Richardson et al. 1999, 7).

To counter this neglect of science in a hermeneutic model of human understanding, Ricoeur proposes substituting the concepts of distanciation (1981, 64f) and diagnosis (1966, 12f, 87f; 1970, 436–438) for the concept of objectivity. To illustrate the meaning of these concepts, one can turn to the way a medical doctor or even a psychotherapist might use the more scientific diagnostic tools of her profession—in medicine, the blood pressure monitor, stethoscope, x-ray machine, or CT (CAT Scan), or in psychology, the DSM-IV, TAT, Rorschach test, any number of pencil and paper tests, or even PET, SPECT, or the fMRI. The use of such instruments for diagnostic purposes generally will be preceded by an interview—indeed a conversation—about how the subject feels, thinks he feels, thinks is

right or wrong with his functioning, work life, marital life, or friendships. According to Ricoeur, what the physician and psychologists learn from the objective instruments gains its meaning significantly with reference to the embodied subjectivity, lived experience, and encoded effective history of the patient or client.

With this illustration in mind, we can comprehend how to envision explanation as not pure objectivity without presuppositions but degrees of distanciation that make sense only in relation to describing a more basic foreground of social and historical experience, belonging, and embeddedness. Hence, rather than celebrating either extreme—the pretensions of objective science or Gadamer's uncritical embeddedness in tradition—Ricoeur (1981, 90) asks: "Would it not be appropriate . . . to reformulate the question in such a way that a certain dialectic between the experience of belonging and alienating distanciation becomes the mainspring, the key to the inner life, of hermeneutics?"

Hence, for Ricoeur, truth—which he identifies with the hermeneutic understanding of the effective history that has formed us—and scientific method and explanation are not viewed, as they are for Gadamer, as a matter of either-or. Rather, he sees truth and scientific method as "a dialectical process" (1981, 93). I must point out, however, that it is precisely the act of including explanation as a submoment of understanding that turns hermeneutic phenomenology into critical hermeneutics of the kind that I am advocating. In this model, the task of explanation is important and in some instances can contribute refinement and critique to the great fund of inherited wisdom.

This is the epistemology that I believe should guide the dialogue between science and religion, especially the dialogue between religion and the psychological scientific disciplines. This is the model that will bear the most fruit in studying human consciousness, its preconscious or unconscious depths, forms of healing and psychotherapy, the analogues between psychotherapy and spirituality, or the processes of moral and spiritual development. This is also the model I recommend for reviving both religious humanism in general and Christian humanism in particular. An epistemology that prioritizes understanding over explanation leads one to take the effective history of the past with the utmost seriousness. It provides models of consciousness, prototypes of intervention, and traditions of confession, restoration, and healing that the modern disciplines may be able to refine but not completely invent. Science will move more firmly and successfully into the future if it also keeps in touch with the past.

Beginning with the Traditions that Form Us

I have confessed already that I will illustrate many of my arguments with the tradition I know best—the Christian tradition. This is not just a

confession of my own limitations but a strategy that a critical hermeneutical phenomenology itself also demands. Because of the massive influence of Christianity on the institutions, cultures, and effective history of the West, this tradition—in its interaction and absorption of elements of Judaism, Greek philosophy, and Roman and German law—constitutes an important part of the effective history and consciousness of vast numbers of people, even those who do not profess this religion or any religion at all. The dialogue between science and religion, or between religion and the psychological disciplines, should not neglect this tradition of understanding.

This message is especially relevant to the new movement of positive psychology. Of all the movements in psychology today, it has returned to a vital dialogue with the traditions of the past for inspiration, new hypotheses, and the possible refinements that science can offer. One can see this trend in Jonathan Haidt's well-received *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom* (2006). Throughout this engaging summary of many of the advances in positive psychology, Haidt is constantly referring to the treasures of the great religious and philosophical traditions of the world, especially Buddhism, because of its sophisticated philosophical psychology.

The psychologically literate philosopher Owen Flanagan, although not a positive psychologist, used the fruits of that field extensively in his recent Templeton Lectures titled *The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World* (2007, 50–52). But he, like Haidt in his appropriation of the insights of the past, skips rapidly from the eudaimonism of Aristotle to his interpretation of the emphasis on mindfulness, nonsuffering, and human flourishing found in the texts of the Buddha and some of his philosophical followers (Flanagan 2007, 1–4, 32–36, 163–68). In the process, Flanagan fails to trace the mixture of Aristotelian eudaemonism and Christianity that developed in the philosophical psychology of Thomas Aquinas, his followers, much of the Protestant Reformation, and the great tradition of Roman Catholic social teachings which has had so much influence on the human rights movement of the modern world (Browning 2006, 2007).

My point is that in reviving the tradition of religious humanism through a dialogue between science and religion, and between religion and psychology, we must not neglect the effective history of the West. At least some of us should be permitted to start in our own backyards. And if we do that we will gain even more and firmer insights and then gradually expand our dialogue to include the rest of the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In May 2010, Don Browning stepped down as one of the chairs of the Joint Publication Board of *Zygon*: *Journal of Religion and Science.* With his consent, the editor of zygon envisaged a thematic section on his most recent book, *Reviving Christian Humanism*: *The New Conversation on Spirituality,*

Theology, and Psychology (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010). This paper is adapted from the Preface and the first chapter of that book.

References

Ames, Edward Scribner. 1929. *Religion*. Chicago: Holt.

Aristotle. 1941. *Nicomachean Ethics*. New York: Random House.

Brown, Peter. 1969. *Augustine of Hippo*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Browning, Don S. 2006. "The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: Should it be Ratified and Why?" *Emory International Law Review* 20(1, Spring):157–84.

———. 2007. "The Meaning of a Family in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." In *The Family in the New Millennium*, vol. 1, eds. Scott Loveless and Thomas B. Homan. Westport, CT: Praeger.

———. 2010. *Reviving Christian Humanism: The New Conversation on Spirituality, Theology, and Psychology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Cushman, Philip. 1995. *Constructing the Self, Constructing America: A Cultural History of Psychotherapy*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.

Dawkins, Richard. 2006. *The God Delusion*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Deming, Will. 1995. *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dennett, Daniel C. 2006. *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Viking.

Engbert-Pedersen, Troels. 2000. *Paul and the Stoics*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox.

Flanagan, Owen. 2007. *The Really Hard Problem: Meaning in a Material World*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 1982. *Truth and Method*. New York: Crossroad.

Haidt, Jonathan. 2006. *The Happiness Hypothesis: Finding Modern Truth in Ancient Wisdom*. New York: Basic Books.

Harris, Sam. 2006. *Letter to a Christian Nation*. New York: Knopf.

Hitchens, Christopher. 2007. *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Twelve.

Interpreter's Bible. 1952. *Volume 8. Luke and John*. Nashville, KY: Abingdon.

Klemm, David, and William Schweiker. 2008. *Religion and the Human Future: An Essay on Theological Humanism*. Oxford: Wiley Blackwell.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1999. *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

Linschoten, Hans. 1968. *Om the Way toward a Phenomenological Psychology.* Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

MacLeod, Robert. 1969. *William James: Unfinished Business*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Palmer, Richard. 1969. *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Richardson, Frank, Blaine Fowers, and Charles Guignon, 1999. *Re-envisioning Psychology: The Moral Dimensions of Theory and Practice*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1965. *Fallible Man*. Chicago: Henry Regnery.

———. 1966. *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and Involuntary*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1967a. *Husserl: An Analysis of His Phenomenology*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

———. 1967b. *The Symbolism of Evil*. New York: Harper and Row.

———. 1970. *Freud and Philosophy*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

———. 1981. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rubinstein, Richard. 2003. *Aristotle's Children*. New York: Harcourt.

Stevens, Richard. 1974. *James and Husserl: The Foundations of Meaning*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Wild, John. 1970. *The Radical Empiricism of William James*. New York: Anchor.

Wilshire, Bruce. 1971. *William James and Phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.