

Religion and Critical Psychology

The ethics of not-knowing in the
knowledge economy

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Introduction

The politics of religious experience

Many people make believe what they experience. Few are made to believe by their experience.

R.D. Laing [1967] (1984) *The Politics of Experience*,
Penguin, p. 118

In the age of the 'knowledge economy' (Drucker [1968] 1969),¹ experience has been returned to its central paradox of knowing between the inner and outer worlds. It has been drawn out of the safe territory of modern interiority into the perplexing world of late modern social uncertainty. It is for this reason that the idea of experience requires constant re-evaluation, because the context and ground of its articulation marks out the complex relation between knowledge, truth and power in each different social, political and historical situation. The framing of experience, both in its theoretical use and its practice in everyday language, provides the mechanisms for both empowerment and disenfranchisement. Indeed, the semantic territory of experience and its philosophical analysis is contested precisely because it offers the possibility of facilitating and restricting individual and social action and related forms of knowledge.

To understand the discourse of experience is to understand something of the very quality of human consciousness and its embodied and lived realities in the social and political world. What makes this idea even more fascinating is that its very epistemological ambiguity opens up the politics of knowledge itself. Reading experience is reading the self, society and environment inside the very categories we have constructed to know the world. Experience, as has been well documented, is therefore never isolated from the theoretical models we have for the experience. Experience thus becomes the process of the ongoing imagining and re-imagining of ourselves and the world. Even the very theoretical articulations or pronouncements about experience carry a qualitative judgement about the conditions of experience; such that

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discourses about experience are themselves involved in the political mapping of experience. How discourses of sensory data, embodied codes, institutions, culture and language are modelled in the discourse of experience contributes to the will-to-power of experience.

More importantly, the theoretical dependency of experience means that it is the so-called experts in theory that seek to offer claims for the truth about experience. It also means that social groups appeal to the primacy of experience as a device to convince people about who they are and the nature of the world they live within. At the same time the contemporary shifting discourses about experience move in and out of the strained language of modernity and the even more thwart language of post-modern relativism. This predicament of experience means that Martin Jay ends his history, or archaeology of experience, with an invitation to join the interactive journey of making experience rather than making a claim to have captured experience (Jay 2005: 409). Jay's appeal to Blake's poetic imagining of the 'songs of experience', which frames his work and creates the title of his book, reflects his intellectual sensitivity to the academic limits of 'knowing' experience in its cognitive, linguistic, embodied and social formation.

Martin Jay's (2005) work on the concept of experience in American and European culture recognises that it is difficult to eradicate experience because, following Joan Scott's insight, he realises that it is 'so much part of everyday language, so imbricated in our narratives that it seems futile to argue for its expulsion' (Scott quoted in Jay 2005: 4). Instead, Jay focused his work on the different 'modalities' of experience, linking experience and language and holding 'the productive quality of discourse' (Scott in Jay 2005: 6). Experience for Jay becomes the 'nodal point' of 'public language and private subjectivity', the space between 'expressible commonalities and the ineffability of the individual interiority', even as this carries a certain Jamesian psychologism (Jay 2005: 6-7). The constant basis of 'otherness', as Jay indicates, within experience and the constant transformation of consciousness means that he and others are led into a hall of mirrors and distorting points of reflection. However, Jay does attempt to navigate the subject-object dialectic by showing how experience functions in religious, aesthetic, political and historical discourses and in so doing he creatively appreciates the 'volatility' of the concept.

Unfortunately, in Jay's admirably democratic attempt, as cultural historian, to avoid the 'claim to exclusive ownership of an experience' and the 'stigma of conservative essentialism', there is something of an ethical impasse that the 'struggle' to live certain lives requires. Even as we need to create space for the conversation of experience we also need to make some ethical judgement

in our will-to-experience. Making choices about the experiences and the social orders we wish to construct for those experiences requires some assessment of the disciplines we use to evaluate the category of experience itself – not least the disciplines of economics, psychology and religion, which we can loosely capture under the human sciences. These discourses impinge on the making of experience, and the meta-representational thinking *about* the making of experience, through the institutional validations of our material order and the practices of everyday living. While not all experience is institutional, the discourses of psychology, economics and religion are all grounded in institutional practice and these social orders interface with innate predispositions to determine the articulations of embodied life.

As the sociologist Georg Simmel (1908a: 37) rightly identified, the problems of the category of experience relate to the binary problem of the individual and the social, which will become the central theoretical concern of this book and the platform for understanding the ethical ground of knowledge. Experience is a mediating category between interiority and exteriority and one that is framed by the fluctuations of time. It allows one to validate events and it marks out both autonomy and dependency. This place between individual and social reality, and between autonomy and dependency, locates experience inside the ethics of knowledge, because the very fluidity of its mediation means that the point of closure or openness draws a boundary of operation and encloses the known against the unknown. Experience is located at this ethical point between knowing and not-knowing. It is here that the forms and ways of knowing determine the utterance of experience. The individual-social binary thus becomes the dividing line of knowledge and experience; it constitutes one of the central ethical fields of knowledge that in turn makes experience.

The important idea within Simmel's analysis is that the individual-social is never closed, but rather becomes a dynamic 'relation', 'an interactionally determined pattern of development among forms of association' (Simmel 1908b: 252).² There is always an inverse relationship between the two variables:

[T]here is, as it were, an unalterable ratio between individual and social factors that changes only in form. The narrower the circle to which we commit ourselves, the less freedom of individuality we possess; however, this narrower circle is itself something individual, and it cuts itself off sharply from all other circles precisely because it is small. Correspondingly, if the circle in which we are active and in which our interest hold sway enlarges, there is more room in it for the development

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of our individuality; but *as parts of this whole*, we have less uniqueness: the larger whole is less individual as a social group ... Expressed in a very terse schema, the elements of a distinctive social circle are undifferentiated, and the elements of a circle that is not distinctive are differentiated.

(Simmel 1908b: 257)

Simmel reveals the difficult politic of freedom in experience in so far as the conversations about experience are becoming fewer and fewer as the theoretical models for thinking about experience become ever more restricted. If experience and the beliefs sustaining experiencing are held within ever fewer institutions then the public space for articulating alternative experiences becomes restricted; something that becomes even more pertinent when the economic institutions increasingly dictate our experience. Experience and thinking about experience constantly evolve, but the direction and the shaping of experience requires scrutiny.

The problem is that the options to think and imagine experience become limited when social and political systems and their corresponding institutional structures reduce the forms of knowledge. The question of experience thus also becomes an ethical question of the types of discourse that are available for experience and the existing institutions that sustain such discourses. Resistance is possible in an oppressive world precisely because of the plurality of discourses that are available for making and unmaking experience inside each specific historical struggle, but this requires a continuation of the plurality of discourses and institutions for corrective encounters. This diversity of associations and interest was important for the economist Friedrich Hayek (1944, 1945) in the overcoming of totalitarian systems through the market, but his own solution now returns us to the same problem in the new conditions of restriction in the neo-liberal economic hegemony. The ethical task before us is always to ascertain the forces of absolute knowledge, especially when so-called freedom unwittingly reduces the institutional orders that can provide alternative discourses.

Politics, the locus of experience and late modernity

In the light of the complex politic of experience and the discourses about experience, writing a book about a particular *type* of experience and the *disciplinary* modelling of experience raises all sorts of problems, especially when we locate these discussions inside the problems of late modern society. It returns us to the celebrations and suspicions of experience Jay (2005) has

so carefully documented. Experience is problematized in the present age – and creates a new intellectual enigma – because of the instability between the individual and social worlds. There is a volatility and paradoxical reversal between inner and outer and public and private, as the locus of self is both limited to the body and simultaneously understood through the external enactment of the body on the public screen; resulting in a disembodied-embodiment. Experience is multiple, without constancy and without certainty, it is entirely self-determined and entirely other-determined. It has become the impossible because the orders of the knowledge economy require competition not coherence. To consider the constant re-inventing of experience in a technological and globalized world opens up the question of the impossibility of experience in a so-called post-modern reality. As the cultural theorist Terry Eagleton remarked, in an article concerned about academic practice and reflection in the contemporary university:

According to one modernist theory, the problem was not having experiences but communicating them ... For a postmodern culture, the situation is the exact reverse. Now it is communication that is easy and experience that is difficult. Instead of experiencing the world, we now experience the experience of it.

(Eagleton 2006: 18)

Eagleton's comment pertains to the political problem of experience and Eagleton's own debate with E.P. Thompson, which Jay (2005: 190ff) identified in British Marxism. It raises the question of how experience is related to the ideological superstructure and the 'romantic' appeals in Leftist literature, including the works of R.D. Laing (noted at the beginning of this chapter), to an empirical experience – in the tradition of Hume – to escape the modern political order (see Jay 2005: 172, 200). However, Eagleton's recent comments also register the problem of how to understand such discourses of experience in a technological world of mediated experience and how academic thinking about experience may itself be implicated in the process. The very simulation of experience and the alteration of time and space in the 'network society' (Castells 1999) prevent the possibility of certain types of 'reflective' experience; or at the very least the conditions of human reflection about experience are changing as the locus of experience is dispersed. Good 'old time' reflective experience may be a privilege not of the capitalist bourgeois, but rather of those outside of the capitalist driven technological world. Experience and the ability to think about experience become problematic when individuals are faced with 'the unprecedented

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expansion of theoretical and practical perspectives' (Simmel 1957: 217). We are so overwhelmed by the multiple systems of knowledge for making experience that experience becomes indecipherable. Giorgio Agamben ([1978] 1993: 13–14) expresses such a predicament poignantly when he writes:

The question of experience can be approached nowadays only with an acknowledgement that it is no longer accessible to us ... For modern man's average day contains virtually nothing that can still be translated into experience ... Modern man makes his way home in the evening wearied by a jumble of events, but harrowing or pleasurable as they are, none of them will have become experience ... It is this non-translatability into experience that now makes everyday existence intolerable – as never before – rather than an alleged poor quality of life or its meaninglessness compared with the past (on the contrary, perhaps, everyday existence has never been so replete with meaningful events).

Attempts to clear experience and thought – romantically or not – from the debris of modernity may be becoming increasingly impossible because we lose the ability to think about experience without the conviction and passion of a community of experience. In such an atmosphere the ability to think is no longer, as Sartre (1948) believed, a 'privilege', but rather a professionally strained economic repackaging of nineteenth century disciplinary formations for the service of the new skills-based economy, where knowledge becomes *techné* (Drucker 1993: 24; Mokyry 2002: 4).³ The very possibility of individuals being linked together by experience is undermined by the refusal to see the present economic orders of truth as themselves implicated in the making and unmaking of experience. We face a complex situation where the strategy of ordering experience and the knowledge of experience is hidden in the sheer force of dis-integrating experience in the market. Knowledge as *techné* removes the capacity for critique of knowledge, because knowledge is applied to the known rationality of economy rather than to the unknown rationality of values.

The future of experience will be determined by the theories and beliefs we hold and our ability to unmask the hidden values of knowledge about experience. As we have seen, the question of experience becomes a question of what types of discourse we wish to sustain and support for our narratives of experience. It becomes a question of the institutions and discourses that support such ways of living in the world. The resulting cacophony of circulating discourses of modernity increases the individual need for 'a fixed

and unambiguous point of reference' (Simmel 1957: 223), which can only be established by drawing back knowledge to the philosophical ground of how we imagine what it is to be human and interrogating the discourses and institutions that inform such an imagination. However, the common error, as Jerrold Seigel (2005: 43) argues, in a challenge to Charles Taylor's (1989) history of the self, is to think that, because the individual stabilizes the experience of the self, it is *only* the self that is making such experience, rather than the languages and institutions in which that person is embedded. The politic of experience and the self returns us again to the moral register of the individual-social binary problem and the values that unify this dynamic relation. Only at this point can we discover the will-to-power of our experience and the ethical force that draws the line in the shifting sands of change.

Critique and religious experience

The theoretical tension in the discussion so far rests on the interaction of three orientating concepts, *experience*, *knowledge* and *institutions* and the way they are read ethically in relation to each other and across the 'artificial unities' of the individual and the social (Beer 2002: 102). The weight of this problem is at the heart of James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), where experience mediates a certain arrangement of knowledge and operates upon a strategic omission of the institutional. The binary politic, however, unravels at the very point of the negotiated arrangement of knowledge in the inverse relation of the two variables, such that when James seeks to ignore the social-institutional it returns in the operations of the institutional religious language used to mark out the experience of the individual. The inverse relation is also seen at the point at which the emerging institutional apparatus of psychological knowledge employs individualism as a defining method. This can be seen in James' 'arbitrary' classificatory schema of religion, organised as it is around *individual* religion (James 1902: 50). While James recognises there is 'no one essence' to religion, he is unable to theorise the knowledge and institutions that allow him to make his own 'religious object' and the implicit values he asserts in the making of such psychological-religious objects (James 1902: 46–7). Late modern scholars have usefully picked up many of these problems surrounding James's text in a wider critical analysis of religious experience, but the critical approach avoids sufficient analysis of the psychological.

The specific analysis of religious experience since the 1980s, for example, embraces important lines of critical and cultural theory, in relation to

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the respective waves of philosophical critique, from Wittgenstein's work on language to post-structuralist and post-colonial inspired readings of Foucault. In these debates, 'religious experience' has been explored as rhetorical and ideological (Proudfoot 1985; Jantzen 1989; Sharf 1998; King 1999; Fitzgerald 2000; McCutcheon 2003) in accordance with the politic of representation between theological and 'secular' scholarly allegiance.⁴ However, while James's own philosophical concerns with the category of 'religion' and 'religious' experience have been brought under greater critical scrutiny,⁵ the supporting discourse of the psychological 'science' of religion remains seriously insulated from such critical reflection at the point of inter-disciplinary engagement.⁶ One of the reasons for this hesitation is that the wider traditions of the subject of religion are caught in the modernist politic of distinguishing a 'science of religion' from the assertions of theology, rather than developing a critique of the contributing disciplinary knowledge. There is an odd collusion of knowledge to achieve a certain political objective. This means there is yet to be full appreciation of the related inter-disciplinary politics and the supporting institutional apparatus of psychological knowledge, especially in its contribution to the making and unmaking of the religious object and religious experience.⁷

While all modern disciplines of knowledge have faced independent critical analysis of their objects and discourses in the post-1968 reconfiguration of knowledge, the psychological subject is preserved at the point of its inter-disciplinary differentiation. This is not simply a question of whether psychological knowledge is reductive of religion (a well-rehearsed debate), but rather what order of political knowledge is sustained in the appeals to the discourse by scholars of the 'science' of religion and psychologists. The modern discipline of psychology that informs the study of religion is thus implicated in the political shaping of 'religious experience' *and* the critique of 'religious experience'. It is therefore necessary to establish a critique of the political structures of psychological knowledge in its encounter with religion in order to break the illusions of a value free knowledge.

Russel McCutcheon (2003: 261) rightly argues, from the 'discipline of religion', that 'future scholarship in our (sic) field will investigate *how it is that this particular socio-rhetoric makes selves (a.k.a., citizens) appropriate to the needs of those whose material interests dominate the modern, liberal-democratic nation-state*'.⁸ In the same wave of critical thinking, 'critical psychology' attempts to bring psychological knowledge to political account, but in the inter-disciplinary points of connection these critical values of knowledge are concealed and largely undeveloped; not least in an alliance of amnesia to preserve the imagined object of 'religion' and the imagined

neutral object of psychology. Ironically, the critique of the category of 'religion' is caught in the deployment of methods that preserve and make the category of 'religion' possible. The critical amnesia can be seen in McCutcheon's focus on the problem of 'religion' without drawing sufficient attention to the problem of the objects of the related fields of study. He, for example, assumes psychologists have the benefit of 'knowing precisely what constitutes their field' (McCutcheon 2001: 119).

I hope to show the psychological object is as unstable, and as obscure, as the religious object and that there is an important ideological link set up in the inter-disciplinary work, which is masked inside the politics of isolating subjects of knowledge. The making of 'selves' for 'nations' is also profoundly linked to the alliance of the 'religious' subject with the orders of psychological and economic knowledge. Future reading in the history of the discipline of religion will also, therefore, need to bring all the detailed suspicion of 'socio-rhetoric' and 'material interests' to the intersections of disciplines and the collusions with the human sciences – something this study attempts to do in relation to economics and psychology. The making and unmaking of the 'religious' object has been the historical practice of the 'sciences' of religion, but if the socio-political interests are to be seen clearly there needs also to be some understanding of the making and unmaking of the 'methods' of religion and their adoption of the material interests of the old industrial economy and the new knowledge economy of corporate culture. The act of stabilising the object of 'religion' is an inter-disciplinary exercise and the critique of 'religion' is the beginning of the critique of those forms of knowledge used in the critique of 'religion'.

In order to reveal its own investments in the knowledge economy, the psychological study of religion, as a key marker in the discourse of religious experience, has to be re-examined according to the new objects of knowledge; not with the aim of returning knowledge to pre-modern belief, but to place all knowledge inside the late modern context of the economy of knowledge – the present dominant regime that informs all subjects of knowing. If we assume that living institutions and communities always sustain discourses then it is always important to identify the related institutions and communities that require the discourse and the object of study, which must certainly be more complex than any one-dimensional reading of the social order. It is my contention that the discourse of psychology is caught in a specific ethical-political ordering of experience, knowledge and institutions along the axis of the individual-social divide, which reflects the values that make and unmake the religious object.

Proudfoot's hidden politic of experience

In order to anchor my position and identify more clearly the ground from which I write, I want to engage with Wayne Proudfoot's now classic study of 'religious experience' as a conversational partner in the debate. I wish to begin by engaging Proudfoot's position because his own strategic closures of discussion enables me to draw out more clearly my specific critical contribution and to show how a will-to-power of experience requires new forms of classification about not only religious experience but the disciplinary reading of such experience in the psychology of religion. I want to do this in order to show how the ethical-politics of knowledge implicates 'psychology' and 'religion' as overlapping sites of critique. Proudfoot's study is thus representative of an important intellectual watershed in the reading of religious experience, but I wish to show how it – along with subsequent studies of its nature – is a *modernist* 'placeholder' for the 'material interests' of the social-apparatus, established in and through its allegiance to psychological knowledge. I do *not* question its central insights, but rather note its theoretical restrictions and limits. What I wish to show is how psychological knowledge functions as a support inside the critique and reflects a hidden ideological value.

My concern is not to increase the value of religion against modernity (although that is often a strategic trope), but rather to show how the practices of modernity in the study of religion are implicated in the political closure of representations for understanding human beings. I thus take the critical project of religion seriously enough to be suspicious of the emperor's new clothes and push the critical platform to those old industrial and neo-liberally transformed supporting fields of the discipline of religion. I am seeking therefore to appreciate some of the central contributions made by Proudfoot, but recognise the need to push his thinking further into a new political concern with psychology. Because my wider ethical-political positioning of psychology and religion may appear too far-fetched at this stage in my argument, I will appeal to the shared ground of the philosophy of discourse to engage Proudfoot's work and only later will I show how psychology holds an ethical-political structure, not only in its encounter with the discourses of 'religion' but as a cultural practice.

Wayne Proudfoot's incisive 1985 study offers philosophical 'scrutiny', using insights from Wittgenstein's language games (Proudfoot 1985: 84, 90, 133, 171, 28–30, 209–10, 214), psychological theory and philosophy of mind, to explore the concept of religious experience in Schleiermacher, James and Otto. His central contribution is to question the appeals to religious

experience as the ground of belief by illustrating the ‘ambiguity’ within the term and its function within language. Proudfoot seeks to show how the ‘concepts, beliefs, grammatical rules, and practices’ (1985: 228) shape an understanding of an experience as religious. In his engagement with the theological piety of Schleiermacher he shows that experience is never prior to the concepts and beliefs, but rather formed by them through a hermeneutic of experience. Proudfoot shows that there is no ‘uninterpreted given’ in experience or some irreducible ground of experience. As he convincingly argues: ‘Religious beliefs and practices are interpretations of experience, and they are themselves fit objects of interpretation’ (1985: 41).

Following two lines of interpretation in the hermeneutical and pragmatic tradition, he correctly shows the different ‘interests’ (1985: 67) involved in interpretation. He thus marks out the difference between an ‘understanding of the description under which the experience is identified by the subject or in the culture in which it is embedded, and an attempt to arrive at the best explanation of the experience’ (1985: 71). The middle sections of the work explore the ideas of emotion and mysticism to show, following cognitive theory, that belief is ‘constitutive of the experience’ (1985: 154). Responding to questions of reductionism, Proudfoot usefully concludes by differentiating ‘descriptive’ (subjective explication) and ‘explanatory’ (theoretical) accounts of religious experience and also recognises the ‘explanatory commitment’ within the identification of experience as religious.

In the process of mapping out the respective types of claims about religious experience, Proudfoot is also able to show how the rhetoric of experience operates in religious discourse as ‘protective strategies’ for ‘apologetic purposes’ and to avoid contestation; such that Schleiermacher appeals to religious experience as if it constitutes a primary God-consciousness that cannot be questioned (it seeks to close the discussion through the rhetoric). This mapping out of the cognitive and strategic nature of thought holds fascinating links to the ‘rules of formation’ in Foucault’s archaeology, just as the links to Wittgenstein’s language games parallel with Foucault’s idea of the statement and discursive practice. However, the central difference between these two is located in the appreciation of language as discursive practice and language as ontological rules.⁹ This distinction reveals precisely the theoretical problem at stake in Proudfoot’s work. He limits his work to rhetorical analysis and only infers indirectly that discourse operates within institutional contexts and social struggles of power. For example, Proudfoot (1985: 232) is aware of the tensions between religious discourse and science:

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The concept of religion and the idea of religious experience were both shaped by the conflict between religion and the growth of scientific knowledge.

However, this conflict remains at a generalised level of concern as a backdrop to his unease with the use of religious experience in the writings of Schleiermacher and James. What never appears fully under his critical gaze is the ‘science’ within his own philosophical discussion and the strategic significance this holds for his own ‘protective strategy’. What is extraordinary is that the signifiers *religion* and *experience* come under extensive critical examination – and rightly so – but then the philosophical discourse solidifies other terms to stabilize this critique without comment (he rhetorically closes the debate with appeals to a secondary order discourse). In my view, the ‘most important ambiguity’ in ‘religious experience’ is not religion or experience as such, but the *apparatus of modernity* that makes such terms function, namely the discourse of psychology which carries such authority in Proudfoot’s work. We can thus see that *psychology* functions in the work, as in so much so-called ‘science-of-religion’ critical discussion, as a ‘placeholder’ of truth or authority. The reason for this authority is that the prevailing discourse of psychology has an institutional support (read economic and political validity) to displace the ‘placeholder’ of religious experience.

I am *not* seeking to re-instigate religion over science, but rather expose the hidden political and economic entanglement of those inter-disciplinary discourses operating in relation to the discourses of religion. Proudfoot, and other such critical thinkers, have done a good job problematizing the categories, but what I want to develop is a certain awareness of the critiques in order to show their own political operations in the theoretical leakages of modern knowledge. If the discourse of *religious experience* is formed in the conflict of science and religion, my contention is to show that the psychology of religion was formed in the historical shift within state-organisations of power (business, education, medicine and social welfare) to create new ‘subjects’ of political order.¹⁰

There are two aspects of Proudfoot’s work that I want specifically to examine; first, the place of psychology as philosophical ‘placeholder’ and, second, the key concern for ‘context’ and ‘conditions’. I will inter-relate these aspects to establish the critical focus of my own work. These two aspects are the most under-theorized (but vitally important) aspects of his work and ones that are important for a critical reading of the psychology of religion and inter-disciplinary thinking. The introduction of psychology, to

be fair, is something he follows up outside his particular expertise and from a later vantage point it is easier to critically contextualise, but they nonetheless need to be given some treatment. What I am trying to establish in this book is the hidden ideological assertion in an argument. I want to reveal what a discipline does not want to see in its logic – the will-to-truth of a position. This is an ethical-political assertion subsequently justified according to a disciplinary logic or the ‘available evidence’. As Proudfoot (1985: 110) establishes for us:

We must employ whatever evidence is available to us in order to ascribe emotions, attitudes, and even beliefs to ourselves or other.

Such a move must entail a working blindness to the disciplinary logic. Indeed, I agree with Proudfoot that there is a need to explore the ‘logical placeholder’ which seeks to ‘guarantee’ the system of knowledge, but where Proudfoot applies his thinking to theological systems of ‘religious experience’ I want to apply such thinking to the apparatus of inter-disciplinary knowledge (Proudfoot 1985: 148). My argument in relation to Proudfoot and throughout this book is that there is – what I will call – a ‘critical myopia’ in inter-disciplinary studies of ‘religion’, which involves the same ‘protective strategies’ that occur in theological readings of experience. In the end what this means is that we cannot escape the political will-to-power that frames our knowledge – the ethical-political context. Let me show how I see this operating in Proudfoot in his use of psychology and then locate this in his discussion of context.

Proudfoot notes a series of experimental pieces of work, largely from 1970s social psychology (notably the period when social psychology went through a ‘crisis’ in thinking).¹¹ The point of introduction comes during a discussion of emotion, in which he has already appealed to Aristotle’s idea on emotion in the *Rhetoric*, to show that cognitive processes shape bodily emotion. I fully endorse the complex model of emotions put forward by Proudfoot to include cognitive and physical aspects, but my concern is one of method and critique.¹² Following the introduction of theories of emotion, Proudfoot explores philosophical and psychological critiques of ‘the traditional view’ (*vis-à-vis* the view of Hume and James-Lange minus Aristotle).¹³ In the psychological critique, we are introduced to an ‘ingenious set of experiments’, ‘controversial experiments’ and ‘a more comprehensive research program’ (Proudfoot 1985: 98, 105, 108, 109) to confirm – with ‘evidence’ – what Aristotle had already deduced through careful reflection; that cognitive factors influence emotion (Proudfoot 1985: 98).

Proudfoot then outlines a range of social psychology experiments to show the link between ‘physiological arousal and contextually determined cognitive labels’. For example, ‘attribution theory’ shows how people ‘perceive the causes of their bodily states and behaviour’ and this adds useful narratives to enhance the thesis that the perception and explanation of events draws on the available cognitive evidence to construct an experience (Proudfoot 1985: 108–10). Proudfoot also outlines an experiment from Pahnke (1970) attempting to create a ‘constant cognitive context’ (with a Christian Good Friday service) for a drug induced (physiological) event. The aim is to show how the attribution is determined by the contextual data in order to make sense of the physical sensation (Proudfoot 1985: 105–7). Later in this discussion, Proudfoot turns towards religious communities and conversion to reveal the methods of cognitive persuasion in a circular logic that shows involvement, in this case with chanting, is given justification by later belief about the action (Proudfoot 1985: 112–14). However, in a psychological world, we are persuaded by being immersed in psychological *use*, we become convinced of psychological truth because it dominates the politics of everyday life and is sustained by the dominant institutional orders.

At one level, these are all useful additional illustrations of the central theoretical problem, but through a critical self-reflexive reading we can see how they work as ‘placeholders’ (to protect against exposure of the hidden ideological belief). ‘Religion’ and ‘experience’ are given detailed discursive analysis, but social psychological theory is never critically explored (although we do find a critical discussion of psychological verbs in relation to Wittgenstein earlier in the work).¹⁴ The reason for the lack of critical reading of psychology is that it already exists in the academic culture as ‘available evidence’. Even the qualification ‘controversial’ experimentation is seen to require no further explanation or political concern. The social psychological narrative (although certainly not all the psychological referents) are imported into this 1980s text with a cultural aura of ‘ineffability’ that he rightly interrogates in James’s model of mysticism (Proudfoot 1985: 148). Of course, Proudfoot is doing no more than he recognises in his own study. He is offering ‘the best explanation for what is happening’ and using the ‘concepts and beliefs employed’ from his ‘immediate context’ (Proudfoot 1985: 146–7). His own ‘critical myopia’ is the failure to see how the ‘rules’ of his own discourse operate inside his critical reading of religious experience. It is to his credit that Proudfoot sees the ‘rules’ of engagement, but what he does not see is that he is inside the process of the ‘rules that govern the employment of the terms by which a religious experience is identified’ (Proudfoot 1985: 119).

The problem he does not see is that the critical insight he makes about 'religious experience' is true of all language games. The second order language of the science or philosophy of religion is not exempt from the rules or the political structures governing such rules. Critical myopia is a strategy employed to gain authority. The tragedy is that it is not possible to create a position of imperial truth outside the discourses and institutions that create such truth. I would not at this point wish to suggest we drift into the quagmire of relativism, but I do wish to show how our discourses follow rules of argumentation that reflect ethical and political values. It is here that we touch on the second aspect of Proudfoot's work that I think remains under-theorized; and, as we shall see throughout this study, it is precisely at the points of under-theorized knowledge that we reveal our hidden values.

Proudfoot's under-theorizing of psychology is linked to his restrictions around the discussion of the 'conditions' and the 'context' of experience.¹⁵ Proudfoot, in a similar vein to Wittgenstein, understands the rules of language taking place within social processes, but never spells out the institutional location. What Proudfoot is unable to do is move from a cognitive theory to a critical social theory, even though he shows full awareness of this dimension. When analysis of discourse remains at the rhetorical level it never sufficiently marks out the ethical and political nature of thought. We find here a desire for a modernist 'science' of language and a restraint to follow through the implications of the wider social conditions and what this might mean for the order of knowledge that supports the argument. The anxiety within knowledge, once it leaves the assertions of positivity, is the vacuum it creates for stable authority. It is because of this situation that much 'science' of religion can appeal to psychology as a guarantee of knowledge without following through the fact that psychological knowledge might itself be open to the flux of language games and a will-to-power. The elision around context and conditions and the attempt to create an ontological cover over such questions is the crisis of modern knowledge.

Proudfoot maps the problem of context and the conditions of knowledge extremely well, but ends his study at this point. To be fair to Proudfoot, his work does not seek to demonstrate more than the shift in thinking from the essentialism of religious experience to the cognitive and rhetorical play of language, but he cannot but face the fact that as Wittgenstein argues language is 'public':

[T]he concepts and beliefs are constitutive of the experience, careful study of the concepts available in a particular culture, the rules that govern them, and the practices that are informed by them will provide

access to the variety of experiences available to persons in that culture. Though it may be difficult to reconstruct, the evidence required for understanding the experience is public evidence about linguistic forms of practice.

(Proudfoot 1985: 219)

The rules of language do not appear from nowhere, they are part of the ‘culture’ and although Proudfoot is caught in explaining ‘explanation’ in the study of religious experience and marking out the problem of reductionism he is led towards the need for ‘historical’ circumstances (Proudfoot 1985: 225). As Proudfoot has already made clear:

People understand and identify their experience in terms of the concepts and beliefs available to them.

(1985: 184)

Unfortunately, the critical limit of Proudfoot’s project does not allow him to see the cultural context of his thinking, which allows his import of the psychological. Although he does recognise that James ‘could only have written in a culture in which there was some meaning to the concept of religious experience’ (Proudfoot 1985: 184). Proudfoot’s key insight is to see both ‘descriptive’ and ‘explanatory’ accounts as ‘cultural’. However, what is lacking in the inter-disciplinary construction of the discipline of religion is to see how fields such as psychology and sociology, which carry intellectual authority, are themselves vulnerable to the same strategies that believers themselves assume. Could it be that we are all subject to a will-to-power? Such claims hide themselves behind the institutional validity prevailing at the time. What we need is to free knowledge from its certainty in order to make reality. It is not just ‘seeing-as’ or ‘experiencing-as’ as Wittgenstein and Hick reveal to Proudfoot, but ‘theorizing-as’ (Proudfoot 1985: 171).

What Proudfoot so usefully unravels is the ‘explanatory commitments’, but there is more ‘evidence’ to account for than is put forward on the table for analysis. What should be considered in the ‘conditions’ of ‘explanation’? If thought is ‘strategic’ as Proudfoot argues – and Foucault before him had articulated so clearly – then it might be that it is ‘not the relations of meaning but the relations of power’ that become significant (Foucault [1976] 1980). When Proudfoot offers suggestions of the kind of explanation that could be offered for religious experience he includes the ‘cultural patterns of thought, action, and feeling’ (Proudfoot 1985: 226), but the ‘cultural’ is never given sufficient critical exploration. Proudfoot is aware that the *cultural, religious*

and *economic*, despite their philological problems, still have what I would like to call a ‘use-value’ – their non-essential nature gives them strategic power in their deployment within institutional practice. As Proudfoot (1985: 198) recognised:

The fact that it cannot accurately be ascribed to people in many societies does not require that it be excluded from the accounts we give of those societies.

It is indeed the ‘habits of interpretation’ (Proudfoot 1985: 226) within the study of ‘religion’ that we need to explore and this requires extending the evidence to the apparatus of knowledge that allows the ‘explanatory commitment’ to have a purchase in the social world. We can extend the rational platform of enquiry and see that is not only important to map the concepts and beliefs of those using the discourse of ‘religious experience’, but the related forms of knowledge that allow the very explanation itself. The discursive strategies of religious experience are political because they too arise from the ‘contextual conditions’ (Proudfoot 1985: 226). They are indeed difficult to identify but cognition is always a social processes of language-users living within political institutions. It is the institutions that support and service a discourse and turning our attention to such institutions – the political and economic infrastructure of our thought – might reveal more of our own ‘explanatory commitments’ in the theory and method of religion; and, in this instance, the psychology of religion.

In some ways, Proudfoot might argue that I have hijacked his work and attempted to pull lines of argument beyond his domain of use in the philosophy of religion. However, his thought contains such openings by the very nature of the mobility of language and we can perhaps see my reading as an acknowledgement of how he has shifted the debate to account for the conditions of knowledge and strategies of thought. It is at the edges of his work that I have tried to extend his thinking to what he does not think – to his unfinished thinking – and it is here I wish to begin my own study. The theoretical difference is between Wittgenstein and Foucault and the difference between language-games and discourse in the two writers. Wittgenstein is more specific in his analysis, because he wishes to reside at the level of language-users in a less ambitious manner than Foucault.¹⁶ Foucault attempts to explore the ‘conditions of thought’ in the network of social relations and while this creates more uncertainty it reveals the heart of knowledge within social relations.

The idea of discourse takes us into the ethical-politics of experience. It raises a question about the kind of value commitment involved in using psychology – or any other method – to explain our practices in the social world. The scholar of religion draws on a field of study like psychology with a set of assumptions about the kind of work this disciplinary discourse can have for his or her reading of an equally ambiguous discourse called ‘religion’, but why suspend one category and not the other? What would it be like if we questioned the conditions of psychological thinking inside religion and exposed its strategies and relations of power? Perhaps, we might see that all our knowledge is a temporary process, dynamic and evolving. We may also have to face the fact that we can no longer build empires without some honest articulation of our values and acknowledgement of who benefits from such thinking. Knowledge might be the social apparatus through which we order the world in a new economy of power, not that of industrial imperialism but global networks, which requires a new ethic of thought as disciplines are reshaped for a new knowledge environment. This book is an attempt to map the discourse of psychology in such a knowledge environment and to examine the ethical ground of such forms of knowledge.

The twilight of modernist experience

By extending the discussion of religious experience inside the ethical-politic of the psychology of religion, I am trying to map the social orders and macro-politic of knowledge behind such thinking. I am attempting to shift the discussion away from modernist ‘experience’ to what I see as a new set of strategies of formation emerging in the contemporary social world. I am not suggesting that the category of religious experience or experience more generally is no longer valid, because discourses from different historical moments continue to oscillate in the public imagination for transformation and reconfiguration. I am suggesting that the conditions of formation are no longer appeals to modernist *experience*, but rather collective mediations in late modern orders of the knowledge economy. Individual *experience* is not a private event but a collective imagining, so that where *experience* once provided a space for resistance it now functions as a collective organising drive. *Individualism is the new collectivism and individuals are the new orders of social persuasion*. The individual-social binary has shifted according to its own paradoxical law of inversion as new constellations of knowledge appear inside the emerging dominant institutions.

Collective-individualism can therefore be seen to arise out of and rest upon a new constellation of knowledge management. The sense of the

present impossibility of *experience* results from this new arrangement of values inside the individual-social binary as it forms a different set of associations between experience, knowledge and institutional order inside the knowledge economy. The present political economy restricts knowledge in its multiplication by establishing specific forms of selective transmission through its institutional base; all forms of knowledge are generated and permitted, but only those forms accessible to the conditions of the knowledge economy are ‘translated’, to recall Agamben’s reading of experience, for use and value. Psychological individualism is translatable in the knowledge economy because it allows a certain collective codification of the self. At this moment, when individualism becomes collective, the narrative of psychological experience is returned to its formative errors and its disciplinary attempts to eradicate the social. The politic of individualism in the knowledge economy throws psychological knowledge back to its own political-theoretical values of the individual-social.

My concern in this study is to establish a critique of psychology in the framing of religious experience through a wider critique of knowledge in the political environment of the knowledge economy; a term I have so far repeatedly employed, but which will be explored in more detail in Chapter 1. In the new political economy of knowledge, scholars of economics, psychology and religion can no longer remain innocent of their assumed neutral categories. They may even have to give up the comfort zones of their inherited industrial disciplinary formations. These are strange times, but they are ones that need articulating, because the present strategy of knowledge is to restrict knowledge and hide the ethical values behind our binary thinking.

Critical method: the ethics of knowledge

The contested space of the category of experience illustrates that the conditions of utterance are as important as the utterance in the making of experience. If experience is shaped by interpretation and interpretation by the social conditions, then the social agencies or institutions that have the power to provide the model of interpretation always shape experience, even as they form spirals of inter-dependence with other institutions. While recognising that experience, knowledge and institutions are linked together, it is important to register that knowledge is never a transparent one-dimensional system of propaganda and social control – as our conspiracy fantasies may wish to dream – but rather a social network of complex interactions across mobile lines of engagement. Nonetheless, there are always attempts to exert an

influence, even if in the end it may be a kaleidoscope of half-revealed notions that inform our lived-embodied reality. We are, of course, always trapped in the hermeneutical circle in our attempts to disentangle the social history of institutions and the deployment of discourses, which is why appeals to a higher discourse or an original ground are attractive. The desire to think we know is more reassuring to our incoherent living; such is the nature of those fractional adjustments of statistics to conform and confirm our knowing.

It is also the case that we are caught inside our own necessary strategic arrangement of knowledge in a sophisticated, survival-equilibrium to ‘make-believe’ our experience and cope with the constant onslaught of networked information and the overwhelming orchestration of media. It is through these complex folds of human limits, social living and survival that groups assert and impose a will-to-truth. The very ‘habits of interpretation’ follow long lines of social investment and politically ordered values. In such plural worlds we cannot escape from the flux of historical discourses, change and provisionality and our will-to-truth, because there is no Archimedean point outside ourselves to offer us a different fantasy. Our knowledge is caught in the conditions of our measurement and the illusion of thought is to imagine that everything is measurable. It is however our very capacity to ‘imagine’ what we are which defies the measurable.

Kant rightly questioned, in his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* ([1796] 1903) and his *Anthropology* ([1798] 1974), the possibility of an empirical science of psychology, because he recognised humans defied the criteria of a natural science object. Indeed, the later developments of ‘scientific’ psychology were a complex hybrid of physiological, philosophical and political discourses, which allowed a certain social will-to-power to emerge in the elisions between these discourses (see Teo 2005). The testable hypothesis of biology is conviction enough to credit a discourse as it moves into the unmeasurable uncertainty of consciousness. The powerful desire to know so easily hides our not knowing and creates opportunity for those who desire the power of knowing. In this sense, knowing and not-knowing are ethically determined. As Jacques Monod (1972: 163) has so insightfully argued:

True knowledge is ignorant of values, but it has to be grounded on a value judgement, or rather on an *axiomatic* value. It is obvious that the positing of the principle of objectivity as the condition of true knowledge *constitutes an ethical choice and not a judgement reached from knowledge, since, according to the postulate’s own terms, there cannot have been any ‘true’ knowledge prior to this arbitral choice.* In

order to establish the norm for knowledge the objectivity principle defines a value: that value is objective knowledge itself. To assent to the principle of objectivity is thus, to state the basic proposition of an ethical system: *the ethic of knowledge*.

In this book I seek to explore some of the lines of knowing and not-knowing as an ethic of knowledge. In the attempt to create humility as practice in thought, I wish to establish a critical method in the ethics of knowledge to reveal the lacunae in thought which hide the fragility of thinking, not least within disciplinary thought. Disciplines, as Monod (1972: 163) hints, are ‘moral rules’ of discourses and thus need to be ethically assessed. *This study is an ethics of knowledge in so far it seeks to (dis)locate disciplines in a dynamic of knowing and not-knowing across the binary values of the individual-social divide*. In many ways this book is, to follow Josef Bleicher (1982: 146), a kind of ‘hermeneutic imagination’, where ‘the ongoing formation of a consensus among practitioners in which criteria for valid knowledge, worth-while objects of research, etc, are developed and applied’. Although, we might go further in giving the historically determined spontaneous imagination greater emphasis in the making and unmaking of our worlds.

The frames of representation for experience, psychology and religion in this book are built on the establishment of a philosophical critical method that follows a Nietzschean tradition of ‘will-to-power’, where knowledge is the ‘raw energy’ of change and imposition (Nietzsche [1883–8] 1968: 1067), but I qualify such an innate structure with recognition of choice and value. Such a tradition of thinking was developed by Foucault to incorporate a strategic and institutional understanding of knowledge and I follow this understanding to show how knowledge works in social networks, but I also go beyond Foucault. I do not follow a model of ‘power’ without ‘interest’ or ‘ethical choice’; rather ‘power’ is always modelled according to the symbolic system of interest and value. Power, to slightly shift Foucault’s emphasis, is always power through networks of meaning and, in this sense, values and power are not distinct or mutually exclusive but work in unity. Knowledge is ethical in the sense of advancing certain ‘interests’ and ‘values’ of networked individuals and groups in a society for the advance of their power, which is why collaboration is important and why intellectuals become ineffective in their muted and isolated disciplinary spaces. They simply mirror external interests and internally compete to undermine the significance and political force of their knowledge, which in turn undermines effective resistance. I am

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thus locating knowledge within an ethics of knowing in order to expose the categories through which we hide and protect our values.

My critique is a critique of knowing and not-knowing as an ethic of knowledge and in this process I want to employ a series of strategies to read disciplinary thought in the human sciences. In order to show knowledge as provisional and reveal the assertion of values we need to expose the political logic of certainty. This requires displacing disciplinary thought along the lines of its fragile construction and bringing thought into engagement with its uncomfortable edges. Indeed, it requires a strategy of thinking within and outside disciplines – disciplines sustained and created by the political logic of institutional power. The arrogance of thought is to build a community – with its departments, conferences and journals – around its articulations so it never has to think otherwise or other-wisdom and never has to think its objects are ethical choices in the making of the subject. The strategies that I employ are therefore openings at the interfaces, or ways out of the closed logic, of a disciplinary order that only has the desire to preserve its existence and self-importance. Beware the borderlines of thought least someone from outside stumbles into your labyrinth and realises the ethical choices of your knowledge. And so I create another labyrinth for others to wrestle with my own ethical choices in the making of the subject of knowledge.

My first strategy is *to read across inter-disciplinary spaces*. In order to reshape domains of knowledge and show the leakages between the discourses of economics, psychology and religion as systems of thought, it is necessary to discover how disciplines close down certain unresolved questions to preserve a certain truth-formation. Disciplines, like dysfunctional family relations, require collusion in order to function as a living entity. Thus when we read across disciplines or bodies of knowledge we see a wider inter-dependency hidden in the isolated unit of knowledge. The collusion of the disciplinary family is seen when meeting with other family units, which expose the secrets of (en)closed thinking and living. Difference allows recognition of the provisional thought and wider social links, which sustain multiple disciplines.

The second strategy is *to examine the nature of binary knowledge and the values it holds* in the disciplinary formation of psychological thinking. The distinctions within thought depend on maintaining divisions within thought as fixed rather than temporary operations. This solidification or reification within thinking is a central practice in assuming authority in knowledge, even as the lived practice may reveal other silenced truth. A third strategy is *to show the operation of disciplinary amnesia* and how this form of forgetting the history of the discipline prevents recognising the lived errors of thought.

Disciplinary amnesia, as I have shown elsewhere, is the art of suppressing those features of a discipline that undermine the logic and coherence of a disciplinary practice (Carrette 2001a; 2002).¹⁷ This practice is employed by projects claiming the rhetoric of science, because it does not wish to make its own historical assertions vulnerable to the past statements, contradictions and errors. I specifically apply the above three strategies in the first part of the book, which seeks to provide a rationale for thinking about how the psychology of religion can be read as political-economy. In the second part, I employ a fourth and fifth strategy in the examination of specific ‘case studies’ (read as ethical-political formations) of the subject.

The fourth strategy that I employ is that already mentioned of *critical myopia*. This is the restriction of critical thought to an object or process outside one’s own position. This closure of thought prevents the self-reflexive fear of critical thought and prevents us from facing the shameful acts of acknowledging our will-to-truth and the raw assertion of our chosen hermeneutical position. The final strategy is to read *thought as ethical-political practice*, by which I mean the assertion of a desired way to live. The link between conceptual thought and lived practice is difficult to mark out in specific detail and I do not seek to discover specific practice, but rather types of knowing and not-knowing as ethical-political orders linked to socio-economic patterns. This strategy follows the assumption of the inter-connected nature of thought and seeks to show that what happens at the conceptual level interacts with an embodied social reality, such that a will-to-power requires a symbolic framework to assert its values.¹⁸

My understanding of the ethics of knowledge will become clearer in my reading of the psychology of religion and in my conclusion about the ethics of knowing and not-knowing. In carrying out these above strategies, I have consciously adopted three forms of approach: broad historical overview (to link different areas of thought); detailed corrective reading of texts (to build critique and position the specific historical examples in my argument); and philosophical provocation and playfulness (to reveal my own values). Each strand will hopefully carry the limits of the other and return the study of religion and psychology to their primary philosophical analysis and, in turn, to the ethics of knowledge.

Critical psychology: the beginning and end of the subject

Before I outline the specific stages of my argument in each respective chapter, some explanation is required of the term ‘critical psychology’ and how it reflects my method. The first thing to establish is that there is no

such thing as ‘critical psychology’ as such.¹⁹ It is rather a loose collection of writings, or an ‘umbrella term’ (Walkerdine 2001: 9; Blackman 2001: 6), for a group of works providing a politic reading of psychological knowledge (including a whole diverse range of critical perspectives from feminism to post-colonialism); although it now takes on a professional and market formation of its own.²⁰ Born out of the ‘crisis’ in 1970s social psychology, and engaging with the politics of the subject in post-structuralist theory, critical psychology attempts in different ways to make psychology a political object of knowledge (see, for example, Shotter 1975; Westland 1978; Henriques *et al.* [1984] 1998; Parker 1992). The ideological critique of psychology is the driving force of critical psychology, as seen in Fox and Prilleltensky’s (1997) seminal collection of essays. Fox and Prilleltensky (1997: xiii) called for the end of ‘political innocence’ in psychology. They were concerned with what Esquicé (2000: 214) later saw as the ‘false neutrality of official psychology’ and much of the early understanding of critical psychology operated on this political critique of so-called ‘mainstream’ psychology (Fox and Prilleltensky 1997: 4). The critical space is nevertheless extremely divergent and reflects a range of positions that allow individuals to make certain statements of ‘disenchantment’ (Ussher 2000: 7).

The poly-vocality of critical psychology allows us, as Parker (1999) has indicated, to make a distinction between those voices ‘inside’ the professional discipline and those ‘outside’ or on the edges of the discipline. The distinction reveals the important nature and types of critique and enables us to see the nature of such critique as reflecting a different set of debates about methodology, ethical practice, political and historical-philosophical concerns, which may or may not seek to challenge the discipline of psychology as such. Thinking within critical psychology operates along a spectrum (Figure 0.1) that opens the field to an inter-disciplinary dynamic where knowledge of the subject is reconstituted within a new set of terms.

The danger of critical psychology is that it can become a sub-disciplinary space and a market category that covers the philosophical and political construction of knowledge it attempts to question.²¹ There is a problem, as John Morss (2000: 105) notes, of keeping critical psychology continuously

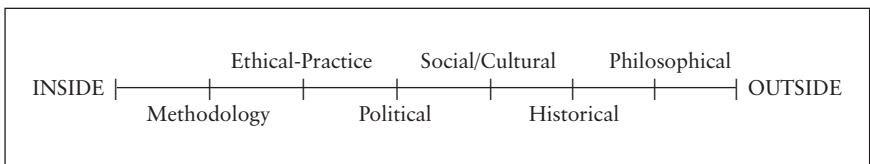


Figure 0.1 Spectrum of themes in critical psychology

attentive to its own project and a constant anxiety about how its message is diluted when it is ‘incorporated into the academy’. Parker even goes as far to suggest that critical psychology ‘is part of the problem rather than part of the solution and that radical work needs to turn against it’ (Parker 2001: 127). The fact that critical psychology is now part of a wider disciplinary and marketing enterprise easily hides its silent assimilation into the ideologies it seeks to oppose, even as such avenues become necessary for transmitting critical debate and the problems of knowledge (there are no pure realms of mediation in a market world). The term should therefore hold a strategic temporality for critical intervention.²² As Esquicic (2000: 212) notes:

Our general sense is that we should probably emphasize the *critique of psychology* rather than develop a *critical psychology*, in the sense that we should not want to stay trapped in the illusion of a possible partial reform of a discipline that appears to be situated as an apparatus for control and social normalisation, as Michel Foucault and others have already explained.

The importance of giving emphasis to the ‘critique of psychology’ rather than ‘critical psychology’ is given support by Thomas Teo (2005) in his historical overview of critical accounts of psychology from Kant to post-colonial theory. Teo (2005: 28, 149) rightly argues that ‘critical psychology is part of the history of psychology’ and that ‘critique of psychology’ is part of modern not just ‘post-modern’ thinking. While Teo’s analysis could have developed a more nuanced reading of the ‘post-modern’ and appreciated thinkers such as Foucault within the context of post-structuralist thought and thus working within modern critical paradigms, he nonetheless appreciates the wider epistemological, ontological and, what he somewhat obscurely calls, ‘relevance’ critical perspectives (Teo 2005: 32–3). This latter categorization to cover *ethical-political*²³ themes illustrates how Teo’s work is caught – and thus restricted – inside a set of disciplinary assumptions and subject-specific theoretical concerns, even as he identifies longer philosophical traditions.²⁴ He is thus concerned with questions of ethical *practice within psychology* in relation to so-called post-modern themes, rather than ethics as a wider philosophical problem of knowledge about the individual-social.

By taking psychological knowledge to its inter-disciplinary edges we can dissolve the subject-specific restriction and return the question of the human subject to philosophical questions of knowledge, which involves some account of the history of religions and economics. This necessarily entails transforming the intellectual domain and questioning the very constitution of

'Psychology'²⁵ as a disciplinary form. The psychology of religion is thus one site of knowledge for demonstrating the ethics of knowledge surrounding the discursive and political making of the human subject; it displaces the frame of reference. Such inter-disciplinary thinking allows critique to emerge more clearly in the disjunction of disciplines and in the displacement of knowledge.

In my view, following Shamdasani (2005), critical psychology takes us to the beginning and end of the subject, in so far as it reveals the fault lines of the formation of the discipline. In this sense, Teo (2005: 28) is right to see critique as ever-present in the subject of psychology, but what he does not appreciate is that this reflects central foundational problems, or persistent faults, in the very constitution of such disciplinary knowledge. He does not see how it reveals an ethical problem of knowledge formation as opposed to an ethical problem within psychological practice (something to which I will return in Chapter 2). This ethic of knowledge returns us to the question of subject formation and enables us to widen the philosophical and ethical analysis to the kinds of knowledge used to form what it is to be human, something that determines the contours of this book.

In this respect, Maritza Montero's (2001) paradigm for 'critical construction and transformation' in psychology rightly places 'critical psychology' within an ontological and epistemological context (questions of the nature of reality and the construction of knowledge that Teo (2005) explores before the advent of the discipline psychology) – to which we might also add hermeneutics (Browning 1998: 40).²⁶ In such a space the basic assumptions of 'psychology' are challenged and 'psychological' knowledge is opened to the outside of the discipline, it is opened to an ethical question about the nature of how we think about ourselves in the present world. The fault lines of the subject of 'Psychology' mean that we have an ethical responsibility to re-examine such knowledge.

Critical psychology is therefore the key to returning us to the primary philosophical questions before the formation of 'Psychology' as a discipline, even as the return is always a move through the existing space of thought, rather than an impossible return to the past as such. It is rather the creation of a new philosophical ordering of inter-disciplinary thought in the age of the knowledge economy that demands the introduction of new ethical categories of knowledge outside 'Psychology'; it is thinking about being human with the edges of other systems of knowledge, such as religion and political economy, to expose the values behind how we are thinking and dividing knowledge (see Chapter 1 in this book). Parker (1997b: 298) sees this opening when he writes: 'A critical psychology has to be constructed

from theoretical resources, life experiences and political identities *outside* the discipline. Only then does it make sense to deconstruct what the discipline does to us and to its other subjects'. By thinking in the wider context we can unravel the ethic of all forms of knowledge in the way we think about the world and the self.

In the present study, 'critical psychology' acts as a useful theoretical space of thinking from which to reconfigure knowledge in the human sciences; it takes us to a critical hermeneutics of the imagination about being human, but I am not bound or limited by this frame other than as focusing a set of critical questions. I take a hermeneutic of political-economy and the taxonomical tool of 'religion' inside my central critique of psychology in order to bring all these forms of thought back to the critical philosophical task of the ethics of knowledge. This critical imagination becomes a practice of living and takes us to the place of 'not-knowing who we are' (Caputo 2004) in the hope of becoming ethically responsible about how we think and know the world. Critique is the ability to push thought to its limits and imagine frameworks of interpretation that bring us to an ethical space of thinking about experience, knowledge and social institutions. As Foucault ([1978] 1997: 36) observed in his reading of Kant's *Aufklärung*, 'critique's primordial responsibility' is to 'know knowledge'; to know the material conditions by which we know and understand ourselves and the world at any one point of time. It is this form of critique that constitutes my understanding of an ethic of knowledge. Critique is thus the basis of an ethical account of knowledge.

This work can be seen to include ever-increasing circles of knowledge to address the problem of experience, mind and institutions in the study of religion and psychology. It is most immediately a critique of the psychology of religion, second, a discussion of economic knowledge in relation to psychology as a way to reveal the ethics of knowledge and, at its most outer edges – or rather at the heart of the turning spiral – it is a wider philosophy of the ethics of knowledge in the human sciences. In bringing these different levels of thinking together, knowing and not-knowing who we are is seen to take on a different intensity in the new knowledge economy. If knowledge has a material benefit to the exchange of goods, services and information then it might be that knowledge of who we are has an even greater purchase on the order of our embodied living. To claim to know who we are in a knowledge economy is to make human beings into the greatest commodity. It is also to control production of who we are for the new economy. The link between images of being human and the economic system is at the heart of my ethic of knowing and not-knowing.

The imagining of who we are, or rather the shocking ability we have as individuals and groups, to hand-over who we are to a unquestioned philosophical logic is now fed into a greater system of control. The types of knowing inside the traditions of psychology and religion are some of the most dangerous forms of knowing because they provide the models of being human to justify and support absolute forms of knowing and absolute forms of economy. Indeed, in the knowledge economy, asserting that we do not-know who we are may very well be the best form of resistance, because knowledge is always more than we can yet imagine and this requires more of us than we yet know. As Foucault (1980: 181) argued in relation to the hermeneutics of the self:

Maybe the problem of the self is not to discover what it is in its positivity, maybe the problem is not to discover a positive self or the positive foundation of the self. Maybe our problem is now to discover that the self is nothing else than the historical correlation of the technology built in our history. Maybe the problem is to change those technologies.

However, to follow Alles's (2001) critical sense of the limits of Foucault, maybe it is time to update Foucault's critique of Cold War knowledge and establish a critique of the representation of human experience, mind and institutions in the emerging knowledge economy, with all its new forms of knowledge management and binary logic of self and other.

In the world of the knowledge economy we need to examine 'economy' not as some old Marxist determinism or a new neo-liberal freedom, but rather as a space to think through how knowledge is shaped by the binary ethical framework of the individual-social. By marking out how 'economy' frames knowledge we can see the values implicit within different forms of knowledge. We can also see not only how knowledge is managed for economy but how economy becomes a central register of value. Once knowledge is constituted and framed in and through the institutions of economy, it displaces other forms of knowing and allows an opening to the values of all knowing by locating its excluded categories and privileged concepts at the points across the irreconcilable binary forms. It is the inherent ambivalence of the discourse of economy in its binary constructions and inter-disciplinary edges that enable it to mask and, at the same time, reveal an ethic of knowledge. I will thus use the economic register of the individual-social binary as a way to read the ethics of knowledge in psychology and religion.

Outline of the book

The two parts of the book are based on two stages in my argument that the methods of psychology in the study of religion need to be critically assessed according to an ethics of knowledge in the age of the knowledge economy. What is at stake in this argument is the problem of absolute, or totalitarian, forms of knowledge and related forms of absolute economy that close down the capacity of human beings to recognise aspects of ethical choice and selection at the points at which knowledge faces its irresolvable binary tensions and ordering of knowledge. Drawing out the values implicit with disciplinary systems becomes a vital ethical task and this study brings these to the surface through a variety of hermeneutical and epistemological strategies. The first part lays down the theoretical ground for an ethics of knowledge in the human sciences by considering the boundaries of economics and psychology and the individual-social binary axis as a way to read ethical values within a system of knowledge. The second part seeks to think through the values of knowledge in three specific traditions of the psychology of religion using the economic context to read the ethical-political dimension.

The two theoretical chapters in Part I establish the ethical-politic of disciplinary knowledge. Chapter 1 links psychological knowledge to the history of economics and the history of economics to psychological models. The concern of economists with ‘non-economic factors’, which make economics possible, is uncovered and the idea of a certain ideology of the self beneath economic processes is developed. The result of this examination reveals the ‘leakage’ between disciplinary systems in the nineteenth century and the ethical-political constraints around knowledge formations. Chapter 2 unfolds the central conceptual dilemma at the heart of disciplinary knowledge in psychology, sociology and economics, which I have already touched upon in the discussion of the politics of religious experience. It examines the nature of how the binary politic of the individual-social operates in psychological and economic discourse. It is argued that psychology sets up a deliberate form of ‘disciplinary amnesia’ around this problem, because it reveals the historical fault lines of the subject. Following the work of Andrew Abbotts on disciplinary knowledge, it is argued that disciplinary knowledge replicates the ‘axis of cohesion’ of a subject throughout its history. The chapter then shows how the fault line of the individual and social is replicated in four key historical moments in the work of Le Bon and McDougall, Freud, Fromm and Hayek. It is argued that the binary politic of the individual-social reveals a set of philosophical assumptions about knowledge formation and a hidden set of values. It is from this established base of binary politics and disciplinary leakage

that psychological knowledge is evaluated in Part II of the book, according to a new object of political economy as a register of human value.

Part II takes examples from psychoanalysis, humanist psychology and cognitive science to show how the values of psychological knowledge can be read at the point of political economy. It reveals how the protected and privileged categories of knowledge reveal the underlying ethical-political values. Chapter 3 begins by exploring the notion of the 'economic' in Freud and then shows how psychoanalytical theory of religion suppresses the economic question through the appeal to science and an appeal to culture. The work of the so-called 'Freudian Left' is taken to illustrate this point, using examples from Reich, Fromm and Lacan. The tension between European and American psychology is developed to draw out the political nature of psychological theory and how such theory is transformed under different cultural conditions. Chapter 4 continues the exploration of the relation between psychology, economics and religion by exploring how Abraham Maslow's psychology carried aspects of the ideology of American capitalism and how his use of the category 'religion' facilitated this process. It explores how the economic conditions in the USA provided a platform for privatising experience. Maslow's psychology is shown to model 'religious' experience through psychological discourse and in turn reshape introspection for a new political ideology. Chapter 5 follows on from the two previous critical readings by showing the links between cognitive psychology and the politics of the knowledge economy. It focuses on the work of cognitive anthropologist Harvey Whitehouse to reveal the hidden political nature of cognitive thinking about religion. After establishing a critical reading of cognitive theory and Whitehouse's otherwise insightful works, the chapter goes on to argue that cognitive theories of religion are restricted to 'codified' models and that more dynamic models of mind are marginalised by the demands for specific forms of knowledge product in the knowledge economy.

The work concludes by offering a model for the ethics of knowledge according to different types of knowing explored in the previous chapters. The ethics of knowledge is then diagrammatically related to the formation of ideas in the disciplinary constructions of economics, psychology and religion along the two central axes of individual-social and closed-open forms of knowing. It is the aim of the book to show how knowledge is ethically framed by hidden philosophical values and the conclusion offers 'not-knowing' as a strategic form of critique and corrective to the knowledge economy, which returns the question to James's and Hayek's own knowledge constructions and their own forms of 'not-knowing' at the limits of knowing. In the end we reach the paradox of knowledge and experience, but also the liberation of our critical imagination through an ethic of knowledge.