UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

WILLIAM JAMES & VASSILIS SAROGLOU:

A COMPARATIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

THESIS SUBMITTED AS PARTIAL REQUIREMENT

FOR THE MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

IN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

BY

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APRIL 2019

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

WILLIAM JAMES & VASSILIS SAROGLOU:

UNE ÉTUDE PSYCHOLOGIQUE COMPARATIVE

SUR LA SPIRITUALITÉ CONTEMPORAINE

MÉMOIRE PRÉSENTÉ

COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DE LA MAÎTRISE EN SCIENCES DES RELIGIONS

PAR

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AVRIL 2019

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL
Service des bibliothèques

Avertissement

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The religious landscape in Western secularized societies is changing. The term 'spirituality' is increasingly popular and, according to recent studies, one in four individuals now self-identify as "spiritual but not religious". Despite the popularity of and interest in spirituality, the concept is unclear and lacks theoretical grounding within the psychology of religion. This thesis proposes a conceptual and theoretical comparative analysis of spirituality covering two periods in psychology: early experimental psychology and current psychological theory. It will explore the psychological characteristics of spirituality. Spirituality will be described as it was first understood and presented by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, published in 1902. Spirituality will then be examined as it is currently understood. Contemporary psychological theory will help understand the underlying psychological dimensions of spirituality as they are presented by Vassilis Saroglou in the Big Four model (2011) which proposes four basic, possibly universal psychological dimensions of religious experience: believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. The study will also analyze a documented contemporary example of self-identification as "spirituel but not religious" using the Big Four model. We suggest that Saroglou's model offers a common framework for assessing the psychological characteristics of spirituality and promises to be a useful tool in theoretical, conceptual, and applied work on self-identification as "spiritual but not religious".

Keywords: spirituality, psychology of religion, William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Vassilis Saroglou, Big Four model.

RÉSUMÉ

Le paysage religieux des sociétés sécularisées occidentales change. Le terme spiritualité est devenu populaire et, selon des études récentes, un individu sur quatre s'auto-identifie comme étant « spirituel mais non religieux ». Malgré la popularité de la spiritualité et l'intérêt qu'elle engendre au sein de la population, le concept n'est pas clair et il est difficile à cerner en psychologie de la religion. Dans ce mémoire, nous comparons deux époques en psychologie, soit celle de la psychologie expérimentale à ses débuts et la période courante en psychologie, le but étant d'examiner, tant au plan théorique que conceptuel, les caractéristiques psychologiques de la spiritualité moderne. Celle-ci est d'abord décrite comme elle fut comprise et présentée par William James dans son oeuvre *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, publiée en 1902. Ensuite, la théorie psychologique courante, représentée ici par les travaux de Vassilis Saroglou, permet d'analyser les caractéristiques psychologiques sous-jacentes de la spiritualité comme elles sont formulées par Saroglou dans le modèle *Big Four* (2011). Ce modèle propose quatre dimensions psychologiques sous-jacentes, possiblement universelles, soit les dimensions cognitive, affective, comportementale, et le sens d'appartenance. Cette étude comprend aussi une analyse, à l'aide du modèle de Saroglou, d'un exemple contemporain et documenté d'auto-identification de « spirituel mais non religieux ». Il est suggéré que ce modèle offre un cadre commun pour comprendre les caractéristiques psychologiques de l'auto-identification comme « spirituel mais non religieux » et promet d'être un instrument utile dans les études théoriques, conceptuelles et appliquées sur la spiritualité

Mots clefs: spiritualité, la psychologie de la religion, William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Vassilis Saroglou, le modèle *Big Four*.

INTRODUCTION

The religious landscape in Western secularised societies has experienced important observable changes the last decades. Among the general population, a growing number of people self-identify as spiritual but not religious. Although spirituality is not a new concept, it gained popularity in the 1960s to distinguish between institutionalized religion which, in the new context of the use of the term, is referred to as religion and de-institutionalized, private, or personal religion which is referred to as 'spirituality'. Spirituality is a subject of renewed interest in psychology of religion as researchers attempt to understand the phenomenon and determine its relation to religion as well as discerning the particular underlying psychological characteristics of contemporary spirituality.

Self-identifying as spiritual but not religious or more spiritual than religious has increased significantly since the beginning of the 21st century. Empirical evidence documents this interest in spirituality over religiosity in certain individuals. A considerable number of studies completed in the decade before 2001 in the United States show evidence that 20% of the population (one in five individuals) self-identify as spiritual but not religious. This number has more than doubled with almost every second person (47%) outside organized religion in the United States self-identifying as spiritual but not religious[1]. Longitudinal studies in 14 countries over a period of two decades (1980-2000) demonstrate a clear pattern of increase in post-Christian spirituality in France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Sweden; a modest increase in the United States; and a recognizable increase in Germany[2].

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1   Heinz Streib and Ralph W. Hood, (2011). "Spirituality as Privatized Experience-Oriented Religion: Empirical and Conceptual Perspectives". *Implicit Religion*, 14:4 (2011), pp. 436 & 440.
2   Ibid., p. 437.

A study conducted in Belgium (before 2003) of approximately 1500 individuals discovered that 27% found both spirituality and religion important; 3% favoured religion but not spirituality; 25% were interested in spirituality but not in religion; and 45% considered neither religion nor spirituality important[3]. Comparatively, a study in 2008 by the International Social Survey Programme[4] showed the following results for participants in the U.S.A (n=1,298) and Germany (n=1,452): 40% in the United States and 10% in Germany describe themselves as spiritual and religious; 23% in the United States and 31% in Germany consider themselves religious but not spiritual; 24% in the United States and 11% in Germany self-identify as spiritual but not religious; and 12% of participants in the United States and 48% in Germany claim to be neither religious nor spiritual[5].

These numbers show a growing interest in spirituality. However, despite its popularity, the term spirituality "is often poorly defined and one's understanding [...] so broad that it becomes a mere frame word devoid of meaning"[6]. The term lacks conceptual and theoretical precision. This thesis will explore in what ways classic psychological explanatory theories of religion remain valid when attempting to understand contemporary spirituality and what current theories propose concerning individual psychological characteristics of spirituality.

The study proposes a theoretical and conceptual comparative analysis of spirituality covering two periods in the history of psychology of religion, early experimental

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3 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), p. 473.
4 Established in 1984 by Australia, Germany, Great Britain, and the US, the ISSP is a cross-national collaboration programme conducting annual surveys on diverse topics relevant to social sciences. Online: <http://www.issp.org/menu-top/home>, consulted May 8, 2017.
5 Heinz Streib and Ralph W. Hood. "Spirituality as Privatized Experience-Oriented Religion: Empirical and Conceptual Perspectives". *Implicit Religion*, 14:4 (2011), pp. 438 & 440.
6 Peter la Cour, Nadja Hørdam Ausker and Niels Christian Hvidt. "Six Understandings of the Word 'Spirituality' in a Secular Country". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 34 (2012), p. 63.

psychology and current theory in psychology. The first chapter will describe spirituality as it was initially understood in early psychology by the classic theory of William James presented in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, published in 1902. The second chapter will focus on how current psychological theory can help understand the underlying psychological dimensions of spirituality as they are presented by Vassilis Saroglou in the Big Four model (2011). This model proposes four basic psychological dimensions of religious experience: believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. The third chapter will compare the work of James and Saroglou. Differences and similarities will be noted in order to provide an overview of how the understanding of spirituality may have evolved in psychology over the past century. The final chapter will demonstrate in what ways current psychological theory can be helpful in understanding contemporary expressions of spirituality by applying the Big Four model to an example of a spiritual but not religious experience.

CHAPTER I

SPIRITUALITY AND EARLY EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY:
THE WORK OF WILLIAM JAMES

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will focus on religion and early experimental psychology as it is presented by James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (henceforth referred to as *Varieties*), an incredible piece of work, extremely well written, covering a multitude of religious experiences intertwined with examples, psychological interpretations, and personal comments. The process is threefold. The first part will situate James within the history of the psychology of religion with regard to his contribution and interests. The second part will offer an account of James' understanding and description of religion and religious experience. It will include a brief presentation of *Varieties* with regard to style, purpose, and context. James' understanding of religion will be introduced followed by a description of the psychological characteristics of three specific varieties of religious experience: conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. The third and final part will demonstrate the relevance of *Varieties* in the study of contemporary spirituality as contemporary psychologists are returning to James to interpret current religious issues in psychology of religion including modern spirituality in all its varieties.

1.2 James and the History of Psychology of Religion

Until the latter part of the 19th century, psychology was considered a branch of philosophy. With the beginning of experimental psychology in Germany and the United States, the study of psychology developed into its own independent scientific discipline. William James was instrumental in the separation of philosophy and psychology. "[He] was more than just a writer about psychology; he was a leading analyst in a discipline that was becoming increasingly linked with physiology. In 1875 he founded the world's first psychological laboratory, before those created by Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig in 1879 and by G. Stanley Hall and John Hopkins in 1881. James' [...] experimental work laid the groundwork for a more ambitious laboratory and eventually a separate department of psychology"[7].

"The movement of psychology away from philosophy and toward the laboratory resulted from its new alliance with physiology which promised to illuminate the study of perception, emotion, thought, memory, attention, will, and association through discoveries about functions of the central nervous system"[8]. By becoming a science, the hope was that psychology might solve some of the questions thinkers had struggled with for centuries and replace superstition, folk wisdom and metaphysical speculation with the rule of universal law[9]. James is often referred to as the founder of American psychology. He was president of the American Psychological Association and professor of "physiology, psychology, and philosophy at Harvard – a career that carried a man just out of medical school to a reputation thirty-five years later as one

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7   Gerald E. Myers. *William James: His Life and Thought.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 6.
8   Ibid., p. 54.
9   Sonu Shamdasani. "Psychologies as Ontology-Making Practices: William James and the Pluralities of Psychological Experience", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 27.

of America's most prominent intellectuals"[10]. His writings are extensive beginning with the publication in 1890 of *Principles of Psychology*, a twelve-hundred page masterwork following the psychological method of introspection, which he defines as "the looking into our own minds and reporting what we there discover"[11].

Research in the early stages of the psychology of religion included methods such as questionnaires and personal documents used by Starbuck and Leuba, as well as the quasi-experimental techniques used by Coe[12]. James conducted experiments in hypnosis and automatic writing. His interests included the mind-cure movements (alternatives to orthodox medicine based on the idea that mental and physical symptoms might be eliminated through mental techniques), psychical research such as foretelling the future and astrology, and paranormal psychology including telepathy, clairvoyance, and mediumship. When the British Society for Psychical Research was established in 1882, James obtained membership in the Society and proceeded to found the American Society in 1884[13]. "Psychical research was without doubt one of his most controversial interests. He was already suspect in some circles because of his religious and metaphysical interests as well as his preoccupation with abnormal psychology and with self help programs"[14]. While reading in the James papers, Eugene Taylor discovered 125 pages of handwritten notes for a series of Lowell Lectures entitled *Exceptional Mental States* delivered by James in 1896. The series included subjects such as dreams and hypnotism, automatism, hysteria, multiple personality, demonical possession, witchcraft, degeneration, and genius. Contrary to his Lowell Lectures in 1878 on *'The Brain and the Mind'*, later published

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10 Gerald E. Myers. *William James: His Life and Thought.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 13.
11 William James. *Principles of Psychology.* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Brittanica, 1890/1952), p. 121.
12 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion". *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality.* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 9.
13 Ibid., pp. 6-10.
14 Ibid., p. 10.

in *Principles of Psychology* (1890), and his 1906 Lowell Lectures published in *Pragmatism* (1907), these lectures were never published, most likely because "they were on heretical topics rejected by psychology as a developing reductionistic science, religion as an exclusively Christian and theistic enterprise, and philosophy as primarily a logical and an analytical endeavour"[15].

Early American psychologists concerned themselves with both religious and spiritual issues, including spiritualism which caused some tension between psychologists and religionists[16]. Religious experience could now be adequately explained by psychological processes thus eliminating the need for supernatural references. "Those committed to psychology as a natural science were courageous enough to tackle some of the most profound and meaningful religious phenomena of the time as lacking any supernatural necessity"[17].

James was aware of the limits of natural science with regard to psychological questions particular to the psychology of religion. "James argued that religious thought was warranted by the fact that psychological reductive theories of religious experience were incomplete. A science of psychology must accept that ontological possibility of transcendence variously experienced"[18], a claim that was rejected by subsequent generations of psychologists who adopted methodologies such as behaviourism ignoring any serious ontological claims. Psychology and religion were seen as supporting incompatible ontological claims[19].

15 Eugene Taylor. "Metaphysics and Consciousness in James's *Varieties*: A Centenary Lecture", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 14.

16 Religionist is a term for a person with "excessive or exaggerated religious zeal". Online dictionary <https://dictionary.reference.com/browse/religionist>. Consulted April 21, 2017.

17 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 8.

18 Ibid., p. 9.

19 Ibid.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James introduced a new approach to the study of religion "by re-establishing experimental psychology as a phenomenologically based enterprise grounded in human experience"[20]. He defined psychology as "the science of finite individual minds [that] assumes as its data (1) *thoughts and feelings*, and (2) *a physical world* in time and space with which they co-exist and which (3) *they* know"[21].

1.3 James' Understanding of Religion and Religious Experience

1.3.1 *The Varieties of Religious Experience*[22]

The Varieties of Religious Experience has been called "the most important treatise on religion by any American [...] The book is a study in human nature, specifically as it is revealed through the psychology of religious experience. [It is] the published version of the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion which James delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1902"[23]. For over a hundred years, beginning in 1888, the Gifford Lectures have been one of the foremost lecture series dealing with religion, science, and philosophy. The prestige of the Gifford Lectures derives in part from the world-renowned lecturers invited to speak as well as from the diversity of intellectual disciplines they represent[24]. William James was the first American to be invited to speak. He refers to this himself: "It seems the natural thing for us to listen whilst the

20 Eugene Taylor. "Metaphysics and Consciousness in James's *Varieties*: A Centenary Lecture", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 20.
21 William James. *Principles of Psychology*. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Brittanica, 1890/1952), preface.
22 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p.321.
23 Gerald E. Myers. *William James: His Life and Thought*. (Yale University Press, 1986), p. 14.
24 The Gifford Lectures. Online <https://www.giffordlectures.org/overview/history>. Consulted April 21, 2017.

Europeans talk. The contrary habit [...] we have not yet acquired; and in him who first makes the adventure it begets a certain sense of apology being due for so presumptious an act"[25]. The title (*The Varieties of Religious Experience)* and subtitle (*A Study in Human Nature*) indicate quite clearly what James intends to cover in these lectures and how he understands the subject. James will speak of religion as experience, of which there is a variety, and that these varieties of religious experience are part of human nature. The lectures are "a laborious attempt to extract from the privacies of religious experience some general facts which can be defined in formulas upon which everybody may agree".

After a few personal remarks, James begins his lectures by stating the manner in which he will administer the lectureship. "I am neither a theologian nor a scholar learned in the history of religions, nor an anthropologist. Psychology is the only branch of learning in which I am particularly versed. To the psychologist, the religious propensities of man [*sic*] must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution. [As] a psychologist, the natural thing for me would be to invite you to a descriptive survey of those religious propensities"[26]. This survey consists of an extensive collection of 214[27] *documents humains* exemplifying the varieties of religious experience he intends to expose. "James selected his case histories with care because he meant *Varieties* to be a massive testimonial, from celebrated saints as well as unknown cranks and eccentrics, to the good that religious belief can accomplish in people's lives"[28]. He covers

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25 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p.3.
26 Ibid., p. 4.
27 Jeremy Carrette. "Passionate Belief: William James, Emotion and Religious Experience", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 87.
28 Gerald E. Myers. *William James: His Life and Thought.* (Yale University Press, 1986), p. 469.

experiences ranging from healthy-mindedness, the sick soul, and the divided self; to conversion, saintliness, and mysticism.

James' approach includes both an existential judgement, which answers questions related to the nature of the object, its constitution, origin, and history from a biological and psychological perspective; and a spiritual judgement, which poses questions related to the meaning and the significance of the object now that it is here. "Our spiritual judgement [...] our opinion of the significance and value of a human event or condition, must be decided upon empirical grounds exclusively", James' empiricist criterion being not origin but *the way in which it works on the whole*, by its fruits[29]. He articulates three criteria by which religious experience is to be assessed: 1) immediate luminosity which is the aspect of spiritual judgement that prompts an investigator to take seriously the experiential component, 2) philosophical reasonableness which assesses whether these alternate states of awareness can be shown to be reasonable and logical; and 3) moral helpfulness which is demonstrated when and if a religious state of mind can be shown to initiate positive consequences for the individual[30].

Varieties is "an attempt by James to counter the medical materialism of the scientific community [and a response] to the psychological discussion of his time in reacting against 'associationist' models"[31]. In its early period, American psychology of religion became closely linked to "Freudian theory and its claim to have found a naturalistic

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29 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), pp. 177 & 16.
30 G. William Barnard. "Mystical Assessments: Jamesian Reflections on Spiritual Judgements", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 134.
31 Jeremy Carrette. "Passionate Belief: William James, Emotion and Religious Experience", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 83 & 84.

scientific explanation for religion"[32]. Whereas James' treatment of psychology as a natural science was provisional, Freud with his theory of psychoanalysis insisted upon psychology as a natural science. James was critical of Freud, without explicitly naming him in *Varieties*, which is evident in the following examples:

> Eliza's delight in her church is a symptom of her hysterical condition. [...] A more fully developed example of the same kind of reasoning is the fashion, quite common nowadays among certain writers, of criticizing the religious emotions by showing a connection between them and the sexual life[33].

> It seems to me that few conceptions are less instructive than this reinterpretation of religion as perverted sexuality. [...] But then why not equally call religion an aberration of the digestive function, and prove one's point by the worship of Bacchus and Ceres [...]. Language drawn from eating and drinking is probably as common in religious literature as is language drawn from the sexual life[34].

> In the natural sciences [...] it never occurs to anyone to try to refute opinions by showing up their author's neurotic constitution. Opinions here are invariably tested by logic and by experiment, no matter what may be their author's neurological type. It should be no otherwise with religious opinions[35].

James refers only indirectly to Freud but mentions others with whom he disagrees by name (doctors Moreau, Lombroso, and Maudsley, and a Mr. Nisbet) as examples of medical materialists and has the following to say regarding their approach:

> The medical materialists are therefore only so many belated dogmatists, neatly turning the tables on their predecessors by using the criterion of origin in a destructive instead of an accreditive way. They are effective with their talk of

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32 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 10.

33 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 9.

34 Ibid., p. 10.

35 Ibid., pp. 14-15.

pathological origin only so long as supernatural origin is pleaded by the other side, and nothing but the argument from origin is under discussion[36].

James' criterion for judging religious belief is not its origin, although that is a valuable criterion, but is based on the way it works as a whole, by its results exclusively. The ultimate test of religious values is nothing psychological, nothing definable in terms of *how it happens*, but in terms of *what is attained*, that is, a new spiritual vitality[37]. What James hopes to achieve is to emphasize the enormous diversity that the spiritual lives of people exhibit in terms of their wants, their susceptibilities and their capacities. "The psychology of individual types of character has hardly begun to be sketched as yet – [these] lectures may possibly serve as a crumb-like contribution to the structure"[38].

1.3.2 Understanding Religion

James is not interested in studying second-hand religion which he describes as that which has been made by others, communicated by tradition, and determined by fixed forms of imitation, thus referring to institutional religion. One must instead search for the original experiences, which set the patterns for

> this mass of suggested feeling and imitated conduct. These experiences can only be found in individuals for whom religion exists not as a dull habit, but as an acute fever. [Such] religious geniuses have often shown symptoms of nervous instability [and] been subject to abnormal psychical visitations [...] and frequently they have fallen into trances, heard voices, seen visions, and presented all sorts of peculiarities which are ordinarily classified as [...]

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36 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 15.
37 Ibid., p. 17.
38 Ibid., p. 82.

pathological features [but which] have helped to give them their religious authority and influence[39].

Studying religious existential conditions, James states, cannot ignore the pathological aspects of the subject but must name and describe them as if they occurred in non-religious people. There is not a single state of mind that does not have "some organic process as its condition. Scientific theories are organically conditioned just as much as religious emotions are [...] our longings and pantings, our questions and beliefs [...] are organically founded, be they [of] religious or of non-religious content"[40]. It leads to a much better understanding of a thing's significance, James suggests, to consider its exaggerations and perversions and its nearest relatives elsewhere. To understand a thing rightly, it must be seen both out of and in its environment to be acquainted with the whole range of its variations. "Religious melancholy, whatever peculiarities it may have *qua* religious, is at any rate melancholy. [The] moment we agree to stand by experimental results and inner quality, in judging of values – [we] see that we are likely to ascertain the distinctive significance of religious melancholy [...] far better by comparing them as conscientiously as we can with other varieties of melancholy [...], than by refusing to consider their place [...] and treating them as if they were outside of nature's order altogether"[41].

Religion, as James understands the concept, cannot stand for any single principle or essence but is a collective name for many characteristics equally important. Likewise, when we consider the term 'religious sentiment' as a collective name for the many sentiments religious objects may arouse, "we see that it probably contains nothing

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39 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 7.
40 Ibid., p. 12.
41 Ibid., pp. 19-21.

whatever of a psychologically specific nature"[42]. Religious love is only the natural emotion of love directed at a religious object. There is no elementary religious emotion but rather a variety of emotions to draw upon. "If you wish to grasp [religion's] essence, you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the more constant elements"[43]. Feelings belong in the personal realm, hence personal religion, not institutional religion, is the subject of James' study. "In the more personal branch of religion it is [...] the inner dispositions of man himself which form the center of interest, his conscience, his deserts, his helplessness, his incompleteness"[44]. This leads James to propose the following meaning of the term religion for the purpose of the lectures: *"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"*[45]. The relation may be moral, physical, or ritual. He determines the meaning of 'divine' as "only such a primal reality as the individual feels impelled to respond to solemnly and gravely"[46].

Religion in its most general terms, James states, consists of the belief that there is an unseen order and our good lies in adjusting ourselves harmoniously to it. He seeks to know what the 'psychological particularities' of such an attitude might be. "All our attitudes, moral, practical, emotional, as well as religious, are due to the 'objects' of our consciousness, the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves"[47]. In the religious sphere of experience, many people possess

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42 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 22.
43 Ibid., p. 372.
44 Ibid., p. 23.
45 Ibid., p. 24.
46 Ibid., p. 30.
47 Ibid., p. 41.

the objects of their beliefs not as conceptions which their intellect accepts as true but in the form of quasi-sensible realities directly apprehended[48].

James does not use the term spirituality in his study of religious experience. He uses only the adjectival form 'spiritual' (e.g. spiritual vitality, spiritual habits, spiritual emotions) without clarifying its meaning except in the case of 'spiritual judgement'. He speaks of individuals' spiritual lives and of a spiritual universe. The closest James comes to a definition of 'spiritual' is by what it is not. When speaking of the conversion experience, he states that self-surrender "has been and always must be regarded as the vital turning point of the religious life, so far as the religious life is spiritual and no affair of outer works and ritual and sacraments"[49]. This is similar to how James describes the difference between institutional and personal religion, thus the terms 'spiritual' and 'personal religion', from a contemporary perspective, might be interchangeable.

> Worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity, theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization, are the essentials of religion in the institutional branch [...] In the more personal branch of religion it is on the contrary the inner dispositions of man himself which form the center of interest. [The] acts to which this sort of religion prompts are personal not ritual acts, the individual transacts the business by himself alone[50].

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48 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 49.
49 Ibid., p.157.
50 Ibid., p. 23.

1.3.3   Descriptions of Religious Experience

It seems common within academic fields studying religion that providing definitions of various concepts, including the term 'religion', is a difficult matter. This is not a new struggle as *Varieties* aptly portrays. 'Experience' is among those difficult terms. It is "one of the most obscure we have"[51]. Experience is something other than mere action or behaviour and cannot be reduced to simply thought or belief nor equated with emotions or feelings, as they are only part of what is meant by experience. Experience refers to a total way of being and cannot be reduced to its parts. *Religious* experience refers to something particular, namely that which is perceived to be religious. Psychologists can identify religious experience as experience identified within religious traditions as religious. The extent to which an experience can be described as religious depends upon the interpretation of the experience[52].

The world of experience consists, James claims, of an objective and a subjective part. The former may be more extensive than the latter, yet the latter cannot be omitted or suppressed. The objective part is the sum total of what an individual at any given time may be thinking. The subjective part is the inner state in which the thinking happens. In the objective part, thoughts are objects whose existence is not inward but outward while the subjective part, the inner state, is the experience itself; its reality and the individual's experience are one[53]. Experience, as it is presented by James, "stands for, though it is not exhausted by, sensation, perception, feelings, prayer, changes of heart, deliverances from fear, and alterations of attitude"[54]. The language of *Varieties* is literary and poetic rather than scientific resulting in James using certain terms

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51 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford,UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 246.
52 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 246.
53 Ibid., p. 369.

interchangeably. For example emotions, feelings, and affections are interchangeable as are the terms characteristics, peculiarities, marks, and qualities.

The following comprises three examples demonstrating how James applied psychological concepts to speak of religious experience. The choice to include only conversion, saintliness, and mysticism as examples of religious experience is based on two factors: (1) the necessity to reduce the large amount of information contained in *Varieties* for the purpose of this brief study, and (2) these specific expressions of religious experience seem more interesting from a contemporary psychological and spiritual perspective.

Conversion

James suggests that "man's liability to sudden and complete conversion [is] one of his most curious peculiarities"[55].

> To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self [...] becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities[56].

In order to begin to describe the psychological elements of the conversion experience, James refers to what he calls *the habitual centre of personal energy,* that is, the group of ideas to which an individual is devoted and from which an individual works. Depending on the kind of ideas and whether they become central or remain peripheral will shape an individual's conversion experience[57]. To say that someone is converted, according to James, means that religious ideas, previously peripheral, become central.

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54 Reinhold Niebuhr. (1997). "William James on Religious Experience", in *The Cambridge Companion to William James*, edited by Ruth A. Putnam. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 215.

55 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 171.

56 Ibid., p. 142.

57 Ibid., p. 147.

Religious aims now form the habitual centre of personal energy. When one idea or aim grows so stable as to expel definitely its previous rivals from the individual's life, there is a tendency to speak of the phenomenon as a 'transformation'. Such change is caused by a shift in emotional excitement. Emotional occasions, especially violent ones, are extremely potent in precipitating mental rearrangements whether they be of a religious nature or not. Hope, happiness, security, resolve, which are also emotions characteristic of conversion, can be explosive and emotions that come in this way, James states, seldom leave the individual unaffected.

As an example, James refers to an interesting piece of work on psychology of religion by Professor Starbuck on conversion experience as being also a general psychological phenomenon of youth.

> Professor Starbuck of California has shown by statistical inquiry how closely parallel in its manifestation the ordinary "conversion" which occurs in young people brought up in evangelical circles is to that growth into a larger spiritual life which is a normal phase of adolescence in every class of human beings. The age is the same, falling usually between fourteen and seventeen. The symptoms are the same, a sense of incompleteness and imperfection; brooding, depression, morbid introspection, and a sense of sin; anxiety about the hereafter; distress over doubts and the like. And the result is the same – a happy relief and objectivity, as the confidence in self gets greater through the adjustement of the faculties to the wider outlook. In spontaneous religious awakening, apart from revivalistic examples, and in the ordinary storms and stress and moulting-time [*sic*] of adolescence, we also may meet with mystical experiences, astonishing the subjects by their suddenness, just as in revivalistic conversion. The analogy, in fact, is complete; and Starbuck's conclusion as to these ordinary youthful conversions would seem to be the only sound one: Conversion is in its essence a normal adolescent phenomenon, incidental to the passage from the child's small universe to the wider intellectual and spiritual life of maturity[58].

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58 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 149.

James describes two ways in which conversion can happen. One is conscious (or voluntary), and the other is subconscious (or involuntary). In the first type, conversion is gradual and consists in building up, piece by piece, a new set of moral and spiritual habits. In the second type, which is the one James will focus on, the subconscious effects are more abundant and startling and the element of self-surrender plays an important role. Conversion of the second type is, James states quoting Dr. Starbuck, "a process of struggling away from sin[59] rather than a striving towards righteousness"[60]. The struggle away from incompleteness towards a positive ideal requires the relinquishing of such emotions as anger, worry, fear, despair and 'other undesirable affections'. This may happen as the individual is overpowered by the opposite feeling or by exhaustion, that is the individual stops caring and a temporary apathy ensues. Although temporary exhaustion more frequently seems to form part of the conversion crisis, both conditions, the subconscious ripening of one affection (positive) and the exhaustion of the other (negative), must have been simultaneously present in order to produce the result, that is conversion.

The difference between a gradual and a sudden convert is a simple psychological characteristic. The recipient of sudden conversion is a subject who is in possession of a large region in which mental work can go on subconsciously or subliminally and from which invasive experiences may come. The "possession of a developed subliminal self, and of a [...] pervious margin, is thus a *conditio sine qua non* of the subject's becoming converted in the instantaneous way"[61]. A sudden conversion, a transformation of the striking kind as James refers to it, is likely to happen in a subject exposed to a converting influence and in whom three factors unite:

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59 Instead of the theological terms 'sin' and 'righteousness', James speaks of 'incompleteness' and 'a positive ideal'.
60 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 149.
61 Ibid., p. 180.

pronounced emotional sensibility, a tendency to automatisms[62], and suggestibility of the passive type.

The feeling that accompanies the conversion experience is a sense of higher control, a state of assurance. The characteristics of this state of assurance are:
- the loss of all worry; peace and harmony even though the outer conditions remain the same; a passion of willingness, of acquiescence, of admiration is the centre of this state of mind.
- the sense of perceiving truths not known before.
- the objective change which the world appears to undergo.; there is a sense of beautiful newness within and without.
- the ecstacy of happiness that is produced.

With regard to the transiency or permanence of these sudden conversions, or conversions in general, James is not interested in duration but in the nature and quality of these shiftings of character to higher levels whether permanent or transient. The persons who have passed through conversion, having once taken a stance for the religious life, tend to feel themselves identified with it no matter how much their religious enthusiasm declines.

Saintliness[63]

The saintly character is the character for which spiritual emotions are the habitual centre of personal energy. The following fundamental inner conditions, which James claims are universal, describe saintliness:

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62 "Mr. Myers has given the name of *automatism*, sensory or motor, emotional or intellectual, to this whole sphere of effects, due to "uprushes" into the ordinary consciousness of energies originating in the subliminal parts of the mind" (*Varieties*, p. 174).

63 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), pp. 193-280.

- a feeling of being in a wider life than this world and a conviction, both intellectual and sensible, of the existence of an ideal power which can be personified as God, as abstract moral ideals, civic or patriotic utopias, or as inner versions of holiness;

- a sense of friendly continuity of the ideal power and one's own life and a willing self-surrender to its control;

- an immense elation and freedom, "as the outlines of the confining selfhood melts down";

- a shifting of the emotional centre towards loving and harmonious affections.

These inner conditions are expressed as a superior kind of happiness which is not placed in comfort but in an inner excitement converting discomforts into sources of cheer. In social relations, the saintly character shows exemplary ability for service and abounds in impulses to help, both inward and outward. Humble-mindedness and ascetic tendencies save the saintly character from personal pretensions. Felicity, purity, charity, patience, self-severity are 'splendid excellencies' which the saintly character possesses in the completest possible measure[64]. "Single attributes of saintliness may [...] be temperamental endowments, found in non-religious individuals. But the whole group forms a combination which, as such, is religious, for it seems to flow from the sense of the divine as from its psychological centre"[65].

Mysticism[66]

Personal religious experience, according to James, has its roots and centre in mystical states of consciousness. As with the term 'religion', James recognizes the difficulty of

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64 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 274.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., pp. 281-318.

defining the term 'mysticism'. Instead of a definition, James proposes four characteristics qualifying an experience as mystical. These are ineffability, noetic quality, transciency, and passivity.

Mystical states defy expression (ineffability); they must be directly experienced. They are states of feeling rather than states of intellect. Furthermore, mystical states seem to those who experience them to also be states of knowledge, states of insights into depths of truth (noetic quality). They are illuminations, revelations, significant and important, and contain a "curious sense of authority for aftertime"[67]. Mystical states are transient, that is they cannot be sustained for long periods. When the experience fades, the memory may be reproduced only imperfectly but when the experience recurs, it is recognized and there is a development of inner richness and importance. Finally mystical experiences are characterised by passivity. The individual feels as if grasped and held by a superior power.

The simplest rudiment of mystical experience would seem to be that deepened sense of the significance of a maxim or formula which occasionally sweeps over an individual. A more pronounced characteristic of the mystical experience is found in the frequent phenomenon of being overwhelmed by a sudden feeling of having been here before[68]. Yet deeper states of mystical consciousness are trance-like experiences, dream states, intoxicants, and cosmic consciousness. Individuals "pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness, and at the same time as from an unrest to a rest. [They are felt] as reconciling, unifying states"[69]. The general traits of the mystic range of consciousness shows that it is "*on the whole pantheistic and optimistic, or at least the*

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67 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 282.
68 Ibid., pp. 283-284.
69 Ibid., p. 308.

opposite of pessimistic. It is anti-naturalistic, and harmonizes best with [...] other-worldly states of mind"[70].

After exposing a number of examples of mystical experiences, James poses the question whether or not these experiences are authoritative. First, James claims, as a matter of psychological fact, mystical states, when well developed, usually are authoritative over the individual to whom they come. Mystical experiences are as direct perceptions of fact for those who have them as any sensations are for anyone else. They are "sensational in their epistomological quality – that is they are face to face presentations of what seems immediately to exist"[71]. Second, James claims, no authority emanates from this experience which should make it the duty for those who stand outside the experience to accept these revelations uncritically. Its value must be ascertained by empirical methods. Third, mystical experiences break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness based upon the understanding of the senses alone. They open the possibility of other orders of truth. Mystical states add a supersensuous meaning to the ordinary outward data of consciousness. They are excitements, like the emotions of love or ambition, by means of which facts already objectively before us fall into a new expressiveness and make a new connection with life. Mystical states may possibly be windows through which the mind looks out upon a more extensive and inclusive world[72].

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70 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 313.
71 Ibid., p. 314.
72 Ibid., p. 317.

1.3.4   Characteristics of Religious Experience

After a careful and detailed study of a variety of religious experiences, James suggests that the characteristics of the religious life include the following beliefs:

- that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance;

- that union or harmonious relation with that higher universe is our true end;

- that prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof is a process where spiritual energy flows in and produces effects, psychological or material, within the phenomenal world;

and the following psychological characteristics:

- a new zest which adds itself like a gift to life, and takes the form either of lyrical enchantment or of appeal to earnestness and heroism;

- an assurance of safety and a temper of peace, and in relation to others, a preponderance of loving affections[73].

"The religious phenomenon, studied as an inner fact [...] has shown itself to consist everywhere, and at all stages, in the consciousness which individuals have of an intercourse between themselves and higher powers"[74]. In religion there is a department of human nature with very close relations to the transmarginal or subliminal region which is "the abode of everything that is latent and the reservoir of everything that passes unrecorded or unobserved [...] In persons deep in the religious life [...] the door into this region seems unusually wide open"[75]. Feeling is the deeper source of religion. In the religious sphere, beliefs that formulas are true can never

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73 William James. *The Varities of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 359.
74 Ibid., p. 344.
75 Ibid., p. 357.

wholly take the place of personal experience. The devout person feels the divine presence, that inflowings of help come in reply to prayer, and that sacrifices to this unseen reality fills them with security and peace. "When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other are almost always the same [...] if you wish to grasp her essence, you must look to the feelings and conduct as being the more constant elements"[76]. The varieties of religious experience may be explained by the fact that "where the character, as something distinct from the intellect, is concerned, the causes of human diversity lie chiefly in our *differing susceptibilities of emotional excitement* and in the *different impulses and inhibitions* which they bring"[77].

1.4 The Relevance of *Varieties* to Current Research on Spirituality

The impact of *Varieties* was significant in the formative years of psychology and has continued to influence the psychology of religion over the past century in various areas including contemporary spirituality. James is noted for anticipating "the current concern with spirituality as opposed to religion, and [...] is the exemplar of what it means to be "spiritual but not religious"". More than one psychologist has observed that if James were writing today, his lectures would undoubtedly be entitled *The Varieties of Spiritual Experience*[78]. This may seem a strange statement since James himself did not use the term spirituality in his study of religious experience. As noted earlier, in *Varieties* the terms 'spiritual' and 'personal religion' may be interchangeable.

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76 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 372.

77 Ibid., p. 194.

78 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 9.

Personal religion is described as *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude*[79], and the religious life is elsewhere described as spiritual when it is *no affair of outer works and ritual and sacraments*[80] (that is non-institutional). Some see in James' definition of personal religion certain characteristics of contemporary spirituality.

Psychology of religion as it emerged by the end of the 19th century was both strongly intertwined with theology and philosophy and, at the same time, strove for its emancipation and recognition by the scientific community. Theologians had already recognized and articulated the growing gap between traditional forms of theology and individual religious experience. In the late 18th century, Schleiermacher, a German theologian born in 1768 and generally recognized as the founder of modern Protestant theology[81], said of religion that it has its own province in the mind in which it reigns sovereign. He offered a new and influential definition of religion as neither thinking nor acting but intuition and feeling. The focus in Schleiermacher's definition is no longer on dogmas and creeds but on the mental act of believing itself, the inner motives and intuitions that influence both psychic functioning and outward behaviour. Schleiermacher defined individually experienced religiosity as the core of religion, a notion also found in James' understanding of religion. It is not surprising to find Schleiermacher mentioned in psychological research and literature on religion and spirituality in the age of secularization. His characterization of religion is sometimes classified as a definition of spirituality after religion[82]. This could also be said of James' definition of religion. Spirituality is for James "a very close

79 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 24.
80 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p.157.
81 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Friedrich-Schleiermacher>. Consulted May 31, 2018.
82 Herman Westerink. "Spirituality in Psychology of Religion: A Concept in Search of Its Meaning". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion,* 34:1 (2012), p. 9.

synonym [for religion. The] spiritual refers to the heart of the religious life when it is authentic – that is when it is grounded in first-hand experience"[83].

Robert Fuller suggests, that, in James' view, spirituality consists of attitudes, ideas, lifestyles, and specific practices based upon the conviction that the visible world is part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance and that union with this spiritual 'more' is our true end. These criteria are helpful, Fuller claims, in eliminating many secular interests and activities that lack any concern with a larger reality and in identifying beliefs and actions that are distinctly spiritual, even when they have no overt connection with organized religion[84].

The necessity to conceptualize spirituality is called into question by Streib and Hood[85] who claim that the concept of religion is sufficient. They refer to William James whose definition of religion, they argue, already embraces and includes spirituality, although spirituality, as it is used today, is not James' term. James suggests understanding the godless or quasi-godless creeds which he finds in Emersonianism[86] or in Buddhism as religion and adds that, for an adequate understanding, the divine needs to be understood broadly. Consistent with a broad understanding of the divine is a broad variety of forms of relation to whatever the individual may consider the divine. The interesting point, Streib and Hood claim, is not so much the varieties of religious experience, but the fact that, for James, all of them are referred to as religion

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83 David M. Wulff. "Listening to James a Century Later: The *Varieties* as a Resource for Renewing the Psychology of Religion", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 50.
84 Robert C. Fuller. *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 8.
85 Heinz Streib and Ralph W. Hood. "Spirituality as Privatized Experience-Oriented Religion: Empirical and Conceptual Perspectives". *Implicit Religion*, 14:4 (2011), p. 446.
86 Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), was an American poet and principal architect of Transcendentalism; in Robert C. Fuller. *Spiritual but not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 27.

which leads the authors to argue for an inclusion of what is today called spiritual experiences within the domain of religion or to define religion so broadly as to include all so-called spiritual experiences. The range of experiences which many today would treat as spiritual have classically been acknowledged as the proper domain of religion.

Vassilis Saroglou, who will be presented in the following chapter, also recognizes the importance of James' work on personal religion in current psychological studies of religion and spirituality. He notes that the "focus on individual aspects will oblige the religious sciences to reinvest their efforts in the study of what William James defined as being the essence of religious experience, namely that aspect of interior and subjective experience independent of organised and institutional forms of religion"[87].

Contemporary psychology of religion stands in James' debt to understand the varieties of postmodern religious experience. He drew attention to the importance and varieties of religious experience and saw that understanding religious experience is worth the strenuous efforts of scholarship and insight. If James were here today, he would be asking the same question of the 21st century as he asked at the beginning of the 20th century: what are the varieties of religious experience in postmodernity and how shall we understand them[88]?

The Varieties of Religious Experience "still remains the single most frequently assigned text in the psychology of religion"[89] which confirms the important

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87 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), pp. 499-501. Free translation.
88 Grace M. Jantzen. "For an Engaged Reading: William James and the Varieties of Postmodern Religious Experience", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 105.
89 Bernard Spilka, Ralph Hood, Bruce Hunsberger and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. (The Guilford Press: New York, 2003), p. 357.

contribution of William James in this field. His work is even more impressive when one considers him a pioneer in a new scientific field. His attempts at circumscribing the subject, defining psychology and religion, proposing a scientific approach laid a solid foundation for further research whether or not one agrees with James' method and theory. "The question of Protestant bias is one that James is more aware of than some critics give him credit for"[90]. His study was mainly, but not exclusively, confined to North American Protestant Christianity which was an important aspect of religious life in North America at the time, and an aspect James knew well. The fact that James was familiar with this culture provided some basic knowledge and increased his awareness about the varieties of religious experience that could be included in his study, as well as the important distinction between religion and psychic phenomena. It is this variety of religious experience that gives credibility to James' research. The enormous amount of material offers a broad perspective for comparison and for detecting similarities and differences from which common (and possibly universal) characteristics of religious experience might be established. William James was a brilliant and talented man and in may ways ahead of his time. He approached religion pragmatically. He was not interested in why people hold religious beliefs to be true but in whether or not religion helps people live. "[A]nyone can selectively employ psychological research to make a case either for or against religion. The better quest is to understand religion in its manifold varieties"[91] which is what James proposed in his own unique way and thus left an important legacy to future generations of psychologists of religion.

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90 Sonu Shamdasani. "Psychologies as Ontology-Making Practices: William James and the Pluralities of Psychological Experience", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 33.

91 Bernard Spilka, Ralph Hood, Bruce Hunsberger and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. (The Guilford Press: New York, 2003), p. 4.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUALITY AND CURRENT PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY:
THE WORK OF VASSILIS SAROGLOU

2.1 Introduction

The focus now shifts from the early experimental psychology of William James to current psychological theory represented by Vassilis Saroglou, an accomplished contemporary psychologist whose contribution to the study of psychology of religion is extensive. This chapter will focus on spirituality in light of Saroglou's work and present the Big Four model, developed by Saroglou, which posits four basic (possibly universal) religious components (beliefs, rituals/emotions, moral rules, and community) with corresponding psychological dimensions, functions, and goals. The chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section includes a brief introduction to Saroglou and a description of the purpose of contemporary psychology. It is followed by a synopsis of the current conceptual debate concerning the relation between spirituality and religion and ends with a presentation of Saroglou's research on spirituality. The second section focuses on the Big Four model. The model will be outlined, the individual characteristics of the four psychological dimensions (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging) will be described and, where possible, specific examples regarding spirituality will be given. The final section will briefly discuss the relevance of the model and will include Saroglou's own arguments.

2.2   Contemporary Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

2.2.1   Presentation of Saroglou

Vassilis Saroglou is an important and accomplished representative of contemporary psychology of religion. In his work, he reexamines and challenges certain classical theories of religion, applies creative and innovative perspectives to the psychological study of religion and spirituality, and builds on previous research (his own and others) to offer new tools and theories in this area. He is a prolific writer and a thorough researcher who brings a wide perspective to the study of religion. His academic experience is varied and impressive with degrees in theology, philosophy, and psychology. He is currently full professor of psychology at *l'Université catholique de Louvain* (UCL) in Belgium and has, since 2001, been director of the Center for the Psychology of Religion founded by Antoine Vergote in 1961, possibly the oldest of its kind. The center studies religion and religious phenomena from a psychological perspective (concepts, theories, methods) and promotes interdisciplinary work between psychology and the human and social sciences of religion. It focuses on five main areas of research: personality and social psychology of religion, cross-cultural psychology of religion, psychology of religious development, clinical and health psychology of religion, and interdisciplinarity with other sciences of religion[92].

In other capacities, Saroglou has served as president of both the International Association for the Psychology of Religion (2011-2015) and the International Academy of Sciences of Religion (2014-2015). He has been associate editor (2007-2014) and co-editor (2015-2016) of the *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* and guest editor of the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* (2011, 42:8).

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92 <https://www.psyreli.org/saroglou>. Consulted April 6, 2017.

His work has been recognized by various psychological associations with a number of awards. He has received the following awards from the American Psychological Association, Division 36: the William James Award (2017), an award "offered every three years to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution through publication and professional activity to basic research and theory in the psychology of religion and related areas"[93], the Mentoring Award (2013), and the Early Career Award (2005). From the Society for Personality and Social Psychology he has been granted the Fellow of Division 8 Award (2016) and the Fellow Award (2015) and in 2006, he obtained the Quinquennial Mid-Career Godin Prize from the International Association for the Psychology of Religion[94]. In January 2018, he was elected Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science (APS) in recognition of his exceptional and unceasing contributions to the progress of psychological science[95]. These awards and positions underscore the extent of Saroglou's work and the appreciation of his work by the academic and clinical psychological communities.

2.2.2 Contemporary Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

The purpose of contemporary psychology of religion is to understand the many ways in which religion operates in an individual's world. Influenced by James, religious experience, that is the experience of solitary individuals, is placed at the forefront of

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93 American Psychological Association, Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, Division 36. <https://www.apadivisions.org/divisions-36/>. Consulted August 14, 2017.

94 <https://saroglou.socialpsychology.org>. Consulted April 6, 2017.

95 The Association for Psychological Science is a prestigious international association dedicated to the promotion of scientific psychology. It unites tens of thousands of researchers from various domains within the psychological sciences. Only six percent of its members are honoured with the status of Fellow. Free translation. <https://uclouvain.be/fr/instituts-recherche/ipsy/marques-de-distinction.htlm >. Consulted May 5, 2018.

the psychology of religion[96]. Thus its focus is on the individual from an internal perspective. Psychology of religion recognizes the major difference between religion per se and religious behaviour, motivation, perception, and cognition and is interested only in these human considerations and not religion as such[97]. Many prominent psychologists, from James and Freud to Jung and Maslow, have argued that religion or spirituality must be considered for a complete understanding of the individual[98].

Theories for the use of psychology of religion derive from mainstream psychology. Today, studying religion and spirituality in relation to basic psychological research includes several areas. In the area of developmental psychology, both clinical and experimental research have documented the relevance of spiritual and religious issues in psychological development. Religious development not only parallels general developmental processes, but may also shed light on these processes. Religion and spirituality are inherently social-psychological phenomena, thus a psycho-social approach can provide helpful insights. Religion and spirituality are also related to cognitive phenomena and many aspects of contemporary cognitive theory are fruitful in explaining elements of religious and spiritual psychological phenomena. Furthermore, religion and spirituality are related to affect and emotion. Classic descriptions of religious experience, like those of William James, focus on its affective aspects and further research since has documented the role of affect in religious conversion. Finally, personality studies are relevant to religion and spirituality. Certain personality traditions have emphasized the integral relationship

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96 Bernard Spilka, Ralph Hood, Brian Hunsberger and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach.* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), p. 248.
97 Ibid., p. 3.
98 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Hood, Michael McCullough, James Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 30:1 (2000), p. 53.

between religion, spirituality, and personality, especially within humanist and transpersonal theoretical frameworks[99].

Psychology of religion applies scientific methods to enhance psychological understanding of religion and spirituality[100]. Its approach is theoretical and empirical, gathering data which can be objectively treated, quantitatively analysed, and confirmed by repeated studies. Psychology of religion assumes that religion is a worldwide phenomenon expressed in a variety of ways, and searches for human characteristics that appear to be universally applicable within the general realms of psychology.

Saroglou's research includes both empirical studies, such as surveys, social experiments, interviews, content analysis, meta-analysis, and cross-cultural comparisons; as well as theoretical and interdisciplinary work[101]. He applies models and theories from his interest in personality and social psychology, especially cognitive/affective needs and positive emotions supported by empirical studies, to assess characteristics and predictors of religiosity/spirituality and individual differences. He describes the limitations, possibilities, and methods of the psychology of religion in the following manner.

> [*La psychologie de la religion*] *se limite à l'observation des faits, à la constatation des co-occurences, des similitudes, des contrastes, à l'examen des causes observables qui expliqueraient des phénomènes observables. Elle peut ainsi offrir de l'évidence empirique pour ou contre l'une ou l'autre thèses théoriques divergentes voire contradictoires, ou au moins soutenir une thèse*

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99 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Hood, Michael McCullough, James Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:1 (2000), pp. 53-54.

100 Bernard Spilka, Ralph Hood, Brian Hunsberger and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach.* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), p. 13.

101 <https://wwwuclouvain.be/en-saroglou.html>. Consulted February 27, 2016.

en termes de probabilité plus grande par rapport à une autre. Elle peut enfin servir d'évaluateur du décalage ou de la concordance qui existe entre idéaux et pratiques, discours et réalité, croyances affichées et croyances vécues. Pour ce faire, elle doit se baser sur des méthodes d'observation et d'explication utilisées dans les différentes disciplines psychologiques [...] L'utilisation de ces méthodes garantit la capacité de réduire, dans la mesure possible, l'influence de la subjectivité du chercheur[102].

2.2.3   Conceptualization: Religion and Spirituality

"Whereas a hundred years ago, William James could simply say 'religion', today, to avoid confusion, [psychologists] use the expression 'religion/spirituality'. Thus phenomena previously termed simply 'religious' are now being divided into two classes, religious and spiritual"[103]. "Spirituality appears to be the favored term to describe individual experience and is identified with such things as personal transcendence, supra-conscious sensitivity, and meaningfulness"[104].

The word spirituality has a long tradition and can be traced back to early Christian writings, but it was not until the 19th century that spirituality attracted attention in theological literature. Two major understandings of spirituality developed, one in Europe and one in the Anglo-Saxon world. In the European understanding, spirituality was "the personal, existential component of religion. Religion thus encompassed both theology and spirituality (lived religiosity)"[105]. In the Roman Catholic tradition this 'lived religiosity' was associated with visions or mystical

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102 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), p. 474.

103 Pavel Říčan. "Spirituality: The Story of Spirituality in the Psychology of Religion". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 26 (2004), pp. 135-136.

104 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Wood, Michael McCullough, James, Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:1 (2000), p. 60.

105 Herman Westerink. "Spirituality in Psychology of Religion: A Concept in Search of its Meaning". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 34 (2012), p. 7.

experiences, whereas the Protestant tradition focused on spirituality as the mental aspect of piety. In the Anglo-Saxon world, spirituality became associated with new religious movements from Christian mysticism to Indian religions and philosophies.

The appearance of spirituality in the study of religion was a result of an increasing focus on religious experience in the early 20th century by authors like William James (*The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1902) and Rudolph Otto (*Das Heilige*, 1917)[106]. During the 1960s, the concept gained popularity in both "religious studies and the sociology of religion to describe a multitude of phenomena related to the New Age movement [which was characterized by a focus on] the sacralisation of the Self"[107] with an individual and personal orientation independent from and critical of religion. In psychology as well as in the wider culture, the influence of C. G. Jung supported this trend as did Abraham Maslow's description and interpretation of peak experiences. Psychodelic drugs inducing ecstatic experiences, independently of organized religion, were also often interpreted as spiritual[108].

The acceptance of the concept spirituality into the study of religion was slow and reluctant. Although a popular term, some found its meaning obscure and its usefulness in research limited, some used the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably, and yet others used the concept only marginally[109]. The concept spirituality and what constitutes its key feature continues to preoccupy the psychology of religion as does its relation to religion. The popularity of the term spirituality in the general population as well as among some psychologists may

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106 Pavel Říčan. "Spirituality: The Story of Spirituality in the Psychology of Religion". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 26 (2004), p. 138.
107 Herman Westerink. "Spirituality in Psychology of Religion: A Concept in Search of its Meaning". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 34 (2012), p. 7.
108 Pavel Říčan. "Spirituality: The Story of Spirituality in the Psychology of Religion". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 26 (2004), p. 138.
109 Ibid., p. 142.

prompt the question: "Is religion really disappearing or is it just changing its forms?"[110] - a fascinating and continuous debate in the psychology of religion.

2.2.4   Research on Religion and Spirituality

In his articles, Saroglou uses the terms religion, religiosity, and spirituality. Religion is defined in general terms by Saroglou as that which "*humans do in reference to what they consider as (an external) transcendence*, and religiosity *is the corresponding individual differences construct with people differing with respect to the presence and intensity of such tendency*"[111]. He does not define spirituality. Defining spirituality, he claims, is problematic. The term is polysemous, unstable, and vague and almost impossible to define by its observable correlates[112].

Saroglou proposes two ways of understanding the relation between spirituality and religion. On the one hand, from a religious perspective, religion comes across as a more global concept within which spirituality is included as one among other aspects of religion. Psychologists of religion who adopt this perspective define spirituality as a search for the sacred. On the other hand, from a non-religious perspective, spirituality can also be understood as a human dimension which includes a variety of realities of which religion constitutes a specific aspect albeit limited to the social dimension of belonging to a group. In an American study, researchers specifically asked about the connection between spirituality and religion and found the second understanding of spirituality to be more popular (39%) than the traditional

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110 Pavel Říčan. "Spirituality: The Story of Spirituality in the Psychology of Religion". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 26 (2004), p.137.

111 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1321.

112 Vassilis Saroglou. (2003). «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34, p. 476.

understanding of spirituality as part of religion (10%). The study also showed that 42% understood the two concepts as somewhat overlapping, 3% as completely identical, and 7% as completely different[113].

In other studies, also from the United States, which focused on people's representations of spirituality and religiosity, spirituality is described as experience and relationship (with God or a force) whereas religiosity is associated with personal beliefs and institutional practices. Spirituality seems to imply autonomy with regard to tradition and institutional religion in its personal quest for meaning, its affirmation of a connectedness between humans, and in its universality dependent on a transcendent principle. Those who self-identify as spiritual but not religious reject organized religion and religious orthodoxy. Their individualized spirituality embraces experiences of the mystical kind[114].

According to Saroglou, the search for meaning inherent to religion is characterized by certain specific features at the cognitive level. It is based on the belief that life is worth living and that the world makes sense. Religion not only concerns itself with the question of meaning but also offers answers to certain existential questions, particularly those related to the origin and purpose of humans and the world. Reflecting on the question of meaning from the perspective of religious belief implies a minimum of continuity/fidelity to a tradition. Religiosity is accompanied by the need for cognitive closure, that is, a need for answers, for order and predictability, and the avoidance of ambiguity and uncertainty[115].

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113 Vassilis Saroglou. "Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion". *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), pp. 479-480.
114 Ibid., pp. 480-481.
115 Ibid., pp. 482-484.

Spirituality shares with religion the belief that life has meaning and both suggest a transcendent reality. Spirituality, however, differs with regard to autonomy in relation to a religious tradition and the absence of a need for order and closure. Although it resembles religiosity in some aspects, spirituality embodies a reality psychologically different from classic religiosity not only in people's representations of spirituality, but also in the way in which it reflects specific cognitive needs and structures, affective/emotional needs, personality traits, identity, and values[116].

Whereas religion places strong emphasis on specific religious traditions and institutions, modern spirituality is, to some extent, independent of religious traditions and institutions and constitutes an individual approach to religious, existential, and ethical issues. However, the two constructs share the inclusion of the dimension of the sacred and transcendence in life and the experience of being interconnected to a larger community or to the world as a whole[117].

"The current religious and spiritual scenery and behaviours pose many new questions when psychologists of religion attempt to outline the attraction to religion and spirituality motives. It makes clear that some classical theories are not challenged and need to be re-examined"[118]. Saroglou re-examines classic theories as to their current validity. He refers to the Freudian theory of religion which emphasizes religion's neurotic character and obsessive preoccupation with guilt linked to the Oedipus complex as outdated. Furthermore, he draws attention to the theoretical understanding of classic religiosity which accentuates the role of religion in satisfying the needs of belonging, the introduction to a filiation, and to a symbolic line of believers.

116 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), p. 486.
117 Vassilis Saroglou, Coralie Buxant and Jonathan Tilquin. "Positive Emotions as Leading to Religion and Spirituality". *The Journal of Positive Psychology*. 3:3 (2008), p. 167.
118 Coralie Buxant, Vassilis Saroglou and Marie Tesser. "Free-lance Spiritual Seekers: Self-growth or Compensatory Motives". *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 13:2 (2010), p. 209.

For modern spirituality, the need of belonging is satisfied by feeling connected to the great human community in general and not a specific religious institution in particular. Insofar as religious socialization within the family is becoming an increasingly marginal reality in secular societies, it is likely that the understanding of individual trajectories concerning spirituality is highlighted by individual determinisms such as genetic predispositions, personality, cognitive/affective styles or by situational determinisms (e.g. unique experiences) rather than by studying the family environment[119].

Saroglou's research on spirituality includes personality traits, values, and positive emotions which have not generally been applied in the study of psychology of religion, to discover underlying psychological motivations for both religiosity and spirituality. The five-factor model (FFM), the dominant model in personality studies today, organises a vast group of personality traits into five basic personality factors: 1) neuroticism (anxiety, depressive tendencies, negative emotions); 2) extraversion (sociability, extraverted character, dominance); 3) agreeableness (altruism in interpersonal relationships); 4) conscientiousness (self-control, orderliness, responsibility); and 5) openness to experience (imagination, aesthetics, novelty)[120]. Studies in different countries have shown this model to be helpful in establishing a fairly constant pattern of the religious personality, at least in traditionally Christian contexts[121]. A positive tendency towards religiosity is accompanied by an inclination toward agreeableness and conscientiouness. However, there is no clear or systematic connection between religiosity and openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism. Spirituality, like religiosity, shows an inclination toward agreeableness, although to a lesser degree, and no connection with neuroticism. It distinguishes itself

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119 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), p. 501.
120 Ibid., p. 490.
121 Ibid., pp. 490-494.

from religiosity with regard to extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience.

Individuals interested in spirituality tend to score high on extraversion, especially in Anglo-Saxon Protestant countries. Spirituality is not associated with conscientiousness, that is the need for cognitive closure and dogmatism. Interest in spirituality often reflects an extraverted character and openness to a variety of new experiences marked by imagination and fantasy. Openness to experience is the personality factor that highlights individual predisposition to paranormal beliefs and experiences[122].

In terms of assessing values related to classic religiosity and modern spirituality, Saroglou refers to studies based on Schwartz' ten-value model[123], a recognized model within psychology consisting of ten human value types ordered along four major dimensions: 1) self-enhancement (achievement and power); 2) conservation (tradition, conformity, security); 3) self-transcendence (benevolence and universalism); and 4) openness to change (autonomy, stimulation, hedonism).

Results show tendencies in classic religiosity toward conservation and in spirituality toward self-transcendence. Spirituality seems to share two tendencies with religiosity: concern and respect for others and the non-valorization of hedonistic values. It distinguishes itself from religiosity by granting no importance to values of conservation, by broadening the attitude of benevolence toward universalism, and by favouring values of autonomy. Spirituality implies autonomy in the construction of identity and values[124].

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122 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), pp. 490-494.
123 Ibid., p. 495.
124 Ibid., pp. 494-498.

It is widely accepted today that there is no correlation between religiosity in general and neuroticism. This observation is consistent with data from studies on personality traits. A high level of neuroticism (anxiety, depression, instability) could possibly be characteristic only of extrinsically motivated religiosity or of a religious attitude that highly accentuates doubt but not of intrinsically motivated religiosity. Certain studies show a slight tendency towards subjective feelings and indicators of higher well-being as a result of religiosity. Neither religiosity nor spirituality necessarily imply emotional instability and, in general, moments of crisis and adversity seem to promote a place for spirituality in people's lives similar to that of classic religiosity[125].

With regard to emotional motivations for religiosity and spirituality, Saroglou notes the substantial research focusing on the ways in which negative experiences and emotions may lead to religiosity/spirituality and shape religious/spiritual experience. His interest lies in how positive emotions may lead to religiosity/spirituality and shape their experience, an area of study thus far little explored. The distinction is made between *self-transcendent* positive emotions (awe, love, admiration) which include a positive evaluation of realities other than the self, and *self-oriented* positive emotions (pride, amusement, joy) which place the emphasis primarily on self-enhancement. It is only those emotions "that include self-transcendence as a major component that should be relevant for [religiosity and spirituality's] connection with, and effects on spiritual behavioural intentions and feelings of oneness with others"[126]. Saroglou has found that a variety of positive emotions, such as joy, gratitude, awe, wonder, or hope, may result from religious/spiritual experiences.

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125 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), pp. 486-490.
126 Patty Van Cappellen and Vassilis Saroglou. "Awe Activates Religious and Spiritual Feelings and Behavioural Intentions". *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 4:3 (2012), p. 224.

Positive emotions broaden people's thought-action repertoires encouraging them to discover novel lines of thought and action. They enhance the feeling that life is meaningful. Positive emotions that include the experience of marvel, wonder, appreciation, or respect for something that is perceived as larger, higher, or more important than the self, or something that is beautiful, pure, or implying some mystery, may be emotions that facilitate people's interest in religiosity/spirituality[127].

Initial empirical data is showing that the many cognitive and emotional implications of positive emotions apply more to spirituality and less to religiosity. First, spirituality, but not religiosity, is systematically related to openness to experience, and second, if positive emotions in general imply some perception of vastness and interconnectedness, they may more easily lead to a spiritual attitude of connection with a transcendent reality and openness to universalistic values and less to concrete religious beliefs and practices. "Positive emotions, although they activate a series of feelings, cognitions, and behaviours, do not necessarily lead people to take specific actions [...] Religion, in contrast with spirituality [...] necessarily implies engagement"[128]. Further research is needed to investigate "whether this effect of some positive emotions on spiritual and religious attitudes and beliefs is sufficient to lead to concrete religious and spiritual behaviours or remains at a surface level of a general positive disposition towards religion and spirituality"[129].

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127 Vassilis Saroglou, Coralie Buxant and Jonathan Tilquin. "Positive Emotions as Leading to
   Religion and Spirituality". *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 3:3 (2008), p. 166.
128 Ibid., pp. 166-169.
129 Ibid., p. 171.

2.3 Basic Religious Components and Spirituality

2.3.1 Presentation of Saroglou's Model

One of the issues which has preoccupied psychological research within the past decades has been the effort to determine the major components, dimensions, or forms of religion and individual religiosity. This issue has also interested Saroglou. Based on previous theorization and research, some of it presented above, he proposes a model including four basic psychological dimensions of religion and individual religiosity that are both partially distinct and interconnected: believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. As is the case with many other psychological constructs, it seems reasonable, according to Saroglou, to presume that there should be both universals and cultural specifics to religion and individual religiosity especially when considering the immense variability in religious expressions across historical periods, cultures, groups, and individuals[130].

The Big Four model outlines four major or basic religious components (belief, rituals/emotions, moral rules, and community/group) with corresponding psychological dimensions, functions, and self-transcendent goals. The model is presented schematically in Table 2.1. It does not appear in this form in the text.

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130 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1320.

Table 2.1 Schematic Presentation of the Big Four Model by Saroglou.

Basic components of religion	Corresponding psychological dimensions	Corresponding psychological functions	Four kinds of self-transcendence
Beliefs	Believing (cognitive)	Looking for meaning and the truth	Ideas relative to the big existential issues
Rituals/emotions	Bonding (emotional)	Experiencing self-transcendent emotions	Awe with respect to a larger and more important reality
Moral rules	Behaving (moral)	Exerting self-control to behave morally	Willingness to achieve irreproachable virtue
Community/group	Belonging (social)	Belonging to a transhistorical group solidifying collective self-esteem and in-group identification	Belonging to a cultural group with a glorious history and ambitious future goals

2.3.2 Psychological Dimensions, Functions, and Self-Transcendent Goals

It is the four psychological dimensions of the model (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging) that are of specific interest to Saroglou. Their characteristics are described in more detail below. The description will include the general characteristics of each dimension, and, where possible, examples will be given with specific reference to spirituality. Functional and dysfunctional manifestations of individual religiosity within each dimension will also be noted. These depend on the excessiveness or not of the investment in one of the four dimensions to the detriment of the other three.

Believing

Believing is, according to Saroglou, considered a basic universal component of religion. It is defined as a set of beliefs in relation to what people consider transcendence (that is something existing beyond the individual or greater than the individual). It constitutes a key difference between being atheist, nonreligious, or nonspiritual and being religious and/or spiritual. People across cultures and religions conceive this transcendence and its connection with humans and the world in diverse ways. It can include one or more gods or divine beings, non-personal divinities, or impersonal forces or principles. Nontheistic spirituality endorses impersonal conceptions of transcendence. The believing dimension can be characterized by holding religious beliefs in a spectrum ranging from literal, dogmatic, and/or orthodox manners to symbolic, flexible, and/or autonomous manners. The latter is characteristic of spirituality with its individual approach to religious, existential, and ethical questions[131]. As a positive mechanism, believing offers meaning-making processes and belief in the meaningfulness of life. In terms of negative results, overemphasis on believing, marked by excessive intellectualization, can lead to dogmatism, that is "unjustified certainty regarding some beliefs even in the face of disconfirming evidence"[132].

Bonding

Bonding includes self-transcendent experiences that bond the individual with what it perceives to be the transcendent 'reality', with others and/or with the inner-self. This usually occurs within a ritualized framework which can be private or public, regular or exceptional. What is possibly universally common across rituals, religions, and

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131 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), pp. 1323, 1326, 1331, 1332.
132 Ibid, p. 1331.

cultures is the emotional self-transcendence people experience through religious rituals and the interindividual variability in frequency and intensity of these experiences. Awe, the emotion of respectful admiration when facing a higher reality, may be a prototype of emotions elicited within a religious context. The bonding dimension can be characterized by the specific emotional quality that individuals, groups, and cultures experience through connection with transcendence, whichever form it may take. Religious experience can be marked by, result from, or lead to negative emotions such as guilt, fear, and anger or to positive emotions such as awe, gratitude, and joy. Positive versus negative emotionality in religious experiences seems a constant distinction across all major religions. Spirituality is characterized by openness to experience which may help explain why the cognitive and emotional implications of positive emotions are higher in spirituality. Bonding offers positive emotions and experiences, attachment security, and regulation of negative emotions. Overemphasis on the emotional dimension marked by excessive mysticism can lead to neurotic religion based on guilt or fear of divine punishment[133].

Behaving

Behaving is the dimension concerned with moral rules/morality. Religion provides specific norms and moral arguments defining right and wrong from a religious perspective. Historically, there has been significant correspondence between religion's morality and society's moral standards. These are values that help enhance social order and reciprocity in altruism and not necessarily emphasizing individual autonomy and societal change. Religion proposes additional norms which include higher moral standards with regard to altruism, humility, and self-control. It also provides absolute values that cannot be negotiated and are often connected with the

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133 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), pp. 1326-1327, 1331, 1332-1333.

need for purity and the respect of the divinity. Behaving in a religiously correct manner may vary depending on the priority given to interpersonal morality characterized by feelings of empathy and principles of justice which may apply more to spirituality, and impersonal morality manifested in principles of loyalty, authority, purity, and integrity, which seem to apply less to spirituality[134]. Buying books, attending conferences, retreats, and educational events seem to be practices associated with spirituality.[135] In a positive manner, behaving offers self-control and healthy life-styles as well as benefits from prosocial dispositions. Overemphasis on the moral dimension marked by excessive moralization can lead to moral rigorism[136].

Belonging

Belonging is characterized by religious identification with a major tradition, a denomination, or a specific group. Religious communities include some kind of authority, that is a point of reference for what is normative and validation for what is new. They also include narratives and/or symbols which seek to unify a glorious past with the present and an eternal future. Religious communities may be large or small in size, old or new in history, exclusive or inclusive in membership, strict or weak in affiliation, horizontal or vertical in structure, real or virtual in construction. Belonging may also be expressed in self-identifying as a 'believer' or a 'spiritual person'. Religious affiliation vary greatly from the exclusive identity of sects to the inclusive identity of modern spirituality where the need of belonging is satisfied by feeling connected to the great human community in general. This dimension manifests positively in offering a sense of belonging, collective self-esteem, and social support.

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134 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), pp. 1326-1327, 1331, 1333.

135 Vassilis Saroglou. »Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), p. 481.

136 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p.1331.

Overemphasis on the social dimension marked by a strictly identitarian form of religion can lead to prejudice toward outgroups[137].

Affirming the co-presence of these four dimensions in religion is more subtle and specific than simply stating there are cognitive, emotional, moral, and social elements within religion. Many social realities (e.g. family, work, politics, and culture) also imply the co-existence and integration of these four dimensions. It is the specific goals attached to these four dimensions (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging) which qualify them as religious: 1) meaning-making by aiming to find the "truth", 2) experiencing self-transcendence through private or public rituals, 3) making decisions and behaving so as to to achieve virtue, and 4) belonging to groups whose quality is the integration between past, present, and future[138].

Religion may vary on tonality depending on the preference given to two of the four dimensions (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging). Saroglou suggests a typology of six religious forms and expressions based on a combination of two of the four dimensions. These forms (spirituality, intrinsic religiosity, orthodox groups, asceticism, charismatic communities, and moral communities) are intended as prototypes not distinct categories since all four dimensions are present in any religious form.

Emphasis on believing and bonding is at the heart of spirituality be it within or outside religious traditions and institutions. The link between some forms of spirituality and morality has been questioned and its links with institutional groups

137 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), pp. 1327, 1329, 1331, 1333.
138 Ibid., p. 1328.

may be weak. Intrinsic religiosity typically emphasises believing and behaving. This is normative of Protestant cultural contexts where belonging and practicing are equally valued. Believing and belonging are emphasised in orthodox groups where beliefs are defined by the groups authority and texts. Bonding and behaving are characteristic of asceticism. Emphasis is placed on experiencing strong emotions of connection with transcendence and also exerting strong self-control. Bonding and belonging are typical of charismatic communities who tend to invest more in the emotional and community and/or group dimensions of religion. Behaving and belonging are key features in moral communities. Within these communities morality may be oriented toward humanitarian causes (social activists) or toward self-control (rigorists)[139].

2.4   Relevance of the Big Four Model

2.4.1   Saroglou's Arguments

Saroglou argues that this model is an important tool in helping determine the major dimensions of religion and individual religiosity for several reasons. First, it incorporates previous efforts to define the major religious dimensions. Theories in psychology and sociology of religion have distinguished between three to six aspects of religion. In 1962 Glock proposed five basic dimensions (ideological, intellectual, experiential, ritualistic, and consequential). Eight years later, Verbit distinguished between six dimensions: doctrine, knowledge, emotion, ritual, ethics, and community. In the late 1990s, Hervieu-Léger advocated for four major dimensions: culture, emotions, ethics, and community. Other models consulted by Saroglou were

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139 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious
    Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), pp. 1331-
    1332.

Tarakeshwar, Stanton, and Pargament's model from 2003 which suggests five religious dimensions similar to Verbit's, and Atran and Norenzayan who, in 2004, advanced ideas from evolutionary psychology[140]. Although there is some variability across these theoretical suggestions in the number and subcomponents of the major religious dimensions, there is, Saroglou argues, consistency among these theories in favour of the four dimensions included in his model. The basic religious components of Saroglou's model resemble those suggested by Hervieu-Léger.

Secondly, the Big Four model adopts a psychologically informed perspective, contrary to a religiously based approach or a sociologically based taxonomy. It distinguishes between different religious dimensions providing nuanced information on how religion works in the lives of individuals and is equally helpful in detecting and understanding the psychological specifics of religion/religiosity across different religious and cultural contexts. Psychological research shows that people differ with respect to their motivations to be religious, and that these various classifications (e.g intrinsic or extrinsic, religious socialization versus emotion-based conversion, modern spirituality versus traditional religiosity) denote specific psychological processes. Thus, there is a need to distinguish between basic dimensions of religion/religiosity that are psychologically informed, that is, they point to psychological constructs and processes. These dimensions must not be unique to particular religious traditions nor simply translate theological positions but need to be broad enough so as to include both universals and specifics across religions and cultures. They must also be able to offer discriminant validity between each other, implying distinct psychological processes, predictors, and consequences[141].

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140 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious
    Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1323.
141 Ibid., pp. 1321, 1322, 1334.

Finally, the model offers a meaningful organization to the variation in religious forms within each dimension as well as processes explaining the positive and negative effects of individual and social functioning. It helps delimitate religion from other similar social and psychological domains and allows social scientists to conceive of religion as being based on universal human motives and constituting one of various ways of expressing these motives[142].

2.4.2 The Big Four Model and Other Approaches to Spirituality

There is a general sense among psychologists that spirituality as a concept needs clarification in order to be a useful term. Current approaches to the study of spirituality lack grounding in both theory and research[143]. The following briefly presents insights from other contemporary psychologists of religion as to what elements need to be considered and/or included in a common understanding of the term spirituality - insights that may also support the relevance of the Big Four model.

La Cour, Ausker, and Hvidt underscore the necessity of a common understanding of spirituality in clinical work. Based on a study of the meaning of the term spirituality, la Cour *et al.* concluded that no common understanding of the concept spirituality exists in a modern, secular Danish context. Based on their research, the authors suggest three characteristics central to a coherent and scientifically useful concept of spirituality: 1) the possibility of another reality than that already known; 2) context

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142 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1331.

143 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Hood, Michael McCullough, James Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:1 (2000), p. 63.

specific, and 3) individual longing and experiences[144]. Concerning the first point, Saroglou includes this aspect within the dimension of bonding where he mentions a 'larger and more important reality'. With regard to the second point, the Big Four model includes the possibility for both universals and specifics across religions and cultures. The third point is clearly covered in Saroglou's characteristics of spirituality and included within the psychological dimension of bonding.

Doug Oman offers three approaches to understanding spirituality. "If religion and spirituality display a prototype structure, then each may be definable by *clusters* of features [...] but no single feature will be relevant in all contexts"[145]. Accordingly, spirituality can be understood as: 1) a search for the sacred (religion as a search for significance in ways related to the sacred), 2) an inherent capacity for self-transcendence, or 3) one religion, multiple spiritualities[146]. These aspects are also covered by Saroglou. Meaning-making is part of the cognitive dimension (believing). The self-transcendent goals associated with each of the four dimensions are what distinguishes religious experience from non-religious experience in the Big Four model. Saroglou understands religion as a multifaceted construct and includes spirituality within the concept of religion.

"Many descriptions of spirituality emphasize one aspect of spiritual experience, sometimes leading to the neglect of other dimensions"[147]. LaPierre proposes a multidimensional framework for understanding spirituality which identifies the

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144 Peter la Cour, Nadja Hørdam Ausker and Niels Christian Hvidt. "Six Understandings of the Word 'Spirituality' in a Secular Country". *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 34 (2012), p. 80.
145 Doug Oman. "Defining Religion and Spirituality", in *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal. L. Park. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2013), p. 25.
146 Ibid., pp. 39-40.
147 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Hood, Michael McCullough, James Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:1 (2000), p. 57.

following components: 1) a search for meaning; 2) an encounter with transcendence; 3) a sense of community; 4) a search for ultimate truth or highest value; 5) a respect and appreciation for the mystery of creation; and 6) a personal transformation[148]. Again, the Big Four model covers all these elements. A search for meaning, ultimate truth and/or highest value is included in believing; an encounter with transcendence, the appreciation for the mystery of creation, and personal transformation all belong under bonding; and a sense of community is about belonging. Behaving is missing, but could also be included in the respect and appreciation for the mystery of creation as this may be expressed in a specific lifestyle.

Initial observations demonstrate that spirituality shares certain characteristics such as a transcendent reality and the belief that life has meaning with classic religiosity. It also embodies a reality psychologically different from classic religiosity in the way in which it reflects specific cognitive and affective needs. Spirituality appears more autonomous and experience-oriented. The Big Four model shows preferential emphasis on believing in and bonding with transcendence to be the core of spirituality. Thus, more extensive and diversified research in the area of cognitive and affective needs might lead to better understanding of spirituality, its *raison d'être*, and the shift from religious to spiritual in contemporary secular societies. The Big Four model offers a solid theoretical framework for such research.

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148 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Hood, Michael McCullough, James Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:1 (2000), p. 57.

CHAPTER III

SPIRITUALITY THEN AND NOW:
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

3.1   Introduction

This chapter will compare the work of William James and Vassilis Saroglou, two exceptional psychologists who have made significant contributions in the study of the psychology of religion. With a century separating the work of James and Saroglou, it could be expected that a comparative analysis would yield few results in terms of similarities. Yet, despite different historic and cultural contexts as well as different and/or limited research methods and theories, the similarities between their work are striking. The analysis will follow the order of the subjects to be compared as they are presented in chapter one. The subjects will be organized under three main headings: (1) psychology and the study of religion, (2) religion as a concept in psychology, and (3) the psychological dimensions and characteristics of religious experience. Each of these sections will be divided into subsections beginning with James' perspective then Saroglou's and ending with a comparative summary. The first section, psychology and the study of religion, will focus on how psychology studies religion. It includes experimental psychology, research methods, tensions between psychology and religion, definitions of psychology, and the objectives of the authors. The following section will present James' and Saroglou's understanding of the concept religion from a psychological perspective. It will cover religious diversity, definitions of religion, and spirituality. The final section will offer a description of the psychological

dimensions and characteristics of religious experience based on the Big Four model and how these are manifested in a variety of ways. A brief conclusion will examine the impact of James' and Saroglou's work on current research in the area of contemporary spirituality.

3.2 Psychology and the Study of Religion and Spirituality

3.2.1 Experimental Psychology

James

Experimental psychology began in Germany and was brought to North America by William James who founded the first laboratory in North America in 1875 and thus laid the groundwork for a more ambitious laboratory and subsequently a separate departement of psychology. Until this point, psychology had been a subdivision of philosophy. The separation of psychology from philosophy led to a closer relationship with physiology which helped shed light on psychological studies in such areas as perception, emotion, and thought through discoveries of the functions of the central nervous system and establish experimental psychology as a science grounded in human experience[149]. Expectations of psychology as a new science were high. It was hoped psychology would solve problems scholars had been struggling with for a long time. Psychological processes rather than supernatural references could now explain religious experience[150]. James, however, acknowledged the limitations of psychology. He was not interested in explaining the origin of religion but in how religion works

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149 Gerald E. Myers. *William James: His Life and Thought.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 6 & 54.

150 Sonu Shamdasani. "Psychologies as Ontology-Making Practices: William James and the Pluralities of Psychological Experience", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 27.

and what value it may have in an individual's life. Although James himself stood outside religious experience, the phenomenon fascinated him and he was one of the first to study religion from the perspective of experimental psychology. He addressed a wide range of subjects that others ignored or found questionable including astrology, paranormal psychology, and self-help programs. He was a member of the British Society for Psychical Research and later founded the American Society. James was also the first to take an objective view of religious experience[151]. He was of the opinion that psychology needed to be as interested in religious experience as in any other aspect of an individual's psychological constitution[152].

Saroglou

Because of James' efforts in the early days of experimental psychology and a century of research, Saroglou has a solid foundation for his work. He operates within a now well-established and recognized science which has undergone tremendous development since its beginnings. It is a structured and diverse environment with divisions and subdivisions. Psychology of religion is part of social psychology which includes developmental psychology, psycho-social psychology, cognitive/affective motivations, and personality. Saroglou is director of the Center for the Psychology of Religion located in Belgium through which most of his research is done. He works with a team in a variety of psychological areas (personality, developmental, social, cross-cultural, and clinical psychology) and also encourages interdisciplinary work with the human and social sciences of religion. The purpose of the psychology of religion is to understand how religion works in an individual's life from the

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151 Eugene Taylor. "Metaphysics and Consciousness in James' *Varieties*: A Centenary Lecture", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 18.
152 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 4.

perspective of internal dynamics (cognition, emotion, motivation, and/or behaviour)[153]. Like James, Saroglou recognizes that psychology cannot answer all questions about religion as it is limited to observable facts but it can offer empirical evidence for or against divergent or contradictory theories and serve to evaluate the similarities and differences expressed in religious experience[154]. The place of psychology in the study of religion may be increasingly relevant especially in secularized individualistic societies where traditional religious forms are no longer or only marginally transmitted within the family environment and individual and personalized spirituality is increasing. Genetic dispositions, personality, cognitive/affective styles, and situational determinisms are areas of research which can be helpful in explaining individual paths of religious experience[155].

3.2.2 Research Methods

James

James was familiar with the use of questionnaires and conducted experiments in a variety of areas. However, his study of religious experience presented in *Varieties* is based on individual religious experiences recorded in biographies, autobiographies and other personal documents. James calls it a descriptive survey. Although this format is rarely applied in psychological research (then or now), it allows James to make important discoveries as well as demonstrating that qualitative methods can provide valuable data. Despite the different and unusual format, James claims that his study is empirically based and clearly specifies the critera for his research. First, there must be a distinction between religion as a personal function and religion as an

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153 Bernard Spilka, Ralph Hood, Brian Hunsberger and Richard Gorsuch. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach.* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), p. 248.
154 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), p. 474.
155 Ibid., p. 501.

institutional product. James is not interested in religion as a product but in how religion functions at the individual level. His approach is introspective; he studies the individual from an internal perspective, so personal religion is the subject of his study. A further distinction must be made between personal religion and morality; the difference is found at the emotional level. Religious experience must then be evaluated exclusively by its results, that is the positive consequences it has on an individual's life. Finally, the researcher must be aware of personal bias and demonstrate impartiality in observing individuals and recording results[156]. James was convinced that any subject needed to be observed both within and outside its environment and that the more extreme examples offered the best cases for studying religious experience. *Varieties* presents a large and vibrant selection of case studies from which James draws his conclusions.

Saroglou

Contrary to James, Saroglou's research is primarily within the parameters of quantitative research. Contemporary psychology applies scientific methods from mainstream psychology to further the understanding of religion. The approach is theoretical and empirical; data is objectively treated, quantitatively analysed and confirmed by repeated studies. This guarantees the ability to reduce as much as possible the influence of the researcher's bias - an important element also for James. Saroglou's methodology includes surveys, social experiments, interviews, content analysis, cross-cultural comparisons as well as theoretical and interdisciplinary work - a much broader scope than James had for his research in terms of data, tools, theories, methods, concepts etc. For example the Five-Factor model, the model currently used in personality studies, has been helpful in gaining insight into the pattern of a religious personality. Schwartz' ten-value model has been another useful tool to

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156 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), pp. 23, 31, 29, 122, 242.

highlight values related specifically to religion and spirituality[157]. Saroglou is interested in the major components of religion, their psychological dimensions, and how they function. The Big Four model is an attempt to present what he considers the basic elements of religion. Saroglou proposes four basic elements of religion (beliefs, rituals/emotions, moral rules, and community) with corresponding psychological dimensions (believing, bonding, behaving and belonging) and functions (meaning-making, experiencing transcendent emotions, exerting self-control, and solidifying self-esteem). In order to develop his model, Saroglou studied previous models which proposed differing basic elements of religion. The model, he claims, responds to the required criteria for evaluating religion and individual characteristics of religious experience. It is psychologically informed, does not reflect religious traditions or theological positions, is broad enough to include both universals and specifics across religions and cultures, and implies distinct psychological processes, predictors, and consequences[158].

3.2.3 Tensions between Psychology and Religion

James

The tensions between psychology and religion in early experimental psychology developed partly as a result of psychology's new ability to explain religious experience through psychological processes which meant that supernatural references were no longer necessary. Although James applied a psychological perspective to the study of religious experience, he claimed that psychology as a science, in order to

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157 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), pp. 490 & 495

158 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1322.

study religion, also needed to consider the possibility of transcendence experienced in individual lives[159]. This too caused tension.

Saroglou

Tensions between psychology and religion in contemporary psychology are not addressed by Saroglou. That is not to say there is no tension. Opposing views still exist as to whether religion needs to be considered in order to fully understand an individual as James suggested. The current debate about the place of spirituality within religion, whether it is a concept in its own right separate from religion, also causes a certain amount of tension among psychologists. Some separate spirituality from religion. Others use religion as a general concept and spirituality becomes one aspect of a variety of religious expressions which is Saroglou's approach. He acknowledges that modern spirituality can exist both within and outside traditional forms of religion.

3.2.4 Definitions of Psychology

James

Because psychology is still in the early stages of establishing itself as a science, James needs to specify how he understands psychology - its purpose, status, and methods. James defines psychology for the purpose of his lectures and it is clearly within the boundaries of his understanding of experimental psychology. Psychology is *"the science of finite individual minds that assumes as its data thoughts and feeling, a physical world in time and space with which they co-exist and which they know"*[160]. Psychology is an empirically based science, it studies internal dynamics, is

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159 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 9.

160 William James. *Principles of Psychology*. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Brittanica, 1890/1952), preface.

contextual, and is grounded in human experience. 'Knowing' in James' understanding is both intellectual and experiential.

Saroglou

Saroglou speaks of the general purpose of psychology of religion, that is, understanding how religion works in an individual's life, as well as the limitations and possibilities of the psychology of religion. It includes a wide range of methods and theories from different psychological areas. It focuses on internal dynamics and considers individual and cultural contexts.

3.2.5 Objectives

James

James clearly states the objectives for his lectures on the varieties of religious experience. There are three. His first objective is to point to some general facts about religious experience which, he hopes, might receive broad support among psychologists. His second objective is to expose the great (maybe surprising) diversity of individual religious experience through the personal documents he has gathered covering various religious traditions and historical and cultural contexts. Finally James hopes, at the end of his lectures, to show the positive effects religion may have in people's lives[161].

Saroglou

Saroglou's objectives are similar to those of James. He is also interested in propoing some basic elements of religion which might receive broad recognition within psychology of religion as well as understanding the underlying pscyhological

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161 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), pp. 321, 82, 179.

characteristics of religious experience. This remains a rich area of research as the debate surrounding basic elements of religion continues. Saroglou proposes a model based on previous suggestions from sociology, biology and psychology[162]. This model outlines four basic religious elements which, he claims, are both universal and culture specific. It includes corresponding psychological dimensions, functions, and goals associated with each element. In terms of basic general elements of religious experience, Saroglou proposes the same two categories as James, cognitive and emotional, and he includes two additional categories, moral and social, which correspond to the psychological dimensions of behaving and belonging. This model has the potential to find collective support among psychologists of religion.

3.2.6   Comparative Summary

Experimental psychology has evolved significantly since its early days as the work of Saroglou shows. James was a pioneer in this new field attempting to establish some general parameters, methods, and concepts which would lead to new discoveries in both psychology, and in understanding religious experience. James' conclusion that experimental psychology was grounded in human experience continues to be valid today. James laid an important foundation from which subsequent psychologists have learned and benefitted including Saroglou. In certain ways, James continues to challenge psychologists of religion in not only accepting religion as a valuable and interesting subject in psychology but also in addressing controversial religious phenomena which he deemed significant sources for psychological research.

Methodology is the area where the differences between James and Saroglou are most noticeable especially in terms of quantitative and qualitative research. *Varieties* is

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162 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious
   Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1324.

based on qualitative research which is rarely applied in psychology. Quantitative research has been and continues to be the preferred method in psychology. There is also an enormous difference in the accessibility to and availability of data. Early experimental psychology was only beginning to build a data base and develop methods and theories, whereas contemporary psychology has the advantage not only of decades of research but also of the advancement of technology. In order to find his information, James read hundreds of books and publications. Today psychologists can conduct on-line surveys reaching a multitude of people and results can be tabulated electronically. Within the limitations of early experimental psychology, James' work is quite impressive, both his approach and the results he obtained.

The provisional definition of psychology James offered a hundred years ago continues to reflect important elements in psychology. The focus on internal dynamics is still the primary role of psychology of religion, the cognitive and emotional dimensions of religious experience continue to be an important area of interest, and contextuality remains a constant aspect of current research. As to determining some universal generally supported psychological characteristics of religious experience, contemporary psychology has yet to find consensus. Both James and Saroglou contribute to the conversation and research with valuable information.

3.3 Understanding Religion and Spirituality in Psychology

3.3.1 Religious Diversity

James

The title of James' lectures, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, indicates a broad perspective on religious phenomena. James assumed that religion is as diverse as individual psychological characteristics in general. He invites his audience to join him in an exhibit of the *varieties* of religious experience from healthy-mindedness and transcendentalism to conversion and mystical states. His study spans centuries with personal accounts from as early as the first century C. E. It covers a range of religious traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity) and what James would call quasi-religious movements such as the mind-cure movement. Religious diversity, he claims, stems from psychological differences in the areas of individual needs, skills and sensibilities. Individual sensibilities to emotional excitement and the reactions they produce are, according to James, the primary causes of human diversity including religious diversity[163]. As a result of such diversity, religion cannot, James claims, be reduced to a single principle, but is a term which covers a multitude of characteristics all of equal value.

Saroglou

Contemporary psychology recognizes religion as a worldwide phenomenon expressed in a variety of ways across historical periods, cultures, groups as well as in individual differences[164]. Like James, Saroglou notes that the different motivations for being religious are based in specific psychological processes. The variety of approaches

163 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 194.

164 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1320.

contemporary psychology applies to the study of religion (developmental, personality, cognitive/affective, cross-cultural etc.) is an indication of religious diversity. The Big Four model also embraces and addresses religious diversity. The four basic psychological dimensions can be expressed in a variety of ways and, combined in pairs, they offer six prototypes of religious experience which again include possibilities for more variation both universally and individually.

3.3.2 Definitions of Religion

James

James finds himself within a field where concepts cannot be precisely defined. The fact that there are so many and such different definitions of religion (James might say the same today about spirituality) proves to him that religion is a term for various characteristics equally important. James speaks of religion in its broadest sense as belief in an unseen order. This belief creates an awareness within the individual of a relationship between themselves and a higher power[165]. Although James is reluctant to offer a definition, he defines religion for the specific purpose of his lectures as *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*[166]. James description of religion is clearly influenced by his understanding and definition of psychology referred to above. The individual and its internal dynamics are the focus of both his definition of psychology and of personal religious experience.

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165 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 344.
166 Ibid., p. 24.

Saroglou

Saroglou defines religion in general terms as that which *humans do in reference to what they consider as transcendence* and religiosity (the individual experience) as *the corresponding individual differences construct with people differing with respect to the presence and intensity of such tendency*[167]. Despite the time and contexts separating these two psychologists, their understanding of religion is strikingly similar. Certain parts of the definitions apply almost identical wording. James' reference to *the feelings, acts, and experiences of individuals* is similar to how Saroglou defines religiosity (differentiated from religion in general) as *individual differences with respect to presence and intensity*. The phrase s*tand in relation to what they may consider divine* from James' definition resembles Saroglou's words *do in reference to what they consider as transcendence*. The term 'divine' used by James refers to a primal reality which can be personified as God, abstract moral ideas, utopias, or inner versions of holiness[168]. The term 'transcendence' used by Saroglou includes one or more gods, non-personal divinities, impersonal forces or principles[169]. James' description of a primal reality (what modern psychology refers to as a 'foundational reality') is as varied and inclusive as Saroglou's understanding of transcendence. This might surprise some.

3.3.3 Spirituality

James

James does not use the term spirituality, only the adjectival form 'spiritual' which is used to describe the inner life of an individual and thus closely related to personal

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167 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious D Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1321.

168 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 30.

169 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1323.

religion. In fact, if *The Varieties of Religious Experience* was written today, many contemporary psychologists suggest that the term personal religion could be replaced by the term spirituality and the title of James' work would then be *The Varieties of Spiritual Experience*[170]. Many of the characteristics of personal religion are similar to those of modern spirituality. While James distinguishes between personal religion and second-hand religion (institutionalized religion), he does not separate personal religion from religion in general nor does he apply the term spiritual outside the domain of religion. The contemporary religion/spirituality debate was not an issue in James' day.

Saroglou

Spirituality seems to be the chosen term to describe individual experience[171]. Defining spirituality, Saroglou claims, is problematic since there is no general consensus only individual suggestions (and they are plentiful) as to what constitutes spirituality and what the term encompasses from a psychological perspective. Saroglou does not define spirituality. He uses the term, but not as a substitute for the term religion nor a separate concept as is the case with many contemporary psychologists. He distinguishes between what he calls modern spirituality which is essentially described in terms of experience and relationship (similar to James' personal religion) and classic religiosity which is characterized primarily by beliefs and institutional practices (similar to James' second-hand religion). Because of some general shared characteristics, Saroglou includes spirituality as part of religion and not as a separate concept while recognizing that spirituality can exist both within and outside traditional institutionalized religion. Modern spirituality embodies a reality

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170 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 9.

171 Peter Hill, Kenneth Pargament, Ralph Wood, Michael McCullough, James, Swyers, David Larson and Brian Zinnbauer. "Conceptualizing Religion and Spirituality: Points of Commonality, Points of Departure". *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 30:1 (2000), p. 60.

psychologically different from classic religiosity, but they also share some important common characteristics such as the belief that life has meaning, the inclusion of the dimension of the sacred and a transcendent reality as well as the experience of being interconnected to a larger community or the world as a whole[172]. When Saroglou uses the term R/S (for religion/spirituality), he is not separating the concepts as opposing entities. He is indicating that spirituality is one of a variety of religious expressions within religion in general.

3.3.4 Comparative Summary

Both James and Saroglou recognize the immense diversity of religion and individual religious experience. This diversity is evident historically but also within the psychology of religion. The authors comprehend religious diversity as a reflection of psychological differences and diversity. Both define religion from two perspectives, general and specific. In general terms, James understands religion as belief in an unseen order and Saroglou defines religion as that which individuals do in reference to transcendence. Saroglou adds religiosity to his definition. Religiosity is related to how an individual experiences what he/she does in reference to transcendence in terms of presence and intensity. James' definition of religion as the feelings, acts and experiences of individuals is quite similar to religiosity in Saroglou's definition. It focuses not on religion in general but on the individual aspects of religion. Spirituality is a contemporary term not used by James. However, some of the characteristics of modern spirituality are also present in James' description of personal religion. Whether James would, as some suggest, title his lectures "*The Varieties of Spiritual Experience*", if they were given today, might be challenged. James describes the varieties of religious experience of which spirituality would be

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172 Vassilis Saroglou. «Spiritualité moderne. Un regard de psychologie de la religion». *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 34 (2003), pp. 480-481.

one kind as Saroglou suggests. Contemporary psychologists explain using the expression 'religion/spirituality', or the abbreviated form R/S, in order to avoid confusion. Doing so may actually cause more confusion since the term spirituality has yet to be clarified in the psychology of religion. Again, both James and Saroglou offer helpful suggestions.

3.4 Psychological Characteristics of Religion and Spirituality

3.4.1 The Specifics of Religious Experience

James

Religious experience can be identified by psychologists as experience within a religious tradition[173]. However, as James already observed, not all religious experience happens within traditional forms of religion thus other specifics are needed to determine whether an experience is religious or not. James' position, like that of most contemporary psychologists including Saroglou, was that the basic variables in religious behaviour are essentially those found in any behaviour, but they interact with some variables within religion to provide relationships unlike those found elsewhere[174]. What distinguishes religious experience from other experiences is, James claims, a difference at the emotional level. There is an added dimension of emotion connected to the belief in an unseen order which develops a relationship between the individual and a higher power. The individual knows this dynamic both intellectually and experientially. Individual characteristics of religious experience, James notes, may also be found in non-religious persons. When these

173 Ralph W. Hood. "The History and Current State of Research on Psychology of Religion", in *The Oxford Handbook of Psychology and Spirituality*, edited by Lisa J. Miller. (Oxford,UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 246.
174 Jacob A. Belzen. "The *Varieties*, the Principles and the Psychology of Religion: Unremitting Inspiration from a Different Source", in *William James and The Varieties of Religious Experience*, edited by Jeremy Carrette. (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 65.

characteristics are grouped together, they seem to flow from the individual's sense of the divine and can then be referred to as religious[175]. In the case of highly developed characteristics, James states, there is no uncertainty as to what experiences are religious.

Saroglou

According to Saroglou, beliefs related to what an individual perceives as a transcendent reality is a key factor in differentiating between being religious or not[176]. In terms of the Big Four model, Saroglou notes that the four psychological dimensions (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging) are also implied and co-exist in many social realities. The specific goals associated with each of the four basic dimensions are what distinguish religion from other social realities. Believing is concerned with existential issues; bonding is related to emotion, specifically awe, with respect to a transcendent reality; behaving is aspiring to achieve moral excellency; and belonging is being connected to a community with a religious tradition or to the world at large[177].

3.4.2 Psychological Dimensions

James is rather inconsistent in his terminology using various terms interchangeably when describing the psychological dimensions of religion. Saroglou is much more precise, therefore his terminology from the Big Four model (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging) will be applied in the following to describe the psychological characteristics of religious experience.

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175 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 274.
176 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1323.
177 Ibid., p. 1333.

James on Believing

The cognitive dimension of religious experience occupies an important place in *Varieties*. James uses different terms such as belief, thought, conscience or consciousness, conception, and ideas when describing this dimension. Attitudes in general, religious or not, are, according to James, based on what an individual believes to exist in reality or ideally together with themselves. The kind of ideas the individual holds about his or her world and what place they occupy, whether they are central or marginal, will also influence belief and religious experience. Within the religious realm, the object of an individual's beliefs may not be intellectually true, that is intellectually defendable or factual, but true in the sense that they are experienced as real, they are sensational. Religious belief is different from other beliefs in that it comprehends the visible world as being part of a larger world from which it draws its meaning[178].

The cognitive dimension of religious experience is illustrated by James in his description of conversion to which he dedicates two chapters. To be converted, according to James, means that religious beliefs which may have been marginal or even nonexistant become central to the individual. Voluntary or gradual conversion happens at the cognitive level when an individual over time develops new spiritual attitudes connected to the new religious beliefs they have adopted. Saintliness is characterized by a conviction of the existence of a higher power which can be both intellectual and sensible[179].

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178 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 359.
179 Ibid., p. 202.

Saroglou on Believing

Saroglou's description of belief is quite similar to the one offered by James. Belief is a basic universal component of religion characterized by special features at the cognitive level. Religious belief consists of a set of beliefs related to a transcendent reality, something which the individual perceives as greater than themselves. How these beliefs are expressed depends on individual psychological differences. They vary on a spectrum from literal and dogmatic to symbolic and autonomous. Belief is about meaning-making and is concerned with ideas related to existential questions. It helps the individual make sense of the world and gives value to life[180].

James on Bonding

James uses several terms other than the term feeling to describe the emotional dimension of religion. These include emotion, perception, sentiment, and experience. While feeling is the deeper source of religion, James observes that there is no specifically religious feeling. Religious emotion does not differ from any other emotion except by the fact that it is directed towards a religious object. This does not exclude the possibility that certain emotions may occur more often than others in a religious context. James focuses on emotion as an important element in religious experience. Religion is experiential manifested in a relationship with a higher power and is expressed in an attitude of solemnity. The purpose of religion is to be in a harmonious relationship with the divine or higher power.

James gives plenty of examples of the role emotions play in religious experience. The second type of conversion, also a mystical experience, is referred to as involuntary or sudden conversion. In this case the individual is overpowered by emotions causing a

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180 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), pp. 1323 & 1332.

complete transformation expressed both internally and externally as a sense of newness. Saintliness is characterized by a sense of freedom and a feeling of being in a world larger than oneself. Mystical states are states of feeling. The individual feels as if moving from something small into something vast[181].

Saroglou on Bonding

The emotional dimension is characterized by self-transcendent experiences that form a close relationship between the individual and a transcendent reality. The role of emotions is important in religion and positive emotions seem particularly relevant especially for modern spirituality. Saroglou differentiates between self-transcendent and self-oriented positive emotions and only the self-transcendent kind is relevant to religion[182]. Self-transcendent positive emotions can lead an individual to discover new thoughts and actions, encourage openness to experience, enrich the belief that life is meaningful, and promote interest in religion. Emotions are connected to relationship and experience. Saroglou notes that awe may be a prototype emotion in religious experience[183].

Saroglou does not specifically address the experiences discussed by James: conversion, saintliness, and mysticism. He mentions the role of especially positive emotions in conversion and briefly comments on mysticism. Saroglou's description of certain aspects of modern spirituality reflects what James describes as being part of mystical states. Modern spirituality implies being open to new experiences which is the personality factor linked to individual predisposition to paranormal beliefs and

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181 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 308.

182 Patty Van Cappellen and Vassilis Saroglou. "Awe Activates Religious and Spiritual Feelings and Behavioural Intentions". *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 4:3 (2012), p. 224.

183 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1326.

experiences. It is also characterized by the perception of vastness mentioned by James as an outcome of mystical experience.

It is interesting to note the various emotions included in the descriptions of personal religion by James and of spirituality by Saroglou. The words printed in italics are those emotions found in the work of both authors. James mentions the following emotions: *hope,* happiness, felicity, *security,* resolve, peace, harmony, *ecstacy,* assurance, elation, freedom, *loving* and harmonious *affections, purity,* patience, *feeling of vastness, tender,* solemnity, *admiration, humble-mindedness.* The primary self-transcendent positive emotions associated with spirituality in Saroglou's work are: *hope,* marvel, wonder, appreciation, respect, awe, reverence, joy, gratitude, *love, admiration, experience of vastness, ecstasy, purity, tenderness, affection, humility,* and *security.* Saroglou suggests that awe, which is described as the emotion of respectful admiration when facing a higher reality, may be a prototype of emotions elicited within a religious context. When reading James' descriptions of the varieties of religious experience, the sense of 'respectful admiration' (awe) is present throughout.

James on Behaving

Again, James applies various terms to speak of behaviour changing between the terms acts, conduct, or habits. He mentions conduct along with feeling as a constant element in religion. Behaviour is the outward manifestation of an inner religious life. They are less important to James than the cognitive and emotional dimensions of religion and given less space in his lectures. Saintliness includes willingness to surrender control to an ideal power, tendencies toward humility and asceticism as well as acts of service in relation to others[184].

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184 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 274.

Saroglou on Behaving

Behaving is concerned with moral rules and exercising self-control. Saroglou notes the specific differences in behaving between classic religiosity and modern spirituality. Modern spirituality is about interpersonal morality based on feelings of empathy and principles of justice, whereas classic religiosity focuses on impersonal morality such as principles of loyalty and integrity. In terms of benevolence (acts of kindness), modern spirituality has a much broader perspective than classic religiosity. The characteristics of saintliness are found in Saroglou's combination of bonding and behaving which he notes is expressed as asceticism[185].

James on Belonging

James does not speak directly about belonging. He is interested in personal religion not institutional religion where belonging would be a more prominent subject. James does suggest that belonging is not restricted to traditional religious institutions but that a sense of belonging can also be found in the new religious movements he presents, for example the mind-cure movement and transcendentalism.

Saroglou on Belonging

Belonging is mainly identified with a major religious tradition, denomination, or specific group but it may also be expressed in self-identifying as 'spiritual but not religious'. In this case the need to belong is met by feeling connected to the world at large or the human community in general[186].

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185 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious
    Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1332.
186 Ibid., p. 1327.

3.4.3   Comparative Summary

Religious experience has traditionally been identified as experience within a religious tradition. James already noted that religious experience can also happen outside traditional forms of religion, an observation Saroglou supports. What makes an experience religious or spiritual, according to James, is a difference at the emotional level related to belief in an unseen order. Saroglou indicates that the four psychological dimensions in the Big Four model also co-exist within other social realities such as family and work. What makes them specifically religious or spiritual are the self-transcendent goals associated with each dimension.

In order to find the psychological characteristics of religious experience, James suggests focusing on thoughts and feelings which are two of the dimensions suggested in the Big Four model (believing and bonding). Saroglou goes further and proposes two additional dimensions, behaving and belonging. Both authors recognize that belief is related to a transcendent reality and that belief gives meaning to the individual's life and the world in which they live. Emotions play an important role in religious experience, especially positive emotions. Spirituality is experiential - expressed in a relationship with a higher power. Saroglou arrives at the same conclusion. Bonding is about self-transcendent experiences from which a bond forms between the individual and a transcendent reality. Thoughts and feelings are, James states, the essence of personal religion and the psychological data upon which James bases his study. These are also the two dimensions emphasized in modern spirituality according to the Big Four model.

Saroglou's model expands on James' initial study on the psychological characteristics of religious experience as well as incorporating one hundred years of research in

psychology of religion. The model is simple in its structure, proposing four basic religious elements with corresponding psychological dimensions, functions, and goals. Whereas James focuses solely on personal religion and thus does not help in differentiating between spirituality and other religious experience, Saroglou's model offers a broader scope suggesting four basic psychological dimensions: believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging. These can be combined in pairs into six prototypes of religious experience each emphasizing two of the four dimensions of the model. The understanding of spirituality has not changed significantly over the past century when comparing James and Saroglou. Both focus on cognitive and emotional dimensions as the underlying psychological characteristics of personal religion/modern spirituality. The underpinnings of spirituality remain the same except the Big Four model offers a much more complex and inclusive description of both spirituality and other varieties of religious experience. It can be helpful in separating what is spirituality from what is not. It is equally helpful in distinguishing between different kinds of spiritualities, e.g. spirituality within or outside traditional forms of religion and theistic or non-theistic spirituality.

3.5 The Contributions of Psychology to the Study of Spirituality

James

Varieties played an important role in the early years of psychology and has continued to influence the psychology of religion since its publication in 1902. It has become especially helpful for contemporary psychology and the recent interest in spirituality. In many areas, James was well ahead of his time and is being credited today by some as an example of what it means to be 'spiritual but not religious'. He has contributed in various ways to the study of contemporary spirituality. He introduced criteria for

assessing religious experience that are useful today in differentiating between religious and nonreligious interests and experiences. He is helpful in the current debate about the separation of religion and spirituality and in understanding modern spirituality both within and outside organized forms of religion.

Saroglou

The Big Four model is an important contribution to psychology. It solidifies research over the past one hundred years on the psychological characteristics of religious experience from early experimental psychology to sociological models in the 1960s to recent studies in cross-cultural, social, and personality psychology. It applies a psychologically based approach that includes concepts and theories from mainstream psychology as well as point to specific psychological constructs and processes. The model is fairly simple in its construction, four basic religious elements each with a corresponding psychological dimension, function, and goal. Theoretically the model can be helpful in organizing the large amount of literature on modern spirituality. Conceptually it offers clarification as to what the term spirituality encompasses. At a practical level, the model can be applied in a variety of settings by different professionals as a tool to determine what constitutes a religious/spiritual experience, especially within the current context of the rather indiscriminant use of the term spirituality. It includes room for both universals and specifics and can be applied transhistorically and cross-culturally offering a broad spectrum for studying religion. The model may also be able to offer insight into the psychological reasons for the shift from religious to spiritual in secular societies - a subject which is not discussed in this study. The Big Four model is a promising proposal and one, it is believed, James would wholeheartedly support. In the following chapter the Big Four model will be applied to a contemporary example of spirituality with the purpose of illustrating the value of Saroglou's model as a tool for assessing spirituality.

CHAPTER IV

CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY: AN EXAMPLE

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have exposed and compared the work of William James and Vassilis Saroglou concerning the underlying psychological characteristics of spirituality. Both James and Saroglou note the important role the cognitive and emotional dimensions occupy in religious experience expressed as spirituality. Believing and bonding are, according to Saroglou, at the heart of modern spirituality. Spirituality is also characterized by the absence of the moral and social dimensions (behaving and belonging). This fourth and final chapter will apply the Big Four model to an example of a contemporary religious experience with the purpose of demonstrating the usefulness and benefits of the model when analysing/assessing spirituality. The example is a *document humain* similar to those presented by James. In his book *La nuit de feu* (*Night of Fire*), published in 2015, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt recounts his mystical experience - *la nuit de feu* as he refers to it - which happened more than 25 years earlier. The chapter begins with an introduction of Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt and a summary of his experience followed by an analysis of the experience based on the Big Four model. The chapter concludes with a brief exposition of how current psychological theory can contribute to a more complete understanding of contemporary spirituality.

4.2 A *document humain*

4.2.1 Presentation of Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt

Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt is a contemporary Franco-Belgian playwright, short story writer, and novelist as well as a film director[187]. Praised by critics and favoured by the public, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt "has become one of the most widely read and performed French-language authors in the world"[188]. A graduate from *l'École Normale Supérieure*, he obtained his *agrégation* in philosophy, defended his doctoral thesis in 1986, then taught philosophy at *l'Université de Chambéry* before becoming a writer.

Schmitt's passion for writing which developed in his youth returned after a mystical experience in the Hoggar desert in 1989, where he, by his own admission, found himself inundated by faith. His literary skills were first revealed in France as a playwright with *La nuit de Valognes*, a modern interpretation of Don Juan published in 1991. His second play, *Le Visiteur*, a dialogue between Freud and God published two years later, was acclaimed by critics, earned him international renown, and established him as a writer. In 1997, he published a monologue on Buddhism entitled *Milarepa*. This lead to a series of stories on childhood and spirituality known as *Le cycle de l'invisible*. It includes three other stories: *Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du Coran, Oscar et la dame rose* et *L'Enfant de Noé*[189].

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187 <https://www.babelio.com/auteur/Eric-Emmanuel-Schmitt/3156>. Consulted July 18, 2018. Free translation. He was born in France and is now a naturalized Belgian citizen.

188 <https://www.eric-emmanuel-schmitt.com/portrait-short-biography.htlm>. Consulted May 31, 2018.

189 <https:// www.linternaute.com/sortir/auterus/schmitt.htlm>. Consulted May 31, 2018.

The work of Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt includes plays, novels, short stories, tales and essays and has been translated into forty-five languages. His plays have been staged in over fifty countries and are part of the contemporary repertoire. They continue to be perfomed in both new productions and revivals in theatres throughout the world. Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt has received numerous awards and prizes (twenty-nine according to his website) from many countries including France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, Poland and the Ukraine[190]. In November 2016, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of Sherbrooke in Québec. Since 2016, Schmitt has been one of the ten jurors of the prestigious Goncourt prize[191]. In 2015, Schmitt published *La nuit de feu* (*Night of Fire*)[192], an account of the revelation he experienced in the Hoggar desert turning the former atheist into a believer who now declares himself an "agnostic who believes"[193].

Schmitt's experience has been chosen for this analysis primarily because his account has been documented and published which is a rare occurrence in contemporary spirituality. The example is beautifully written and includes valuable information about the psychological characteristics of contemporary spirituality. It is a textbook example for applying the Big Four model as it contains all the elements necessary for a good analysis. James would most certainly have included this example if he were writing today. It is an example of an individual for whom spirituality exists 'as an acute fever'[194].

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190 <https://www.eric-emmanuel-schmitt.com>. Consulted May 31, 2018.

191 <https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1094295/salon-du-livre-quebec-eric-emmanuel-schmitt-litterature-chopin>. Consulted May 31, 2018.

192 Although this book has been translated into several languages and the title can be found in English, *Night of Fire*, a full English translation of *La nuit de feu* is not available at the present time.

193 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric-Emmanuel_Schmitt>. Consulted May 31, 2018.

194 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 7.

4.2.2 Schmitt's Experience

At the age of twenty-eight, Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt embarks on a hike in southern Algeria. During that expedition, he loses sight of his companions and finds himself alone in the immensity of the Hoggar mountains. Without water and food during the cold night in the desert, he experiences no fear but feels a burning force lifting within him. The rational philosopher is shaken in all his certitudes. A feeling of peace, of happiness, of eternity overwhelms him. This fire, why not call it God?[195]

The experience, as it is recorded in the book, covers several chapters. It will not be quoted here in its entirety; only the parts of the experience relevant to the psychological characteristics of spirituality will be recorded. What follows are three parts of Schmitt's experience. The first quote is a brief introduction to the experience, the physical and emotional environment Schmitt describes as he prepares to spend the night in the desert; the second quote is about the experience itself – the night of fire as he refers to it; and the third, fourth, and fifth quotes recount Schmitt's reflections upon the experience after it has happened (immediately after, the days following the experience, and 25 years later at the time of writing *La nuit de feu*)[196].

Before the experience (section 1):

> I decide to dig a bed for myself. The sand will serve as a sheet... I bury myself... I am on my back in the position of a tomb effigy facing the evening star. My breath is agitated... Lost... Dying... That is what awaits me. My eyes open. I panic... I pant, restless, worried, afraid... ready to let myself be tormented by fear...

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195 Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt. *La nuit de feu*. (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2015). Back cover. Free translation.

196 The quotes are not the full text. Only phrases with psychological relevance have been included. The phrases have been put together in order to create a text. Three dots ... indicate either missing parts from the original text or dots in the original text.

During the experience (section 2):

> Buried. Settled in the sand sarcophagus, I face the night... Buried... If I could only fall alseep! ...my conscience, clear, vibrant, does not let me rest... Buried... I will soon disappear in the sand... Buried... What is happening? I am feeling light, I am detaching myself or being pulled... I rise up above the sand, the pile of rocks, and ... I am flying. Incredible: I have two bodies! One on the ground and one in the air... The prisoner below shivers and the emancipated light, impalpable, rises slowly above the landscape... My conscience loses its usual train of thought... Time is slowing down. I am flying... Where does this force come from? ... From outside? From inside? I don't understand... Everything is changing... The force acts again. It makes me bigger... enormous, spreading me out to the dimensions of the mountains...The force insists. It pulls me apart without breaking me. In fact, this dismantling fills me with sweetness. Delicious. A sense of peace overwhelms me... An immense joy. I am confident... Joy. Flame. The force charges. I let it. It penetrates my body, my spirit. I radiate... I leave everything, the desert, the world, my body, me. I will soon be one with this force... Magnificent. Dazzling. I feel everything... I am on fire.. I no longer think in phrases nor perceive with my eyes, ears, and skin... I approach a presence... The more I move forward, the less I doubt... The less I question the more obvious it is. Everything has meaning. Felicity... Fire... I burn, I merge, I lose my boundaries, I enter the hearth... Fire...

Immediately following the experience (section 3):

> The force that lifted me has delicately brought me back on the ground... Slowly I regain my intelligence and memory. Slowly I come back to myself. The Great Light is receeding but we are not separating: there is a trace left buried deep within me, alive, glowing... I recover my normal breathing and reintegrate my body... Absolute certainty glows above all else: He exists. Who? I cannot name Him. He never named himself. He exists. Who? Who is my abductor? Who has pulled me from the ravines and filled me with joy? ... Who is my abductor? I reflect on this with tenderness. Overjoyed... I am overjoyed... He has delighted me... Maybe I should baptize him God. Or Fire. God? Why not... God, I have touched his heart. Or He has touched mine... We will not leave each other. What joy that He exists! Happiness! Through my new faith, I experience it powerfully. What has He taught me? "Everything has meaning. Everything is justified"... I relax. A feeling of comfort seizes

me... I join ordinary time... last night I stepped outside it to touch eternity... I smile as I reflect on the gift I have received. Faith...

In the days following the experience (section 4):

> I tried to get used to the joy. For such was the result of my mystical night: beatitude... joy had reintegrated me into the world and placed me in front of God. Joy led me to humility. Because of it, I no longer felt isolated, a stranger... joy had brought me back to just proportions: not great by myself, rather great by the greatness which had been placed within me.

Twenty-five years later (section 5):

> I read the original books of different Eastern and Western spiritualities. I entered the garden of religions by the the door of the mystical poets who, far from dogmas and institutions, experience more than they prescribe... I shared an interior flame with individuals from all times and all places. Fraternities were being formed. The universe was widening... While writing these pages, I have trembled, jubilated, held my breath, howled with enthusiasm.... Inexhaustible, this night of fire continues to shape my body, my soul, my life... One night on earth has dressed me in joy for the whole of life.

4.3 Analysis of Schmitt's Experience

The Big Four model will now be applied to Schmitt's experience, an example of one type of spirituality among several. The analysis will focus on the specific psychological characteristics of Schmitt's experience and how they compare with or reflect the characteristics of modern spirituality proposed by Saroglou. Each of the four dimensions will be applied to the example in the order they are presented in the model (believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging) in order to determine which dimensions are part of the experience and which are not. The cognitive and emotional dimensions (believing and bonding) are emphasized in spirituality and the absence of

the moral and social dimensions (behaving and belonging) are also important characteristics.

4.3.1 Believing

The cognitive dimension is present in Schmitt's experience although it is somewhat discreet. At the beginning of the experience, Schmitt writes that his conscience is clear and vibrant. It will not let him rest. As he enters more deeply into the experience, he speaks of losing his train of thought and time slowing down. He no longer thinks in phrases (section 2). He is moving into a different mental state, James would say. Both during and after the experience Schmitt knows, intellectually and emotionally, that everything has meaning. This is stated twice. Meaning-making is part of the cognitive dimension and so is belief in a transcendent reality. When Schmitt reflects on the experience after it has happened, he claims that he has been given the gift of faith. This can be interpreted as belief. Beliefs related to a transcendent reality are a key characteristic of religious experience according to Saroglou[197] and also one of the two major psychological underpinnings of modern spirituality. Saroglou defines transcendence in very broad terms (so does James) as something existing beyond the individual which the individual can refer to in a variety of ways such as one or more gods/divine beings, non-personal divinities, or impersonal forces/principles. Schmitt describes transcendence in different ways throughout the experience. It is a force, a presence, the Great Light, an abductor, "He", and Fire. He finally settles on the term 'God'[198] as his way of addressing and referring to the transcendent reality he has just encountered. The elements included in

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197 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1323.
198 These terms are written in capital letters in the original French text.

the cognitive dimension of the Big Four model can be found in Schmitt's experience: belief in a transcendent reality and looking for (and finding) meaning. The meaning-making process is not confined to the moment of Schmitt's experience - the actual time it lasts. Rather, his mystical night is the starting point for a meaning-making process which continues throughout his life. He discovers during the experience that everything has meaning, that everything is justified (section 2).

4.3.2 Bonding

Modern spirituality is about experiencing a relationship through powerful emotions with a transcendent reality. It is first and foremost experiential. This aspect is evident and explicit in Schmitt's account. "I experience it in a powerful way", he records (section 3). He gives a description of how he experiences this relationship, this encounter with transcendence: he feels light; he is detaching himself or being pulled; he is floating at one moment and flying at another; he feels on fire; he has two bodies, one on the ground and one in the air. He feels he is being spread out to the dimensions of the mountains. He radiates. He describes the experience as sensual. It is delicious; he is filled with sweetness (section 2).

The emotional dimension dominates Schmitt's experience. Saroglou defines bonding as including self-transcendent experiences that bond the individual with what it perceives to be the transcendent reality[199]. Bonding is the most influential of the two dimensions of spirituality, believing and bonding, in Schmitt's account. It is characterized by the emotional quality an individual experiences through connection

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199 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1326.

with transcendence[200]. Schmitt is clearly experiencing a relationship, a bond, with a transcendent reality. During the experience he states, "I will soon be one with this force", "I merge, I lose my boundaries, I enter the hearth" (section 2). As the experience fades and he regains awareness of the world around him, he knows that a relationship has been established. "We are not separating; we will not leave each other" (section 2).

"[We] have literally been bathed in sentiment"[201] James states toward the end of his lectures. Schmitt's experience is also "bathed in sentiment". It includes many of the self-transcendent emotions characteristic of religious and spiritual experiences. These are: peace, joy (or a variant, eleven times), confidence, felicity, delight, happiness, comfort, certainty, tenderness, beatitude, humility, harmony, and sweetness. How do these compare with James and Saroglou? Feelings related to personal religious experience mentioned by James are: hope, happiness, felicity, security, resolve, peace, harmony, ecstacy, assurance, elation, freedom, loving and harmonious affections, purity, patience, feeling of vastness, tender, solemnity, admiration, and humble-mindedness. Saroglou recognizes the following self-transcendent positive emotions: hope, marvel, wonder, appreciation, respect, awe, reverence, joy, gratitude, love, admiration, experience of vastness, ecstacy, purity, tenderness, affection, humility, and security. Schmitt shares 'tenderness', humility, and 'feeling of vastness' with both James and Saroglou. He shares peace, felicity, harmony, certainty (= assurance), and beatitude (= happiness) with James. With Saroglou he shares joy and, indirectly, marvel, wonder and awe expressed by Schmitt as delight and happiness. Schmitt does not use the term 'awe' (*émerveillement*) when narrating his experience. However, the

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200 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1332.
201 William James. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. (New York: Touchstone, 1902/2004), p. 359.

text is imbued with a sense of awe in his description of the experience and in his choice of words (e.g. joy, delight, happiness, beatitude, sweetness). His questioning and what he discovers could also be described as a sense of awe, for example when he says, "He exists. Who? I cannot name Him" (section 3). So can his smile when he reflects on the gift he has received (section 3). This sense of awe and his bond with a transcendent reality extend beyond the moment of the experience. When reflecting upon his mystical night twenty-five years later, the sense of awe is still present. "One night on earth has dressed me in joy for the whole of life", he writes (section 5). The experience continues to influence his life and his being. While recording his experience, he relives that night of fire and experiences powerful feelings such as jubilation and enthusiasm (section 5).

4.3.3 Behaving

Although Saroglou claims that all four dimensions are present in any religious experience, behaving (the moral dimension) seems to play only a marginal role in spirituality if it is present at all. Behaving is hardly noticeable in Schmitt's account. It may be mentioned indirectly in his reference to reading the original books of different spiritualities as well as the works of mystical poets (section 5). Buying (and reading) books, Saroglou suggests, is one of the practices associated with modern spirituality. The moral dimension might be included in the sense of humility Schmitt develops as a result of his experience, not great by himself but great by the greatness which has been placed within him (section 4).

4.3.4 Belonging

The social dimension, belonging, is expressed as identification with a major religious tradition, a denomination, or a specific group[202]. This dimension is absent in modern spirituality. There is no identification with a tradition, a denomination, or a specific group. However, Saroglou notes that a sense of belonging may be expressed in self-identifying as a 'believer' and that the social dimension can be satisfied by feeling connected to the human community in general[203]. Schmitt describes himself as "an agnostic who believes"[204] not identifying with any tradition or group. He refers to entering the garden of religions by the door of mystical poets who, far from dogmas and institutions, experience more than they prescribe (section 5). He mentions praying within the framework of no religion[205]. He speaks of the universe widening (a tendency toward universalism is another characteristic of spirituality) and of transhistorical and cross-cultural bonds (fraternities) being formed with people from all times and places with whom he shares an interior flame (section 5). Whether this is related to a sense of belonging (identifying with or self-identifying as something) or not is ambivalent. This could also be included in the emotional dimension as a sense of interconnectedness.

4.4 Concluding Remarks

The application of the Big Four model to Schmitt's experience clearly shows the specific psychological characteristics of modern spirituality. It is independent of

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202 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious
  Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1327.
203 See chapter 2, p. 47.
204 Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt. *La nuit de feu*. (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2015), p. 185.
205 Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt. *La nuit de feu*. (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 2015), p. 168.

traditional and/or institutional religion in all of the four dimensions. Spirituality constitutes an individualized approach to existential and ethical questions and is autonomous in its search for meaning as well as in the construction of identity and values. Schmitt finds meaning in his experience of and relationship with a transcendent reality. "Everything has meaning" he states during the experience, and this does not change following the experience. Schmitt also constructs his identity independently of any religious tradition. He describes himself as an 'agnostic believer'. This description could be categorized as one type of contemporary spirituality. Schmitt may be the only one using it. It would be interesting to compare Schmitt's description of himself with someone who identifies as 'spiritual but not religious' or 'more spiritual than religious'. How might an 'agnostic believer' differ psychologically from a 'spiritual but not religious' individual in terms of belief and understanding transcendence?

Spirituality is experiential. Experience is primordial in Schmitt's account. He experiences self-transcendence in relation to a 'higher' reality through powerful emotions. This mystical experience transforms him – body, soul, and life – both in the moment and beyond the experience. Positive emotions especially seem to have more impact on spirituality. Schmitt's account is infused with positive emotions. Any negative emotions, such as fear or feeling isolated, disappear as he is drawn into the experience. Joy is the positive emotion characterizing Schmitt's experience. It appears more than ten times in the excerpts. Joy reintegrated him into the world and placed him in front of God. Joy led him to humility. Joy brought him back to just proportions. He is dressed in joy for life (sections 4 and 5). Both James and Saroglou mention a variety of positive emotions which can be part of spirituality and religion. Might there also be individual differences as to which emotions are favoured in different types of spirituality? Schmitt accentuates joy.

Schmitt's account is an excellent example of modern spirituality showing its specific psychological characteristics. It emphasizes the cognitive and emotional dimensions. Although the emotional dimension (bonding) is predominant in Schmitt's experience, the cognitive dimension (believing) remains significant. As James would say, Schmitt knows transcendence both intellectually and emotionally. Modern spirituality shows little or no interest in the moral and social dimensions (behaving and belonging) which is also the case in this example. The analysis illustrates well how the Big Four model can be helpful in understanding modern spirituality by pointing to its basic underlying psychological characteristics and, with additional research, may possibly offer more nuanced descriptions of the psychological dimensions of contemporary spiritualities.

CONCLUSION

Intrigued by the growing interest in spirituality in Western secularized societies, this thesis attempted to understand the phenomenon from a psychological perspective within the tradition of experimental psychology. Through a comparison of the work of two prominent psychologists of religion, the thesis led to a general understanding of spirituality and its underlying psychological dimensions and encourages the use of a theoretical framework developed by Vassilis Saroglou for psychological research in and assessment of spirituality in both academic and clinical settings.

The study covered two periods in the history of the psychology of religion, early experimental psychology and current psychological theory. Beginning with *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, published in 1902 by William James, also known as the founder of American psychology, spirituality was described as it was first understood in psychology. James introduced a new approach to the study of religion through experimental psychology grounded in human experience. Current psychological theory was represented by Vassilis Saroglou whose research on religion and spirituality is extensive and led him to suggest a promising theoretical framework for understanding the underlying psychological dimensions of religion referred to as the Big Four model. This model presents four basic components of religion with corresponding psychological dimensions, functions, and goals. Believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging constitute the psychological dimensions of the model.

Despite different historical and cultural contexts, the comparative analysis showed more similarities than differences between James and Saroglou. Their differences were primarily at the methodological level. The comparison accentuated the progress made in psychology since James' research in the late 19ᵗʰ century in terms of available

data, methods, and theories. Although James did not employ the term spirituality, his description of the psychological characteristics of personal religion were similar to those offered by Saroglou of modern spirituality. Both emphasized the cognitive and emotional dimensions as primary characteristics of spirituality and noted the lack or absence of the moral and social dimensions. Finally, the Big Four model was applied to a contemporary example of spiritual but not religious (i. e. Schmitt) in order to illustrate its potential in assessing the psychological characteristics of spirituality.

Several objectives were achieved in this thesis. First, it illustrated the value of classic psychological explanatory theories, such as James', when attempting to understand spirituality. James noted the importance of the cognitive and emotional dimensions in personal religious experience, dimensions which continue to be recognized as important characteristics of spirituality. Secondly, it documented how current psychological theory can contribute to the understanding of spirituality. The Big Four model proposed by Saroglou offers a theoretical framework based on decades of research and is able to provide more nuanced descriptions of spirituality and its varieties as well as the varieties of other religious experience. Finally, the study indicated that the understanding of spirituality has changed very little in psychology over the past century and that its psychological underpinnings (cognition and emotion) have remained constant indicating, as Saroglou suggests[206], that these might be basic universal dimensions of spirituality - an important finding for future research on this subject.

This thesis has several limits which need to be acknowledged. First, the thesis included only two authors. Well-known contemporaries of William James, such as G. Stanley Hall, James Leuba, Edwin Starbuck, and Sigmund Freud were also interested

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206 Vassilis Saroglou. "Believing, Bonding, Behaving, and Belonging: The Big Four Religious Dimensions and Cultural Variation". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 42 (2011), p. 1320.

in the study of the psychology of religion and many current psychologists alongside Vassilis Saroglou have contributed significantly to research on spirituality. They could all have provided valuable information. However, two authors seemed sufficient for the purpose of the comparative analysis presented in the thesis.

Although the history of the psychology of religion spans more than a century, this thesis covered only two periods, early experimental psychology in the late 19th century and current psychological theory at the beginning of the 21st century. Other periods in the history of psychology represented by such influential psychologists as Freud, Jung, and Maslow who could have provided a broader understanding of spirituality were not examined. Furthermore, this research was conducted within the area of experimental psychology. Although important, other areas of psychology interested in the study of religion, for example psychoanalytical psychology and Jungian psychology, were not included. They were considered beyond the scope of this work.

In this thesis, the study of spirituality was limited to the context of Western secularized, post-Christian societies. Other religious and cultural contexts equally important were not examined. Only one example of contemporary spirituality was included. Other examples exist but were not considered. Finally, this thesis did not attempt to explain the shift from religious to spiritual. It is limited to the understanding and description of the psychological characteristics of spirituality.

Additional research is needed in several areas in order to better understand contemporary spirituality from a psychological perspective. Further research in cultural and religious contexts outside Western secularized societies and the Christian tradition is necessary as this will provide a more complete and nuanced description of

spirituality. For example, how is spirituality expressed in different religious, cultural, and social contexts? Is it, as some suggest, a new phenomenon reflecting the place of religion in Western secularized societies?

Research applying the Big Four model to current examples of spirituality is another area which could be investigated further to obtain more detailed descriptions of each of the four psychological dimensions as well as their functions and goals. For example, what, if any, are the cognitive, emotional, moral, and/or social differences between a 'spiritual but not religious' individual, one who is 'more spiritual than religious', simply 'spiritual', 'religious and spiritual', or neither spiritual nor religious? How might more extensive and diversified research in the area of cognitive and affective needs lead to a better understanding of spirituality, its *raison d'être*, and the shift from religious to spiritual in contemporary secular societies?

This thesis offered a theoretical comparative analysis of spirituality covering two periods in the history of the psychology of religion which, to our knowledge, has not been done before and thus may be a unique contribution. It has been an interesting and stimulating exploration of the psychological dimensions of spirituality which appear to have remained constant and may, as Saroglou suggests, be universal. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James expressed his desire to offer some common characteristics of personal religious experience which would find consensus among psychologists. With the Big Four model, such an opportunity might be at the doorstep of the psychology of religion and spirituality.

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