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An introduction

The science and profession of psychology emerged in the mid- to late nineteenth century. In all its varieties, including "pop psychology," psychology is one of the ways that we in the contemporary world ask the questions: "Who am I?" "What sort of things are we?" "How shall I live my life?" "What makes me happy, sad, confused, anxious?" These questions arise not only in the abstract, they occur also in activities of healing, correcting, adjusting, guiding, treating, managing, counseling. Even though in many quarters, psychologists have distanced themselves from such questions – call them philosophical – the inescapable truth is that they surface in all psychologies, pure and applied. Psychology asks these questions and psychology answers them. Questing for the nature of human nature, of mental illness, of cognition, of personal growth, for the tasks and challenges of childhood and old age, and in countless other ways, psychology addresses the vexations of living and dying.

And so psychology is an ethical science, ethics being the discipline that seeks to know how we should live our lives. Textbooks and clinicians and researchers, in one way or another, advise us how to conduct our lives. At the very least, they provide information, but all such information implicitly offers guidelines for conduct: description is prescription. This is not an indictment of psychology, for there is great effort to be fair and neutral within the field; it is simply stating the obvious case that no science that describes and explains human behavior and mental life can avoid indicating better and worse ways to act, think, and feel.

For these reasons, psychology makes claims in areas already occupied by the religious traditions – traditions that not only have positions on our nature and our place in the cosmos, but also on how we should act, think, and feel. Religions offer care for the soul in sickness, depravity, and loss. The Catholic Church is no exception in this regard, having a long history of reckoning with the nature and rectification of human life. So when psychology emerged in the nineteenth century, and as it continued to grow, bubbling forth from the ground of twentieth-century life, there were bound to be points of difference and convergence between psychology and Catholic thought and traditions. The philosophical presuppositions of some prominent psychologists, for example, were precisely the kinds of doctrines identified in the 1918 *Code of Canon Law*

(*Codex iuris canonici*, 1918) as being antithetical to the Catholic faith. Some psychotherapeutic practices, in how they encouraged patients to think and act, were called immoral by some Church officials and by some Catholic psychologists. The fact is that psychologists take positions on ground deemed sacred and protected by the Church. Psychological expertise proclaimed on this sacred ground cannot be sheltered from religious counterclaims when the Church has provided other knowledge and guidance for centuries.

This book explores some of these conflicts and convergences. The primary focus is on what those psychologists who were also Catholic said and did about the relationships between modern psychology and Catholicism. The book further has an emphasis on the American scene. Without a doubt, modern psychology and, of course, Catholicism, are international in scope, but there were some particulars of the American social landscape that individuate that history. Distinctive features of the American context, such as its traditions regarding the separation of church and state, were not shared everywhere, and in some countries at some times, political regimes imposed religious orthodoxies, and some of them were Catholic. Until the 1960s, because they came primarily from immigrant groups, American Catholics often felt a need to justify their being both Catholic and American. There was in the Catholic subculture a lively sense of being a minority group. There was both a sense of superiority of the traditions and teachings of the Church and a sense of inferiority, especially regarding participation in the intellectual life of the nation. Nevertheless, the narrative cannot be confined exclusively to these shores, as many ideas and people came or visited here and contributed mightily to what happened. In several chapters, the focus will indeed be in other places, including Belgium (for the beginnings of experimental psychology within a Catholic setting), France (in dealing with some of the spiritualist and miraculous phenomena), Ireland (in dealing with an early Catholic response to psychoanalysis), and Switzerland and England (especially for consideration of Catholic Jungians). The Vatican, the home of the Pope and seat of the Church, naturally plays an important role in this history, from beginning to end. In fact, a papal document serves as one bookend for the story: *Aeterni Patris* (1879/1954) was a call by Pope Leo XIII for a renewal of Thomistic thought and its positive engagement with the modern world, especially the modern sciences. This document sounded a receptive tone and thus helped to justify the cultivation of modern psychology in Catholic circles. The Second Vatican Council of the 1960s marked the end of an epoch in the questioning of boundaries between psychology and Catholicism, and there our study – although not the story – will end. After that time, things changed, and even if the components remained, their relationships did not. Finally, *Ex corde ecclesiae* (Pope John Paul II, 1990/2000) raised the question of the meaning of institutions that are both Catholic and universities, there being presumably no contradiction between the two. This document suggests a reconsideration of some of the

solutions to the sometimes difficult relationships between psychology and Catholic thought.

Non-Catholic readers, especially non-Christian readers, may wonder at this point about the relevance of what follows for a more general understanding of relationships between psychology and religion. Those relationships are very important and will remain so. Understanding one history of the conflicts and cooperation between science, however conceived, and religion, also however conceived, can provide some clarity in an area fraught with vague generalities. Hence the plan of this book is to study a specific religion and to differentiate the psychologies that it encountered. I do not assume that the relationships between psychology and Catholicism can be automatically generalized to those between other religions and other sciences. It may well be that they cannot. However, if we can talk about specific relationships and what actually happened within them, perhaps we can discern a wider range of possibilities. With that aspiration, I would say that one need be neither Catholic nor a psychologist to follow the thread of meaning through this book. The issues addressed are important for us all.

The question of boundaries

How can there be contested boundaries between psychology and the Catholic Church, since psychology is an empirical science whose sole duty is to discover the facts and then propose the theories that explain them? The Church has to do with beliefs and values. This division of labor between facts and values, between objective data and subjective beliefs, is still our taken-for-granted way of ensuring peace within ourselves and in our society. If this position, called naturalism, were the correct way to frame the relationship between psychology and religion, there could be contests of will and power, but not of knowledge. The reason for this is that, according to naturalism, the only way to gain certainty in knowledge is by natural scientific means. What we *ought* to do – ah! This the scientist cannot answer, because it is not a factual concern. At best, the psychologist could predict what consequences follow any course of action. A naturalistic philosophical presupposition, one that underlies much thinking in psychology, would ignore claims of psychological knowledge coming from a religion, because religion does not discover scientifically whatever it uncovers.

But since the beginnings of natural scientific psychology, and since the beginning of the profession of psychology in psychoanalysis and the like, church leaders, philosophers, theologians, and yes, church psychologists, have questioned psychology's knowledge claims and scientific authority. These figures have contested the boundaries between the knowledge domain of psychology and that of the church in various ways. Some have disputed the claim that psychology can be a natural science. For others, even if psychology were what

some psychologists say it is, namely, an empirical science just like biology and physics, even then, as repeated incidents over the past century show, Catholic thinkers inside and outside psychology have disputed the limits of the competence of the psychologists. (The boundaries are contested in biology and physics, too, as debates over evolution and creation illustrate.) The reasons for these disputes are many, but central to them are the objects of investigation of the various sciences. For the sciences do not have the only access to these objects – such as living things, the object of biology, and material things, the object of physics. This is all the more the case when one turns to psychology, for here is a science – of disputed character – that deals with what? It deals with behavior, with experience, with the mind, with personality, with human beings and what they think, feel, and do. What are closer to the heart of the Church, of any church, than those things? It does no good to set up in the abstract a division of labor between psychology and the Church. That has been tried repeatedly, only to founder on the rocks in the tumultuous straits of human existence. Psychologists deal with flesh and blood human beings, often with their most intimate concerns. So does the Church, which has also as its concern the eternal destiny of these human beings. So how and where can we set up a clear and distinct partition? Where shall we find one when human thought, feeling, and action are involved?

The boundaries of science

Thomas Gieryn (1983) provides a solid sociological analysis of ways that scientists engage in "boundary-work," that is, make "attributions of selected characteristics to the institution of science for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes 'non-scientific' intellectual or professional activities" (p. 791). His examples include the efforts of John Tyndall in the nineteenth century to claim for scientists some of the academic authority that religion had had in Great Britain: "The Church . . . held power over educational institutions and used it to stall introduction of science into the curriculum" (p. 784), a situation that was repeated later to counter psychology's efforts to find a place in the curriculum. According to Tyndall, science differs from religion in four ways:

(1) Science improves our material lot; religion provides emotional comfort and consolation.
(2) Science uses experimentation to discover the attributes of nature; religion describes spiritual entities that cannot be empirically verified.
(3) Science does not follow any authority except the answers Nature gives to experimental questions; religion "continues to respect the authority of worn-out ideas and their creators" (p. 785).
(4) Science is objective; religion is subjective.

These four arguments elaborate one central point, namely, that science yields knowledge whereas religion produces feelings. In claiming this distinction between objective knowledge and subjective feeling, Tyndall sought to claim for science some of the authority that the Church had in his day. His boundary-work, demarcating the difference between the outer world and the inner world, served to determine a domain over which religious claims were invalid. Today, when scientific authority is common sense, some religious positions seek the status of scientific authority, as in the case of arguments for Intelligent Design.

Central to Gieryn's study is the conditions under which boundary-work is likely to occur. He identifies three situations: "(a) when the goal is *expansion* of authority or expertise into domains claimed by other professions or occupations . . .; (b) when the goal is *monopolization*[1] of professional authority and resources . . .; (c) when the goal is *protection of autonomy* over professional activities" (pp. 791–2). Gieryn concludes that "the boundaries of science are ambiguous, flexible, historically changing, contextually variable, internally inconsistent, and sometimes disputed" (p. 792). This analysis helps discern how boundaries are drawn without deciding in advance what significance to give to the truth claims of the participants.

Tyndall's demarcations serve to point to a larger issue, namely the question of what distinguishes something called "science" from other types of activities that also make knowledge claims. Gieryn's (1999) sociological studies of disputes over the nature of science illustrate the difficulties. Science as it exists in the "wild" is a complex thing:

> [It] is not embodied only in these first-time-through practices, instruments, research material, facts, and journals; it has several other realities too. Science [is] . . . a bit of the cognitive schema we use everyday to navigate material and symbolic lands. Science also exists in codified bureaucratic procedures, as when university catalogs divvy up the universe of learning into natural science, social science, and humanities.
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> (pp. 19–20)

It is this cultural complex called "science" that is at issue in this book, not some supposed ideal essence of science. In the chapters that follow, we will attempt to find out what the science of psychology has meant by examining what the participants in the various struggles have claimed it was. This view of the authority of science based on its knowledge claims is critical for the analyses in this book. In psychology, the basic questions about human beings are far from settled. As a consequence, what type of knowledge counts in psychology? Who can legitimately speak of human psychology, to put the matter bluntly, if to be human means to have an eternal destiny? Does not any science which

[1] Gieryn (1999, p. 16) calls this "expulsion," that is, the effort to deny the epistemic authority of science to contenders whom the other players deem non-scientific.

ignores that destiny ignore the most important point? Or is that destiny a matter of faith alone, and has the science of psychology plenty to do without tackling the questions of the soul? Questions such as these have been behind the boundary-work between psychology and the Catholic Church.

For Gieryn, the difficulty is not simply that boundary-work has occurred, because it might be the case that some contestants are simply wrong if, for example, we take the view of science developed by the philosopher, Karl Popper. Then we might say that psychoanalysis and Neoscholastic psychology (a type developed in the Catholic world) mistakenly called themselves sciences, but in fact they were not, because their key proposition could not be falsified, meaning that no scientific test could dispute their knowledge claims. One such claim would be the Neoscholastic conclusion that the evidence of psychology points to the reality of the rational soul as a spiritual, not a material, substance. From a Popperian point of view, how could such a conclusion be tested empirically? Therefore, so the argument would run, Neoscholasticism is not science. If Neoscholastic psychologists engaged in boundary-work, claiming scientific status for their psychology, that would not legitimate it as science, because it did not conform to the canons of science. But efforts to define in advance what science is by asserting a criterion such as falsifiability play only one part in determining what science is and what is the authority of science. Other considerations and other participants, sometimes remote from the laboratory or the university, decide what counts as science. At the same time, this does not mean that "anything goes" with science, because the cultural institutions that have stakes in science will object and will exclude or protect its autonomy and thus their epistemic authority. In this book, we will not define in advance what science is and is not. We will look at the disputes over its limits in order to see what science has become for us.

Such a strategy is vitally important for psychology, in which disputes over the nature of the discipline, its status as a science and, indeed, the meaning of "science," have been and remain integral to the kind of thing that psychology is. That is, boundary-work is not something psychologists do only when pressed by contenders; boundary-work is a distinguishing characteristic of psychology. Using Thomas Kuhn's terminology, we can say that boundary-work is part of "normal science" psychology and not only a part of "revolutionary science."

For psychology, there is the ever-recurring boundary dispute between the natural science and the human science approaches, with some attempting to define psychology as a natural science to the exclusion of a human science approach, and others seeking to enlarge the meaning of "science" to include the human sciences. Rather than rehash these arguments, this book takes the position that all science is interpretative or hermeneutical activity. Don Ihde (1997), approaching the natural sciences from a philosophical angle, argues that the tried and true differentiation between the natural sciences and the human sciences in terms of the former explaining nature and the latter interpreting

human realities has been challenged on the ground that the natural sciences too are interpretative. Ihde develops a theme from Bruno Latour, who presents the case that science works by producing a series of representations, each one of which becomes data for further interpretation, and that the very instruments used in the laboratory (the epitome of "real" science) are devices that inscribe – and Ihde adds, depict – something. Scientific activity entails, among other things, reading these inscriptions and depictions. Thus all science is an interpretative activity, and not only the human or social sciences. Heelan (1998) furthers this conception by using the metaphor of the library: when nature and Scripture are read, in terms of which library are they read? The modern sciences, starting with Galileo, read natural phenomena in terms of a mathematical library, in contrast with ancient science, which turned to other sources. This view of science differs from Gieryn's sociological analysis, but it is a reminder that whatever else science is, it is an activity performed by members of a larger cultural community. It also serves as a reminder that science has a history, and that it has had other libraries to draw upon.

Science and religion: the larger picture

What holds true for science in this study also holds true for religion. Both have histories, and the question "Whose Science? Whose Religion?" (Brooke and Cantor, 1998, p. 43) is relevant. Religion, whatever it is, does not claim to be – with some exceptions, such as Christian Science and Scientology – science. In this book, the parallels between science and religion are fairly precise, because here we are not dealing with religion in general but with a specific religion, Roman Catholicism.[2] With this religion, the questions of authority and of who speaks for the Church seem much clearer than with science, and especially with psychology. The Church has a hierarchical structure, and the Pope has, in a very real sense, the last word. Psychology has no pope. Even acknowledging the more or less fixed structure of the Church, in this study we are not dealing with an abstract entity, but with a living community composed of individuals responding to unique cultural and historical events. In addition, the Church is no monolithic structure, so that the questions of what the Church is and how it responded to developments in the sciences do not have univocal answers. As we shall see, there have been boundary disputes between the Church and psychology, and

[2] Because of this limitation, the whole question of what is and what is not a religion can be avoided, although others have not avoided it. Pargament (1999) has made one attempt to define religion, especially in relation to spirituality. As he points out, authors going back to William James (1903) in *The varieties of religious experience* have had to make decisions about what to include and what to exclude. The present effort has the same limitations. So nothing in this book should be assumed to apply *a priori* to other religions or forms of religion. I do not think that there is an essence of religion that would permit us to draw the lines of demarcation between religion and psychology deductively.

moreover, boundary disputes within the Church between Catholic psychologists and other Catholics, some of whom were also psychologists.

The larger vicissitudes of science and religion I shall not discuss (see Asad, 1993; Pickstock, 1998). Assuming that they are not fixed entities, their relationship cannot be defined categorically. Brooke (1991) has described three standard concepts of the relationship: conflict, complementarity, and mutual advantage. The conflict model is familiar these days in the political wrangling over creationism, but Brooke has shown with specific historical examples that conflict is not a necessary relationship between religion and science, and creationism is as much a conflict between theologies as it is a conflict with science. Complementarity can take many forms, including the one Tyndall described. Typically, perhaps, it takes the form of a division of labor, especially where a natural scientific psychology prevails. Mutual advantage can occur at the practical as well as at the theoretical level. When a church hires a psychotherapist, or a religiously affiliated institution establishes a psychology department, we have examples of mutual advantage. When Victor White sought to collaborate with Carl Jung, he intended mutual advantage for both Thomistic theology and for analytical psychology. Brooke (1991) has concluded that no simple answer to the relationships between science and religion exists and that they are better addressed with examinations of specific instances.

Boundaries between psychology and religion

One of the significant ongoing boundary-making efforts that define psychology as a science has been its relationship with spiritualism. Coon (1992) observes that, over the past century, "psychology has been a magnet for cultural anxieties about the hazy borderline between science and pseudoscience, between the natural and the supernatural" (p. 143). Coon's study of how early experimental psychologists came to grips with the claims of the spiritualists, including mediums, "mind-readers," and mental healers, is a good case in point for the difficulties in drawing the lines between what is science and what is not (and what is religion and what is not). Coon concludes in part by saying:

> In an era of increasing skepticism about God, scientific naturalism offered the latest and best substitute providing order and reason in the universe. In this worldview, espoused by the majority of experimental psychologists, psychophysical parallelism held sway. Physical phenomena could only occur as the result of physical causes. Psychological phenomena might bear a one-to-one correspondence to physical phenomena but could not cause or be caused by them.
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> (p. 149)

Psychophysiological parallelism was a position close to that of the spiritualists, who asserted the effectiveness of the parallel world of the spirit in the material

world. Efforts by some early psychologists to distinguish themselves from the spiritualists were complicated by the fact that William James, the premier psychologist at the turn of the twentieth century, took the spiritualists' claims seriously. In reaction to what were seen as the spiritualists' excessive claims, many in psychology found the embrace of a materialistic conception of science enticing. Where did this outcome leave the psychologist who was also a religious person, for whom the physical world could feel the effects of the action of the spiritual? Where did it leave the psychologist who at the same time rejected spiritualism and its promise of "a new secular faith" (p. 144)? This was the position of the psychologist who was also Catholic, who held that the immaterial soul acted on the body, and that miracles, such as those reported at Lourdes, happened. This is an example of the problem that faces us.

Many have been the boundaries drawn between psychology and religion, and between psychology and theology. Bear in mind that these lines often serve practical purposes, such as securing the independence of a psychology department in a college, or persuading a congregation that its members suffering from addictions or abuse need counseling in addition to prayer. Others erase or redraw the lines in order to deal with the less than sage advice, in the name of some enlightened theory or other, that therapists may give to their Christian clients. But these practical matters often arise from or lead back into more speculative ones. The fact is that, before the nineteenth century, the boundary between psychology and the care of the soul did not exist. Even when physicians, lawyers, and bankers offered clients advice on living the good life, in much of the western world prior to the nineteenth century, there was more of a common ground for ethical decision-making than now exists (MacIntyre, 1984). I am not prejudging the issue here, and throughout this text I will avoid slipping into either a "grand narrative" of progress or of regress. Moral pluralism is our condition, and in light of the extant alternatives, we may hope it remains our condition. The point is that given our contemporary situation, the question of boundaries between psychology and religion promise to remain viable and contested.

So how have the boundaries been drawn? Without pretense of being complete,[3] here are the main ways.

[3] This way of describing interactions between psychology and religion is not the only one. Kevin Gillespie, SJ, offers another one, drawing on the work of John Haught. In this view, there are five types of relationship between psychology and religion: conflict, contrast, contact, confirmation, and – to be avoided – conflation. Conflict occurs when "science invalidates religion" (Gillespie, 2007a, p. 176); contrast means that science and religion have nothing in common (for example, there is no theology of reaction time or color vision); contact means that the two differ but can interact (Gillespie uses the setting up of the American Catholic Psychological Association as an example); and confirmation signifies how the two work toward a common end. Conflation is psychology-as-religion. These categories overlap the ones I am using: Haught and Gillespie's conflict is "psychology as religion"; contrast is the "divorce" of psychology and religion; contact is similar to the

(1) *Psychology divorced from philosophy and theology*. First, and most common, is that which derives from the stance that psychology is a natural science. As such, it derives its data from empirical investigation, and on that basis it forms theories to explain the relationships between the facts. Psychology so conceived makes no philosophical, theological, ethical, or political statements. Indeed, if it is indeed a natural science, it cannot make them. In this view, the boundary seems clear.
(2) *Psychology bound to philosophy and theology*. A second position is that since all psychology has underlying presuppositions, philosophical, cultural, and historical, the lines between psychology and religion are not easy to draw. This position may push the question about boundaries to philosophy, where a boundary question also arises: "Can there be a Christian philosophy?" This position also makes it imperative to probe the presuppositions of psychological theory, and to ask of them their compatibility with views of human nature stemming from religious tradition. In principle, the autonomy of psychology is recognized, but it is not absolute, since competing and even superior claims must be acknowledged.
(3) *A Christian psychology*. Third is the view that scientific psychology has largely been a secular affair and that what is needed today is a Christian or even, more specifically, a Catholic psychology. This position sees secular psychology as hostile to the claims of religion and as competing with them.
(4) *Psychology instead of religion*. A fourth position asserts that psychology is a more rational approach to living than is religion and should replace it. A variant on this theme is more irenic, and it significantly alters the nature of the boundary. In this view, psychology does not replace religion; it rather participates in one of the traditions of "unchurched spirituality." This route appeals to those for whom religions, with their teachings and competing claims to ultimate truth, seem irrelevant, but for whom matters of the spirit are vitally important. The "spiritual but not religious" portion of the contemporary population often turns to psychology of one sort or another instead of to religious faith. This group probably makes up the majority of those who pursue this fourth path. "Where religion was, let psychology be," seems to be the heart of this approach.

If the first two alternative ways of drawing a boundary are guided by the principle that "good fences make good neighbors," the second two challenge

second alternative presented here, except that "contact" has to do with ways that psychology and religion interact positively, and this, in my view, can be seen in a variety of ways under my second category, although my way stresses more the theoretical. Virtually all the topics covered in this book could fit under "contact." "Confirmation" is also largely handled in my second category. "Conflation," "psychology as religion," I would see in terms of unchurched spirituality and contend that it is not conflation but a unique formulation of a psychologized spirituality. A purely Christian psychology could be a better example of conflation.