

The Struggle to Believe in the Context of A Postmodern Secular World

Paul F. Cunningham, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Second Annual Rivier College Faculty Summer Seminar 2000

“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”
(Albert Einstein)

“There is nothing that will cure the senses but the soul, and nothing that will cure the soul but the senses”
(Oscar Wilde)

“Recent developments in the mind-brain sciences rejecting reductionism and mechanistic determinism on the one side, and dualisms on the other, clear the way for a rational approach to the theory and prescription of values and to a natural fusion of science and religion.”

(Roger Sperry)

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Description of the Second Faculty Summer Seminar

The struggle that many people experience with their faith and with their church is often a highly private affair. The struggle revealed its public face, however, during the Second Annual Rivier College Faculty Summer Seminar 2000. The four-week seminar happened during the summer months of May and June and involved Prof. Paul Lizotte (English and Communications), Dr. Ann Riggs (Religious Studies), Dr. Liz Wright (English and Communications), and myself (Social and Behavioral Sciences) as discussants.

We read Kathleen Norris's (1998) thoughtful essays in *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*, Ronald Rolheiser's (1999) wonderful book, *The Holy Longing: A Search for Christian Spirituality*, and Denise Levertov's (1997) extraordinary selection of poems on religious themes, *The Stream and the Sapphire*. These books provided an important framework for our discussion of the many different issues involved in understanding what Christian spirituality means and its "nonnegotiable essentials" (e.g., private prayer and private morality, social justice, regular churchgoing and participation in the Eucharist and so forth). Especially critical and pressing in our discussions was the topic of the relationship between science and religion (Clayton, 1997; Haught, 1995) and the objective validity and universality of reason (Nagel, 1997) as a way of discovering non-relative truth in a postmodern world. There was also discussion of Jaroslav Pelican's (1971) scholarly account of the emergence of the Catholic tradition (100-600 C.E.) and what the church of Jesus Christ believes in its prayers, teaches in its exegetical and catechetical works, and confesses in its apologetics and polemics, liturgy and creeds, on the basis of Scripture:

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, pp. 49-50)

The content of this *Credo* (or Nicene Creed), the profession of faith that is said aloud at every Sunday and feast day Mass, holds one of the keys to understanding the struggle that some Catholics experience with their faith and with their church.

What This Essay Is All About

It is a truism in cognitive psychology that before a problem can be solved, it must first be understood (Davis, 1973). Until we have a clear, accurate picture of the problem we will most likely fail to reach an accurate solution. And regardless of the nature of the problem, the key to a successful solution lies in how the problem is represented, that is, how a person comes to interpret the problem. In interpreting the problem a variety of factors need to be identified, including what is known or given about the problem. In other words, before proposing possible ways of addressing the problem of the struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern secular world, we need to first understand how people actually experience the struggle to believe.

Describing the struggle to believe. While reflecting on the assigned readings and on the discussions that I had with my seminar colleagues in preparation for the writing of this essay, I was struck by Kathleen Norris's (1998) use of storytelling as a narrative device for sorting through all the issues and trying to make sense of them. Storytelling seemed to be a good technique for describing the psychological contours of the problem of the struggle to believe as it occurs in the private experience of actual individuals living in the postmodern secular world. After all, psychologically speaking, it is the subjective dimension and its interior order of events that provides the starting point from which the struggle to believe first becomes manifest in an individual's private experience, and the context within which satisfying resolutions emerge and ultimately take root. The first part of the essay therefore focuses on *describing the experience* of the struggle to believe from the first-person point of view. It presents:

- A Sacred Story -- a story about the faith struggle that I experienced when I was a college student in a Roman Catholic Seminary, and
- Phenomenological Survey Results -- a brief summary of other people's stories of their faith struggle that I have garnered through books that mattered to me and in recent conversations I've had with people that focused on answering this query: "In terms of one's faith, have you ever experienced a struggle to believe? What was that like? Can you tell me anything else that will help me better understand your experience?"

Understanding the struggle to believe. The second part of the essay focuses on *understanding possible resolutions* of the struggle to believe from a more objective, third person point of view. Building on my knowledge of transpersonal theory and research (having taught a course in transpersonal psychology at Rivier College since 1989), and drawing on the organizational framework presented in John Haught's excellent book, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (1995), the second portion of the essay presents

- Positive and negative aspects of modernism that have shaped the present crisis of faith.
- Positive and negative aspects of postmodernism that have shaped the current struggle to believe.
- How "epistemological pluralism" may offer a "contrast" solution to science and religion conflict.
- How "new paradigms" of science may offer a "contact" solution to science and religion conflict.
- How postmodern thought and modern science can help shape, support, and nourish the subjective wisdom and spiritual quest of Catholicism.

In the concluding portion of the essay, "Bridging Science and Spirit," I have set myself a two-fold task: (a) to identify how three key ideas of postmodernism can help us better understand the struggle that many people experience with their faith and with their Church, and (b) to find a way to have Catholic spirituality able to stand up to scientific authority (and scientism) by announcing its own methods and modes of knowing, data and evidence, confirmations and verifications in a way that satisfy the essence of both religious and scientific claims. Unless and until these two tasks are accomplished, I believe that the chance of any reconciliation between the Catholic religion, postmodern philosophy, and Western science will be slim. As philosopher Colin Gunton put the matter: "The quest must be for non-foundationalist foundations: to find moments of truth in both of the contentions [of postmodern thought and modern science], namely that particularity and universality each have their place in a reasoned approach to the truth (quoted in Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 123).

Reconciling religion, science, and postmodernism. From the standpoint of transpersonal psychology, pre-modern religion and modern science and postmodern thought do not need to be in conflict. Transpersonal psychologist Roger Walsh (1999) states in his book, *Essential Spirituality: The Seven Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind*, that "mature spirituality cannot be limited to ancient ideas and long-dead teachers. Rather, if spirituality is to live in us and through us, it must embrace the modern world and incorporate relevant findings from contemporary science" (pp. 17-18). As Albert Einstein (1879-1955) put it:

“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” Unfortunately, the struggle to believe has turned into a contest between science, religion, and postmodernism and a source of strife between the Church and the postmodern world. Much of the conflict, however, has been between *pseudo-religion* with its “untested faith” and its “proof by authority” claims, *extreme postmodernism*, especially poststructuralism, with its belief that “there is no truth, only interpretation,” and *pseudo-science*, especially scientific materialism (Alfred North Whitehead’s phrase) and scientism: the two-fold belief that “only the material is real” and “empirical science is the only way to obtain valid information.” (“Please, Mr. E. O. Wilson, show me your scientific proof that science is the only means for acquiring knowledge.”) There does not necessarily need to be a conflict between mature spirituality (with its emphasis on testing the claims and practices of a religion through personal experience), mature science (with its similar emphasis on the empirical verification of facts and theories), and mature postmodernism (with its emphasis on interpretation, context, and diversity). Consequently, this essay takes note of relevant findings from transpersonal psychology, modern science and postmodernism whenever they throw light on helping us understand both Catholic spirituality and the struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern secular world.

The actual relation of exterior realities to interior realities. Catholicism gives great emphasis to interior modes of knowing (e.g., faith, mystical-contemplative experience, revelation, inspired scripture writings) and interior, transcendental realities. Science emphasizes exterior modes of knowing (e.g., sensory-motor experience, perceptual observation) and exterior, empirical realities. Drawing upon the ideas developed by transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998) in his insightful book, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion*, this essay will examine what is arguably one of the most critical and pressing issues in the relation of science, postmodernism, and spirituality -- the actual relation of exterior realities to interior realities. Empirical science is a superb method for learning about physical objects and their properties. But empirical science with its “eye of flesh” (to use St. Bonaventure’s term, *lumen inferius/exterius*) cannot see nonphysical subjective experience and can say almost nothing about such vital dimensions of life, as meaning and purpose, values and spirit. To know the spiritual nature of ourselves and our link with spiritual Reality requires cultivating a different way of knowing that is based on a different way of seeing, using the “eye of Spirit” (*lumen superius*) that transcends the sensory realm. Unless we find a way for both those claims to be true – the transcendental and the empirical, the interior and exterior – I believe that we will never genuinely integrate or reconcile religion and science in the secular world.

Three aspects of the secular world. Of course, the particular reconciliation achieved between science and religion in the secular world will depend on exactly what is meant by “science,” “religion,” and “secular world.” Wilber (1998) points out that the *secular world* actually consists of three very different aspects. Some aspects of the secular world are “modern” in the sense of historical events set into motion in Western Civilization following the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Other aspects are “pre-modern” in the sense of continuing the traditions of ancient revealed religions and include the handing down of Christian doctrine during the course of Church history. Still other aspects are “postmodern” in the broad sense of historical events occurring in the wake of modernism. These three aspects of the contemporary secular world – pre-modern, modern, and postmodern – coexist today in what is often an antagonistic and deeply distrustful relationship. They nevertheless provide a necessary framework both for understanding the meaning of the phrase “struggle to believe” and for determining what constitutes an appropriate response to the struggle. Any resolution of the struggle to believe, I believe, will ultimately depend on finding some common ground that can accommodate and relate the deepest wisdom of pre-modern Catholicism, the best insights of modern science, and the brightest knowledge of postmodernism in a way that is acceptable to all three of these aspects of the secular world.

The living truth of the struggle to believe. Being a bit of a postmodernist myself, I do not expect that there is one great Truth about the “struggle to believe,” that I know it, and that it will appear in the pages of this essay. I have come to believe that truth is made up of many seemingly distinct, separate, and different realities. Truth is not a thing that must always have the same appearance, shape, or form wherever and whenever it appears (the arguments of philosopher Thomas Nagel (1997) presented in his fine book, *The Last*

Word, notwithstanding). The truth of the struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern world is a living truth and exists only in those terms. I am myself a portion of the truth that I perceive and communicate, and this applies to each person, each reader. As writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1972) put it:

Each of you are part of the truths that you perceive. ‘Truth,’ reflected through you, becomes in a way new truth, for it is perceived uniquely, (as it would be for each individual who perceived it). It is not less truth or more truth in those terms. It becomes new truth. (pp. 473-474)

Instead of absolute truths or even moral positions, I would like the reader to think of what follows only as various approaches to truth, avenues of fruitful speculation and intuitive possibilities. If philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1957) is correct, then the reader who faithfully relies on his or her detached and unrestricted desire to know and understand a “truth” will always be led into still greater dimensions of knowing that truth by always asking the further question.

In this Faculty Seminar, asking the further question meant asking it within an interdisciplinary context provided by my colleagues and our numerous guest speakers who represented the disciplines of chemistry, philosophy, history, religious studies, and literature. As John Polkinghorne (1998) observed in his book, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*:

Interdisciplinary work is both essential (for, in the end, knowledge is one) and risky (for we must all venture to speak on topics of which we are not wholly master). We must attempt a bit of intellectual daring and, above all, we have to be prepared to listen and learn from each other, showing mutual tolerance and acceptance in doing so. (p. 83)

In our different ways and in our different domains, we were each concerned with understanding the living truth of the struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern world.

Exploring the issues for yourself. Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1957) once said somewhere in his magnum opus, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, “If you have much to say, you can’t say it all at once.” This essay, therefore, is not brief. I hope to address the issues in a reasonably complete manner and to convey some of the excitement and passion, trust and openness to experience, camaraderie and enjoyment that I felt as a participant in this wonderful learning opportunity that the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary have provided for the intellectual and spiritual growth of its academic faculty. My ultimate aim is to encourage you, the reader, to explore the matter for yourself and generate your own evidence, pushing against the usual psychological and social barriers of your own private psyche until they give, perhaps opening your eyes to new mystical territory that is available to you in your own states of inspiration. Becoming aware of that greater Source from which all such creative moments emerge, perhaps you too will feel an impulse to translate that sacred vision into words, art, song or dance for the sharing with others, reminding them of their own sacred story and struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern secular world.

Experiencing the Struggle to Believe

A Sacred Story

Ever since I can remember I have had a burning desire to understand the true nature of human personality and humanity’s proper relationship to spiritual Reality and to the rest of creation. I thought I had discovered those Truths (capital T) in my academic training during the spring semester of my junior year at Our Lady of Providence Seminary (Warwick, RI). I was 20 years old at the time and studying to become a Roman Catholic diocesan priest. I was steep in my study of Darwinian anthropology, Freudian psychology, Biblical studies, existential philosophy, and natural science.

What I learned. I learned in my anthropology course about Charles Darwin who spent over half his life proving the validity of his theory of evolution. Generations of scientists since have viewed the natural world through its light, taking Darwinian theories for granted as being a literal interpretation of the origins of species, and attempting to make human nature conform to the picture of evolution as Darwin conceived it. Certainly Darwin's considerable achievement in classifying the different species and in describing their struggle for survival is an entirely true and objective representation of the natural world. I learned in my psychology course about Sigmund Freud who invented such a comprehensive system of psychology that it seemed to explain everything about human experience and behavior. Such an all-inclusive and internally consistent theory must be true, I thought, because it possessed such sweeping explanatory power. I learned in my religion course about the Old Testament God Jehovah and about Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who declared that His was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Holy Scriptures and the theological doctrines and dogmas of His Church must certainly be divinely true if His Holy Spirit inspired them. I learned in my philosophy course about existential philosophers such as John Paul Sartre and Albert Camus who were committed to engaging the painful realities of aloneness and death exactly as they are and refused to gloss over suffering or arbitrarily pretend that life is inherently meaningful. Such a demand for authenticity, freedom, and autonomy must certainly be true and the correct defense against delusion and self-deception, I thought. I learned in my natural science course that science, too, seemed committed to engaging reality exactly as it is. Objective, empirical science must certainly be the final arbiter of what is true and real. When I attempted to integrate these diverse beliefs and ways of thinking into a single coherent framework, however, I became filled with feelings of tension and conflict, stress and strain, for *how could they all be true?* When I examined in more detail the assumptions and implications of the course material, I gradually began to lose a sense of my own worth and purpose.

What I came to believe. My course in *Darwinian theory* revealed our species to be a creature pitted against itself (as ego is pitted against id) and whose nature is amoral (there are no standards of right or wrong as anything goes for survival sake). In the Darwinian world, nature cares little for the individual, only for the species. The attainment of adulthood has little purpose except to insure the further existence of the species through parenthood. The species itself appears to have no reason except a mindless determination to exist. Tainted with brutish and destructive impulses, I was the member of a deadly and greedy predatory species, a murderer at heart and nature's despoiler, a blight upon the planet, and the victim of an indifferent Nature that brought meaningless death. I became separate from nature and in competition with all other creatures in an endless struggle for survival. There is no possibility of spiritual survival as far as evolutionary theory is concerned, however, because evolutionary Darwinian man and woman are not created with a soul. All psychological activity is scaled down in between life and death. Death becomes an affront to life and comes to imply a certain kind of weakness, for is it not said that only the strong survive?

My course in *Freudian psychology* taught me to believe that my unconscious self was certainly devious, capable of the most insidious subconscious fraud, and filled with savage rage and infantile impulses that I could not trust, no matter what I told myself. The unconscious was understood to be a garbage heap of undesirable impulses, long ago discarded by civilization. Slips of the tongue and dreams betrayed the self's hidden nefarious true desires. The spontaneous self, the impulsive portion of my nature, became most suspect, since in my spontaneous acts I could unwittingly reveal not a basic goodness, but the hidden shoddiness of my motives. Altruism, displays of valor, philosophy itself, and artistic creativity were tied to the meanest motives and were only possible because of their self-serving qualities. Beneath their gentle guise laid the infant's savage determination to exist and the male's desire to slay the father in order to supersede him in life's battle. Programmed from childhood to fail or succeed, the heights and depths of each person's soul were seen to be the result of infantile behavior patterns that rigidly controlled us for a lifetime. The Freudian concept of the self lacked any good, trustworthy, or purposeful intent. It seemed to be the only kind of a self that could logically survive the theories of Darwin – the end result of an organism that survived by triumphing over other life forms in an endless battle for life.

Unfortunately, such concepts were also reflected in my *Bible studies*. Given the earth as living grounds by a capricious and vengeful God, who would one day destroy the world, I came to believe that our species was bound for ultimate tragedy and extinction. Born blighted by original sin, created imperfect by a perfect God who then punished me for my imperfections, and who would send me to hell if I did not adore Him, I came to see myself as an innately flawed and sinful self, a creature bound to do wrong regardless of any strong good intent. Being the member of a species of sinners, contaminated by original sin even before birth, innately driven by evil, and sometimes demonic, forces that must be kept in check by good work, prayer, and penance, I came to distrust my inner self and to fear my own spontaneity. How could I be “good” when my self was “bad”? The conditions of life and illness were seen as punishment sent by God upon his erring creatures, or as a trial sent by God, to be borne stoically. Life was indeed a valley of sorrows.

My course in *existential philosophy* was simply a variation upon the theme. It convinced me that life was an unpleasant and inherently meaningless condition of existence from which release was welcomingly sought and that the end justifies the means, especially if that end is Man. Life was replete with guilt, pain, suffering, and death. One is born alone and dies alone. There is no escape from this condition of isolation for the self who perceives the universe and everyone else as totally unlike itself, as “other” (“Hell is other people”). Jean Paul Sartre’s novels, *Nausea* and *No Exit*, persuaded me that I was born without reason (because “existence precedes essence” and no *a priori* meaning or purpose could be assigned to my being since nothing is pre-given but must be created), that I prolong myself out of weakness (because I do not have the courage to commit suicide), and that I will die by chance in a meaningless universe to boot. Belief in God, in the existence of a spiritual Reality, and in an afterlife may serve as a consolation to the ego faced with the threat of nonexistence, but I must not deceive myself. The separate self is always eventually overcome by death. The skull always grins at the banquet of life, so to speak. Everyone must die; everything gained must eventually be relinquished. Nothing lasts; everything changes. Eventually I must confront the threat of my own extinction and refuse to pretend that things can get better. Try as I may to create meaning through my individual actions, even the most heroic actions could not overcome feelings of existential dread and ontological anxiety. Like a personality in one of Pirandello’s novels, I was a character in search of an author. Like an actor in one of Beckett’s plays, I was waiting for a Godot who would never arrive. Even love itself seemed only a romantic illusion.

My *natural science* course had the most impact of all. Science led me to suppose that my exquisite self-consciousness and all of life itself was nothing more than an accidental by-product of inert atoms and molecules and the chance conglomeration of lifeless chemical elements, mindlessly coming together into an existence that was bound to end in a godless, uncaring, and mechanical universe that was itself accidentally created. The emotions of love and joy, the virtues of kindness and generosity, all thoughts and wisdom, religious sentiments and consciousness itself were merely epiphenomena of the erratic activity of neural firings, hormones, and neurotransmitters. Consciousness was the result of a brain that was itself nothing but a highly complicated mechanism that only *happened* to come into existence, and had no reality outside of that structure. The self was simply the accidental personification of the body’s biological mechanisms. Feelings of conscious choice were only reflections of brain state activity at any given time. The great creative, individual thrust of life within each person became assigned to a common source in past conditioning or to the accidental nature of genes or reduced to a generalized mass of electrochemical impulses and neurological processes.

Projecting these ideas upon nature at large, the *natural world* appeared equally mysterious, dangerous, and threatening, especially the *animal world*. Given to humans to do with as we wished by our species God, animals were in a “natural” subordinate position in the Great Chain of Being. Lifted up above the beasts at the pinnacle end of a great evolutionary scale, only humans possessed consciousness and self-consciousness, intellect and imagination, emotion and free will, and the dignity of a spiritual life. Only humans were to be granted souls or a rich psychological life. Animals were mere electrochemical machines that operated solely by the mechanism of instinct. Being creatures literally without a center of meaning, animals were to be regarded simply as physical objects, like rocks and stars, blind alike to pain or desire and

without intrinsic worth or value. An individual animal's existence could have no higher meaning or purpose than to be a resource for human use or consumed as mere foodstuff in a daily tooth-and-claw struggle for survival that was everywhere beset by the threat of illness, disaster, and death. The sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of animals became justified if it was a means toward the goal of protecting the sacredness of human life and the survival of the human species, regardless of the consequences.

Becoming the self I thought I was. Unbeknownst to me at the time, my academic course work was indoctrinating me into what transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart (1975/1992, Chapter 2) calls the "Western Creed" – a set of *implicit* assumptions about the nature of human personality and physical reality that have come to characterize much of the postmodern secular world, that have practical consequences on the human spirit, and that block progress in understanding the spiritual side of ourselves. Operating for the most part outside of my conscious awareness, these psychologically invisible beliefs programmed my experience to such an extent that they took on the appearance of fact. Interpreting the private events of my life in light of these assumptions about the nature of reality and human personality, I unconsciously put together my perceptions so that they seemed to bear out those beliefs. My beliefs selectively structured my experience so that experience came to fit the beliefs I had about it. Perceptions and beliefs became mutually and selectively reinforcing. What I believed to be true became true in my experience. Imagination and emotion, following the contours of my beliefs, not only colored and intangibly structured my subjective experience, but also conditioned me to act in certain ways in accordance with those beliefs upon which I had come to base my life. Believed in fervently enough, they came to act like strong hypnotic suggestions that triggered specific actions strongly implied by the beliefs. The end result was a set of unexamined structured beliefs that were automatically acted upon. I created events that more or less conformed to those beliefs, and became the self that I thought I was.

"Science loves skepticism except when skepticism is applied to science". There always remained lingering doubts, however, about what I had come to believe. I found it ironic that the basis of the scientific empirical method and the framework behind all of our organized structures of science, rested upon a subjective reality that was not considered valid by the very scientific institutions that were formed through its auspices. How could such a vital consciousness as my own even suppose itself to be the end product of inert elements that were themselves lifeless, but somehow managed to combine in such a way that our species attained fantasy, logic, vast organizational power, and civilizations? Science almost made me believe in magic! What a cosmic joke that the chemical composition of my own mind was somehow intelligent enough to understand the irony of its own meaninglessness. Certainly a brain that could conceive of order somehow had to emerge from a greater order. Certainly it was not *purposelessness* that gave us the order of nature – such well-ordered genetic activity or the elegant sequences of molecular structures that support the creation of amino acids and proteins that sustain physical life. Certainly it was not *meaninglessness* that gave rise to the creative drama of our dreams. Certainly it was not *genetic chance* that is responsible for the precision with which we grow spontaneously, without knowing how, from a fetus to an adult. Certainly it was not *environmental necessity* that caused the existence of heroic themes and quests and ideals that pervade human life. Surely all of these give evidence of a greater context in which we have our being.

How could agnostic science, I wondered further, stress the species' accidental presence in the universe and that we owe our physical existence to the chance conglomeration of atoms and molecules and still expect our species to be the most moral of creatures or to feel that one's individual life has meaning or purpose? How can we believe we live in a safe universe if each species exists because it survives through tooth and claw, and if it must hunt and kill out of murderous intent, as implied by the theories of evolution? How can we trust ourselves or live lives of honor if we believe we are members of such a dishonorable killer species? If we see ourselves as the end result of such a species, then how can we expect goodness or merit or creativity from ourselves, or from others? How could we look at ourselves with self-respect, with dignity and joy, if we believe that life is inherently meaningless or that we are the end products in which only the fittest survive? One question led to another. Yet while referring to the Big Bang *theory* or to the *theory* of

evolution, my teachers seemed to accept them as facts about existence. Any skepticism anyone expressed that threatened those theories seemed to be almost heretical.

The kite as a symbol of transformation. When the full weight of these unanswered questions and unquestioned beliefs finally fell upon me, a sick and sinking feeling began to well up in the pit of my stomach. Amid such a conglomeration of negative beliefs, the idea of a good and innocent inner self seemed almost scandalous. To encourage expression of that self appeared foolhardy, for it seemed only too clear that if the lid of awareness were opened, so to speak, all kinds of inner demons and enraged impulses would rush forth. This webwork of beliefs had deprived my mind and body of the zest and purpose needed to enjoy pursuits or activities and made any endeavor appear futile. I began to feel adrift, without a higher goal or vision. I felt suspicious, frightened, angry, aloof, and alone. In this confusion of thoughts and fears, I felt my life to be meaningless and hungered for something more sustaining. I was experiencing what William James (1902/1936) called “soul sickness.”

As I lay exhausted upon my bed one spring afternoon in 1970, I slipped into a trance-like state and had a waking dream. My confused and disordered mind suddenly symbolized itself as a kite connected to a long string held by mental hands. The kite was fluttering in fits and starts, buffeted about by turbulent gusts of inner wind that threatened to tear it to pieces. “How can I stop this violent commotion of my mind?” I thought aloud. “Cut the string,” an inner voice replied. “But if I do that, then I’ll lose my mind,” I answered back, fearing that if I cut that string I would release my mind to fly off into some dark, unfathomable and limitless recess of the psyche, forever swallowed up by my own subjectivity. “What else can I do?” I implored. “Pull the kite in,” an answer came. Slowly I began to tug on that mental string, but the more I pulled, the more wildly did that kite toss and turn. Thrown about by the tumultuous energy of that wild psychic wind, my mental kite threatened to tumble and shatter onto that inner landscape. I was at a loss at what to do to end this turmoil of body, mind, and spirit. I feared that I was losing my mind.

At this point, my mind suddenly opened up and leaped beyond itself. Some indescribable element, some spiritual intangible, touched me and said: “If you want to save yourself, you must first lose yourself. If you want to hold onto yourself, then you must let yourself go.” All at once I knew what I had to do. In a moment of faith, instilled by an unaccustomed sense of trust and safety, I slowly let the string out so that the kite ascended higher and higher until it found its way up through the turbulence and turmoil into the calm and peaceful sky above. My mental kite now floated easily and gently with a newfound sense of ease and freedom. I was suddenly filled with an additional energy, a new buoyancy and joy. Sitting up in bed and opening my eyes, I sat transfixed. Another world seemed to shimmer within and around whatever I looked at. Everything seemed to be what it was, yet somehow more. A change had occurred in me. I felt my personality click into a new focus and become lined up with an invisible part of my own reality that I had barely sensed before. The entire feeling-tone of my personality was changed. In that brief moment of intense, expanded consciousness, I felt and experienced directly a Presence so creative, understanding, and lovingly permissive that its good nature and loving intent could indeed create and maintain worlds. In a way quite difficult to describe, I felt myself to be a part of nature’s framework and one with nature’s source. My earlier psychological reality became meaningless to me. It was superseded by a biologically and spiritually rooted faith that my existence was meaningful precisely because of my connection with nature and with that greater indefinable framework of existence from which all life springs, even though that meaning was not intellectually understood at the time. I felt deeply within myself that the quality of identity and the nature of existence were far more mysterious than I could understand.

Epiphany. When my formal training as a psychologist began, I was constantly on the outlook for some kind of framework that would help me translate that spectacular inner vision into terms that made psychological sense. Transpersonal psychology and the writings of Jane Roberts (1970, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1979a, 1979b, 1981a, 1981b, 1986a, 1986b, 1995, 1997), gifted writer, mystic and mentor, have helped me to make that translation in a way that was psychologically sound and faithful to the underlying complexity of the original experience. Looking inward and remaining open to my intuitions, I had felt

deeply within myself connections not only with the earth itself, but with deeper realities. While in the throes of what seemed to me to be inspiration of almost unbearable intensity, I got the idea that the universe was formed out of what God is, that it was the natural extension of divine creativity, lovingly formed *from the inside out*, so to speak. I felt that in certain basic and vital ways, my own consciousness and being was a portion of that divine gestalt. As philosopher-theologian John Hick (1999) in his book, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Dimension*, put it:

There is an aspect of us that is ‘in tune’ with the Transcendent. This aspect is referred to as the image of God within us; or as the divine spark spoken of by Plotinus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eckhart, Ruusbroec, Suso, Tauler and many other Christian mystics; or as ‘that of God in every man’; or as the *atman* which in our deepest nature we all are; or as our ‘true self’, the ‘selfless self’, or as the universal Buddha nature within us. It is this aspect of our being that is affected by the ultimately Real to the extent that we are open to that reality. (p. 41)

I became aware that God is so much a part of His (or Her or Its) creations that it is almost impossible to separate the Creator from the creations, that each hypothetical point in the universe is in direct contact with God in the most basic terms, and that this connection can never be severed.

I got the picture that there is a portion of God that is directed and focused and residing within each of us that is more intimate than our breath. It is the force that forms our flesh and our identities in that it is responsible for the energy that gives vitality and validity to our unique personalities. I perceived all Being to be continually upheld, supported, and maintained by this ever-expanding, ever-creative energy that forms everything and of which each human being is a part. As physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998) in his book *Belief in God in an Age of Science* put it:

Our moral intuitions are intimations of the perfect will, our aesthetic pleasures a sharing in the Creator’s joy, our religious intuitions whispers of God’s presence. The understanding of the value-laden character of our world is that there is a supreme Source of Value whose nature is reflected in all that is held in being. (pp. 19-20)

I also felt the inconceivable vitality of a God that is truly multidimensional -- a God that is a part of creation and yet is also more than what creation is, in the same way that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. His nature transcends all dimensions of activity, consciousness, or reality, while still being a part of each. Yet this is no impersonal God. Since its energy gives rise to you and me and all human personalities, how could this be? This portion of God that is both aware of itself as you, that is focused within your existence, and that is also aware of itself as something more than you, is a loving and creative, redemptive God that is both transcendent and personal. This portion of God cherishes and protects you and looks out for your interests and may be called upon for help when necessary in a personal manner through prayer that always contains its own answer if you believe and desire to receive it (Mark 11:24).

It is very difficult to try to assign anything like human motivation to God. I can only say that that initial experience revealed the existence of a God who was possessed by “the need” to lovingly create from His own being – to lovingly transform His own reality – in such a way that even the most slightest thought that emerged within His infinitely massive, omnipotent, superlative, and creative imagination attained dimensions of actuality impossible to describe. This was no static, impassible God that I perceived. It was a vision and version of a God who, seeking to know Himself, constantly and lovingly creates new versions of Himself out of Himself (or Herself). This “seeking Himself” is a creative activity, the core of all action; God acting through *creatio continua* (see, for example, Peacocke, 1979). Each creation carries indelibly within itself this characteristic of its Source. Just as one’s awareness and experience of God constantly changes and grows, all portions of God are constantly changing, enfolding and unfolding as the universe does (see, for example, Bohm, 1980).

The loving support, the loving encouragement, the need to see that any and all possible realities become probable and have the chance to emerge, perceive, and love – that is the intent of the divine subjectivity and creativity of God that I perceived in that state of expanded consciousness. I felt deeply that our closest approximation of the purpose of the universe could be found in those loving emotions that we might have toward the development of our own children, in our intent to have them develop their fullest capabilities. And God loves all that He has created down to the least. He is aware of every sparrow that falls because He is every sparrow. Everything that was or is or will be is kept in immediate attention, poised in a divine context that is characterized by such a brilliant concentration that the grandest and the lowest, the largest and the smallest, are equally held in a loving constant focus. His awareness and attention is indeed directed with a prime creator's love to each consciousness. God IS Love (1 John, 4:8, 16).

Aftermath. The highly charged energy generated by this experience was enough to change my life in a matter of moments. The insights that I received strongly clashed with previously held ideas and beliefs, giving the experience its initial explosive, volatile, and intrusive quality. I had been led by my experience beyond the framework of beliefs that had given it birth. My task was now to correlate the new intuitive knowledge with the beliefs of the Western Creed that I had so willingly accepted before, and to reform my knowledge frameworks to make them strong enough to support the new insights. Accepted frameworks and answers now made little sense to me. I could no longer accept answers given by others, but now insisted upon finding my own. I could no longer continue to think about God in the old ways, for the experience had brought me far beyond such a point. I had now to free myself and be true to my own vision. Shortly thereafter I left the Seminary to see the world firsthand, driven by a fine impatience, a divine discontent that drives me on even today. I felt immeasurably strengthened and supported by an inner certainty that instilled in me a sense of safety, optimism, and trust in my own nature and in that unknown source (called God) in which we all have our being and from which our vitality springs daily. I knew somehow that my existence had a meaning and purpose even if that meaning and purpose was not intellectually understood.

The insights that I received during that state of expanded consciousness required me to become more responsive and responsible in my behavior. It also brought with it a sympathy with life that had earlier been lacking, especially for animals – a sensitivity that remains strong, challenging, and intense to this day. I understood for the first time that my humanness did not emerge by refusing my animal heritage, but upon an extension of what that heritage is. It was not a matter of rising above my animal nature to truly appreciate my spirituality, but of evolving from a fuller understanding of that nature. I am not separated from animals and the rest of existence by virtue of possessing an eternal inner consciousness; rather, such a consciousness is within all life, whatever its form. The consciousness that exists within animals is as valid and eternal as my own, for each individual being is

A vital, conscious portion of the universe [that] simply by being, fits into the universe and into universal purposes in a way that no one else can... an individualized segment of the universe; a beloved individual, formed with infinite care and love, uniquely gifted with a life like no other. (Roberts, 1997, pp. 147-148)

I also came to understand the symbolism of my kite experience: There is a portion of universal creative energy that becomes individualized to form my being and that sustains and nourishes my existence, and when I become too intent in maintaining my own reality I lose it, because I am denying the creativity upon which it rests.

Phenomenological Survey Results

The sweeping psychological attitudes on the part of many people who put forth great intellectual effort and who labor hard emotionally to remain “good” Catholics in the postmodern secular world cannot be adequately understood from the presentation of a single case study alone, however. We can also learn from other people's stories. These stories can be obtained from the reading of books and in face-to-face

conversations. Other people's stories of their personal struggles with their faith and with their churches can be used to expand our understanding of the problem of belief and extend the range of our discussion into other, different aspects of the issue. Obtaining other people's stories of their struggle to believe seemed to me to be a good way of understanding how people actually experience the problem. Only when the private or personal nature of the struggle to believe is sufficiently understood will we be ready to see how the magnification of individual reality combines and enlarges to form the many important and vital issues involved in our collective struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern secular world. We may learn, as Kathleen Norris (1998) puts it, "how individual experience can be made meaningful to others, so that it does not remain exclusively private or personal" (pp. 25-26).

Having received my doctorate in general-experimental cognitive psychology and phenomenological research methods, I thought that by interviewing a relatively small number of individuals, I might obtain a better understanding of the issues of faith that baptized Catholics were currently struggling with in their lives (see Braud & Anderson, 1998; Valle & Halling, 1989, for an overview of phenomenological-transpersonal research methods). During the summer months of May, June, and July, therefore, I interviewed 12 people (males and females, youth, adults, and elderly) in diverse settings (over lunch with friends in New Hampshire, on an airplane while traveling from an assessment conference in Wisconsin, during family gatherings in Rhode Island, in e-mail correspondences with colleagues across New England, and so forth) asking the following questions: "In terms of your faith, have you ever experienced a struggle to believe? What was that like? Could you tell me more about that?" People's answers to these three questions provided a first-person perspective that gave flesh and blood to the problem of belief, so to speak. Responses tended to fall into four categories:

- **Conflict with science.** Science had become an important arbiter of what was true and what was real. For these individuals, the struggle to believe had its source in the fact that many of the things that they had learned in childhood as being true according to the Bible had been proved to be either impossible or highly implausible from the viewpoint of modern science.
- **Apparent arbitrariness of religious ritual.** For other respondents, the struggle to believe did not originate from a conflict between modern science and the Catholic religion, but out of the perceived relativity of what was once thought to be non-relative religious practices.
- **Conflicting views of God.** For other people, the struggle to believe involved a profound questioning of the nature of God as it appears in biblical history. People reflected upon the duality that pervades Christianity generally, trying to reconcile their ideas of a loving, merciful God, faith healing, and heaven for the "good guys", with contradictory beliefs in God's vengeance, the devil, eternal damnation for the "bad guys," and humanity's sinful nature.
- **Apostasy and a total desertion of faith.** Some respondents asserted that the Christian God has caused us enough trouble as it is, and better to dispense with the entire idea altogether.

These categories are not intended to be exhaustive. Given the haphazard nature of the sample and its small size, these responses are not to be considered representative of the domain of individuals who are experiencing a struggle with their faith or with their church. I simply offer them as suggestive of the issues and as springboards for further discussion. Each category of response is described in more detail below.

Conflict with science. Some people's stories of their struggle to believe lay firmly in a perceived conflict between their literal belief in the events described in Scripture and the findings of modern science. The physical sciences, for example, have indicated that the world was not created in six days and that it is highly unlikely that our species originated in some Garden of Eden as described in Genesis. Does this mean that the Genesis creation story is false? Natural science asserts that human conception without fertilization is a biological impossibility and that the dead do not resurrect. Does this mean that the Virgin birth of Christ didn't happen or prove that there will be no resurrection of the dead as expressed in the Credo? Schooled in the ways of scientific thinking, respondents had become conditioned to believe that information that isn't literally true is false. If only literal (read: empirical) facts are true, and if the Bible is not a book of facts,

then how can it be a guide to knowing what is true and real? And if some of the statements in the Bible are known to be false in an empirical sense, then what about the other “facts” that cannot be scientifically verified? Are they also false?

Apparent relativity of religious ritual. Other people’s stories of their faith struggle seemed to arise out of the perception that religious practices that were once thought to be absolute have turned out to be not absolute at all. For example, once upon a time it was a sin to eat meat on Fridays during the season of Lent, to eat or to drink anything except water prior to Holy Communion, or to touch the communion Host with one’s hands, but now such acts are no longer considered sins. The forgiveness of sins was once obtainable only through private confession, but now is available through general absolution at Sunday Mass. The priest used to be sole mediator between God and his people, but now non-ordained laity can distribute Holy Communion to parishioners any day of the week. Such changes in ritual seemed to affect the faith of the older Pre-Vatican II respondents I interviewed. What was once a necessary requirement for grace or salvation is perceived as being no longer so, and if this is true in the little things of faith, then what about the larger things?

Conflicting views of God. Another aspect of people’s faith struggle lay in their understanding about the nature of God. “If there is a God, then why doesn’t He speak to us directly?” “Why does a loving God allow evil to occur?” were two questions that arose in this context. Another respondent struggled with the prejudice of an ancient God who said that homosexuals were evil and unnatural (according to God’s holy words). Writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1981b), in her thought-provoking book, *The God of Jane: A Psychic Manifesto* articulates the concerns of Catholic respondents who are disturbed with the conflicting views of God as portrayed in the Scriptures. She writes:

If Christ said, ‘Turn the other cheek,’ did the Crusaders pay any attention? Or the members of the Inquisition? It seldom occurs to us that to be divine might possibly mean that we could not kill; not even our enemies, or heretics, or the bad guys. But, some poor disturbed person believes that he or she is divine, and hears God’s voice commanding the death of a neighbor, or ten neighbors, and for *that*...we have Biblical precedent. Didn’t Jehovah slay the enemies of the Israelites? Didn’t God command Abraham to slay his own son, staying his hand only at the last moment. ...Was that the divinity that gave rise to my life? And yours? (p. 50). ...No wonder so many self-proclaimed messiahs dealt in bloodshed of one kind or another. We have a long history behind that one! There’s the God of Vengeance, Jehovah the bloodthirsty, whose own son is a crucified victim (p. 49).

For Ms. Roberts, this version of God, embellished with the most primitive ideas of good and evil, is hardly more rational and is even more flawed than we are.

Ms. Roberts also finds it difficult to reconcile the apparent contradictions and duplicity that she perceives within Christianity itself. Jane believes that if we are to achieve any genuine social justice in the context of the postmodern secular world, we will have to jettison our antiquated, parochial, and prejudiced concepts of God.

What dubious duality pervades our religions! We have Christ saying, Love thy enemies, turn the other cheek, and the meek will inherit the earth. But we also have his father who sent plagues to the Egyptians on behalf of the chosen people, and whose divine murders are wholesale. Even now each side in a war calls upon God to kill the enemy and almost any means is justified if the end is a *good* one. ...If we are to end our wars, we have to dispense with a threatening, vengeful, bloodthirsty God. If we’re to have any kind of world brotherhood, we have to dispense with a God who reserves his favors for a chosen few. Life is given to all. The sun shines freely on each of us. Would a God be less kindly? More than this, we must also dispense with our species God, and extend our ideas of divinity outward to the rest of nature which couches us and our religious theorizing with such a steady gracious support. (pp. 62- 63)

Although Ms. Roberts' Catholic inheritance seems more a curse than a blessing to her, she still believes in the existence of God. Her struggle is with Christianity's conventional ideas of God.

I'm taking it for granted here that there *is* a Source or God, but that our visions of such a vast psychological reality are limited, even shoddy and destructive. The idea of a crucified God to me at least is aesthetically appalling, for example. Why not a God who loves earth and life for a change? If we are going to insist upon a superhuman God, then why a distant, tempestuous God 'the father'? Why not a God who has the finest human abilities carried to their fullest.... And of course Christianity leaves out any goddesses, so that...religion is not just parochial but 'sexist' as well. And no one ever talks about Christ, the lover of women. ...The old version of a father God, a single deity, may have served to help form our own unique kind of consciousness so that we see ourselves as a species with a God of its own, set against the rest of creation, lifted up above the beasts. That concept may have helped unite us and let us find our own sense of identity at one time, but it's no longer serviceable, and it's turned a destructive face (p. 62). ...An authoritative, absolute God whose word was to be obeyed without question does not fit well in a democracy any more than a king or dictator would (p. 255).

Ms. Roberts believes that through each individual's faith struggle the species is rediscovering its ancient tools of "god-making." Coming out from behind our dogmas and ceremonies, individually we are reaching and searching for the source of Being that is the power behind any great religion. Jane believes, however, that Christians in general and Catholics in particular, have not been able to form any new conceptions of divinity because they fear that any new visions of God seem to be blasphemy. They feel bound to the past and constrained by ideas that *almost* close one's mind and heart to any revelations that might contradict ancient dogmas. Roberts (1972) states:

Religion per se...is always the external facade of inner reality. The primary spiritual existence alone gives meaning to the physical one. In the most real terms, religion should include all of the pursuits of man in his search for the nature of meaning and truth. Spirituality cannot be some isolated, specialized activity or characteristic. Exterior religious dramas are important and valuable only to the extent that they reflect the nature of inner, private spiritual existence. To the extent that a man [or woman] feels that his [or her] religion experiences such inner experience, he [or she] will feel it valid. Most religions per se, however, set up as permissible certain groups of experiences while denying others. They limit themselves by applying the principles of sacredness of life only to [our] own species, and often to highly limited groups within it. (p. 399)

Ms. Roberts speculates that the contemporary struggle to believe reflects the rumblings of the collective psyche, expressed by the various individuals in their own ways, in response to Christianity's having grown more and more out of phase with their private experience, and its dogmas beginning to smother the very intuitive insights that they were meant to express and protect. In the words of Lenny Bruce: "Every day people are straying away from church and going back to God."

Apostasy and a total desertion of faith. Still other respondents reported that they no longer believed in the religion of their childhood, period. From their perspective, all religions (Christian and non-Christian alike) are not much more than childish productions that have about as much reality as Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny. There is simply no credible evidence for any of them, and individuals who continue to believe in the dogmas and doctrines of Christianity as adults have simply refused to grow up cognitively. Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998) describes this as the standard response of individuals who have accepted the positivist approach of modern science to religion:

Religion is a hangover from the childhood of humanity, on exactly the same footing as the tooth fairy. It's cute for children but deadly for adults, and its persistence into maturity – the persistence of

deeply held religious beliefs into adulthood – is a sign of pathology, lack of logical clarity, or existential inauthenticity. There are no exceptions, because there is no God (p. 16).

One respondent wondered, given the fact that Christianity was a religion born two thousand years ago in the Middle East with its ancient beliefs and alien culture that knew neither the telephone, relativity theory, nor modern medicine, why anyone in America would *want* to believe in hell, an authoritative father-figure God, sinful selves, or demons and devils in an age of reason, knowledge, and free intelligence (see, for example, Sagan, 1996)?

Understanding the Struggle to Believe

Science and Religion: From Conflict to Confirmation

Survey responses, book readings, and my own personal experience indicate that the relationship between scientific knowledge and religious belief remains a pressing and critical issue in the struggle that individuals experience with their Catholic faith today. The relationship between scientific knowledge and religious belief has been a “hot” topic in academic circles ever since Ian Barbour’s (1966) excellent summary of the issues in *Issues in Science and Religion*. How are we to understand the problem of the struggle to believe in the postmodern age as depicted in all of these accounts? What are the likely criteria for resolution of the problem? What constraints should be placed on the solutions we might formulate? What various solution options are open to us given what is known about the problem? John Haught (1995) provides an up-to-date summary of the topics in the continuing dialog between science and religion in his book, *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation*. He points out that there are at least four possible solutions that present themselves to any individual trying to relate religion and science together in the context of the postmodern secular world.

1. Keep modern science, postmodern thought, and Christianity dissociated and separate and view them as being in necessary but unavoidable radical disagreement with each other (the *conflict* position)
2. Keep modern science, postmodern thought, and Christianity dissociated and separate but see them as peacefully coexisting, with each addressing its own corresponding domain, dimension, or level of being (the *contrast* position)
3. Keep modern science, postmodern thought, and Christianity associated and related and look for ways how the spiritual, subjective wisdom of Catholicism can somehow shape the relativism of postmodern thought and empirical, objective knowledge of modern science (the *contact* position)
4. Keep modern science, postmodern thought, and Christianity associated and related and look for ways how each enterprise can mutually support and nourish each other (the *confirmation* position)

Because I believe with E.O. Wilson (1998) that the integration of all forms of knowledge is perhaps the single greatest task confronting the postmodern world, I do not wish to argue in favor of the conflict position in this essay, although I will examine in some detail what I consider to be *the positive and negative aspects of modern science and postmodern thought* because of their importance for understanding the contemporary struggle to believe. I heartily agree with physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998) when he states in his book, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*:

I am a passionate believer in the unity of knowledge and I believe that those who are truly seeking an understanding through and through, and who will not settle for a facile and premature conclusion to that search, are seeking God, whether they acknowledge that divine quest or not. Theism is concerned with making *total* sense of the world. The force of its claims depends upon the degree to which belief in God affords the best explanation of the varieties, not just of religious experience, but of all human experience. (p. 24)

The contrast position, on the one hand, is appealing and I shall describe one version of it called *epistemological pluralism*. The contact position is also appealing and I examine what represents a *new “paradigm” approach* in science. Confirmation positions, on the other hand, require that the roadblock to the reconciliation of science and religion set up by the two-fold beliefs of (1) *scientific materialism* (the belief that “only the physical is real; what is nonphysical does not exist, and even if it does, it cannot be verified unless it is entirely reducible to physical matter”) and (2) *scientism* (the belief that “there is no reality except that revealed by science; no truth exists except that which science delivers”) be addressed in a straightforward manner. This is done in a subsequent section of the essay titled “Bridging Science and Spirit in a Postmodern World.”

First, let us examine how the “problem” of science and religion became such a big issue historically in our collective psyche in the first place. By understanding something about the origin of the current conflict between science and religion, we may advance enough in our understanding to see that our task is not to somehow make God compatible with science or science compatible with God, but to reassess the actual relation of exterior realities and interior realities generally, and to find a way for both these realities – empirical and transcendental – to be true.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Modernity

What is modernity? According to transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998) in his book, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion*, the origin of the contemporary “struggle to believe” can be traced to the rise of “modernity” in European civilization or what historians have aptly called the “Age of Reason and Revolution” (Durant, 1963). Modernity refers to the general period that had its *roots* in sixteenth century Renaissance humanism (and the works of Petrarch, Pico, Erasmus, Luther, de Montaigne, da Vinci, Machiavellian, Vives, and Shakespeare) when Catholic Church authority began to recede. Modernity *matured* with the development of seventeenth century science (and the works of Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton) when, instead of Scriptures, faith, and revelation, precise measurements and empirical observation began to be used to map the universe. Modernity *blossomed* with eighteenth century European Enlightenment when science, art, and morals became differentiated from each other and fully separated from religion.

The dignity (positive aspects) of modernity. According to Wilber’s (1998) account, prior to modernity, the various cultural spheres such as science, art, and morals were not clearly differentiated from each other, but instead were fused or conflated with religion in a way that robbed each cultural sphere of its autonomy to pursue its own truths. A scientist like Galileo, for example, could be prevented from pursuing an empirical science because it conflicted with the religious beliefs of the times and if your political views disagreed with religious authorities, you could be tried for both heresy (a religious crime) and treason (A political crime). With the rise of modernity, however, each cultural sphere became clearly differentiated from religion and from each other so that each could develop at its own pace with its own methods, and follow its own discoveries unencumbered by intrusions from the other fields (a situation that did not exist previously when Christian religion dominated all). You could now look through Galileo’s telescope without being hauled off to the Inquisition and burned at the stake and you could espouse universal rights of humans without being charged with treason against King or Queen. Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998, pp. 41-42) in his book *The Marriage of Sense and Soul: Integrating Science and Religion*, includes the following trends as other examples of modernity’s many positive results:

- **Philosophy:** Descartes is considered the first ‘modern’ philosopher; modern philosophy is usually ‘representational,’ which means it tries to form a correct representation of the world. This representational view is also called ‘the mirror of nature,’ because it was commonly believed that the ultimate reality was sensory nature and philosophy’s job was to picture or mirror this reality correctly.

- Art: Modern art in the most general sense (from the middle of the eighteenth century forward) – that of Goya, Constable, Courbet, Manet, Monet, Cezanne, van Gogh, Matisse, Kandinsky – is marked at times by an almost total break with traditional themes and modes of composition, and especially a break from depicting merely mythic-religious themes (nature, not myth, comes more to the fore).
- Science: Modern science (Kepler, Galileo, Newton, Kelvin, Watt, Faraday, Maxwell) relied in large part on the measurement of empirical-sensory data. The old sciences has *classified* nature, the new sciences *measured* nature; and that was their astonishing and revolutionary strength.
- Cultural cognition: This involved a general shift from mytic-membership modes of cognition to mental-rational modes; a shift from conventional to postconventional ethics; a shift from ethnocentric values to universal or global values.
- Personal identity: This involved a shift from a role identity, defined by a social hierarchy, to an ego identity, defined by personal autonomy.
- Political and civil rights: This included the outlawing of slavery, the institution of women’s rights, child labor laws, the rights of humankind (freedom of speech, religion, assembly, fair trial), and equality before the law.
- Technology: This refers especially to inventions beginning with the steam engine, as well as industrialization in general.
- Politics: This included the rise of the liberal democracies, often through a series of actual revolutions (in, e.g., France and America).

Although modernity is sometimes regarded as the “Great Satan” responsible for the death of God, as Wilber’s list above indicates, modernity has had many positive aspects and constructive results that did not exist on any sort of large scale during the “pre-differentiated” times of pre-modern religion. Each individual came to have rights that could not be violated by the Church, State or community in general which freed the development of liberal democracies.

The rise of scientism and scientific materialism. Beginning around the nineteenth century, however, the various cultural spheres came to be invaded and colonized, controlled, dominated, and oppressed once again, not by religion this time but by otherwise admirable science. Science began trying to assimilate and incorporate all other fields into itself, similar to the way that religion once had. Instead of the cultural spheres of art, philosophy, politics, economics, morals, and so forth being under the domain of Christianity as they were during pre-modern times, the cultural spheres came to be subsumed under the domain of science. Whereas Christianity was once the final arbiter of reality, now science took upon itself that role. Science itself would now pronounce on what was, and what was not, real.

How came this to be? Late eighteenth and early nineteenth science was stunningly successful with its projects of measuring nature and dramatic discoveries in physics, chemistry, biology, medicine, astronomy, communications, transportation, economics, banking, and industrialization. The most shocking discovery of all made by science was that much of what had been mistakenly thought for millennia to be radically interior, subjective, transcendent, other-worldly, metaphysical, disembodied, higher, or mystical modes of consciousness actually were thoroughly and intimately connected and embedded in exterior, objective, immanent, this-worldly, physical, embodied, lowly, empirical events in the biomaterial brain and organic body. The profound disclosure and recognition of this elemental connection – interior nonphysical consciousness has an exterior physical correlate – had been completely overlooked in virtually every pre-modern culture, religion, metaphysic, and worldview, without exception. More and more it began to look as if a diligent, thorough, persistent examination of the empirical and positivistic qualities of this world, the world of objects, would yield all the knowledge fit to know and all the salvation that reality could offer. If the higher realm of supposedly “transcendent mind” was actually a function of the organic body, why should the allegedly “transcendental realities” of religion such as soul and spirit be any different?

The sweeping success of scientific empiricism made science so full of itself and grandiose in its own conceit and power, so filled with hubris in the face of its astounding accomplishments, that there arose within science a more narrow, technical and extreme sense of itself called “scientism” and “scientific materialism” (Cameron & Edge, 1979). It is called “extreme” because it takes the two very important “moments of truth” (Wilber’s phrase) of modern science – that “every interior mental event has a physical correlate in the material world” and that “all genuine knowledge must be grounded in experience” – and blows them radically out of proportion to say that “there are no interior dimensions to reality, only exteriors,” and “even if interior realities did exist, there would be no valid way to prove their existence.”

Interior realities reduced to exterior correlates. This extremist branch of empirical science dismissed the entire interior dimension of soul and spirit. Soul, spirit, and God were denied any substantial reality at all because empirical instruments could register none of them. Unless one could actually or figuratively put one’s finger on them and see them with one’s physical senses or their extensions (e.g., a microscope, telescope, cloud chamber, or photographic plate), then they could not be verified and therefore could not be said to exist. As C.G. Jung (1960) in his essay titled, “The Real and the Surreal,” put it:

The concept of reality [became limited] in such a way that the attribute “real” applied only to a particular segment of the world’s reality. This restriction to the so-called material or concrete reality of objects perceived by the senses is a product of a particular way of thinking [that]... operates on the celebrated principle ‘*Nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu,*’ regardless of the fact that there are very many things in the mind which did not derive from the data of the senses. According to this view, everything is ‘real’ which comes, or seems to come, directly or indirectly from the world revealed by the senses. (p. 382)

Not just spiritual realities were attacked, but the entire sweep of lived experience. Any and all subjective realities located in interior emotional, cognitive, and psychic spaces (spaces of intension and not simply extension) – including consciousness, psyche, moral wisdom, art, self, mind, cultural values, honor, justice, thoughts, dreams, virtue, intentionality, compassion, joy, and meaning – were stripped of their actual contents, denied legitimacy and status as irreducible realities with their own ontological weights. All were pronounced private modes of knowing at best and epiphenomenal or illusory hallucinations at worst. Or else they were reduced to exterior surfaces, sensory-empirical correlates, machine models, reductive bits-and-pieces partialities, clock-work assembly-line patterns in an objective physical world in which the omnipotent primacy of matter and physical location reigned supreme. The simple sensory, physically perceivable and measurable correlates of inner reality were the only “real” referents (or existing entities) and were themselves the sum total of reality. C.G. Jung (1960) explains:

Restriction to *material* reality carves an exceedingly large chunk out of reality as a whole, but it nevertheless remains a fragment only, and all round it is a dark penumbra which one would have to call unreal or surreal. This narrow perspective is alien to the Eastern view of the world. ...Our arbitrarily delimited reality is continually menaced by...the ‘supernatural’...[and] begins with the concept of the ‘psychic’. ...Is a thought ‘real’? Probably – to this way of thinking – only in so far as it refers to something that can be perceived by the senses. If it does not, it is considered ‘unreal,’ ‘fanciful,’ ‘fantastic,’ etc. and is thus declared nonexistent. ...The thought *was* and *is*, even though it refers to no tangible reality; it even has an effect, otherwise no one would have noticed it. But because the little word ‘is’ – to our way of thinking – refers to something material, the ‘unreal’ thought must be content to exist in a nebulous super-reality, which in practice means the same thing as unreality. (p. 382-383)

The important features of Being that are material were made the *only* features of existence. No higher levels of reality, beyond the physical, were needed to explain any of those so-called “interior dimensions” located in “interior spaces.” God (or spirit or soul) was not needed as a working hypothesis any more, and so was no longer allowed to enter into any discussion of science at all. Science became scientism –

scientific materialism and scientific imperialism—which soon became the dominant “official” worldview of modernity. As C.G. Jung (1960), in his essay, “Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology,” put it:

Under the influence of scientific materialism, everything that could not be seen with the eyes or touched with the hands was held in doubt; such things were even laughed at because of their supposed affinity with metaphysics. Nothing was considered ‘scientific’ or admitted to be true unless it could be perceived by the senses or traced back to physical causes. ... Belief in the substantiality of things spiritual yielded more and more to the obtrusive conviction that material things alone have substance, till at last, after nearly four hundred years, the leading...thinkers and investigators came to regard the mind as wholly dependent on matter and material causation. ... Just as formerly the assumption was unquestionable that everything that exists originates in the creative will of a God who is a spirit, so the nineteenth century discovered the equally unquestionable truth that everything arises from material causes. Today the psyche does not build itself a body, but on the contrary matter, by chemical action, produces the psyche. ...Mind must be thought of as an epiphenomenon of matter. ... To allow the soul or psyche a substantiality of its own is repugnant to the spirit of the age, for that would be heresy. (pp. 338-341)

Religion from the secular worldview. Under the influence of scientific materialism, Christianity and all other world religions have come to be viewed as “non-scientific” in a purely negative way (Kurtz, 1991). Religion is viewed either as a superstitious relic of magical and primitive thinking (Comte), or as a defense mechanism expiating guilt and anxiety (Freud), or as an opaque ideology institutionalizing alienation (Marx), or as a debilitating projection of humanity’s inward yearnings (Feuerbach), or as a purely private emotional affair, harmless in itself but not deserving the title “knowledge” (Quine, Ayer, and the positivists). Philosopher Bertrand Russell (1957), in the preface to a book that contains his famous essay, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, summarizes the judgment of the secular worldview regarding religion.

I think all the great religions of the world – Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Communism – both untrue and harmful. It is evident as a matter of logic that, since they disagree, not more than one of them can be true. With very few exceptions, the religion which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of environment is what led him to accept the religion in question. ... The conviction that it is important to believe this or that, even if a free inquiry would not support the belief, is one which is common to almost all religions and which inspired all systems of state education. The consequence is that the minds of the young are stunted. ...The above evils are independent of the particular creed in question. ...There are also, in most religions, specific ethical tenets which do definite harm. The Catholic condemnation of birth control [for example], if it could prevail, would make the mitigation of poverty and the abolition of war impossible. (pp. v-vii)

The rise of positivist, biologic, and behaviorist psychology. In the positivist, biologic, and behaviorist psychology that would seize and freeze the soul for almost three centuries, interior awareness, perception, impulses, emotions, images and symbols, concepts, rules and operations, cognitive processes, and creative vision had no substantial reality *on their own*, but were considered to be merely *representations* of something in the material world, which now alone was real (Robinson, 1995). The mind itself, if its existence was granted at all, was a *tabula rasa* – a blank slate – filled with nothing but *pictures* of the empirical world. There was nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses, and thus all higher modes of knowing were relentlessly and unsparingly completely destroyed in their own terms and reduced to empirical sensations. Even if there were other modes of knowing than the sensory-empirical, they would have no means of validation and thus could not be taken seriously. They are, at best, merely personal or subjective tastes and idiosyncratic displays, useful perhaps as emotional preferences but have no cognitive validity at all.

Or else the mind was reduced to the physical operations of the brain and organism. According to the “oath” of Hermann von Helmholtz (1821-1894), considered to be one of the greatest scientists of the 19th century because of his significant contributions to physics, physiology, and psychology:

No other forces than the common physical-chemical ones are active within the organism. In those cases which cannot at the time be explained by these forces one has either to find the specific way or form of their action by means of the physical mathematical method, or to assume new forces equal in dignity to the physical-chemical forces inherent in matter, reducible to the force of attraction and repulsion. (Quoted in Hergenhahn, 1997, p. 208)

Contemporary biopsychology’s claim that mental life has no reality apart from its manifestation in specific neurological processes and events represents only the most recent attempt to aggressively turn all interior psychology into exterior physiology. This approach was affirmed by astronomer Carl Sagan in 1977 in his book, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence*: “My fundamental premise about the brain is that its workings – what we sometimes call ‘mind’ – are a consequence of its anatomy and physiology, and nothing more” (p. 7). This metaphysical judgment was given recent expression in the astonishing book, *The Astonishing Hypothesis: The Scientific Search for the Soul*, by British physicist and biochemist Francis Crick (1994), winner of the Nobel Prize in 1962 for his discovery with James D. Watson of the molecular structure of DNA:

The astonishing hypothesis is that ‘You,’ your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. As Lewis Carroll’s Alice might phrase it: ‘You’re nothing but a pack of neurons.’ (p. 3)

In the modern behaviorist version of this worldview, intentionality has no reality apart from its manifestation in specific observable behavior. The “mind” itself is just a “black box” unobservable by empirical science (that is, unknowable by the exterior eye of flesh) and thus not open to scientific investigation (translation: not really real). All behavior is determined by material causes either from within the organism or without from the environment. Volition is an illusion. B.F. Skinner (1904-1990), whom the CEO of the American Psychological Association in 1990 adulated as “the greatest contemporary psychologist,” put it this way:

The hypothesis that man is not free is essential to the application of the scientific method to the study of human behavior. The free inner man who is held responsible for the behavior of the external biological organism is only a prescientific substitute for the kinds of causes which are discovered in the course of a scientific analysis. ...Science insists that action is initiated by forces impinging upon the individual, and that [freedom] is only another name for the behavior for which we have not yet found a cause. (quoted in Harman, 1998, p. 26)

The Western Creed. Transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart (1975/1992; 1997) refers to this collective secular worldview as *The Western Creed* that is presented below:

I BELIEVE... in the material universe... as the only and ultimate reality... a universe controlled by fixed physical laws... and blind chance.

I AFFIRM... that the universe has no Creator...no objective purpose...and no objective meaning or destiny.

I MAINTAIN... that all ideas about God or gods... enlightened beings... prophets and saviors... or other nonphysical beings or forces... are superstitions and delusions.... Life and consciousness are totally identical to physical processes... and arose from chance interactions of blind physical forces.... Like the rest of life... *my* life... and *my* consciousness... have no objective purpose... meaning... or destiny.

I BELIEVE... that all judgments, values, and moralities... whether my own or others... are subjective... arising solely from biological determinants... personal history... and chance.... Free will is an illusion.... Therefore, the most rational values I can personally live by must be based on the knowledge that for *me* ...what pleases me is Good... what pains me is Bad.... Those who please me or help me avoid pain are my friends... those who pain me or keep me from my pleasure are my enemies.... Rationality requires that friends and enemies be used in ways that maximize my pleasure and minimize my pain....

I AFFIRM... that churches have no real use other than social support... that there is no objective sins to commit or be forgiven for... that there is no retribution for sin or reward for virtue... although there may be social consequences of action.... Virtue for *me* is getting what *I* want... without being caught and punished by others....

I MAINTAIN... that the death of the body is the death of the mind.... There is no afterlife... and all hope of such is nonsense. (Tart, 1997, pp. 41-42)

The scientific and philosophical quotations I cited a few paragraphs back confirm that the above premises and suppositions are not an exaggeration of the metaphysical judgments held by Western scientists generally, especially those whom science and society holds in high esteem and honor. It is the dominant, official, orthodox, positivist approach of modernity voiced in one form or another by such illuminaries as Ernest Becker, Albert Camus, Auguste Comte, Francis Crick, Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sigmund Freud, Stephen Gould, Karl Marx, Bertrand Russell, Carl Sagan, Jean Paul Sartre, B.F. Skinner, and E.O. Wilson.

The disaster (negative aspects) of modernity. This is a profoundly misguided and deeply confused approach. Werner Heisenberg (1958), the father of quantum theory, in his book *Physics and Philosophy: The Evolution of Modern Science*, states: “Some scientists [have been] inclined to think that the psychological phenomena could ultimately be explained on the basis of physics and chemistry of the brain. From the quantum-theoretical point of view there is no reason for such an assumption” (p. 106). Albert Einstein put the matter more forcefully: “The present fashion of applying the axioms of physical science to human life is not only entirely a mistake but also has something reprehensible in it” (Planck, 1932, p. 209). C.G. Jung (1960) believed that the modern world’s present inclination “to account for everything on physical grounds...[was] because up to now, too much was accounted for in terms of spirit. ...Most likely we are now making exactly the same mistake on the other side” (p. 342). The self-obliterating denial of any sort of subjective dimension does not just emphasize the very real and important material aspect of being, but it also attempts to completely deny reality to all non-sensory, nonphysical facets of being. Taken to absurd and self-defeating extremes by the positivist wing of modern science, the result was a totally materialistic world that took the materialists with it.

The problem is that once this important key idea of modern science (that “interior realities have exterior correlates”) is taken to its extreme (“There are no interior realities, only exterior ones”), then it can no longer claim to be true. Either it must accept the fact that its own scientific theories are biologically conditioned just as much as religious beliefs are (that the brain determines the dicta of science as decisively as it does those of religion and that all thought is equally biologically grounded, be it of religious or scientific content) or else it must exempt itself from its own claims and somehow hold that scientific theories and facts alone are epistemologically and ontologically superior to those discredited beliefs which it disfavors based on some theory of “favored” determinate brain states. As William James (1902/1936) put it:

To plead the organic causation of a religious state of mind, then, in refutation of its claim to possess superior spiritual value, is quite illogical and arbitrary, unless one has already worked out in advance some psycho-physical theory connecting spiritual values in general with determinate sorts of physiological change. Otherwise none of our thoughts and feelings, not even our scientific doctrines, not even our *dis*-beliefs, could retain any value as revelations of the truth, for every one of them without exception flows from the state of its possessor’s body at the time. (pp. 15-16)

Moreover, to attribute the origin of religious beliefs to brain states does not logically mean there is no validity to those beliefs – as if explaining the origins of religious belief in terms of biological correlates would simultaneously explain away the religious belief’s moral authority or spiritual significance – as if its spiritual value is undone and discredited if a “lowly” biological origin is asserted. A biological account of religious belief cannot decide one way or the other about the religion’s spiritual significance – to do that we must look at some criteria other than origins (e.g., judging the value of religious life by its results).

The result of extreme science (scientism and its underlying philosophy of materialism) is a world defined by the webwork of beliefs that framed my Sacred Story presented in the first portion of this essay. It is a world with no meaning at all except survival, ruled not by spirit or purpose, but merely and always by genetic chance or environmental necessity. These unfortunate beliefs have played an important negative role in present world conditions, contributing to the troubles of society and undermining personal integrity. It is a worldview that subsequently led to the brutalities of capitalism, rampant materialism, vulgar schemes of world domination, the destruction of nature and the fragmentation of the lifeworld, the philosophies of nihilism, experiences of existential angst and dread, the loss of value and meaning, and the death of God. Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998) calls it “the disaster of modernity.”

Interior collapsed into exterior. These four words is the precise disaster of modernity, the disaster that was ‘the disenchantment of the world’ (Max Weber), the ‘colonization of the value spheres by science’ (Jurgen Habermas), the ‘dawn of the wasteland’ (T.S.Eliot), the birth of ‘one-dimensional man’ (Herbert Marcuse), the ‘desacralization of the world’ (Frithjof Schuon), and the ‘disqualified universe’ (Louis Mumford). (p. 76)

Scientific psychology’s complicity in the disenchantment of the world. Science’s metaphysical account of the lived world is inadequate because of its failure (or inability) to accommodate the value-laden character of reality. In the words of physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998) in his book *Belief in God in an Age of Science*:

From the practice of science to the acknowledgement of moral duty, on to aesthetic delight and religious experience, we live in a world which is the carrier of value at all levels of our meeting with it. Only a metaphysical account which is prepared to acknowledge that this is so can be considered to be at all adequate. (p. 19)

Human beings live by values that science ignores. When science states that it is neutral in the world of values, or that it is value-free, or that certain values are outside its frame of reference, science implies that those values are without basis, whether it intends to or not. By denying our species the practical use of those very elements that are needed to remain healthy in body and mind – the feeling that we are at life’s center and that we can act safely in our environment, the belief that we can trust ourselves and that our being and our actions have meaning – science, including psychology, by what it has said and by what it has neglected to say, has come close to a declaration that life itself is meaningless. By trying to reduce the great individual thrust of life that lies within each person to a generalized mass of chaotic impulses and chemicals, scientific psychology and the philosophy of materialism on which it is based has helped create insanities that otherwise would not have plagued our world.

Traditional psychology’s determination to be positivist, biologic, and behaviorist has brought about a certain artificial shrinking of what constitutes psychological reality. Many academic psychologists who accept the view of scientific materialism, for example, consider the human personality (if its existence is granted at all) as composed only of the conscious self, and cut out the unconscious dimension of psychological life altogether. As C.G. Jung (1960) put it in his essay, “Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology”:

This view reduces psychic happenings to a kind of activity of the glands; thoughts are regarded as secretions of the brain, and thus we achieve a psychology without a psyche. From this standpoint...the psyche does not exist in its own right; it is nothing in itself, but the mere expression of processes in the physical substrate. That these processes have the quality of consciousness is just an irreducible fact – were it otherwise, so the argument runs, we could not speak of psyche at all; there would be no consciousness, and so we should have nothing to say about anything. Consciousness, therefore, is taken as the *sine qua non* of psychic life, that is to say, as the psyche itself. And so it comes about that all modern ‘psychologies without a psyche’ are psychologies of consciousness, for which an unconscious psychic life simply does not exist. (p. 343)

“What is imaginary is not real”— we have all been taught this as children. Emotions are to be viewed with an ironical eye. A profound distrust of subjectivity has resulted, even though all notions of objectivity emerge from that very subjectivity to begin with. Trained to be unemotional and to stand apart from experience, non-feeling objectivity has come to mirror the standard for ideas and behaviors in scientific psychology. Experience becomes limited to the events that laboratory science can explain. What cannot be proven in the laboratory is presumed not to exist at all. Anyone who experiences “something that cannot exist” is regarded as crazy, delusional, or otherwise mentally ill. Laboratory science becomes the final arbiter of reality – the rest is anecdote.

Traditional psychology’s determination to be objective like the physical sciences has brought about a particular brand of science that is a relatively narrow one and has resulted in a “scaling down” in the dimensions of psychological life to those that can be studied in an exterior fashion. Psychology has come to accept only certain specific areas of inquiry and investigation as appropriate for study. Areas outside its boundaries become off-limits and taboo subjects (e.g., the parapsychology of spirituality). Most psychologists have not yet accepted or incorporated the latest theories of physics into their psychological theories and continue to understand, life, mind, and consciousness within an outdated, limited Newtonian framework of deterministic cause-and-effect in which time is considered as a series of consecutive moments (Slife, 1993). As a result, Western psychology has only a surface understanding of what the self is or of the mind’s associative processes. Only slowly have the psychological domains been able to fight their way back to some sort of recognition of both conscious and unconscious processes by a growth of interest in theoretical linguistics, human memory, Piagetian psychology, Gestalt psychology, and the information-processing approach. Psychological science must expand its definitions of reality if it is not to become a caricature of itself or a handmaiden to its own technology and give up its claim of investigating the true nature of life, mind, and consciousness.

We have seen that scientific materialism and scientism was not simply an attack on religion *per se*, but an aggressive rejection on the entire interior domain of consciousness (Wilber, 1998). This means that if we are to effect a proper reconciliation between science and religion, we must first re-establish the importance, validity, and significance of interior, subjective domains generally. Let us now examine how postmodern thought attempts to accomplish this task.

The Positive and Negative Aspects of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a cluster of philosophies with an extraordinary number of meanings (Powell, 1998; Sim, 1999). Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998) in his book, *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, distinguishes between (a) its narrow and technical meaning of “postmodern poststructuralism,” and (b) a broader, more general sense of any of the major philosophic movements occurring after modernity as a reaction against scientific materialism and scientism. Wilber argues that scientific materialism and scientism (and their underlying philosophies of positivism, empiricism, biologism, mechanism, reductionism, and behaviorism) have been so influential and have so dominated the modern worldview that many, if not most, counterculture movements occurring after “modernity” have defined themselves *in reaction to* scientific materialism and scientism, including the philosophic movements of Idealism and Romanticism.

Previous postmodern rebellions. Using the word “postmodern” in the general sense, meaning any movements occurring after modernity, Wilber (1998) suggests that Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) “was either the last of the great modern philosophers or the first of the great postmodern philosophers. He was probably both” (pp. 87-88). Whereas the scientific materialism of modernity believed that sensory experience is the basis of all knowledge, Kant countered by saying that truths about ourselves and the world cannot be discovered through sense data alone (using the eye of flesh), but must be acted upon and processed by an actively organizing and analyzing rational system of innate mental structures, principles, operations, and abilities (using the eye of the mind) before such truths could be discovered. It was Kant who first proved logically that we could never know ‘the thing in itself’ but only its apparent exterior sensory facade and our phenomenological experience that results from the interaction between sensations and the innate categories of thought of the human mind (Hergenhahn, 1997, pp. 168-172).

Idealism. Wilber (1998) proposes that German Idealism can be taken to be the first great postmodern revolt against scientific materialism (“postmodernism” in its broad, general meaning). Taking Kant’s insight that phenomena are *constructed*, not merely *perceived*, by the mind (but a supra-individual and transpersonal mind or spirit), the Idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) developed it into a profound philosophy of spiritual unfolding within the context of cosmic and human history. Lacking the means to reliably reproduce the transcendental insights that formed the very core of its great Spirit-in-action vision, however, Idealism could not provide any serious challenge to empirical scientific materialism. Idealism eventually degenerated into abstract speculations and became dismissed as “mere metaphysics” or thought without evidence.

Romanticism. Romanticism was the second great postmodern revolt, according to Wilber (1998), that recognized how scientific materialism, scientism, and the rationality of the modern scientific worldview was denying, repressing, devaluing, and distorting the interior life (e.g., aesthetics, self-expression, feeling, and emotions), and objectifying and reducing human nature to the status of a physical object. The various Romantics (Rousseau, Herder, Schiller, Novalis, Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, Whitman) issued a call for “a return to origins” – back to nature, back to the noble savage, back to some prior, primal, pristine, and pure state or period in history where the terrible madness and disasters of modernity had not yet occurred. By the end of the 19th century, however, in face of the continuing denial by scientific rationality of any substantial reality to all interior domains (except to scientific reasoning itself), Romanticism could no longer provide a serious challenge to scientific materialism and scientism. Certain proponents of romanticism in contemporary psychology, however, have argued for its return, pointing out how it can and should play a greater role in the profession of psychology in meeting the challenges of postmodernism today (Schneider, 1998).

What is postmodernism? It was only at the beginning of the 20th century did there arise what can be called the first specifically postmodern revolt in the more narrow and technical sense: *postmodern poststructuralism*, generally associated with luminaries such as Barthes (1915-80), Deleuze (1925-95), Derrida (1930-), Foucault (1926-84), Guattari (1930-92), Kristeva (1941-) Lacan (1901-81), Lyotard (1928-), Nietzsche (1844-1900), and later Wittgenstein (1889-1951) (Powell, 1998; Sim, 1999). What exactly is postmodernism? According to Wilber (1998, pp. 120-121):

postmodern philosophy is a complex cluster of notions that are defined almost entirely by what its proponents reject...i.e., foundationalism, essentialism, transcendentalism, rationality, truth as correspondence, representational knowledge, grand narratives, meta-narratives, realism, canonical descriptions, and ‘big pictures’ of any kind...[but that] most of these ‘rejections’ stem from three core assumptions:

1. Reality is not in all ways pre-given, but in some significant ways is a construction, an interpretation (this view is often called ‘constructivism’).

2. Meaning is context-dependent, and contexts are boundless (this is often called ‘contextualism’).
3. Cognition must therefore privilege no single perspective (this is called ‘integral-aperspectivalism’).

These three core assumptions of postmodernism basically represent “moments of truth” (Wilber’s phrase) that serve as keys to unlock understanding of most theories of postmodernism. These three key ideas of postmodernism constitute the hub of postmodern theory. Most postmodern theorists have devoted major portions of their writings to one or all of these ideas. Once each key idea is understood, then the theory can be theoretically reconstructed simply by reasoning logically from that starting point. Agreeing with Wilber (1998), I would propose that these three key ideas of postmodernism – interpretation is an intrinsic feature of being, meaning is context-dependent, and no single perspective is privileged – need to be recognized, acknowledged, and incorporated into any attempt that seeks to understand the struggle to believe in the context of a postmodern secular world. Beginning with the first key idea of postmodernism, let us examine the positive and negative aspects of each of the three core assumptions of postmodern thought in more detail.

Key Idea #1: Interpretation is an Intrinsic Feature of Being

According to Wilber (1998), the first key idea of postmodern thought – that reality is not simply given to us but is also partly constructed – represents an attempt on the part of postmodernists to emphasize the role that *interpretation* plays, not only in human understanding (which of course it does), but into the very structure of reality. Interpretation is an essential part of both epistemology and ontology, in other words. The first key idea of postmodernism begins, in a sense, with the notion that neither the knowing self (noesis) nor the known world (noema) are simply statically pre-given in an “already out there now real” fashion (B.J. Lonergan’s phrase) but are co-constructed and co-constituted entities. The mind forms the world as much as the world forms the mind. Science makes *real* progress because we are already “plugged into” the physical world. We are a part of the physical world, not a part from it. The physical world rises up before our eyes, but our eyes are a part of that world they see. In other words, there is no detached, disembodied, ahistorical, pre-given, fully-formed, self-contained, antiseptic, isolated, untouched and untouchable entity called the “I” (ego or conscious mind) on the one hand, and a similarly situated empirical-sensory “It” (world or object) on the other hand, that can be accurately known by simply “taking a good look” with empirical scientific methods.

Objection to “naïve realism.” “Naïve realism” is the belief that our visual and bodily senses reveal to us an external world as it really is – that we “see” actual physical objects. This is the epistemological view of scientific materialism and scientism that postmodernism rejects – the belief that valid knowledge can only be obtained by separating oneself from the object of study (objectivity), that the self is nothing more than another object in the material world (materialism), that only the sensory-empirical is real (positivism), and that truth depends on the correspondence or accurate match between the representation that I have in my head “in here” and that single, simple, pre-given objective empirical world of nature “out there” (representationalism). Wilber (1998) describes the theory of “naïve realism” in this way:

The isolated subject looks at an equally isolated object (such as a tree), and then simply chooses a word to represent the sensory object. *This, it was thought, is the basis of all genuine knowledge.* Even with complex scientific theories, each theory is simply a *map* that *represents* the objective territory. If the correspondence is accurate, the map is true; if the correspondence is inaccurate, the map is false. Science – and all true knowledge, it was believed – is a straightforward case of *accurate representation*, accurate mapmaking. ‘We make pictures of the empirical world,’ as Wittgenstein would soon put it, and if the pictures match, we have the truth. (p. 127)

It is not that representational knowledge is wrong. The problem is the attempt on the part of the extreme wing of materialistic science to reduce all knowledge to veridical representation. Given our current knowledge of cognitive processes, we now recognize that there will never be 100% correspondence between

the external object of perception and its representation in experience. The map is not the territory. The menu is not the meal. The diagram of a flower is not the flower itself.

Postmodernists object to “naïve realism” as an approach to knowledge because it ignores the fact that the knower (the individual personality, self, subject, theorist) *always* brings something to the knowledge enterprise. Every individual has his or her own cultural contexts and social backgrounds, psychological traits and characteristics, neurological structures and dynamics, developmental history, and so forth that determine, govern, and influence not only what he or she will see, but *can* see of that supposedly objective “already out there now real” world. Moreover, our personal or private thoughts themselves “exist within a vast background of cultural practices and languages and meanings and contexts, without which [we] could form virtually no individual thoughts at all” (Wilber, 1997, p. 103). And if the knowing self is not simply statically pre-given, then neither is the known world. The “world” that is actually “out there” also exists dynamically and develops in situated contexts and backgrounds that have a developmental history. The world itself has a history that exists within the larger context of the history of the universe. Evolving complexity, in other words, applies not only to the perceiving subject but also to the perceived world within an evolving universe. The perceiving self and the perceived world co-evolve.

Contemporary neurological evidence seems to support postmodern objections to naïve realism. From the neurological standpoint, the events in our lives and within our bodies depend upon interpretation by the brain. We can know nothing directly, but only our own experience that is transmitted through – and so “colored” by – the central nervous system. The perceptual time lag, caused by the limited speed of light, is also involved. As C.G. Jung (1960) put it in his essay, “Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology”:

Without a doubt [psychic life] is our only immediate experience. All that I experience is psychic. Even physical pain is a psychic image which I experience; my sense-impressions – for all that they force upon me a world of impenetrable objects occupying space – are psychic images, and these alone constitute my immediate experience, for they alone are the immediate objects of my consciousness. My own consciousness even transforms and falsifies reality, and it does this to such a degree that I must resort to artificial means to determine what things are apart from myself [even though those artificial instruments themselves are also a part of the ‘camouflage’ reality that they are meant to detect]. Then I discover that a sound is a vibration of air of such and such a frequency, or that a colour is a wave of light of such and such a length. We are in truth so wrapped about by psychic images that we cannot penetrate at all to the essence of things external to ourselves. All our knowledge consists of the stuff of the psyche which, because it alone is immediate, is superlatively real. Here, then, is a reality to which the psychologist can appeal – namely, psychic reality. (p. 353).

There are no real divisions between the perceiver and the thing seemingly perceived. In many ways, the thing perceived is an extension of the perceiver.

Perception and creation. There is *something out there* to observe, of course. Our sense apparatus and conceptual structures determine what form that something will take, however (Goldstein, 1999). The physical world that we recognize can be thought of as being made up of invisible patterns of energy. These patterns are “plastic,” in that while they exist “in themselves” (Kant’s phrase), our physical senses perceive these patterns in their own ways, and impose a highly specialized pattern upon the available field of energy. The “same” distal stimulus (distal = stimulus at a *distance*) is something far different to a human, an elephant, a dog, a bat, a praying mantis, a snake, and fish who perceive it.

Humans experience ‘sound’ [for example] in response to pressure changes or ‘vibrations’ in the air at frequencies ranging from about 20 vibrations per second (which sound very low-pitched to us) to 20,000 vibrations per second (which sound extremely high-pitched to us). ...Elephants can detect frequencies below the range of human hearing, dogs can detect frequencies that are above the human range of hearing...Bats emit high-frequency sonar waves and sense their reflection, ...The praying

mantis...has neurons that fire in response to a range of 25,000-45,000 vibrations per second in receptors located in its abdomen, ...Snakes can detect infrared radiation. ...Fish and amphibians can detect electrical fields. (Goldstein, 1997/1999, pp. 30-33)

Each creature perceives physical reality through its own set of highly specialized senses. Each constructs perceptions consistent with the senses that happens to have at the time.

The distal stimulus not only *appears* to be different, however, it *is* different. Those physical senses, in a very real manner, create the stimuli that they perceive. For example, although our bodies appear quite dependable, solid, and steady to our physical senses, we are not aware that the very senses that make such deductions are the result of the behavior of spinning atoms and molecules in constant commotion and activity, literally coming together to form the body with great exchanges of energy continually occurring between it and the physical environment. It does not bother us one iota that the physical substance of our bodies that our physical senses perceive as so dependable, solid, and steady are actually made up of completely different atoms and molecules than they were composed of seven years ago. Yet our sensory-perceptual apparatus creatively jumps over such gaps in our physical continuity. The physical matter of our ears, eyes, nose, tongue, and hand changes constantly, with us none the wiser – all because the physical senses force us to translate experience into physical perceptions.

This does not mean that physical perception of solid bodies is the only reality or that the physical reality of solid bodies is false. It is that the physical picture is simply one of an infinite number of ways of perceiving the various guises through which reality expresses itself and is simply the only reality that we can perceive with our physical senses (Roberts, 1972, pp. 28-29). Anything that exists in physical term also exists in other terms that we do not perceive, however. Any event that we perceive is only a portion of its true dimensionality. Our perceptive mechanisms simply do not allow us to tune into their other ranges of actuality. Neuroscientists studying brain function, for example, react to exterior stimuli perceived by their physical senses. These empirical stimuli, these physical carriers of data, these patterns of brain action are all that are presently observable and are all that scientists have been able to follow. Far greater interactions at the atomic and subatomic levels that also occur are not perceived, and so the true story of the decoding of brain functioning has not yet been understood.

Our physical senses react to a highly specific but limited field of stimulus energy. Our audio window onto sonic reality, for example, is limited to a range of 20-20,000 Hz; our visual window onto electromagnetic reality is limited to about 3800-7200 angstroms. Our physical senses constrain what we can hear and see of the physical world. There is light that we do not see with physical eyes as there is sound that we do not hear with our physical ears. We ignore non-physical data. What lies outside of physical sensation and perception remains unknown to us, empirically speaking, without special instrumentation. We are aware of the physical universe only insofar as it impinges upon our physical senses. Most of the unseen, unfelt, unheard, untasted, and untouched forces that act and work on us are psychologically invisible to us. Physical sensation must be shaped into certain form if we are to become aware of it at all.

Our physical senses are in fact living “transducers” (translators) that convert one form of energy (e.g., electromagnetic waves of light) into a different kind of energy (e.g., electrochemical neural energy). The stimuli themselves are altered by the sensory receptor systems by which they are detected and transduced. Our nervous system itself is also altered as it detects, transduces, and encodes data – translating the sensation into a form that the nervous system can handle. Physically, we can handle only so much data at once, so that we are dependent in that respect upon our neurological structure. From the viewpoint of biological psychology, this is what perception is: a change or alteration of neurological structure. In other words, change characterizes the nature of human perception from the word “go.” Any sensory system automatically alters the incoming stimuli and the incoming stimuli simultaneously alter the electromagnetic and neurological systems of the perceiver. The sensory electro-chemical mechanisms and neurological system of the perceiver themselves *change, and are changed by* that which they perceive. The observer and

the object perceived are parts of the same event, each changing the other. And “like any perception, the information then becomes a part of the nervous system’s structure. Nothing is neutral in those terms” (Roberts, 1972, p. 274). As C.G. Jung (1960) put it in his essay, “The Real and the Surreal”:

Far too little in theory, and almost never in practice, do we remember that consciousness has no direct relation to any material objects. We perceive nothing but images, transmitted to us indirectly by a complicated nervous apparatus. Between the nerve-endings of the sense-organs and the image that appears in consciousness, there is interpolated an unconscious process which transforms the physical fact of light, for example, into the psychic image “light.” But for this complicated and unconscious process of transformation consciousness could not perceive anything material. The consequence of this is, that what appears to us as immediate reality consists of carefully processed images, and that, furthermore, we live immediately only in a world of images. In order to determine, even approximately, the real nature of material things we need the elaborate apparatus and complicated procedures of chemistry and physics. These disciplines are really tools which help the human intellect to cast a glance behind the deceptive veil of images into a non-psychic world. (pp. 383-384).

Science’s very methodology alters the world as it looks at it (the complementary principle in physics). As Werner Heisenberg puts it: “What we see is not nature, but nature exposed to our method of questioning. Without the conceptual apparatus to investigate a given possibility, nothing is seen” (quoted in Gowan, 1980, p. iv). “Thus, there are no significant scientific facts that are not already interpreted facts. ...Experience is always interpreted, as the intertwining of theory and experiment in science illustrates” (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 107, 118).

Cognition and construction. Creation and perception are therefore far more intimately connected than most people recognize or acknowledge. We are always translating realities from one framework to another, translating unknowable realities of transient electromagnetic wavelengths into knowable terms of light and dark colors, size and shape, for example. Add to this creativity of our physical senses, the contributions that our conceptual structures make to perception (such as our expectations, purposes, interest, desires, beliefs, semantic knowledge, episodic memories, and language), and we can understand how the living picture of the world that the human personality has “in his or her head” depends as much, if not more, on what the perceiver brings to the knowledge enterprise as on the nature of the world that is “out there.” Our own senses bring us information each moment that in a way is already invisibly processed according to our individual beliefs, desires, and intents that serve as organizational schemata which screen out certain information, causing us to ignore certain stimuli that would automatically catch the attention of another individual (e.g., when you are in blue mood, you might easily misinterpret information, overstating pessimistic elements). Much of what we take to be perceptions naively given to us by our senses, are actually creations and translations, constructions and interpretations of our physical senses and conscious mind. From a psychological perspective, the natural world *is* the psychic world. We are creators of the physical world, as we know it. As C.G. Jung (1960) put it in his essay, “The Real and the Surreal”:

Far, therefore, from being a material world, this is a psychic world, which allows us to make only indirect and hypothetical inferences about the real nature of matter. The psychic alone has immediate reality, and this includes all forms of the psychic, even ‘unreal’ ideas and thoughts which refer to nothing ‘external.’ We may call them ‘imagination’...but that does not detract in any way from their effectiveness. ...We are steeped in a world that was created by our own psyche. From this we can judge the magnitude of the error which our Western consciousness commits when it allows the psyche only a reality derived from physical causes. The East is wiser, for it finds the essence of all things grounded in the psyche. Between the unknown essences of spirit and matter stands the reality of the psyche – psychic reality, the only reality we can experience directly. (p. 384)

Research in cognitive psychology indicates that human cognitive processes, while splendid and unique, often cause us to organize and interpret our sensations through ideas and to acknowledge only those perceptions that serve to give those ideas validity. When we view our own experience introspectively or the behavior of others perceptually, we do so through our own specialized theories and beliefs, interests and purposes, and tend to see only what we are programmed or conditioned or expect to see. Focusing attention on certain superficial similarities, we perceive information that fits into preconceived patterns established by our prior knowledge – to be aware of certain characteristics within certain conditions – so that what is dissimilar or physically imperceptible becomes psychologically invisible to us (Rokeach, 1960). Facts are proven by excluding what does not agree. We end up perceiving patterns that conform to our beliefs. The patterns we perceive, however, are actually ones we ourselves have transposed upon the event, making us blind to many larger dimensions of experience and preventing us from understanding phenomena as it “really” is. Insisting that what we see fits in with what we already know, we do not discover anything really “new.”

Language and interpretation. Language plays an important role in most forms of postmodern thought, with many postmodernists tracing their intellectual roots to the French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (Sim, 1999). What role did language play in helping the three key ideas of postmodernism – constructivism, contextualism, and aperspectivalism – come to the forefront of philosophy? How did the study of language come to take such a central role in postmodernism and what aspects of language support the key ideas of postmodernism? Wilber (1998) explains:

The importance of contextualism, interpretation, and hermeneutics in general came to the fore historically with what has been called *the linguistic turn* in philosophy – the general realization that language is not simply a representation of a pre-given world, but has a hand in the creation and construction of that world. With the linguistic turn, which began roughly in the nineteenth century, philosophers stopped using language to describe the world, and instead started looking at language itself. Suddenly, language was no longer a simple and trusted tool. Metaphysics in general was replaced with linguistic analysis, because it was becoming increasingly obvious that language is not a clear window through which we innocently look at a given world. ...Language helps to create my world, and, as Wittgenstein would put it, the limits of my language are the limits of my world. (pp. 124-125)

Cognitive psychology has since clarified and elaborated upon the precise ways in which language in some ways *determines the way* we think (called Whorf’s (1956) “linguistic relativity hypothesis”) and in other ways simply *influences what* we think. It is often difficult, for example, to think outside of verbally structured thought – much of the time we think in words. How I *talk* about something often makes a difference to how I will *think* about it. How we come to understand particular philosophical ideas such as postmodernism (or psychological process such as the struggle to believe in God in a scientific age) are strongly colored by the particular words we use to talk about that idea or process. To English-speaking bilinguals whose native language is other than English (e.g., Japanese or Chinese), it seems obvious that one thinks differently in different languages. Postmodern thought asserts that

It is through language that we name our world and by naming it, we create the world we name. ...All languages do not talk of the same world; each language brings into existence its own unique world. ...To speak a language is to make the world it expresses one’s own; speaking within a language brings about a special way of relating to the world. (Pollio, 1982, Chap. 6)

Applications in the classroom. Postmodernism’s first key idea has long been applied in the field of education. Educational psychologist Anita Woolfolk (1998, pp. 277-281, 346-365) states that the individual student’s active construction of meaning and own effort to understand is at the center of the teaching-learning enterprise.

Constructivist theories of learning – that ‘we actively construct knowledge based on what we already know and the new information we encounter’ – are based in the research of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, the Gestalt psychologists, Frederick Bartlett, and Jerome Bruner as well as the educational philosophy of John Dewey. ... There is no one constructivist theory of learning, [however]. Some constructivist views emphasize the shared, social construction of knowledge [and thus advocate class discussion, group work, cooperative learning, and cognitive apprenticeships as important pedagogical practices]; others see social forces as less important [and thus emphasize lecture and individual seat work]. (Woolfolk, 1998, p. 277)

Regarding linguistic influences on thinking, psychologist David Myers (1992) writes: “The power of language to influence thought makes vocabulary building [and learning a modern language] a crucial part of education. To expand language is to expand the ability to think. David Premack...reported that even among chimpanzees, language training enhances the ability to think abstractly and to reason by analogy”(pp. 311-312).

Extreme postmodernism: There is no truth, only interpretation. According to Wilber (1998) the disaster of postmodernism was to take the first key idea (“Every action or event has an interpretive component; many realities are socially constructed”) to its extreme (“There is no truth, only different interpretations, and all realities are socially constructed”). In reaction to the extreme of scientific materialism (“There are no interiors, only exteriors”), postmodern poststructuralism went to the opposite extreme (“There are no exteriors, only interiors”). It completely denied reality to the objective features of being and made them completely interpretative. There is nothing out there, only our interpretations. Independent facts do not exist, only interpretations do. All empirical objects are reduced to subjective interpretations; all truth is reduced to interpretative whim. According to the extreme branch of postmodernism (postmodern poststructuralism), science and religion are not really governed by discovered facts but by culturally situated, interpretative paradigms. Science is not knowledge of the world, but merely an interpretation of the world. Christianity is not knowledge of God, but merely an interpretation of God. And since all paradigms are simply one of many possible, ad hoc, free-floating, constructions of reality, then different interpretations of the world and all interpretations of God are equally good, equally valid ways of making sense of the world and of God. One interpretation is no better and no more binding than another. Science and Christianity become merely one of numerous different readings of the text of the world or of the Word of God. Wilber (1998) points out the fatal flaw of this position.

All interpretations are not equally valid: there are better and worse interpretations of every text. *Hamlet* is not about a fun family picnic in Yellowstone Park. That is a very bad interpretation, and it can be thoroughly *rejected* by any community of adequate interpreters. All interpretations are not created equal – and that brings to a crashing halt the major claim of extreme postmodernism. (p. 34)

Moreover, the fact that all perceptions of the objective world have an interpretive component does *not* do away with the objective world, but simply fixes its place within its appropriate semantic (interpretive) domain. As Wilber (1998) puts it:

Even though the manifest image of an object is in part a mental construction, it is *guided* in important ways by *intrinsic features* of the sense experience, which is exactly why, as Kuhn knew, science can make *real* progress.... The ‘difference’ between your fingers might be a mental construct, but the fingers themselves in some sense preexist your conceptualization of them; they are not totally or merely a product of mental constructions (which is exactly why a dog, a pre-conceptual infant, and a camera – all lacking a conceptual mind to do any constructing – will still register them). A diamond will cut a piece of glass, no matter what cultural words or concepts we use for ‘diamond,’ ‘cut,’ and ‘glass,’ and no amount of cultural constructivism will change that simple objective fact (pp. 122-123). ...A soul can experience God, no matter what words we use for ‘soul,’ ‘experience,’ and ‘God’ (Wilber, quoted in Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 259).

John Polkinghorne (1998) in his book, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, makes the same point when he states:

What we know of entities must conform to their nature and there is a necessary veiled character to our encounter. ...Yet that encounter is a real meeting with something other than human thought, an exploration of what is and not just of what we choose to say. The concepts we are considering cannot do the work that is needed to be done unless they have that ontological reference. (p. 45)

A second problem with the claim that “there is nothing but interpretation, objective truth does not exist” is that logic shows that there is severe self-contradiction hidden in all forms of extreme postmodernism – the so-called *performative contradiction*, – as pointed out by scholars such as Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, Karl-Otto Apel, Ernest Gellner, Thomas Nagel, and by Dr. Herman Tavani (1999) in last year’s First Annual Rivier College Faculty Summer Seminar. As Wilber (1998) puts it:

The difficulty is that, in its totalizing attack on truth (“There is no truth, only different interpretations”), extreme postmodernism *cannot itself claim to be true*. Either it must exempt itself from its own claims...or what it says about everybody else is equally true for itself, in which case, what it says is not true, either. As Gellner summarizes the disaster: “So, if true, it is false; so, it’s false”(p. 34-35)

And so extreme postmodernism, “nihilistically denying truth, including its own or, attempting to avoid that, exempting itself from its own claims has nothing left but its own relative constructions that collapse under the weight of its own absurdity and logical self-contradictions” (Wilber, 1998, p. 35).

Key Idea #2: Meaning is Context-Dependent

The truth of the second key idea of postmodernism – that “all meaning is context-dependent” – can be illustrated using several examples from sensory-perceptual psychology. My teacher and mentor, psychologist Howard Pollio (1982), in his college textbook, *Behavior and Existence: An Introduction to Empirical Humanistic Psychology*, reminds us that

The most obvious first-person experience we have of the perceptual world is that of figure and ground. As the early Gestalt psychologists noted, some parts of the world catch our attention and become figural, while other parts recede from us as unimportant and become background. ...Figures always appear against some ground, and what this ground happens to be always plays some part in what is perceived. (pp. 80, 84).

Two circles exactly the same size will appear unequal when appearing against different grounds (call “contrast effect”). Letter recognition (e.g., “k”) is more accurate and more rapid when the letter occurs in the context of a word (“book”) than when it occurs in the context of a non-word (“obok”) (called “word superiority effect”).

And what is true in perceptual experience of circles and words is also true in the cognitive experience of meaning as the following Chinese Taoist story illustrates.

There was once a farmer who lived in a poor country village. The farmer was considered very well to do, because he owned a horse that he used for plowing and for transportation. One day his horse ran away. All his neighbors exclaimed how terrible this was, but the farmer simply said ‘Maybe.’ A few days later the horse returned and brought two wild horses with it. The neighbors all rejoiced at his good fortune, but the farmer just said ‘Maybe.’ The next day the farmer’s son tried to ride one of the wild horses; the horse threw him and broke his leg. The neighbors all offered their sympathy for his misfortune, but the farmer again said ‘Maybe.’ The next week conscription officers came to the

village to take young men for the army. They rejected the farmer's son because of his broken leg. When the neighbors told him how lucky he was, the farmer replied 'Maybe.'...The meaning that any event has depends upon the 'frame' in which we perceive it. When we change the frame, we change the meaning. Having two wild horses is a good thing until it is seen in the context of the son's broken leg. The broken leg seems bad in the context of peaceful village life; but in the context of conscription and war, suddenly becomes good. (Bandler & Grinder, 1982, p. 1)

The same stimulus, in other words, can give rise to different perceptions depending on the context in which it is observed and interpreted. The above story also illustrates how a single event can be interpreted within one, two, and even more contexts and that with each change in context the meaning of the event changes. Change the context of an event or action, and you change its meaning. But more than this – by changing the meaning, you change your response to the event as well. In a sense, this is what a therapist attempts to do when he or she gets the client to “look at things differently,” or “get a different perspective on the matter,” or “take other factors into consideration” (Bandler & Grinder, 1982, p. 2).

Contexts are in theory endless. As illustrated in my “Sacred Story” and survey results mentioned earlier in this essay, an individual's struggle to believe can theoretically arise in the framework of an infinite number of contexts – psychological, biological, philosophical, scientific, religious, cultural, and social. As Wilber (1998) puts it:

The word 'bark,'...means something entirely different in the phrases 'the bark of the dog' and the 'bark of the tree' – in other words, meaning is in many important ways dependent upon the context in which it finds itself. Moreover, these contexts are in principle *endless* or *boundless*, and thus there is no way finally to master and control meaning once and for all (because one can always imagine a further context that would alter the present meaning) (pp. 123-124)

Applications in the classroom. Postmodernism's second key idea has also been applied in the field of education. A contextualist perspective of learning – that “skills and abilities should be assessed as they would be applied in real-life” – has led to the development of several new approaches based on the requirement of performance in context (Woolfolk, 1998, pp. 568-575). Two approaches to assessment – portfolios and performance evaluations – require that students show examples of actual work performance or solve actual problems and perform meaningful tasks in authentic contexts for subsequent evaluation. Such “authentic” assessments are viewed as being more meaningful to students because they are developing their skills within a context similar to that in which those abilities are to be used. Such “situated learning” makes the transfer and generalization of learning to the situation in which that learning is to be applied much more likely. As Woolfolk (1998) puts it:

Aspects of physical and emotional context – places, rooms, how we are feeling on a particular day, who is with us – are learned along with other information. Later, if you try to remember the information, it will be easier if the current context is similar to the original one. This has been demonstrated in the laboratory. Students who learned material in one type of room performed better on tests taken in a similar room than they did on tests taken in a very different-looking room. So studying for a test under 'testlike' conditions may result in improved performance. (p. 262)

As cognitive psychology has long known: Context is always a part of learning and is an effective retrieval cue for memory.

Extreme postmodernism: No meaning actually exists or can be conveyed at all. I said a few paragraphs back that the act of perceiving (as a gerund) is one example of the enduring truth of postmodernism's second key idea – that “meaning always depends on the context or setting” – because it demonstrates how the same figure (object, event, or action) can have very different meanings depending on the context in which it appears. “Perceiving is an activity that can be considered only in the contexts of all

that is involved – a unique balance among the perceiver, the world, and the situation” (Pollio, 1982, p. 101). The extremist branch of postmodernism, however, took this fact and moved it in a more chaotic direction and rendered it unintelligible. As Wilber (1998) puts it:

That postmodern moment of truth has, once again, been deformed and pressed into self-contradictory duty by extreme postmodernists (particularly the branch known as ‘deconstruction’...) who use it to deny that any sort of meaning exists actually or can be conveyed at all. Any time science or traditional philosophy attempts to make a statement about the objective world, deconstruction will simply find a context that renders the statement absurd or self-contradictory, thus ‘deconstructing’ the attempt. Since such a context can *always* be found (they are limitless), any and all meaning can be aggressively exploded and deconstructed right from the start. (p. 124)

Example from the area of religion. In other words, the postmodern truth that all meaning is context-dependent is brought to extremes and used to deny any moment of objective meaning at all. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this in the area of religion are the disparate and even diametrically opposite Christian doctrines that can be obtained from a reading of the Bible (i.e., people can quote from the Scriptures to support practically any position they wish).

Look at the variety of doctrines within Christianity – most of them derived by deductive reasoning from the same original body of evidence, the Scriptures, rather than later revelation. From those premises, some churches conclude that we have free will, but others that we are predestined to behave as we do; some churches infer that we achieve salvation through private repentance, but others through public rebirth, and still others through good works; and so forth. (Hunt, 1982, p. 129)

Different minds starting from the same unquestionable text, can *interpret* the language of Scripture in their own ways, so as to derive from it justification for their own social values. Extreme postmodernists would conclude from this that since the words of Scripture can mean anything at all depending on its context (the interpreter, the text, and the situation), then no intrinsic meaning independent of context *can* adhere to Scripture. And since any meaning could be “de-constructed” in a similar way by simply employing a different context to frame the issue, then no actual meaning can be constructed at all. Wilber (1998), however, again points out the fatal flaw of such a position: “If that is a meaningful theory, its own meaning is meaningless. If it is so, then it isn’t; so, it isn’t. Contextualism, yes; extreme contextualism, no” (p. 124).

Key Idea #3: No Single Perspective is Privileged; Multi-Perspective Approach is Necessary

The third key idea of postmodernism proceeds directly from the second. If meaning is indeed context-dependent, then understanding the meaning of a thing or event from a diversity of perspectives and contexts is the best way to get the most complete and accurate “whole picture” of the thing or event. If for every perception, other perceptions are indeed possible, then these other perceptions need to be given voice and a fair hearing if the perception is to be a complete, accurate, and reliable guide to understanding and behavior. As Wilber (1998) puts it:

The fact that meaning is context-dependent – the second important truth of postmodernism – means that a multi-perspective approach to reality is called for. Any single perspective is likely to be partial, perhaps even distorted, and only by taking multiple perspectives and multiple contexts can the knowledge quest be fruitfully advanced. And that ‘diversity’ is the third important truth of general postmodernism.... ‘Aperspectival’ means that no single perspective is privileged, and thus, in order to gain a more holistic or *integral* view, we need an *aperspectival* approach. (p. 131)

If an event or action is never fully disclosed or discovered in one perception alone, then multiple perceptions are indeed necessary.

What does it mean to say “no single perspective is privileged?” I said a few paragraphs back that the “same” physical stimulus is something far different to the human, the elephant, the dog, the bat, the praying mantis, the snake, and the fish who perceives it. This does not mean that the reality of the stimulus exists in the form that we humans perceive it in any more *basic* a way than it exists in the form perceived by other non-human animals in the context of their own “self-world” (or Umwelt). We cannot perceive the quite valid reality of any distal stimulus in any context but our own “self-world” (or Eigenwelt). This applies to anything within the physical world that we know. Humans, in other words, do not have any privileged position when it comes to perceiving reality, as it exists in the “already out there now real” world. Experience and behavior always occurs in a particular situation, and this situation is always structured by, and itself structures, the self-world of the living creature (von Uexkull, 1957). This is no less true for you and me than it is for non-human animals. In order to gain a more holistic and fundamental understanding of the reality of a stimulus, all perspectives need to be honored and incorporated into an integrated view of that stimulus.

Applications in the classroom. Postmodernism’s third key idea has also been applied in the field of education in several ways. Multi-perspective approaches to learning – providing multiple representations of academic content using an assortment of analogies, examples, and metaphors – is thought to aid in the development and transfer of learning complex learning. According to Woolfolk (1998),

‘Revisiting the same material, at different times, in rearranged contexts, for different purposes, and from different conceptual perspectives is essential for attaining the goals of advanced knowledge acquisition.’ This idea is not new. Years ago Jerome Bruner in 1996 described the advantages of a *spiral curriculum*. This is a structure for teaching that introduces the ‘big ideas’ early in the school years, and then revisits the subjects in more complex forms over time. (p. 348)

The growing recognition and acceptance of the need for multicultural education in the classroom is another outgrowth of the third key idea of postmodernism. Multicultural education rejects the “melting pot” metaphor where diverse cultural perspectives are absorbed and assimilated into the mainstream of a society so that no particular culture or social class or race or religion or ethnicity or gender is so privileged that such differences vanish. Multicultural education believes in the ideal of an American society that values diversity and teaches tolerance. Multicultural education is more than simply a change the curriculum to include the perspectives and histories of diverse ethnic groups, however. It is a postmodern approach to knowledge that “helps students understand how the implicit cultural assumptions within a discipline influence the ways that knowledge is constructed within it” (Woolfolk, 1998, p. 163-164).

Extreme postmodernism: No perspective whatsoever is better than any other. As is so often the case with postmodernism, this third important key idea – only by taking multiple perspectives can an event be fully disclosed – was taken to absurd and self-defeating extremes. On this extreme view, since all is interpretation anyways, science has no privileged knowledge of the world any more than Christianity has privileged knowledge of God. History and mythology, astronomy and astrology, chemistry and alchemy, palmistry and psychology, Christianity and New Age religions are all equally on the same footing since no interpretation is intrinsically better than another. All have exactly the same validity and significance as a way of making sense of the world. This version of postmodernism is called “extreme” because it takes the very important insight that “no perspective is privileged” and blows it out of all proportion to say that “no perspective whatsoever is better than any other.” But again, if this is a meaningful theory, then it results in a severe self-contradiction, as Dr. Tavani (1999, pp. 64-67) so ably pointed out in the first summer seminar – self-contradictory because their own belief and perspective is held to be so much better than all other alternative beliefs and perspective.

Postmodern Thought in Psychology

Postmodernism as we have seen has many good aspects and is not entirely the demon that some individuals think it is. Postmodern thought has had a significant impact on the discipline of psychology (Gergen, 1994;

Martin & Sugarman, 2000; Smith, 1994). Psychologist Brewster Smith (1994), in an article titled “Selfhood at risk: Postmodern perils and the perils of postmodernism,” identifies some of the constructive contributions of postmodern thought to psychology.

Psychologists on the softer, more humanistically oriented side of psychology can rightly applaud the demise of logical positivism as a constraining, proscriptive philosophy of science that was a disastrous choice for the psychological enterprise. They can welcome social constructionism – the recognition that people actively construct their worlds of experience and behavior in a social process. ...They can accept the contextualist criticism that many of the claims of Euro-American psychology are probably history and culture bound. They can even agree that when psychology is concerned with people, who are creatures of meaning and value, it needs to work in an interpretative, hermeneutic framework as well as in the causal-explanatory one customary in natural science. All of this is constructive and helps to correct the damage done in the half century dominated by behaviorism. (p. 408)

Moreover, the three key ideas of postmodernism have been confirmed by scientific research in contemporary sensory-perceptual (Gestalt) and cognitive psychology as representing important operating principles of our perceptual and cognitional processes. For example, there is always some contribution by the perceiver to all perceptions (constructivism), referred to as “top-down processing” of a stimulus array (such as, ambiguous figures). Moreover, the meaning that any “stimulus” or figure has depends on the context or ground in which it is perceived (contextualism) (e.g., the sound of a squeaky shoe on a busy sidewalk has little meaning but the same sound outside your window when you are alone in bed means something else altogether). In addition, for every perception, other perceptions are possible (as in “reversible” figures); a figure is never fully disclosed in one perception (aperspectivalism).

Postmodern psychologist Kenneth Gergen (1994), in an article titled, “Exploring the postmodern: Perils or potential”?, argues that postmodern critique of psychology’s traditional epistemology (i.e., called *representationalism* or *naïve realism* – the belief that there exists a pregiven, fixed and determinate “already out there now real” world (Lonergan’s phrase) that can be known simply by taking a good look at it and that is truly known and accurately represented in the words we use to describe or explain what we see) actually “opens new vistas for psychology and new horizons for the self” (p. 412). He asks us to consider the sociocultural ramifications of the language that psychologists use to frame their research agendas and how they reify language, treating it as “the mirror to the real” (p. 414), in order to justify, control, and dictate what is counted as adaptive action, moral principles, and evidence for what is true.

We are urged to consider, for example, the effects on the culture of such terms as *depression*, defined as a psychological disorder, reified in our measures, and treated chemically. How is it that peoples in other cultures and preceding centuries manage(d) without such a concept, yet contemporary psychologists detect depression in all corners of society (now even in infants), and over six million Americans now ‘require’ Prozac? What professions stand to profit by this particular set of constructions and practices? Is it possible that the public has served as an unwitting victim? Such issues are of profound consequence to the future of culture, and they cannot (and have not) been raised by those who merely consider such terms as *depression*, *mental conditions*, *treatment*, and *cure* as depictions of the real. (p. 414).

As with any valid and significant insights, however, when taken to extremes and blown radically out of proportion, the three key ideas of postmodernism become absurd, false, and self-defeating. And this is exactly what happened in the movement called postmodern poststructuralism. Psychologist Brewster Smith (1994), for example, bemoans what he sees as

most unfortunate...the tendency [of postmodern thought] to give up the conception of science – natural or human, historical or ahistorical—as an evidential, public, self-critical enterprise (p. 408).

...In the face of the postmodern challenges, the crux of the matter is whether it is still possible to retain some toehold to sustain the old human struggle toward truth, goodness, and beauty as meaningful ideals.” (p. 409)

Psychologists Martin and Sugarman (2000), in their article titled “Between the modern and the postmodern: The possibility of self and progressive understanding in psychology,” discuss how extreme versions of postmodern thought dramatically undercut psychology’s traditional notion of the self as a pregiven, personal, psychological being and challenge the rationale for current psychological and educational practices about what is worth teaching and learning. The attempts by some postmodernists to reduce all psychological phenomena either to its neurological correlates (as their extremist scientific materialist counterparts also do) or to sociocultural environments does not further our understanding of mind, brain or behavior, according to Martin and Sugarman (2000).

By entirely reducing subjectivity to neurophysiology or sociocultural practice, postmodernists like Ricard Rorty...and Kenneth Gergen...go too far. Reductive strategies achieve success only if they are ontologically informative in the sense that it can be shown that what was described as two different things is actually one thing. Successful reduction is impossible if important aspects of adequate conceptions of things are lost in the reductive exercise. Such impossibility is clearly evident in attempts to reduce psychological phenomena to neuropsychological states. Knowledge of the presumed neuropsychological correlates of emotion reveals no more about emotional experience than the physical properties of musical instruments reveal about musical performance. Attempts by social constructivists to reduce psychological subjectivity to the sociocultural also fail. One can agree that one’s emotional experience or moral sense would be impossible without one’s historical and current immersion in relevant sociocultural conventions and practices that provide necessary means, significations, and standards that partially constitute one’s emotional experience or moral sense. However, to go further and claim that reflective, intentional subjective experience of this kind is reducible to those same sociocultural conventions and practices is to confuse [or conflate] subjective experience with its sociocultural origins. (p. 403)

Let us now turn our attention toward the consideration of an entirely different approach to the problem of the struggle to believe in God in the postmodern scientific age that attempts to harmoniously integrate science (empiricism), philosophy (rationalism), and religion (mysticism) into a single view. It is a philosophical movement that began in pre-modern times, existed alongside of modernism for the past four centuries, and that neither denies the validity of science nor defines itself in reaction to postmodern thought because it does not felt threatened by either of them – the philosophy of *epistemological pluralism*.

Epistemological Pluralism

The traditional version of epistemological pluralism was perhaps given its best exposition by two Christian mystics: Franciscan theologian St. Bonaventure (1217-1274) and French philosopher and theologian Hugh St. Victor (1096-1141). Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1990) in his book, *Eye to Eye: The Quest for a New Paradigm*, describes this paradigm in detail. According to the traditional version of epistemological pluralism, every human being has three “eyes” or ways of knowing (the eye of flesh, the eye of reason, and the eye of spirit) that give rise to valid and important knowledge when addressing its own special and specific dimension of reality. Each eye has its own objects of knowledge that reveals its own corresponding aspect of existence or level of being. Each eye is valid and useful in its own domain of experience. Each eye cannot be reduced nor explained in terms of the other ways of knowing. These three major ways of attaining knowledge or kinds of epistemology, moreover, can be rank ordered from “lower” (e.g., the eye of flesh) to “higher” (the eye of spirit). Whenever “higher” dimensions are represented in terms of “lower” ones, they necessarily lose something in the translation (e.g., as when a 3-D sphere is reduced on a 2-D surface, it becomes a circle; the circle, however, cannot not adequately represent the sphere).

The eye of flesh. The lowest mode of knowing is the “*eye of flesh*” (*cogitatio, lumen inferius/exterius*) that makes visible the sensory realm and yields empirical knowledge (science). The empirical eye of flesh (empiricism) with its human sensory-perceptual systems and their extensions (microscopes and telescopes, weights and measures, oscilloscopes and CAT scans, and so forth) detect, transform, and translate the data of sense (colors, sounds, tastes, odors, textures and pressures) and attains sensory knowledge (empirical facts such as chemical gas composition) of the external world of space, time, and matter (Galileo, Kepler, Locke). In this realm, an object is never A and not-A; it is either A or not-A. A box is never a car, a broom is never a horse, and one rock is not another rock.

The eye of reason. The next higher mode of knowing is the “*eye of reason*” (*meditatio, lumen interius*) that discloses the mental realm and gives rise to rational knowledge (art, morality, logic, mathematics, law). The rational eye of the mind (rationalism) perceives the data of consciousness (images, concepts, ideas, thoughts, symbols, meaning, language, logic, numbers) and attains mental knowledge (knowledge of the mind itself, of the truth of logical deductions, of the Pythagorean theorem) (Kant). In this realm that includes imagination, conceptual thinking, psychological insight, and creativity, a box can be car, a broom can be a horse, and one rock is like all other rocks. The mental field, therefore, includes but transcends the sensory field. In imagination, for example, we *see* things with the mind’s eye and picture sensory objects that are not immediately present to the eye of flesh. In logic, we can conceptually operate on physical objects or reason about activities without physically manipulating or performing them. The truth of ideas or of a logical deduction cannot be seen by the senses (e.g., no one has ever seen with the eye of flesh the square of -1). Imagination, mathematics, and logic are “trans-empirical” in those terms.

The eye of spirit. The highest mode of knowing is the “*eye of spirit*” (*lumen superius*) that uncovers the spiritual realm and produces religious knowledge (gnosis, the Gospels, the Koran, *satori, kensho*, nirvana, samedhi, unio mystica, karios, cosmic consciousness). The spiritual eye (contemplation) perceives the data of soul and spirit (mystical experience) and attains transcendental knowledge (revelation) of transcendental realities (God, grace, the Trinity). Just as reason transcends flesh (trans-empirical), so contemplation and meditation transcend reason (trans-rational) where an object can be A and not-A (e.g., as in reversible figure/ground relationships). With the eye of Spirit, God can be seen. With the eye of Spirit, the validity and significance of the Christ entity can be known. As Wilber (1998) puts it: “The eye with which you see God is the same eye with which God sees you: The eye of contemplation” (p. 174).

Examples of “category mistakes.” According to the traditional view of epistemological pluralism, empirical science would pronounce on the facts delivered by the eye of flesh, and religion would pronounce on the facts delivered by the eye of spirit. On this view, empirical science, using its eye of flesh, can tell us much about the sensory domain and a little bit about the mental domain, but virtually nothing, however, about the spiritual, mystical, contemplative domain. To insist that it does so would represent a confusion of levels that philosopher Gilbert Ryle (1949) in his book, *Concept of Mind*, called a “*category mistake*” (e.g., the phrase “mental processes” does not mean the same kind of thing as “physical processes” even though the two topics can be labeled with the same word – “processes.” To think so is to overlook differences between the word and the experience it names). According to the traditional view of epistemological pluralism,

- A category mistake is committed when one eye tries to see for another eye (e.g., when theologians try to be scientists or scientists try to be theologians) or when one eye takes over the role of the other two (e.g., as when science states that anything that exists, exists in some quantity that can be measured; if it cannot be measured, then it does not exist).
- A category mistake is committed when science goes beyond the actual findings of science to deny that other approaches to knowledge are valid and other truths true (e.g., when science becomes the sole criterion of truth, the final arbiter of reality, as it does in scientism).
- A category mistake is committed when logical reasoning tries to claim something as empirical fact (e.g., logically, “heavier objects fall faster;” empirically, all objects fall at the same rate of acceleration).

- A category mistake is committed when dogmatic theology tries to claim something as empirical fact (e.g., when theologians claim the Biblical account of Creation is an empirical fact or the Virgin Birth is a biological fact, then they should be prepared to answer scientific questions about it).
- A category mistake is committed when the eye of reason tries to prove that which can only be seen with the eye of spirit (e.g. rational proofs for the existence of God). Kant demonstrated in his book, *Critique of Pure Reason*, that such attempts are futile (we can always create logical arguments for either of two completely contradictory views with equal plausibility). Reason only generates paradox when it tries to grasp God (e.g., God as non-dual Reality – as a “coincidence of opposites” – cannot be pictured in dualistic propositional logic). When scholars try to separate the content of a belief in a religion (such as a belief in angels) from the act of belief, for example, they arrive at the awkward conclusion that even when the content may be illogical, the act may be logically justified.

What can be known by observation, therefore, should not be confused with what can be known by reasoning, and what can be known by reasoning should not be confused with what can be known through contemplation.

Limitations of epistemological pluralism. Epistemological pluralism would be an appealing solution to the conflict between science and religion if science would only accept spiritual modes of inquiry as being valid and significant. Unfortunately, the eye of spirit is not allowed. Empirical science soundly rejects, denies, and discards the reality of the eye of spirit and recognizes only the eye of reason linked to evidence offered by the eye of flesh. Why accept the reality of a fiction? Moreover, science is regarded as a “lower” form of knowledge subservient to spiritual modes of knowing in the traditional version of epistemological pluralism – a role that modern science will not accept. Epistemological pluralism, therefore, at least in its traditional form, is not likely to give us the “consonance” or peaceful coexistence of science and religion that we are looking for as a solution to the struggle to believe. In order for epistemological pluralism to serve the function of bridging science with spirit, both science and religion must take a more generous view of reality (Wilber, 1998): (a) Science must recognize that its own method does not rest on narrow empiricism (sensory experience only) but on broad empiricism in the general sense (direct experience generally), and acknowledge that religion and science are both forms of knowledge with equal validity and significance (when applied to its own domain); and (b) Christianity must recognize that its own spiritual knowledge is not “higher” than scientific knowledge, and be willing to open its truth claims to direct verification – or rejection – by experiential evidence.

New Paradigms of Science

Individuals whose faith struggle is due to the perceived conflict between science and religion may find some comfort in recent attempts by scientists who are interpreting the results of their scientific work in physics and biology within the framework of religious meaning. This kind of “science provides proof of God” approach frames scientific ideas from the perspective of religious faith. It involves “a reading of the physical world as containing rumors of divine purpose. ...[and] offering theistic belief as an insightful account of what is going on” (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 10).

Examples of “new paradigm” approaches in science. This approach in science can be found in such books as:

- Fritjof Capra’s (1975) *The Tao of Physics* (“The principle theories and models of modern physics lead to a view of the world which is internally consistent and in perfect harmony with the views of Eastern mysticism,” p. 294).
- Gary Zukav’s (1979) *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (“The philosophy of physics is becoming indistinguishable from the philosophy of Buddhism,” p. 280).

- Ken Wilber's (1985) *Quantum Questions: Mystical Writings of the World's Great Physicists* ("The founders and grand theorists of modern (quantum and relativity) physics: Einstein, Schroedinger, Heisenberg, Bohr, Eddington, Pauli, de Broglie, Jeans, and Planck...were all mystics of one sort or another," p. 5).
- Rupert Sheldrake's (1990) *The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God* ("If the fields and energy of nature are aspects of the Word and Spirit of God, then God must have an evolutionary aspect, evolving along with the cosmos, with biological life and with humanity," p. 167).
- Paul Davies's (1992) *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World* ("New advances at the frontiers of science...have led to interesting and exciting ideas about God, creation, and the nature of reality," p. 16).
- Norman Friedman's (1994) *Bridging Science and Spirit: Common Elements in David Bohm's Physics, the Perennial Philosophy and Seth* ("Ideas from physics...of mystics...as well as the channeled spirit entity known as Seth...are parallel in their descriptions of reality," p. 16).
- Fred Alan Wolf's (1999) *The Spiritual Universe: One Physicist's Vision of Spirit, Soul, Matter, and Self* ("The solutions science and spirituality offer are one and the same," p. xix)
- Kenneth Miller's (1999) *Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground between God and Evolution*. ("Darwin lifted the curtain that allowed us to see the world as it really is. And to any person of faith, this should mean that Charles Darwin ultimately brought us closer to an understanding of God. ...In many respects, evolution is the key to understanding our relationship with God" pp. 286, 291).

The basic idea behind many of these books is what has traditionally been called the "argument from design." Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1998), in his book *The Marriage of Sense and Soul*, explains:

The idea is that, as empirical science pushes into the deepest secrets of the physical world, it discovers facts and data that seem to demand some sort of Intelligence beyond the material domain. The standard example is the Big Bang: Where did *that* come from? Since the very earliest material plasma seems to have been obeying mathematical laws that...existed prior to space and time...[then] what existed before the Big Bang...very well might be *a nonmaterial Logos governing the patterns of creation* – what many would simply call God. And, this argument continues, since science discovered the Big Bang, science itself is pointing to God. (p. 20)

Physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998), in his book *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, views this "new paradigm" approach in science from a different perspective. He sees it as signaling an opportunity to move beyond the old-style natural theology of St. Anselm and Thomas Aquinas that presented proofs of God's existence based on first-cause arguments and arguments from design to a new form of theology of nature that sets scientific explanation within a wider frame of reference: "We are not now looking to the physical world for hints of God's existence but to God's existence as an aid for understanding why things have developed in the physical world in the manner that they have" (p. 13).

Limitations of the "new paradigm" approach. One problem with the "new paradigm" approach as a solution to science-religion conflict is what happens when today's scientific facts that seem to support belief in God are replaced by new and different scientific facts tomorrow that point to the opposite conclusion? Does one's belief in God then fall also? Particle physicist Jeremy Bernstein states: "If I were an Eastern mystic the last thing in the world I would want would be a reconciliation with modern science, (because) to hitch a religious philosophy to a contemporary science is a sure route to its obsolescence" (quoted in Wilber, 1985, p. x). A second problem with such "proofs" is that they are little more than abstract, rational explanations and scientific theories *about* spiritual realities that do not move the individual closer to any real awakening of spiritual awareness, do not provide genuine spiritual knowledge, and may actually discourage individuals' religious impulse to take up an actual spiritual practice themselves and thus directly access the Spirit of God itself (Wilber, 1998).

Bridging Science and Spirit in A Postmodern Secular World

Point of Confirmation: Transpersonal Psychology

Psychology's potential contributions to the task of bridging science and religion cannot be denied. "Next to the deep mystery of the divine nature, the mystery of the human person is of central significance for the whole discussion, since scientific and religious concerns intersect most clearly in our embodied nature" (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 80). Psychology is now exploring areas that are relevant to this topic, including:

- States of consciousness (H. Hunt, 1995)
- Meditation (Murphy & Donovan, 1997)
- Lucid dreaming (Gackenback & Bosveld, 1989)
- Psychedelics (Grof, 1988)
- Near-death experiences (Ring, 1980)
- Trance channeling (Hastings, 1991; Klimo, 1987)
- Cross-cultural contemplative development (Walsh & Shapiro, 1983)
- The relation of psychosis to mysticism (Nelson, 1994)
- The relation of brain states to mind states (Austin, 1998)

These studies have thrown light on how spiritual practices work, confirmed some of their benefits, and led to the birth of "transpersonal psychology," a field of psychology that emerged in the late 1960's out of humanistic psychology, and that is dedicated to integrating the wisdom of the world's religions and modern science (Wulff, 1991, Chapter 12). Transpersonal psychology has as one of its tasks the scientific investigation of spiritual experience and behavior. What transpersonal psychology has discovered, and what Christian mystical traditions have disclosed is that there are "unexplored creative capacities, depths of psyche, states of consciousness, and stages of development undreamed of by most people" (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 1). Anthologies that serve as excellent introductions to transpersonal psychology include:

- Charles Tart's (1975/1992) *Transpersonal Psychologies: Perspectives on the Mind from Seven Great Spiritual Traditions*.
- Roger Walsh and Deanne Shapiro's (1983) *Beyond Health and Normality: Explorations of Exceptional Psychological Well-Being*.
- Roger Walsh and France Vaughn's (1993) *Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision*.
- Seymour Boorstein's (1996) *Transpersonal Psychotherapy*.
- Bruce Scotton, Allen Chinen, and John Battista's (1996) *Textbook of Transpersonal Psychiatry and Psychology*.

What is transpersonal psychology and transpersonal psychotherapy? Based on an analysis of over 200 previous definitions of transpersonal psychology cited in the literature over a 23 year period, Lajoie & Shapiro (1992) identified "states of consciousness," "highest or ultimate potential," "beyond ego or self," "transcendence," and "spiritual" as the most frequently found major themes and synthesized the following definition: "Transpersonal psychology is concerned with the study of humanity's highest potential, and with the recognition, understanding, and realization of unitive, spiritual, and transcendent states of consciousness" (p. 91). Transpersonal psychologists Frager and Fadiman (1998) in their textbook, *Personality and Personal Growth*, elaborate:

Transpersonal psychology contributes to the more traditional concerns of the discipline an acknowledgement of the spiritual aspect of human experience. This level of human experience has been described primarily in religious literature, in unscientific and often theologically biased language. A major task of transpersonal psychology is to provide a scientific language and a

scientific framework for this material. ...One basic tenet of transpersonal psychology is that there is in each individual a deeper or true self that is experienced in transcendent states of consciousness. Distinct from the personality and the personal ego, it is the source of inner wisdom, health, and harmony. ...One of the premises of transpersonal psychology is that we do not know the full range of human potential. The sense of a vast potential for growth within the individual provides a context for transpersonal psychology. (p. 464)

Although there are many different perspectives within the field of transpersonal psychology, eight key assumptions can be identified that define a transpersonal approach, according to transpersonal psychotherapist Brandt Cortright (1997, pp. 16-21), in his book, *Psychotherapy and Spirit*:

- Our essential nature is spiritual.
- Consciousness is multidimensional.
- Human beings have valid urges toward spiritual seeking, expressed as a search for wholeness through deepening individual, social, and transcendent awareness.
- Contacting a deeper source of wisdom and guidance is both possible and helpful to growth.
- Uniting a person's conscious will and aspiration with the spiritual impulse is a superordinate health value.
- Altered states of consciousness are one way of accessing transpersonal experiences and can be an aid to healing and growth.
- Our life and actions are meaningful.
- The transpersonal context shapes how the person/client is viewed.

Cortright (1997, pp. 229-242) also identifies six underlying principles that unite transpersonal therapists:

- Transpersonal psychotherapy is a theoretical framework that views psychological work within a context of spiritual unfolding.
- Consciousness is central in transpersonal psychotherapy.
- Transpersonal psychotherapy is multidimensional and experiential.
- Transpersonal psychotherapy is heart-centered.
- Transpersonal psychotherapy is profoundly optimistic and hope-centered.
- The transpersonal view of psycho-spiritual transformation extends far beyond the healing and growth of the self.

The perennial philosophy. One cannot divorce action from philosophy. Just as every cognitional theory is based upon some implicit theory of personality that gives psychological roots to the theory of mind, so also every school of psychology is based upon some implicit metaphysic that presupposes a structure of reality that makes that psychological framework possible and intelligible. Although there is not universal agreement regarding the philosophic underpinnings of transpersonal psychology, there is wide agreement within the transpersonal field that the five premises of the *philosophia perennis* or “perennial philosophy” (Aldous Huxley's (1945) phrase) tie together the various themes, definitions, assumptions, and principles of transpersonal psychology and psychotherapy. According to Wilber (1991):

The perennial philosophy is the worldview that has been embraced by the vast majority of the world's greatest spiritual teachers, philosophers, thinkers, and even scientists. It's called perennial or 'universal' because it shows up in virtually all cultures across the globe and across ages. We find it in India, Mexico, China, Japan, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Tibet, Germany, Greece. ...And wherever we find it, it has essentially similar features, it is in essential agreement the world over (p. 77).

Phenomenological psychologist Ronald Valle (1989) describes the five premises of the *philosophia perennis*.

- The first premise of the perennial philosophy is that “a transcendent, transconceptual reality or Unity binds together (i.e., is immanent within) all apparently separate phenomena be it physical, cognitive, emotional, intuitive, or spiritual” (Valle, 1989, p. 261). The everyday world of physical reality and our personal consciousness and identity, in other words, are manifestations of a larger, nonphysical divine reality.
- The second premise of the perennial philosophy is that “the ego- or individualized self is not the ground of human awareness but rather only one relative reflection/manifestation of a greater ‘transpersonal’ (as ‘beyond the personal’) Self or One (i.e., pure consciousness without subject or object)” (Valle, 1989, p. 261). Each individual has an ignored, denied, overlooked, or hidden, inner self that reflects, is connected to, and is a part of this divine reality. Transpersonal psychologist Thomas Yeomans (1992), in a monograph titled, *Spiritual Psychology: An Introduction*, refers to the personal and particular aspect of the more universal transpersonal Self as our “soul”:

In *Spiritual Psychology*, the soul is seen as the organizing principle of a lifetime, providing a context and container for the vicissitudes of experience and development of the human being. It is that principle within human experience that ‘knows’ the direction a particular life can take toward fulfillment and maturity, and which can guide this life according to this knowing. It is thus in a dynamic relationship with the other dimensions of a person’s experience (i.e., physical, emotional, mental, interpersonal) and is at once the most familiar and the most mysterious aspect of our being. At root we are this soul, this is our true identity, and yet we wander through our life seeking its way, learning by trial and error who it is we most deeply are, and only gradually discovering what is most essentially our own nature. (p. 13)

- The third premise of the perennial philosophy is that “each individual can directly experience this transpersonal reality that is related to the spiritual dimensions of human life” (Valle, 1989, p. 261). This “inner transpersonal self” can be discovered through appropriate practices and techniques and can be awakened and take central part in the everyday life of the individual.
- The fourth premise of the perennial philosophy is that “this experience represents a qualitative shift in one’s mode of experiencing and involves the expansion of one’s self-identity beyond ordinary conceptual thinking and ego-self awareness (i.e., mind is not consciousness)” (Valle, 1989, p. 261). The emergence of this inner self is an important goal of an individual’s life and the awakening to one’s greater identity is the purpose and goal of human life.
- The fifth premise of the perennial philosophy is that “this experience is self-validating” (Valle, 1989, p. 261).

A new approach to the study of religion. It is transpersonal psychology’s public recognition and acknowledgement of these five premises of the *philosophia perennis* that most clearly distinguishes it from the traditional approach taken by the social sciences to the study of religion. When sociologists, anthropologists, historians, or traditional psychologists study religion in its external and institutional aspects, it makes no difference whether or not a higher or ultimate spiritual reality actually exists. It is simply sufficient that the people and faith communities being studied believe so. While this objective, non-religious approach to the study of religion is an entirely valuable and legitimate enterprise, its particular brand of religion is a relatively narrow one, brings about a certain artificial shrinking of religious reality, and actually tells us little about the nature of religion as participated in by religious people. Just as diagramming sentences tells us little about the spoken language, or dissecting animal bodies tells us little about what other living creatures perceive, so does social science’s determination to be “objective” in its study of religion tells us little about the *religious* interpretation of religious experiences and behavior. It is as if a person was to happen upon a “first apple” one day and examined its exterior aspects only, refusing to feel it, taste it, smell

it, or otherwise become personally involved with it for fear of losing scientific objectivity. In this sense, such a person would learn little about the apple, although he might be able to analyze its structure, isolate its component parts, predict where others like it might be found, and theorize about its function and environment, but the greater “withinness” of the apple would not be found any place “inside” its exterior skin. When social scientists study religion, they are doing the same thing. Even when they deal with the “inside” of exterior religious reality, they are still dealing with another level of outsidership, learning little about the greater “withinness” out of which all religions spring. Without extending themselves to the knowledge that can only come from subjectively tasting the rich, vital dimension of the inside psychological depth of religious experiences and behaviors, social and behavioral scientists must give up its claim of investigating the true reality of our spiritual and religious nature. Transpersonal psychology affirms that the one taste of *religious* interpretation is no less legitimate than the non-religious interpretation that is presupposed by the methodological objectivism of traditional social science. Transpersonal psychology, in other words, presupposes a structure of reality that makes transpersonal experiences and behavior possible.

In order to situate transpersonal psychology within the larger current of postmodernism, let us examine how the three key ideas of postmodern thought -- interpretation is an intrinsic feature of being, meaning is context-dependent, and no single perspective is privileged -- can help shape and support our understanding of the struggle that many people experience with their faith and with their Church in the context of a secular world.

Point of Contact: Christianity’s Image of God in Some Significant Ways is An Interpretation

One way that postmodern thought can help shape and support our understanding of the struggle to believe in God in the context of a secular world can be found in postmodernism’s first key idea – interpretation is an intrinsic aspect of the universe of Being. If we regard our images, concepts, and symbols of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) as constructs and interpretations of our experience of the greater inner realities of our being, then our ways of thinking and talking about God cannot be understood to be simply objective representations of an “already out there now real” God totally separate and isolated from His/Her creations. How Christianity talks and writes about God has a hand in the creation and construction of the believer’s experience, understanding, and judgments of the God that Christianity believes, teaches, and confesses. Those experiences, understandings, and judgments form both the content and context of the individual’s struggle to believe. Philosopher-theologian John Hick (1999) in his book *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm* calls this the “critical realist principle:”

The critical realism principle – that there are realities external to us, but that we are never aware of them as they are in themselves, but always as they appear to us with our particular cognitive machinery and conceptual resources – is...a vital clue to understanding what is happening in the different forms of religious experience. (p. 41)

The solution to the conundrum of the non-realism of extreme postmodernism and the naïve realism of scientific materialism seems to lie in this middle way of “critical realism.” John Hick (1999) clarifies the distinction between the non-realism of extreme postmodernism, the naïve realism of scientific materialism, and the middle way of critical realism that acknowledges the existence of external realities but only as they appear to us within the context of the conditioned human perceptual-conceptual system of the experiencer (or in the words of St. Thomas Aquinas “Cognita sunt in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis” – “Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower” *Summa Theologiae*, II/III, 1, 2; p. 1057).

If we take as an example...Julian of Norwich’s visions of Christ and her hearing him speak of the limitless divine love, the non-realist interpretation is that the entire experience was a self-induced hallucination – not in any sense a revelation, not an expression of the ‘impact’ of the Transcendent upon her. The naïve realist interpretation -- which was probably her own understanding of her

experiences – is that the living Christ was personally present to her, producing the visions that she saw, and uttering in Middle English the words that she heard. But the critical realist interpretation, which I believe to be correct, is that she has become so open to the transcendent, within her and beyond her, that it flooded into her consciousness in the particular form provided by her Christian faith. ...Her experience was thus a genuine contact with the Transcendent, but clothed in her case in a Christian rather than a Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic or other form. ...In these and many other ways, the impact of the transcendent reality upon us receives different “faces” and voices as it is processed by our different religious mentalities. Religious experiences, then, occurs in many different forms, and the critical realist interpretation enables us to see how they may nevertheless be different authentic responses to the Real. (p. 42)

God concepts and the evolution of human consciousness. Many psychologists interested in religious issues recognize that all major world religions – Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism – have played an important role in the collective psychological evolution of our species (what Jung (1960) called the “collective unconscious”). Christianity, in particular, set forth the initial precepts upon which Western Civilization was built. From the perspective of transpersonal psychology, the historical progression of religion, philosophy, and science gives us a perfect picture of the development of human consciousness. On this view, for instance, the emergent ego, needing to feel its dominance and control, imagined a dominant, powerful, male God apart from nature. Whenever a tribe, group, or nation decided to embark upon a war, it always used the concept of its god to lead it on. The god concept, then, was an aid, and an important one to humanity’s emerging ego. God images changed as consciousness did. Changing concepts of God – from the Old Testament concept of Jehovah the Righteous to the New Testament concept of God the loving Father – have gone hand-in-hand with the development of our consciousness as a species. Study of the psychology of God as it appears in our histories, myths, and Scripture can help us discover much about our own psychology (perhaps more than we are ready to know). Religions in general, and Christianity in particular, have followed the development of human consciousness, evolutionarily speaking, reflecting in our constructions of God, sometimes in distorted form, those greater inner realities of our being.

Transpersonal psychology assumes that our species’ constructed images of God, however, not only reflect the state of our consciousness as it “is” but also point toward the desired future state, operating as a spiritual blueprint just like an architect’s plan, only at a different level. In other words, the various ideas of God that our species create are thought to be intuitive projections intended to give conscious direction to the species and to act as stimulators of development and evolution (Assagioli, 1991). There is an important dynamism and vitality to our God concepts that go beyond being simple intellectual containers for “religious sentiments” (Allport’s phrase). They act as transpersonal symbols of intuitive insight and transmitters for impulses toward “higher” stages of development that arise from the deeper dimensions of our species’ nature. Seemingly outside of the self, our God images, symbols, and concepts are meant to lead the species into its greatest areas of fulfillment.

Transpersonal psychology regards the spiritual impulse as one of our strongest attributes as a species, and the part of our psyche most often overlooked by traditional, orthodox psychological science. Spirituality’s importance and significance, however, is becoming less frequently ignored, denied, or ridiculed by mainstream psychology (Bragdon, 1994; Richards & Bergin, 1997; Vaughn, 1991). Rebecca Clay (1996), in an article titled “Psychologists’ Faith in Religion Begins to Grow” describes psychology’s changing attitude toward religious belief.

Devotedness reflects irrationality and superstition. A religious orientation serves as a crutch for people who can’t handle life. Religious beliefs indicate emotional instability. Comments like these illustrate psychology’s traditional view of religion. Although William James and other early psychologists were interested in the topic, psychologists since Freud have generally seen religious belief and practice as signs of weakness or even pathology. That’s changing, say psychologists who

specialize in religion. Research suggests that religious faith – whether it’s Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, or other – may actually enhance mental health, at least in some cases. (p. 1)

Psychologist Kenneth Pergament (1997), in his book *The Psychology of Religion and Coping: Theory, Research, Practice*, for example, explores the relationship between mental health and religion. His studies of people’s use of religion to cope with major life stresses found that certain types of religious expression seem to be helpful whereas other types seem to be harmful. People who embrace what he calls the “sinners-in-the-hand-of-an-angry-God” model tend to feel angry toward a God they believe is punishing them for their sins, feel a lack of emotional support from their church, synagogue, or congregation, and consequently have poorer mental health outcomes, typically suffering more distress, anxiety, and depression. On the other hand, people who embrace the “loving God” model tend to see God as a partner who works with them to resolve problems, view difficult situations as opportunities for spiritual growth, and feel support from their religious leaders and fellow church members, and consequently enjoy more positive mental health outcomes. Mental health outcomes, in other words, seem to depend on the way people view their relationship with God. People who view God as a warm, caring, and dependable friend are much more likely to have positive mental (and physical) health outcomes (e.g., lower blood pressure, lower death rates from coronary heart disease, less depressed and anxious, less likely to abuse drugs) than people who viewed God as a cold, vengeful, and unresponsive deity whom they could not trust.

Transpersonal psychology affirms religion’s salutary effect on mental health and recognizes that many people are undergoing profound spiritual transformations that may result in emotional and physical healing, a radical shift in values, and profound awareness of the mystical dimension of existence *as well as* tremendous inner turmoil (S. Grof & C. Grof, 1989; C. Grof & S. Grof, 1990). Transpersonal psychology takes the position that humanity is by nature a spiritual creature. “God-making” is a part of our psychic heritage. The function of spirituality, or what personality psychologist Gordon Allport (1955) in his book, *Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality*, calls “the religious sentiment,” is “to relate the individual meaningfully to the whole of Being” (p. 94). As Rolheiser (1999) observes in his book, *The Holy Longing*, the word “spirituality” has become part of our common vocabulary. “Today bookstores, church and secular alike, literally teem with books on spirituality” (p. 5). People today are looking for alternate interpretations and explanations of reality because the old ones no longer satisfy either the intellect or the soul (Taylor, 1994).

Evolutionary significance of the contemporary struggle to believe. Christianity has had its extraordinary influence, I believe, because behind the power of Christianity lies the unending reality of our species’ inner source, and that it is this inner reality that each individual tries to explore, express, and define in his or her private or personal struggle to believe. I believe that the contemporary struggle to believe in God is important in evolutionary terms, helping to shape humanity’s consciousness. In the great sweeping changes in religious concepts that are abroad in our world today, perhaps our consciousness – our psyche – is constructing and projecting greater images of our own probable fulfillment, and these are seen in our changing concepts of God (Chandler, 1988; Lewis & Melton, 1992; Needleman & Baker, 1981; Peters, 1991). Often the personality of God as generally conceived is based upon our small knowledge of our own psychology (Vitz, 1977). Perhaps our personal and public struggle to believe in conventional, orthodox, official conceptions of God stem directly from distortions in our ideas of who and what we are. The promise and hopeful outcome of our struggle to believe is that in our attempt to reshape our understanding of God, in so doing we reshape ourselves.

Point of Contact: The Struggle to Believe is Context-Dependent

A second way that postmodern thought can help shape and support our understanding of the struggle to believe in God in the context of a secular world lies in postmodernism’s second key idea – that the meaning of the struggle to believe is in important ways dependent on the context in which it occurs. My “Sacred Story” narrative illustrates how an individual’s struggle to believe occurs in the larger context of the

person's psychological needs and desires, and basically cannot be separated from his or her biological status of health and illness, philosophical outlook, scientific beliefs and religious ideas, cultural environment and social realities. These contexts together form the trellis of "the struggle to believe" wherein both thorns and roses may grow and in which, in the words of Kathleen Norris (1998), one's religious inheritance may be "both blessing and curse" (p. 22). Just as an individual's personal struggle to believe must be considered in a far greater context than usual, so we cannot understand our species' collective faith struggle unless and until we consider the needs and desires of those involved – needs which also arise in a framework of psychological, biological, philosophic, scientific, religious, cultural, and social realities (i.e., the context of a postmodern secular world).

The dignity of the struggle to believe. Someone once said, "To those who believe that all answers are known, there is little need to search." The fact that there is a struggle implies that some sort of search going on. Each individual's lived experience represents a unique context and inimitable perspective on the struggle to believe. I believe that only by taking multiple perspectives and multiple contexts into account can our understanding of the struggle to believe in God in the context of a postmodern secular world be fruitfully advanced. The old images, symbols, and concepts of God may no longer work for individuals struggling with their faith (old wine) and if they are to be propelled into satisfying new images, symbols, and concepts (new wineskins), then we need to support their courage to "go ahead."

For some individuals, the "going-ahead" may be a part of their restless creative energies to rejuvenate and revive their childhood religious beliefs. For others, the going-ahead may involve an attempt on the part of their creative abilities to seek a new synthesis because they have gone as far as they could in the old framework. They are asking questions they might not ask otherwise that may lead to a greater, more evocative framework for dealing with "religious matters." Perhaps they are beginning a new psychological journey to find a new thematic world to live in as they seek to see spirituality in a new light. For still other individuals, the going-ahead may be an attempt to throw off the old beliefs and dogmas of the past that offended the intellect and the intuitions. They may be trying to divorce themselves from feelings of being deceived or betrayed (what was once true is true no longer), to question official views, or to refuse to be emotionally smothered by old beliefs. The struggle to believe may be an attempt on the part of others to distinguish between what they experience about life and what they have been told, to distinguish between their own personal beliefs and observations and those that they have simply accepted from their culture without examination. They may be struggling to give expression to their need for greater visions of divinity, and to consider a greater context in which the full dimensions of human existence can be creatively expressed.

Personally speaking, I am optimistic about the probable outcomes of all these "goings-ahead." The apparently ambivalent struggle of belief and unbelief can be understood in Christian terms as "the necessary cost of a creation given by its Creator the freedom to be itself. ...as being the inescapably mixed consequences of a world allowed by its Creator to explore and realize, in its own way, its own inherent fruitfulness – to 'make itself' (Polkinghorne, 1998, pp. 13-14). Call me faith's fool if you want, but my faith senses some future development for these individuals that draws them outward, coaxing them, sometimes gently and sometimes not, to travel out along psychological paths that are personal and intimate, and that spring from the individual's innate knowledge that the journey of their struggle to believe is necessary and has meaning.

Point of Contact: A Multi-perspective on the Struggle to Believe Furthers Understanding

A third way that postmodern thought can help shape and support our understanding of the struggle to believe in the context of a secular world lies in postmodernism's third key idea – the call for a multi-perspective approach that would recognize that people's faith struggle is not to be feared or prematurely thwarted or resolved, closed off, denied, or forgotten, but acknowledged and its positive aspects honored. In greater terms, a multi-perspective approach would acknowledge the validity and significance of both the

unity and diversity of religion. As physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1999) in his book, *Belief in God in an Age of Science*, puts it:

The continuing development of the interaction between science and theology cannot simply be contained within the limits of Christian discourse alone. The other great faith traditions of the world must also be involved and their very existence, in their stability and unreconciled diversity, poses a profound problem for an ecumenical theology, which neither denies to the traditions their roles as carriers of authentic spiritual experience nor seeks to eliminate their incompatibilities by reducing each to a lowest-common-denominator account, unrecognizable to its adherents (pp. 90-91). ...The presence of a history of authentic spiritual experience of a most profound kind within each of the world faith renditions is the ground for supposing them to have important things to say to each other, despite the discord of their competing claims. (p. 115)

A multi-perspective approach would be a truly ecumenical approach that treats religion in global terms, and recognizes and acknowledges that there is no single privileged perspective on the problem of belief or on the nature of God (Huxley, 1945; Schuon, 1984; H. Smith, 1976). As Mahatma Gandhi once observed: “God has no religion.”

Postmodernism’s insistence upon an aperspectival approach to truth derives in some measure from Kant’s initial distinction between the unexperienceable *noumenon* (the thing-as-it-is-in-itself that can never be humanly known in-itself) and the experienced *phenomenon* (the thing-itself as it appears filtered through distinctively human perception and conception). From a religious perspective, something parallel to Kant’s distinction can be found in Hinduism’s (non-dualistic) distinction between *nirguna* Brahman and *saguna* Brahman (Hick, 1999, Chapter 10). *Nirguna* Brahman is God in God’s-self, God as supreme and ultimate reality beyond human conceptions of personality or personhood, as it is in-itself, without attributes or empirical predicates and relations, formless and ineffable and non-dual Reality, absolute and transcategorical, existing beyond and outside of the range of human conceptual representation, the nameless ground of all Creation. *Saguna* Brahman is that self-same God as humanly experienced and conceived in human terms, a personal manifestation of God the Absolute, given concrete form and individualized expression and different phenomenal form through human reasoning and imagination, and known as the Creator God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as humanly described within the different religious traditions and theologies, as worshiped in our churches and synagogues and mosques, and as petitioned to in our prayers. These two aspects of God (and of the Real) differ but are not separate. They are one, yet are not identical. They are ultimate reality in itself and its impact on human beings. In the words of the religious Hindu text *Yogava’sistha*: “Thou art formless; thy only form is our knowledge of thee.” If human beings did not exist, then there would be no *saguna* Brahman since it exists only in relation to human consciousness, but the eternal reality of *nirguna* Brahman would continue to exist unaffected.

This two-fold acknowledgement of the trans-categorical nature of ultimate reality and recognition of the validity of different limited forms of awareness of that reality has important implications for our understanding postmodernism’s contribution to our understanding of religious pluralism. In the words of the Hindu text *Bhagavata Purana*: “Truth has many aspects. Infinite truth has infinite expression.” Theologian-philosopher John Hick (1999) in his book, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Realm*, defines “religious pluralism” as the idea that

The great world religions are different human responses to the same ultimate transcendent reality. That reality is in itself beyond the scope of our human conceptual systems. But nevertheless it is universally present as the very ground of our being. ...This means that the different world religions...taken together as complex historical totalities, constitute different human responses to the ultimate transcendent reality to which they all, in their different ways, bear witness. (p. 77)

On this view, although each world religion may regard itself as the *true* revealed religion whose experience of a personal God or non-personal Absolute (e.g., Yahweh, Vishnu, Shiva, the Holy Trinity, Allah, Brahman, Tao, and so forth) is considered to be “ultimately Real,” none of these experiences of God is the Real in itself, but merely manifestations of the Real as it appears to humanity and as clothed in the language of physical being. According to the idea of religious pluralism, all of the theologies and philosophies of the different world religions are simply differing descriptions of the same ultimate reality that lies beyond the borders of what is humanly thinkable and sayable. The ineffable God is imaged and spoken about and written of in different historically and culturally conditioned ways by the founders and followers of the various faith traditions. As John Hick (1999) put it: “Each tradition speaks literally (or analogically) about their own God or Absolute, and thereby speak mythologically about the Real in itself. And mythological truth is instrumental truth, consisting in its capacity to evoke and develop appropriate human responses to the Ultimate” (p. 78). That the language of revelation is necessarily symbolic and metaphorical (e.g., God is Father, Lord, King, potter, husband, almighty, logos, and other ‘images and semblances’ drawn from the ‘good’ aspects of the lived human world) is therefore a part of the concept of religious pluralism and postmodernism’s first, second, and third key ideas. The metaphorical character of the language of scripture, tradition, and liturgy does not, however, necessarily have to be an obstacle to faith or a cause of one’s struggle to believe. It can instead function to lead us on our journey, into and through and beyond the ego-self towards an awareness of our ultimate union with the Transcendent and with the ultimately real in a manner suitable and appropriate to our nature.

The question here is whether a practicing Catholic can legitimately affirm the trans-categorical nature of ultimate reality and acknowledge the metaphorical character of human language about that reality, (i.e., embrace the concept of religious pluralism as being an accurate representation of the facts) and still remain in a “state of grace” within the Church? Can a person remain an orthodox Catholic and accept the central Catholic doctrines as being not literal, absolute truths but as symbolic or metaphorical truths (and as such relative to human cognitional processes) that nevertheless point beyond themselves to an utterly transcendent reality that transcends all doctrines and dogmas? Without becoming deeply implicated in controversy or in a logical contradiction, can one simultaneously speak of the Trinity as a *manifestation* of the supreme deity yet also understand that Catholic concept in psychological terms -- perhaps as being a strictly masculine concept in which the duality and division that each male feels within himself is externalized and projected upon the one God concept of “those mysteries of the self that are involved in being a son, and then a father, while also always feeling within oneself that part or inner self which cannot be seen by another, which is neither father nor son, but which is within oneself *while* one is father, and while one is son” (Butts, 1998a, p. 66)?

I find myself here concerned with issues about what constitutes authentic Christianity and will leave it to my more orthodox theologian friends to defend my orthodoxy (or criticize my unorthodoxy) as the case may be in these matters. The notion of heresy and the Catholic Inquisition of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries were once powerful deterrents against the kind of theological speculations I may appear to be engaging in at this point of my essay. I have no desire to be punished (or even executed) as a theological deviant, however, by those more doctrinally fundamentalist theologians among my readers who may possess the dogmatic certainty of the medieval Church and who may be able to discern what is to be regarded as unquestionably true. The historian Jaroslav Pelikan (1971) makes it clear in the scholarly work I read for this Summer Seminar, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, that Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular is an enormously complex phenomenon with an institutional history that reflects many different and changing strands of thought, moral outlook and practice. Before Christianity became a state religion under Constantine (272-337 C.E.) and before the Council of Nicea (325) defined a normative Christianity which was to be maintained for the next 10 centuries by the repressive ruling political-ecclesiastical powers of Rome and Constantinople, there was a freedom of theological speculation that flourished in a rich variety of ways. I wish the theological speculations regarding the Trinity concept articulated in this essay to be considered as being expressed in the spirit of that earlier Church period.

Let us now turn our attention to the final topics of my paper -- the twin beliefs of *scientific materialism* and *scientism* – to see what common ground can be found in them that may accommodate the best insights of science and the deepest wisdom of Christianity. My first task is to examine how the key idea of scientific materialism – that “spiritual events have exterior correlates in the material world – may be interpreted to accommodate one of the important beliefs of the Catholic faith – belief in the possibility of life beyond biological death. My second task is to find a way to have Catholic spirituality able to stand up to scientific authority – scientism and its key idea that “all genuine knowledge must be grounded in experience” – by announcing its own methods and modes of knowing, data and evidence, confirmations and verifications in a way that satisfies the essence of both religious and scientific claims.

Point of Contact: Spiritual Events Have Empirical Correlates in the Material World

Is it possible for a Catholic to believe in the existence of spiritual Reality and in a loving and creative, redemptive God that is both transcendent and personal and still accept the partial truth of *scientific materialism* – that “interior events have physical correlates in the material world” – without going overboard and attempting to reduce all other truths to that partial aspect? I believe that one can. If we are to regard human beings as psychosomatic unities, as contemporary science encourages us to do, and also affirm the Christian belief in life after death, then we need to make new metaphysical judgments that encourage us to take a more generous view of the nature of reality as a way of making sense of the broadest possible spectrum of human experience and behavior. Scientific materialism as it stands today constitutes a metaphysical net, so to speak, that captures metaphysical fish of only a certain size. This notion is illustrated in the following parable attributed to physicist Sir Arthur Eddington:

In a seaside village, a fisherman with a rather scientific bent proposed as a law of the sea that all fish are longer than one inch. But he failed to realize that the nets used in the village were all of a one-inch mesh. Are we filtering physical reality? Can we catch consciousness with the nets we are using? (p. 27, quoted in Friedman, 1994)

Jane Roberts (1981a) makes a similar point when she says: “Science itself must change, as it discovers that its net of evidence is equipped only to catch certain kinds of fish, and that it is constructed of webs of assumptions that can only hold certain varieties of reality, while others escape its net entirely” (p. 137).

M-1, M-2, and M-3 metaphysics. Willis Harman (1998) in his thought-provoking book, *Global Mind Change: The Promise of the 21st Century*, discusses three different kinds of “implicit metaphysics” that have formed the various metaphysical nets that scientists and non-scientists have used to hold their understanding of time, self, others, and world.

- **M-1 Materialistic Monism** (Matter giving rise to mind). “The basic stuff of the universe is matter-energy. We learn about reality from studying the measurable world. ...Whatever consciousness is, it emerges out of matter (that is, the brain) when the evolutionary process has progressed sufficiently far. ...Consciousness apart from a living physical organism is not only unknown, it is inconceivable” (Harman, 1998, p. 30). M-1 metaphysic is the metaphysic of scientific materialism and, for the most part, characterizes the contemporary scientific attitude as depicted in the media, and in popular and polemical scientific writing (e.g., E.O. Wilson, 1998).
- **M-2 Dualism** (Matter plus mind). “There are two fundamentally different kinds of basic stuff in the universe: matter-energy stuff and mind-spirit-stuff” (Harman, 1998, p. 30). In this view, mind and matter are strictly separate. The body is physical and the mind is nonphysical. The body is viewed as functioning completely independent of the mind. Bodies are relegated to nature, our souls to God. M-2 metaphysic characterizes the dualistic universe of French philosopher Rene Descartes (1596-1650) and some fundamentalist versions of Christianity.

- **M-3 Transcendental Monism** (Mind giving rise to matter). “The ultimate stuff of the universe is consciousness. Mind (or consciousness, or spirit) is primary, and matter-energy arises in some sense out of mind. Consciousness is not the end-product of material evolution: rather, consciousness was here first!” (Harman, 1998, p. 30). Moreover, M-3 metaphysics allows for various orders of existence. Reality does not consist simply of the physical or only of the physical and non-physical, but is multidimensional in nature. Just as there are spectrums of light, there are also spectrums of matter and of being, with different kinds or orders of species of consciousness even with the physical system itself. M-3 metaphysics has been a part of Eastern cultural history (Hinduism, Buddhism) for centuries and has long been a part of the esoteric (as opposed to the exoteric) traditions of all world religions (see, for example, Schuon, 1984, Chapter 3, “Transcendence and Universality of Esoterism”).

Harold Morowitz (1980), in his article “Rediscovering the Mind” makes the point about M-3 metaphysics this way:

First, the human mind, including consciousness and reflective thought, can be explained by activities of the central nervous system, which, in turn, can be reduced to the biological structure and function of that physiological system. Second, biological phenomena at all levels can be totally understood in terms of atomic physics, that is, through the action and interaction of the component atoms of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen, and so forth. Third and last, atomic physics, which is now understood most fully by means of quantum mechanics, must be formulated with the mind as a primitive component of the system. We have thus, in separate steps, gone around an epistemological circle – from mind, back to mind. (p. 16)

Harmon believes that M-1 dominance is declining and that there is a “fundamental change” that is occurring in Western society that involves “a shift of dominant metaphysics from M-1 to M-3” (Harman, 1998, p. 31; see also, Harman & Clark, 1994). The question I want the reader to consider is not “Which of these three metaphysics is true?” but instead ask: “Which one of these seem to make the best fit with what the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses on the basis of the word of Scripture?”

Mind and brain are connected. Contemporary understanding of the intimate connection between mind and body encourages us to regard the mind itself, far from being *nothing but* an otherworldly soul trapped in a material body (M-2), as intimately interwoven with the biomaterial brain (M-1). Transpersonal psychologists would take this idea one step further and agree that mind is not drastically divorced from the brain, but would caution that it is not drastically reducible to it either. Writer and mystic, Jane Roberts (1997), in her evocative book, *The Way Toward Health*, applies the same caution:

Do not think of the mind as a purely mental entity, and of the body as a purely physical one. Instead, think of both mind and body as continuing, interweaving processes that are mental and physical at once. Your thoughts actually are quite as physical as your body is, and your body is quite as nonphysical as it seems to you your thoughts are. You are actually a vital force, existing as a part of your environment, and yet apart from your environment at the same time. (p. 131)

Mind influences and modulates (inhibits and stimulates) all sorts of bodily processes and activity by way of central nervous system, endocrine glands, and immune system mechanisms as documented in the following areas of scientific research:

- Health psychology (Goleman & Gurin, 1993; Hafen, Karren, Frandsen, & Smith, 1996)
- Psychoneuroimmunology (Ader, Felten, & Cohen, 1990; Ornstein & Sobel, 1987)
- The placebo effect (Frank & Frank, 1991; White, Tursky, & Schwartz, 1985)
- Multiple personality (Damgaard, 1987; Putnam, 1989)

- Spontaneous remission (O'Regan & Hirshberg, 1993)
- Healing effects of prayer (Aldridge, 1993; Dossey, 1993)
- Imagery and healing (Sheikh, 1984)
- Hypnosis (Hilgard, 1986; Rossi & Cheek, 1994)
- Biofeedback (Green, Green, & Walters, 1970)
- Physical and psychological effects of meditation (Murphy & Donovan, 1997)
- Exceptional psychophysiological capacities (Murphy, 1992)
- Experience of willed activity and directed attention (James, 1897/1956)

These research areas provide empirical evidence that suggest we are psychosomatic unities and not simply spiritual ghosts inhabiting a machine body. Our proud human consciousness rests on the vast unconscious integrity of our physical being, in other words. In physical life, our conscious mind is largely dependent upon the natural workings of our physical brain. This means that our thoughts and emotions are a part of nature and not a part from nature, and are as natural as the locks of our hair and the cells within our bodies – and as real. The same power that moves your body moves your mind, so to speak. You don't just have a body; you are your body. It is you for all practical intents and purposes while you are alive in physical reality.

Example from placebo effect studies. This possibility is illustrated by the strange case of Mr. Wright, a patient with generalized advanced malignancy of the lymph nodes (lymphosarcoma), described by Bruno Klopfer, M.D. (1957, pp. 337-339) in his Presidential Address to the Society of Projective Techniques. This dramatic case study of the “placebo effect” (the word *placebo* comes from the Latin meaning “I shall please” and technically refers to “any medical procedure that produces an effect in a patient because of its therapeutic intent and not its specific nature, whether chemical or physical,” Liberman, 1962, p. 761) raises fundamental questions about the nature of the true relation of mind to body and is summarized below:

According to Klopfer, a man with severe cancer insisted that he be given an experimental drug called Krebiozen, then considered by its proponents to be a ‘miracle cure’ for cancer. After a single dose of the drug, the man’s cancerous masses ‘melted like snowballs on a hot oven’ and he was able to resume normal activities. Later, however, the man read that studies have shown Krebiozen to be ineffective. His cancer began spreading again. Acting on a hunch, his doctor urged the patient not to believe the studies he had read. The doctor then treated the man with an ‘improved’ Krebiozen. In fact, the doctor gave his patient only water. Nevertheless, the man’s condition once more improved significantly. He continued to recover until he again read that the worthlessness of Krebiozen had been conclusively proven. Several days later, he died. (Hurley, 1991, p. 30)

The imagination can, apparently, work miracles. From the voodoo curse to bring on sickness or death to unicorn’s horn to treat disease and powered Egyptian mummy for healing wounds, from bloodletting to cure fever to ground-up fox lung for treatment of tuberculosis, variety of bizarre therapies and remedies may have worked for reasons other than what was in the bottle or pestle.

The placebo effect is so powerful that no drug can be marketed in the United States unless it has been evaluated against a placebo. The difference between the effectiveness of the drug and the effectiveness of the placebo (usually a sugar tablet if pills are being tested) is considered to be a measure of the drug’s actual effectiveness. If the effects of a new drug is not different from those of a placebo, then the new drug is considered ineffective, even though both the new drug and the placebo produced beneficial changes. Any medical procedure (including drugs, surgery, and psychotherapy) can have a placebo effect, and much of the effectiveness of active treatments that produce real cures on their own can be attributed to a placebo component. Health psychologist Shelly Taylor (1999) notes that, for example,

In one study (Beecher, 1959), patients complaining of pain were injected with either morphine or a placebo. Although morphine was substantially more effective in reduce pain than was the placebo, the placebo was a successful painkiller in 35% of the cases. Another study demonstrated that morphine loses as much as 25% of its effectiveness in reducing pain when patients do not know they have been injected with a painkiller and are therefore not preset to show the drug's effects. In summarizing placebo effects, A. K. Shapiro (1964, p. 74) stated: 'Placebos can be more powerful than, and reverse the action of, potent active drugs. ...The incidence of placebo reactions approaches 100% in some studies. Placebos can have profound effects on organic illnesses, incurable malignancies. ...Placebos can mimic the effects usually thought to be the exclusive property of active drugs. (pp. 293-294)

According to Hurley (1991, p. 30) researchers have elicited placebo effects in a variety of medical problems, psychiatric syndromes, and psychologically-sensitive functions, including:

- Medical problems, such as angina pectoris and essential hypertension, cancer, rheumatoid and degenerative arthritis, peptic ulcers and nausea, migraine headache, allergies and acne, radiation sickness, hay fever and cough, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, organic brain disorders such as Parkinsonism, and pain from a variety of sources.
- Psychiatric syndromes, such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia.
- Psychologically-sensitive functions, such as reaction time, grip strength, pulse rate, blood pressure, short-term rote memory, mood changes, and self-perceptions of sympathetic nervous system relaxation and activation.

How does a placebo work? A variety of mechanisms have been postulated including: classical conditioning, anxiety reduction, the release of endogenous opioids, and changes in response expectancy. Moreover, if positive expectations can make a person better, it stands to reason that negative expectations can make a person worse (called the "nocebo"), as the example of the voodoo curse illustrates. Psychological states of fear, anxiety, mistrust, hopelessness, apathy, and despair have biological effects upon the body, diminishing immune system functioning, preparing the body for further illness. There are complex pathways between mind and body and belief systems. Whatever the mechanism by which placebos may work, the fact remains that health can be influenced by something as intangible as belief. Placebos provide ample proof that something as intangible as expectation can have an effect on body chemistry and on the autonomic nervous system, and that what passes through the mind can produce alterations in the body's chemistry. The effect of the placebo is physical, even though it works through the imagination. In ignoring or minimizing the power of the placebo effect as a mere artifact in pharmacological research, we risk losing a deeper understanding of the true potential of one of the most powerful therapeutic psychological interventions available to humankind – the belief that our body does indeed have the power and capacity to heal itself.

Biopsychology has confirmed that each one of our thoughts represents a triggering stimulus bringing about hormonal changes, and altering our entire physical body at the same time. Our bodies are changed biologically by our thoughts, in other words. It is not just that our thoughts trigger chemical reactions within the body, as of course they do, but that our thoughts have an electrical and chemical reality besides their recognized mental aspects (Becker & Selden, 1985). This means that our thoughts interact with the body and become a part of it. In terms of the body's integrity, our mental states, therefore, are highly important. Beliefs that foster apathy, despair, or hopelessness automatically lower bodily defenses against disease agents, activating and changing the body's chemistries, altering its balances, and initiate disease conditions. And it works the other way around as well: If we are to keep our mind strong and clear, we must keep our body in good health and not abuse it. This mind-body unity is summed up in the what biofeedback pioneers Green, Green, and Walters (1970) called the "psychophysiological principle": "Every change in the physiological state is accompanied by an appropriate change in the mental-emotional state, conscious or unconscious, and conversely, every change in the mental-emotional state, conscious or unconscious, is accompanied by an appropriate change in the physiological state"(p. 3).

Metaphorically speaking, the marriage of soul and flesh is an ancient contract. Your body is your spirit in physical (electrical, chemical, magnetic, hormonal) clothes, the soul in Earth garments, the face of the soul turned outward toward the seasons. In a manner of speaking, you are Earth come alive to view itself through conscious eyes, alive with a light from which the very fires of life are lit. In physical life, the spirit speaks with a physical voice, and the material body is a creation of the spirit. Ronald Rolheiser (1999) in his book, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*, describes a charming and delightful Jewish legend about how the soul was put into our bodies at birth and why we don't have any recollection of that miraculous event.

There is a Jewish legend that says that just before God puts a soul into the body that soul is asked to forget its preternatural life. Hence, just as the soul enters the body, one of God's angels presses the body's mouth shut, as a gesture that, during its early life, it is to be silent about its divine origins. The little crevice below each person's nose is the imprint of the angel's forefinger, sealing your lips – and that is why, when you are trying to remember something, during your ponderings, your own forefinger spontaneously rises and rests in that crevice. (p. 16)

While you are a physical creature in the world of time and space, in other words, there is no division between the mental and physical. On this view, if you think there is a division between the mental and physical, then you do not yet sufficiently understand the physical reality of your thought or the spirituality of your physical creaturehood.

What of spiritual and miraculous healing? Going further into this issue we can ask: What about claims of miraculous, spiritual healing by divine intervention, specifically, extraordinary healing that deviates from the known laws of nature or that transcends our knowledge of these laws and is believed to be brought about by some supernatural agency? Do such phenomena in fact exist? Is the structure of reality such that miraculous healings can occur? What empirical evidence can be brought to bear in support of their occurrence? I won't go into much detail here but refer the reader to Brendan O'Regan's (1991) article titled *Healing, Remission, and Miracle Cures* in which he describes, for example, the case of Vittorio Michelli who suffered from malignant bone cancer, but after bathing in the waters at Lourdes (France) experienced sudden and complete tumor remission and reconstruction and regrowth of bone loss without any medical or surgical intervention. This is one example of the 64 (out of approximately 6,000) claims of miraculous healings that have been officially declared to be "miracles" by the International Medical Commission that was initially formed in 1947 to document the occurrence of healings associated with the 1858 apparition of the Virgin Mary in the little village of Lourdes, France.

To those of my readers who are familiar with the rigorous procedures and criteria that the Catholic Church has instituted to assess the validity claims of spiritual healing know that it is not easy to have a miracle. For those of you who are not familiar with the procedures and criteria being used at Lourdes, the following extended quotation from St. John Dowling's August 1984 article in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* will give you some idea of how carefully claims of spiritual and miraculous healings are examined and analyzed in order to rule out alternative explanations.

At present there are 25 members of the Commission: thirteen French, two Italian, two Belgian, two English, two Irish, one each from Spain, Holland, Scotland and Germany. Then they have a wide spread of specialties. Four each from general medicine and surgery, three from orthopedics, two each from general psychiatry and general practice, and one each from radiology, neuropsychiatry, dermatology, ophthalmology, pediatrics, cardiology, oncology, neurology and biochemistry. Ten members hold chairs in their medical schools. All are practicing Catholics. Many are doctors who come regularly to Lourdes as pilgrimage medical officers, but some have little or no connection with the shrine.

If, after the initial scrutiny and follow-up, the Medical Bureau thinks that there is good evidence of an inexplicable cure, the dossier is sent to the International Medical Commission that usually meets once a year in Paris. The preliminary investigation of the data is made, and if the members agree that the case is worth investigating, they appoint one or two of their members to act as rapporteur. The rapporteur then makes a thorough study of the case, usually seeing the patient himself [or herself], and presents the material in a detailed written dossier circulated to the members before the meeting at which they will make their decision.

The report is then discussed critically, at length, under 18 headings, a vote being taken at each stage. In the first three stages, the Committee considers the diagnosis and has to satisfy itself that a correct diagnosis has been made and proven by the production of the results of full physical examination, laboratory investigations, x-ray studies and endoscopy and biopsy where applicable. Failure at this stage is commonly because of inadequate investigation or missing documents. At the next two stages, the Commission must be satisfied that the disease was organic and serious without any significant degree of psychological overlay.

Next it must make sure that the natural history of the disease precludes the possibility of spontaneous remission. The medical treatment given cannot have affected the cure. Cases ruled out here are those about which there cannot be any certainty that the treatment has not been effective. For example, a course of cytotoxic drugs would lead to the case being rejected even where the likelihood of success was small. Then the evidence that the patient has indeed been cured is scrutinized and the Committee must be satisfied that both objective and subjective symptoms have disappeared and that investigations are normal. The suddenness and completeness of the cure are considered together with any sequelae. Finally, the adequacy of the length of follow-up is considered. After this detailed study, the question, ‘Does the cure of this person constitute a phenomenon which is contrary to the observations and expectations of medical knowledge and scientifically inexplicable?’ is put. A simple majority carries the case one way or the other. (quoted in O’Regan, 1991, p. 50)

The real miracle of all this, I suppose, is that *sixty-four cases* have actually survived such careful scrutiny by the Commission to be officially declared “miracles.” If miracles do in fact occur, then what does this tell us about the structure of reality that permits such events to exist in the first place? What implications does this have for the assumptions of a materialistic and reductionistic science that has little room in its webwork of beliefs to allow for even the possibility of miracles to occur? As James Hansen, in his 1982 *New Scientist* article titled: “Can Science Allow Miracles?” put it: “The genuine possibility of divine intervention as an unknown variable knocks the whole house of cards to pieces” (quoted in O’Regan, 1991, p. 51).

Mind and brain may be connected but they are not the same thing. Contemporary science encourages us to regard the mind and body, emotion and limbic system, intentional rationality and neocortex, joy and dopamine, dreams and serotonin, angst and acetylcholine, mysticism and brain waves as intimately connected (M-1 metaphysic). In its extremist form, science equates mind and brain regarding them as equivalent or identical. Mind-body medicine means brain-body medicine in those terms. Yet mind and brain possess some profound differences that prevent either from being reduced, without remainder, to the other. Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1997) in his book, *The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision for a World Gone Slightly Mad*, points out some of the ways in which mind and brain each have different phenomenology – they “look” quite different – and their study involves two very different approaches to how we understand the reality of life, mind, and consciousness.

- The only way you can see your brain as an object, for instance, is to cut open your skull and get a mirror, but you can see and experience your mind directly, immediately, and intimately. The brain may be “inside” your skull, but you are still dealing with the “inside” of exterior reality, with another level of outsideness (its surface structure). The greater “withiness” of the mind (its deep structure) would not be found any place inside its brain. Our closest point to this withiness is our own consciousness.

- Your lived experience, thoughts, images, symbols, feelings, impulses (i.e., your mind) does not “look” like a big, crumpled gray and white grapefruit (your brain). The mind is what our consciousness looks like from within (from the inside), whereas the brain is simply what it looks like from without (from the outside) and they don’t look the same at all. The brain is the mind in camouflage – the mind in biological, chemical and electrical clothing – so to speak.
- Thoughts do not take up physical space. Physical instruments can probe the brain, but physical instruments cannot probe the mind. Physical instruments cannot even find the mind. Thoughts are not like neurons that you can pile one upon the other. They do not have shape that you can see or size you can measure or mass you can weigh like you can a specimen of brain tissue. As C.G. Jung (1960) put it: “Psychic contents are nonspatial except in the particular realm of sensation. What bulk can we ascribe to thoughts? Are they small, large, long, thin, heavy, fluid, straight, circular, or what? If we wished to form a living picture of a non-spatial, fourth-dimensional being, we could not do better than to take thought for our model” (p. 347-348).
- A brain physiologist can know every single thing about what every single atom and molecule of my brain is doing (e.g., measure neurotransmitter levels of serotonin and dopamine, ACH and GABA at various synapses, obtain EEG recordings and PET scans) but that will tell her or him nothing about the specific contents of a single thought in my mind. If you want to know what is going on in my mind and to find out what my thoughts are, you cannot find this out by peering into my brain. You have to talk to me and communicate with me.
- The experience of your mind cannot be translated directly into the data we know about the factual brain (we don’t experience the firings of neurons, we experience an image; the “shape” of an idea does not resemble the shape of a neuron), and no diagram of the brain can capture the intersection of person with flower that happens when we see, smell, touch, and feel a rose. All the accumulated facts obtained by learned science about how the ear functions do not and cannot add up to the direct sense encounter of one person with a piece of music. Moreover, it is the direct knowledge of your mind that must come first; otherwise, the “facts” about the brain or the rose or the music will have little meaning without that initial encounter of experience.

The mind and brain, in other words, are two carefully integrated and balanced phases of our actuality in space and time but they are not the same thing. If you are depressed because you lack purpose or meaning in your life, stocking your brain to the hilt with serotonin or dopamine will not do a thing to develop that purpose or meaning. Phenomenologically and methodologically, mind and brain are quite different. As physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998) in his book *Belief in God in an Age of Science* put it:

The poverty of an objectivist account is made only too clear when we consider the mystery of music. From a scientific point of view, it is nothing but vibrations in the air, impinging on the eardrums and stimulating neural currents in the brain. How does it come about that this banal sequence of temporal activity has the power to speak to our hearts of an eternal beauty? The whole range of subjective experience, from perceiving a patch of pink, to being enthralled by a performance of the Mass in B minor, and on to the mystic’s encounter with the ineffable reality of the One, all these truly human experiences are at the center of our encounter with reality and they are not to be dismissed as epiphenomenal froth on the surface of a universe whose true nature is impersonal and lifeless. (pp. 18-19)

TV set/program analogy. The M-1 metaphysical judgment that consciousness is nothing but an epiphenomenal by-product of a mechanistic brain is certainly a reasonable hypothesis given the mass of data and observations from clinical and experimental neurology and psychiatry that indicate that traumas, tumors, and infections in the specific areas of the brain can result in distinct and characteristic changes in various

aspects of consciousness and physiological processes (see, for example, Damasio, 1994). These data and observations, however, can be interpreted in an entirely different way than is done by materialistic science. Transpersonal psychologist Stanislav Grof (1985) in his book, *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death and Transcendence in Psychotherapy*, illustrates this by the simple example of a television set.

The quality of the picture and sound is critically dependent on proper functioning of all components, and malfunction or destruction of some of them will create very specific distortions. A television mechanic can identify the malfunctioning component on the basis of the nature of the distortion and correct the problem by replacing or repairing the hardware in question. None of us would see this as a scientific proof that the program must therefore be generated in the television set, since television is a man-made system and its functioning is well known. Yet, this is precisely the kind of conclusion mechanistic science has drawn in regard to brain and consciousness. (p. 22)

Biologist Rupert Sheldrake (1990), in his book, *The Rebirth of Nature: The Greening of Science and God*, builds on Grof's example of a TV set to explain scientists' recurrent failures to find memory traces in healthy brains, in damaged brain tissue, and in genetic mutation.

A search inside your TV set for traces of the programmes you watched last week would be doomed to failure for the same reason: the set tunes into TV transmissions, but does not store them (p. 93)... [Moreover] damage to some parts of the circuitry can lead to loss or distortion of pictures; damage to other parts can make the set lose the ability to produce sounds; damage to the tuning circuit can lead to loss of the ability to receive one or more channels. But this does not prove that the pictures, sounds and entire programmes are stored inside the damage components (p. 94)... Genetic mutations can affect this tuning process, and the ability of the organism to develop...just as changes in condensers or other components of a TV set can affect its tuning to particular channels, or affect the reception of programmes – the sounds or pictures may be distorted, for example. But just because mutant components can affect the picture and sounds produced by the TV receiver, this does not prove that the TV programmes are programmed by the set's components and generated inside the set. No more does the fact that genetic changes can affect the form and behavior of organisms prove that their form and behavior are programmed by the genes (p. 90).

In other terms, “the information is knit into the genes and chromosomes, but it exists apart, and the physical structures merely represent the carriers of information” (Roberts, 1977a, p. 190).

Using as an example one of my favorite television programs, *Star Trek*, and using Aristotle's terms of causality, one could say that modern science may be able to tell us something about the “material” cause of the *Star Trek* images I see on the TV screen (i.e., the television tube) and the “efficient” cause of those TV images (i.e., the electric currents and voltages, the incoming electromagnetic signals), but modern science can say next to nothing about their “formal” cause (i.e., the program concepts in the mind of Gene Roddenberry) and the “final” cause (i.e., the ultimate purpose of expanding the imagination of its viewers, motivating them to face and overcome their problems and better their world) from a simple examination of the hardware contained in the TV set.

Word/thought analogy. Another way to conceive of the relationship between brain (surface structure) and mind (deep structure) is by looking at the analogous relationship that exists between spoken or written words (surface structure) and the thought or experience (deep structure) they seek to convey. Words are used to tell of an experience, but they are not the experience that they attempt to describe. The same applies, of course, when we read a newspaper and when we speak to another person. The actual words convey information, feelings or thoughts. Obviously the thoughts or feelings, and the words are not the same thing. As you read the words in this essay, for example, you realize that the information that you are receiving is not an attribute of the letters of the words themselves. We take it for granted without even thinking of it that the symbols (i.e., the letters) are not the reality (i.e., the information or thoughts) that they

attempt to convey. The letters upon this page have the reality of only ink and paper, black marks on a white field. The letters upon the page are symbols that have agreed upon meanings connected with them. The true information is not in the written letters or words any more than the thought is in the spoken sounds or words. The information they convey is invisible. The printed line or spoken word does not contain information – it transmits information. The words are not the information, only the verbal carriers of it. Where is the information, then, that is being transmitted, if it is not contained within the letters or the words written upon this page (or in the sounds of the spoken word)? The letters and words transmit information that resides within *the self*. Likewise, just as a printed page does not contain information but transmits information, perhaps the brain does not contain the mind but transmits the mind.

Body illusions. Our identity is not contained in our bodies, any more than mind is contained in our brain or thought and emotion are contained in the physically written and spoken word used to express them. If we consider the spectacular framework of our body from the physical standpoint alone we can see how this is true. Physician Larry Dossey (1991), in his book *Meaning and Medicine: A Doctor's Tales of Breakthrough and Healing*, discusses several examples of what he calls “body illusions” to point out how inaccurate our everyday, ordinary Newtonian assumptions about the nature of matter as containers of consciousness really are. We perceive our bodies as objects, with bulk and mass, composed of blood and bone. We experience it as solid and stable and individual as we perceive all other physical matter with our physical senses. Our bodies, however, also exist in other terms than we normally suppose.

The physical body that we perceive as so *solid* is, at another order to existence, not solid at all. The more matter is explored, the more we discover that “while the body does have a certain mass...it is almost totally thin air. Almost all the mass in the atoms of the body is concentrated in the nuclei. All the rest of the atom is emptiness, except for a few electrons which are separated from the nucleus by vast reaches of space” (Dossey, 1991, p. 107). Moreover, there is constant commotion and activity going on as the atoms within your body spin. The flesh that seems so solid turns out to be composed of swiftly moving particles – often orbiting each other – in which great exchanges of energy occur. Within our body light, sound, and electromagnetic *energy* takes on specific shape in the form of organs, cells, molecules, atoms, and electrons – each less physical than the last, each combining into structures and patterns to form matter, giving strength and vitality to the physical form that we recognize as our bodies.

The physical body that we perceive as so *stable* is also an illusion of perception. “Your body at this instant is not the body you had when you started reading this [essay], and it will not be the body you have when you finish it. The body’s atoms are always being replaced in an invisible stream. Each year, 98% of the 10^{28} atoms in the body are replaced; at the end of five years *all* are renewed, down to the very last one” (Dossey, 1991, p. 107). The atoms and molecules that compose our physical image, in other words, continually change during our existence in the physical field. It is interesting to speculate about the mechanism that makes possible the continual opening for the influx of new atoms and molecules into our physical body while we are alive, and why at physical death the possibility of this repairing type of atomic action closes down. I’d like to suppose that it is our *spirit or soul or inner self* that makes possible these openings for the influx of new material in the physical form during our existence in physical reality, and that when it abdicates the body (as one may believe occurs at physical death), the possibility of this type of restoration of molecular action closes up?

The *individual* self that we consider as basically limited and enclosed inside our head or bounded within our skin is another illusion. Our skin, for example, that seems to act like a fence that keeps our identity safely inside our body and that separates ourselves from everything that is not ourselves, also *connects* us to the rest of the universe. Through our skin, which is itself alive, the self is extended out into the environment so that we can receive and draw in nutrients from air and sunlight without which we could not survive. Moreover, there is a constant physical interchange between the structure we call our body and the space outside it – chemical and electromagnetic interactions and basic exchanges of energy without which life as we know it would be impossible. Physically speaking, portions of ourselves leave our bodies

constantly and intermix with what seems to be not-self. That most intimate part of you, your breath, for example, constantly and necessarily (for to hold your breath is to die) flows out from what you are into the world that seems to be not you. Moreover, “bodies are incessantly mixing with other bodies through the endless shuttle of atoms just mentioned. ...Each breath we take has millions of molecules breathed recently by each and every one of the five million people on earth. And the molecules have been breathed not just by people, but *any* living thing that breathes – cows, horses, snakes, spiders, birds, bees, and so forth. These molecules actually become the stuff of the body” (Dossey, 1991, p. 108). We eat portions of the universe in the form of plants and animals and make them a part of ourselves, being used by our bodies, and then returned to the earth to be used again. From the physical standpoint alone, then, the self is composed of all these alien unselflike elements. In other words, the self is not basically limited by the body; we could just as easily say that the self is extended by the body, connecting us with the rest of the universe.

Let us now turn our attention to examples of phenomena from three other areas – psychophysiology, multiple-personality, and trance-channeling – that considers further the scientifically interesting question of whether there might be more to discover about the story concerning the relationship between mind and body than has been told by materialistic, reductionist, mechanistic science (see Cardena, Lynn, & Krippner, 2000, for an empirically grounded survey of other examples of “anomalous” phenomena).

Example from psychophysiological studies. One mind-boggling example of anomalous research in the area of psychophysiology is found in the work of British neurologist John Lorbor who has studied children with hydrocephalus (water on the brain) – a condition in which an abnormal build-up of cerebrospinal fluid occurs in the brain. As a result of this unfortunate condition, children no longer possess an entire cerebral cortex (the portion of the brain believed to be the seat of consciousness). In extreme cases, the skull may be lined with only a thin layer of cells a millimeter or so thick with the rest of the cranium being filled with cerebrospinal fluid as documented by non-invasive brain-scanning techniques such as the CAT scan. What is relevant to our discussion here is the finding that, despite the absence of “virtually no brain” among some of Dr. Lorbor’s patients, the mental development of the children appeared normal (Lewin, 1980). According to Michael Talbot (1986), in his book, *Beyond the Quantum: How the Secrets of the New Physics are Bridging the Chasm between Science and Faith*,

Lorbor has since gone on to discover numerous other individuals who function normally but possess no brain. For example, in a article published in *Science* in 1980, science writer Roger Lewin reported that at the Children’s Hospital in Sheffield, Lorbor has done more than 600 such scans on patients with hydrocephalus. In the study, he divided the patients into four groups: those with nearly normal brains, those with cerebrospinal fluid filling 50 to 70 percent of the cranium; those in which it fills 70 to 90 percent; and the most severe group, those in which cerebrospinal fluid fills 95 percent of the cranium. In this last group, which comprised just less than 10 percent of the study, half of the individuals were severely mentally disabled, but the remaining half possessed IQ’s greater than 100 (pp. 87-88).

What could possibly explain such a phenomenon? Perhaps our mind and our consciousness, and everything that we have come to identify as our “Self” is not as much a result of brain state activity as we think or have been taught to believe. Perhaps the brain does not contain the mind. Perhaps the mind contains the brain. Perhaps consciousness is not limited within the skull but circulates throughout the entire body.

Example from multiple-personality studies. The psychiatric disturbance of multiple-personality disorder (MPD) represents a third category of phenomena that raises fundamental questions about the actual relation of mind to body and body to mind and the assumption that form (i.e. brain/body) creates consciousness (i.e., mind/psyche). The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* identifies three diagnostic criteria for MPD: (1) the existence within an individual of two (or more) distinct personalities, each of which is on control of the body at different times; (2) the personality that is dominant determines ongoing behavior; and (3) each personality is complex and has its own unique history, behavior

patterns, and social relationships. Certain phenomena characteristic of this disorder seems best explained by the alternative hypothesis that consciousness creates form, and not the other way around. For instance, according to Damgaard (1987):

One of the hallmark research findings in MPD ego state experiments is the discovery that different states vary in regard to internal self perception (physical appearance, age, voice quality, etc.) as well as external physical characteristics, such as visual acuity, EEG patterns, allergies, drug sensitivities, skills, habits, vocabulary, taste discrimination, and performance on IQ and projective tests [Greaves, 1980]. In the same physical body an adult ego state who smokes, wears glasses, is right-handed, good at math, allergic to sulfur, with a normal IQ can exist alongside a child ego state who has never smoked, has 20/20 vision, is left-handed, paints, has no medication allergies, and scores in the 130s on the same IQ test. (p. 128)

These phenomena of multiple-personality are suggestive of Willis Harman's (1998) M-3 Transcendental Monism metaphysic inasmuch as we have evidence here of mind (and consciousness) creating different manifestations of body (and matter) quickly and at will, as different ego states emerge, shift, and change. Perhaps we have here one glimpse of how spirit creates matter.

Example from trance-channeling studies. A fourth example of phenomenon that is relevant to the topic under discussion is the curious case of the trance-channeled writings of Seth-Jane Roberts. Here we have a mass of writings consisting of complex, discursive, internally consistent, and highly rational narratives produced by a woman named Jane Roberts in an animated, light trance state of consciousness (with characteristic dissociation, amnesia, and *excursus* of the ego) while speaking for an entity that calls himself "Seth." Seth, who always claimed independent and discarnate status, emerged initially through the auspices of the Ouija board in December 1963 and continued to speak through Jane Roberts until her death in September 1984. Seth speaks about himself in the following way:

You may call me whatever you choose. I call myself Seth. It fits the me of me, the personality more clearly approximating the whole self I am, or am trying to be (Roberts, 1970, p. 17). ...I have been conscious before your earth was formed (Roberts, 1972, p. 6). ...In your dreams you have been where I am (Roberts, 1970, p. 2). ...My communications come through Rubert's [Seth's name for Jane] subconscious. But as a fish swims through water, as the fish is not the water, I am not Rubert's subconscious. ...Rubert assembles me or allows me to assemble myself in way that will appear recognizable to you, but regardless of this, I exist in an independent manner (Roberts, 1970, p. 54). ...What I am is difficult to explain because of the limits set not only by your knowledge but by the method of our communication (Roberts, 1966, pp. 221-222). ...You cannot understand what I am unless you understand the nature of personality and the characteristics of consciousness (Roberts, 1972, p. 4). ...I am simply an energy essence personality, no longer materialized in physical form. Personality and identity are not dependent upon physical form. It is only because you think they are that you find this sort of performance so strange. ...You do not suddenly acquire a 'spirit' at death. You are one, now (Roberts, 1970, pp. 210-211). ...You are presently focused entirely within physical reality, wondering perhaps what else if anything there may be outside. I am outside, returning momentarily to a dimension that I know and loved (Roberts, 1972, pp. 10-11). My mission is to remind you of the incredible power within your own being, and to encourage you to recognize and use it (Roberts, 1974, p. 152). If I succeed in convincing you of my reality as a separate personality, I will have done exceedingly well (Roberts, 1970, p. 54). I speak, myself, for those portions of *your* being that already understand. My voice rises from the strata of the psyche in which you also have your experience. Listen, therefore, to your own knowing. (Roberts, 1977, p. 24)

Jane as Seth has dictated a wealth of information on topics ranging from art to zoology, expressing knowledge of facts not published in any book on subjects not consciously known to her. The dictated material could be laid aside sometimes for weeks and months at a time and then resumed without difficulty

or review, with no period of fumbling and no declension in quality, never with a contradiction or inconsistency, never out of character and rarely with revision. A complete record of what occurred during the Seth-Jane Roberts trance sessions has been recorded by her husband, Robert Butts, and other first-hand witnesses (Butts, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 1999b; Roberts, 1966, 1970, 1972, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977a, 1977b, 1978, 1979, 1981a, 1981b 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1995, 1997; Watkins, 1980, 1981). This record, collectively known as the *Seth Material*, is presented with sufficient noteworthy candor to offer the interested reader excellent evidential material and a good outer history of the case. The original transcripts of all trance sessions are on file and available for review in the Sterling Memorial Archives at Yale University to anyone interested in studying the Seth phenomenon in more detail.

The challenge for scientific psychology is to explain how Jane Roberts could suddenly possess and exhibit an ability to compose philosophic, scientific, and psychological material of a very high order of sophistication and intellectual integrity with no previous study or instruction. The problem is that the causative factors of past history, education, and environment that psychologists are accustomed to look for in cases of multiple personality disorder cannot be found (Hughes, 1992). There is no trace of abnormal tendencies or coercion on the part of Seth, no evidence of excessive emotionalism or superiority complex, no smugness or sarcasm, no hatred or prejudices, no vulgarity or tantrums, no compulsive ideation or obsessive acting out in response to stress or fatigue. Dr. Eugene Barnard of North Carolina State University, after an extended face-to-face conversation with Seth, made the following observation:

The best summary description I can give you of that evening is that it was for me a delightful conversation with a personality or intelligence or what have you, whose wit, intellect, and reservoir of knowledge far exceeded my own. ...In any sense in which a psychologist of the Western scientific tradition would understand the phrase, I do not believe that Jane Roberts and Seth are the same person, or the same personality, or different facets of the same personality. (Roberts, 1970, p. 101)

Jane as Seth could also apparently manifest clairvoyant and telepathic abilities. Reaching into the minds of strangers present and improvising on themes intimately related to them, Jane as Seth could demonstrate penetrating psychological insight that pinpointed an individual's character, abilities, and liabilities as only a most accomplished psychologist might (see for example, Roberts, 1974, pp. 122-132, 154-157; Butts, 1999a, pp. 341-347).

The *Seth Material* ostensibly rises from dimensions of psychological activity beyond the ego of Jane Roberts. The Seth personality evidently draws its energy and derives its power to act from unconscious sources that are arguably transpersonal in nature. Logically, either Seth is a subconscious production of Jane Roberts's own psyche or Seth is who he says he is – an “energy personality essence” no longer focused in physical reality (Butts, 1997a, p. 327). In either case, as concluded in an earlier investigation of the precedent-setting Patience Worth phenomenon of 1913-1938,

Either our concept of what we call the subconscious mind must be radically altered so as to include potencies of which we hitherto have had no knowledge, or else some cause operating through, but not originating in, the subconscious of [Jane Roberts] must be acknowledged. (Prince, 1926, p. 8)

The hypothetical possibility that a personality can exist independent of a physical body (as Seth claims) presents a scientific question-mark that merits serious consideration and must rank as an event of the highest theoretical significance, for it would vindicate the Catholic belief in the survival of bodily death. According to Seth-Jane Roberts (1970):

Physical life is not the rule. Identity and consciousness existed long before your earth was formed. You see physical bodies and suppose that any personality must appear in physical terms. Consciousness is the force behind matter, and it forms other realities besides the physical one. It is only because your own viewpoint is presently so limited that it seems to you that physical reality is

the rule and mode of existence. The source and power of your present consciousness has never been physical, and where I am, many are not even aware that such a physical system exists. (pp. 228-229)

Consciousness creates form, and not the other way around. What I am attempting to show with these examples of “anomalous” experience and behavior is that empirical evidence exists that permit us to reasonably question whether there might be more to the story than has been told by scientific materialism, and to doubt that consciousness, mind, and spirit is only a by-product of the brain that can be explained away in a totally adequate way in terms cerebral anatomy and physiology. There may be more to discover here. As C.G. Jung (1960) put it:

No chain of reasoning can prove or disprove the existence of either mind or matter. Both these concepts...are mere symbols that stand for something unknown and unexplored. ... There is nothing to prevent the speculative intellect from treating the mind as a complicated biochemical phenomenon and at bottom a mere play of electrons, or on the other hand from regarding the unpredictable behavior of electrons as the sign of mental life even in them. ... Both views are equally logical, equally metaphysical, equally arbitrary and equally symbolic. From the point of view of epistemology it is just as admissible to derive [the brain from consciousness as consciousness from the brain]. (pp. 339-340).

Auguste Comte (1798-1857), French positivist and founder of sociology, rejected belief in a transcendent being, viewed religion as a necessary evil that contributed to social stability, and believed that empirical science was the only adequate source of knowledge. There is a paradox bearing this philosopher’s name that is based on the following question: “If mind is nothing more than brain, then how does the mind or consciousness both function and observe its function at the same time?” Comte’s paradox raises the issue: How is it possible for such a phenomenon to exist at all? Assuming that mind is brain, then the task set for psychological science is to find where meta-levels of cognition actually resides in the brain (what brain structure, substrate, cortices, association area). The problem of how mind or consciousness can both function and observe its function at the same time is based on the assumption of the primacy of physical reality over consciousness. The problem of Comte’s paradox does not exist for those who hypothesize the notion that consciousness is primary. In other words:

Both philosophers and neuroscientists have been plagued to determine where consciousness comes from and why it exists if we hold material reality to be primary (d’Aquili & Newberg, 1996). However, if consciousness is primary, then the problem dissolves because consciousness becomes the ground substance of being. If everything derives from consciousness, then there is no need to question how consciousness arises from material reality. Of course, one then has to determine how material reality derives from consciousness. (Newberg, Newberg, & d’Aquili, 1997, pp. 177-178)

If mind is not brain, then *what* and *where* is consciousness? Writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1970, 1972, 1986a) argues that it is a metaphysical, a scientific, and creative error to separate matter from consciousness in the way done by contemporary science. One thought could not leap from an infinite number of nerve endings, if matter itself was not initially alive with consciousness. Consciousness and matter and energy are one, in this view. Consciousness is the agent that initiates and directs the transformation of energy into matter and of matter into energy. Instead of the hypothesis that matter creates and is the underlying basis and foundation of consciousness, Jane Roberts asks us to consider alternative hypotheses: “that consciousness itself indeed creates matter, that consciousness is not imprisoned by matter but forms it, and that consciousness is not limited or bounded by time or space” (Butts, 1997, p. 312). As psychologists Andrew Newberg, Stephanie Newberg, and Eugene d’Aquili (1997) put it:

Science as a general study has based its entire methodology on the notion that material reality is primary. Although this is a reasonable starting point, it is by no means the only one. Philosophically, it might be plausible for consciousness to be primary over material reality. This has been the basis of

many Eastern traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. If this is the case, then one would have to derive material reality from consciousness rather than the other way around. Furthermore, it has been argued (although both sides remain in heated debate) that if consciousness is primary, it may have characteristics such as nonlocality and simultaneity. These are characteristics often reserved for quantum mechanics but may be applicable to consciousness as well [see, for example, Bohm, 1980; Zohar, 1990]. In fact, if consciousness is primary, then it would make sense that it has properties similar to those observed in material reality because material reality would have to be derived from consciousness. (p. 177)

Ms. Roberts and Drs. Newberg, Newberg, and d'Aquili are not assigning human traits to energy when asking us to consider the hypothesis (or should I say scientific heresy) that all energy contains consciousness, but are acknowledging that our human traits are the result of energy's characteristics. And if consciousness forms matter, and not the other way around, then thoughts would exist before the brain and after it. The brain would simply be the physical counterpart of the mind, the means by which the functions of the soul and intellect are connected with the physical body. Through the filtering and focusing characteristics and effects of the physical brain (Bergson, 1911), events that are of nonphysical origin become physically valid. And if thoughts exist before and after the brain, then so would the self who has them. Death would not be an end, but a transformation of consciousness, a means to its continuation, leading toward a spiritual rebirth and regeneration, and an opportunity for other kinds of experience and development (see, for example, Roberts, 1972).

Exploring the parapsychology of spirituality. As a person whose intent is to keep religion in connection with the rest of science I must admit that what we don't know about death is far, far greater than what we do know. This extreme uncertainty of human comprehension about what happens to the human psyche at the point of death and afterwards makes the materialistic proclamations of modern science appear jejune. As Jung (1960) put it: "Only a mind lacking in imagination can fail to admit its own insufficiency" regarding this question of life after death (p. 414). In an intriguing essay addressing this topic titled "The Soul and Death," Jung (1960) describes how the nature of the psyche reaches into obscurities far beyond the scope of ordinary, scientific understanding – that "no one knows what 'psyche' is, and one knows just as little how far into nature 'psyche' extends" (p. 409). Jung, however, does refer to a group of parapsychological phenomena – namely, spatial and temporal telepathy – that has the highest theoretical significance for him because it indicates the trans-spatial and trans-temporal nature of the psyche and "the hypothetical possibility that the psyche touches on a form of existence outside space and time" (p. 414). As Jung put it:

We may establish with reasonable certainty that an individual consciousness as it relates to ourselves has come to an end [at death]. But whether this means that the continuity of the psychic process is also interrupted remains doubtful, since. ...the unconscious psyche appears to possess qualities which throw a most peculiar light on its relation to space and time. I am thinking of those spatial and temporal telepathic phenomena which. ...prove that the space-time barrier can be annulled. ...Anyone who has the least knowledge of the parapsychological material which already exists and has been thoroughly verified will know that so-called telepathic phenomena are undeniable facts. An objective and critical survey of the available data would establish that perception occurs as if in part there were no space, in part no time. ...This possible transcendence of space-time, for which it seems to me there is a good deal of evidence, is of such incalculable import that it should spur the spirit of research to the greatest effort. Our present development of consciousness is, however, so backward that in general we still lack the scientific and intellectual equipment for adequately evaluating the facts of telepathy so far as they have bearing on the nature of the psyche. I have referred to this group of phenomena merely to point out that the psyche's attachment to the brain, i.e., its space-time limitation, is no longer as self-evident and incontrovertible as we have hitherto been led to believe. ...Out of respect for the psychological fact that 'telepathic' perceptions occur, anyone should draw the conclusion that the psyche, in its deepest reaches, participates in a form of existence beyond

space and time, and thus partakes of what is inadequately and symbolically described as ‘eternity.’ (pp. 412-414)

There is a host of extraordinary and unusual phenomena (other than telepathy) that are suggestive of life after death (Becker, 1993; Doore, 1990; Hart, 1959; Kastenbaum, 1984; Spong, 1987; Tart, 1997) which have been laboriously and seriously investigated, including studies of:

- apparitions (Moody, 1993; F.W.H. Myers, 1903/1954)
- out-of-body experiences (Buhlman, 1996; Monroe, 1985)
- channeling (mediumship) and messages ostensibly from the dead (Hastings, 1981; Klimo, 1987)
- reincarnation memories (Head & Cranston, 1977; Stevenson, 1987; Weiss, 1988; Woolger, 1987)
- near-death experiences (Ring, 1982, 1984; Sabom, 1982)
- psi phenomena of clairvoyance and psychokinesis (Broughton, 1991; Irwin, 1989; Jahn & Dunne, 1987; Krippner, 1982, 1984)

I refer to this group of phenomenon because I believe that parapsychology has substantial implications for religion, and provides a necessary interface between science and religion. In my opinion, psychical research and parapsychology provide core empirical grounds for believing in and validating some of the fundamental claims of many spiritual traditions for spiritual healing (psychokinesis), intercessionary prayer (telepathy), and prophecy (precognition).

“As people who have been taught to respect science, we have to know that we have very sound scientific data, well over 1,300 experiments that show that *the human mind can do things that a human brain can’t conceivably do*” (Tart, 1997, p. 177). There are hundreds of published, high quality, laboratory research projects that have validated the reality of several psychic abilities (called *psi*), notably telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis (for empirical reviews, see Bem & Honorton, 1994; Braude, 1997; Edge, Morris, Palmer, & Rush, 1986; Krippner, 1977, 1978, 1982, 1984, 1987, 1990; Shapin & Coly, 1993; Wolman, 1977). The experimental evidence for psi phenomena meets the criteria generally demanded for other psychological phenomenon. The methodology used by parapsychologists has received the implicit approval of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, which admitted the Parapsychological Association as an affiliate organization in 1969. There is no field within psychology whose experimental methodology is so highly scrutinized as parapsychology. The level and quality of replicability entailed in paranormal phenomenon is equal to that entailed in many officially acceptable phenomena. There are many other phenomena in nature, particularly within the social and behavioral sciences that are not 100% repeatable under experimental circumstances, for example. Moreover, there is sufficient conceptual repeatability in psi experiments to provide the foundations for a viable research field as indicated by the fact that “parapsychology” is indexed monthly in the American Psychological Association’s *Psychological Abstracts*. The relative frequency of experiments yielding statistically significant results indicates there is something here that warrants explaining. Based on the cumulative record, very few scholars who are conversant with the literature of parapsychology have maintained that the existence of psi has not been established.

Transpersonal psychologist Charles Tart (1997) in his provocative book, *Body/Mind/Spirit: Exploring the parapsychology of spirituality*, presents “a detailed exploration of the spiritual implications that can be drawn from modern scientific research in parapsychology” (p. 23). Parapsychology, of all the sciences, provides a bridge that joins the psychological and the scientific with the spiritual. In a manner of speaking, parapsychology tries to address the elements of the soul that religion refuses to examine. Philosopher Michael Grosso, in an essay titled “The Parapsychology of God,” asserts that “parapsychology is an area of research that, by breaking the ontological barrier of materialism and validating the reality of a transcendent psi factor in nature, vindicates, *in a general way*, the human spiritual quest by grounding it in a

dimension of objective experience” (quoted in Tart, 1997, p. 116). Parapsychologist William Braud, in an essay titled, “Parapsychology and Spirituality: Implications and Intimations” writes:

Parapsychological findings can be useful to those on spiritual paths as they can provide a certain degree of confidence and trust that at least some of the processes and concepts encountered are ‘real’ in the more traditional sense and are not delusions, projections, or misinterpretations. They also can serve to remind us that we are not alone in having exceptional experiences; such experiences are normal, natural, and remarkably widespread. (quoted in Tart, 1997, p. 150)

If telepathy, precognition, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis have an empirical reality, then perhaps by implication an empirical reality can be established for some aspects of the epistemology and ontology of our Christian and non-Christian spiritual traditions. This attempt to justify the spiritual through scientific parapsychology, however, can only be partial (as our exposition of epistemological pluralism and examination of the limitations of new “paradigm” approaches in science have shown) for there is much about spirituality that is beyond the reach of the eye of flesh and the eye of reason and modern science as currently conceived.

Resistance to the findings of parapsychology. I don’t know what the reader may think of paranormal phenomena that, as we all know, are much easier to ignore or ridicule than to explain. In this regard, the modern scientific establishment in general, with a few praiseworthy exceptions, has paid little attention to parapsychological findings illustrating the degree to which scientific materialism and scientism permeates the scientific enterprise. Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, & Bem (1993) in the eleventh edition of the prestigious Hilgard’s Introduction to Psychology textbook note:

A number of carefully controlled studies (called *ganzfeld experiments*) have been conducted to evaluate ESP via telepathy. These experiments are subject to criticism (replicability, inadequate controls, file-drawer problems). However, a careful analysis of the results does not preclude the possibility of a real ESP effect. Nevertheless, most psychologists remain skeptical about ESP and psi in general, in part because so many past instances of extraordinary claims turned out to be based on flawed experimental procedures, faulty inferences, or even on fraud and deception. (p. 249)

The evidence is not yet strong enough for those scholars whose philosophy of scientific materialism has no place for the existence of such phenomenon, and who can honestly say that “they have not seen anything to convince them” because they have not bothered to seriously look at the evidence in the first place (after all, why waste time investigating the reality of a fiction or examining something that is patently nonsense anyways!) The reasons why many scientists resist taking a serious look at the evidence from parapsychology are complex (e.g., ignorance, obstinate close-mindedness, unacknowledged fears of the paranormal, primal conflict repression, and so forth) (see, for example, Eisenbud, 1970, 1982, 1983). I certainly agree with the outspoken critics of parapsychology that it has been a field in which the sources of deception are extremely numerous (e.g., see, for example, Randi, 1987). But I believe with William James that “there is no source of deception in the investigation of nature which can compare with a fixed belief that certain kinds of phenomenon are *impossible*” (quoted in McDermott, 1968, p. 787).

If (and this is a big IF), if a person has indeed taken the time to seriously examine the evidence from parapsychology, then why might he or she continue to believe that “there is no credible evidence that [paranormal phenomenon] have any basis in fact” (e.g., Halpern, 1998)? Many critics of parapsychology argue how the results of a particular experiment *could* have been due to fraud and deceit but *do not establish evidence that any of the proposed scenarios actually took place*. For the skeptic it is sufficient that such scenarios *could* have occurred, not that they did. Doubters always find ways to deny whatever is accomplished. An individual’s acceptance of the evidence seems to be strongly influenced by their prior metaphysical judgments about the nature of reality and philosophic beliefs about the possibility paranormal phenomenon. As mentioned previously in our discussion of human cognitive processes, while splendid and

unique, they cause us to organize and interpret our perceptions through ideas and to acknowledge only those interpretations of phenomenon that serve to give those ideas validity. When skeptics view paranormal phenomenon, they do so through their own specialized theories and beliefs, and tend to see in the paranormal only what they are programmed or conditioned to see. They perceive in the phenomenon a pattern that fits into preconceived categories and schemata established by their prior knowledge – to be aware of certain characteristics within certain conditions – so that what is dissimilar or contradictory becomes psychologically invisible to them. Facts are proven by excluding what does not agree. The pattern that one perceives, however, is actually one that has been transposed upon the paranormal phenomenon, making the skeptic blind to many larger dimensions of the phenomenon, and preventing him or her from understanding the phenomenon as it really is. See, for example, psychologist Ronald Siegel's (1980) article titled "The Psychology of Life After Death" in which he notes superficial similarities between near-death visions and dissociative hallucinatory activity of the brain and concludes that both types of experiences are *nothing but* solipsistic fantasies.

This is why a certain degree of open-mindedness is essential if one is to examine the evidence from parapsychology for oneself in a truly unbiased manner. What is required is something similar to a phenomenological *epoche* (Ihde, 1979). This requires that we

suspend or step back from our ordinary ways of looking, to set aside our usual assumptions regarding things (p. 32). ... (and) that ordinary belief and taken-for-granted theory be suspended (p. 34). ...*Epoche* requires that looking precede judgment and that judgment of what is 'real' or 'most real' be suspended until all the evidence (or at least sufficient evidence) is in. ...Included are all phenomena of experience. Excluded are metaphysical and reality judgments. These are suspended. ...taking careful note of phenomena without either imposing something upon them or too soon concluding something about them (p. 36). ...Reality belief must be suspended in order to allow the full range of appearances to show themselves (p. 38).

Such "open-mindedness" on the part of traditional, orthodox, mainstream psychologists is difficult to obtain given the traditional attitude of scientific psychology toward anything hinting at the "supernatural" or "spiritual." Psychologist Deborah Coon (1992), in an article titled, "Testing the Limits of Sense and Science: American Experimental Psychologists Combat Spiritualism – 1880-1920," pointed out that

American psychologists faced great difficulty at the turn of the century as they tried to erect and maintain boundaries between their science and its 'pseudoscientific' counterparts – spiritualism and psychic research. The public solicited their opinions regarding spiritualism, and a few psychologists wanted to conduct serious investigation of spiritualistic and psychic phenomenon [notably the American Society Psychical Research co-founded by William James in 1885]. However, many psychologists believed that such investigation risked the scientific reputation of their infant discipline. Because they could not readily avoid the topic, some psychologists studied spiritualistic and psychic phenomena in order to prove them fraudulent or explain them via naturalistic causes, and others developed a new subdiscipline, the psychology of deception and belief. ...Psychologists used their battles with spiritualists to legitimize psychology as a science and create a new role for themselves as guardians of the scientific worldview. (p. 143)

Those whose job it is to defend the status quo cannot afford to rebel.

Nevertheless, spiritualistic and psychic phenomena are quite ancient. They have been expressed throughout history by many cultures and religions from the past, continuing into the present. The strength, vitality, and worth of such phenomena – including religious experiences and transpersonal concepts -- have been greatly undermined, however, by cultural distortions and negative ideas, religious superstition and fanaticism (see for example, skeptic Michael Shermer's (2000) insightful critique of the American religious scene in his book *How We Believe: The Search for God in an Age of Science*). One unfortunate consequence

of this history is that mainstream psychologists do not take contemporary religion, transpersonal psychology, or parapsychology seriously. Few psychology textbooks refer to transpersonal psychology as a “Fourth Force” or identify the psychology of religion as a subfield of study within the profession. The findings of parapsychology are almost never taught as a part of general undergraduate or graduate science education. Many of the ideas implied by transpersonal psychology, the psychology of religion, and parapsychology research run directly counter to much thought in contemporary science and are regarded as scientific error as far as mainstream orthodox psychology is concerned (Gray, 1991; Radner & Radner, 1982). From the viewpoint of traditional psychology, while transpersonal theory, world religions, and parapsychology findings may be theoretically fascinating and creatively valid, they are seen as dealing essentially with “non-information” that does not contain any statements about any kind of scientifically valid, hardbed reality (see for example, Ellis and Yeager, 1989; Neher, 1990; Shermer, 2000). This negative, skeptical attitude on the part of official, orthodox psychology toward transpersonal psychology, spirituality, and parapsychology is based, at least in part on mainstream psychology’s relatively narrow brand of science (scientism) and its artificial shrinking of what constitutes psychological reality (scientific materialism).

Psychology’s nearest corollary to the soul. It takes a certain moral courage in this age of scientific materialism and scientism to propose that consciousness creates form, that paranormal phenomena are real, and to put forward as a working hypothesis that

[Humans] have a soul; that that soul has substance, is of divine nature and therefore immortal; that there is a power inherent within it that builds up the body, sustains its life, heals its ills and enables the soul to live independently of the body; that there are incorporeal spirits with which the soul associates; and that beyond our empirical present there is a spiritual world from which the soul receives knowledge of spiritual things whose origins cannot be discovered in this visible world. (Jung, 1960, p. 341)

But the past 30 years of research and theory in transpersonal psychology serves to show that these ideas have not died out everywhere in psychology or become a mere fossil left over from pre-modern Christianity. As C.G. Jung (1960) put it in his essay, “Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology”:

If we keep this in mind, we can perhaps summon up courage to consider the possibility of a ‘psychology *with* a psyche’ – that is, a theory of the psyche ultimately based on the postulate of an autonomous, spiritual principle. We need not be alarmed at the unpopularity of such an undertaking, for to postulate ‘spirit’ is no more fantastic than to postulate ‘matter.’ Since we have literally no idea how the psychic can arise out of the physical, and yet cannot deny the reality of psychic events, we are free to frame our assumptions the other way about for once, and to suppose that the psyche arises from a spiritual principle which is as inaccessible to our understanding as matter. It will certainly not be a modern psychology, for to be modern is to deny such a possibility. (p. 344)

Such a psychology will have to be a “post-postmodern” psychology, or in even bolder terms, a “transmodern” psychology (Jones, 1994; O’Donohue, 1989). Transpersonal psychology comes closest to being the psychology with a soul.

In the interests of advancing my project to reconcile science and religion, let us explore in more detail the time-honored hypothesis of a psyche that is capable of existing independent of the body, of an autonomous spirit in-itself and for-itself whose existence is taken for granted, of the existence of a self-contained spiritual reality that is simultaneously a part of yet apart from physical reality. Does such an entity really exist? If so, in what form does it exist? Does it act, as well as exist? Since my intent in this essay is not to indulge in “metaphysics” but to keep religion in connection with the rest of science and to encourage my readers to examine this age-old notion of the soul in an unprejudiced way and test its empirical justification in their own experience, I will attempt to describe this entity (or “soul”, referring to the personal

and particular aspect of the spiritual dimension) in a way that scientific psychology may also recognize as real.

The conscious self and the subconscious are nowadays well-accredited psychological processes by many academic psychologists (e.g., in personality and cognitive psychology), and, if they are half way familiar with the history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry (see Ellenberger, 1970), psychologists acknowledge unconscious processes as well (variously called the “transmarginal field” by William James (1902/1936), “subliminal consciousness” by F.W.H. Myers (1976), the “superconscious” by Roberto Assagioli (1991), and the “cognitive unconscious” by John Kihlstrom (1987)). The exploration of the multiple and diverse phenomena that have their origin in psychological processes below the threshold of consciousness (e.g., sleep and dreams, hypnotism and trance states, hysterical neuroses and multiple personality, automatism of writing and speaking, demoniacal possession, conversion experiences and mystical ecstasy, genius and paranormal capacities) (e.g., see Taylor, 1984; Myers, 1976, 1961) reveals that

Each of us is in reality an abiding psychical entity far more extensive than he [or she] knows – an individuality which can never express itself completely through any corporeal manifestation. The Self manifests through the organism; but there is always some part of the Self unmanifest; and always, as it seems, some power of organic expression in abeyance or reserve. Much of the content of this larger background against which our conscious being stands out in relief is insignificant. ...But in it many of the performances of genius seem also to have their origin; and in our study of conversion, of mystical experiences, and of prayer, we have seen how striking a part invasions from this region play in the religious life. ...It is one of the peculiarities of invasions from the subconscious region to take on objective appearances, and to suggest to the Subject an external control. In the religious life the control is felt as ‘higher’; but since...it is primarily the higher faculties of our hidden mind which are controlling, the sense of union with the power beyond us is a sense of something, not merely apparently, but literally true. (James, 1902/1936, pp. 502-503)

Although the proponents and early practitioners of hypnosis often over dramatized their case, not only claiming cures but miracles, still the substantial work done in the nineteenth century by respected physician-scientists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, John Elliotson, James Esdaille, Theodore Flournoy, Pierre Janet, Ambroise Liebeault, and Charles Richet demonstrate two important points about this realm of transmarginal, subliminal consciousness: (a) the existence of a power with each individual, latent but appreciable, to better one’s own condition, heal one’s body, accelerate learning and insight, and (b) the susceptibility of this power to suggestion, either through structured hypnosis or sometimes by the person himself or herself through a kind of spontaneous self-suggestion (see for example, Ellenberger, 1970; Myers, 1976; Rossi & Cheek, 1994)

Starting with the literally and objectively true psychological fact of the subconscious continuation of our conscious self with a deeper and wider inner self, let me propose, as an hypothesis, that Myers’ (1976) “subliminal self,” James’s “subconscious self” (1902/1936), and Assagioli’s “transpersonal self” (Assagioli, 1965) be taken as psychology’s nearest corollaries to the soul. Myers, James, and Assagioli all begin with the hypothesis that each individual possesses an inner self of extraordinary creativity and organization. Its direction can be misread because its language is symbolic; but it is benign and of good intent. It is that portion of each person that simultaneously orders the intricate involuntary systems of the body, that makes available superior inner knowledge in dreams and states of creative inspiration, and responds to inner patterns of development that act as stimulators for the fulfillment the individual’s finest abilities. Theories concerning the subliminal self may also stress the interdependence of individual minds (as in Jung’s collective unconscious) and the existence of precognitive abilities – two attributes that fit in quite well with Einsteinian physics and relative time. It is the Self that forms the two-fold screen of mind and brain, and, personified, it probably is the source of religion’s guardian angels (Godwin, 1990). Transpersonal psychologist Thomas Yeomans (1992), in a monograph titled, *Spiritual Psychology: An Introduction*, attempts to articulate one vision and version of this inner self or “soul”:

The soul has no particular qualities, or attributes, but rather is the context for all of our attributes and characteristics. It holds and integrates the different dimensions of our experience, and can be seen as that capacity to hold simultaneously any polarity, or contradiction, in our experience. ...The soul is the source of Life within us, much like the sun is to the earth, and its energies pervade all dimensions and aspects of our lives. In this respect, paradoxically, there is no place the soul is not. Its being is the context that holds the particulars of a life, and informs the dynamics of these particulars moment to moment and over time and space. (p. 13)

Let me further propose that such a notion of an inner, subliminal self provides the exact mediating term and threshold required to serve as a point of contact with science and traditional Christianity (see also, Assagioli, 1991; Vaughn, 1986). How far this doorway may carry us once we step through it and follow it into its remoter regions has been the subject of all the different world religions. My own hypothesis about the farther reaches and limits of this extension of human nature and personality builds upon William James's (1902/1936) conclusions presented at the end of his studies of the varieties of religious experience:

The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely 'understandable' world. Name it the mystical region, or the supernatural region, whichever you chose. So far as our ideal impulses originate in this region...we belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world. ...Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for it produces effects in this world. When we commune with it, work is actually done upon our finite personality. ...But that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal. God is the natural appellation, for us Christians at least, for the supreme reality, so I will call this higher part of the universe by the name of God. We and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled. ...God is real since he produces real effects. (pp. 506-507)

We dwell, in other words, in a physical reality that we can see, hear, smell, taste and touch using our ordinary, supraliminal consciousness yet we also dwell simultaneously in "unknown" non-physical realities beneath and beyond and within the physical reality that we know. Writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1972) reminds us:

As the present life of any individual rises from hidden dimensions beyond those easily accessible in physical terms, and as it draws its energy and power to act from unconscious sources, so does the present physical universe as you know it rise from other dimensions. So does it have its source, and derive its energy from deeper realities. Reality is far more diverse, far richer and unutterable than you can *presently* suppose or comprehend. (pp. 237-238)

On this view, the human personality is multidimensional (Roberts, 1972, 1977, 1979a), and until we understand the multidimensional reality of human personality, we will not have any adequate understanding of the abilities that lie within each individual or of the eternal validity of the soul. As William James (1902/1936) put it:

The whole drift of my education goes to persuade me that the world of our present consciousness is only one out of many worlds of consciousness that exist, and that those other worlds must contain experiences which have a meaning for our life also; and that although in the main their experiences and those of this world keep discrete, yet the two become continuous at certain points, and higher energies filter in (p. 509). ...No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded. How to regard them is the question – for they are so discontinuous with ordinary consciousness. ...At any rate, they forbid a premature closing of our accounts of reality. (p. 379)

Let us now turn our attention to the final matter for discussion in this essay: To find a way to have Christian spirituality able to stand up to scientific authority (scientism) by announcing its own methods and modes of knowing, data and evidence, confirmations and verifications in a way that satisfies the essence of both religious and scientific claims.

Point of Contact: Genuine Knowledge of God Must Be Grounded in Experience

Scientists-theologians are increasingly recognizing the need “to articulate Christian beliefs in ways that seem natural and congenial to the scientific mind” (Polkinghorne., 1998, p. 84; see also Barbour, 1990; Peacocke, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1994).

We look for evidence for what we are asked to believe. Bottom-up thinkers proceed from the basement of phenomena to the superstructure of theory. Top-down thinkers somehow seem to start at the tenth floor and to know from the start what are the general principles that should control the answers to the enquiry. Many theologians appear to the scientists to be of the top-down variety. As they discourse on the immanent Trinity [God in the divine nature itself], one wonders how they know what they are claiming. Bottom-up thinkers prefer to stick with the economic Trinity [God’s self-manifestation to creation]. Their method is *analogia entis* rather than *analogia fidei*, the appeal to experience and reason rather than to a superior source of knowledge. (pp. 84-85)

Christianity needs to engage in more “bottom-up” (inductive) thinking instead of “top-down” (deductive) thinking. Christianity needs to empirically anchor its claims more thoroughly in direct spiritual experience if it is to give an adequate response to the contemporary struggle to believe.

Two types of empiricism. Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1983/1990) in his book *Eye to Eye: The Quest for the New Paradigm* points out that it is a fallacy to think that the “empiricism” of the scientific method should refer narrowly to sensory experience alone. Sensory experience is only one of several different but equally legitimate types of empiricism. Webster’s (Merriam, 1961) *New Collegiate Dictionary*, for instance, defines the noun “empiric” (derived from the Greek, *empiricus*, meaning “experienced”) as “one who relies upon practical experience.” The adjective “empirical” is defined as “depending on experience or observation alone...pertaining to or founded upon, experiment or experience.” The noun “experience” is defined as “The actual living through an event or events; ...hence, the effect upon the judgment or feelings produced by personal and direct impressions.” “Empiricism,” in other words, in its broadest sense means *experiential* and includes direct, interior, immediate, psychological experience in general.

Once we understand that “empirical” in the broadest sense does not have to be confined to sensory experience alone, then it will become possible to accept the partial truth of *scientism* – that “genuine knowledge must be ultimately grounded in experience, in data, in evidence” – without failing to see that, in addition to sensory experience, there is (a) the psychological (mental) *experience* of logic, mathematics, semiotics, phenomenology, and hermeneutics and (b) the spiritual (psychic) *experience* of mysticism, cosmic consciousness, *satori*, *gnosis*, revelation, meditation, and that religion can disclose and produce genuine knowledge (“psychic” in the Jungian sense of pertaining to the “psyche” or the human soul). It will also be easier to understand how the spirit of scientific inquiry can be carried into the interior domain of spirituality to disclose and produce a science of spirituality.

Is a science of spiritual experience possible? Can there be a science of spiritual experience? Is it possible to have a science of Christianity? What would it look like? What would it reveal and could it be actually verified? Scientific method in its broadest sense can be defined as “a method of gaining knowledge whereby hypotheses are tested (instrumentally or experimentally) by reference to experience (‘data’) that is potentially public, or open to repetition (confirmation or refutation) by peers” (Wilber, 1985, p. 13).

“Science” in this general sense does not have to be confined to the sensory domain, but might include a science of psychological (mental) experience and a science of spiritual (psychic) experience.

Just as “empirical” and “sensory” are not the same things, so also “scientific” and “sensory” are not the same things. The dividing line between “scientific” and “non-scientific” is not between sensory and non-sensory, physical and metaphysical, but between “experientially testable” and “non-testable proof by authority.” If science and Christianity are to be integrated, then science, on the one hand, must recognize that its own method does not rest on narrow empiricism (sensory experience only) but on broad empiricism in the general sense (direct experience in general), and Christianity, on the other hand, must open its truth claims to direct verification – or rejection – by experiential evidence.

Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1957), in his treatise *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, proposed the possibility of what he called a “generalized empirical method” for the study of the data of consciousness.

It may be urged that empirical method, at least in its essential features, should be applicable to the data of consciousness no less than to the data of sense. ...We have followed the common view that empirical science is concerned with sensibly verifiable laws and expectations. If it is true that essentially the same method could be applied to the data of consciousness, then respect for ordinary usage would require that a method, which only in its essentials is the same, be named a generalized empirical method (p. 72). ...A generalized empirical method that stands to the data of consciousness as empirical method stands to the data of sense. ...As applied solely to the data of consciousness, it consists in determining patterns of intelligible relations that unite the data explanatorily. ...However, generalized method has to be able to deal, at least comprehensively, not only with the data within a single consciousness but also with the relations between different conscious subjects, between conscious subjects and their milieu or environment, and between consciousness and its neural basis. (p. 243-244)

Transpersonal psychologist, Ken Wilber (1990) identifies three key features in the scientific method that can be used to characterize the broad outline of a generalized empirical method that is just as applicable to the spiritual quest as it is to the physical and psychological domains of experience.

Step 1. Instrumental injunction. This first step of the spiritual quest and key feature of a generalized empirical method of spiritual experience refers to the set of instructions, procedures, exercises, activities, techniques, method, praxis, and experimental designs that are intended to produce a direct experience or apprehension of requisite data or evidence of spiritual Reality. It is always in the form: “If you want to *know* this, you must *do* this.” If you want to see a cell, you must look through a microscope. In order to understand Spanish, you need to learn the language. If you want to know the truth of the Central Limit theorem, then you must learn statistics. If you want to know enlightenment, you must practice meditation. If you want to know God, you must pray, have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and keep the commandments (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 62). Transpersonal psychologist Roger Walsh’s (1999) wonderful book, *Essential Spirituality: The Seven Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind*, for example, is filled with simple, powerful exercises aimed to produce a direct experience or apprehension of the holy and the sacred that exists both within and around us. The “instrumental injunction” (Wilber’s phrase) implies that for whatever type of knowledge (empirical, rational, spiritual), the appropriate “eye” must be trained until it is adequate (*adequatio*) to the illumination. Learning to read ushers us into a world that is not given to the eye of flesh all by itself. Learning Christian meditation or interior prayer leads to an apprehension by the eye of spirit that discloses that which cannot be perceived with the eye of flesh or the eye of reason alone.

What Jesus gave to his disciples was not a series of dogmatic beliefs but a series of practices or prescriptions: “Do this in remembrance of me,” “If anyone loves me, he will keep my commandments,” and so forth. The “do this” instruction often included specific types of contemplative prayer: If you want to *know* God, you must *do* this. These directions were aimed to reproduce in the apostles and disciples the spiritual

experiences or data of the founder – Jesus Christ in the case of Christianity, Buddha in the case of Buddhism, Mohammed in the case of Islam, and so forth. All the founders of the Christian tradition underwent a series of profound spiritual experiences and direct apprehensions of God (Jesus baptized in the river Jordan; Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration; Paul on the road to Damascus, for example). Christian contemplatives, mystics, and saints (e.g., St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, Lady Julian of Norwich, Meister Eckhart, St. Augustine, Catherine of Siena, Origen) and non-Christian contemplatives, mystics, and saints (e.g., Sri Ramakrishna who died in 1886, Ramana Maharshi who died in 1950, and Paramahansa Yogananda who died in 1952) serve as excellent examples of a science of spiritual experience. Such “spiritual practices” and data have been subsequently refined and polished through the centuries of the Church. Their great secret is that, with the eye of Spirit, Spirit can be seen.

Step 2. Direct apprehension. This second step of the spiritual quest and key feature of a generalized empirical method of spiritual experience refers to the direct insight, immediate experience or apprehension of data disclosed or evoked by the injunction. The injunction leads to an experience, apprehension, illumination, or a direct disclosing of data, and these data are a crucial ground of genuine knowledge. Transpersonal psychologist Ken Wilber (1985) presents a description of mystical consciousness based on his 25 years of practicing Eastern forms of meditation:

In the mystical consciousness, Reality is apprehended directly and immediately, meaning without any mediation, any symbolic elaboration, any conceptualization, or any abstractions; subject and object become one in a timeless and spaceless act that is beyond any and all forms of mediation.... contacting reality in its ‘suchness,’ its ‘isness,’ its ‘thatness,’ without any intermediaries; beyond words, symbols, names, thoughts, images. (p. 7)

Transpersonal psychologist Thomas Yeomans (1992), in a monograph titled, *Spiritual Psychology: An Introduction*, attempts to express his direct insight, immediate experience or apprehension of the “soul” as disclosed through the practice of the techniques and exercises of Psychosynthesis:

When touched directly, it [the soul] is experienced as a pure beingness that is connected as well to all other beings and to an experience of larger Life, Great Spirit, or God. ...Though there is no specific content to this experience, there is a profound aliveness and connectedness, a freedom from the fear of death, and acceptance of one’s life *as it is being lived in its uniqueness now*, and an infusion of joy and gratitude for Life as a whole. Sometimes the soul is experienced as that which gives meaning to life, or a sense of destiny and purpose. At other times it is experienced as that which guides and sustains a life. At still others it is experienced as that which goes beyond life and death, a principle of eternity and infinity that pervades and infuses mortal life. In still other traditions it is described as being no-thing, or emptiness, or a void, that which has no specific content, but which is in, and of, itself most alive and connected to all Life. And always it is seen as central and valued in human existence, sought for, discovered, and cultivated and then lived as fully as possible within the confines of ordinary daily existence. (pp. 13-14)

Evelyn Underhill’s (1911/1961) book, *Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness* and William James’s (1902/1936) classic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study of Human Nature* contain numerous descriptions of individuals’ encounter with the divine in its mode of immanence. Rudolf Otto’s (1923) book, *Idea of the Holy* describes individuals’ encounter with the divine in its transcendent mode. It is likely, however, that “for many ordinary believers, religious experience will be in a lower key, mediated through sacrament, prayer, silence, and obedience” (Polkinghorne, 1998, p. 119)

Step 3. Communal confirmation (or rejection). This third step of the spiritual quest and key feature of a generalized empirical method of spiritual experience refers to the checking of results (the data, the evidence) with others who have adequately completed or performed the injunction. This is the intersubjective realm of shared seeing and knowing, the process of consensually proving and validating

personal, interior knowledge. This implies that if other competent individuals faithfully repeat the injunction or experiment (“Practice interior prayer”), then they will experience roughly the same data (“Knowledge of God”). Of course, any particular individual’s apprehension may be mistaken, and therefore at every stage, she or he has recourse to checking and obtaining confirmation (or refutation) by others who are adequately trained in the injunction (e.g., checking one’s direct illumination with the spiritual director is like checking math problems with the teacher when one is first learning geometry). If a person refuses to train the particular “eye” then we are justified in disregarding that person’s opinions and excluding her or him from our vote as to communal proof (e.g., someone who refuses to learn Christian meditation cannot be allowed to vote on the truth of the Holy Spirit; someone who has not examined the *psi* literature first-hand is inadequate to form a reasonable judgment about it).

Some may object that spiritual knowledge is basically private and is not subject to verification. If that were so, then phenomenological accounts and self-reports could not be used as fundamental data in psychological experiments. The fact of the matter is that the technique of protocol analysis – or the use of the subject’s own verbal reports as data – is frequently used to probe the individual’s internal states and to gain verifiable information about the course, structure, and content of an individual’s cognitive processes in areas of psychology, like psychophysics, perception, attention and reaction time, conditioning and learning, remembering and forgetting, thinking and problem solving, intelligence and personality (see Ericsson & Simon, 1984, for an empirical review of the major issues surrounding the use and validity of verbal reports). Spiritual knowledge is no more “private” and incommunicable than mathematical knowledge (i.e., geometric theorems are public knowledge to trained mathematicians but not to non-mathematicians). Spiritual knowledge is public knowledge to all contemplatives and mystics because it can be communicated and shared from teacher to student (e.g. the *transmission* of Buddha’s enlightenment all the way down to present-day Buddhist masters). A trained consciousness is a public, sharable, and intersubjective consciousness; otherwise it could not be trained or communicated in the first place. Both mathematical knowledge and spiritual knowledge are forms of “internal” knowledge (i.e., there is no external sensory proof that -1 squared equals 1; no microscope or telescope have yet spotted God), the truth of which can be validated and proven to be true by a community of trained peers who know the internal logic of the contemplative experience (or the internal logic of mathematical deduction) and who decide whether the direct apprehension is true or not.

To say that we can have “empirical verification” of psychological (mental) or spiritual (psychic) experience simply means that we have some sort of direct, interior, immediate evidence (or data) for our assertions that we can publicly check (confirm or refute) with the aid of someone trained or educated in the domain. For example, interior mathematical (or logical) experience (i.e., the whole series of symbolic images, equations, patterns, deductions) is part of the essential evidence or data grounding mathematical (or logical) knowledge that can be checked with other trained mathematicians (or logicians) who perform the same calculations (or deductions) to see if they experience the same proofs (or conclusions). This is why mathematics (and logic) produces genuine knowledge (even though no one has ever seen, heard, smelled, touched or tasted either the square root of negative one or the logic of a valid syllogism in the external world.)

Knowledge, belief, and faith. What about those things that we cannot know through our own experience? Is belief an intelligent and reasonable thing to do in the absence of experientially generated knowledge? Certainly there are many things about ourselves and about the world that we will never know based on our own experience alone. There are few items of experientially generated knowledge that are themselves totally independent of beliefs, for example. Our lived experience is limited to an extremely narrow strip of space-time and unless we are ready to rely on the lived experience of others, we must leave all other times and places blank. No one person can know all there is in a lifetime; we cannot discover for ourselves all discoveries. Moreover, psychology recognizes that there will always remain aspects of our Self of which we will remain ignorant. The totality of the psyche can never be grasped by the intellect alone; certain portions of each individual’s reality are consciously unknowable. In addition, there will always

remain mystery in our understanding of our spiritual nature, of God, and of certain elements of doctrinal content of the Catholic faith. There will always be, as physicist-theologian John Polkinghorne (1998) puts it, “the necessary ineffability of the infinite God to finite human minds and the unavailability of the divine nature to being put to experimentally manipulated testing” (p. 113). Still, the reasonableness of belief does not make it knowledge. Our beliefs can be false in that they affirm to be what isn’t really so. Beliefs can be limiting in that they prevent one from seeing evidence that contradicts them. How do we choose what to believe in the absence of anything immediately accessible in the physical world or in our experience that would serve as validating criteria for the “article of faith” we are asked to believe?

The pragmatism of belief. William James (1897/1956) proposed a pragmatic solution to the problem of belief: judging the truth-value of a belief by its effects on the individual’s life. Any belief that helps create a more effective and satisfying life is worth holding. To the question: What beliefs should I believe in? James answers: Choose beliefs that bring into your life positive effects – kindness, love, joy, peace, vision, wisdom, generosity, and so forth. In these terms, the “truth” of a belief (e.g., in our spiritual nature, in our freedom and responsibility, in God’s existence and nature, and so forth) can be found in the results it produces. It comes down to the Jamesian empirical criterion: By their fruits (“the way in which it works out on the whole”) shall you know them, not by their roots (their “origins”).

Bernard Lonergan, S.J. (1957, pp. 703-717) makes a similar point in his book, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*. Knowledge is what you affirm as being true based on *your own* personal experience, personal understanding, and personal judgment. Belief is what you affirm as being true based on *somebody else’s* personal experience, understanding, and judgment. Knowing is affirming what one correctly understands in one’s own experience. Belief is accepting what we are told by others on whom we reasonably rely. The content of knowledge and belief may be the same, but its origin and motive for acceptance are different. We decide to believe because of its value to do so. The difference between knowledge and belief lies not so much in its object as in the attitude of the subject.

And what we happen to believe makes a difference in the way we experience our self, our body, time, the world, and others. I am referring to what can be called “practical belief” – belief that makes a direct difference in the way we act in the world and in the way that we are disposed to react to the events of our daily lives. This dispositional aspect of belief is absent in those beliefs to which we may give intellectual assent to, or pretend to have (even to ourselves), but do not express in our actions. Not all beliefs, therefore, are created equal. As John Hick (1999) in his book, *The Fifth Dimension: An Exploration of the Spiritual Dimension*, put it:

Each of the great world religions offers a comprehensive conception of the world, and in so far as such pictures are believed and are built into our dispositional structure, they automatically affect the way in which the believer lives. They determine the overall meaning of life for us. We are of course talking here of genuine beliefs, beliefs on which we are prepared to act – what Cardinal Newman (1947) called *real*, as distinguished from *notional*, assents. ... The understanding of our lives as taking place in the presence of, and as grounded in, the Divine, the Transcendent, the ultimately Real, can make a profound difference to our sense of the meaning of our life now. (pp. 50-51)

The character that we *believe* the universe to have and therefore *experience* it to have is an important part of the religious meaning that we give to our lives. To believe that you are an excellent creature and a valuable part of the universe in which you exist, that your existence enriches all other portions of life even as your own being is enhanced by the rest of creation, that it is good and natural and safe for you to grow and develop and use your abilities, that you are eternally couched and supported by the universe of which you are a part, that all of your imperfections and all of the imperfections of other creatures are redeemed in the greater scheme of the universe in which you have your being, that you exist whether or not that existence is physically expressed, however, remain *notional* rather than *real* beliefs for most people. For those experiencing a “struggle to believe” a wide gap often exists between the immediate concrete meanings by

which and through which we live their daily lives and the meaning of life as taught by institutional religion. Philosophy cannot be divorced from action, however. We can often more reliably see from peoples' behavior than from their words what they *really* believe. It is difficult to pretend or fake a religious meaning of life if we don't really believe it has one.

And what of Faith? And what of "Faith" (*Espoir*) in its more general sense? Here we also have a situation where we are called upon "to believe" even though there is no direct evidence; otherwise we would have no need for "faith." But I do not mean in this instance the faith that is attached, like the emotion of love, to any one religious object, article of faith, doctrine, dogma, church, or person, for such a faith is always in jeopardy since at one time or another the object of faith may no longer justify it, the faith itself becoming lost, then attaching itself again to a new object, each time losing it and then finding it anew. I mean the *spirit* of faith of someone like Mother Rivier as recounted in the following episode from her life:

Consequently, when Marie Rivier noticed that her daughters paid scant attention to small things, she could not help but scold them: 'If you acted with *a spirit of faith*' [emphasis added], she would tell them, 'you would pay much more attention to what you are doing.' That is why in her instructions she unceasingly recommended singleness of purpose – a practice which excludes all self-seeding and *by which one considers God alone in performing one's actions* [emphasis added]. (From "Vision d'Espoir," a monthly publication reflecting upon themes in Mother Rivier's spirituality. Distributed by Sr. Claire Provost in commemoration of the Presentation Sisters Bicentennial Celebration)

Such a faith ("by which one considers God alone in performing one's actions") recognizes one's connectedness with God. It is a state of grace that incites a general, overall sense of optimism and confidence, safety and freedom; a condition in which we were once immersed as children; a condition blessedly free in that it does not acknowledge or anticipate impediments. In faith's eyes, impediments vanish and barriers dissolve, not because a person is suddenly struck by a fool's stupidity that blinds him or her to them, but because they disappear in light of a newfound sense of ease, freedom, and certainty. One is simply no longer afraid. One's cowardliness is gone. It is a belief in safety that provides a medium for growth so that the individual can reach out, explore, and is free enough to exercise his or her curiosity. It is a faith that draws the person outward and gently coaxes him or her to some sensed further development. It is a faith that takes it for granted that a certain desired end will be achieved, even though the means may be unknown.

For many people, such a faith is hard to come by. We are afraid of being "faith's fool." Yet each person "goes on faith" that tomorrow will come and that one's being and actions have meaning. We operate on such a faith constantly, so that it becomes an almost invisible element in our lives. Without it, there would be no family groups, societies, civilizations, laws or governments. It is the fiber behind all relationships and organizations. Where does this faith come from? Writer and mystic Jane Roberts (1981b) believes that this sort of faith "is based upon the innate, natural knowledge possessed by each creature – the knowledge that it springs from a sustaining source, that its birth is cushioned by all the resources of nature, and that nature itself is sustained by the greater source that gave it birth" (pp. 12-13). It is about this greater, sustaining source (called God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) that the church of Jesus Christ believes in its prayers, teaches in its exegetical and catechetical works, and confesses in its apologetics and polemics, liturgy and creeds, on the basis of Scripture.

Summary and Conclusion

In the first part of this essay, I described the personal struggles that some people have with their faith and with their churches in the context of a postmodern secular world. The personal account of the faith struggle that I experienced when I was a young seminarian illustrates how a person's private struggle with one's faith and with one's church happens in the context of his or her psychological and biological situation, and basically cannot be separated from his or her religious beliefs and philosophical sentiments, and cultural environment and social framework. Survey responses from other people concerning their faith struggle

confirms that the question of the struggle to believe cannot be answered from a religious standpoint alone, but involves great sweeping psychological attitudes on the part of many individuals that meets the needs and desires of those involved. Themes such as “conflict with science,” “the arbitrariness of religious ritual,” “conflicting views of God,” “apostasy and total desertion of faith” give voice to individual needs which arise in a framework of psychological, philosophical, historical, and cultural realities that cannot be isolated from religious beliefs. Only when the private nature of the struggle to believe is sufficiently emphasized can it be seen how the magnification of individual reality combines and enlarges to form the collective events of our human social world.

In the second part of the essay, the question of relating religion and science is addressed from five standpoints: modernism, postmodernism, epistemological pluralism, new paradigms of science, and transpersonal psychology. *Transpersonal psychology* is dedicated to integrating the wisdom of the world’s religions and modern science and currently represents psychology’s single best attempt at bridging science and spirit in the context of a postmodern secular world. *New paradigms of science* ties religious philosophy to contemporary science and looks to science to provide proof of God by setting scientific discoveries within the framework of religious explanation. *Epistemological pluralism* keeps religion and science as separate but peacefully coexisting domains with each addressing its own special level of being and which would be an appealing solution to the “problem” of religion and science if only science would accept spiritual modes of inquiry as being valid and significant. Although the unfortunate beliefs contained in extreme forms of *modernism* (i.e., scientific materialism and scientism) and *postmodernism* (i.e., postmodern poststructuralism) have played an important negative role in present world conditions, contributing to the troubles of society and undermining personal integrity, both modernism and postmodernism have also had many positive and constructive results that did not exist on any sort of large scale during pre-modern times.

Two key ideas of modernism – mental events have empirical correlates in the physical world and genuine knowledge must be grounded in experience – and three key ideas of postmodernism – interpretation is an intrinsic feature of being, meaning is context-dependent, and cognition privileges no single perspective – possess a psychological validity and significance that need to be recognized and acknowledged and incorporated into any attempt to adequately understand people’s faith struggles in the context of a secular world. These key ideas provide points of contact by which modern science, postmodern thought, and Christianity can be related such that each framework may mutually support and nourish one another. Modern empirical science has tended to reject spiritual experiences because they appear to be inaccessible to the scientific method; postmodern thought has tended to reject religion because it appears to be capricious and arbitrary. Science, taken in its broader more general sense, however, provides us a generalized empirical method by which spiritual experiences may be experientially explored, investigated, reported, confirmed or denied. By this move, science and Christianity can be joined by the thread of direct experience and evidence. Postmodernism, taken in its broader more general sense, provides us with a set of cognitive guidelines and prescriptions by which the “problem” of the struggle to believe may be better understood, criteria for solutions may be more easily identified, and constraints on various solution options more readily recognized.

Resolution of the “struggle to believe” in the context of a postmodern secular world requires that the exploratory, experiential, and experimental process of putting one’s faith to the test of further action and development continue. Authentic Christianity must continue to be based on direct spiritual experience and evidence if it is to maintain its power to transform the comprehending ego that struggles with its faith in the existence of deeper spiritual realities. Without engaging in spiritual practice and generating the experience that grounds belief, Catholicism in particular and world religions in general risk ending up being metaphysics in the “bad” sense – statements without evidence or means of verification, a belief system without a method of gathering actual and direct experiential evidence for its truth claims, and a thought system without a way of reliably reproducing these insights in others. Christianity’s great and enduring strength after all is that it is at its core a spiritual experience.

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