

## RELIGION AS AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

There is now considerable scholarly literature on the nature of religion and the way in which religion should be studied. This discussion of religion as a study was initiated in America by Joachim Wach and the historians of religion at the University of Chicago who have followed his lead—notably Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa.<sup>1</sup> More recently, Wilfred Cantwell Smith's book, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, has advanced this discussion by replacing the concept of religion with two adjectival forms: instead of thinking in terms of the noun "religion" (e.g., "the Christian religion" or "religions of the world") we should think in terms of religious traditions and the personal religious faith of individuals.<sup>2</sup> Whether one follows the proposals of Smith or of the Chicago historians of religions,<sup>3</sup> it is clear that the nature and study of religion are so bound together that we will not secure an empirically

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the major works by Wach (*The Sociology of Religion*, 1944; *Types of Religious Experience*, 1951; *The Comparative Study of Religions*, 1958) and by Eliade (*Cosmos and History*, 1954; *Sacred and Profane*, 1957; *Patterns of Comparative Religion*, 1958), the approach of the "Chicago School" is set forth in two volumes of essays: Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, eds., *The History of Religions—Essays in Methodology* (Chicago, 1959) and Joseph M. Kitagawa, ed., *The History of Religions—Essays on the Problem of Understanding* (Chicago, 1967).

<sup>2</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion* (New York, 1964). See also his excellent new work entitled *Questions of Religious Truth* (New York, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Note that Smith is not in full agreement with the Chicago historians of religions on what constitutes the study of religions. Kitagawa acknowledges the contrast between the set of assumptions "generally accepted by students of the History of Religions (*Religionswissenschaft*)" and Smith's contention that the study of religions is primarily the study of persons (Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 40n1). See essays on methodology by Kitagawa and Smith in Eliade and Kitagawa, *op. cit.*

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grounded definition of religion until we bracket the question of essential definition and begin to amass the kind of empirical data required for an adequate conception.

Consequently, I will begin with two presuppositions: first, religion is not likely to be studied or taught in an academically legitimate fashion until the usual conceptions of religion are suspended; second, attempts to find the essence of a specific religion or of religion in general are functions of how one approaches and organizes the data involved. Note that the scope and context of the data involved are the crucial preliminary problems which decisively affect the entire enterprise.

In light of these presuppositions, I will discuss in some detail the components of and criteria for an inquiry into things which are claimed to have a religious meaning. Throughout, I will argue for a method of studying things religious which is both empirical and comparative—empirical in that it disallows any a priori judgment on what should be counted as religious, and comparative in that it seeks to understand all of the allegedly religious experiences, ideas and institutions in terms of other elements in the same tradition and comparable elements in other traditions.

As for the practical implications, I would suggest that this method of studying religions would be a vast improvement over the mixture of catechetics and confusion still characteristic of most religion courses presently being offered at the college level. The task of establishing an academically legitimate religion curriculum is as crucial for the state and private secular colleges and universities as for the church-affiliated schools.

## I. Religiology

### A. *The Concept of Religion*

Just as terms like history, art and science can refer to certain kinds of data to be studied as well as to the disciplines themselves, "religion" refers to matters considered religious as well as to the process of studying them. The latter meaning, however, is comparatively recent: it was not until a century ago that "religion" came to mean a systematic study having its own subject matter and method of proceeding.

Since "religion" equivocally refers to both the object of the study and the study itself (as do "art" and "history," but with much less confusion), we may be justified in introducing a neologism—namely, religiology. This term has its parallel in the names of such disciplines as anthropology, sociology and psychology. "Religiology" would serve as a translation for *Religionswissenschaft* and would be more accurate than the range of current terms which includes: history of religions, study of religions, phenomenology of religion, comparative religion, religious

studies and religious thought. In this article, however, we shall use the terms "religion" and "religiology" interchangeably since they both mean the study of whatever is counted as religious.

In his extensive survey of the term "religion" as used in the West, Wilfred Cantwell Smith explains that the phrase "religions of the world" probably first appeared in 1508 in a book of beliefs and rituals. Significantly, "religion" or "religions of the world" were used (and in some quarters are still used) in contrast to "faith": "religion" and "religions" are reified terms referring to something fixed and alien, whereas "faith" would refer to one's inner piety or spiritual state.<sup>4</sup> Both "religion" and "religions" have always been used pejoratively precisely because they referred not only to an external and systematic set of doctrines and practices, but because they designated a plurality rejected by "the faithful." Just as it was only in relation to each other that Catholics and Protestants came to see their respective religious faiths and traditions as a religion, Christians as a group, probably due to their increasing awareness of the non-Christian religions, are now coming to see Christianity as one of the world religions. Naturally, there is a reluctance on the part of the orthodox to understand themselves as religiously committed to anything but a uniquely true revelation; to view this revelation as one among many in effect reduces it to a partial and incomplete vehicle of the divine. Consequently, the faithful distinguish the study of world religions from the study of their own religious commitment (i.e., "the faith"). The important point here lies in the widespread failure of religiously committed people to see that other religious faiths and traditions have an inner as well as an outer dimension, and that in each tradition the externals are easily confused with the essential task of living religiously.

While the reification of the term "religion" has given it a pejorative meaning for the religiously orthodox, it has a positive—and equally misleading—connotation for those impressed by the plurality of religious traditions. In this perspective, "religion" seems to stand for an assortment of observable entities or phenomena—like so many institutions, each with an identifiable genesis, development, leaders, goals and rules. In short, this attempt to be dispassionate can obscure the highly personal and vital aspect of one's religiousness.<sup>5</sup> When properly used, "re-

<sup>4</sup> Appropriately, Roman Catholics commonly speak of keeping and spreading "the faith."

<sup>5</sup> Wach emphasized that although *Religionswissenschaft* is primarily concerned with religions other than one's own, it generally has the effect of deepening one's religiousness. Cf. Wach, "The Meaning and Task of the History of Religions (*Religionswissenschaft*)," Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 2. Similarly, one of his distinguished students remarks that Wach required the historian of religions to be "emotionally equipped" to deal with religion, not (as the positivist maintained) to foster indifference, but to do justice to a religion's true nature (Philip Ashby, "The History of Religions and

ligion" includes the institutional and conceptual elements as well as personal commitments to whatever is alive in the tradition. Consequently, religion as a discipline entails at least both sides of what William James call the "great partition which divides the religious field. On the one side of it lies institutional, on the other, personal religion."<sup>6</sup> To these two elements I would add the conceptual or philosophical. James's personal/institutional division, then, should be seen as only one way of structuring the discipline of religion. By my rendering, religion entails a description and an analysis of all the experiences, ideas, belief, traditions, institutions, rituals, obligations and objects which function religiously in human experience.

In short, "religion" does not refer to any single entity or quality, but rather to all of the aspects of experience which are considered religious by individuals or groups.<sup>7</sup>

Once it is acknowledged that analysis and evaluations presuppose an empirical study of whatever people do in fact count as religious, then such distinctions as cosmic/prophetic, natural/revealed, particular/universal, spiritual/cultural, will be recognized as inadequate categories for the complexities they are intended to explain.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, terms like "the Christian religion" and even "Christianity" will have to be stripped of the essences attributed to them in an a priori fashion. There is no single truth or experience to which words like "Christianity" or "the Christian religion" refer. Rather, there are groups of people whose religiousness can and should be studied. This study—not some concept modified by "Greek," "Christian," or "Hindu"—should be called religion. Instead of searching for the essence of a particular religious tradition, it would be more revealing and more faithful to that tradition to study the experiences, ideas and institutions of the people who call themselves Christians, Buddhists, and the like.<sup>9</sup>

the Study of Hinduism," Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 155). In his response to Kitagawa's paper on the history of religions (American Academy of Religion Convention, October 21, 1967), Thomas Berry suggested that the historian of religions is creating, and is himself an example of, a new and distinctive religious consciousness. None of these considerations, however, should minimize the fact that the study of religion (whether it is called history of religions or religiology) can and must stand on its own merits as an academic discipline.

<sup>6</sup> William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1958) (1902), 40-41.

<sup>7</sup> It was William James who first made the same point about the divine: "The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions." *Varieties*, 368.

<sup>8</sup> For a similar list of a priori categories frequently assumed by the uncritical student of religion, see Kees Boole, "History of Religions with a Hermeneutic Oriented Toward Christian Theology?" in Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 111.

<sup>9</sup> It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the cultural context for an understanding of the three major proselytic religions, Buddhism, Christianity and

In Wittgensteinian language, we would ask: "What games do Christians and Buddhists play as Christians and as Buddhists?" Unquestionably, Christians, Buddhists and Taoists have always played "the religion game" differently, and to that extent each may be considered a religion; but "religion" in each case is adjectival—namely, the Christian, Buddhist and Taoist ways of being religious. The "home-base" of religion, then, is the religiousness of the people in question.

If my approach to religion is valid, then it would seem that there is little hope of progress in the attempts to discern the essential characteristic of a particular religion or of religion in general until these efforts are based firmly on the empirically given experiences, ideas and institutions actually counted as religious. The best answer to a question on the meaning of religion would be a list of the experiences, ideas and institutions concerning which one might ask, "what religious function does it perform?" or "what religious meaning does it have in the lives of human beings?" The "essence" question has given way to a methodological functionalism.<sup>10</sup>

### B. The Study of Religion

The aim of this section is to show that the methodological question should take precedence over other aspects of religion or religiology. In this attempt I am following the lead of Joachim Wach and the historians of religions who want the discipline of religion to "develop and exhibit a method adequate to its own content, problems and materials."<sup>11</sup>

While theology, philosophy, history and similar studies may not have fixed methods, they are at least secure as disciplines. There are two possible explanations why religion does not enjoy a similar security: first,

Islam. For a modest but successful account of the varieties of Buddhist experience, see Thomas Berry, *Buddhism* (New York, 1967). Similarly, with the Christian tradition semantic continuity has obscured the significant differences between its innumerable cultural forms. For the contrasts between American and European Christianity, see *American Christianity*, eds., H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, Lefferts A. Loetscher (2 vols., New York, 1960, 1963), cited in this respect in John J. McDermott, "The American Angle of Vision," *Cross Currents*, XV (Winter 1965), 87n7. Among the few adequately contextual accounts of the Islamic tradition, see the following by Wilfred Cantwell Smith: *The Faith of Other Men—Islam in Modern History*, "The Special Case of Islam" (ch. 4 in *The Meaning and End of Religion*), and "Is the Qu'an the Word of God?" (ch. 2 in *Questions of Religious Truth*). See also: Fazlur Rahman, *Islam* (New York, 1966), and Charles J. Adams, "The History of Religions and the Study of Islam," Kitagawa, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> There are several versions of functionalism, any one of which is consistent with the very general meaning of the term assumed here. See William James, *Pragmatism* (New York, 1958) (1907); Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York, 1953), sections 66-69; and Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Scientific Theory of Culture* (New York, 1960), 159.

<sup>11</sup> Jerald C. Brauer, "Preface," Eliade and Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, x.

religion has alternately been identified with theology and philosophy; secondly, studies in religion prior to the nineteenth century did not have the comparative data since made available by anthropology and linguistics.<sup>12</sup> The complex relation of religion to theology and philosophy will be discussed below; my concern here is with the conditions which have generated religion as an autonomous discipline.

The term "history of religions" as employed by the University of Chicago historians of religions is in fact an attempt to translate what Max Muller, in 1867, called *Religionswissenschaft*. Muller's "science of religions" can be translated "comparative study of religions," but most historians of religions see *Religionswissenschaft* as both a descriptive and an analytic discipline. Its point of departure is "the historically given religions," but it also seeks to analyze what is distinctively religious.<sup>13</sup> (In Eliade's thought, the distinctively religious is called "the sacred.") Thus, what is usually called the "history of religions"—and what I am calling religiology—includes both historical and systematic considerations. As Kitagawa explains:

Our thesis is that the discipline of *Religionswissenschaft* lies between the normative disciplines on one hand and the descriptive disciplines on the other. Following Wach, we may divide *Religionswissenschaft* into historical and systematic subdivisions. Under the heading of "historical" come the general history of religion and the histories of specific religions. Under the heading of "systematic" come phenomenological, comparative, sociological, and psychological studies of religions. All these subdivisions are regarded as integral parts of *Religionswissenschaft* or the history of religions, in the way we use the term.<sup>14</sup>

And in the conclusion to his chronological survey of "the 'History of Religions' as a Branch of Knowledge," Eliade explains that historians of religions are divided between two divergent but complementary methodological orientations:

One group concentrate primarily on the characteristic structures of religious phenomena, the other choose to investigate their *historical context*. The former seek to understand the *essence of religion*, the latter to discover and communicate its *history*.<sup>15</sup>

Wach, Eliade and Kitagawa insist that the non-historical aspects of various religions fall within the history of religions because it is only in the

<sup>12</sup> Cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion* (London, 1958), (1933), 13: "The development of the science of Comparative Religions is due mainly to two factors: the publication and study of the Sacred Books of the East, and the growth of anthropology."

<sup>13</sup> Joseph M. Kitagawa, "The History of Religions in America," Eliade and Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 21.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Sacred and Profane* (New York, 1961), 232.

light of the way in which a religion develops that structural questions can adequately be dealt with.

Thus, I am following the history-of-religions approach in including the mystical, philosophical, and sociological approaches within the discipline of religion. The mistake would be to see religion as some quality of experience studied by various disciplines, but having no discipline to deal with it adequately as religious. According to my definition, religiology is a disciplined attempt to describe and analyze—with the help of other disciplines—all of the games which may be counted as having a religious meaning. The major traditional ways in which people have played the religion game include: the Judaic, Christian, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, Taoist and Shintoist. Similarly, a partial list of the components found in each of these religious traditions would include: the personal or mystical, conceptual or philosophical, and in varying degrees, the institutional, moral and aesthetic. The religious traditions enumerated above are properly the concern of the historian of religious traditions. Since my primary concern is methodology, however, I want to concentrate on showing that one's understanding of these religious traditions is dependent upon fidelity to the components of each tradition. From my study of these traditions thus far, it would seem that each of them includes at least the personal (or mystical), philosophical, and socio-historical factors, and that corresponding to each of these factors in each religious tradition there are, or should be, special emphases in religiology. So the inquiry into things religious should include a psychology of religious experience, an analysis of philosophical ideas, and a study of the socio-historical dimension precisely because people do play the religion game (are religious) in these ways.

## II. Components of Religion

The subject matter of religiology may be divided into three areas: the personal or mystical, the conceptual or philosophical, the social or historical. This tripartite division, which is the rough equivalent of Friedrich von Hügel's three elements of religion,<sup>16</sup> is an attempt to replace the problem of essence by aspects, elements, or what Wittgenstein would call the "family resemblances" of religion.

According to this adaptation of von Hügel's three elements, every religion possesses these three aspects in a more or less harmonious relationship. But these three elements are as normative as they are descriptive: the history of religions reveals that a tradition forfeits its religiousness when one or another element is either overemphasized or disregarded. In effect, one or another of these characteristics can be ignored

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion* (London, 1961) (1909), I, 48-49, 85-86.

only at great risk. The history of Christianity, for example, provides many instances of these risks, and the readjustments to their consequences.<sup>17</sup> There is reason to agree with Randall's thesis that "all modern religious and philosophic thought has ever since sprung from conflicts between tradition and novel ideas, and from efforts at reconciling them."<sup>18</sup>

If this three-fold unity is truly descriptive of a religious tradition at its best, it would make sense to study religious traditions with an eye to the dialectic between these aspects. But even if my characterization of religions should ultimately prove inadequate, it does at least provide a starting point from which we can show the need to study each kind of religious function contextually. For example, a study of the Christian tradition would require by definition that the religiousness of Christians be described and analyzed in terms of its personal, conceptual and socio-historical forms. Further, each of these forms has its own problems which require an appropriate method. Our task, then, is to develop a method for each of these elements; in each of the three, the decisive question will be the relation of the element in question to religion as a discipline.

#### A. Personal or Mystical

It may seem odd to treat the personal and mystical as though they were correlative. Yet, methodologically considered, the mystical is simply a personal religious experience in its most obvious and complete stage. As James explains in the "Conclusions" of his *Varieties*, the "extremest examples" yield "the profounder information."<sup>19</sup> In addition to serving as the model of personal religion, mysticism is also a primary source for the philosophical and institutional elements of a religious tradition.

This is not to say that the mystical is necessarily prior to the philosophical or institutional; those who claim such a priority for mysticism fail to take account of the extent to which the testimony of the mystic is entirely fashioned by the mystic's assumptions, expectations and theological frame of reference. In short, the meaning of a mystical or unitive experience depends on what the mystic brings to it. Hindus have a Hindu mystical experience precisely because the anticipation and in-

<sup>17</sup> For an incisive interpretation of the vacillating function of knowledge or reason in relation to Christian faith, see John Hermann Randall, Jr., *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion* (Boston, 1958); for an equally excellent schematization of Christian faith *vis-à-vis* Western culture, see H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York, 1951).

<sup>18</sup> Randall, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> James, *Varieties*, 368. And in the same place James writes: "To learn the secrets of any science, we go to expert specialists, even though they may be eccentric persons, and not to commonplace pupils."

terpretation of the mystical experience are prefashioned by an identifiably Hindu perspective. Despite the pervasive influence of non-mystical factors, however, the experience of the mystic does issue in a new beginning; by virtue of its depth, intensity and influence, the mystic's testimony is in many ways the best place to look for the roots of what is prized as an ideal among the faithful.

In an effort to render the mystical aspects in more consistent language, I would suggest that mysticism or the mystical process consists in three phases: the mystical subject (the person who has a conversion or some kind of unitive experience), the experience itself (whatever actually happens), and the interpretation of this experience (the conceptualization of the mystical experience by the subject, and subsequently by other interpreters). But note that the mystical experience cannot be understood independent of the other two components of religiousness, and that the mystical process cannot be understood apart from a study of the philosophical and socio-historical tradition of the mystic. As Bergson well explains:

What the mystic finds waiting for him, then, is a humanity which has been prepared to listen to his message by other mystics invisible and present in the religion which is actually taught. Indeed, his mysticism itself is imbued with this religion, for such was its starting-point.<sup>20</sup>

Rephrasing Bergson's insight on mysticism in the language I am recommending, we would say that the mystic intensifies and subsequently articulates the religiousness of his own spiritual, philosophical and socio-historical milieu. The home-base is not any one of these particular forms of religiousness, but the complex relationships between them in the experience of a community. The religiousness of a community (whether a tribe or supra-national fellowship) supplies the context in which or by which the spiritually gifted individual is enabled to contact a larger reality than that available to the other members of the community. The meaning or interpretation of this contact, of course, issues in a philosophical or theological dimension. When the mystic process results in an incisive and intense conviction, this conviction naturally takes shape via philosophical and theological concepts. The problem of conceptualization becomes crucial not only from a theological and philosophical standpoint, but for the entire study of things religious. Unfortunately, the mystic process can only be understood through the concepts used by the mystic. At this point the theologian, philosopher, and scholars in related areas all can and should have their say—provided that both the contextuality and uniqueness of the mystic experience is taken as home-

<sup>20</sup> Henri Bergson, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (New York, 1956) (1935), 239.

base. Let us look briefly at the mingling of philosophical with mystical religion on the meaning and significance of the mystic process.

The philosophical aspect of mystical religion is concerned with the ontology claimed or assumed by the mystic. What the philosopher needs to analyze here are not truth claims or propositions so much as the meaning ascribed to the context in which the mystic apparently finds his true significance. The distinctive fact about the mystic's context is that it is invariably the largest or most ultimate conceivable: The Absolute, God, The One, Brahman and Nirvana are some of the names given to the whole of which the mystic feels himself to be a part.<sup>21</sup> The philosophical and mystical aspects of religion are scarcely distinguishable at this point. Who can say whether the mystical or philosophical came first, for example, in the Upanishads or in Plotinus? Indeed the Vedantin and the Plotinian will be quick to deny the dichotomy which the question presupposes. The best we can do is to discern the mutual influence of the philosophical and mystical aspects of religiousness, and consistently respect both areas when analyzing the mystic process.

Finally, I would emphasize that the relatedness between the mystical and philosophical typifies the relatedness of all three elements. Thus, religiology involves not only the three discrete elements, but the way in which each element is related to the other two. Relatedness and contextuality are the key terms for this conception of religion. Using Augustine as an example, I would argue that in addition to studying Augustine's mysticism, philosophy and socio-historical significance, we need also to see ways in which each of the elements is fashioned by the other two. To miss the Neoplatonic elements in his mystical experience at Ostia, or to miss the mystical element in his ideas of knowledge and the self, is to miss Augustine's significance for the Christian tradition.<sup>22</sup> But Augustine's importance for all three areas is by no means unique. Most of the great religious personalities are rendered more intelligible when one understands their place in each of these areas. In his *Mystical Element*, von Hügel cites Cusa, Thomas More, and Newman as being exemplary in all three areas;<sup>23</sup> a similar claim could as justifiably have been made for Luther, Calvin, Kierkegaard or Tillich.

It may not always be necessary to examine all three aspects of a person's religiousness—perhaps only one or two will be discernible. But

<sup>21</sup> For a list of names or signs within the Christian context, see Robley Whitson, *Mysticism and Ecumenism* (New York, 1966), 30.

<sup>22</sup> See Paul Henry, "Philosophy and Mysticism in the Confessions of St. Augustine," *Downside Review* (Autumn 1961); E. I. Watkin, "The Mysticism of St. Augustine," *St. Augustine—His Age, Life and Thought* (New York, 1959); and John Hermann Randall, Jr., *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion* (Boston, 1958).

<sup>23</sup> Von Hügel, *op. cit.*, I, 60–65.

when studying an entire religions tradition, or the key figures in a tradition such as those named above, it would seem both fruitful and necessary to work for the maximum contextuality and relatedness of aspects.

### B. Conceptual or Philosophical

What is the relation of religiology or religion as a discipline to what is ordinarily called philosophy of religion?<sup>24</sup> Since both religiology and the philosophy of religion are still emerging as disciplines, the relation between them is extremely difficult to define. There are several reasons for these complications, most of them historical. The genesis of philosophy of religion would be difficult to date exactly, but it can best be seen as resulting from the failure of its predecessor, natural theology. Hume and Kant, of course, had a decisive effect on both the collapse of natural theology and the emergence of philosophy of religion.<sup>25</sup> The ghost of natural theology has endured so persistently, however, that it is all too frequently identified with philosophy of religion. By my account, theology is the study of whatever is taken as divine. Philosophical theology is this study conducted philosophically.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, the proper successor to natural theology is philosophical theology, not philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion (or philosophical religiology) is not limited to a consideration of the divine, but encompasses all things counted as religious, only one of which is the divine.<sup>27</sup>

In the West, the concept of God has been a central topic in the study of people's religiousness, but the philosopher, per se, has not been concerned with the idea of God as religiously operative. It would seem that when philosophy of religion is defined as "philosophical thinking

<sup>24</sup> What is usually called philosophy of religion might more accurately be called philosophical religion or philosophical religiology.

<sup>25</sup> Probably the most scholarly presentation of philosophy of religion from Hume to Hegel is James Collins, *The Emergence of Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, 1967); for a less scholarly though perhaps more readable version of the same area, see Frederick Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion* (New York, 1967).

<sup>26</sup> Philosophical theology since Hume and Kant has been primarily concerned with two problematic areas: the problem of religious knowledge and the problem of God in relation to man and the world. For the former, see Antony Flew and Alisdair Mac Intyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London, 1955), and William T. Blackstone, *The Problem of Religious Knowledge* (New Jersey, 1963). For the latter, see Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago, 1953).

<sup>27</sup> Note that it is possible for religion, and consequently for philosophy of religion, to dispense with theology. A highly developed conception of the divine is central to the Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Hindu traditions, but more or less unimportant (or rejected entirely) in the Confucian, Taoist, and Zen traditions. (The Buddhist tradition resists all such generalizations.) If one counts communism, nationalism, and secular humanism as religions, then theology is obviously incidental to religion.

about religion,"<sup>28</sup> "religion" refers to concepts and claims which are of interest primarily to the philosopher, and which are understood primarily from a philosophical perspective.<sup>29</sup> As a consequence, religion becomes a function of the philosophical constructs which may fail to represent adequately the religiousness of any group, past or present. In short, the "home-base" has shifted from what functions religiously in human experience to the conceptualizations of these functions. The conceptualizing process can be legitimate only if religious experiences, ideas and institutions are taken as primary.

Unfortunately, most philosophers of religion treat problems which seem to have a bearing on people's religiousness, but in fact often fail to draw from or illuminate the other aspects which we count as essential to religion. This failure is largely a function of the historical development of philosophy of religion as part of philosophy rather than as part of religion. Traditionally, philosophy has tended to minimize the significance of the data it has had to organize. This apriority has become less blatant in areas where the data is already well organized by its own discipline: compare, for example, the rigor which philosophers have been forced to employ in philosophy of science and philosophy of history as opposed to the cavalier accounts of religion by these same philosophers.<sup>30</sup>

In relation to religiology, philosophy of religion (or philosophical religiology) would designate the particular philosophical character of a fruitful inquiry into things religious. The philosophical aspect of religiology would function mid-way between the mystical and socio-historical aspects. The philosopher, whether phenomenologist, linguistic analyst or pragmatist, can profitably clarify, explicate and evaluate things religious to the extent that he is truly informed on the vast array of religious experiences, ideas and institutions, and the ways in which these actually function religiously for individuals and communities.

<sup>28</sup> John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Jersey, 1965), 1. This is probably the most standard one-line definition.

<sup>29</sup> Even the most empirically grounded philosophical definition of religion is likely to suffer this weakness. See Ferré's *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, Part I, on the problem of defining religion. Ferré's own definition of religion as one's way of valuing most comprehensively and intensively, however, may be adequate for a tradition like Christianity, but it is hardly appropriate for Zen.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. A. J. Ayer's irresponsible account of mysticism in *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York, 1946), 118-19; or Walter Kaufmann who thinks that a religious person is one who believes that God exists "and sometimes reveals propositions to mankind" (*Critique of Religion and Philosophy* [New York, 1958], 89). Philosophers are not the only practitioners of the reductionist fallacy: Marx and Freud are classic examples of great thinkers whose writings reveal an unduly restricted conception of religion.

Gathering the kind of data necessary for progress in philosophical religiology may appear forbidding, but anything short of this ideal proportionately limits the creative capacities of both disciplines. Now that information on the history and structure of religions is becoming increasingly more available, philosophical religion can and should make the same kind of advances characteristic of other "philosophy of—" disciplines. Ironically, the data available to James,<sup>31</sup> Otto,<sup>32</sup> and Bergson<sup>33</sup> is almost insignificant by comparison with the vast amount of information now readily available on every level and in every area of religion. It may also be the case, however, that as the data becomes increasingly more complicated and sophisticated, the philosopher will become increasingly more reluctant to take it as primary. This failure of nerve will simply perpetuate and enlarge the already sizable gap between philosophy and the inquiry into things religious.

### C. Sociological Religion

Of the many approaches to religion, the sociological and historical studies are perhaps most faithful to what groups or institutions count as religious. The model for fidelity to religious factors was set for sociological religion by Max Weber, whose *Sociology of Religion* (1922) showed the relation between the religious and socio-economic behavior. The only other landmark in the sociology of religion is Joachim Wach's *Sociology of Religion*: written two decades after Weber's, it avoids Weber's overemphasis on the economic aspect of the relation between religion and society. The sociology of religion, as Wach says, attempts to work out categories and types for what the historian of religions shows to be the development of various religions and cults.

The sociologist of religion, of course, can construct categories which hinder rather than help the study of religious traditions. Weber's identification of the economic with the sociological, for example, fails to do justice to the other ways in which a people behave religiously. Similarly,

<sup>31</sup> James's *Varieties* is still unsurpassed both for its fidelity to recorded experience and for its philosophical and psychological interpretations of these experiences.

<sup>32</sup> Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* (New York, 1960) (1923) exaggerates the a priori character of the religious, but more than any other interpretation of religious experience, it is informed by a scholarly knowledge of Christian and Indian mysticism (see his *Mysticism: East and West* [New York, 1959] [1923] for a comparative analysis of mysticism). It should also be noted that C. G. Jung adopts Otto's definition of religion. He writes: "Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolph Otto aptly termed the *numinosum*, that is, a dynamic agency of effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will." *Psychology and Religion: West and East* (New York, 1958), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Bergson's *Two Sources* is sociologically dated and it is phenomenologically less sophisticated than either the *Varieties* or *The Idea of the Holy*, but it brilliantly shows the relationship between the mystical, the philosophical and institutional aspects of religion.

Bergson's *Two Sources* is marred by a failure to see what was religious for non-Western religions (even a superficial understanding of Indian spirituality would have saved Bergson from dividing all mysticism into complete and incomplete—with Christian mysticism as the only example of "complete"). For misreadings such as these, there is simply no substitute for a thorough knowledge of religious traditions. As Wach remarks: "Without the work of the historian of religion, the sociologist would be helpless."<sup>34</sup>

The sociology of religion, or the discipline of sociological religion, is the sociological study or analysis of whatever a society counts as religious—and it should be the cooperative effort of both the religiologist and the sociologist which decides what a society or institution does in fact count as religious. There is now increasing evidence of this cooperative effort by sociologists such as Milton Yinger,<sup>35</sup> Peter Berger,<sup>36</sup> and Thomas F. O'Dea,<sup>37</sup> and religiologists such as Harvey Cox,<sup>38</sup> Martin Marty,<sup>39</sup> Michael Novak,<sup>40</sup> and the "God Is Dead" theologians (whose work, it seems to me, is of greater sociological than theological importance).<sup>41</sup>

Another recent phenomenon of mutual interest to sociology and religiology is the development of the psychedelic (or "hippie") religion. The proliferation of high priests, religious experience, and sacred writings, rituals, music and art all attest to the emergence of a religion which meets the criteria I am proposing. If nothing else, this development suggests the almost inevitable relatedness of the personal, conceptual and sociological aspects of religion.

### III. Criteria for Religiology

According to Professor Kitagawa, there are three essential qualities underlying the discipline of the history of religions:

<sup>34</sup> Joachim Wach, *Sociology of Religion* (Chicago, 1962) (1944), 2.

<sup>35</sup> J. Milton Yinger, *Religion, Society and the Individual* (New York, 1957), *Sociology Looks at Religion* (New York, 1961), and *Religion in the Struggle for Power* (New York, 1961).

<sup>36</sup> Peter Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (New York, 1958), and *The Precarious Vision* (New York, 1961).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas F. O'Dea, *The Sociology of Religion* (New Jersey, 1966).

<sup>38</sup> Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York, 1965). See also: *The Secular Debate*, ed., Daniel Callahan (New York, 1966).

<sup>39</sup> Martin E. Marty, *The Infidel—Free-Thought and American Religion* (Cleveland, 1961), *Varieties of Unbelief* (New York, 1966), and *Religion and Social Conflict*, eds. Robert Lee and Martin E. Marty (New York, 1964).

<sup>40</sup> Michael Novak, *Belief and Unbelief* (New York, 1966).

<sup>41</sup> See especially Gabriel Vahanian, *The Death of God—The Culture of Our Post-Christian Era* (New York, 1957), and Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (New York, 1966).

First is a sympathetic understanding of religions other than one's own. Second is an attitude of self-criticism, or even skepticism, about one's own religious background. And third is the "scientific" temper.<sup>42</sup>

Note that Kitagawa would apply these canons specifically to the history of religions, not necessarily to the other valid ways of studying religions. In our scheme, however, approaches such as theology and the philosophy, psychology and sociology of religion should all be considered part of and dependent upon the broad discipline which we call religiology. Furthermore, the terms "religiology" and "religion" minimize the ambiguity involved in the term "history of religions"—namely, that it includes considerations of the structure as well as of the history of religions. Admitting this ambiguity, Kitagawa notes that the discipline called "history of religions" is also known by "comparative religion," "phenomenology of religion," and "science of religions."<sup>43</sup> By insisting on "religion" or "religiology" as the name for the entire inquiry, the historical aspect of this inquiry will designate a part rather than the whole discipline.

Consequently, Kitagawa's three canons should be equally appropriate for our proposed discipline of religion. Indeed, I hope to show that my conception of religion reveals how these canons apply not only to a particular approach, but to all the approaches which claim to describe or analyze things religious (i.e., religiology in its entire range). So in the following three sections I will discuss some approaches to (or components of) religiology in the light of Kitagawa's criteria. In each section I will show how the canons set down by Kitagawa require that no one aspect of religion can be successful apart from the others. Thus, my tripartite rendering of religion and the three criteria adapted from Kitagawa cohere to form a new method for religiology.

#### A. Understanding Another Religion

As a minimum requirement for understanding a religious faith or tradition other than one's own, I would suggest the following: first, that the roots and presuppositions of the tradition be different from one's own. In this respect, note that it is easier for Protestants and Roman Catholics to understand each other than for either of them to understand orthodox Jews, and easier for Christians and Jews to understand each other than for either to understand Hindus and Buddhists. Secondly, by "religion" we mean not only each of the parts of a tradition, but the inner relatedness of these parts. Thirdly, a real understanding of another religion entails not only a knowledge of the spiritual writ-

<sup>42</sup> Kitagawa, "The History of Religions in America," Eliade and Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*



ings, philosophical systems and institutional forms, but what each of these actually means to the believer.

In many theology and religion departments, especially those in church-affiliated colleges, it is ordinarily assumed that ecumenism is as much an academic as it is an ecclesiastical ideal. Forward-looking theology departments in Roman Catholic colleges announce the signing of Protestant theologians with an air of pride and something like mischievousness, and many Protestant-affiliated colleges take great care in filling their Chairs of Roman Catholic Studies. While all of this contributes to the flow of information and understanding between Christian churches, it does not constitute a dialogue between different religions. Note that Roman Catholics and Protestants are sustained by the one Christian historical genesis and religious presuppositions—not unlike the way in which Democratic and Republican politicians are supported by the same political tradition and consensus. In contrast, neither branch of Christianity can understand the Judaic tradition without recognizing the historical and subsequent theological differences which are at the root of each tradition. Yet, we are still in the western orb; and, despite a generally appalling lack of interest in the Islamic tradition, the Christian is even here within his own historical and religious milieu.

Such is not the case, however, when one turns to the Indian religious experience (primarily that of the Hindus and Buddhists) and the Chinese (primarily the Confucians and Taoists). These traditions are as ancient, sophisticated and as vigorous as the three traditions generated by the Near East, and have developed in cultures radically different from the Middle Eastern or European. Once we encounter one of these traditions in all of its immensity and depth, it should be clear just how local are the differences between Catholics and Protestants.

By implication, then, we can see that recent developments in ecumenical dialogue, when brought into higher education, do not in themselves render the Christian tradition academically legitimate subject matter. Continuing the political analogy introduced above, we would suggest that the exponents of one or another religious affiliation function ecumenically very much the way that an elected Republican or Democrat functions politically; but for an understanding of international politics or the political structure of a foreign power, then we need to study political science, most especially international affairs and comparative governments. Unfortunately, religion is far from achieving this kind of academic sophistication, and until it does the odds will be against progress in understanding religions other than one's own.

According to our second condition for understanding another religion, we need to know not only each of the components described above, but also the way in which each component has its function and meaning in terms of the other two or more components. The importance

of the mystical and philosophical elements can easily be missed by Christian ecumenists because their model of religious dialogue has been primarily institutional. When a Christian seeks to understand a non-Western religion, however, it should become apparent that the socio-historical element is inextricably bound to the mystical and philosophical elements. One need only sample a few of the popular comparisons of Christianity with Hinduism or Buddhism to see that no one point of comparison can be taken as adequately representative of the entire tradition. In fact, even an accumulation of comparisons misses the vital relationship which each element has to the entire historical complex.

Furthermore, this requirement is as applicable—and as consistently violated—with reference to one's own religion. Protestations against one's religious tradition (often accompanied by an enthusiastic endorsement of a radically different tradition) may frequently be the result of a failure to see one or another component in its proper context. Similarly, the too easy rejection or affirmation of another religious tradition probably stems from a judgment on only one component of that tradition. This overemphasis is especially obvious in the case of the Christian who sees in his own tradition nothing but bureaucracy and empty formalities, and sees in one of the Eastern traditions nothing but the loftiest spirituality. There is also the reverse situation: many Christians who are impressed by the socio-historical dimension of their tradition identify Christianity with social action, and see in Hinduism and Buddhism nothing but a rejection of social and historical responsibility.

The exaggerated judgments operative in both of these situations can be explained by placing the elements involved in relation to the entire fabric: Christian socio-historical sense is indeed a significant factor in the Christian experience, but there is also the Pauline strain and the mystical strain, neither of which provides a humanistic emphasis. Similarly, mysticism is indeed a central motif in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions, but this must be understood in the context of their respective cultures, which have revealed extraordinary artistic, speculative and ethical achievements.

Thus, to lift an element out of a tradition is not only to miss the element, but to miss the tradition as well.

The third condition for understanding another religion is that the elements of the tradition be understood not only as information, but in terms of what these elements experientially mean to a believer. With the exception of those who are already disenchanted with their own tradition, one who initially encounters another religion will ordinarily see it as an accumulation of complicated formulations and rigid prescriptions. To the believer, however, these formulations and prescriptions are vital and meaningful. Consequently, one does not really understand another religion until that tradition, including its charismatic person-

alities, scriptures and institutional forms, are admitted to be as viable as are the corresponding elements in one's own tradition.

Radhakrishnan, one of the most informed and influential mediators between East and West, warns that another's faith

will remain merely a cold intellectual proposition until we make it a part of our inner being. We must experience the impression that has thrilled the follower of another faith if we wish to understand him.<sup>44</sup>

Such a deliberate and wise recommendation, however, does not prevent Radhakrishnan from treating Christianity as so many cold intellectual propositions in contrast to the spirituality and profound interiority of Hinduism.<sup>45</sup> Obviously, it is easier to preach objectivity than to practice it.

There is another lesson to learn from Radhakrishnan's failure to treat Hinduism with the same critical ability that he exercises on other religious traditions. Radhakrishnan's conception of religion is precisely the same as his idealized conception of Hinduism. Unlike the sixteenth century Catholic, Radhakrishnan is willing to see his own commitment as a religion among religions, but then when he offers what he considers to be the universal element in all religions, he offers his own version of Hinduism.<sup>46</sup> In reply to Schweitzer's criticism of Indian philosophy and religion,<sup>47</sup> Radhakrishnan argues that the contrast between Hinduism and Christianity "is really between religion and a self-sufficient humanism."<sup>48</sup> Radhakrishnan's failures are instructive for two reasons: first, since he is perhaps the greatest comparative religiologist of the first half of the twentieth century, his inability to meet his own standards offers a sorry testimony for comparative religions; secondly, it should point up the need for a first-hand acquaintance with the inner relatedness of the several aspects of the religious tradition under consideration.

Thus, any attempt to understand another religious tradition which does not take account of all the data in the largest possible context will almost certainly fail. Now that the linguists, anthropologists and historians have been so successful in amassing data on virtually all religious traditions, the effort to understand another religion in all of its complexities becomes at once more demanding and more fruitful.

<sup>44</sup> S. Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, 28.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, ch. 2 and his *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (New York, 1958) (1939), ch. 7.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. his *Hindu View of Life* (New York, 1962) (1926), ch. 2 and his *Recovery of Faith* (New York, 1955), chs. 6-8.

<sup>47</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Indian Thought and Its Development* (Boston, 1960) (1936), especially ch. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 75.

## B. A Critical Approach to One's Own Religion

The following adaptation of Kitagawa's second canon for *Religionswissenschaft* is closely related to the first. Indeed, they complement each other: understanding another religion presupposes an understanding of one's own religion, and "an attitude of self-criticism, or even skepticism, about one's own religious background" probably requires that another religious tradition serve as a point of comparison. Perhaps the surest way to develop a critical attitude towards one's religious position is to journey religiously—if only by reading the scriptures and other revered literature of another religious tradition. While no body of religiously revered writings can adequately reveal a religious tradition in its entirety, it can introduce a person to ideals and experiences most esteemed by the community of believers. If one becomes familiar with other aspects of that tradition, one's own tradition will consistently come under more careful and more fruitful scrutiny.

There is no way of predicting, of course, just what affect one's study of another religious tradition will have on one's position; rather, the more proper question is whether the Socratic adage is as applicable to a religious position as to one's world view. For once it is admitted that "the unexamined religious position is not worth living," then a critical reading of one's religious faith and tradition—preferably aided by the study of another position—must be considered an ideal as well as a responsibility. Just as Euthyphro would never have examined his conception of virtue had he not met Socrates, most religious positions would remain unexamined in the absence of another live option. The Christian position, of course, has rather consistently—and effectively—been confronted by secular or naturalistic humanism.<sup>49</sup> It might be even more rewarding, however, if Christians were similarly informed by one or another religious tradition. This is so because a religious faith or affiliation stands to benefit most from a tradition which includes mystical, philosophical and socio-historical elements comparable to one's own tradition while resting on totally different presuppositions.

The denial or revision of one's idea of God, after all, is only one part of one's personal religion; a sympathetic understanding of another religious tradition, however, reveals an alternative for every part of one's religion.

<sup>49</sup> It is significant that many Christian thinkers, primarily the secular humanists and the "death of God" theologians, have rejected the traditional idea of God without confronting the larger question, why any religions at all? Tillich meets this problem directly in his lecture, "The Significance of the History of Religions for the Systematic Theologian," published in *The Future of Religions* (New York, 1966), and in Kitagawa, *op. cit.* Tillich replies that the theologian "must assume that religion as a structure of symbols of intuition and action—that is, myths and rites within a social group—has lasting necessity for even the most secularized culture and the most demythologized theology" (Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 243).

A critical understanding of one's religious tradition attained via another religious tradition will probably reveal the peculiar way in which the strengths and weaknesses of each tradition are functions of each other. The Hindu de-emphasis of social justice and progress, for example, is largely a function of the very profound Upanishadic metaphysical monism and the subsequent (and largely misunderstood) theory of *maya*. Similarly, the Christian penchant for rational theology is a function of the Greek rationalistic temper used to much advantage in other areas.<sup>50</sup>

The Hindu who carefully studies his own and another tradition may justifiably be impressed by the mystical and conceptual profundity of the Upanishadic tradition and by the resilience of this tradition when seen in its total cultural context. The real weakness of Hinduism, then, can be attributed to its failure to hold the tension between the mystical, philosophical and socio-historical. The mystical and philosophical had flourished while the socio-historical was neglected; now, in reaction, the socio-historical is dominant and the mystical and philosophical have fallen from a position of priority to near neglect.

The same adjustments of emphases are equally apparent in the history of Christianity: despite the highly philosophical conception of Christianity usually emphasized by the churches (especially the Roman Catholic) and the emphasis on the socio-historical (especially on the conceptions of virtue and salvation which support prevailing institutions), an adequate interpretation of the Christian tradition would admit the central importance of a personal or mystical element. The Christian tradition has repeatedly had to adjust the delicate tension between these components. For this reason, no one thinker nor age can stand as a representative of the entire tradition. The failure to see the significance of Augustine, Gregory, Bonaventure, Eckhart, Cusa, Boehme, Fox and other mystics has led no less an interpreter than Radhakrishnan to claim that "Religion in the West is a support for social stability and a shield against the innovator."<sup>51</sup>

The Christian who knows his own tradition in relation to at least one other tradition, and the non-Christian who knows the Christian tradition in terms of the way its several elements have developed historically, will be less likely to lapse into the kind of facile simplification just quoted. Indeed, it is precisely in order to replace these exaggerated judgments, and to locate accurately the strengths and weaknesses, the

<sup>50</sup> *Cross Currents* readers are familiar with recent efforts to replace the Greek metaphysical element in Christian (primarily Roman Catholic) thought by process metaphysics. See Eugene Fontinell's two articles in *Cross Currents*: "Reflections on Faith and Metaphysics," XVI (Winter 1966), and "Religious Truth in a Relational and Processive World," XVII (Summer 1967).

<sup>51</sup> Radhakrishnan, *East and West in Religion*, 54.

very common and the unique, that one should study and criticize one's own religious tradition in the light of another religious tradition.

### C. The "Scientific" Temper

In the following passage, Kitagawa offers an explanation of the "scientific" temper required for *Religionswissenschaft* which can be adapted for the discipline of religion which I am proposing:<sup>52</sup>

What does it mean to view the data "religio-scientifically"? This is not a simple question. Basically, the point of departure of *Religionswissenschaft* is the historically given religions. In contrast to normative disciplines, *Religionswissenschaft* does not have a speculative purpose, nor can it start from an a priori deductive method. While *Religionswissenschaft* has to be faithful to descriptive principles, its inquiry must nevertheless be directed to the meaning of religious phenomena.<sup>53</sup>

By dividing what Kitagawa here refers to as "the historically given religions" into the mystical, philosophical, and socio-historical, I have attempted to explain why "description" and "meaning" are correlative terms. By my rendering, the mystical, philosophical and socio-historical are equally elements of the religious traditions and the meaning of religious phenomena. Consequently, scientific in this scheme, and perhaps in Kitagawa's, not only consists in a fidelity to historical data, but in an understanding of this data in the most appropriate and revealing contexts. There would seem to be at least three such contexts:

- . . . there are the particular elements or components (e.g., mystical, philosophical or socio-historical) in relation to each other;
- . . . then there is the entire tradition, of which every datum is a part, in relation to other traditions with their comparable data;
- . . . finally, there is the total context of religiousness—i.e., what a datum means in terms of a general conception of religiousness.

The first context, that of the particular element or aspect of a religious tradition, has been discussed at length, and here we need only reaffirm the methodological significance of these elements. We would refuse to classify as scientific or methodologically sound a description or interpretation of any data unless it was informed by—and in turn illuminated—the other aspects of the same tradition. Consequently, those who approach religion from the perspective and by the methods

<sup>52</sup> Note that Kitagawa has probably placed "scientific" in quotation marks for the same reason that "science of religions" is a poor translation of *Religionswissenschaft*—namely, there is no exact English equivalent of *wissenschaft*. Having made this caution, I will drop the quotation marks from the term scientific.

<sup>53</sup> Kitagawa, "The History of Religions in America," Eliade and Kitagawa, *op. cit.*, 21.

of their own disciplines can be counted methodologically legitimate only if they are informed by the history of the religion or religions which they are examining. The scientific temper, then, consists in the refusal of the specialist to use his discipline as a procrustean device: the sociologist cannot afford to ignore the function of personal experience, the philosopher cannot treat concepts as though they had their meaning independent of the personal and institutional, and the linguist, psychologist, aesthetician and cultural historian must be similarly cognizant to the entire fabric in which their discipline is but a strand.

Secondly, we would insist that a scientific approach to man's religiousness requires that the meanings attributed to either the parts or the whole of a religious tradition be informed by other religious traditions. The true significance of certain charismatic personalities or sacred texts depends on the corresponding elements in other traditions. As for example, the meaning of Jesus and of the early Christian experience cannot help but be enriched by sympathetic yet critical studies of other religious personalities and their respective followers.<sup>54</sup> In short, an attempt to understand and to appreciate the significance of any relevant information would seem to require this comparative context. As always, the larger and more detailed the context, the greater will be the possibility of insight.

Finally, I want to offer an hypothesis concerning religiousness in general—an hypothesis which is as tentative as it is ambitious. In view of the great varieties of religious personalities, experiences, beliefs, concepts and practices, only the most general traits, drawn from the broadest array of data, could characterize religiousness in general. One such useful characteristic is its integrative function. This function is discernible in each of the three components of religion which we have discussed: when seen as a function of man's striving for a deeper, wider and more fruitful participation or integrativeness, the mystical, philosophical and socio-historical elements of religion are all rendered more meaningful. Each of these three elements is a way of explaining the ways in which man's religiousness is actually a way of integrating what would otherwise be diffuse or unrelated.

Note that the integrative function is proposed as an example of the kind of characterization of religiousness which is neither an a priori criterion nor so formal as to be without significance. While I am not committed to this particular conception of religiousness, it is at least a conception which is discernible in all aspects of all the religious traditions with which I am familiar. This latter claim is more important for the scientific temper than any claim for or against integration as a defining characteristic of religiousness. In conclusion, religiology or

<sup>54</sup> How could the Christian not be interested in the development of the Buddhist doctrine of the Threefold Body? Cf. Berry, *Buddhism, op. cit.*, chs. 4, 10.

religion as a discipline is characterized by a scientific temper to the extent that hypotheses about religiousness in general (e.g., integration as a defining characteristic) organize and illuminate the varieties of data without destroying their subtleties and significance to the believers in question.

## Conclusions and Implications

If my proposal for religiology is well founded, the systematic inquiry into things religious should be interdisciplinary, comparative or contextual, and scientific:

1. *Interdisciplinary.* While "religion" is the name of the entire inquiry into anything claimed to have a religious function or meaning, this inquiry requires several auxiliary disciplines such as psychological religion, philosophical religion, sociological religion, historical religion and perhaps such future studies as economic religion, political religion and psychedelic religion.
2. *Comparative.* In order to discern the religious meaning and significance of experiences, ideas and institutions, each datum under consideration will have to be analyzed in terms of its function and significance both within its own tradition and in comparison to the corresponding datum (or the lack of one) in another religious tradition. Ultimately, every datum has its meaning in relation to larger and larger contexts.
3. *Scientific.* Religion at its best will hold a fruitful tension between fidelity to empirical data and imaginative speculation about the ultimate meaning and value of religiousness.

Finally, I would suggest two implications of what I have attempted to establish:

1. In order for religion to develop and employ a method appropriate to its subject matter, it will have to be rescued from the connotations of piety and orthodoxy which have traditionally been associated with the study of religion.
2. If the cycle of second-rate study of religion is to be broken, the college and university religion departments will have to establish religion as a discipline by employing a legitimate methodology in academically legitimate courses taught by qualified scholars in the field.