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As often happens in relation to the humanities and social sciences (and at present the psychology of religion primarily falls into this category, despite somewhat successful and promising attempts to give it more of the character of a natural science), the psychology of religion has a number of theoretical, methodological, and practical problems. These stem from its very foundations, and are thus difficult to solve. The first such problem encountered by a person who wishes to know more about the psychology of religion is the uneven development of this subject both in the West and in post-Soviet countries. This situation has been brought about by Soviet scientific isolation and developmental upheavals in the countries of the former USSR, which have, unfortunately, not always promoted a sufficient measure of quality scientific inquiry and cooperation.

In this respect, the psychology of religion differs little from other scientific disciplines that are forced to exist in similar situations. In addition, the psychology

of religion does not maintain a clear status as an academic discipline. Like light, which can be described simultaneously as both a particle and a wave, the psychology of religion can be viewed simultaneously both as a discipline of religious studies and of psychology. As a branch of religious studies, it is studied in philosophy departments and taught as a rule by people with a philosophical education. As a branch of psychology, it is taught in psychology departments by psychologists to future psychologists in upper-level courses. Compilations of peer-reviewed collections show that religious scholars working in the realm of the psychology of religion focus primarily on the historical, theoretical, and analytical. Psychologists who study religious phenomena often limit their analysis to the purely empirical.

Religious scholars are dependent on their knowledge of religious traditions and on their skills in working with texts; they often lack sufficient knowledge and skills for carrying out empirical research. Because of their own limitations, psychologists rarely try to create a whole picture of religious or non-

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religious life, preferring simply to apply their expertise in empirical research to relatively new and exotic psychological topics. As a rule, psychologists consider psychology of religion as a side branch of their basic science. The fact that such authoritative classic psychologists as William James, Sigmund Freud, Karl Gustav Jung, Abraham Maslow, Gordon Allport, and Viktor Frankl have separate works on religion gives the discipline some weight. However, none of the above-mentioned psychologists was primarily interested in the psychology of religion as a subject of research.

Nevertheless, the psychology of religion's indeterminate status as a discipline can become a blessing. Its "mother" sciences of religious studies and psychology are the result of an active cooperation between representatives of various academic disciplines and directions. Religious studies are unthinkable without the work of historians, philosophers, sociologists, philologists, anthropologists, and scholars of culture studies. Psychology also cannot be imagined, especially in the context of its historical development, without the contributions of philosophy, biology, and medicine, as well as the sciences of language and mind. In the modern sciences, interdisciplinarity strengthens

rather than weakens any research project. This interdisciplinary tendency holds great promise for the psychology of religion, if representatives of different disciplines are not partitioned off from each other and instead cooperate in joint projects. The strict institutional divisions between sciences, in which publication in the journals of "another science" officially plays no role in the careers of graduate students, doctoral students, and university faculty, substantially hinders the cooperation of colleagues who represent different disciplines. Considering such problems with interdisciplinary cooperation, and the fact that Soviet psychology of religion fell behind the West, the publication of the collection *The Psychology of Religion: Between Theory and Empiricism* provides an excellent platform for religious scholars and psychologists and should be welcomed in every possible way.

The collection summarizes the work of the psychology of religion section of the 2015 Minsk conference "Religion and/or Everyday Life." It consists of four sections: The History of the Psychology of Religion, Theoretical and Applied Aspects of Empirical Research, Psychology of Religious Conversion, and Cognitive Religious Studies. The researchers who presented their papers address questions that

are relevant to the psychology of religion in the current stage of its international development.

In her article on the principles of methodological objectivism, Elena Oryel raises the question of what position researchers of religious phenomena must take in relation to the ontological status of objects of religious faith. The author, relying on psychology of religion classics by Theodore Flournoy and William James, asks if it is desirable to exclude from academic consideration questions about the reality of whatever might be beyond the physical world. Methodological objectivism is somehow juxtaposed with the engaged principles of confessionism and partisanship. The article examines the possibility of verifying value judgments while confirming that such verification is always necessarily incomplete and limited. Therefore an ultimate falsification is also not possible. Such an epistemological element is completely fitting in a methodological article, in as much as it gives boundaries to our knowledge and formulates for scholars a stance of modesty in relation to the material they study.

David Damte raises the question of religious feeling and its understanding in nineteenth-century German philosophy. His examination begins with the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm

Friedrich Hegel, however it does not end there. The article also contains a description and analysis of the views of Jakob Friedrich Fries, Johann Freidrich Herbart, Johann Gottlieb Fichte (Fichte the younger), Eduard von Hartmann, and Gustav Teichmüller. Although the publication is dedicated primarily to the history of philosophy, it broaches the subject of psychology at least tangentially. An attentive reading can provide the psychologist of religion with a range of important insights and hypotheses as well as an understanding of the background against which the early psychologists of religion developed. In particular, this series of philosophers first turned their attention to the unconscious character of mental life (Eduard von Hartmann), which later laid the foundation for psychoanalytic approaches.

In her article, Tatiana Malevich examines in detail the characteristics of the research of mysticism. For various reasons, the mystical experience is one of the most difficult phenomena for the study of the psychology of religion, because, according to the testimony of the mystics themselves, it stands outside of the realm of semiotics. It is ineffable and is therefore difficult to clearly define (is the mystical experience simply a more

intensive religious experience or something entirely different?). There is the problem of study from without or within, as well as the difficulties for scholars in interpreting the experience of adherents of non-Abrahamic religious traditions. The article examines the advantages and limitations of questionnaires and interviews, psychometric scales designed to research mystical experience, and also experimental research. It concludes that it is necessary to employ a complement of different quantitative and qualitative methods that supplement each other.

The psychologist Denis Kozhevnikov devotes his paper to appraising the effectiveness of autogenic training and centering prayer. Autogenic training was developed for secular conditions, just as centering prayer constitutes a psychological practice that arose in the Christian context for religious purposes. The author describes the design and results of psychophysiological experiments, reaching the conclusion that autogenic training exerts a large influence on a person's psychophysiological condition. This does not, however, signify that centering prayer is ineffective for religious purposes. The described empirical research can be useful for religious scholars as it demonstrates the possibilities

of empirical psychology for testing hypotheses that arise from theoretical analysis and reflection. All the same it is worth noting that comparing the degrees of influence of different psychotechnics on the psychophysiological condition of a person is indirectly tied to the problems of the psychology of religion. The question, however, remains open and it is possible to have various opinions on this matter.

The largest numbers of articles in the collection are dedicated to the question of religious conversion. Here I will allow myself to express a critical observation, which in no way, however, should cast aspersions on the high quality of material presented by the authors of the collection. It also indubitably reflects the subjective academic preferences of the reviewer. It is also clear that it is impossible to examine all the relevant and significant questions of any academic discipline in the limits of one publication or even one collection. That being said, it is important to point out that none of the four articles that examine in great detail the background, stages, and phenomenology of conversion, even tangentially raises the question of deconversion, the loss of religious faith. Such one-sidedness is inconsistent, considering both

the relevance of secularization and, as a consequence, the departure from religious faith of many people in the world, and also proceeding from purely methodological considerations. The contemporary psychologist of religion Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi maintains that “the psychology of religion is also the psychology of irreligion” (Beit-Hallahmi 2007, 301). Stated differently, the complex examination of the processes of gaining and losing faith is more informative than the exclusive emphasis on religious conversion, which is traditional for the psychology of religion. Given the availability of high-quality research on deconversion (for example, Zuckerman 2015), the absence of references to such questions is inconsistent. I do, however, make the reservation that it is not possible to expect one collection of material to examine all relevant question for any discipline, especially if it has not set such a task for itself.

Konstantin Antonov addresses the correlation between religiosity and rationality in the context of religious conversion. He ultimately examines the move from the mundane to the sacred in the capacity of a transition, which in the framework of human life never assumes a final character. Religious experience from time to time must renew itself in order not to be subsumed by the

routine of everyday life. At the same time religious experience does not exist apart from thought, but rather becomes the object of it. Reflection and experience take part in a complex interplay, not being able to manage without each other. Frequently their interaction becomes the basis for conflict. The question of the relationship between reflection and religious experience takes on a particular urgency because of the disputes that have become actualized between believers and non-believers in Western countries and also to the polarization between them in the world as a whole.

Liubov Ardasheva establishes the impossibility of creating one all-embracing model of conversion that is universal for all religious traditions and for all people. Existing models are examined in sufficient detail in the article, together with critical observation on each stage. Principally she addresses the models offered by John Lofland and Rodney Stark. However, as the author of the article asserts, no research confirms the correctness of this model. More promising are the approaches of Henri Gooren and Lewis Rambo, for whom conversion is a fairly prolonged process, the stages of which are predominately a reference point for the researcher and not strictly consecutive

phases. Ardasheva draws the conclusion that conversion is gradual; any suddenness is just a part of conversion and not conversion itself. A less rigid and more nuanced approach to such a complex process is much more relevant.

Irina Balanova offers a social constructivist approach to researching the phenomenon of conversion. The author proposes studying conversion in the context of personal changes, which owing to methodological constraints cannot be induced from the outside. As a result, it is impossible to establish cause-and-effect relationships in an experiment. However, the study of the religious language and metaphor for conversion, as not just a subjective and individual but also an intersubjective process, does not have similar limitations. Narrative analysis of a text recounting conversion shows the ways in which an individual discovers a new social identity, reappraises past experience, and gains perspective for future experiences. "A second cognitive revolution," which has supplemented the subjective emphasis of cognitive approaches with the intersubjective, has updated the narrative approach and qualitative research methods as a whole. In this respect, the approach to data and its analysis that was used in this article

is most promising. However, research of this type must be continued and expanded with samplings from representatives of other confessions and religions and also nonbelievers, who are going through or have gone through deconversion.

Tatiana Folieva examines conversion in material from the Jehovah's Witnesses, then her research focus shifts from the individual to the organization. At the same time conversion is viewed not as the action of an impersonal force on a passive object (as in the classic conversion of the apostle Paul) but as a process, initiated by the subject. The person who initiates this process actively searches for answers to philosophical and existential questions. The article's empirical research is constructed from a content analysis of materials published by the Jehovah's Witnesses. This content analysis is based on script theory, which was developed by specialists in the field of artificial intelligence. Folieva concludes that the model of conversion practiced by the Jehovah's Witnesses is related more to the rational type of conversion, even though they do not use Christian Science terms. Conversion is based on receiving clear answers to raised questions and not on turning to mystical and hidden dimensions of

Christianity, such as, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity. Such data analysis has significant potential, allowing the discovery of particularities of conversion in various religious traditions. Attention must also be given to the means employed by modern secular and atheist organizations with the goal of augmenting the number of nonbelievers. This would organically increase knowledge about the rational type of conversion because it is rather difficult to imagine deconversion having a different source.

Three articles in the collection are dedicated to the cognitive approach to research on religion that has developed in recent decades. The relationship between cognitive religious studies and the psychology of religion has been discussed, although not all cognitive religious scholars would unreservedly agree to identify themselves as psychologists of religion. Institutionally cognitive religious studies are represented by a separate association: the International Association for the Cognitive Science of Religions (IACSR), which is not a part of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion (IAPR). These organizations hold independent conferences and publish independent journals. Periodically the question of the relationship between these two

disciplines is raised, as they are to one degree or another “twins.”³

The first article in the section on cognitive religious studies, written by the coauthors Roman Sergienko, Irina Shoshina, and Irina Malanchuk, is a qualitative general review of the above-mentioned schools of thought. The article traces the development of cognitive religious studies beginning with Stewart E. Guthrie, who studied anthropomorphism and pareidolic illusions (such as seeing a “face in the clouds”); Justin Barrett, who wrote about the Hypersensitive Agency Detection Device (HADD); Pascal Boyer, who wrote about ontological categories and minimal counterintuitiveness; and other authors. Sergienko, Shoshina, and Malanchuk emphasize evolutionism, which forms the foundation of the cognitive approach, and the naturalness of the cognitive processes that make possible a person’s religiousness. The authors also emphasize the importance of the habitual and everyday, rather than the extraordinary religiousness of mystics, for representatives of the cognitive approach. The cognitive mechanisms that make religion possible are uncovered, such as

3. For example, at the 2013 conference of psychologists of religion in Lausanne. See <http://wp.unil.ch/iapr2013/congress/program>.

social perceptions and the theory of mind, and neurophysiological research, which can augment the understanding of what religion is, are briefly mentioned. The article is worth reading for those who are starting to explore cognitive religious studies, as it provides a good orientation to these materials.

Alexandra Belova addresses the topic of the cognitive approach to the study of ritual and ritualistic behavior. This topic, in comparison to the study of the particularities of the formation and functioning of religious views and convictions, is rarely encountered in general reviews of cognitive religious studies. This, by the way, does not make it any less important. The article examines the cognitive theory of ritual behavior. A considerable amount of attention is given to Robert McCauley and Thomas Lawson's theories of ritual form and also to Harvey Whitehouse's theories of ritual and memory. The survey also looks at Dan Sperber's views on ritual, as well as those of Pierre Lienart, Pascal Boyer, and several other researchers. The value of this survey is indubitable, as it not only introduces readers to the works of cognitive religious scholars who have not been translated into Russian or Ukrainian, but also demonstrates the heuristic

potential of cognitive theories that are applicable not just to the beliefs but also to the religious activities of people.

Dmitry Gorevoy raises an extremely interesting theoretical problem in his article on anthropomorphic projection. He compares the ideas of Russian ethnographers with theories that have arisen in the context of modern cognitive religious studies. Representatives of both schools share a naturalistic research aim, that is, to explain religion as a natural phenomenon, and also turn to research data on archaic religiosity and childhood. However, the views of Sergei M. Shirokogovor, Lev Ia. Shternberg, Vladimir G. Bogoraz-Tan, and other ethnographers, which are similar in many ways to those of Stewart Guthrie, Jesse Bering, and Justin Barrett, have differing theoretical and empirical sources. Cognitive religious studies depends on the modern theory of consciousness, specifically the theory of the modularity of mind by Jerry Fodor, a student of Noam Chomsky. Classical ethnography has a more empirical-inductive character and does not compare with today's theoretical apparatus. In the future it will be important to correlate the newest cognitive theories of religion with the views of classical Western anthropologists, following their possible lineage.

Having covered all the obvious strengths of this collection, it is important to point out a few lacunae and disproportions. As has been shown above, much attention has been devoted to the phenomenon of conversion. This, however, has been understandably one-sided, in the context of the transition from unbelief to faith, but not the reverse. Deconversion is not examined even obliquely, and this in circumstances of continuing secularization and an increasing number of people who live without religion. Symptomatic is the appearance of “atheist churches” (Wheeler 2013) created specifically for the socialization of people who are accustomed to church life but who have lost faith. A reader also will not find information on age and gender dynamics in religion; religious forms of coping, that is, the particularities of how people overcome life challenges and misfortunes depending on their relationship to religion; works on the theme of religion and physical or psychological health and well-being; and also examination of questions of religious motivation and the psychological consequences of such individual motivations. Meanwhile the tradition of researching the motivation of religious activity is part of classical (Gordon Allport) and

modern mainstream psychology (the self-determination theory of personality of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan [Ryan & Deci 2000]). Moreover a series of studies on religiosity, conducted in the International Laboratory of Positive Psychology and the Quality of Life at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow, also relies on self-determination theory. The absence both of mention of their research and reference to publications by members of the laboratory, not to mention the absence of their articles in the collection, attests to the necessity of improving the quality of communication with psychologist colleagues.

These critical remarks notwithstanding, the publication of the collection *The Psychology of Religion: Between Theory and Empiricism* is a clear sign that this discipline, despite many difficulties in the post-Soviet arena, is actively functioning and developing. In this sense, not only is the actual publication important, but also the high quality of articles presented in the collection, their interdisciplinary character, and also their appeal to the works and research of Western colleagues.

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