
Religion and Psychiatry: Beyond Boundaries

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Foreword

Religion is a major activity of human beings including those suffering from a mental disorder. Psychiatric patients often raise for themselves the kind of questions that everybody has considered and which religion tries to answer. Where do we come from? Is there life after death? What is the origin of the universe? Why are we confronted with evil? Are we free or ruled by our instincts and brain mechanisms?

Religion is an important component of life. Anthropologists have recognized that the Neanderthals already had some sense of transcendence and of spirituality, a fact that is more striking in the remnants of archeological excavations of *Homo sapiens sapiens* settlements.

The history of religions as we know them today begins in the Near East with the invention of writing about 3000 BCE, with the written record of human religious experiences and ideas. The middle of the first millennium BCE has been considered by Karl Jaspers, in his *The Origin and Goal of History*, as a key Axial Age of thinkers having had a profound influence on future philosophy and religion. In this context, Rudolf Otto's famous book, *The Idea of the Holy* (1917), defines the essence of religious awareness as awe, a unique blend of fear and fascination before the divine.

The *Encyclopedia of Religion* defines religion as a "push, whether ill-defined or conscious, toward some sort of ultimacy and transcendence that can provide norms and power for the rest of life. When more or less distinct patterns of behaviour are built around this depth dimension in a culture, this structure constitutes religion in its historically recognizable form. Religion is the organization of life around the depth dimensions of experience, varied in form, completeness, and clarity in accordance with the environing culture." A religion is an organized approach to human spirituality which usually encompasses a set of narratives, symbols, beliefs and practices, often with a supernatural or transcendent quality, that give meaning to the practitioner's experiences of life through reference to a higher power or truth. Religion includes three components: 1) a notion of the transcendent or numinous, often, but not always, in the form of theism; 2) a cultural or behavioural aspect of ritual, liturgy and organized worship, often involving priesthood, and societal norms; and 3) a set of myths (sacred truths) held in reverence or believed by adherents.

Spirituality shares with religion the personal belief in ideas of religious significance, such as God, the Soul, or Heaven, but rejects the administrative, often bureaucratic and hierarchical, structure and creeds of a particular organized religion.

Based on census or public opinion data, a person is considered to be of a particular religion if they say that they are of that faith. According to David Barrett et al, editors of the *World Christian Encyclopedia: A comparative survey of churches and religions - AD 30 to 2200*, there are 19 major world religions which are subdivided into 270 large religious groups, and many smaller ones. There are about 2.1 billion Christians (32% of the world population); 1.3 billion Muslims (19%); 0.8 billion Hindus (13%); 0.4 billion practise Chinese folk religion (6%) and 0.36 billion are

Buddhist (6%). The remaining religions are practised by the other 10% of the global population. Another 775 million people (12%) have no religion (they consider themselves agnostics, freethinkers, humanists, secularists, etc.) and 150 million (2%) are atheists.

Religion plays an important role in the ceremonies attached to the stages of life, such as birth, becoming adult, marriage and death. It is also important when confronted with illness and misfortune. The case of mental disorders is special. Severe depression uncovers what Kurt Schneider called the primordial fears of human beings: the fear of poverty, the fear of becoming ill and the fear of damnation, which were respectively at the origin of the delusion of being ruined, the hypochondriacal and the guilt delusions. Delusional patients are preoccupied with delusions on the origin of the universe, good and evil and so on and delusions of religious content have been recognized for centuries. In spite of all of this, psychiatrists have not paid sufficient attention to the examination of religiosity in their patients. Even fewer include religiosity and spiritualism in psychotherapy, which is strange as both religion and psychotherapy try to bring meaning to experience. The separation of religion and science in general parallels the separation of Church and State and this has been sometimes taken too far. As an example, an English nurse was reprimanded by The National Health Service for having asked an elderly lady if she would like the nurse to pray for her.

In Western civilization, there is a division of the world into two comprehensive domains, one sacred, the other profane. Religion is often described as a communal system for the coherence of belief focusing on a system of thought, unseen being, person, or object, that is considered to be supernatural, sacred, divine, or of the highest truth. Moral codes, practices, values, institutions, traditions, rituals and scriptures are often traditionally associated with the core belief, and these may have some overlap with concepts in secular philosophy. Religion is also often described as a “way of life” or a life stance. The scientific method gains knowledge by testing hypotheses to develop theories through elucidation of facts or evaluation by experiments and thus only answers cosmological questions about the physical universe. It develops theories of the world which best fit physically observed evidence. All scientific knowledge is subject to later refinement in the face of additional evidence. Modern science and laicism often go together.

Whether religion has a positive or a negative impact on personal growth and mental health is a controversial issue. It is easy to quote in this respect Sigmund Freud, who wrote that religion is a “universal obsessional neurosis of humankind”, representing an infantile stage of mental development which prevents human beings from facing the reality of their life. Furthermore, it is easy to argue that religion – or an aberrant way to understand religion – has been a source of conflicts and mass violence in recent years, which have had an enormous negative impact on the mental health of thousands of people.

However, there is also abundant research evidence that religion, or spirituality (defined as the individual religious experience as opposed to ritualistic religious practices), is associated with higher levels of subjective well-being and lower levels of depression, and may promote both emotional and cognitive growth.

The issue is complex, is made even more complex by problems with definition and assessment, but is very topical and attractive. The WPA, therefore, welcomes this comprehensive and multifaceted volume, produced by one of its most active Scientific Sections, hoping that this effort will contribute to clarify the issue and stimulate further reflection and research.

Mario Maj
President, World Psychiatric Association

Preface

CROSSING BOUNDARIES

The boundary between religious belief and the practice of psychiatry is becoming increasingly porous. No longer can psychiatrists in a multi-faith, multi-cultural globalized world hide behind the dismissal of religious belief as pathological, or behind a biomedical scientism, as they are more frequently confronted by distressed patients for whom religious belief may determine their choice of symptoms and their compliance with treatment.

There is inevitably a tension in any such boundary crossing. Religious belief, for example, can be harmful to mental health and be a trigger for mental illness. Spirituality may not have the safeguards and structures of established Faith Communities; and the political abuse of religion has left an indelible scar on the world. The destructive manipulation of behaviour and belief by cult leaders is also well known to be disastrous.

Crossing the boundary, or breaking the psychiatry and religion taboo, may therefore be complex for an atheist psychiatrist, challenged by a patient with a religious problem, or when the values espoused by the patient are at variance with their own values and beliefs. Boundary violations and unrecognized counter transference when treating religious patients from a similar faith background to the psychiatrist are other pitfalls for the unwary.

Yet, as the authors of this book illustrate, the evidence is cogent that mainstream religiosity is an enabler of health and a protection against mental illness – through, for example, the provision of social support, or by enabling contact with a forgiving creator God.

The religiosity gap, we would maintain, therefore needs to be reduced; and the religious source of the values that are instrumental to compassion, and which can unleash altruism, needs to be more fully recognized and utilized.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has rightly regarded spiritual values as a component of Quality of Life. After the publication of *The World Health Report 2001. Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope* by WHO, the World Council of Churches showed its partnership and identified mental health as a key issue for the churches' role in the mission of the church in the twenty-first century¹ [1, 2]. The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) was also correct to establish greater links with user organisations and to explore the provision of a more person-centred psychiatry.

¹ The World Council of Churches formulated its view on mental health in an ambitious Strategic Plan of the Mental Health & Faith Communities Initiative: "Mental health is a life-long dynamic process which allows the whole person to develop psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually within society, whilst integrating personal and interpersonal joy and distress, leading towards the experience of well-being and harmony with oneself, others, the environment, and God" [3].

FOUR GREAT STREAMS OF RELIGIONS

This volume is about psychiatry and the interface between psychiatry and religion. In other words, this is not a book on religion(s). However, it is concerned, especially Part 2, with the views religions have on psychopathology, disordered behaviour and treatment. We are just at the beginning of exploring, understanding and comparing these views. Although we were used to the more or less pronounced influence of Judeo-Christian traditions and doctrines in the Western world, together with Islam, as the Semite, prophetic or Abrahamic religions, the monotheistic religions do not have exclusive rights. They share prophetic faith, faith in a transcendent being, consciousness of time and history, and a community based on justice [4–6]. What do these characteristics mean for an understanding of psychopathology and disordered behaviour in comparison with the other two main streams of religions?

The mystic religions that emerged out of India have a completely different view on human nature and the ultimate reality of the universe [5]. It can be expected that these characteristics mean an original take on psychiatry. The third stream, the wisdom religions, emerged out of China. Not the prophet, not the mystic, but the sage, the wise man, is honoured as the ideal human person in his religious context [5]. There is a fourth stream of religions, often called tribal or indigenous religions [4]. Australian and African religion is typical of this fourth stream.

It is inevitable that this world seems confused and confusing. But at the same time, despite this enormous diversity, great questions are universal, such as how to cope with suffering, serious illness and death. And despite the differences, religions of all times and places offer a message and a way of salvation. What did and still does that mean for the understanding of psychopathology, treatment and human welfare?

A LONG AND TENSE HISTORY

For many centuries religiosity and spirituality played a major role in speculations about the origin of mental disorders. They were thought to be the works of demons, able to penetrate body and mind of an individual because he had sinned. Exorcism was the treatment of choice.

In the nineteenth century, demons lost their dominant position. The pioneers of American moral treatment started to view mental illness as a physical illness. In many cases “moral treatment”, a child of humanism [7, 8], seemed to be far more appropriate than the dire treatments that had preceded it.

In the twentieth century, psychoanalysis became the dominant philosophy of psychiatry. Though sin in a religious sense faded into the background, it returned in a different shape. Friction between unacceptable strivings (secular “sins”) versus demands of the super ego played an important role in psychoanalytical theorising. Religiosity proper, however, was anathema to psychoanalysis. It was considered to be an anachronism, a remnant from an infantile past; if anything, to be treated rather than to be cherished. The influence of those ideas has been tremendous, including beyond the boundaries of psychiatry. They probably have contributed substantially to secularisation of the Western world. They certainly buttressed the inclination of many, if not most, psychiatrists of the twentieth century to exclude religiosity from their purview. For biological and social psychiatry – focusing

predominantly on brain functions and living circumstances – religiosity was not a factor generally to reckon with. Transcultural psychiatry, with its roots in social anthropology, has always taken the religious beliefs and practices of individuals and their communities more seriously as they may relate to the understanding of mental disorder.

That psychiatry in the twentieth century was largely a “Godless” period was not to the advantage of the psychiatric patient. Religiosity can be considered a normal personality trait and cannot be disregarded by psychiatrists, whatever their own ideas on religiosity might be. The entire soul/psyche, after all, belongs to their sphere of work. This point of view is the *raison d’être* of the WPA’s section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry, and the main reason why this book was conceptualised under the section’s auspices. We hope that this volume will indeed stir up curiosity and interest in the interface between psychiatry and man’s tendency to provide life with a vertical transcendental dimension.

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General Introduction: Religion and Science

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I.1 PSYCHIATRY AND RELIGION

The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) Section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry (SRSP) took the initiative to start a project that would lead to the publication of a handbook like volume that would serve several purposes. First of all the editors were convinced, and still are, (of the fact) that the study of interface between Psychiatry and Religion offers a lot of helpful and at the same time critical tools for psychiatric thinking and practice. Religion and spirituality play their role in the lives of many, many people in a personal and/or socially meaningful, be it salient way. In that sense religiosity and spirituality belong to the domains of quality of life. In fact it is not imaginable how religion or spirituality could not be of influence on the way of life, the well being and psychic and social functioning of people in general, psychiatric patients in particular.

It took psychiatry a lot of time to rediscover this simple and at the same time complicated fact. For a long time psychiatry had not been aware of the fact that a more or less silent antipathy against religion influenced her thinking and practice fundamentally, even in her classificatory systems like the DSM. Although Freud is frequently mentioned as the father of this anti-religious stance, its roots go further back. Was it not psychiatry, according to the well-known hagiography, that liberated those poor living creatures who had been captured for so many years, chained in irons, as a triumph of human care and humanism? The real story is slightly different. In western society God was replaced by nature and by the end of the eighteenth century the physician who knew the order of nature, including the structure of the body, could replace the priest who claimed his authority in the name of God. The start of psychiatry is an illustration of that development. Religion lost its leading position, and the physician became the new guide in life with scientific and moral authority. Since then the relationship between psychiatry and religion has been strained to a greater or lesser extent.

The words 'mad' and 'madness' are complex terms and, as has been illustrated in several ways, these and other terms we are used to in (descriptive) psychopathology and the underlying way of thinking contain these tensions.

This book is about the interface between psychiatry and religion and spirituality. It is a book mainly written by and aimed at psychiatrists all over the world. At the same time it is a multidisciplinary book and we welcome the contributions of many experts in the field of inquiry of religion, spirituality, psychiatry and mental health. The discussion and debates are complex and span a number of disciplines: psychology, psychology of religion, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, cognitive sciences, neurosciences, philosophy of mind, of science and of religion, history, and theology. No single discipline can do full justice to the complexity of the issues at hand. Any opposed claim would raise troublesome barriers; it is the intention of the editors of this volume to get beyond such barriers.

1.2 NO APOLOGETICS

In order for progress to occur in this interdisciplinary field of inquiry a minimum consensus concerning the meaning of core constructs is needed. Now, here the discussion becomes exciting, because, as one thing is very clear from the perspective of religion and spirituality, one cannot settle any kind of consensus as intended here on purely objective grounds. As soon as one starts to discuss such core constructs as disease, mental health, religiousness and spirituality all kinds of background issues, assumptions and convictions, mindsets come about. One of these assumptions, to name just one, is the rather typical Western idea that illness is secular [1, p. 271]. Somatic and/or psychic, illnesses have to do with biomedical, causal-mechanical patterns that are in no way spiritual or religious. However, Islamic understanding of health and illness cannot be understood otherwise than in the context of religious conceptualization. Within a totally different discourse the anti-Semitic image of ‘the dirty Jew’ was repudiated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the Jewish model of preventive medicine based on the interpretive tradition of Moses and hygiene [2].

Anyhow, it means that from a global perspective it becomes very clear that a discussion like the one we are thinking of here has much of an interreligious and interspiritual dialogue. Greater awareness of religious and spiritual plurality has heightened the need for such an interreligious and interspiritual dialogue, even with regard to psychiatry, or better: from within the profession itself. In connection with this need, there is overwhelming agreement that training and permanent education should include instruction and guidance on how to handle religious and spiritual issues in assessment and therapy. In the meantime such a dialogue asks for a new kind of spirituality itself in order not to fall back into any form of outdated exclusivism [3]. Psychiatry is not helped forwards by any form of religious apologetics or expansionism! That is a very difficult but nevertheless worthwhile task, beyond usually very tough barriers.

1.3 OVERVIEW

Many colleagues from all around the world, among them many WPA officials, started working on this project which reflects their commitment to study the interface of psychiatry and religion. ‘Beyond boundaries’ is felt as a challenging task and formulated as the general theme.

Table 1.1 This List Includes Only Organized Religions and Excludes More Loosely Defined Groups Such as Chinese or African Traditional Religions

Religion	Members	Percentage
<i>Christianity</i>	2.1 billion	33.0%
<i>Islam</i>	1.3 billion	20.1
<i>Hinduism</i>	851 million	13.3
<i>Buddhism</i>	375 million	5.9
<i>Sikhism</i>	25 million	0.4
<i>Judaism</i>	15 million	0.2%
<i>Baha'ism</i>	7.5 million	0.1
<i>Confucianism</i>	6.4 million	0.1
<i>Jainism</i>	4.5 million	0.1
<i>Shintoism</i>	2.8 million	0.0

Source: *Encyclopaedia Britannica* [4]

The central part of the book, Section II, offers a description and analysis of how major world religions look at psychiatry, its practice and psychiatric disorders. We posed several questions to the authors. How do the religious and spiritual traditions they represent look at mental or psychic functioning and how do they evaluate and interpret psychic disorders? These are rather general formulations and questions. What does it mean in concreto, in daily practice? Mahayana Buddhism is widely and profoundly immersed in the mental life of East Asian people. Muslims attribute all events in life to God's will and thus the concept of mental illness is influenced by religious aspects. What do these influences mean to psychiatric thinking and practice and to (the development of) therapy? Table I.1 shows the top 10 organized world religions.

Necessarily, we had to confine ourselves. The project will cover Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, Buddhism in East and South Asia, and Judaism. We are also able to include a chapter on African Religions. Of course, this is a very ambitious program. The authors have enough room to elaborate to the best of their knowledge/with their own expertise on psychiatry and the religious tradition they represent. Statistics of the world's religions are only very rough approximations. Aside from Christianity, few religions, if any, attempt to keep statistical records; and even Protestants and Catholics employ different methods of counting members.

This central part, including seven chapters, is meant to be the fundamental part of this book.

It is preceded by what could be called the prolegomena, about issues that have to be explored first or that cannot be missed without great detriment. When entering an unfamiliar or unknown field or subject one needs to know (something like) where to begin. There are so many approaches and confusion is inevitable. Why should we (as psychiatrists) think and write about religion, spirituality and psychiatry anyway? What has psychiatry to do with religion or spirituality? Why care? On the one hand, it could be said that such an idea, prolegomena I mean, is a rather typical Western post-enlightenment idea. On the other hand, our claim could be that Western psychiatry has omitted an important realm of human experience [1, p. 182] 'The constraint of ontological space'. So in this section it needs to become clear that there are plausible reasons for doing what we

are going to do, and for exploring the hindrances, or for explaining why it should be evident that we care.

In the twentieth century the encounter and interaction of religion and science took many forms. New discoveries in science have challenged many classical religious ideas. In response some people have defended their tradition, others have abandoned their tradition, and still others have reformulated long-held concepts in the light of science.

This first section contains historical, philosophical, theological and aesthetic viewpoints. Concepts of evil are dealt with in various religious traditions throughout the ages and also how these concepts affect(ed) psychiatric thinking from a historical point of view. The theme will also be approached from a philosophical point of view. This is an important aspect, because we need a tool to approach the theme. In order to find such a tool, philosophical fieldwork needs to be done. Chapters are included on science and transcendence, and on religion and spirituality as (not just as) human endeavor, in a very sensitive and open-minded way. So, this first section is about (world)views, assumptions, concepts and (ontological) values, and about relevance! Is it still clear that religious believers and spiritually minded people live by religious and spiritual stories and statements which they interpret their (even pathological) experiences with accordingly and which enable them to express meanings of a profound and transcendent kind? Is a human propensity for transcendence facultative, or is there a fundamental shortfall, and does man need to learn to cope with emptiness? Do we think exclusively in medical psychiatric categories, hiding or masking existential layers? After this first part follows the announced central part on religions and psychiatry; again too ambitious, nevertheless full of starting points for future discussion and research.

The third section is on religion, spirituality and psychopathology. In this part the core business of psychiatry, assessment/diagnosis and psychopathology is at stake. Discussions, explorations, research data and the like will not be restricted wherever possible to Western thinking or Western populations only, although data from elsewhere might not be available or insufficient. Since Sigmund Freud published his first article on religion more than a century ago a number of developments have taken place in psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychology of religion. A review of these developments is included in this part of the book. A chapter on the psychology of fundamentalism and religion ('Violence of the Sacred') is necessarily included.

The fourth section is on empirical research, exploring the relation between spirituality/religion and mental health. These chapters should inform the readers, if possible and relevant, about phenomenology, epidemiology, research data, explanatory models and theories, wherever evidence based data are available. It is important to refer to these data whenever necessary opinion based points of view are presented, explained and discussed, and that credulity based material should be detected. However, also attention will be paid to a more conceptual approach. How do these psychopathological phenomena relate to existential themes? What does that mean? Are we looking at epiphenomena or what else? In addition, what are the effects of religious practices of fasting and circumcision? Furthermore it is important to give an account of discussions towards the development of new classification and diagnostic systems, e.g. DSM-V and WPA Program on Psychiatry for the Person [5, 6].

Three other parts are added to the foregoing: one with regard to (psycho) therapy and pastoral care, one concerning Religion and the Brain and a third one on religion, spirituality, and training and permanent education.

How to approach the religiously committed patient? This question is thoroughly discussed and illustrated from both a psychotherapeutic and a spiritual care-giving angle. A chapter on the relationship between pastoral care and mental health completes the fifth part.

Recent brain research has revealed changes in brain functions concomitant with religious and spiritual experiences. This is anything but surprising. Experiences of whatever nature are predicated upon activation of certain brain circuits. Atheists have taken the neuro-theological data as the ultimate triumph of their viewpoint: religiosity is but a brain state, nothing more. This is a misconception. Religious needs originate on a psychological level, not in the brain. The brain enables one to generate the corresponding religious feelings. As an analogy: aesthetical feelings are made possible by the brain, they are not caused by the brain but by external stimuli. Neuro-theological data show that man has the capacity to conceive of a transcendental realm and communicate with it. These data do not have to mean the death blow to the deistic idea at all. And although a 'God spot', or 'God gene' has been discovered, no conclusions can be drawn whatsoever about the existence of God, or any supreme being or reality. In the meantime that does not mean, despite the fact that repeated empirical arguments can not prove the existence or non-existence of God, that the claim that God exists is meaningless. It just means that we have to argue on another level of knowledge for or against the existence of God. In connection with this type of reasoning more can be said on brain, soul, self and freedom [7, 8].

With regard to training and education, a curriculum should offer sufficient opportunity for teaching trainees to address the existential, religious and spiritual needs of our patients, including:

Knowledge: basic knowledge of major belief systems; knowledge about the developmental, experiential, and mental health; consequences of religious experiences.

Skills: improvement of interviewing skills; improvement of diagnostic skills with respect to people having all kinds of religious backgrounds; therapeutic skills.

Attitudes: systematic reflection on the professional's own belief system (atheism included) and the influence of it on their functioning; analysis of transference and counter-transference issues; empathy.

All contributors were asked to look at how (if at all) their own faith perspectives influence the way they think about psychiatry and human nature, about the phenomena they are writing about and the way they study and write about these phenomena. What are some of the starting, fundamental premises of their perspective? What are some of their chief concerns within their religious/cultural perspective that would point the reader to certain aspects that should have priority? What aspects of religiousness or spirituality are likely to influence directly the phenomena they are describing for better or for worse?

I.4 RELATION BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Ken Wilber called the relation of science and religion in today's world 'a deadly dance' [9, p. 15]. He warns the reader of several stances toward this relation, that still influence and even dominate our thinking [9, p. 15–24]:

1. Science denies any validity to religion;
2. Religion denies any validity to science;

3. Science is but one of several valid modes of knowledge, and thus can peacefully coexist with spiritual modes;
4. Science can offer “plausible arguments” for the existence of Spirit;
5. Science is itself not knowledge of the world but merely an interpretation of the world, and therefore it has the same validity – no more, no less – a poetry and the arts.

The author argues that none of these five stances are acceptable. They are not powerful enough in a way that both parties would find agreeable. I take just one element from his line of thinking that is worthwhile keeping in mind. The third statement would be properly called ‘epistemological pluralism’. However, what is meant by that? The traditional view on this pluralism goes back to the Middle Ages: ‘every human being has the eye of flesh, the eye of mind, and the eye of contemplation’ [9, p. 18]. These three eyes are three eyes of knowledge: empiricism, rationalism, and mysticism. It would make a great difference with regard to our view on the relation between science and religion if the existence of this epistemological pluralism was an accepted fact. However, that is not the case according to modernity.

Science and religion have often been seen as enemies locked in mortal combat. Some people in both camps are even aggressively continuing the warfare, for instance on the topic of evolution. But conflict can be avoided if science and religion are seen as strangers, occupying separate domains at a safe distance from each other. Science and religion, for instance, represent two kinds of inquiry and so they offer two complementary perspectives on the world.

However, many people are seeking a more constructive partnership. Science raises questions it cannot answer itself. So many participants are looking for a constructive dialogue, because they are aware of the limitations of their own field of inquiry, and because both partners do not claim to have all the answers. Still other scientists and theologians even go a step further. They seek a closer integration of science and religion.

We will use a well known influential fourfold typology, originally formulated by Ian Barbour, who is a pre-eminent figure in the field of science and religion [10, 11]. This fourfold typology is in fact the standard manner to present the relationship between science and religion and for that reason it can help us to sort out the great variety of ways in which people have related science and religion, and neurosciences and theology in particular. Barbour uses four key words to typify the four relationships: conflict, independence, dialogue and integration; Table I.2 illustrates the way Barbour relates certain scientific disciplines and their way of thinking, and religious assertions about human nature.

Table I.2 Genetics, Neuroscience, and Human Nature [10]

Conflict	Independence	Dialogue	Integration
Reductive materialism	Body/soul dualism	Neuroscience and the embodied self	Biological organism and responsible self
Sociobiology and human morality	Body and soul: complementary perspectives	Anthropology and the social self	Mind and brain: Two aspects of one process
Genetic determinism and human freedom	Sin and redemption	The computer and the brain	Process philosophy

1.4.1 Conflict?

Scientific materialism makes two assertions: matter is the fundamental reality in the universe, and, the scientific method is the only reliable path to knowledge. Religion is not acceptable because religion lacks public data, lacks experimental testing and so on. Science is objective, open-minded, and universal; religion is none of these. In neuroscience we can find this same reductionistic materialism. In principle, we are told, we can account for every mental phenomenon using the same physical laws that suffice to explain radioactivity, or nutrition, or growth. The same reductive point of view holds true for the sociobiology: the only demonstrated function of religious beliefs and human morality is to keep the genes intact. Another illustration of the conflictual relationship between the neurosciences and theology would certainly be genetic determinism. It has sometimes been claimed that our fate is determined by our genes. But although nature and nurture impose severe constraints upon us, we are free selves who envision possibilities and can decide deliberately and responsibly among alternative actions. So here the conflict is between determinism and human freedom. Dean Hamer, who is a pre-eminent geneticist, recognizes the limitations of his scientific treatise and acknowledges that his approach is not a complete explanation of spirituality; genes explain only a relatively small percentage of variance at best. Hamer shows that new discoveries in genetics and neurobiology might indicate that humans inherit a set of predispositions that make their brains ready and eager to embrace a higher power [12]. He calls the specific gene he identified the ‘God gene’ that appears to influence spirituality. Elaborating on his findings he argues that spiritual belief may offer an evolutionary advantage by providing us with a sense of meaning and purpose, and the courage and will to overcome hardship and loss. In fact in that way Hamer tried to bridge the gap between science and religion instead of stirring up the conflict. (For a critical discussion of religion as ‘adaptation or evolutionary by-product’ and genetics, see [13]).

1.4.2 Independence?

What is the meaning of independence regarding science and religion? One way to avoid conflict or any problem is to keep neuroscience and religion separated in watertight compartments (demarcation theory). One can distinguish the two according to the questions they ask, the domains to which they refer, the claims they make, and the methods they employ. Science asks how matters work, and about causal relations. Religion asks why and asks for meaning and purpose. From another point of view: scientific and religious languages have distinctive functions and so science and religion offer complementary perspectives, for instance the complimentary perspectives of brain and mind. Body and soul used to be two separate compartments. But nowadays it is clear from the neurosciences that such a dualism can no longer be maintained. The dependence of mental status on biochemical processes, for instance in moral dilemmas [14, 15] or during religious practices as meditation or prayer, is clearly shown. So we are getting used to the concept of the embodied self, that goes beyond the body/soul dualism, and that goes beyond this second type of relationship between science and religion called independence. Religious concepts like sin and redemption seem far removed from any scientific data. Even that, however, is highly questionable from an evolutionary and ethological point of view.

1.4.3 Dialogue?

Contrary to the independency point of view the dialogue looks at the presuppositions and tries to explore similarities between methods and concepts. Independence emphasizes the differences. Many theologians today try to reclaim a religious or spiritual view of the self as a unified activity of thinking, willing and acting. Neuroscience seems to be consistent with theological affirmations of embodiment. Embodiment is very clear when we look at our affectivity. When I am moved by an emotion, it is clear that being emotional, for instance being afraid, is not possible without feeling a bodily tension or beating of the heart. So here religious thinking and the neurosciences, and also the behavioral sciences join in asserting the embodied self with special importance of emotions.

1.4.4 Integration?

In integration scientists and theologians go even further. Exponents of dialogue may sometimes reformulate traditional ideas. Integration is more far-reaching in articulating theological reconstruction more extensively and systematically. For instance, reconstruction of a religious concept like original sin as a biologically based disposition from the past that is not adaptive in the modern world. So according to this approach new knowledge from the neurosciences will affect religious thinking!

It is up to the reader to look at his or her position, regarding one's own religious, spiritual and scientific background. It is one of the aims of the WPA section on Religion, Spirituality and Psychiatry to help clear up these kinds of important discussions.

1.4.5 Neuro-theology

Neuro-theology is an example of a new emerging scientific discipline, based on neurosciences, that presents strong challenges to traditional religious beliefs concerning human nature. Neuroscience is the study of the physical structures of and causal interactions between neurons and neuronal assemblies [16]. It studies religious and spiritual concepts in relation to neurological and neuropsychological findings and analyses. There is much to tell about interesting data and recent discoveries in this particular field regarding religion and spirituality [12, 17]. At the same time, if one looks carefully, it is not difficult to recognize the fourfold typology in the way participants in neuro-theology handle and evaluate their findings.

1.5 REFINEMENTS

Barbour's typology had been the starting point for the study of religion and science relationships for many years. Stenmark [11] offered a new searching exploration based on the premise that science and religion are social and dynamic practices and no static entities. His study offers a refinement of the Barbour typology. How do these relationships between science and religion evolve? According to Stenmark we need four parameters or dimensions to take into account in order to understand how and why science and religion relate to each

other as they do. His approach helps us to get a more differentiated picture of the interactions between science and religion.

Stenmark's approach is based on the idea that science and religion are both social practices. He calls it the social level of science and religion, and it is about the social interactions between practitioners of both science and religion. Such practices can be distinguished by the aims the practitioners have in mind (teleological dimension) by the methods that are used (epistemological dimension), and by the subject matter and content of science and religion (theoretical dimension). The independence view would mean that these two practices are completely different with regard to these parameters. The conflict view would mean that the parameters should be the same. The dialogue and integration views mean that there is a more or less overlap between one or more parameters.

With regard to psychiatry and religion we would have to look at these parameters and to search for areas of overlap, or areas of total difference. What would be the overlap and the difference between psychiatry and religion in a teleological sense? If it would be appropriate to say that both practices aim at 'healing' or at helping relationships, there still would be a great difference between mental health and welfare (salvation) as a goal. However, despite the difference in 'healing' methods (e.g. medication versus prayer) the relationship between 'the healer' and 'the healed' is fundamental for employing the method. On a theoretical level the question would be how much overlap or difference there is in theoretical output. Could both psychiatry and religion offer us explanations of concepts like disease, illness and health, and also of experiencing illness and health? Would these explanations be complementary or opposite?

However, if we look at the historical development of science and religion as social practices it is clear that at different times and places human nature has been differently experienced, behavior has been differently regarded, and claims to knowledge have been adjudicated in different ways.

1.6 CROSSING BOUNDARIES

The boundary between religion and spirituality and the practice of psychiatry is becoming increasingly porous, as the contributors to this book amply illustrate. No longer can psychiatrists in a multi-faith, multi-cultural globalized world hide behind the dismissal of religious belief as pathological, or behind biomedical scientism. During the last two or three decades religion and spirituality have become more prominent in mainstream psychiatry, not least because of the increased migration [18]. Globalization affects psychiatry, as it affects religion and spirituality. According to Kale [19] globalization exhibits five main trends in spirituality and religion:

- the use of religion and spirituality in reterritorialization;
- a worldwide quest to integrate spirituality in all aspects of day-to-day life;
- the increasing individualization of spirituality;
- the enhanced manifestation of spirituality in cyberspace;
- the syncretization of spirituality.

Religion and spirituality are on the move, so to say. This asks from psychiatrists to be more knowledgeable. Religion, spirituality and globalization have a vital impact on wellness and

quality of life for a growing number of people worldwide. The World Health Organization (WHO) has rightly regarded religious, spiritual and personal beliefs as a component of quality of life. This growing awareness may enhance the study of religion and spirituality in psychiatric training, research and practice. In their review Fulford and Sadler stated: ‘There is a renewed cross-disciplinary contact (between religion and psychiatry, PJV) after nearly a century of mutual neglect’ [20]. We really hope that this book may stimulate WPA, as a global organization, to take an active stance in this renewed and promising contact.

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Evil in Historical Perspective: At the Intersection of Religion and Psychiatry

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1.1.1 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Mankind has struggled since remotest antiquity, and presumably long before recorded history, to comprehend and to deal with – the manifold sources of challenge and threat to our earthly existence. Precisely because the threats to our survival are so numerous, compared with the comforting and healing actions that aid our survival, we have evolved over the millennia with a heightened awareness of the things that can harm or kill us, lower our social status, adversely affect our loved ones, or otherwise rob us of the necessities of life. This has led to the broad distinctions in our language between the positive and the (altogether more numerous) negative influences – captured under the headings *Good* and *Bad*, or in a manner more freighted with religious overtones, *Good* and *Evil*.

Originally, the concept of Evil covered a large territory on our mental map: natural disasters such as droughts, floods, earthquakes, plagues, and extremes of temperature; animals that could endanger our lives; and finally – the most dangerous of all our enemies: other humans with hostile intentions. The inescapable death of ourselves and of all living species was often itself regarded as an evil.

Natural disasters, in particular, could be so overwhelming, wiping out great numbers of people, even whole populations, at one stroke, that they cried out for explanation and, if possible, for being brought under our control. But war and violent acts even in peacetime could also reach devastating proportions. These phenomena also cried out for explanation and control.

The religious impulse, which has sprung up spontaneously in all cultures from the beginning of recorded time (if not from the time of our emergence as a separate species), has acquired pride of place among the attempts our ancestors made to explain evil. Mankind has found it both comforting and necessary to invoke the concept of the divine, whether compartmentalized into many deities (as in the pantheons of the ancient Greeks, the Hindus,

the early Egyptians, etc.) or, as in the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, manifest in the existence of one God. Many believe that God created us in His image; others, regarding this as an anthropomorphic conceit, assert that we created (the concept of) God in our image. Be this as it may, religion assigns to God (whether in the singular or the plural) supernal powers over our lives and over all Nature. Related ideas include heavenly reward for doing well; heavenly retribution for doing evil. As we shall see, in earlier times the natural disasters were themselves understood as punishment writ large – for violating God’s laws about proper conduct by whole groups of people, even at times by whole nations.

The belief in life after death, adhered to by religious persons of many faiths, brings with it the accompanying notions that those whose lives have been (mostly) good will reap the reward of life-everlasting in Heaven; those whose lives have been (mostly) bad, devoted repeatedly to acts regarded as evil – will earn only a place in eternal damnation, Hell, or its equivalent. The appeal of these beliefs is easy to grasp, given the unhappiness endured by most well-meaning and well-behaved people, and given the outrageous success to the very day of their death, whether in fame, power, or money, of certain undeserving people who, in the estimation of society, were evil. One of the functions acquired by religion, in other words, was the promise of at least *belated* justice via the punishment of bad people, even if it could only be carried out in the hereafter – that the good people had been unable to effect within the lifetime of the offenders.

Looking at the world’s timetable, it is clear that religion antedated philosophy, and that philosophy came before psychiatry. It is not surprising, then, that in seeking an explanation as to how the mysterious and embarrassing existence of evil arose amongst their own kind, men turned first to religion. The first persons to offer explanations about evil were men of religion: either founders of a new religion, or else men schooled in-, and strongly identified with, an already developed religion. Many of these men were of what we would now call a ‘philosophical turn of mind’ – in the sense that they grappled with the larger issues of good and evil, morality, how life should be lived, how death should be confronted, our place in Nature, and our relation to Deity. The next group of men to ponder these issues and to offer explanations, steeped as they were in both religion and philosophy – were the religious philosophers. Only within the past three centuries have we witnessed the emergence of a few philosophers – often raised in deeply religious families – whose approach to the subject of evil is nevertheless more secular in construction and less tied to the tenets of this or that religion.

Until very recently the topic of evil was felt to be the exclusive province of religion, or perhaps of religious philosophy; explanations of evil partook of the metaphysical or the supernatural. To that extent, only for religious adepts: priests, ministers, rabbis, imams, was it permissible to make pronouncements about evil. Philosophers whose thoughts and writings were imbued with religion might also address the subject. But for the vast majority of people – to speak about evil, especially to categorize certain others as evil, was felt as an intrusion on sacred ground, and would often enough invite adverse criticism.

In the twentieth century, however, discussion of evil underwent a sea-change. Many important philosophers were less attached to conventional religion than heretofore. And in the last half of the century, particularly following the Holocaust, but also in recognition of the genocides in Armenia earlier, and in Cambodia, Rwanda, Nigeria, Yugoslavia and elsewhere, along with the Nanking Massacre of 1937, and the mass murders of its own citizenry in Russia and China – the topic of evil could no longer be confined to the

sanctuaries of religious leaders or to the university halls of the philosophers. Two significant developments have, in recent years, brought about a reshaping of our attitudes towards evil. First, we have begun to pay more attention to how the word *evil* is used by the public and by the media. There are certain classes of crime, for example, that predictably elicit the word, whether from people in ordinary life or from writers and journalists. *Evil* is no longer ‘off-limits’ except to men of the cloth. Second, evil has become an acceptable subject for study by the mental health professions, including general psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, and neuroscience. Rather than relying only on the Bible (of whatever religion) for explanations about the nature and roots of evil, we now look where we should have been looking all along: the human brain.

There has been an inchoate recognition for a long time that *evil is a purely human phenomenon*. For an action on the part of one creature toward another creature to be considered evil, there must be consciousness and also an awareness of death. The consciousness, in this case, would involve the awareness of the suffering that one is inflicting upon another. Awareness of death is a special case of consciousness, the implication being that an aggressor realizes consciously (a) that the death of the victim may be the result of aggressive action, and (b) that the victim would have been vehemently opposed to this result. There is also the matter of *attitude*. Acts that we regard as evil are often preceded by powerful emotions of hatred (whether in the form of contempt, envy, jealousy, outrage over being humiliated, and the like). Born of such hatred are such acts as murder, rape, grievous assault, public humiliation, the depletion or ruin of another’s possessions, etc. All these manifestations are unique to our human species (with perhaps a few analogous acts among some of the higher apes). The cat bears no malice toward the mouse, nor the walrus to the fish it devours for its sustenance. For all intents and purposes we are the only members of the animal kingdom of whom it is meaningful to apply the word *evil*.

In reviewing how the concept of evil has evolved over the centuries, we turn our attention first to the men of religion in ancient times, some of whom also became the founders of new religions. We then see how the concept was reworked and understood by men who were at once professional philosophers and deeply religious persons. In the more recent centuries the main commentators on evil were philosophers, often with a strongly religious background and upbringing, but who were not also clergymen. Still more recently, we confront professors of philosophy of a more secular orientation. Finally, commentary on evil is divided between philosophers who are less strongly identified with a particular religion – and persons in the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry.

1.1.2 EVIL AS VIEWED BY MEN OF RELIGION IN ANTIQUITY

One of the earliest ideas about evil is to be found in the writings of Yajnavalkya, a Hindu religious adept and ascetic of the eighth century BCE. He spoke of an ‘inner person’ who existed in two states: one of this world, one in the Other. When we are born and acquire a body, we are joined with evils; when we die, we abandon evils. In the intermediate situation of the dream state we see both the evils of this world and the joys of the Other world – an idea that is incorporated in a religious text: the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad [1]. As for ‘evils,’ Indian and Buddhist countries believe in the notion of karma, according to which all our deeds, whether good or evil, are rewarded or punished; our ultimate fate is determined by the accumulation of our deeds, extending over our lifetime ([1], p. 40).

A near-contemporary of Yajnavalkya, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah spoke in the tradition of Jewish monotheism, referring to the fallen angel Lucifer (lit.: the bearer of light) as one who had claimed that he would ascend into Heaven and exalt his throne above the stars of God. . . I will be like the Most High [Isaiah 14:12–15]. The prophet asserts that no, Lucifer (called also *Satan*: Hebr. for ‘adversary’) will be brought down to Hell. Lucifer’s sins were those of pride and covetousness – akin to our modern concept of narcissism. But there is a hint in Isaiah’s remarks that the good and evil observed among men is related in some way to the supernatural, celestial battle waged between God and His adversary – Lucifer/Satan.

Prince Gautama Siddharta (623–543 BCE) as he neared 30 gave up a life of riches, wandering in northern India as a poor man, and developing a philosophy that emphasized the renunciation of earthly desires and the state of non-attachment. Having achieved enlightenment, he became known as the Buddha (from the Sanskrit verb to *awaken*). Though he never claimed divine status, rather that of a teacher and guide, he has now become the object of veneration by those who claim Buddhism (and its offshoots) as their religion. Buddha taught that to escape suffering one needed to eliminate desire and to follow the noble Eightfold Path (right view, right speech, right thought, etc). To be avoided were the chief sins – all related to lust or desire; namely, anger, greed, and foolishness. These constitute the same triad of sins embodied in Japanese Zen-Buddhism: *ikari* (anger), *musabori* (greed) and *orokasa* (foolishness).

The religious teacher and prophet of ancient Persia, Zoroaster, was probably a contemporary of the Buddha, though some have suggested he may have lived much earlier, even before 1000 BCE [2]. The religion he founded – Zoroastrianism – postulated the twin brother-Gods, Ahura-Mazda (the God of Light and Good), and Ahriman (the God of Darkness and Evil). There is a close parallel here to the Old Testament story of the twin brothers, the virtuous Abel and the murderous Cain. Ahriman is said to have chosen of his free will to behave in an evil way, creating in the process the phenomena of sin, death, and evil.

The Jewish prophet of the Old Testament, Ezekiel (622–570 BCE), a contemporary of the Buddha, wrote of Lucifer in this way: ‘Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. . . Thou hast sinned: therefore. . . I will destroy thee, o coveting cherub. . . and never shalt thou be anymore’ [28:12–19]. Centuries later, Christian theology could not accept that God created Lucifer/Satan as a wicked creature, since this would amount to God creating an evil. Instead, St. Augustine’s idea (built upon Ezekiel’s understanding) found preference, according to which God had not created Lucifer as evil. Rather: Lucifer, now as Ha-Satan [*the adversary*] via an exercise of his own free will – *chose* an evil path, and was cast out of Heaven (cf. [3]).

1.1.3 EARLY PHILOSOPHERS

Kong Fu-zi [Kong, the Master], whom we know as Confucius [551–479 BCE], albeit a religious man, rarely discussed supernatural phenomena, emphasizing instead a humanistic approach – one that recognized the free will of all people [4].

Confucius taught that the superior man is one who has learned to overcome his *innately evil nature*, through the practice of *jen* [acknowledgment, knowledge]. He also advocated

moderation as a transcendent virtue, akin to the emphasis on the ‘middle way’ in the philosophy of Aristotle. Evil, for Confucius, was not seen as a supernatural force implanted in us, and against which we must constantly struggle, but as an inborn human tendency – against which we must constantly struggle.

Mencius [372–289 BCE], who may have been taught by Confucius’ grandson, Zi Si, was an idealist after the manner of Plato, in agreement with the latter that he believed in man’s innate moral goodness, in contradistinction to Confucius’ belief in man’s originally evil nature.

The comments of Plato [427–347 BCE] on evil have a resonance with those of Confucius. For Plato, God was not the cause of evil; instead, God guarantees the inevitable decree of Fate; namely, that the man who will make the wrong or immoral decision will pay for it, becoming tormented, perverted, and unhappy. God is without blame (ἀνόμιος). The ‘evil soul,’ meanwhile, is that part of the soul *where evil naturally resides*; that is, the irrational part of the soul which is receptive to evil and to ‘unmeasuredness’ – i.e., excess and defect, the sources of unrestrained wickedness and cowardice. One effect of this irrational soul is to make the soul think that whatever it avoids or shuns is ‘evil,’ and whatever it seeks is ‘good’ ([5], Phaedrus 256B 2–3).

Plato’s pupil, Aristotle (384–322 BCE), expressed similar views concerning evil: evil was a form of the ‘unlimited’; good, of the limited. Excess and deficiency are failings; virtue lies in the (golden) mean. As Aristotle mentioned: Men are bad in countless ways; good, only in one ([6], II vi). The mark of virtue was to have the right feelings at the right times on the right grounds toward the right people for the right motive and in the right way. In this regard, Aristotle’s ideas harmonize with those of the Buddha’s Eightfold Path.

Epicurus, a Greek philosopher [341–270 BCE] from the generation after Aristotle, held that the purpose of philosophy was to attain a happy, tranquil life, adding that pleasure is the measure of what is good; pain, of what is bad. He held that the gods neither reward nor punish people, but also counseled against hedonism – remarking that restraint and temperance were prime virtues, much as was emphasized by Plato and Aristotle ([3], 1:20). The philosophical school he founded (Epicureanism) was one of the three then dominant schools of thought, alongside Stoicism and Skepticism. Epicurus is noted for his effort to explain the world without recourse to myth or religion, but through reference to material principles – testable in what we would call a *scientific* way via direct observation. Moral reasoning for Epicurus involved a cost/benefit analysis of pleasure versus pain (the latter included both physical and mental suffering). Mirrored in his philosophy is the Jeffersonian credo, embedded in the American *Declaration of Independence*, asserting that human beings have the inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In one of his writings, preserved by the early Christian rhetorician, Lactantius [240-ca. 320 CE], Epicurus casts doubt on God’s responsibility for evil via a method of careful reasoning that we will confront only much later in the works of Pierre Bayle. As Epicurus phrased it: *God either wishes to take away evils, and is unable, or He is able and unwilling, or He is neither willing nor able – or He is both willing and able. If He is willing but unable, He is feeble, but this is not in accord with the character of God. If He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God. If He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble – and therefore not God. If He is both willing and able (which alone is suitable of God), where then does evil arise? And why does God not remove evils?* It will be many centuries before this dilemma is resolved satisfactorily.

1.1.4 COMMENTARY ON EVIL IN THE 1ST MILLENIUM OF THE COMMON ERA

The word *evil*, once the New Testament was organized in its final form by Bishop Irenaeus in the late second century CE, occurs some 106 times (as against 446 times in the Old Testament). The Greek word κακόν is used much as was the Hebrew נָרָא [ra] of the OT – in a variety of ways: *wickedness, hurt, mischief, bad, affliction, adversity, harm, wrong*, etc: that is, both to designate the deed and also its consequence. There is not so much comment on the primal *source* of evil (as in Zoroaster's Ahriman), as there is an implicit recognition that men are strongly inclined to commit acts which others define as evil – particularly if there is a weakness in their link to God. In this sense, God plays a role more in the center stage of human conflict than is apparent in the philosophy of Plato, where God (or the 'gods') are at a greater remove from human affairs, operating more as observer or final judge. Thus the New Testament speaks of the ungodly man: one whose life-course is an injury to himself and to everyone around him; he is morally evil and hurtful. Saul of Tarsus [? to ca. 67 CE], who became St. Paul, famously wrote in the first epistle to Timothy: 'the love of money [φιλαργυρία] is the root of all evil' – referring especially to '...they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish [lit. ανόητος 'mindless'] and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition' [1 Tim. 6:9 & 10]. Paul here inveighs against the same evils of greed and foolishness that the Buddha underscored. Elsewhere, Paul gives us a brief catalog of evils: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry [lit.: heresy], witchcraft, hatred, strife, envy, drunkenness, revellings, and such like' [Paul's Epistle to the Galatians 5: 16–24]. Oddly, the King James version also mentions 'murder' [Gal. 5:21] – which would be φόνος/phonos, whereas the original Greek of the Septuagint only reads φθόνος/phthonos – which signifies *envy* or *malice*. Paul does not present these evils in a hierarchical manner; certain ones nevertheless appear to us more malign (such as εχθρα: hatred, enmity) than others (such as drunkenness).

Plotinus [205–270 CE] is believed to have been a Hellenized Egyptian, the developer of neo-Platonic philosophy. He himself was not Christian nor did he refer to Christianity in his works. Plotinus' cosmology influenced subsequent philosophers from many backgrounds, including Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. One aspect of his cosmology centers around his belief that the soul is composed of a higher and a lower part: the higher part – divine, and imparting life to the lower part, which in turn is the seat of the personality with its passions and vices. Evil is linked with matter, in contrast to the Intellect, which is always pure – and which turns away from matter. For Plotinus evil was not irremediable, since it came about through privation: through the soul becoming disconnected from the higher part because of forgetfulness. In this latter state, the soul loses its ability to rule over its inferior part and comes under the influence of matter. The remedy for the soul, by which it can free itself from evil – is through the experience of love.

In contrast to the mind-set of Plato or Mencius, the early Christian philosophers tended toward a pessimistic view of humanity, picturing man as sinful, evil as inescapable, salvation as difficult to achieve. This gloomy view was not universal among them, but was characteristic of the most influential thinkers. Consider, for example, the ideas of St. Augustine as contrasted with those of Pelagius. Both were born in the same year [354 CE]: Pelagius in Britain; St. Augustine, in North Africa. St. Augustine, before his conversion to Christianity at age 31, struggled with sexual feelings that overwhelmed him and which he strove to 'conquer' after coming under the influence of St. Ambrose in Milan. In his effort to

understand evil, St. Augustine argued that God was good and the things He made were good. Evil, not being attributable to God, came from the sin committed by Adam and Eve in violating God's prohibition against eating the forbidden fruit (which conferred *knowledge*, including, by the way, knowledge about sex and procreation). Because of this hubris, we became corrupted by our own *free will* – the Original Sin of these first two humans being passed down the generations. For St. Augustine this *vitium* (flaw) lay in our passions and desires of the flesh, summed up under the heading of *concupiscentia* (which includes *all* desires – for wealth, admiration, power, not just for sex), the root being Pride (the craving for self-exaltation). In one of his more dour comments, he wrote *Sub Deo justo, nemo miser nisi mereatur*: Under a just God, no one is miserable who has not deserved misery. Yet St. Augustine disagreed with Plotinus, claiming instead that whatever exists on earth (including matter) is good, because it came from God. The one curative that could free our will from its inherited and otherwise irremediable predisposition to sin – was the elusive (and for St. Augustine, not very liberally dispensed) force of *God's grace* [7].

Pelagius' views were diametrically opposed to those of St. Augustine, rejecting the latter's fatalistic and rigid conceptions. Opposing the doctrine of Original Sin, Pelagius proposed instead that Adam was created susceptible of death – whether or not he had sinned; his sin was his alone and not that of all mankind; infants are in the same state as Adam before the Fall; and even before Christ there were some men who were sinless. Each person, furthermore, was free to choose between good and evil. Though Pelagius regarded his contemporary as nearly Manichaeic (and thus heretical) in his picture of Good and Evil as akin to two separate forces, it was St. Augustine who won the day and set the tone for much of Christian philosophy in the years to come. Pelagius emerged, despite his (as we would see it) humanistic philosophy, as the 'heretic.' In fairness to his rival, St. Augustine did recognize (in a manner at variance with Manichaeism) that '... I once thought that it is not we who sin but some other nature that sins within us (*mihi videbatur non esse nos qui peccamus, sed nescio quam aliam in nobis peccare naturam*). . . The truth, of course, was that it was all within my own self, and that my own impiety had divided me against myself' ([8], V, 10).

1.1.5 ARABIC PHILOSOPHERS IN THE TIME OF THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

A number of important Arabic philosophers bookended the first millennium, having flourished in the century-and-a-half just before, or just after 1000 CE.

The first philosopher of major significance during this era was Abū Yūsuf al-Kindī (ca. 801–873), who was born into an aristocratic family in Kufa (in what is now Iraq). A polymath learned in many academic subjects, Al-Kindī is credited with having introduced Indian numerals (that we now refer to as Arabic numerals) into the Islamic and Christian worlds. In the field of psychology he wrote a treatise on sleep and dream interpretation. As to his philosophic thought, he was influenced by Aristotle and by such neo-Platonic writers as Plotinus and Proclus. In his treatise *The Eradication of Sorrow*, Al-Kindī touches on the broad topic of good and evil, insofar as he speaks of grief as related either to the loss of loved ones or to the loss of personal possessions. Yet one cannot live without sustaining the loss of loved ones nor can one acquire all he may desire. As Butterworth [9] mentions, 'the only way to escape sorrow is to be free from these attachments' (p. 269). In this sense

Al-Kindī argues for the kind of asceticism urged by the Buddha long before him, and by the neo-Platonic philosophers as well – who equated evil with the material world – and with the inordinate quest for material wealth; good – with philosophic contemplation and the pursuit of virtue. Implicit in his recommendation for the virtuous life is something akin to life according to an Aristotelian Golden Mean – where, regarding possessions, one strives to get along with the low side of average; to be satisfied, that is, with ‘just enough.’ This would be the optimal antidote to greed (recall the Buddha’s triune conception of evil: anger, greed, and foolishness) – that was still compatible with a tolerable human existence.

The philosopher/polymath whom we know as Rhazes was born in Persia, in the city of Rayy (whence his name: ‘from the city of Rayy’) in about 854. He became physician in charge of the Royal Hospital in Rayy, eventually moving to a similar post in Baghdad. Among his medical accomplishments were the discovery of sulfuric acid and the medical use of alcohol. Though a prolific writer (one year he is said to have written 20,000 pages, or 55 a day), little has come down to us of his original works. A freethinker whose philosophic ideas were more in keeping with Platonic than with Aristotelian thought, Rhazes did not see creation as a gift or an act of grace bestowed on us by a benevolent deity. Rather, he felt that ‘... in this life, evils outweigh goods,’ in sympathy with the Epicurean view, and also with his physicianly observation that there was a ‘prevalence of pain and suffering over peace and pleasure in all sensate beings’ [10]. Akin to the Judaeo-Christian notion of expulsion from the Garden of Eden because of sin, Rhazes pictured our bodily existence as representing a fall from the life-giving principle of the Soul – a fall that can be broken by the gift of intelligence. The fall was not so much imposed on us by God as permitted by a tolerant and all-seeing Wisdom [10]. There is a hint here of man having free will, despite the omnipotence of an all-knowing God – leaving us free to pursue good or to descend into evil.

In a manner analogous to Pelagius’ departure from orthodox Christian belief, the Persian-born Islamic philosopher, Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī [870–950], the founder of Islamic Neo-Platonism, questioned the authority of the Qur’an and rejected the notion of predestination. He felt reason was superior to revelation – a heretical idea for a Muslim [11]. Al-Fārābī may have been influenced in this direction by his (heretical) teacher ‘Īsa al-Warrāq (died 909 CE). Dividing the cosmos into three worlds: the First (independent of matter; the realm of intelligible forms and higher spirits); the Second (the heavenly spheres); and the Third (material entities), Fārābī posited that evil was excluded from the first two, and could exist only in the third realm. Even there, in the domain of willful action, good and evil can be found, and depend on either the proper use, or else the misuse, of material means. Voluntary evil is associated with wrong choice, as when, for example, the rational faculty is oblivious to the supreme good and is directed instead toward an inferior good such as pleasure or profit ([11], p. 97). There is no simple correspondence, in other words, between *Pleasure and Good* versus *Pain and Evil*, since certain pleasures are obviously associated with vice and with harm to others. Rhazes before him had cautioned that pleasure is to be pursued only in a manner that brings on no greater pain or harm ([9], p 271). As with Pelagius, and in opposition to St. Augustine, God and the supernatural are no longer primary elements in Al Fārābī’s conceptualization of evil and its origins. Even though he invokes God as the ‘Lord of the Worlds,’ God, in Al Fārābī’s view, does not act directly on the sublunary world (Rhazes would agree with this postulate), and is thus more remote than the God of St. Augustine.

Abū 'Ali al-Husayn ibn Sina, whom we know as Avicenna, was born near Bukhara (in Central Asia) in 980. He died in 1037 CE. A polymath like the previously mentioned Islamic philosophers, Avicenna is better known today for his voluminous medical writings than for his essays on other topics. In his philosophical work, he was interested primarily in creating a coherent system that dealt with man's place in the world in a way harmonious with Islamic religious doctrine. His earliest works were influenced by Al-Fārābī, and include his *Maqala fi'l Nafs* (Compendium on the Soul) in which he argues for the incorporeality of the soul, though without adopting the Neo-Platonic notion of its pre-existence [12]. As with medieval philosophers in general, Avicenna used the philosophical mind-set in the service of religion, positing that God, as one pure Good could produce only a cosmos that was orderly and good. But this raises the vexatious question: if God is pure Good, whence Evil? Avicenna's answer was that there was no Pure Evil (like the Zoroastrian Ahriman) on the other side of the balance. Rather: in our world there are particular evils, best understood as 'accidental consequences of good' ([12], section 5). Still to be explained: moral evils among human beings, as opposed to natural evils such as earthquakes and floods. Here Avicenna posited that God knows the things that exist, but not individuals. This drew fire from a later Islamic philosopher, Al Ghazali (1058–1111 CE), for whom Avicenna's denial that God had knowledge of particulars, as well, was heretical. In the area of psychology Avicenna's religion-inspired views existed side by side with his practical medical knowledge. In a prelibation of Descartes' seventeenth-century theory, he believed that the soul is independent of the body, even going so far as to enunciate an argument, similar to Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, that a blind man, were he suspended in the air, would be unaware of his body, yet still possessed of self-awareness – because he could still think ([12], section 7). But in his great compendium, the *Canons of Medicine*, Avicenna described various 'down-to-earth' psychological (we would say *psychiatric*) conditions, such as melancholy and mania – along with recommendations for their treatment. Avicenna's views on the temperaments (Sanguineous, Phlegmatic, Bilius, Melancholic or 'Atrabilius'), and their connections to the four elements: air, water, fire, and earth, respectively, derive from ancient Greek sources (particularly, Galen). We still use the corresponding temperament terms *manic, phlegmatic, melancholic/depressive, and irritable* even today, as did Kraepelin in the early 1900s. But Avicenna hardly confined himself to psychological issues, and though he touched on psychiatric conditions, he cannot in any meaningful sense be called a psychiatrist.

The most prominent successor to Avicenna, Abū'l Walīd ibn Rushd (our Averroës), born in Islam's western-most area, in Cordoba (1126–1198), is famous for his commentaries on Aristotle. Ibn Rushd was in touch with Christian and Jewish philosophers in Islamic Spain, including Maimonides (also from Cordoba), who greatly admired him. As with many philosophers, from the Greeks to the time of ibn Rushd, the attainment of intellectual excellence was considered a 'prerogative of the privileged few' ([13], p. 301). The masses, in contrast, could aspire at best to a level of moral excellence through leading a life of virtue (according to the wisdom and recommendations of the philosophers). Moral uprightness was a potential for them, even though a comprehension of the essential truth lay beyond their grasp. A philosophical posture vis-à-vis good and evil is implicit in this view, though ibn Rushd focuses less on the topic of evil than did some of his Islamic predecessors. Dante knew of both Avicenna and ibn Rushd, whom he situated in the limbo of *Inferno* – where lay the unbaptized and the virtuous pagans (whereas another prominent Aristotelian, St. Thomas Aquinas, was in *Paradiso*). Toward the end of Canto IV (ll. 142–144) of the

Inferno, Dante wrote:

*Euclide geomètra e Tolomeo, Euclid the geometer and Ptolemy,
Ippocrate, Avicenna e Galieno, Avicenna and Galen,
Averroès che 'l gran comento feo. Averroès who made the great Commentary. [14]*

1.1.6 RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHERS OF THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The humanist Jewish philosopher Maimonides [1135–1204] transmitted Aristotelian rationalism, which had been kept alive through the Arabic sources of the previous four centuries, to later Christian theologians like Albertus Magnus and St. Thomas Aquinas. Maimonides accepted the Platonic view that earthly matter was the source of evil and saw the *Imitatio Dei* of St. Augustine as a way of freeing oneself from the ties of matter [15]. He also saw the imagination as tied to material things, one manifestation of which was the anthropomorphism and belief in a *corporeal*, as opposed to an abstract, God [16]. He advocated, in a manner akin to asceticism, minimizing one's attention to bodily functions and impulses (food, drink, sex...), recognizing how they underlay the 'evil impulse' [יצר-הרע yetzer ha-ra]. Yet his realism was such that he understood that the evil impulse was not irredeemably evil: later rabbis would argue, in fact, that without a measure of the impulse, one would not marry, have children, build a house, or engage in business. What was crucial in Maimonides' argument was that the impulses that govern sex and the desire for mastery can go overboard (beyond, in effect, the Aristotelian mean) and end up as evil actions.

For St. Thomas Aquinas [1225–1274?] the main theological struggle was that of *theodicy*: how to explain the existence of evil, given an omnipotent God who was thoroughly benign and good – an echo here of the earlier lament of Boëthius: 'If there be a God, from whence so many evils?' ([17], xix). The resolution lay for him in the concept of free will. Only God had a free will that was at the same time incapable of sin. But St. Thomas considered it impossible for God to create human beings having both a rational nature and free will – who would always choose what was right and never commit a fault or a sin. As to why it should be that God could not have gone the extra distance and engineered our free will in such a way that we too could not commit sins – St. Thomas does not hazard an explanation. He does conclude, however, that the root of all vices lay in the inordinate love of self [Question VIII, art. 2, reply 19] – a comment in line with our modern conception of narcissism (Aquinas St. Thomas [71]. For further explication of the views of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, the reader should consult the excellent summary of Carlos Steel [72].

Count Giovanni Pico della Mirandola [1463–94] hoped to put to rest, as had Pelagius before him, the belief still held by some – that evil was born of two distinct sources, one representing the Good; the other, Evil, as posited by Zoroaster and the similar-minded third-century prophet, Mani – from whose name the Manichaean heresy derives.

Writing in the early Renaissance period, St. Ignatius Loyola [1491–1556], the founder of the Jesuit order, expressed a mixture of views: some that pay homage to traditional Christian theology; others that have a more modern ring. He mentions (in the traditional vein) that the Devil, studying the nature and traits of each man, suggests splendor to the ambitious, gain to the covetous, delight to the sensuous, etc. But he avoids the trap of theodicy in stating that one cannot define Good and Evil in absolute terms, and that evil is an emergent property that grows out of a particular context, dependent also on the mind-state of the person(s) in question [18]. Stressing the important role played by our free will – by which we may choose to turn away from God's loving desire (and thus commit evil acts), Loyola lays less emphasis

on God as omnipotent and all-good, which so bedeviled, or rather confounded, those who grappled with theodicy. Similar views were expressed by Loyola's contemporary, Juan Luis Vives [19]. As a Jew who converted to Catholicism under the impact of the Spanish Inquisition, Vives was perhaps more ready to think along less conventional paths, contending that the Will is essentially spontaneous (and not always subject to Reason), and is at liberty to choose to do evil things as well as good things, God notwithstanding.

1.1.7 THEOLOGIANS AND PHILOSOPHERS OF THE RENAISSANCE AND ENLIGHTENMENT

Among the prominent theologians and philosophers of the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries, the subject of evil is treated more and more as a human affair, with God or the Devil playing less active roles from the standpoint of causation. There is an increasing tendency to picture God in a more abstract, less anthropomorphic, manner. Most of the philosophers are believers; many come from families where the father was a clergyman. But the dominant explanation concerning the origin of evil relies on concept of free will, albeit a free will that was granted us by the deity.

The German Protestant religious mystic, Jacob Boehme [1575–1624] argued, in a way that would have been considered quite heretical earlier, that God was 'underneath' rather than 'above.' In what amounts to a prelibation of Spinoza's philosophy, Boehme stated that Nature rises out of God, and that we 'sink into him' [20]. He also posited two triads of forces, one of which was composed of the elements: Soul, Body & Spirit – corresponding to which are Good, Evil, and Free Will. In his later writings Boehme envisioned evil as the direct outcome of the wrathful side of God, adding that the object of the world's life and history was to exhibit the eternal victory of Good over Evil; Love over Wrath.

For Thomas Hobbes [1588–1679], the son of a Protestant vicar, God was one Substance, of which there could be more than one Persons (or Representatives), such as Moses, or later, His own Son, Christ ([21], p. 520). But Hobbes' comments on Good and Evil reflect his sociological/political understanding of these attributes. Portraying human life as involving a universal desire for self-preservation, Hobbes argued that because Man is in the state of nature anarchic and greedy, a social or civil order soon evolves – as a means of avoiding a war of all against all. In his famous comment about our life as 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short' ([21], p. 186), Hobbes states that the remedy for this is the appointment of a sovereign, who saw to it that men exchanged a degree of personal freedom in return for personal safety. Good, Evil, and Justice had no meaning, in Hobbes' schema, until men curbed their desires and entered into a social pact ([21], Ch. XIII).

The comments on evil of Descartes [1596–1650] resemble those of Vives: in his *De Passionibus* he asserted that 'All good and evil in this life depend on the Passions alone' [CCXII]. For Descartes the passions (we would call them the *emotions*) are the products of Nature; their use is to contribute to actions that preserve or improve the body. Yet the Will must at times oppose the Passions with '...firm and determined judgments touching the knowledge of Good and Evil, according to which the Soul has resolved to conduct its actions' [CXXXVII]. What Descartes does not make clear is how we know what is Good and what is Evil to begin with.

Sometimes called the last of the medievalists, Baruch Spinoza [1632–77] had a conception of evil as identified, in neo-Platonic language, with privation or 'absences

which express no essence.’ He also thought of God in a way reminiscent of Boehme: God is ‘immanent in the world’ and individual things are themselves modes or modifications of God. The one reality is ‘God or Nature’ [23, 24]. This equation of God with Nature earned for Spinoza an excommunication from his Jewish coreligionists, but also later even from the Calvinists – both groups regarding such an unexalted view of God as heretical. Spinoza argued, in regard to evil, that there is no evil in the nature of things: the same object may be good in one set of circumstances and evil in another. Whatever advances man toward a more perfect nature is a true good; evil could be seen as a criticism of God’s goodness. *À propos* free will, we may know a thing to be (good or) bad, yet not find in ourselves the power either to do the good or to abstain from the bad.

In the same way that Spinoza’s family fled to Holland to avoid religious persecution, Pierre Bayle [1647–1706], the son of an impoverished Calvinist minister in southern France, fled to Holland – because of his unconventional ideas that ran counter to the Catholicism of Louis XIV. Picking up where Epicurus left off two millennia before, Bayle contended that it cannot be the case that Evil exists and that God is both omnipotent and benevolent [25], for if God were both willing and able to remove Evil, then where does Evil come from? To strengthen his point (meanwhile alienating the religious orthodoxy of his day), Bayle challenged the accepted wisdom that belief in divine reward promotes morality – given that many religious believers are not deterred from evil acts, including cruel and destructive behaviors, whereas many atheists are not immoral, even though they stand in no fear of divine retribution for their non-belief. Instead, as Bayle emphasized, people’s conduct is determined primarily by secular sanction and by character structure: those who are cruel will act cruelly, whether or not they believe in God or the Hereafter. People who are kind will distance themselves from cruelty, even if they do not believe in divine punishment [26].

Bayle’s contemporary, the Baron Gottfried von Leibniz [1646–1716] is known more for his co-invention of the calculus than for his theodicy [27]. Bayle, the incurable pessimist, viewed a God who could have made a world where there were fewer crimes and sufferings – yet chose not to do so – as something of a criminal on a grand scale. Leibniz, the incurable optimist, argued that, *au contraire*, this was the best world that could have been created; any alternative world would have been worse – a view savaged by Voltaire in his famous parody, *Candide*. Leibniz did define three categories of Evil; namely, the metaphysical, the physical, and the moral. The ‘metaphysical’ related to the degeneration inherent in the substance of which the world was made (since only God is perfect). The ‘physical’ concerned the pain and suffering we experience in the world, whilst ‘moral’ evil amounts to the crime – for which physical (or ‘natural’) evil is the punishment. It was this latter notion that came in for Voltaire’s ridicule: how, for example, were the 60,000 victims in Lisbon on that fateful day in November, 1755 – any more ‘deserving’ of the earthquake than were the citizens of some other city? The Lisbon earthquake was in fact a turning point, much as the Holocaust or 9/11 in our day, that forced men to rethink the concept of evil, and to rid themselves of the idea that natural disasters were somehow or another ‘God’s punishment’ for our sins. As Voltaire wrote, with timeless eloquence:

*What crime, what sin, had those young hearts conceived
That lie, bleeding and torn, on mother’s breast?
Did fallen Lisbon deeper drink of vice
Than London, Paris, or sunlit Madrid?
—(from Poem on the Lisbon Disaster [28])*

In Bayle and Leibniz we have the paradox of two men, both Protestant, both born within a year of each other: one still wedded (though not exclusively) to the metaphysical view of evil; the other, rejecting the metaphysical in favor of a more down-to-earth (and down to the individual person) conception. Perhaps the answer lay in the fact that Bayle was poor and was exiled; Leibniz was rich and honored in his own country.

The empiricist Scottish philosopher, David Hume [1711–76], though raised in a Calvinist background, removed God from the equation concerning good and evil, claiming that what ought, and what ought not, to be the case cannot legitimately be derived from the ideas of a deity. He argued against the notion that Reason alone enables us to make moral distinctions. Rather: morality is concerned with such non-ideational entities as Passions, Volitions, and Actions. It is only when we are able to attend to our own feelings that we are able to distinguish Virtue and Vice; between moral good and evil [29].

In the same way that Bayle and Leibniz emerge at the conceptual antipodes regarding the origins of evil, the postulates of Jean-Jacques Rousseau [1712–88] are diametrically opposite, regarding the original state of man, to those of Thomas Hobbes. In his *Second Discourse* (1762) Rousseau claimed that the human condition derives from society, whereas in the ‘state of Nature’ Man was free and independent, healthy, happy, and innocent. Once a social condition develops, there was, Rousseau supposed, a fall from Nature, and with it a corruption of the once ‘noble savage.’ Here Rousseau was mistaken, for there is not a shred of anthropological evidence to support his claim. But there was certain grandeur to his error: scientifically mistaken, but politically correct – for his time. It was not hard to see evils (social evils, in this case) in Rousseau’s France, on the cusp of the up-coming revolution – if one contrasted the lot of the common man with that of the aristocracy. Hobbes may have been right about society in general, but Rousseau was right about the society in particular with which he was familiar. At all events, Rousseau deserved great credit, as Susan Neiman pointed out ([30], p. 41), for being the first to treat the problem of evil as a philosophical (one might even say, sociological), as opposed to a theological problem. Rousseau took the problem out of God’s hands and ‘put it squarely in ours’ ([30], p. 43). Evil did not require reference to supernatural forces, which meant in effect that evil is not a metaphysical problem; it is a human problem.

Immanuel Kant [1724–1804] also rejected the notion of Original Sin – as an affront to our moral freedom [31], but retained a place for religion, given that religion underlines our duty to uphold moral values as divine commands. Christianity focuses on pride as the primary sin, which Kant regarded as ineradicable by human means. Kant distinguishes between self-conceit (*Eigendunkel*) and Self-Love (*Eigenliebe*), as the latter can be good insofar as it is controlled by ‘practical reason.’ He understood the evil that arises in the human heart as stemming from the subordination of what he called the Objective Law of Duty to (mere) happiness. Evil becomes one of the choices open to us via our free will. Man has a propensity [*Hang*] to evil (akin to Maimonides’ *yetzer ha-ra*), which must be combated through our becoming our own ‘moral sentries.’ Kant made a distinction between *Böse* [evil] and *Übel* [bad, though it is the cognate for the English word *evil*]: *evil* actions are those which aim at the violation of the humanity of another person (such as murder, rape, torture). Whereas *bad* actions are those that might be harmful or disagreeable to one’s general well-being (e.g., delayed payment of a debt or failure to honor some other type of promise). While neither Kant nor other philosophers give detailed descriptions of individual case-histories embodying evil actions, he was aware that terrible crimes occurred, and remarked that ‘great crimes are paroxysms, the sight of which makes one whose soul is healthy to shudder’ [32].

Here is a comment that presages our contemporary, more *emotional*, use of the word *evil*, as pertaining to acts that are (to those who witness or experience them) breathtakingly inhuman.

Georg Hegel [1770–1831] became famous for his dialectic triad of *thesis*, *antithesis*, and *synthesis* – inspired in part by the French Revolution. Hegel felt the latter movement could be understood as a burst into freedom for the masses (thesis), that then ushered in a reign of terror (antithesis) that led finally to a better post-revolutionary form of government based on freedom and equality (synthesis). As for his comments on evil, these are mostly to be found in his *Philosophie des Rechts* [33] – the German word conveying the meanings both of ‘right’ and ‘law.’ Hegel sought to establish a groundwork for morality centered on each person’s free will and humanity – within the context of our life as members, inevitably, of a social entity. The social entity, in turn, needed to be regulated by a superordinate morality, which for Kant (more so than for Hegel) necessitated the acceptance of God as the embodiment of that higher morality. What makes a person evil in Hegel’s view is the choosing of natural desires in opposition to the good ([33], section 40). Though Hegel does not give ‘case histories’ of evil, he does assert that there is an important distinction between crimes that attack the entire manifestation of one’s Will (i.e., of another person’s freedom and humanity), as in the instance of murder, slavery, or religious compulsion – in contrast to lesser crimes that invade less of the life-space of another person [34]. As for the matter of ‘free will,’ it is noteworthy that Hegel felt that the success of America (along with England and France) in the nineteenth century related in large part to the large numbers of Protestant dissenters who ‘created a tradition for a people who aspired to create libertarian societies’ ([35], p. 172). The point here is that the dissenters exercised greater freedom to think for themselves and to stress their individuality – in contrast to those who adhered to monolithic systems of thought and belief, like the Catholics and Muslims.

For Arthur Schopenhauer [1788–1860], irritable, embittered, pessimistic, this was, in his 180° turn from Leibniz, the *worst* of all possible worlds – where pleasure was the exception in human life; pain, the rule. As he concluded in his most important work, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* ([36] *The World as Will and Representation*), the Will is equated with effort and desire, which is ultimately painful and ‘evil.’ Pain arises from the *desire to have* – and then not having. After a brief satisfaction with one’s desire there is momentary pleasure – and then the emergence of new desire and new pain. Selfishness or egoism (narcissism, in our language) was for Schopenhauer, universal: the egoist seeks his own advantage and is ready to strike down those who oppose him. His *Weltanschauung* resonates in this way with Hobbes’ ‘war of all against all.’ Schopenhauer recognized that the attachment to life that characterizes all living forms makes understandable our horror in reaction to murder – as the maximal violation of our inherent will-to-live. Toward the end of life Schopenhauer embraced Buddhism, by virtue of its preaching deliverance from Self – unlike the egoist: the malicious man who thinks only of himself.

The year before Schopenhauer’s death coincided with the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. Darwin, though of course not a philosopher, gave new meaning to the kind of existential struggle for survival alluded to by Hobbes and Schopenhauer. Putting this struggle on a *scientific* footing for the first time, Darwin drew attention to natural selection. Herbert Spencer five years later used the term ‘survival of the fittest.’ Some took this to mean that brute force triumphed over weakness, applying the idea to our species as well as to the other animals. But Darwin was not arguing that evil won out over the good, particularly as he held that the ethical life (among men) is different from the life in (the rest of) Nature. It is the

ethical life that brings us out of the state of all-against-all warfare and leads us to peace. In our own generation it has become clear through the work of evolutionary psychiatry – that as a group species we also harbor genes that promote compassion and altruistic behavior. As James Wilson has put forward [37], we would not have survived as a species if we did not possess, alongside our aggressive tendencies, other innate, gene-driven tendencies that promote moral sentiments: *sympathy*, *fairness*, *self-control*, and (here, James cited Kant) *duty*. Viewed in this light, *evil* can be seen as an exaggeration of our aggressive tendencies; *good* – as a manifestation of our adherence to the moral sentiments outlined by Wilson. In this schema religion no longer has any *explanatory* value vis-à-vis evil, though it retains its value as a promulgator and advocate of the moral sentiments by which our lives should be guided.

Darwin's new theory did not sweep away all at once the religion-based explanation for evil. Søren Kierkegaard [1813–55], for example, though born after Darwin, died before the *Origin* was published. Still ensconced within traditional Christianity, he understood sin as rooted in Willing. Sin (and hence evil) occur when a person refrains from doing what is right even though he understands what is right [38].

For Friedrich Nietzsche [1844–1900] God played no role in the causation of evil, which, he argued, was to be understood in purely human terms. 'Being evil' was 'being not moral,' practicing immorality, resisting tradition – however reasonable or stupid tradition might be. Nietzsche recognized that 'harming the neighbor,' however, was felt to be preeminently harmful in all the moral laws of different ages ([39], #96). Though Nietzsche endorsed the idea of the *will to power* as the basis of human nature (a view in sympathy with that of Schopenhauer), he also spoke of 'resentment' as a key emotion in those whose quest for power was denied them. This resentment, Nietzsche saw as resulting from the 'corruption of human nature' that was encouraged by religion in general, specifically by Christianity ([40], p. 262) – a pretty radical departure from beliefs of Nietzsche's Lutheran father, grandfathers, and great-grandfather. His much-misunderstood concept of the *Übermensch* ['Superman,' or 'Overman'] was totally unrelated to the notion, as hijacked by the Nazis, of a superior race. Nietzsche's *Übermensch* was the creative artist who lives 'beyond good and evil' (as popularly conceived): the powerful man, that is, who has mastered his passions and risen above the mediocrity of everyday existence [41]. At all events, Nietzsche took the concept of evil far away from the religion-based explanations (the theodicies of Leibniz and others), adopting a much more relativistic notion of what constituted evil. Apart from harming one's neighbor, that is, certain acts or tendencies might be regarded as evil in one culture or one context, but not so in another culture or context.

1.1.8 MODERN CONCEPTIONS OF EVIL. THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHIATRY & NEUROSCIENCE

During the last century the ways of defining and understanding evil have been left less in the hands of theologians and philosophers; much more, in the hands of experts in psychology and psychiatry, including those in the field of neuroscience. There has been increasing recognition that evil is a purely human phenomenon, and that the place to look for its site and origins is not in the heavens but in the human brain. Even the question 'what is evil?' is recognized as an erroneous question, since it presupposes there is some ineffable substance that corresponds to the substantive [i.e., the noun] 'evil,' or that there is some one-size-fits-

all definition that is universally acceptable. Instead, a more meaningful approach is to adopt the standard proposed by the Austrian philosopher Wittgenstein [1889–1951], who took the position that *the meaning of a word is its usage* [42]. Viewed in this light, we look to the way in which people in ordinary life, as well as the ways in which journalists and others in the media, employ this term. It turns out that we reserve the word ‘evil’ in everyday life for actions that evoke the emotion of horror: acts that are breathtakingly horrible because of the intense suffering to which the victims are subjected, the outrageousness of the acts, their heinousness or depravity – especially if the acts were prompted by scheming (malice aforethought) of a ‘diabolical’ nature (implying the intention to hurt in a particularly cruel and sadistic manner). Thus, a man who kidnaps a child, whom he then violates sexually, and afterwards strangles and dismembers – is readily identified as having committed an *evil* act. And if he has committed a string of such acts over time, with every intention of repeating such behavior if given the opportunity – people will often apply the word *evil* to the man himself: he is an *evil person*. Perhaps the only philosopher to draw attention to this way of thinking about evil: as that which is breathtakingly awful – is Susan Neiman [30].

Persons who are apprehended by the authorities for having committed acts of these kinds will usually be incarcerated in prisons or, if mental illness had been a key factor in the commission of the act, will be mandated to a forensic hospital for observation and treatment. In either situation, a forensic psychiatrist may be summoned to evaluate the offender – as to whether he or she is mentally ill, or is instead in the grips of a personality disorder, such as antisocial or psychopathic personality. It is uncommon for people to use the word *evil* in reference to crimes (such as financial swindles) that do not involve violence or intense psychological harm (as by extreme humiliation, subjugation, or unlawful imprisonment). Furthermore, one seldom refers to a *person* as evil (in contrast to particular acts of violence), unless the person has engaged habitually and for an extended period of time in acts of unusual cruelty. Many men committing serial sexual homicide, and some repeat-rapists, fall into this category, especially where there is an element of torture of the victim(s). Descriptions of such persons can be found in numerous books and articles by forensic psychiatrists and psychologists [43–46]. Buss, writing from the perspective of evolutionary psychiatry, focuses on those brain mechanisms that subserve aggression and defense against threats to one’s survival: mechanisms that under certain circumstances can operate in a grossly exaggerated manner – leading to extreme acts of violence of the sort to which the public will apply the label ‘evil.’ Egger, Stone, and Ward et al. enumerate the background factors in men committing serial sexual homicide, some of whom subject their victims to prolonged periods of torture, earning thereby the label of ‘evil person.’ The background factors conducing to violence in general: genetic predisposition to psychopathy, parental neglect or cruelty, hormonal factors, head injury with unconsciousness, drug abuse, etc. – have been discussed in detail by Debra Niehoff [47]. In an outstanding book written by a survivor of an attempted murder by an axe-wielding psychopath, Terri Jentz [48] defined as an act of evil: ‘when an act ruptures all categories of comprehension’ (p. 516), elsewhere describing her ‘belief in the existence of utter evil as a modern revision of Manicheanism,’ based on her study of gratuitous cruelty in the twentieth century (p. 512). Even more poignantly is her comment about her would-be assassin, whose sadism was in no way confined just to her and her friend (who was blinded by this axe wielder): ‘I was astonished at the many searing memories this one man had ignited in so many people. . . *Was this evil’s strategy, to perform breathtakingly brutal acts that so shocked the nervous system and*

overwhelmed the brain that these traumatic events were not integrated into consciousness, but left disturbing, damaged mosaics of unassimilated memories?” (p. 509).

The inadvertent spokesman for the general public and its use of the word, Jentz has left us with as accurate a depiction of *evil* as we are likely to find in the lay literature. In the psychiatric literature the term *evil* occurs very seldom. Freud, when writing of his celebrated case, the *Wolf Man* [49], mentions the patient’s dissatisfaction with God, leading to his own strange theodicy, according to which: ‘*If He were almighty, then it was His fault that men were evil, wicked and [that they] tormented others. . . He ought to have made them good; He was responsible for all the wickedness*’ (p. 62). In his *Introductory Lectures* [50] Freud speaks of our dream-life – in which *the Ego, freed from all ethical bonds, finds itself at one with all the demands of sexual desire, even those which have been condemned by our ethical upbringing; lusts we think of as remote from human nature show themselves. . . . These censored wishes appear to rise up out of a positive Hell*’ (p. 142).

À propos Freud, the interconnections between religious thought and the development of his psychoanalytic theories are discernible, albeit subtle and complex. Among his ancestors were rabbis and Hasids, but his father, Jakob, broke away from the stricter practices and traditions of his forebears, while retaining great pride in his Jewish heritage and his familiarity with Yiddish and Hebrew. Sigmund grew up still less familiar with Jewish observance, though retaining throughout his life a ‘Judaism without religion’ ([51], p. 6). Toward the end of his life, Freud wrote his controversial *Moses and Monotheism* – which angered both observant Jews and Christians (as Spinoza had managed to do, years before, with his equation of God with Nature). Freud likened Moses to the first Messiah, and saw Christ as reborn as a resurrected Moses – transfigured as the Son in the place of his Father ([52], p. 114). Freud’s biographer, Peter Gay, tells us that Freud spoke with his friend, Lou Andreas Salomé in 1935, mentioning that ‘The figure of Moses . . . had haunted him all his life,’ adding that Freud had compared Jung to Joshua – ‘who would take possession of the promised land of psychiatry while he, Freud, the Moses, was destined to glimpse it only from afar’ ([52], p. 605). So far we have commented on Freud’s complex relationship to his Jewish origins. But the impact of his religious background upon his practice of psychiatry is less readily detectable. There is some fairly compelling evidence for a more direct influence, however, in two related areas. Two of the ‘pillars’ of psychoanalysis are *free association* and *dream analysis*, both crystallizing in Freud’s mind in the 1890s. David Bakan [53] makes the case that Freud’s exposure to the Hasidic and Kabbalistic background of his grandparents’ generation set the stage for his discovering the value of ‘free association’ as a method of gaining access to deeper layers of reality. Freud may well have been aware, for example, of his thirteenth-century coreligionist – the Spanish-Jewish mystic philosopher from Saragossa: Abraham Abulafia. As part of his method of achieving a trance-like state in which he felt in closer touch with God, by *unsealing the soul and untying the knots which bind it* (Bakan, p. 76) was through the practice of *k’fitsah* [קִפְצָה] – which meant jumping or skipping from one thought to another, till he was able to escape the quotidian, and reach ever more lofty and spiritual levels. Abulafia induced this state in himself in the quest of a religious goal. Freud appears to have transformed this method in the quest of a psychiatric goal; namely, that of gaining access to hidden layers in the psyche of his patients, with the ultimate goal of liberating them from their neurotic conflicts. The second pillar – dream analysis – represents an interest of long-standing in Jewish tradition, as noted in the Old Testament story of Joseph (Genesis 41: 1–37), and in the *Moreh Nevuchim* (Guide to the Perplexed) of Maimonides. But dream-interpretation before Freud tended, with a few

exceptions, to stereotyped and sterile; the results, unconvincing. Dream dictionaries were popular, in which common dream elements were said to have certain specific meanings. Aside from the genius of the poet, Pushkin, who gave his heroine, Tatyana, a dream which had the effect of warning her against marrying the 'gloomy and dangerous crank,' Evgeny Onegin (a full 60 years before Freud's *Traumdeutung/The Interpretation of Dreams*) – there was almost nothing in the earlier dream literature that hit upon the *psychological* meaning of the dream, unique to each dreamer. It was Freud's genius that paved the way to unlock these highly individual meanings – via his patients' own free associations to their dreams. Granted there are culturally determined, rather common symbols: bottles are often female genitals; snakes are often penises – *but not always*. In the dreams of one of my analytic patients from many years ago snakes kept cropping up. From her associations it became clear the snakes did not represent her boyfriend's organ; instead, they led her to think about his sister – an intrusive and highly critical woman who kept trying to interfere in their relationship. None of the old dream-dictionaries would have led one to this conclusion.

The relationship of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) to religion was quite different from that of his erstwhile mentor, Freud. Jung's father was a Swiss pastor; Jung himself throughout his life was preoccupied with mystical themes, astrology, and spiritism (the latter prompted by the spiritistic trances he witnessed in his 15-year-old maternal cousin, Helene, when he was a young man). During his youth, Jung once saw an eighteenth-century carriage, and imagined that he had a memory of it in a previous life ([54], p. 664). During the period of the Great War, Jung became intrigued with Gnosticism, not only for its emphasis on knowing, but on its interest in the problem of evil ([54], p. 719). Equally interested in dreams as Freud was, Jung, once he became a psychiatrist, developed a different technique. He took to writing his dreams down, then telling himself stories stimulated by the dream images, and encouraging fantasies to arise in his mind, as an outgrowth of these mental pictures. Next, Jung would draw the resulting images on paper. He began this practice in 1913. It was out of these exercises that his theory of *archetypes* emerged. He believed that there existed a set of universal, primordial images – the archetypes – embedded in the unconscious of every person. Various coincidences convinced Jung of this proposition, such as the similarity of a hallucination (of a phallus suspended from the sun, that produced the wind) mentioned to him by a schizophrenic patient – to an early Greek text that spoke of a tube hanging from the sun that set the winds in motion ([54], p. 705). These impressions led Jung to speak of a 'collective unconscious.' He later used the terms *collective subconscious* and then the *objective psyche*, by which he referred to what he believed was a reservoir of the experiences of human beings as a species – by virtue of its being common to everyone. Practitioners in contemporary psychoanalysis and psychiatry, apart from those who are adherents to Jung's psychology, do not accept the notion of a collective unconscious. There is another concept that Jung developed that relates to the subject of evil. The set of personal characteristics that a person wishes to conceal from others, even from himself, Jung called the 'shadow.' Jung further postulated that the more someone tried to keep this shadow hidden, the more the shadow becomes active, predisposing to evil actions. Further, Jung imagined that the shadow could, especially under the influence of alcohol or other mind-altering agents, become the predominant force in the individual, leading to hitherto unsuspected levels of evil. Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 classic, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, may be understood as a parallel in novel-form to Jung's shadow. Consistent with Jung's beliefs in archetypes, collective unconscious, shadows, and the like – is his religious faith. Toward the end of his life, in a 1955 interview with a journalist, Jung stated that 'God is

the voice of conscience speaking within us,' adding that he had an 'unshakable conviction of the existence of God. . . I do not take His existence on belief – I know that He exists' ([54], p. 726). It is easy to see why Freud and Jung eventually parted ways, given that the religion-based views of Jung, expressed rather in poetic than in scientific language, were quite alien to Freud, who retained his biological foundation and his antipathy to organized religion to the end, even while pursuing similar psychoanalytic pathways as did his younger counterpart. Jung's psychology, in this respect, offers analogies to whatever it is in us that leads to evil action, but does not have the kind of explanatory value that would give it purchase in the field of science, including in the domain of forensic psychiatry.

What contemporary psychiatry can now provide by way of explaining the phenomenon of evil, as defined in popular usage – is the following: (a) commonalities can be discovered when one looks at a large number of detailed case histories of persons whose acts have been described as 'evil,' (b) study of the brain, via functional magnetic resonance imaging and other techniques, can reveal differences in the brains of such persons, when compared with the brains of ordinary persons. I refer here only to evil acts committed in peacetime, since it is well known that in wartime many ordinary men suddenly find themselves capable of cruelties which would be most foreign to their lives before and after their participation in warfare.

As for the commonalities among persons with a penchant for committing evil acts, there are two in particular that stand out. One group consists of serial killers intent upon torturing their victims. From a diagnostic standpoint these persons (the vast majority of whom will be men) exemplify the confluence of psychopathy and sadistic personality. The main personality *traits* of the psychopath, as defined by Robert Hare and his colleagues [55] are glib speech (insincerity), grandiosity, lying, manipulateness, callousness, lack of empathy and remorse, and inability to take responsibility for one's actions. The main traits of sadistic personality as outlined in DSM-III-R [56] consist in the enjoyment of another's suffering, humiliation, and subjugation of others [57]. Another group consists of persons, outside the domain of serial homicide, who scheme ('with malice aforethought') to subject another to extreme pain and/or death – as witnessed in the cases of certain men who stage the death of their wives in order to make their deaths appear accidental, or who make plans to hide their bodies in hopes of rendering their death an uncertainty (as in the case of Scott Peterson, who killed his pregnant wife and threw her body into the ocean [58]).

Neuroscientists do not use the word *evil* in their reports, but considerable research has recently been carried out on brain activity in persons whose violent crimes have inspired the word *evil* in everyday discourse. Much of this research has been summarized in the book about psychopathy of James Blair and his colleagues [59]. One common underlying factor concerns brain-differences in psychopaths that diminish their capacity for empathy; specifically, for feeling compassion for the suffering of others. Absent this capacity, the possibility of inflicting torturous suffering on others becomes greatly enhanced. This is reflected in the commission of acts that the public experiences as 'evil.' Specific regions of the brain that communicate with one another in determining what behaviors emerge in response to particular urges or stresses have been outlined by Kalivas and Volkow [60] in their paper on pathways relevant to addiction. Their model is pertinent as well to other maladaptive behaviors, including those related to violent crime. The key regions in this schema involve a memory system, subserved by the amygdala, in touch with prior experiences (including those of harm done to the individual by early caretakers). This region communicates with another – the dopamine-dependent nucleus accumbens – that

weighs the salience (degree of desirability) of various behavioral options. Both these regions are important parts of what is often called the ‘bottom-up’ brain mechanisms, and concern our basic drives [61]. Final decisions regarding action (that is, what we actually end up doing in any given situation) are the function of the ‘top-down’ mechanisms. A control-mechanism mediated by the anterior cingulate gyrus exerts either a weak or a strong control upon the various options being considered. Finally the orbitofrontal cortex, integrating all this information, either allows the most favored option to go forward into actual behavior – or decides against it, thwarting the behavior. A man struggling with the temptation to kidnap and rape a child (which would end up as an evil act, if consummated) may think of how that child might feel, or might think about the consequences of getting caught and arrested – and then decide against this ‘desired’ behavior. Or his desire may be so strong as to override the ‘braking’ mechanisms; his impulse-control may be so weak as to fail to inhibit the behavior. In these scenarios, the crime (the ‘evil’ act) will occur.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, judgments about which acts are considered evil are made more easily in peacetime – by individuals and by the public – than is the case in situations of group conflict (as in riots or between gangs) or of full-scale war. The witness of inter-group strife, so characteristic of our species, reminds us of our origins as *members of small tribes* numbering perhaps 100 or 150 persons. Our brains have evolved over the approximately four million years since we split off from bonobos and chimpanzees to become hominids, gradually emerging as what Carl Zimmer has cleverly called (because we can talk and read) the *gossiping ape* [62]. To meet the multitudinous threats to survival in our early days, our brains became ‘wired’ for group affiliation and for aggressive defense against those who would harm us—whether the predators were saber-tooth tigers or (more commonly) other people. Religion sprung up in every human society, presumably answering to vital needs and impulses peculiar to a distinctly *social* species such as our own. We cannot do without each other, and (all too often) we cannot get along with one another – especially when goods necessary to survival are scarce and when the conditions that make life secure and comfortable are seriously compromised. During times of adversity religion can play contrary roles: religion unifies and strengthens the bonds among members of a religious group, offering hope, and emboldening group action that fosters survival. But therein lay the rub. For at such times, religion may be used by one group to rally forces against a competing group, fomenting a war that is justified (in the eyes of the adherents of the warring group) against those who do not believe in the ‘true God’ of the group that has taken up arms. This conceit – that God stands behind only *our* group – helps explain the paradoxical situation in which the monotheistic Abrahamic religions, quickly separate into tribes (albeit large ones) in times of trouble. The followers of Jehovah, Christ, and Allah are suddenly at each other’s throats. This phenomenon becomes particularly acute during times of drastic change or drastic shortage. If the crisis is local, we see the emergence of religious cults, some of which are led by fanatics of remarkable cruelty. The Reverend Jim Jones in Guyana, David Koresh in Waco, Texas, and Jeff Lundgren, the breakaway Mormon leader in Kirtland, Ohio are examples. If the crisis involves whole nations or religious memberships, we see the emergence of religious armies, with a charismatic leader at the helm, poised to conquer another group or nation. If the army is strong, there will be war; if it is too weak to conquer outright, there will be terrorism. The red thread running through all these religion-inspired actions is *fundamentalism*. Two chief characteristics of such fundamentalism, as mentioned by Vamik Volkan in a recent address on psychoanalysis and religion [63], are a list of unchangeable doctrines adhered to by the believers, and their

opposition to non-believers or to 'lukewarm' believers. By no means is fundamentalism regularly associated with violence. But under particular circumstances a group of believers may be energized by a charismatic and hate-filled leader, such that religious fundamentalism becomes the force by which violence is unleashed. Kernberg [64] made the point, in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, that the internal tensions of the jihadists (bemoaning the decline of Islam since the defeat in 1683 at the gates of Vienna, and the relative impoverishment in Dar al-Islam (the countries where Islam is the dominant religion) compared with the Western industrialist countries – are now displaced toward the outside, toward, that is, the 'infidel' West. Volkan has striven to create a bridge between the psychology of the individual, as emphasized in traditional psychoanalysis, and the psychology of the group – stressing how children are raised as fledgling members of a social group – with which they strongly identify, at the same time they develop, during the same formative years, a sense of personal identity. The admonitions and information imparted to children in their first half dozen years, creating both the individual and the group identities, become 'hard-wired' into brain circuitry, fostering automatic, unconscious responses. In certain groups, these responses may include such convictions as *we the faithful of religion X are better than you people of religion Y and we are thus, through God's favor, more deserving of the good things of the world than you. . .* Like all thought-habits of long standing, these automatic responses are not easily overturned. The topic of religious fundamentalism and its psychology has been previously explored by René Girard [65] and summarized recently in the admirable article by Lord Alderdice of Northern Ireland [66]. Alderdice makes the point that the jihadist terrorists that figure so prominently in the current geopolitical scene are heavily indoctrinated, but are not mentally ill. The fundamentalist environment in which they were enveloped was one that predisposed to violent solutions. Many were educated in madrassas, memorizing the Qur'an, with its many references to the infidel and to the dire fate that awaited them (as in the long passage in Sura 5: 35–66). Saturated in a Good/Believer versus Evil/Infidel atmosphere, the step toward violence, when under the influence of a paranoid leader during socially disruptive times – is not a long one. One may note in contrast that in the Old Testament 'infidel' does not occur; the word is used in the New Testament just twice (2 Corinthians 6:15, and 1 Timothy 5:8). In neither reference is the (Christian) believer abjured to harm or to kill the infidel; merely to avoid association with the infidel.

Psychiatry, as it turns out, has much of value in helping us to understand the mind-set of fundamentalists, as well as of those who become terrorists. But psychiatrists at the vanguard in this arena, such as Jerrold Post [67], Vamik Volkan, Otto Kernberg, John Alderdice, and also the historian-philosopher, René Girard, convey their excellent points to like-minded audiences; in effect, they preach to the converted. The fundamentalists, and the terrorists among them, do not listen. The most militant and disaffected among them continue to regard those who disagree with them as infidels and evil-doers. We are then apt to see a perversion of religion: religious leaders sanction actions that, ironically, the rest of the world regard as evil. Examples are legion: the Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland bombing each other's houses, the Sunnis and the Shiites in Iraq bombing each other's mosques, Hindus and Moslems in India destroying each other's holy places, the jihadists bombing the Twin Towers and cafes in Tel-Aviv, or slitting the throat of journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi (February 1st, 2002) – because he was a Jew. The date is of interest to me: I was in Karachi 20 years earlier to the day, living as a Jewish psychiatrist in the home of Moslem psychiatrist colleagues, lecturing on my topic of 'borderline personality,'

and attending many Moslem weddings. It was a different time. When religion is hijacked and made into a pretext for war and atrocities, we may, as psychiatrists, correctly diagnose that calamity as a sign that a large group of people has come to feel humiliated, disenfranchised, dealt out of the chance to have the good things of life: dignity, adequate food, satisfactory work, the pursuit of happiness. Military action may be necessary as an unfortunate first step. Ultimately the excesses of fundamentalism, and the terrorism it may spawn, can be corrected only politically: by helping in whatever way possible to improve the lives of the group whose cause was spearheaded (literally) in the first place by the fundamentalists and their terrorist cohorts. In this great task, psychiatry can play only an advisory role, helping to educate political leaders as to what the social 'disease' had been, and what might be its most likely cure. Equally important as an antidote to religious fundamentalism, when it has gotten out of hand, is the voice of the 'lukewarm' believers, the moderates, who show, instead of paranoid hatred and fanaticism, tolerance and the warm acceptance of others. More such voices are beginning to be heard. An outstanding example is that of the Moslem writer, Irshad Manji. She has shown the courage to criticize the jihadists within Islam in her widely read *The Trouble with Islam Today* [68]. And Salman Rushdie has outlived the fatwa leveled against him by Ayatollah Khomeini. I was privileged to hear Rushdie address a large audience two years ago, where he could speak freely, and where it was not even necessary for the public to pass through metal detectors. There is hope.

In summary, religion and philosophy no longer have a meaningful role in explaining the *causes* of evil, though they of course retain an important role in setting forth the guidelines for appropriate moral values and acceptable behaviors. For clues concerning causation, we must turn instead to psychiatry, psychology, and neuroscience. Age-old conundrums as to whether humans are inherently good or inherently evil fall by the wayside, as we become aware that our genetic givens and our brains are equipped with the mechanisms for *both* altruistic/cooperative interactions – and for narcissistic or aggressive interactions. This position was already championed long ago by the Moslem empiricist historian of culture – ibn Khaldun [1332–1406]. Unhappy with the abstract and metaphysical arguments of theologians and philosophers, ibn Khaldun relied on what he could actually observe in societies. He recognized that 'evil qualities' existed in man – such as injustice and aggression, which were 'natural' to human beings, yet compassion and affection were also part of our human nature – in such measure that we were more inclined to the good than to the bad [69, 70]. Which behaviors are favored, as we now realize, are dependent upon a host of factors: heredity, constitution, gender, early rearing, culture, brain damage, involvement with drugs that lower impulse-control, etc. When aggressive actions pass a certain socially-acknowledged boundary-line and pass into the grotesque and the heinous, we have entered the realm of evil. As one of their functions, religion and philosophy *deplore* such actions. To *understand* evil actions – is the domain of sciences that explore the workings of the human brain.

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