Religion and Psychology: A Dialogue

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> Ever so many people at the present time find themselves interested in both psychology and religion. Psychology is a solidly growing science: There is hope that it may emerge as the decisive science of the twentieth century. It is also currently fashionable -- perhaps too much for its own good. While popular interest in psychology mounts, religion remains as ever one of the prominent concerns of mankind. This concern has existed since the dawn of history, probably long before -- and has not been diminished by the social and moral catastrophes of the past three decades. Those who are interested in both psychological science and religion are quite naturally asking what the two subjects have to do with each other. Both seem so intimately tied to the future destiny of the human race.1

As Gordon Allport observes, psychology and religion <u>are</u> both tied to the future destiny of the human race, simply because they both deal with life and how to live with its joys and sorrows. In this paper I wish to stress a positive working relationship between religion and psychology, where one does not replace the other, but each mutually criticize the other and each shares their respective image of human maturity.

This interest in human maturity is a personal concern that stems from what I believe to be my purpose on earth; to commune with, participate in the lives of, and help my fellow sisters and brothers with life struggles. My concern is for the well-being, quality, and level of human life. My studies in college and meaningful experiences in life have dealt with understanding, or

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1 Gordon W. Allport, <u>The Individual and his Religion: A Psychological Interpretation</u>, (New York: The Macmillan company, 1950), p.v.

gaining insight into what I can do to best fulfill my purpose. I have found that the "inner life", which consists of our images of good and evil, our view of ourselves, our view of what makes life meaningful, and our life sustaining centers of power and value, plays an important role in our lives. My experiences have given me ideas as to what a healthy and unhealthy inner life is, what the fruits of both are, how important evaluating our inner life is to our quality of life, and how our inner lives develop. I have found it necessary to look into this inner life and evaluate it, define it, before one can be in harmony with life. My concern is similar to Don Browning's observation that many people really have no encompassing faith, no ultimate concern, no real unity to their lives.

Religion and psychology have concepts, images and modern developments that help us bring order to our inner lives. Among the many roles these two disciplines play, I believe that "at heart", the study of religion and psychology are what Don Browning (following William Dilthey) calls Geisteswissenschaften (sciences of the human spirit in its quest for meaning), contrasted to Naturwissenschaften(sciences of nature which seek causal explanation, prediction, and control).2 If these sciences are to realize that they are both aiding the human spirit in its quest for meaning, and if they wish to use their concepts, images, and modern developments to help humanity, then they need

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2 Don S. Browning, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), p.7.

to cooperate. As Gordon Allport observes in the preface to his book, The Individual and His Religion, "before such a harmony of effort can arise, the parties of both parts will need a greater flexibility of outlook than they customarily display. . . . only when both parties broaden their perspective will the way to understanding and cooperation open."3 There has been some cooperation between the two parties but there needs to be much more, and on a broader scale, before transforming aid can be brought to the human race.

This paper will concentrate on three authors that successfully combine psychology and religion in viewing human development. I will explore how these modern scholars, have used psychology and religion in trying to find some answers to the problems of human development. James Fowler is a Harvard trained theologian who has done work in developmental psychology. Fowler evaluates modern theories that offer elaborate images of the human life cycle and suggests what part they can play in our lives. According to Fowler a vital religious center is necessary though, to answer questions like; what is my life sustaining center of power and value? What makes life meaningful for me? and What are my images of good and evil? Fowler°s view is that of a theologian trained in psychology.

Gordon Allport is a psychologist who espouses the importance of the religious sentiment in one's life. A goal stated in his book The Individual and His Religion, is to trace the full course

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3 The Individual and his Religion, p.vi.

of religious development in the normally mature and productive personality.4 He deals with the psychology, not psychopathology, of religion. Psychopathology, in this case, would mean the neurotic function of religious belief. Allport denies that the religious pattern in the individual's life possesses a standard form, yet this does not mean that there is no personal form. He, through his studies, has found people to be very consistent with themselves, even though in their religious lives people are not consistent with one another.

Don Browning has a PhD. in the area of religion and psychological studies. He is a theologian and a psychologist. His book, Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, investigates the possibility that religion could play a role in the newly evolving discipline of critical psychological theory. Browning evaluates some of the major contemporary psychotherapeutic psychologies as to the implicit principles of obligation, and the deep metaphors found in and around their concepts. He hopes to show that a cultural conversation can, and should occur between the social and psychological sciences, to help shape the self-understanding of modern individuals. According to Browning it is essential that these sciences remain sciences, and not become our functional religions, our world views, or our ethics. The ethical and metaphysical resources of the Jewish and Christian religious traditions are what Browning uses to critique the dimensions of these modern psychologies when they threaten to become our religions, our world view, or our

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4 Ibid., p. 12

ethics.

In bringing forth the views and studies of these three authors I hope to do two things. One is to show that conversation can and needs to happen, between religion and psychology, to help the self-understanding of modern individuals, which will in-turn aid all of humanity. The second goal is to show what place religious sentiment should play in our lives, or what positive role religion can play in the individuals inner life development.

GORDON W. ALLPORT

According to Gordon Allport, to know that a person is in some sense "religious" is not as important as to know the role religion plays in the economy of ones life. A psychological understanding of the nature and functioning of the religious sentiment is then necessary if dialogue between religion and psychology is to be free of prejudice or emptiness.5

> My effort, as I say, is directed solely to a portrayal of the place of subjective religion in the structure of personality whenever and wherever religion has such a place. My approach is psychological, some would call it naturalistic. I make no assumptions and no denials regarding the claims of revealed religion. Writing as a scientist I am not entitled to do either.6

Religious sentiment refers to the "mode of response" found when dealing with subjective religion. Allport states that this

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5 Ibid., p.5.

6 Ibid., p.vii.

response is a blend of emotion and reason, of feeling and meaning, or simply a fusion of emotion and logical thinking.[7] Religion, in this case, being partly intellectual but more fundamentally motivational, claims Allport, covers everything in experience and everything beyond experience, it makes room for scientific fact and emotional fact. Allport expands on this by stating, "It is a hunger for, and a commitment to an ideal unification of one's life but always under a unifying conception of the nature of all existence."[8] This description of religion does not affect formal religions structure.

This religious sentiment has no standard form, but Allport assures that there is a personal form.[9] It would be quite convenient if there was such a common denominator, and many have tried to define one, but all have failed. Most psychologists, he states, seem agreed that there is no single and unique religious emotion, and that there can not be, for then the task of psychological analysis would be straight forward, which it is not.[10] These psychologists find instead, a broad and varied set of experiences that may be focused on a religious object. Allport stresses "that it is the habitual and intentional focusing of experience, rather than the character of the experience itself that marks the existence of a religious

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7 Ibid., p.17.

8 Ibid., p.21.

9 The Individual and his Religion, p.6.

10 Ibid., p.4

sentiment."11 The majority of writers on religion in its subjective aspects are in error when they fail to refer the task of characterizing the religious consciousness to the individuals who experience it, the only authorities capable of knowing what it is.12 Instead, these writers try to establish a fixed norm for religious sentiment and then admit that individual variations do occur.

This personal form is different for each individual. No two people have the same intellectual problems and skills, and therefore no two people reach identical answers to life's questions. Each person searches for answers to questions such as: What is life all about? How are all of the intricacies of life related? Is there a master design? etc. These questions are insistent with many people, and the curiosity they engender demands a support.13 For many people, religion is the support. it is primarily a search for the answers to the above mentioned questions, the search for complete knowledge and truth. With these concepts in mind it is easy to see that no two individuals will reach the same solutions. The place of religion in the personal life is different from its place in society. "The social scientist argues that the function of religion is to produce social stability. Yet no individual, I venture to assert, is religious for any such reason. The person who

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11 Ibid., p.4.

12 Ibid., p.6.

13 Ibid., p.18.

conforms to a religious custom does so for his own private reasons and derives from his conformity some special significance for his own life."14

We are now in a position to view Allport°s analysis of religious development,' beginning at early childhood and continuing throughout life. The first apparently religious responses (eg.folding hands, bowing head, or simple prayers) of the child, are not religious at all, but wholly social in character observes Allport. "The rituals are learned but not their significance."15 This self-centered thinking is slowly replaced by standardized theology and morality of culture that seeps into the child's life. An example given by Allport talks about a boy refusing to say "Our father", because if God is good then God could not be like his father, for his father was a drunkard. The child has not yet shifted from the concrete imagery of early childhood, to a more abstract conception appropriate in latter life.

An additional influence is brought to bear on the developing sentiment. Allport finds that grave disappointments (such as a sick puppy who dies despite desperate prayers) and deprivation (such as not getting a sled for christmas, for which many prayers were performed) halts the self-centered prayers. He emphasizes that to pass from self-interest to self-disinterestedness is extremely difficult and results in many people dropping religion

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14 Ibid., p.25.

15 Ibid., p.29.

because it does not magically bring aid. Maturing intelligence is what begins to offset development, because it is now more able to comprehend somewhat more adequately the abstractions taught at home and in church. The child's theology gradually begins to approximate that of his/her elders.

Serious reverses in the evolution of the religious sentiment do not occur for a while. It is not until the stress of puberty, according to Allport, that these reverses come about, "At this period of development the youth is compelled to transform his religious attitudes- indeed all his attitudes- from second hand fitting to first-hand fittings of his personality."16 This would be a time of rebellion in most cases, from the parents way of thinking. It may take many forms. Youth can shift allegiance to a different religious institution or reach a satisfying rationalism from which religious consideration are forever after eliminated.17 Opportunism and hedonism are stated by Allport as being the style of life that some youth drift into at this time. The stories of religious experience are extraordinarily diverse.

> Many, perhaps most, experience wavering faith, with peaks of exaltation and troughs of despair. The feeling of alienation from parent and church is common. Moral judgments are often harsh and positive, whether directed toward others or toward oneself. The adolescent is often a moral absolutist and believes that a God must exist in order to guarantee the moral values to which he holds. Bereavements and suffering call attention to evil and injustice, and often kindle flames of consuming doubt, or else increase the religious urge, and hasten the development of a

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16 Ibid., p.32.

17 Ibid., p.34 .

religious solution to the problem of evil.18

The psychological roots of religious sentiment are very numerous and that for one who is religiously inclined almost any type of experiencing can be, and will be, entered into the channel of the growing sentiment. Veterans of war who were studied had varied reports; doubts arose, faith was confirmed, strengthened, and faith was rejected. For many people the last traces of their childhood religion have been forcibly wiped out. "Should they yet find a way of satisfying the religious need which, in spite of everything, in most of them persists, they will do so only by way of the religion of maturity."19

Allport states that maturity in any sentiment comes about only when a growing intelligence some how is animated by the desire that this sentiment shall not suffer arrested development but shall keep pace with the intake of relevant experience. Three attributes of maturity as defined by Allport are chosen because they represent the three primary avenues of development that are open to any human being in the course of growth: the avenue of widening interests (the expanding self), the avenue of detachment and insight (self objectification) and the avenue of integration (self--unification). Without the direction and coherence supposed by some dominant integrated pattern, any life

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18 Ibid., p.34-35.

19 Ibid., p.51.

seems fragmented and aimless.20 Allport has noticed that whenever this integrative pattern is a mature religious sentiment it has a heavy duty to perform because it must accommodate every atom of experience that is referred to it.

A new definition for religious sentiment is stated by Allport because of the development stage of the sentiment at this time. A mature religious sentiment is a "disposition built up through experience, to respond favorably, and in certain ways, to conceptual objects and principles that the individual regards as of ultimate importance in his own life, and as having to do with what he regards as permanent or central in the nature of things."21 A warning is issued that the fashioning of the religious sentiment is always unfinished business and must not be expected to be absolutely consistent, even when mature.

According to Allport, immature religion, whether in adult or child, is largely concerned with magical thinking, self-justification, and creature comfort. Thus it betrays its sustaining motives still to be the drives and desires of the body. By contrast, mature religion is less of a servant, and more of a master, in the economy of the life. The mature religion emerges with the proprium, states Allport. As the individual develops there comes into being an ego (or proprium) which is the more stable, driving, and therefore unifying inner core of their personality. The individual's warmer and more

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20 Ibid., p.53.

21 Ibid., p.56.

enduring meanings and values are involved in that ego. If the individual's religious orientation whatever its context is a formative factor in their ego, then its motivating power will be strong and directive. Their religious attitude will be intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic. "The extrinsically motivated person uses their religion, where as the intrinsically motivated lives theirs. In theological terms, the extrinsic type turns to God, but with out turning away from self."22

Allport states that the individual who centralizes the religious sentiment knows well that their religious faith is not as clear or valid as the sciences. It shall, though, surpass it in adequacy, for religion must answer questions that science dare not frame, and "infuse all of life with motive."23 The developed religious sentiment is composed of many factors (eg: matters of dependency, a rational system of belief, or other empirical origins), "all of which form a comprehensive attitude whose function it is to relate the individual meaningfully to the whole of Being."24

The individual learns that to surmount the difficulties of a hostile world he/she needs also faith and love.

" Thus religion, engaging as it does reason, faith, and love, becomes for them morally true. Most religious people claim that it is also metaphysically true because they feel that outer

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22 Gordon W. Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality, (London: Yale University Press, 1955), p.37.

23 Ibid., p.68.

24 Ibid., p.94.

revelation and mystical experience have brought them supernatural assurance. Thus the warrant for certitude comes from the total orientation that the person attains in his quest for a comprehensive belief-system capable of relating him to existence as a whole."25

A "mature" person uses every intellectual tool he/she has, as they develop their basic life-affirming hypothesis as coherently as possible. But in the very search for coherence there is the demand for "relevance to the task of living as honestly as possible with the rest of humanity in a mysterious world: thus, we need reason, faith, and love."26

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25 Ibid., p.95.

26 Ibid., p.73.

Don S. Browning

We inhabit a pluralistic and rapidly changing modern society and thus build our identities out of a wide variety of resources. Some moderns can, and do achieve a rather high degree of coherence, focus, and purpose out of the many resources responsible for their identity. They can organize and synthesize fragments into a more or less working whole. The crucial question addressed by Browning regards the orientation of culture which molds our inner life. Will our culture be oriented and directed by our inherited religious traditions or will it increasingly gain its orientation from the modern psychologies, or does each perspective have its own space?

Browning writes for people who have been touched, shaped, and influenced in some way by the Jewish and Christian traditions.27 He writes for those who are still wrestling with

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27 "The Judeo-Christian tradition was chosen to play the role of critic for three reasons: 1)He hopes to show that critical discussion is indeed possible between an established religious tradition and the normative horizons of the modern psychologies. 2)It makes sense to engage this specific tradition first because it has most substantially and most decisively informed western cultures. 3)Browning argues that there are good reasons, although possibly not definitive ones, to continue to see that tradition as a major source for the interpretation of life and that we should not too quickly permit the implicit religious and ethical horizon of the social sciences to replace the explicit religion and ethics of the Jewish and Christian traditions." Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, p.x.

what these traditions and their claims may mean for modern persons. But furthermore he acknowledges those who have been touched, shaped, and influenced by the modern psychologies (twentieth century originated) and who are actively asking about the place they should occupy among the resources for modern living. Browning focuses primarily on discussing the role of the social sciences, which will indirectly gives us the role or part of the role that religion plays in our development.

Each discipline has its place in culture. Culture is defined as a system of symbols and norms which guides a society or group by providing general images of the nature of the world, the purpose of life, and at least some of the basic principles by which life should be lived. The social sciences (psychology in our case) do not dictate norms of action, it seems, and only indirectly make suggestions for appropriate strategies and skills. The situation in which psychology can truly be of assistance is stated by Browning; " Only when theological ethics tells us what our goals in action should be can the social sciences meaningfully tell us about what constrains and channels our actions toward reaching these goals."28 "Empirical information about the central tendencies and central needs of human beings are supplied by developmental psychologies. These psychologies make an important contribution to our normative judgments, especially in situations where humans are disputing

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28 Don S. Browning, ed., Practical Theology. (San Francisco: Harper & Row 1983), p.15.

about what their real needs are. But this knowledge of central tendencies and needs never dictates our norms of action."29

Clearly the task of theology, claims Browning, "is to orient the believer to the broadest ranges of human experience, to describe and represent what experience testifies to be its ultimate context, and to induce the appropriate existential and ethical response."30 Theology needs to look forward, think prospectively, and project the goals of life. In contrast to this task is scientific psychological language, for if theology tries to interpret the widest possible field of human experience, experimental psychology narrows its task and tries to test its propositions against the data, or in other words, it analyzes the smallest field of experience. Clinical psychologists, for example think retrospectively and help us analyze the interaction between biology and early parental and social influences in the formation of the self. Data refers to a particular set or collection of sense data that are clear and distinct enough to be managed, controlled, isolated, and counted. A different area of psychology, however, stands somewhere between experimental psychology and theology. Rather than prediction and control based on the manipulation of discrete facts of sense experience, the clinical psychologies (or at least some of them) are concerned with the interpretation of basic patterns, modalities, themes, and narratives which give lives their underlying

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29 Ibid., p.17.

30 Religious Thought and Modern Psychologies, p.7.

cohesion. With this distinction between psychologies, one can see that there is an interaction or commonality between clinical psychologies and theology.

The clinical psychologies try to interpret individual lives, and theology tries to interpret life, as a whole. Browning's thesis expresses that "significant portions of the modern psychologies and especially the clinical psychologies, are actually instances of religio-ethical thinking. They are in fact, mixed disciplines which contain examples of religious, ethical, and scientific language."31 If this is so then both disciplines must evaluate the framework of meaning from which they make their interpretive judgments. To do this Browning intends to distinguish what is scientific from what is moral and quasi-religious and to make some evaluation of what sense can be made of each. He calls for a critical methodology for reaching moral judgments. Speaking as a Pastoral counselor, Browning contends "that in our efforts to avoid moralism, we have moved more and more toward a stance of ethical neutrality which has done a disservice to the people who look to us for help. Pastoral care and counseling need to be grounded in a practical moral theology or theological ethics. In order to arrive at such an ethical stance in a pluralistic age, five questions need to be asked: What kind of universe constitutes the ultimate context of our action? What are we obligated to do? Which of all our human tendencies and needs are we morally justified in satisfying? What is the immediate context of our action? What specific roles, rules and processes of communication should we follow in order to accomplish our moral ends? In seeking to answer these questions, we create a process in which moral and ethical decisions can be made."32

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31 Ibid., p.8.

32 Christian Century, March 23, 1984 p.15.

These questions reveal the structure of all moral action, whether that action is pursued by an individual or a community. This analytic exercise involving five levels of thinking is necessary, according to Browning "in order to straighten out our confusion when we get in a muddle."33 The analysis proceeds in order to provide a contextual back ground for care of one another and of the world. Such care must be exercised with humility and tenderness and with an acute sense of human and Christian fallibility. But it also should be exercised with confidence that progress can be made, our care and counseling can be improved.

In our day the disciplines of theology have tended to specialize at these different levels, with no single discipline or subdiscipline responsible for integrating them all systematically. Browning states that this may be why theology has lost some of its intellectual power in guiding the church -- why theology is often said to be abstract: "it has abstracted out an important level but ignored all the rest. It has failed to attend to the 'full fact' of human action and human decision making. It is irrelevant mainly because it is incomplete."34 All theologies must operate at all five levels to be thoroughly practical, states Browning. He continues that "any theology that wishes to have the luxury of not addressing all of these levels

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33 D.S. Browning, ed., Religious Ethics and Pastoral Care. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1983), p.54.

34 Ibid., p.55.

(and there are certainly good reasons for specialization) must openly and humbly admit its incompleteness."35

The first three levels (what is said about our universe, our obligations, and our basic human needs) have the greater importance for us (as Christians), than the other two levels. This importance is due to the fact that New Testament writers speak of our universe, our obligations, and our basic human needs which has a large claim on us as listeners to their words.

The metaphorical level deals with the various metaphorical and symbolic ways we use to represent the ultimate context of experience: "it is the most distinctively and formally religious level, although practical religions always have convictions and make judgments and statements at all five levels."36 The obligational level is the most distinctively moral level. The tendency-need level tries to answer the question regarding what humans want and what they need and value -- in the nonmoral (although not necessarily immoral) sense of those terms. The contextual-predictive level tries to specify the common sociological, psychological, and cultural trends which are likely to condition our actions and their consequences. And finally, the rule-role level tries to articulate the concrete rules, roles, and processes of communication necessary to construct a world according to the visions, obligations, and possibilities opened up at the higher levels.

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35 Ibid., p.56.

36 Ibid., p.56.

Metaphors

"We start thinking about the world in metaphors and symbols long before we start making discrete propositional statements."37 We do this in all aspects of our thinking. When it comes to speaking about the most ultimate (in the sense of most determinative) aspect of our experience, we do it in metaphorical language. Browning rightly states that none of us knows directly the ultimate context of experience; therefore we take more familiar and tangible aspects of experience and apply them metaphorically to the intangible and mysterious ultimate features of experience. Browning claims that "through our metaphors we thus learn to see the world at its foundations as either warm or cold, responsive or indifferent, predictable or capricious, demanding or permissive, for us or against us."38

Browning quotes Hauerwas to summarize:

> We neither are nor should we be formed primarily by the publicly defensible rules we hold, but by the stories and metaphors through which we learn to intend the variety of our existence. Metaphors and stories suggest how we should see and describe the world -- that is how we should 'look-on' ourselves, others, and the world -- in ways that rules taken in themselves do not. Stories and metaphors do this by providing the narrative accounts that give our lives coherence.39

Hauerwas argues that religious stories and metaphors are not

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37 Ibid., p.57.

38 Ibid., p.58.

39 Ibid., p.61.

reducible to formal principles and rules. Vision, metaphor, and story are non-reducible dimensions of moral thinking and moral decision making.

Obligational

The second, or obligational level generally is guided by some consciously or unconsciously held general principle about how our actions should be ordered. This principle may be beyond immediate articulation by particular persons, or groups, but it is still functioning in their moral thinking. The basic Christian theories of obligation center around the principle of neighbor-love that instructs us to "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matt.19:19; Mark 12:31), and the older and even more universal golden rule that says to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Although,Browning adds, just what these principles actually mean is a matter of great dispute.

The single most powerful principle of obligation is summarized by Browning; "to reason morally (or to put our reasoning powers at the service of moral ends) is to think reciprocally or reversibly. That is to say, by reason we come to understand that it is unfair to make claims on someone else that we are unwilling for that person to make on us."40 Both the Golden Rule and the Second Great Commandment are,

"in the first instance, invitations to think. They are

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40 Ibid., p.64.

> invitations to practical moral rationality. In order to love your neighbor as yourself, or do to others as you would have them do to you, you must be able to think rationally, and especially to think reversibly and impartially. Thus there is at the very heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition a core of practical moral rationality found in this tradition which we frequently fail to understand and appreciate.41

We have now taken from the Christian story and its metaphors of ultimacy, a principle of obligation -- reversible impartiality of the kind celebrated in the Golden Rule and in the Second Great Commandment. This principle helps us to understand the metaphor of God as governor and brings light to the moral seriousness of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Moreover, the principle is to be found in similar formulations in a variety of other metaphorical and religious settings throughout history -- partial illustration of how moral principles indeed have some independence of their religious metaphorical contexts.42

Tendency -- Need

> "In the Christian context the principle of impartiality is equally fundamental for a proper interpretation of both justice and love (agape). In justice there is a more direct emphasis upon impartiality, equality, and reciprocity. In love as agape we are called to be more active, more directly empathic, more specifically identified with the unfortunate, more self-sacrificing and aggressive in trying to meet needs and redress inequalities. But we still do this impartially, without regard to the special qualities and values of the other persons and without elevating our own claims above theirs.43

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41 Ibid., p.65.

42 Ibid., p.66.

43 Ibid., p.66-67.

The difficulty with interpreting the Christian obligations of love and justice in terms of the principle of impartiality is that impartiality is such an abstract principle. Impartiality universalized probably gets to the very heart of moral thinking, but like any universal principle, it remains rather formal and empty unless it is supplemented by a generic theory of human nature. A generic theory is simply a theory of what the central tendencies and needs of humans really are. The question then becomes, "Which of all the various conflicting human tendencies, wants, and needs are now to be justly, fairly, and lovingly -- impartially -- met?"44

To get our information about human tendencies and needs we go to at least three places: "1) our own intuitive experience, 2) religious and cultural traditions, and 3) the sciences of the human such as psychology, sociobiology, and sociology."45 We humans have many tendencies, wishes, and wants, not all of which can actually be thought of as legitimate needs in the proper sense of that word. Browning states that;

> "In situations where these tendencies and wishes conflict with one another we are constantly trying to determine which ones are most central and most compatible with a wide range of other nonmoral goods and needs. The catalog of values in Genesis illustrates the way in which religious traditions convey images of nonmoral goods. °You shall have them [plants] for food'; °Be fruitful and multiply'; °It is not good that...man should be alone' -- all of which are blessed with the benediction °Behold, it was very good.'"46

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44 Ibid., p.69.

45 Ibid., p.69.

46 Ibid., p.70.

But as traditions break down and personal experience becomes confused, humans begin to quarrel with one another about what their basic needs really are. This throws them into a comparative mentality whereby they attempt critically to correlate their historically inherited perception of value with what the sciences have discovered about the central tendencies of human beings. This is where factual information from the theories of development, about our central human tendencies, can inform ethical rationality.

To step back for a moment and look at what Browning is implying shows that he is abstractly stating that "good developmental psychology can be enormously helpful, as I believe it implicitly has been already, in our ethical deliberations, by giving us theories of the range, sequence, and time table of our basic needs and potentials. In turn, these theories can constitute highly strategic theories of the premoral good that our more directly ethical principles of equal-regard and mutuality should order in the very process of living."47

Our religious metaphors, our theology, as well as the other normative disciplines (ethics, political science), must help these clinical, developmental and social psychologies "stand on its own feet. Theology offers its normative understanding of what constitutes morality. The role of theology is to challenge these psychologies to bring to the surface their moral

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47 Religious Thought and the Modern Psychologies, p.230.

commitments or their deep metaphors, and critically test them. For if Browning's view of the inevitable role deep metaphors in practical thinking is correct, and if his view that some rational method can be brought to the question of evaluated deep metaphors from the perspective of their metaphysical as well as their moral adequacy, then barring the role of religion may be more difficult than one would think.48

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48 Ibid., p.244.

James W. Fowler

> "In our time of fractured images of the human vocation and of fragmented experiences of connectedness to religious and cultural symbols of wholeness, a group of philosophical psychologists are helping us to gain a holistic grasp on the course of human life. Using the organic root metaphor of development in a variety of ways, their research and theories aim to provide empirically grounded chartings of predictable patterns and turnings in human life cycles. Seventeenth-century Protestant scholastic theologians wrote and taught about what they called the ordo salutis -- the path or steps to salvation. It may not be going too far to suggest that philosophical theorists of developmental psychology are offering, in formalistic and mainly secular terms, contemporary versions of an ordo salutis. This parallel makes more sense if you recall that in Latin salus, the root word for salutis and salvation, means 'wholeness' or 'completion.'"[49]

Concerned with faith and with human formation and transformation, Fowler wants people to take seriously the fact that they began as infants and children and that in their present efforts to shape adult identity and faith they need to revisit their earliest years and relationships. He wants to offer, with his own theory, the beginnings of an ordering of the predictable phases of growth in faith, taking full account of the dynamics of doubt and struggle it entails. Fowler treats developmental theories as narrative structures, as myths of becoming, that

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49 James W. Fowler, Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), p.15.

elaborate both the quality and the direction of human growth and development. His evaluation engages these myths of becoming with ethical and theological criteria of adequacy. He treats the theorists as quasi-ethicists and quasi-theologians.50

Theories have dual sides to them;

> "A theory means an elaborate, dynamic model of very complex patterns in our lives. Theories can be exciting and powerful, giving us names for our experiences and ways to understand and express what we have lived. They can also become blinders, limiting our ability to see to only those features of phenomena that we can name and account for."51

Erik Erikson builds on the definition when he says "we must take our theories with a serious playfulness and a playful seriousness."52 This is a warning that shows a double faith. Faith that can in some measure grasp, clarify and work effectively with the most vital processes of our lives, but also faith that the reality of any such complex process will not be exhaustively contained in our theoretical frameworks.

Developmental theories give us a way of claiming an inbetween position (inbetween a static and a dynamic theory) that allows us to speak of the dynamics of change and transformation. They also allow us to focus on equilibrium and continuity. Four psychologists that have contributed to Fowler's work on faith development are Carol Gilligan, Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson,

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50 Ibid., p.16.

51 James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith:The Psychology of Human development and the Quest for Meaning,(San Francisco: Harper & row, 1981), p.xiii.

52 Ibid., p.89.

and Lawrence Kohlberg. Gilligan°s contributions are to our understanding of human wholeness and completion which focuses especially on images of moral maturity. The implications of her work, which Fowler notes, are that the morally mature woman or man is one who has moved through either the route of developing an ethics of responsibility or through the route of the ethics of rights and duties, to the point where the strengths of each of these positions approach each other and can be integrated.

In short; "Gilligan helps us to see in fresh ways that human wholeness or completion requires a balance between responsibility and care for others (and their relatedness to each other), on the one hand, and regard and care for the self, on the other. For this balancing in our lives -- not just in our minds -- we need the virtues that come with connectedness, intimacy, love, and care. But we also need the virtue of fairness, a sense of justice, and a principled commitment to duty."53

Erik Erikson's insights push us in the direction of ethics and normative visions of human wholeness. Erikson's vision is prophetic and religious in its clear suggestion that fulfillment in life derives from caring for the conditions that enable present and future generations to develop the full range of human virtues. His work lifts up the critical importance of finding ways, by mid-life at least, of employing one's gifts and abilities in long-term commitments to care for persons, for institutions, and for society, so that in one's own life cycle one contributes to the strengthening of the ongoing cycle of the generations.54 Daniel Levinson's perspective enriches our

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53 Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian, p.45.

54 Ibid., p.23.

understanding of life as process. In contrast to societal tendencies to overprize youth and young adulthood, he asserts the dignity, the creativity, and the richness that each of the four major seasons of our lives makes possible. Avoiding giving prescriptive norms for womanhood/manhood, Levinson, instead, provides a framework that can help us keep abreast of "what time it is in our lives" and understand some of the dynamics of transitional experiences. His position can help by providing one kind of orientation we need as we face decisions or choices and as we work at the maintenance and renewal of long-term commitments.55

Lawrence Kohlberg's ground breaking work on the developmental stages of moral judgment has opened the way for a number of promising approaches for extending Piagetian work in the study of ego development. Kohlberg has been the largest influence on Fowlers work.

These psychologists and their contributions, as well as others, have all helped Fowler form his own theory. Fowler's research in the area of faith development begins with a premise that faith is a human universal. Faith, for Fowler, is interactive and social, it is a person's or group's way of moving into the force field of life. It is a way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and relations that make up our lives. It is shaped by initiatives from beyond us (spirit and grace) and other people. How these later initiatives

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55 Ibid., p.33.

are recognized and imagined or unperceived and ignored, powerfully affects the shape of faith in our lives.56 He quotes Wilfred Cantwell Smith; "faith is deeper and more personal than religion. It is a person's or group's way of responding to the transcendent value and power as perceived and grasped through forms of cumulative tradition."57 (Religions, are defined as cumulative traditions, they are various expressions of the faith of people in the past.)

Fowlers seven stages of faith were developed from analysis of interviews that began in 1972 and continued for seven years. Nearly 400 persons, ages 4 to 80, Jews, Catholics, Protestants, agnostics, and atheists were asked questions like: Does life have a meaning or purpose? What gives your life meaning in this present period? When you are most discouraged, what gets you up in the morning to return to the struggle? The stages that follow are summarized by Linda Lawrence. She is a freelance writer who interviewed Fowler for a resource in her masters thesis, which explores the impact of family dynamics on adult faith development.

"Primal Faith (Infancy)(a pre-stage): A pre-language disposition of trust forms in the mutuality of one's relationships with parents and others to offset the anxiety that results from separations which occur during infancy.
Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early childhood): Imagination, stimulated by stories, gestures, and symbols, and not yet controlled by logical thinking, combines with perception and feelings to create long-lasting images that represent both the protective and threatening powers surrounding one's life.

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56 Stages of Faith, p.xiii.

57 Ibid., p.5.

Mythic-Literal Faith (Childhood and beyond): The developing ability to think logically helps one order the world with categories of causality, space, and time; to enter into the perspectives of others; and to capture life meaning in stories.
Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence and beyond): New cognitive abilities make mutual perspective-taking possible and require one to integrate diverse self-images into a coherent identity. A personal and largely unreflective synthesis of beliefs and values evolves to support identity and to unite one in emotional solidarity with others.
Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young adulthood and beyond): Critical reflection upon one's beliefs and values, understanding of the self and others as part of a social system, and the assumption of responsibility for making choices of ideology and lifestyle open the way for commitments in relationships and vocation.
Conjunctive Faith (Mid-life and beyond): The embrace of polarities in one's life, an alertness to paradox, and the need for multiple interpretations of reality mark this stage. Symbol and story, metaphor and myth (from one's own traditions and others'), are newly appreciated as vehicles for grasping truth.
Universalizing Faith (Mid-life or beyond): Beyond paradox and polarities, persons in this stage are grounded in a oneness with the power of being. Their visions and commitments free them for a passionate yet detached spending of the self in love, devoted to overcoming division, oppression, and brutality."58

Fowler has been, so far, emphasizing the structural-developmental understanding of cognition used by most of the developmental psychologists. The formally describable structuring patterns found in his faith development research has to hold together cognition and affection, for faith, he knew "involves rationality and passionality."59 Thus the critical importance of contents of faith (realities, values, powers and communities on and in which persons rest their hearts), are emphasized. Fowler attributes this to his theological training.

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58 Linda Lawrence, "PT CONVERSATION: JAMES FOWLER," Psychology Today, November 1983, p. 56.

59 Stages of Faith, p. 273.

To try and account for the interplay of structure and content in faith means to look more radically and inclusively at faith as a particular person's way of constituting self, others, and world in relation to the particular values, powers, and stories of reality he or she takes as ultimate.60

Our faith orientations and our corresponding characters are shaped by three major elements, labeled the "contents" of our faiths. First, there are the centers of value that claim us, the causes, concerns or persons that consciously or unconsciously have the greatest worth to us. "Worship and worth have etymological kinship, states Fowler, practically speaking we worship that or those things in relation to which our lives have worth. Whether our valuing in faith exhibits the polytheistic, henotheistic, or radical monotheistic pattern, the actual center or centers of value in our lives that have god value for us exert a powerful structuring on our ways of seeing."61

Equally important in affecting our orientations in life are the images of power we hold and the powers with which we align ourselves to sustain us in the midst of life's contingencies. We live in a potentially dangerous world of power; we are finite beings. In such a world we seek for the images and reality of powers that can be relied upon in life or death. "We try to align ourselves with power sufficient to sustain us and these

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60 Ibid., p. 273.

61 Ibid., p. 276.

persons and things we love."62

Our characters and faith orientations are shaped by the master stories (the third element) that we tell ourselves, and by which we interpret and respond to the events that impinge upon our lives. Our master stories are the characterizations of the patterns of power-in-action that disclose the ultimate meanings of our lives. A master story represents its most "comprehensive interpretation of the character of value and power in our ultimate environment and of its disposition to us."63 A religious core story enables us to see and comprehend our lives in relation to the life, history, and intentions of God. It provides a context of ultimate meaning for the events and relations of our lives; it gives us decisive images by which to interpret what we suffer and to sustain and guide us in what we hope. The Christian core story is centered in the love of Creator for created, it "focuses in the decisive actions of Creator to restore relations with created, and to bring to glorious fulfillment the vision of an ultimate community of righteousness, love, and peace. To see God's sovereign action is to be called to partnership. This is partnership in love, in hope, in redemptive-liberative suffering, and in the incomparable joy and richness of communion with God and all creation."64

Religious faith traditions must "enable us to face tragedy

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62 Ibid., p. 277.

63 Ibid., p.277.

64 Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian, p. 116.

and finitude in the devastating and bewildering particular forms they come to us, with out giving into despair or morbidity."65 Religious faith must provide liberation and redemption from sin, and self-absorbtion, "it must link us to communities of shared memory and shared hope."66

Conclusion

What does all of this mean? To answer this I refer back to my thesis, my statement of purpose for writing this paper. My purpose was two fold: first was to illustrate that conversation can and needs to happen between religion and psychology, in dealing with the well-being, and quality of human life, and second was to show what positive role religion can play in the individuals inner life development.

There are three authors that I studied to help me solve this dilema. The information contained in each authors section of the paper is only a small portion of their work in the area of religious thought. I pulled out of each author their view, or analysis of the relationship between religion and psychology, and their view as to the place each disciplines should hold in our culture.

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65 Stages of Faith, p.293.

66 Ibid., p.294.

Don Browning reports that significant portions of the modern psychologies especially clinical psychology, are in fact instances of religio-ethical thinking. They are mixed disciplines which contain examples of religious, ethical, and scientific language, thus the link between psychology and religion is established and discusion as to the frame work of meaning from which they make their interpretive judgments (on life as a whole, for theology, and on the individual life, for psychology) is encouraged.

Fowler, by his complex, inclusive, analysis of faith and the interplay of its structure and content, synthesizing both psychology and religion, gives a good argument for continuing conversation between the two disciplines. At the same time Fowler's analysis illuminates what important role religion and its, stories, images of power, and centers of value, play in the individuals growth and development.

Finally, we can see through the review of Gordon Allport's section that a religious sentiment enables a person to respond favorably to "conceptual objects and principles that the individual regards as of ultimate importance in his or her life, and as having to do with what they regard as permanent or central in the nature of things."67 Allport illustrates that religious ideas play an important role in the development of the mature "philosophy of life" and the self-concept.

What then are the implications of this study? One is that

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67 The Individual and his Religion, p.56.

conversations should continue between the two disciplines to help individuals increase the quality of their life time experiences. In more detail, psychology should pay closer attention to the discussion of religion, because of the influence religious metaphor, and story has in the individual life. As a science "psychology can neither prove nor disprove religion's claims to truth (metaphysically). It can, however, help explain why these claims are so many and so diverse. ... The final truths of religion are unknown, but a psychology that impedes the understanding of the religious potentialities of man scarcely deserves to be called a logos of the human psyche at all."68 This is a warning to psychology to pay attention to religion regarding their claims.

On the other hand, there is a warning to religion to critically review what its master story is, what its metaphors are, and what its center of value is (for each religious group), for these things have a large impact on the life of the individual. People's lives are torn apart sometimes because of their religious views. People have a vast hunger and deep need for perspectives on life that have the power to "go all the way". By this I mean that people sense deep down somewhere that the "glitter of secularization, the distractions of the media, and the hypnotic engagement in consumption are but canvas skins covering yawning abysses in our lives. Academic theologians and conventional church people may fail to see how powerful theistic imagery and religious rhetoric and vision are in our era."69

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68 Becoming, p.98.

69 Practical Theology, p. 78.

Religion certainly strengthens the individual against times of anxiety, doubt, and despair, it also provides the forward intention that enables him or her at each stage of their becoming (to use one of Allport's metaphors) to relate themselves meaningfully to the totality of being.

Both theology and the clinical psychologies are interpretive disciplines or sciences of the human spirit in its quest for meaning (Geisteswissenshaften as stated by William Dithely). The clinical psychologies try to interpret individual lives, and theology tries to interpret life as a whole. This paper is dedicated to trying to bring both religion and psychology together. Both disciplines must face the question of what frame work of meaning is used in their interpretive judgments. They must broaden their perspectives, and work together positively, sharing respective images of human growth, to aid each person in creating a "niche in creation."

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