

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
Department of Social Relations  
Social Relations 98  
The Psychology of Religion

Gordon W. Allport

SOME ATTEMPTS AT A PSYCHOLOGICAL DEFINITION OF RELIGION

1. William James: The Varieties of Religious Experience (M.L. edition).

"Religion...shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."  
(Pages 31-32.)

- a. "The divine shall mean for us only such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely, and neither by a curse nor a jest."  
(Page 39.)
- b. "If religion is to mean anything definite for us, it seems to me that we ought to take it as meaning this added dimension of emotion, this enthusiastic temper of espousal, in regions where morality strictly so called can at best but bow its head and acquiesce."  
(Page 48.)
- c. "The life of religion in the broadest and most general terms...consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."  
(Page 53.)
- d. "There is a certain uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet. It consists of two parts....(1) uneasiness...a sense that there is something wrong about us as we naturally stand, (2) solution... a sense that we are saved from the wrongness by making proper connection with the higher powers."  
(Page 498.)

2. Sigmund Freud, in Totem and Taboo, The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents, and Moses and Monotheism, refers to religion as a "mass obsessional neurosis" and "an illusion," the product of wish-fulfillment. He makes clear that he is discussing "what the ordinary man understands by religion," "a system of doctrines and pledges."

- a. "When the child grows up and finds that he is destined to remain a child for ever, and that he can never do without protection against unknown and mighty powers, he invests these with the traits of the father-figure; he creates for himself the gods, of whom he is afraid, whom he seeks to propitiate, and to whom he nevertheless entrusts the task of protecting him."  
(The Future of an Illusion, Anchor, pages 39-40.)
- b. "Religious doctrines...are all illusions, they do not admit of proof... just as they cannot be proved, neither can they be refuted...." [Yet, knowing the origins of religious doctrines, and the human motives they express] "We say to ourselves: it would indeed be very nice if there were a God, who was both creator of the world and a benevolent providence, if there were a moral world order and a future life, but at the same time it is very odd that this is all just as we should wish it ourselves. And it would be still odder if our poor, ignorant, enslaved ancestors had succeeded in solving all these difficult riddles of the universe."  
(The Future of an Illusion, Anchor, pages 57-58.)

3. C.G. Jung: Psychology and Religion: West and East, volume II of the Collected Works, Bollingen Edition.

"Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the numinosum, that is, a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. On the contrary, it seizes and controls the human subject, who is always rather its victim than its creator." (Page 7.)

4. G.W. Allport: The Individual and His Religion.

"A man's religion is the audacious bid he makes to bind himself to creation and to the Creator. It is his ultimate attempt to enlarge and to complete his own personality by finding the supreme context in which he rightly belongs." (Page 142.)

5. W.H. Clark: The Psychology of Religion.

"Religion can be most characteristically described as the inner experience of the individual when he senses a Beyond, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his behavior when he actively attempts to harmonize his life with the Beyond." (Page 22.)

6. P.E. Johnson: The Psychology of Religion, revised edition.

"Religion is response to a Sustainer of values.... Religion is personal devotion to ultimate Being, who is believed to offer creative potentialities for human life through enlarging relationships." (Pages 48-49.)

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Junior Seminar  
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

Fall Term 1965-66

Texts to be read entire. This reading will be discussed by the group, and a written test taken on Friday, January 7th.

- W. James. Varieties of Religious Experience (Modern Library).
- S. Freud. The Future of an Illusion (any edition).
- H. Smith. The Religions of Man (Mentor).
- P. Tillich. The Courage to Be (Yale).
- G. Allport. The Individual and his Religion (Yale).

Additional references, useful in connection with project reports.

Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (Published by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1424 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C.)

- G.W. Allport. Becoming: basic considerations for a psychology of personality (Yale).
- M. Argyle. Religious Behavior (Free Press).
- D. Bakan. Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (Van Nostrand).
- P.A. Bertocci. Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Prentice Hall).
- A.T. Boisen. The Exploration of the Inner World (Harper).
- M. Buber. Between Man and Man (Beacon).
- R.C. Cabot & R. Dicks. The Art of Ministering to the Sick (Macmillan).
- W.H. Clark. The Psychology of Religion (Macmillan).
- E. Erikson. Young Man Luther (Norton).
- H. Feifel (ed.). The Meaning of Death (McGraw-Hill).
- E. Fromm. Psychoanalysis and Religion (Yale).
- V. Frankl. Man's Search for Meaning (Beacon).
- W. Herberg. Protestant, Catholic, Jew (Doubleday).
- H. Hoffman. The Ministry and Mental Health (Association).
- C.J. Jung. Psychology and Religion (Yale).
- J.H. Leuba. God or Man? (Holt)
- J.H. Leuba. Psychology of Religious Mysticism (Holt).
- L. Linn & L.W. Schwarz. Psychiatry and Religious Experience (Random House).
- R.V. McCann. The Churches and Mental Health (Basic Books).
- M.E. Marty. The New Shape of American Religion (Harper).
- R. May (ed.). Existential Psychology (Random House).
- P. May (ed.). Symbolism in Religion and Literature (Braziller).
- F. S. Mead. Handbook of Denominations (Abingdon).
- O.H. Mower. The Crisis in Psychiatry and Religion (Van Nostrand).
- G. Myers. History of Bigotry in the United States (Random House).
- E. Raab (ed.). Religious Conflict in America (Anchor).
- M.G. Ross. Religious Beliefs of Youth (Association).
- W. Sargent. Battle for the Mind (Doubleday).
- P. Tillich. Dynamics of Faith (Harper).
- E. Underhill. Mysticism: a study of the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness. (Meridian).

Reports due.

October 15: The basic difference between Freud and James in their approach to the study of religion.

About two pages, based on a reading of The Future of an Illusion and Lecture 1 (Religion and Neurology) in the Varieties.

October 29: Impressions and Interpretation of an unfamiliar religious service.

About five pages, based on: (1) attendance at some unfamiliar religious service, and  
(2) reading on the religious tradition in question drawn from some encyclopedia, or portions of H. Smith, W. Herberg, or F.S. Mead, or other relevant source.

December 17: Topical project paper. About 20 pages in length.

The following list of suggestions would be suitable choices for topics, or by arrangement with the instructor, other topics may be substituted. The references given here are starting points for the project. The student will undoubtedly wish to amplify the bibliography.

Project papers.

Project 1. The Religious Sentiment: Childhood to Maturity.

M. Argyle. Religious Behavior, Chs. 6, 7, 8.  
W.H. Clark. The Psychology of Religion, Chs. 4, 5, 6, 9, 11.  
G.W. Allport. The Individual and his Religion, Chs. 1, 2, 3.  
L. Linn & L. Schwarz. Psychiatry and Religious Experience, Chs. 2, 3.

Project 2. Conversion.

W. Sargent. Battle for the Mind (entire).  
W. James. Varieties of Religious Experience, Lectures 9 and 10.  
W. H. Clark. The Psychology of Religion, Ch. 9.

Project 3. Mysticism.

W. H. Clark. The Psychology of Religion, Ch. 12.  
W. James. Varieties, Lectures 16 and 17.  
J. H. Leuba. The Psychology of Religious Mysticism (portions).  
Evelyn Underhill. Mysticism (portions).

Project 4. Psychology of Doubt and Belief.

G.W. Allport. The Individual and his Religion, Chs. 5, 6.  
W. James. Varieties, Ch. 3.  
S. Freud. The Future of an Illusion (portions).  
J.H. Leuba. God or Man?, Chs. 14/19.  
W.H. Clark. The Psychology of Religion, Chs. 7, 10.  
P. Tillich. Dynamics of Faith.

## Project 5. Mental Health and Religion.

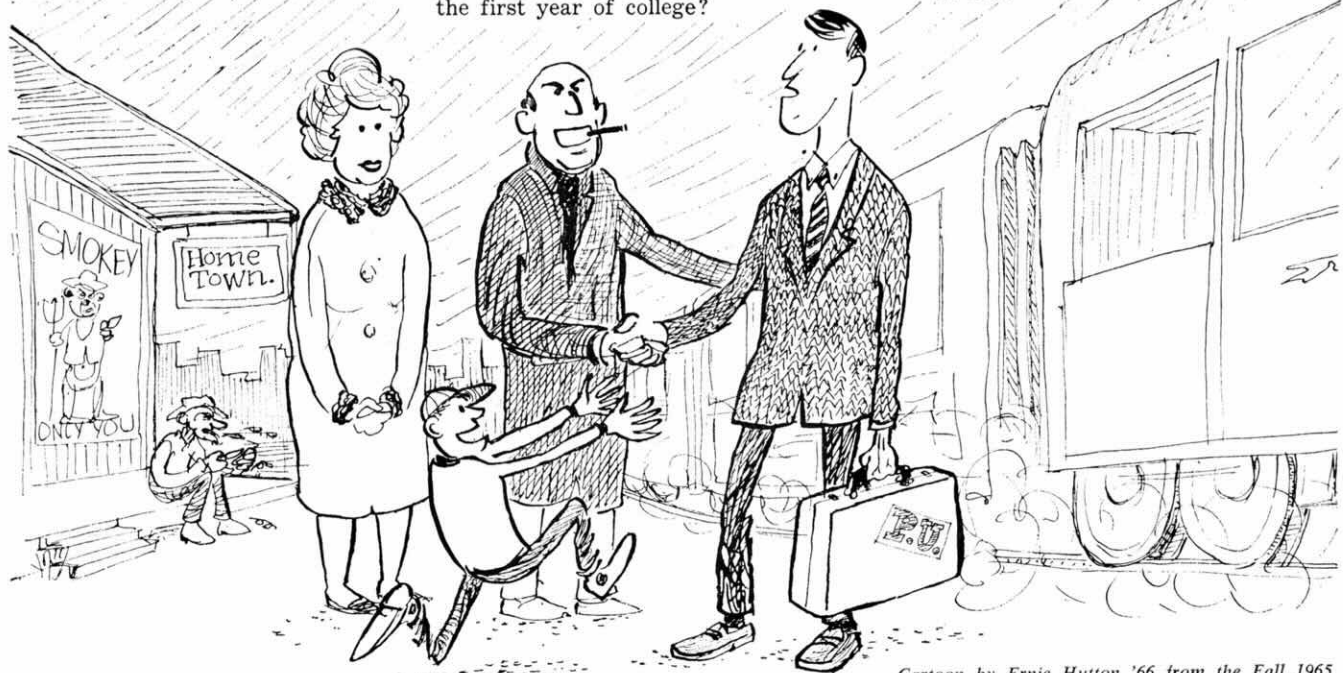
- H. Hoffman. The Ministry and Mental Health.  
 W. James. Varieties, Lectures 4-8.  
 G.W. Allport. The Individual and his Religion, Ch. 4.  
 R.C. Cabot & R. Dicks. The Art of Ministering to the Sick, Chs. 22, 23, Appendix A.  
 H. Feifel (ed). The Meaning of Death (portions).  
 L. Linn & L. Schwarz. Psychiatry and Religious Experience, Chs. 1, 6.

## Project 6. The Future of Existential Psychology.

- G.W. Allport. Pattern and Growth in Personality, Ch. 22.  
 R. May (ed). Existential Psychology.  
 V. Frankl. From Death Camp to Existentialism.  
 P. Tillich. The Courage to Be; and Dynamics of Faith.

Charley! How good to see you, boy!  
We've really missed you here  
on the old home front! How's  
the first year of college?

I don't believe  
in God.



Cartoon by Ernie Hutton '66 from the Fall 1965  
Tiger, Princeton undergraduate humor magazine