

The Psychology of Religion/The Religion of Psychology

The University of Chicago
Friday, March 6th, 2015

Both to the discomfort and excitement of psychologists, scholars of religion, and religious practitioners, the overlap between the histories of psychology and religion is rather significant. Like philosophy, psychology was once pegged, in the words of Frank E. Manuel, as the “newest handmaiden of true religion.” However, with the emergence of new experimental methods in the late nineteenth century and of psychoanalysis (an inherently anti-religious discipline, according to its founder) in the early twentieth, psychology attempted to distance itself from religion, though with mixed results. Although psychologists, psychiatrists, and other mental health professionals today understand their respective disciplines to have grown increasingly scientific and thus less “religious,” the various ways in which psychology and religion were interrelated in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries could be used to tell a different story.

On Friday, March 6th, 2015, the University of Chicago Divinity School and the Martin Marty Center will host **The Psychology of Religion/The Religion of Psychology**, a conference exploring the relation between two problem children of modernity. We welcome contributions from scholars in any discipline whose research is concerned with the relationship between religion and psychology, from both an historical and a contemporary perspective. Possible topics include (but are not limited to):

- The ways in which the boundaries of and between psychology and religion are erected and blurred;
- The relation between modern clinical categories like anxiety and depression and their theological counterparts;
- Religiously-inspired quasi-psychologies, psychologically-inflected quasi-religions, and other spiritual hybrids;
- Religion and the dynamics of family life;
- Therapeutic techniques drawn from religious or spiritual practices;
- The psychology of religion, pastoral psychology, and other fields that integrate psychology and religion;
- The rise of the psycho-pharmaceutical approach to mental life and its effect on traditional therapeutic and pastoral counseling;
- Religion and psychology as anchors of disciplinary power.

The conference will be keynoted by a roundtable discussion between:

Tanya Luhrmann
Watkins University
Professor in the
Anthropology Department
at Stanford University, and
author of *Of Two Minds*
(2000) and *When God Talks*
Back (2012)

Jonathan Lear
John U. Nef Distinguished
Service Professor at the
Committee on Social Thought
at the University of Chicago,
and author of *Freud* (2005),
Radical Hope (2006), and *A*
Case for Irony (2011)

Jeffrey Kripal
J. Newton Rayzor Chair in
Philosophy and Religious
Studies at Rice University,
and author of *Authors of the*
Impossible (2010), *Mutants*
and Mystics (2011), and
Comparing Religions (2013)

Please send 300 word proposals for 20-minute papers to the conference organizer, Benjamin Y. Fong, at bfong@uchicago.edu by January 5th, 2015. Paper presentations may come from any discipline and address any topic but should seek to offer general conclusions about the relation between psychology and religion (a request to which the keynote panelists have already agreed). Submissions should also include a separate document with the author's name, contact information, and institutional affiliation. Participants will be notified by January 20th.