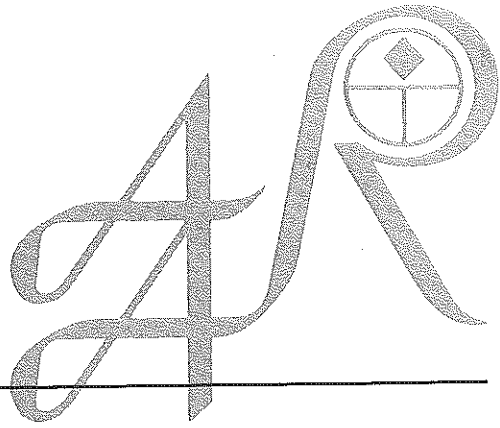


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The Religion Game: Some Family Resemblances

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INTRODUCTION

THIS paper is an attempt to analyze the nature of religion in terms of its components and characteristics. In Part One, I adopt Wittgensteinian terminology to develop and justify a new approach to the varieties of religious phenomena and structures. Applying to the study of religion some Wittgensteinian reminders for the replacement of essences with a theory of language-games and family resemblances, I suggest that the search for the illusive essence of religion or of religious traditions should give way to the description of religion and religions in terms of how the religion game is played.¹ Thus, historical religious traditions and their respective components may be seen as members of the religion family, and qualities, characteristics, or functions which these members share may be viewed as their family resemblances.

In Part Two, I offer three such characteristics or family resemblances for religion: integration, non-attachment, and transformation. These characteristics both describe religion or the religious, and exemplify the kind of neutrality and specificity Wittgenstein recommends as the ideal philosophic method. By referring to religions and the religious as games and by describing the features of such games as family resemblances, I hope to emphasize the fact that being religious is part of an activity or a form of life.² Accordingly, the religion

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¹Note that the singular form *the religion game*, and the plural form *religion games*, are equally acceptable for our purposes: The singular emphasizes the similarity, and the plural emphasizes the variety, of religion games. In Wittgensteinian fashion, it is the games (plural) which are primary; until such time as definite characteristics can be discerned, *the religion game*, is simply a common name for all of these games.

²The expression of this aim is a paraphrase of Wittgenstein's oft-quoted reminder that "the term 'language-game' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity or a form of life" (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963,

game or the religious form of life has been played in many different ways, each way being a member of the religion family (i.e., the Christian way, the Buddhist way, and so on). Further, each of the more prominent members of the religion family (Christian, Buddhist, and so on) have several structural components (roughly, the mystical, conceptual and cultural), and several characteristics or family resemblances (namely, integration, non-attachment and transformation). In light of some Wittgensteinian reminders on essences and descriptions, I will try to show some of the ways in which various religion games, and the resemblances they share, are so many complex activities revealing and defining the religious form of human life.

RELIGION GAMES AND THE RELIGION FAMILY

As interpreters of William James and Wittgenstein alike have pointed out, the theory of games and the theory of family resemblances in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* bears an obvious similarity to the view of religion that William James had articulated fifty years earlier.³ In the *Varieties of Religious Experience* James writes:

Most books on the philosophy of religion try to begin with a precise definition of what its essence consists of . . . The very fact that they are so many and so different from one another is enough to prove that the word "religion" cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name. The theorizing mind tends always to oversimplification of its materials. This is the root of all that absolutism and one-sided dogmatism by which both philosophy and religion have been infected.⁴

James approached the problem of the divine in the same way: "The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may all find worthy missions."⁵ Despite the fact that James wrote a classic account of the varieties of religious experience whereas Wittgenstein wrote almost nothing on religion, the cause of a pluralistic and neutral approach to the study of religion is better served by Wittgenstein than James; for during the past two decades *Philosophical Investigations* has had a revolutionary impact on philosophical theology and philosophy of religion.⁶

sec. 23). For an extremely perceptive reading of this Wittgensteinian reminder and its implications for religious language, see Richard H. Bell, "Wittgenstein and Descriptive Theology," *Religious Studies*, V (October, 1969), pp. 5-7.

³For Wittgenstein's debt to James, see George Pitcher, *The Philosophy of Wittgenstein*, Englewood-Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964, p. 218, and M. O'C. Drury, "A Symposium: Assessments of the Man and the Philosopher," in K. T. Fann, ed., *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Man and His Philosophy*, New York: Dell Publishing Company, 1967.

⁴William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York: New American Library, 1958 (1902), p. 39.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 368.

⁶See especially Dallas M. High, *Language, Persons and Belief*, New York: Oxford

Like James's pragmatism, Wittgenstein's theory of games precludes essences and emphasizes the pluralistic character of the philosophic enterprise. The Wittgensteinian conception of philosophy is especially applicable to the conflict among philosophies of religion: namely, that each definition merely expresses the philosopher's preference for what he thinks any proper religion ought to be. Wittgenstein explains that the "main cause of philosophical disease" is "a one-sided diet: one nourishes one's thinking with only one kind of example."⁷ If we were to survey any complex phenomenon such as the nature of games, or of religions, we would "see how similarities crop up and disappear."⁸ The denial of essences, however, does not deprive a general term of all application. A range of things called religious may have no common essence in the strict sense of the term, but they may have family resemblances or all of these religious particulars as part of the religion family.

Yet *Philosophical Investigations* admits to the methodological problem which plagues philosophy and religiology alike: What should count as the data of religion in the first place?⁹ Should the conception of religion dictate which of the experiences, ideas and institutions shall be counted as religious, or should these elements dictate the conception of religion? Or, how does the religiologist recognize when a religion game is being played? Wittgenstein seems to offer two answers to this crucial question: On the one hand, he says that "philosophy really is 'purely descriptive,'"¹⁰ and on the other hand he admits that "what we call 'descriptions' are instruments for particular uses."¹¹ Philosophy, then, should deal with what is in some sense given, but at the same time a philosopher can deal with data only by knowing his way around and by arranging what he already knows.¹² The implication of this dilemma is that there is no absolute or *a priori* criterion for what should be the standard of religion; rather, the standard is derived from the games that are played and considered to be religious. Rich-

University Press, 1968; Dallas M. High, ed., *New Essays on Religious Language*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1969; W. D. Hudson, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Bearing of his Philosophy upon Religious Belief*, Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1968; for a complete listing of all writings by and about Wittgenstein until 1967, see K. T. Fann, "A Wittgenstein Bibliography," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, VII (June, 1967).

⁷ *Op. cit.*, sec. 593.

⁸ *Ibid.*, sec. 66.

⁹ It is precisely in order to avoid the assumptions which accompany the selection of data that the phenomenologists developed the ideal of freedom from presuppositions. See Marvin Farber, *The Aims of Phenomenology*, New York: Harper and Row, 1966, chap. 2.

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958, p. 18.

¹¹ *Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 291.

¹² This thoroughly Wittgensteinian mode of philosophizing has received its most explicit formulation in the writings of John Wisdom. In *The "Logic of 'God'"* Wisdom explains that he wants to "bring out a little of how, when, and why it is sometimes worth saying what everybody knows" (in John Hick, ed., *The Existence of God*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963, p. 276).

ard Bell notes regarding the language game that "philosophical description serves the end of helping to determine what is being said";¹³ the descriptive approach I am recommending for the study would help to determine what is being done religiously.

Although this standard for religion is imprecise and tentative, it is by no means arbitrary. As the history of western philosophy well attests, a rejection of the Platonic forms does not automatically issue in chaos. Somewhere between the Platonic forms and the Heraclitean flux lie conventions, or what Wittgenstein calls games. As Hume, James, Dewey, and other empiricists have shown, even the most arbitrary of the rules governing human activities tend to become absolutized. Far from being created or discarded easily, the rules of most games are treated as sacrosanct ideals rather than as conventional norms or procedures. The rules operative in religion games (and rules operative in the study of these games) typify this failure to acknowledge the functional character of rules. The resistance of Christian theologians to any conception of religion at variance with their own is one example of an enshrined standard for what is to count as a religion game.¹⁴ Rather than being treated as arbitrary conventions, the conceptions of religion and religious traditions have been so effectively formulated that most students of religion will continue to treat them in terms of one or more units, blocs or "isms."¹⁵

In light of Wilfred Cantwell Smith's penetrating analysis of religion and Wittgenstein's theory of games, terms such as *Christianity* and the *Christian religion* should be abandoned in favor of *Christian games* or *the Christian way of playing a religion game*. Even though Christians, Hindus, and Taoists—to take three examples from the range of historical religious traditions—are each considered religious, religions, or religious traditions, each plays its own religion game (or plays the religion game differently). To the uncritical student of

¹³ Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁴ Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion* is a classic version of the conflict among various standards for Christianity and for religion. For a contemporary dialogue on the same theme, see: A. N. Prior, "Can Religion Be Discussed?" *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, eds., Antony Flew and Alasdair Mac Intyre, London: SCM Press, 1963. The growing quality and quantity of work in Asian religions is also making it increasingly difficult to hold to any one conception of religion, least of all one that is obviously tied to a particular religious tradition.

¹⁵ For a brilliant and scholarly critique of the reification of religious traditions, see Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962. Several important publications have avoided this artificial "bloc" approach. See, for example, the three volumes edited by Kenneth Morgan: *The Religion of the Hindus*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1953, *The Path of the Buddha*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1956, and *Islam—The Straight Path*, New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1958. More recently, the *Religious Life of Man* series, edited by Frederick J. Streng and being published by Dickenson Publishing Company, California, includes the following titles: *The House of Islam*, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*, *Chinese Religion: An Introduction*, *The Hindu Tradition*, and *The Buddhist Religion*.

religion and certainly to the religious believer, it would appear that being religious consists in being, respectively, a good Christian, a good Hindu, or a good Taoist. The religiologist, however, has to answer a more critical question: In what respect are these traditions, or these games, religious in the first place? What functions, rules or characteristics do these traditions (or religious games) have in common such that despite their vast differences each is considered essentially religious?

Following the lead of Wilfred Cantwell Smith and the Chicago historians of religion,¹⁶ and drawing on the terminology of Wittgenstein, I suggest that all the major historical religious traditions are like so many members of a family, each of which has a structural similarity and a set of defining qualities or family resemblances. The constitutional or physical structure of historical religions seems to include at least these three elements: the personal or mystical, the conceptual or philosophical, and the socio-historical (including the moral, aesthetic, ritual and institutional).¹⁷ As difficult as it is to determine the exact structure of these religious traditions, it is still more difficult to determine their qualitative characteristics or resemblances. At this point the family analogy needs clarification. The individual members of the religion family, such as the Christian or Buddhist traditions, clearly exhibit their own structural or constitutive elements, but they only indirectly reveal the functions which they presumably share and for which they are considered religious. While the structural elements—the mystical, philosophical and cultural—would seem to be *sine qua non* for any religious tradition as a *tradition* (or as a member of the religion family), it is the characteristic functions—such as integration, detachment, and transformation—that characterize the entire family and all of its members as *religious*. According to this scheme, the religiousness of traditions such as Hinduism (or, more properly, the Brahmanical, Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite traditions) consists in the ability of such traditions to foster individual and communal integration, nonattachment and transformation. It is these three characteristically religious abilities or functions that now concern us.

SOME FAMILY RESEMBLANCES

Integration, non-attachment and transformation are, I suggest, three characteristics or family resemblances of several major religion games (or ways of playing the religion game). In accordance with the Wittgensteinian theory of family resemblances, these characterizations are neither essences nor entirely arbitrary, but the kind of descriptions which show us the way around the field

¹⁶ This is not to say that Smith is in full agreement with the Chicago historians of religions; for a brief account of their respective positions, see articles by Kitagawa and Smith in Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, eds., *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959.

¹⁷ For a discussion of these three elements of religion, see my article, "Religion as an Academic Discipline," *Cross Currents*, XVIII, 1 (Winter, 1968), 11-33.

of religious phenomena. These three characteristics of religions are not arbitrary if they do in fact describe the religious quality of higher religious traditions (or members of the religion family) such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Although these three characteristics are neither explicit nor obvious, they may yet help to explain the vast array of religion games. Insofar as any or all of these characterizations might indeed change our way of thinking about religion,¹⁸ they may serve a normative function in the study of religion. In short, I hope that one or more of these proposed characterizations will contribute to our understanding both of religious traditions and of religion in general, without distorting the subject matter which religiology seeks to render more intelligible. If successful, they will serve as normative or regulative principles for the study of higher religious traditions and for a more adequate conception of the family of religion *per se*.

Integration

The following analysis discusses the integrative function of (1) the mystical, (2) the conceptual, and (3) the cultural elements of religion, and (4) the relationship of integration to its antithesis, disintegration, as an adequate characterization of religion.

As a characterization of mysticism, the terms integration and integral experience have a long history. The mystical experience, or more properly the mystical process, which includes the unitive experience itself, involves a personal subject who has an experience and an interpretation which the subject gives to the experience. It is the entire process—subject, actual experience, and interpretation—which deserves to be called the mystical or integrative process.

This process, celebrated by Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic mystics with inexhaustible originality and profundity, springs from and returns to the mystic's own religious tradition and consistently attests to the underlying unity or relatedness of the self and of all reality. Such a claim, and in fact any claim about the mystical process, ushers in the second phase of the integrative function: the conceptual or philosophical interpretation of the mystical process. It is the philosophical element which systematically and self-consciously articulates the nature of the self and how the self is related to whatever is considered the ultimate ontological category.

As a philosophical construct, the concept of integration renders religious experience more perspicuous and intelligible and deserves to be taken seriously as an important characteristic of the first two elements of religion, the mystical and philosophical. Integration or integralism is the central philosophical idea for many religious thinkers, especially those who emphasize the wholistic or organismic quality of reality. Among contemporary philosophers, Bergson, Whitehead, the later Heidegger, Aurobindo, and Radhakrishnan all celebrate

¹⁸ Or, perhaps, take seriously Wittgenstein's reminder: "Don't think, but look!" (*Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 66).

the value of integrating the diverse strands of existence. Consequently, these thinkers are easily appropriated for religious purposes. Integration also needs to be analyzed in relation to the third element of religion, the socio-historical or cultural.

Just as the mystical consists in a uniquely unitive experience, which, when analyzed and systematized, may render the self along with the rest of reality more unified, so the cultural aspect of religion (including moral obligations, art forms, institutions, and rituals) helps to render the believer's world more unified and coherent. By integrating the parts of each believer's experience on the basis of established priorities or concerns, a religious tradition draws from, and prepares the faithful for, the experience of ultimate concern and fullness of religious life which the mystic represents. Specifically, religious ideals such as Christian *agape*, the various Indian *yogas*, Buddhist compassion, and various Chinese ideals all foster a kind of integrating which culminates in salvation. In each of the moral, social, ritual, and aesthetic functions of religion, there is a consistent effort to enable the religious subject to be more intimately and meaningfully related to all the aspects of his religious tradition—especially to whatever is held to be the divine source and guarantee of that tradition.

Yet, might not disintegration also serve as a defining characteristic of religion? Obviously, the disintegrating process does figure in religion games (or the religion game). The sense of guilt or of the meaninglessness of existence seems to be a prerequisite for certain kinds of religious awareness. In the Christian tradition, Kierkegaard is probably the most forceful exemplar of the disintegrative function of religion. Yet even Kierkegaard seeks the integrative rather than the disintegrative ideal, for his primary task was to save the individual from an *inauthentic* integration provided by Christendom. My point in citing Kierkegaard is not to impose a label on him,¹⁹ but simply to show that even a religious personality who exemplifies disintegration may be committed to a kind of integration which is the religious reversal of the disintegrative process.

Similarly, the first of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddhist tradition categorically defines all existence as transitory or disintegrative, but this truth has its meaning primarily in terms of the fourth Noble Truth or the Eightfold Path by which a Buddhist strives to overcome the disvalue of existence. This case provides a model for the way in which integration serves as the defining characteristic even when disintegration is an essential ingredient of a particular religion game.

¹⁹ I am not suggesting that Kierkegaard's religious thought supports the concept of integration as it has been developed in this paper. If a label were to be imposed on Kierkegaard's thought, I would recommend H. R. Niebuhr's characterization, "Christ and Culture in Paradox" (see *Christ and Culture*, New York: Harper and Row, 1951, chap. 5). Concerning the ideal of integration, it is noteworthy that Niebuhr finds Kierkegaard's conception of Christianity (and, I would add, his conception of religion) to be inadequate precisely because it excludes the salvific function of communal experience (Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 181). For an effective counter to the usual reading of Kierkegaard in terms of isolation and the disintegrative function of communal experience, see Stanley

Non-attachment

As noted above, mystical experience is a religious person's realization of a greater unity either within himself or between himself and the Ultimate. But this realization apparently presupposes the kind of exacting spiritual preparation that the great religious personalities insist upon. The revelation of Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the Buddha's Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and the teachings of a long tradition of experts up to Ramakrishna, Gandhi, and Suzuki, all advocate the renunciation of self as the highest religious ideal. The *Bhagavad Gītā* teaches that man can achieve salvation only after he frees himself from *prakṛti* (i.e., from nature, or from the phenomenal self). The basic teaching of the *Gītā* is to act without attachment to the fruits of one's action.²⁰ In the *Gītā*, mysticism is the fulfillment of this ideal: i.e., it consists in the realization that one's actions, the fruits of one's actions and one's own self, are all one in the Supreme Lord.

Similarly, the Buddhist and Christian traditions have consistently preached that salvation consists in becoming detached from the old and natural self in order to be born to a truer and ultimately blissful state. Although many of the Buddhist schools (primarily the Theravada) do not affirm the Supreme Lord of the *Gītā* or of the Gospels, virtually all Buddhist schools are emphatic about the need to be detached from the phenomenal world. Indeed, if we had to settle on one defining characteristic of the Buddhist tradition, it might well be detachment from the demands of *samsara* or phenomenal existence.

Philosophically, this ideal of non-attachment emphasizes that the self and the human condition are inherently limited as reality and as value. In effect, the meaning and value of the phenomenal self is dependent on some ultimate reality or the largest possible field of relations. Virtually the entire Indian philosophical tradition, the Taoist and Buddhist traditions in China, and in the West, the Platonists, Stoics, Christian philosophers, and Hegelians all affirm the need to move from a narrow self-consciousness to a universal consciousness. Plato, for example, gives us a text which is equally in the spirit of Asian and western religious thought: "Violent attachment to self is the constant source of misdeed in every one of us" (*Laws*, 731e). Perhaps the most explicit and profound celebration of non-attachment is to be found in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*, and Christian thinkers, especially Augustine and Eckhart, have maintained and extended this stoic ideal.²¹ Similarly, the Hegelian conception

R. Moore, "Religion as the True Humanism: Reflections on Kierkegaard's Social Philosophy," *Journal of The American Academy of Religion*, XXXVII (March, 1969), 15-25.

²⁰ For an excellent interpretation of *karma-yoga* (or salvation by selfless action), see *The Bhagavad Gītā*, trans., (with introduction and critical essays) Eliot Deutsch, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

²¹ Note, for example, the Stoic and Indian quality of Meister Eckhart's "About Disinterest": "Among men, be aloof; do not engage yourself to any idea you get; free yourself from everything chance brings to you, things that accumulate and cumber you; set your mind in virtue to contemplation, in which the God you bear in your heart shall be

of the Universal Self²² is comparable in effect, if not in intent, to the conception of the self as Ātman-Brahman in the *Bhagavad Gītā*.²³ These and countless other examples discredit the view that detachment is a peculiarly Asian value;²⁴ rather, it characterizes religious traditions in general and, particularly the philosophical component of these traditions.

In varying degrees, the several parts of the cultural function of religion may also be characterized by the ideal of non-attachment. Believers are enjoined by their respective religious traditions to give of one's self, and ultimately to give one's entire self, for the sake of others. For example, the *bodhisattva*, in his infinite compassion, is so committed to the salvation of all other creatures that he postpones enjoying the blissful state of Nirvana. A similar ideal, albeit rarely so lofty, is to be found in the other religious traditions as well.

When either a religious order or an entire culture is at a peak of religious fervor, the religious ideal is detachment from the so-called pleasures of this world. At such times, great cultural achievements are frequently done anonymously. A list of equally typical implications could be extended indefinitely. Let it suffice to say that non-attachment is an important, if not necessary, characteristic of religion in its several main functions.

Transformation

In the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which remains in many respects unsurpassed as a study of mysticism, William James treats mystical experience as a process of radical transformation. This characterization does not exclude the possibility that mysticism is also characterized by integration or detachment, but according to James, it is the transformative function which makes mystical experience religious.²⁵ The great religious personalities may not have taught the same religious doctrines, but by virtue of their personal transformation, they epitomize one of the essential elements of the religious life. The religious personalities are exemplars as well as advocates of this radically transformative

your steady object, the object from which your attention never wavers; and whatever else your duty may be, whether it be fasting, watching, or praying, dedicate it all to this one end, doing each only as much as is necessary to your single end. Thus you shall come to the goal of perfection." (Raymond B. Blackney, ed., *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation*, New York: Harper and Row, 1941, p. 91).

²² This conception is brilliantly expounded in Josiah Royce's *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964 (1919), pp. 158-76.

²³ Drawing on both Hegelian (or neo-Hegelian—primarily F. H. Bradley) and Vedāntic schemes, S. Radhakrishnan has developed a theory of selfless detachment in philosophical, as well as in religious, terminology (see his commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā* [1948], on the Upaniṣads [1953], and on the *Brahma Sūtra* [1959]).

²⁴ See, for example, Walter T. Stace, "Oriental Conceptions of Detachment and Enlightenment," *Philosophy East and West*, II, 1 (April, 1952): "I think that the concept of detachment, which originated in India and then spread all over Asia, is peculiar to the East" (p. 20).

²⁵ James, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

experience. Indeed, it is perhaps the nature and significance of their transformative experiences which classify them as religious. In the Christian tradition, Paul and Augustine are models of the transformative experience. Perhaps the most significant of all transformative experiences was Gautama the Buddha's experience of suffering and impermanence. This experience led to a view of life which has dominated the religious consciousness of countless millions throughout more than twenty-five centuries. Although there is apparently no single transformative experience of comparable importance in the lives of all great religious personalities, such lives attest to a steady process of transformation which enabled them to serve as models of transformation for countless other souls.²⁶

In effect, religion or religiousness, especially when considered in the great religious souls, consists in the process of recreating or transforming the actual in order to bring about the ideal of the spiritual order. This ideal could be integration or detachment, or any of the various ideals—such as progress, order, escapism—to which religious persons and traditions have been committed, but according to the transformist theory of religion, it is the process of transformation rather than any specific ideal which is distinctively religious.

When expounded in philosophical language, the transformative function of religion is placed in a more systematic context. Western process philosophy lends itself especially well to a description of this transformative function. Bergson's *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* offers this text:

In our eyes, the ultimate end of mysticism is the establishment of a contact, consequently of a partial coincidence, with the creative effort which life itself manifests. This effort is of God if it is not God himself. The great mystic is to be conceived as an individual being, capable of transcending the limitations imposed on the species by its material nature, thus continuing and extending the divine action.²⁷

Bergson is equally perceptive on the transformative function of religion in culture. The social or institutional element of religion maintains a dynamic relationship with the mystical elements. He writes:

What the mystic finds waiting for him, then, is a humanity which has been prepared to listen to his message by other mystics invisible and present in the religion which is actually being taught. . . . Thus his mysticism is served by religion, against the day when religion becomes enriched by his mysticism. . . . In reality, the task of the great mystic is to effect a radical transformation of humanity by setting an example.²⁸

²⁶ At present, I agree with those, like R. C. Zaehner, who contend that experience due to drugs is generally not as religiously efficacious as experience based on more traditional spiritual disciplines.

²⁷ Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, trans. R. Ashley Audra and Clouesley Brereton, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956 (1935), pp. 220-21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

More specifically, the institutional, moral and devotional aspects of religion each partially perform a transformative function. Churches, sects, religious orders and various rituals, devotions, and religious art objects within institutional religion all contribute to the gradual transformation of the faithful. These institutional forms help to prepare the faithful to recognize and to follow the example of the religious personalities—whether they be the great transforming souls such as Gautama, Jesus, and Mohammed, or more contemporary figures like Suzuki, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Teilhard, or Buber. Each of these and many other religious personalities attest both to the divine in the world and to the need to realize the divine by working for the constant transformation of oneself and all humanity. In short, the transformative function does seem a persistent and perspicuous characteristic of religion.

CONCLUSION

If integration, detachment, and transformation do in fact characterize the full range of religious traditions in all of their internal complexity, we are closer to an adequate conception of what makes religion and religions what they are. While it is possible that one or more of these three characterizations may prove to be essential to every element of every higher religious tradition, given the rather elementary state of the development of religiology, no such characterizations at the present time can pretend to be definitive. Thus, even if all of these characteristics prove inadequate to the complexities they are intended to explain, they may well prove to be effective examples of a more empirical approach to the study of religion. I hope that this approach will encourage others to test these and similar characteristics of religion against the empirical data of all experiences, ideas and socio-historical elements counted as religious.