

Newsletter of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion

December 2007

In this Newsletter you find a variety of information that meets the aims of the Newsletter 'new style':

- a review by James. W. Jones on the International Conference on Spirituality (Prague, September 2007);
- the self-presentation by our colleagues in Psychology of Religion from the Uppsala University, Sweden (the first self-presentation in what hopefully becomes a tradition in order to keep all of you informed about the work of colleagues, in order to promote mutual communication and exchange);
- the announcement of a conference on Psychiatry and Religion (Leiden, The Netherlands);
- a new interesting French internet-site on Theology and Psychoanalysis.

1. Prague Conference, September 2007

On an unusually warm September weekend, over 90 people from 27 different countries gathered at the medieval Charles University in the city of Prague in the Czech Republic. They came for the International Conference on Spirituality organized by psychological societies within the Czech Republic and the University's Theology Faculty in cooperation with the International Association (primarily in the person of Professor Jacob Belzen). Over all the conference was well-organized, the setting in the Theology Faculty was splendid, the support staff genuinely helpful, and the catered coffee-breaks added several kilos to the weight of the participants—all this is a tribute to the conference organizers.

Since the conference was originally described as a meeting on spirituality and psychology and the majority of the sponsors were psychological organizations, virtually all the presentations were psychologically oriented. All the current topics in the field of psychology of religion could be heard: coping, religion and health, measurement concerns, personality and developmental issues, and so on. The diversity of topics, the genuinely international scope of the participants, and the distribution of younger and more senior scholars are all proof of the vitality of the field.

The glaring exception to this international diversity was the four keynote speakers. Professor Jacob Belzen, a person with significant responsibility for the organization of the conference, was the only European. The other three keynote speakers were from the United States. Speaking as a North American, I was rather uncomfortable with this. The tacit message seemed to be that the leading work in the psychology of religion is done in the United States. Clearly there are outstanding European researchers and clinicians who could have more than adequately addressed the whole assembly. My fellow countryman, Professor Ralph Hood, made this point in his keynote address when he warned the assembly against following too closely the trends from America.

The creative methodological tension in the field between the quantitative, measurement paradigm and the use of qualitative, narrative methods was clearly in evidence—A controversy not limited to the psychology of religion but found in many other branches of psychology as well. Among the keynoters, Professors Belzen and Hood argued for a more ideographic approach and Professor Emmons relied on more nomothetic data. Throughout the conference were some papers on narrative methods and many more on quantitative research.

The tradition in the psychology of religion much less represented was the clinical, primary psychodynamic, one. Professor Pargament gave the only clinically focused keynote address, and it was not psychodynamically oriented. In the conference there was one paper on Freud, one that referenced Klein, none on Jung. There are no doubt several reasons for this. Psychodynamic writing, by and large, has retreated into reflections on one or two clinical cases and away from the Freud's and Jung's (and other early analysts like Fromm) concern with cultural phenomena like religion or art. And

clinical psychologists of religion have tended to focus on the healing role of spirituality and not made clear the interpretative gain for understanding religion from the use of clinically grounded methodologies. Academic psychology, on the other hand, in its drive for the nomothetic has rejected the single case design and the clinical case study as a method. However, some of that more individually oriented methodology has returned in the narrative approach which bears a family resemblance to the clinical interview.

So if the conference is a window on the state of the discipline one sees the measurement paradigm dominating, the narrative approach growing, and the clinical/psychodynamic tradition receding in importance.

In addition, this conference may be a harbinger of things to come and maybe the International Association should take notice. Will the trend towards regional or local conferences grow? If it does, perhaps the International Association should consider how it might further support this trend.

---James W. Jones

2. Self-presentation: Academic and research programs in psychology of religion at Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden

The discipline of psychology of religion and its academic and research programs at Uppsala University are organizationally located under the Faculty of Theology. Within the faculty, psychology of religion and sociology of religion are situated within the area of the Social Sciences and Religion.

The orientation of the academic and research programs in psychology of religion at Uppsala can best be described as the linking of religious studies with a variety of sub-disciplines in psychology. The current professors in the discipline, Owe Wikström and Valerie DeMarinis, have research competencies and clinical training for conducting studies in and across these areas.

The academic program in psychology of religion entails three levels: an undergraduate program concentration, a master level advanced program, a doctoral research program, (with a post-doctoral program under construction). Courses in psychology of religion at all these levels can be taken by students in the faculty's academic programs, by students from other university disciplines and departments (including international students), as well as clinical and research professionals most commonly working in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, mental health and social work.

The master level advanced program in the Social Sciences and Religion, with a concentration in psychology of religion, is a two-year academic program following the structure of the European Bologna reform proposal. This master program permits qualified students to receive the European Union Diploma in Psychology of Religion through Uppsala University. Students enrolled in the multi-disciplinary and multi-faculty English-language Masters program: Master in Religion in Peace and Conflict at Uppsala University, are permitted to concentrate their work in psychology of religion, and thereby may apply for the European Union diploma as well. Both masters programs with concentrations in psychology of religion require a final thesis that presents the results of an empirical research study.

The doctoral research program in psychology of religion is a four-year academic program. Admission to the program is dependent upon academic excellence as well as full financing through an internationally- or nationally-funded research project or through doctoral research funding awarded through the university. Methodological competency in quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research is a requirement of the program. The dissertation, based on an original empirical study, can take the form of a social science monograph or of a behavioral science collection of published articles. The doctoral program currently has seven students preparing dissertations on a wide variety of research topics ranging from a psychological investigation of the existential dimension of burn-out among priests in the Church of Sweden, to a comparative investigation of religiosity, culture and wellbeing among youth from backgrounds in the Assyrian and in the Jewish traditions in Sweden.

Recent dissertations have been based on original research linking psychology of religion to: ritual studies, cultural psychology, migration studies, comparative religious studies, coping theories, and clinical areas in applied psychology.

The research program of the faculty in psychology of religion has a broad focus including theoretical, clinical, and applied psychology projects. Nationally- and internationally- funded research projects in the following topic areas are currently underway:

- research projects on women's meaning-making and ritualizing patterns related to alcohol problems and intervention strategies including an existential dimension (together with The Karolinska Institute, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Stockholm University)
- program- evaluation and planning research on meaning-making, religiosity and acculturation (together with Uppsala University, Centre for Transcultural Psychiatry)
- research on psychosocial, cultural, and play-behavior patterns related to internet gambling (together with Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School)
- exploratory study on mental health, religiosity, and psychosocial structures in an Afro-Brazilian community in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (together with faculty from The Karolinska Institute)

The teaching and research programs in psychology of religion have built and continue to build strong academic networks and teacher/student exchange agreements with universities in Scandinavia including Lund, Umeå, Åbo, Oslo and Copenhagen. Within the European Union, research projects and teaching agreements currently exist with the universities of Cracow, Groningen, and Louvain-La-Neuve. In the near future, and in coordination with Uppsala University's desired expansion of: English-language programs, courses and international research projects; official links with universities, programs, and individual scholars especially in the United Kingdom and the United States will be explored.

Recent international guest professorships related to advanced level teaching, research seminars, and joint research have included Professor James Jones from Rutgers University, Professor Anthony Marsella from the University of Hawaii, and Professor Halina Grzymala-Moszczyńska from the Jagellonian University. Visiting scholars and guest professors are a welcomed addition and expansion of these kinds of appointments is underway.

Further information on teaching and research programs in psychology of religion or on any of the topics mentioned here can be obtained by contacting the academic and research programs director, Prof. Valerie DeMarinis at: (valerie.demarinis@teol.uu.se). The new website for psychology of religion at Uppsala University is planned for late February 2008.

3. Second International Conference on Psychiatry and Religion 17-19 March 2008 Leiden, The Netherlands

Religious Psychopathology:
Explorations at the Interface of Psychiatry and Religion

Dutch Foundation for Psychiatry and Religion in collaboration with the Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group of the Royal College of Psychiatrists (UK) and under the auspices of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA)
www.religionandpsychiatry.com/congress2008

Issues for deepening and broadening research:

conceptual analysis, phenomenology, epidemiology, normal and abnormal religiosity, transference and countertransference, mystic experiences, depression, psychosis, cults, suicide, religious socialization, psychotherapy, pastoral care

Interdisciplinary approach, pushing back boundaries:

psychiatry, philosophy, psychoanalysis, theology, psychology of religion

Outstanding and well-known professionals as keynote speakers:

Herman M. van Praag, Harold J.G.M. van Megen, Marc Galanter, Patrick Vandermeersch, Gerrit Glas, Andrew Sims, Ahmad Mohit, Moshe H. Spero, Alan Apter, Michael King, Dan Blazer, Arjan Braam, Piet J. Verhagen

Elaborate presentations:

lectures, plenty of time for discussions with the keynote speakers

Social program:

Join us in Leiden, the oldest university city of the Netherlands, city of science, culture, 'herring and white bread'

Information, registration: www.religionandpsychiatry.com/congress2008

Check the congress website regularly for program updates!

4. Theology and Psychoanalysis

I would like to bring to you attention the following internet-site:

<http://theo-psy.net/default.aspx>

made by Jean-Baptiste Lecuit (department of theology, catholic university of Lille).

The subject of the site is the relation between theology and psychoanalysis with a focus on theological anthropology. Lecuit himself has written a major study on Antoine Vergote's contributions to this field: *L'anthropologie théologique à la lumière de la psychanalyse. La contribution majeure d'Antoine Vergote*, (coll. « Cogitatio Fidei », 259), Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 2007.

Bonjour à tous,

Le site internet "[Théologie et psychanalyse](http://theo-psy.net/default.aspx)", que j'ai récemment créé, est désormais en vitesse de croisière

Vous y trouverez principalement :

- Des ressources sur "*Théologie et psychanalyse*", "*Foi-religion et psychanalyse*"
- Des ressources concernant l'*anthropologie théologique*

Si vous souhaitez être tenu informé des mises à jour du site et de ses différentes ressources, vous pouvez vous inscrire à la [lettre d'information](#) (news letter) (l'inscription est anonyme et réversible)

N'hésitez pas à recourir au formulaire de "[contact](#)" pour me faire part de vos suggestions ou proposer du contenu à placer sur le site

Bonne navigation !

Jean-Baptiste Lecuit