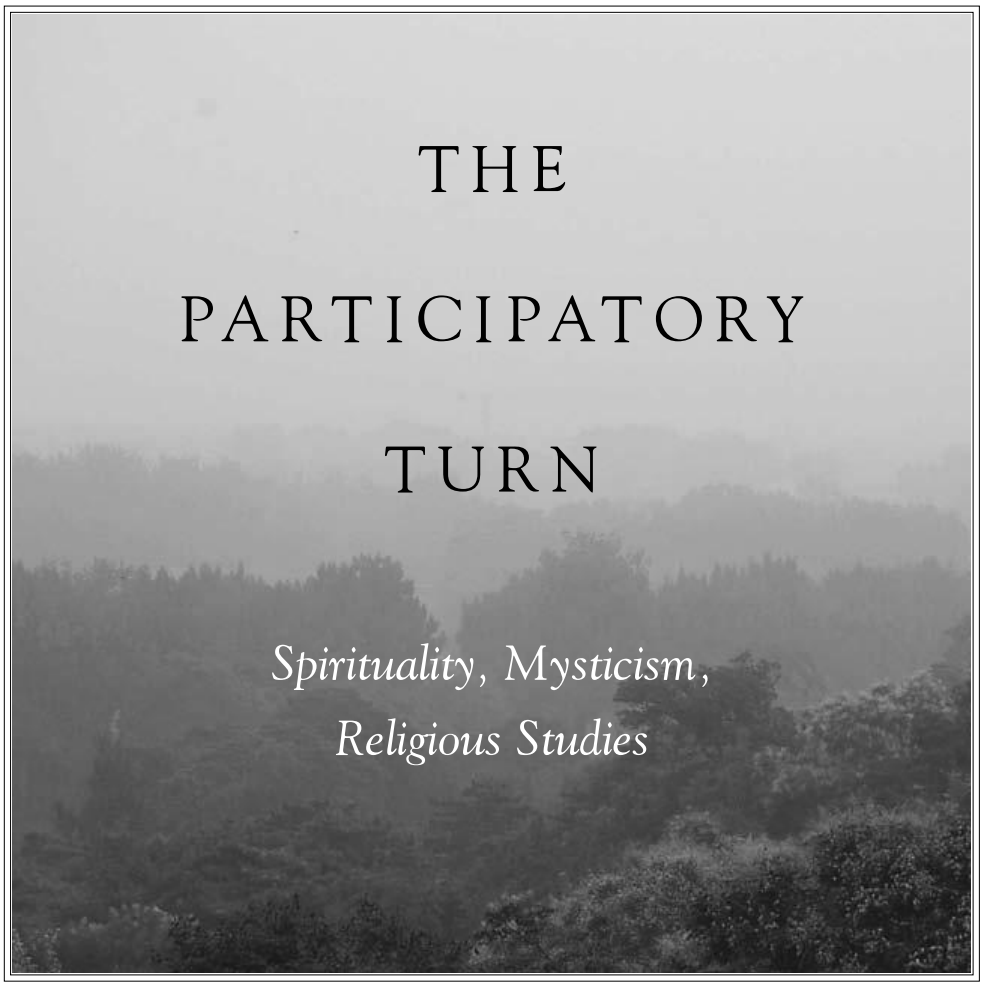

THE PARTICIPATORY TURN

Spirituality, Mysticism, Religious Studies

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INTRODUCTION

The Participatory Turn in Spirituality, Mysticism, and Religious Studies

Jorge N. Ferrer and Jacob H. Sherman

DO WE REALLY need another "turn" in academia and the study of religion? After all, it seems that when one or another turn has been proposed—whether linguistic, interpretive, narrative, pragmatic, or postcolonial—scholars often presented it as a kind of epistemic rupture with the past, a revolutionary paradigmatic shift that would drastically change the way the phenomena studied in their disciplines are to be approached. Whereas claims of epistemic rupture may sound pretentious today, we think that the route of creative scholarship is more like a winding road than a straight highway, and that certain turns are therefore unavoidable if genuine or substantial progress is to be made in any discipline.

Having said this, we do not think of *The Participatory Turn* as a radical break with either the past or the present, but rather as an attempt to name, articulate, and strengthen an emerging academic ethos capable of coherently weaving together a number of the most challenging and robust trends in contemporary Religious Studies. Among these trends and themes we have selected the postcolonial revaluation of emic epistemologies, the postmodern emphasis on embodied and gendered subjectivity, the feminist recovery of the sensuous and the erotic in religious inquiry and experience, the pragmatic emphasis on transformation and antirepresentationalism, the renewed interest in the study of lived spirituality, the resacralization of language, the question of metaphysical truth in religion, and the irreducibility of religious pluralism. If we choose to present our formulation of this growing academic sensibility as a turn, it is only because we believe that, taken together, these trends issue a serious challenge to the currently prevalent cultural-linguistic

paradigm in the study of religion. With this in mind, *The Participatory Turn* presents a pluralistic vision of spirituality that accepts the formative role of contextual and linguistic factors in religious phenomena, while simultaneously recognizing the importance, and at times even centrality, of nonlinguistic variables (e.g., somatic, imaginal, energetic, contemplative, and so on) in shaping religious experiences and meanings, and affirming the ontological value and creative impact of spiritual worlds and realities. In other words, we are aiming at a critical, metaphysically thick, and religiously relevant sensibility within the academic study of religion. We believe that this articulation is neither a return to previous epistemological structures nor a drastic rupture from them, but rather reflects the ongoing project of a creative fusion of past, present, and perhaps future horizons that integrates certain traditional religious claims with modern standards of critical inquiry and postmodern epistemological insights about the cocreated nature of human knowledge.

But before introducing the general contours of such a participatory understanding of religious inquiry and experience, it may be important to situate the "participatory turn" in the context of the development of the field of Religious Studies in general, and in relation to the linguistic paradigm in particular. By exploring various challenges to the linguistic turn, we are able see the need to move beyond what Jürgen Habermas calls the "linguistification of the sacred," while at the same time adumbrating the shape of the participatory turn. This rather controversialist approach is intentional. We are not seeking to build a participatory sensibility from the ground up, as if it were one of the great systems of nineteenth-century philosophy, but are instead discovering its contours in the give and take of arguments in the midst of which we (in the field of Religious Studies) already find ourselves. Let us begin then with a brief exposition of the nature and possible limitations of the linguistic paradigm.

THE IMPACT OF THE LINGUISTIC TURN ON RELIGIOUS STUDIES

One could make the case that twentieth-century Western philosophical thinking—beginning with the work of thinkers as diverse as Bertrand Russell, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, or Gottlob Frege—was characterized by an ever-increasing interest in the study of language. The "linguistic turn" in philosophy shifted the focus of inquiry from the inner representations and innate categories of a Cartesian-Kantian subject to the analysis of the elements of language, such as semantics, speech-acts, conditions for a theory of meaning, the relationship between words and world affairs, and so forth.[1] Developing the ideas of the late Wittgenstein, Gilbert Ryle, and others, a growing number of scholars boldly asserted that classical

philosophical puzzles were "nothing but" problems of language that could be either resolved or dissolved through a variety of linguistic analyses and reconstructions.[2] In this new philosophical environment, linguistic signs were no longer regarded as mediating factors between the "subjective" representations of a Cartesian ego and the "objective" world, but rather as the primary locus of any plausible cognitive meaning and epistemic justification.[3] In other words, philosophy after the linguistic turn considered *public* language—instead of *private* representations, concepts, or ideas—the true interface between the knowing subject and the world, thereby allegedly overcoming the epistemological skepticism of modern philosophy after Immanuel Kant's critical revolution.[4] As Barbara Fultner points out, after the linguistic turn, the "philosophy of language . . . becomes the 'successor discipline' to epistemology and metaphysics."[5]

Before the linguistic turn, and in the wake of the Enlightenment critique of metaphysics, religious scholars following Friedrich Schleiermacher sought to defend the autonomy and validity of religion by freeing religious experience from its premodern (and at that time dubious) metaphysical anchors.[6] Whether animated by idealist, phenomenological, or comparativist sensibilities, these modernist scholars tended to enthrone a supposedly autonomous, universal, and often disembodied and masculinized Cartesian subjectivity as both the agent and the locus of any genuine and reliable religious inquiry. Several decades of exploration, definition, and reduction of religion in terms of a core religious "human experience" followed, with religion being variously understood as "the feeling of absolute dependence" (Schleiermacher) or the subjective consciousness of "the eternal" (Nygren), "the holy" and "the numinous" (Otto), "the sacred" (Eliade), or "the ultimate concern" (Tillich).[7] Modern Religious Studies were thus shaped by epistemological assumptions and concerns emerging from what Habermas calls "the philosophy of the subject," that is, the philosophy that takes consciousness to be primary in the search for epistemic certainty.[8] As Walter H. Capps aptly puts it, the modern quest for a "first principle" or sui generis element in religion was guided by a "Cartesian temper with a Kantian conceptual framework."[9] This fundamentally modern project in the study of religion was drastically brought to an end by the linguistic turn.

The impact of the linguistic turn on Religious Studies was profound and far-reaching. The linguistic reconstruction of philosophy influenced generations of religious scholars, and the significance of public language over private experience in the study of religion was forcefully asserted from a variety of angles and with different emphases for decades.[10] Methodologically, embracing the linguistic turn in Religious Studies entails abandoning all efforts to assess the epistemic status of private consciousness or suprasensible experiences of the real, the sacred, or the holy. More positively, it involves approaching the study of religion as the examination of both public religious

languages and the relationship of such languages to either the sensible world or to other elements of the linguistic framework. Such strategies are employed, for example, in the study of parables and myths, scriptures and canons, doctrines and creeds, rituals and religious behaviors, sacred texts and narratives, religious symbols and metaphors, and so forth. A narrativist understanding of religion, Gavin Flood explains, requires that "rather than subjectivity (belief, cognition, inner states and religious experiences) language and culture, the realm of signs become the locus of inquiry."[11] In the study of mysticism, for example, this paradigm shift is visible in the reframing of its focus from "mystical experience" to "mystical language" (Katz), mystical "meaning events" (Sells), "mystical expressions" (Idel), or in the proposal that mysticism is just "a kind of writing" (Cupitt).[12] Since language was now recognized as not only *expressive* but also *constitutive* of human experience, the ultimate referents of religious discourse were not to be sought in special intuitions or states of consciousness, but in the rich communicative interactions religious practitioners have in an always already linguistically structured world. The postmodern theologian Mark C. Taylor puts it this way: "Far from existing prior to and independent of any inquiry, the very phenomenon of religion is constituted by local discursive practices."[13]

Although the shapes of the linguistic turn in Religious Studies are extremely diverse, it may be helpful to distinguish three major, nonmutually exclusive families of approaches: analytic, interpretive, and postmodern.[14] First, the *analytic* branch of the linguistic turn stems from the influence of a number of Anglo-American thinkers—such as Russell, G. E. Moore, A. J. Ayer, or John L. Austin—who strove to achieve conceptual clarification of obscure philosophical problems through the analysis of language.[15] Whether concerned with formal reconstructions of language or the identification of metaphysical pseudoproblems originated by its ordinary use, many twentieth-century philosophers of religion turned to the tools of analytic philosophy in order to advance, critique, and deepen religious understanding.[16] Among the most important trends in the analytic study of religion, we should mention here the early debates about the verifiability and falsifiability of religious doctrines, the search for the rational foundations of religious beliefs, the theological reinterpretation of Nietzsche's "death of God" as a linguistic affair, the Wittgensteinian account of religions as "language games," the reformed antifoundationalist epistemology in theology, and the understanding of religions as "conceptual frameworks."[17] More recently, analytic philosophy of religion has focused on the epistemology of religious experience and the problem of reference in religious knowledge.[18] Within analytic circles, we can also situate John Hick's pluralistic philosophy of religion and the work of a number of process theologians with analytical dispositions such as David A. Pailin.[19]

Second, the pervasiveness of *interpretive* approaches in contemporary Religious Studies bears witness to the critical influence of the hermeneutic tradition in the twentieth century—especially of the works of Schleiermacher, Heidegger, Paul Ricoeur, and Hans-Georg Gadamer.[20] In contrast to the analytic agendas of linguistic clarification and exploration of the rationality of religious beliefs, a hermeneutic philosophy of religion focuses on the study of religious meanings and symbols, the interpretation of sacred scriptures and revelation, the hermeneutical dimension of translation, scriptural exegesis and (creative) "isogesis," discourse theory in Religious Studies, the relationship between religious experience and its interpretation, and issues raised by the challenges of cross-cultural hermeneutics, among other areas of inquiry.[21] From a hermeneutical standpoint, religious experiences have been framed as "interpretative accounts" (Proudfoot), religious traditions as "textual communities" (Holdrege) or "living hermeneutic processes" (Vroom), and religions as "comprehensive interpretive frameworks" (Lindbeck).[22]

Despite the rich diversity of hermeneutic orientations and sensibilities in the academic study of religion[23]—e.g., phenomenological, comparativist, constructivist, historicist, and so forth—most interpretive writers stress both the contextuality and plurality of religious meanings and worlds.[24] To illustrate the variety of hermeneutic approaches, and with no wish to suggest that the following list is exhaustive or representative, we mention here Mircea Eliade's early plea for a "creative hermeneutics," Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenzza's development of a "critical feminist hermeneutics," Raimundo Panikkar's proposal of a "diatopical hermeneutics" for interreligious encounters, Sandra M. Schneiders's influential hermeneutic approach to the study of spirituality, David Tracy's interpretive theology, Jeffrey J. Kripal's articulation of a "mystical hermeneutics" or understanding of hermeneutic practice as mystical, and Jeffrey R. Timm's and Donald S. Lopez's revaluations of traditional interpretive approaches.[25]

Third, within the rubric *postmodern* we are locating a number of critical discourses such as those emerging from poststructuralism, Derridean deconstruction, gender studies, postcolonialism, and ethnic studies. Most of these approaches emerged in the late 1970s rather independently and it would be surely a mistake to conflate them, but they all share a commitment to listening to the subjective experience of "the Other" (i.e., the marginal "nonsubjects" of modernity, such as women, ethnic minorities, gays and lesbians, or colonized peoples), as well as to reversing and overcoming traditional hierarchical dualisms such as sacred/profane, God/world, male/female, civilized/primitive, transcendent/immanent, presence/absence, one/many, light/darkness, spirit/body, and so forth. For poststructuralism and deconstruction, we think above all of Thomas Altizer's theology of the "death of God," Jean-Luc Marion's "God without Being," Taylor's deconstructive a/theology, John D. Caputo's Derridean "religion without religion," Don Cupitt's "mysticism of

secondariness," and Tomoko Masuzawa's painstaking deconstruction of theories of religion.[26] For the gendering of Religious Studies, one can consult, among other works, Grace Jantzen's, Pamela Sue Anderson's, and Sarah Coakley's feminist critiques of analytic philosophy of religion, Amy Hollywood's and Beverly J. Lanzetta's revisions of the study of mysticism from the perspective of female experience, or the excellent collection of essays on the impact of feminist methods on the study of religion compiled by Arvind Sharma.[27] And for postcolonial studies, we isolate as a representative sample the works of Richard King on Hinduism and mysticism, Donald S. Lopez on Buddhism, David Chidester on indigenous African religions, Michael Taussig on shamanism, and Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui-Lan on the meeting of feminism and postcolonialism.[28] We could also situate here the increasing proliferation of critical analyses that show how foundational categories of the discipline of Religious Studies (such as "religion," "world religions," or "Hinduism") are analytically vacuous or the product of modern European colonial interests and Christian theological agendas—a line of work brilliantly developed by authors such as Jonathan Z. Smith, Talal Asad, Timothy Fitgerald, Daniel Dubuisson, and Masuzawa, among others.[29] Finally, at the interface of postmodern theory and hermeneutics, a growing number of scholars are today providing deconstructions and critical genealogies of diverse religious figures, trends, and schools. This tendency can be illustrated, for example, by reference to the Foucauldian studies of Hugh B. Urban on Tantra, Bernard Faure's critical analyses of Buddhist attitudes toward gender and sexuality, and Kripal's controversial study on the homoerotic nature of Sri Ramakrishna's spirituality.[30]

Despite the significant differences among them, what is common to analytic, interpretive, and postmodern approaches can be explained in terms of their insistence that the study of religion should focus on the examination of the "signs" and "meanings" attached to religious texts, worldviews, and practices.[31] After the linguistic turn, the object of Religious Studies is no longer the elucidation of the origin, nature, or ontological implications of religious experience, but the analysis, interpretation, or critical deconstruction and reconstruction of the textual, the linguistic, and the symbolic. In this light, the shift from a "philosophy of consciousness" to a "philosophy of the sign" in Religious Studies can be seen as advancing the linguistification of the sacred, with which Habermas characterizes the modern era.[32] To "linguistify" the sacred means to subvert its transcendental authority in the Heavens and bring the legitimization of its cognitive and normative claims down to Earth, that is, to the intersubjective space constituted by communicative exchanges among rational human beings. In the disenchanted world of post/modernity, the sacred has been detranscendentalized, relativized, contextualized, and diversified but, most fundamentally, assimilated to linguistic expression. In contemporary religious matters, as Cupitt writes, "language goes all the way down."[33]

BEYOND THE LINGUISTIC TURN

As Thomas Kuhn pointed out, any conceptual revolution both addresses the limitations of the previous paradigm and raises new questions and challenges. Some of these challenges can be answered within the new revolutionary paradigmatic structure, but the effective resolution of other more recalcitrant problems will require surpassing even the new paradigm.[34] There is no reason to believe that the linguistic turn should be an exception. Here we want to isolate a number of increasingly significant themes and trends in both Religious Studies and the academy at large which, taken together, may suggest the need to go beyond the limits of the linguistic paradigm. Specifically, our discussion focuses on the following seven areas: (1) the postcolonial revaluation of emic epistemological frameworks; (2) the postmodern and feminist emphasis on embodiment and sacred immanence; (3) the resacralization of language; (4) the "pragmatic turn" in contemporary philosophy; (5) the renewed interest in the study of lived spirituality; (6) the question of religious truth in postmetaphysical thinking; and (7) the irreducibility of religious pluralism.

The Revaluation of Emic Epistemological Perspectives

Recent developments in postmodern theory, cross-cultural hermeneutics, and postcolonial studies have raised caution among scholars regarding the potential pitfalls and ideological implications of privileging Western epistemological frameworks in the assessment of religious, and especially non-Western, truth claims. First of all, the postmodern critique of the Western scientific/philosophical metanarrative as "onto-theological" suggests that Western epistemologies deserve to be treated today with the same sort of critical suspicion with which modernist scholars previously regarded religion.[35] As Gianni Vattimo points out, "It is (only) because metaphysical meta-narratives have been dissolved that philosophy has rediscovered the plausibility of religion and can consequently approach the religious need of common consciousness independently of the framework of the Enlightenment critique."[36] Secondly, the recognition of a variety of culturally specific criteria that determine what counts as valid knowledge leads many contemporary interpretive writers to regard the long-assumed epistemic superiority of critical rationality simply as one more element in the modern Western narrative, whose ultimately axiomatic status belies its claim to supremacy. In this light, for example, Flood recommends considering scholarly (outsider) and traditional (insider) accounts of religion as legitimate competing narratives, and argues that in this contest neither side can claim epistemological privilege on a priori grounds.[37] Finally, postcolonial studies have exposed and denounced the connection between the supposed cognitive superiority of the West and colonialism, imperialism, and the political domination of non-Western cultures.[38]

Moreover, since no clear asymmetry between Western and non-Western epistemologies can be categorically established, avoiding ethnocentrism requires that we abandon the belief that the currently fashionable Western epistemology should be the preferred framework to assess all cognitive claims.

One of the unifying threads in these criticisms is the recognition of a multiplicity of valid ways of knowing and the consequent challenge to the very idea of universal reason now exposed as being (conveniently) shaped by the assumptions of the Enlightenment project—a challenge issued by feminists decades ago. This awareness animates contemporary postmodern, feminist, and postcolonial critiques of Western epistemology as disembodied, rationalistic, and cognicentric. Taken together, these developments have led many to a revalorization of alternative emic epistemologies and categories in the study of religion. More specifically, it is increasingly claimed that looking at our intellectual concerns against and through the background of non-Western frameworks may not only serve as a wholesome corrective for our inevitable cultural biases, but may also bring fresh perspectives on unsolved problems and debated questions.

In *Orientialism and Religion*, for example, King argues that certain Buddhist and Hindu "constructivist" epistemic viewpoints—such as those of Dignaga, Dharmakirti, Kamasila, and Bhartrhari—effectively challenge Steven T. Katz's assertion that accepting the culturally mediated nature of the contemplative path entails the impossibility of nonconceptual, unmediated mystical experiences.[39] As King explains, these contemplative Asian epistemologists hold that a nonconceptual access to reality may actually require the prior use of conceptual tools.[40] In a similar vein, Robert K. C. Forman points out that the Yogacara Buddhist epistemologist Paramartha, while recognizing the linguistically constituted nature of ordinary experience and knowledge, claims that the goal of meditative practice is precisely to dismantle such constructive mechanisms and lead the practitioner to an unconditioned insight into the nature of reality.[41] Of course, the introduction of these emic frameworks into the contemporary debate about the nature of mysticism does not settle the contested issues. Rather, it simply *but crucially* highlights the fact that Western epistemologies (such as the neo-Kantian one endorsed by Katz) may not be the last arbiters in the assessment of religious knowledge claims, and in particular of those emerging from long-term contemplative practice. As King cautiously states: "My point is not that Western scholars should necessarily accept the emic perspectives over which they are claiming the authority to speak, but rather that they at least entertain the possibility that such perspectives are a legitimate stance to adopt and engage them in constructive debate."[42]

A related development is the proposal to apply emic categories in the study of religion. Consider, for example, Benson Saler's suggestion that scholarship can benefit from the use of folk categories (such as the Hindu *dharma*)

as tools of anthropological analysis: "While anthropologists normally devote much attention to native categories in ethnographies of the peoples who utilize them, the time has come, I think, to borrow selectively from such categories and experiment with them as transcultural tools."[43] Donald Rothberg makes a related case in the context of spiritual inquiry:

> To interpret spiritual approaches through categories like "data," "evidence," "verification," "method," "confirmation," and "intersubjectivity" may be to enthrone these categories as somehow the hallmarks of knowledge as such, even if the categories are expanded in meaning from their current western usage. But might not a profound encounter with practices of spiritual inquiry lead to considering carefully the meaning of other comparable categories (e.g. *dhyana*, *vichara*, *theoria*, *gnosis*, or *contemplatio*) and perhaps to developing understandings of inquiry in which such spiritual categories are primary or central when we speak of knowledge? To assume that the categories of current western epistemology are adequate for interpreting spiritual approaches is to prejudge the results of such an encounter, which might well lead to significant changes in these categories.[44]

Expressing a similar sensibility, Peter Ochs writes that Religious Studies will remain colonialist insofar as they "tend to remove 'religious phenomena' from the contexts of their societal embodiments and resituate them within conceptual universes of our own designing."[45] What these and others scholars are persuasively arguing is that importing the language and epistemic categories emerging from Western scientific and philosophical traditions to analyze and account for the validity of knowledge claims from all cultures, ways of knowing, and domains of reality is highly questionable. Most religious and spiritual endeavors, we should stress here, are aimed not so much at describing or explaining human nature and the world, but at engaging and transforming them in creative and participatory ways, and may therefore call for different validity standards than those emerging from the rationalistic study of the natural world.[46]

To add fuel to this fire, an increasing number of Western scholars are today "coming out" as spiritual practitioners, rendering the modern disciplinary divide between Religious Studies and Theology more dubious than ever.[47] The fact that many of these scholars display *both* religious commitments *and* critical perspectives on traditional religious beliefs reinforces the dissolution of strict modernist dichotomies such as insider/outsider, emic/etic, engaged/detached, theological/scholarly, confessional/academic, or caretaker/critic.[48]

Participatory thinkers hold that openness to the potential heuristic value and even validity of alternative epistemic frameworks does not necessarily ensnare us in relativistic dilemmas. In our attempt to rise above the inevitable biases of our perspective, we should not fall into a vulgar relativism incapable of offering grounds for qualitative distinctions or transcultural

judgments. This can be avoided, we believe, by evaluating all knowledge claims—etic and emic, insider and outsider, rational and transrational, naturalistic and supernaturalistic—through *validity standards of both dominant and marginal Western and non-Western epistemologies in whatever measure may be appropriate according to the context of the inquiry and the type of knowledge claims*. One of the most vital tasks for those of us who accept this approach is the clarification of the relationship between epistemological frameworks (objectivist, constructivist, hermeneutic, pragmatist, and so on), contexts of inquiry (scientific, religious, artistic, psychological, and so on), and ways of knowing (rational, contemplative, aesthetic, moral, imaginal, somatic, and so on).

In any event, we propose that the dividing line between sound and weak scholarship should not be traced between Western and non-Western epistemologies—or even between naturalistic and supernaturalistic claims—but between approaches that lead to *radically empirical intersubjectively testable outcomes and/or discernible pragmatic consequences* and those which do not. The "and/or" of the previous sentence is fundamental, particularly in the context of religious inquiry. On the one hand, it may be plausible to consider intersubjective consensus a central epistemic standard in the context of what we might call, paraphrasing Kuhn, a single tradition's "*normal*" *spiritual inquiry*, in which spiritual practice is managed by a prevailing spiritual paradigm and something akin to a correspondence theory of truth is operative (for example, between practitioners' insights and the tradition's mapped "stages of the path"). On the other hand, however, it should be obvious that intersubjective agreement is probably an inappropriate test not only *among traditions* (which bring forth different and often incompatible spiritual insights), but also in periods of "*revolutionary*" *spiritual inquiry* within one tradition, in which anomalies in relation to accepted doctrines arise and new paradigms of spiritual understanding are developed (for example, it is likely that neither the Buddha's enlightenment nor the claims of the more radical Christian mystics could have been intersubjectively corroborated in their respective times and contexts). In the latter cases, the search for more pragmatic avenues to legitimize spiritual knowledge claims becomes imperative.[49]

The challenge raised by the revaluation of emic epistemologies to the linguistic and social-scientific paradigms in the study of religion should be obvious. In contrast to the textual and/or naturalistic account of religion held by these approaches, many of these emic perspectives regard extralinguistic variables (e.g., supernatural entities, spiritual energies, archetypal principles, etc.) as both constitutive elements and real referents of religious knowledge and experience. As mentioned above, many of these perspectives are not naively ignorant of the linguistically and conceptually mediated nature of human knowledge. And yet, they vigorously defend that ordinary cognitive constructive mechanisms and associated epistemologies are overcome in certain special noetic states, such as those emerging from meditative, visionary,

ecstatic, and contemplative practice. Contrary to the hegemonic claims of the linguistic paradigm, then, it is becoming increasingly plausible that epistemological frameworks that take into account a wider—and perhaps *deeper*—engagement with human faculties (not only discursive reason, but also intuition, imagination, somatic knowing, empathic discernment, moral awareness, aesthetic sensibility, meditation, and contemplation) may be critical in the assessment of many religious knowledge claims.

Sacred Immanence and the Return of the Sensuous Body

Postmodern and postcolonial thinkers are neither the first nor the only ones denouncing the ideological and epistemologically dubious nature of the Western metanarrative. Feminists have questioned the professed neutrality and objectivism of Western science and philosophy for decades, showing how androcentric and rationalistic biases make these cognitive enterprises not only one-sided, but also oppressive of women and other marginal populations.[50] In the study of religion, one of the main targets of postmodern and feminist critical analyses are transcendentalist and essentialist accounts of the divine or ultimate reality associated with traditional theologies. Whereas postmodern thinkers consider these views symptomatic of the Western allegiance to an oppressive "metaphysics of presence," feminists see them as products of patriarchal ideologies that tend to deny or, at any rate, undervalue the spiritual dimensions of nature, embodiment, and women. These critical perspectives have inspired the contemporary revival of human faculties and the exploration of facets of reality often overlooked in the modern study of religion, in particular: sacred immanence and the spiritual quality of nature; female experience and feminine ways of knowing; the centrality of the body in religious practice and experience; the role of empathy, the erotic, and emotion in religious knowledge; and the connection between the sexual and the mystical.[51]

In a recent study on radical (postmodern) theologies, for example, Richard Griggs concludes that "[a]ll of them seem to emphasize the immanence of the divine. . . ."[52] This stress on the immanent is tangible, Griggs continues, in Mary Daly's insistence that spiritual liberation lies in fully inhabiting "the Realm of Wild Reality," Taylor's understanding of language as the "divine milieu," Ursula Goodenough's religious naturalism and plea for the worship of nature, David Crosby's consideration of nature as "metaphysically ultimate," Sallie McFague's view of "the world as God's body," or Naomi Goldenberg's the*a*logy of the immanent Goddess, among other similar proposals. In addition to Taylor's a/theology, which is "in large measure, a critique of the notion of the transcendent God,"[53] sacred immanence is also the mark of a number of postmodern proposals influenced by the writings of Jacques Derrida, such as Caputo's or Cupitt's. Discussing Walter Lowe's work,

for example, Caputo asks, "Who is the God who comes after metaphysics? Not a God of infinite distance from earth and flesh, but the infinite freedom to make God immanent, in-the-finite, incarnate."[54]

This affirmation of the immanence of the sacred often comes together with a plea for the resacralization of everyday life, and in particular, of sensuality and the body. In contrast to its previously marginal status, "the body" has become a key hermeneutic category in the study of religion.[55] The last two decades of religious scholarship have produced an astonishing number of studies on perceptions, representations, and uses (and abuses) of the body in religious practice; for example, on embodied spiritual potentials and transformative energies; the essential role of bodily postures and movements in religious experience and ritual practice; the mythical, symbolic, and metaphorical dimensions of the body; and critical appraisals of many historical spiritual practices and understandings as "disembodied."[56] Attuned to the *Zeitgeist*, Kripal gives voice to the new centrality of the body in Religious Studies: "If there is a universal in the history of religions, it is the human body and its physiological shaping of religious practice and experience."[57]

The body has also emerged as a reinvigorated site of knowledge, analysis, and investigation in the anthropology of religion (e.g., Paul Stoller's fascinating participatory research on Songhay sorcery and spirit possession) as well as a fruitful comparative category in cross-cultural studies (e.g., Anne Hunt Overzee's excellent study of body symbolism in Teilhard de Chardin and Rāmānuja).[58] Of related interest are a number of explorations of Eastern views on the body.[59] Showing how Asian views on the body can shed new light on Western perennial questions, for example, Yuasa Yasuo suggests that the unity of the mind/body complex is not a problem to be solved through rational inquiry, but an existential fruit to be achieved through conscious self-cultivation (*shugyo*).[60]

Moving away from the debate about its universal or contextual nature, the contemporary study of mysticism is gradually recentering itself not only on the textual and the historical, but also on the position of the body and its sexual and erotic energies in mystical endeavors. In his innovative analysis of the mystico-erotic experiences of scholars of mysticism, for example, Kripal speaks about the erotic as "a radical dialecticism between human sexuality and the possible ontological ground(s) of mystical experience."[61] For Kripal, the body and its sexual drives can influence and even constitute not only mystical phenomena, but also the very scholarly approaches employed in their study. Even the ancient mystics' ascetic control of sexuality, far from being considered merely repressive, is today reframed as a kind of eroticism capable of transforming desire into religious discourse and discernment.[62] The relationship between embodiment and the mystical has also been analyzed from different feminist angles. Jantzen discusses the political and patriarchal dimensions of the devaluation of the somatic and the erotic in the history of

Christian mysticism, Hollywood explains how corporeal and erotic mystical modes historically associated with women have been denigrated and even pathologized, and Lanzetta offers a meditated consideration of women's bodies as "mystical texts" and sexuality as an area of "women's reclamation of holiness."[63] The trend toward integrating the spiritual into the physical, as well as celebrating the religious significance of sexuality and the immanence of the divine, is also at the heart of the so-called "body theologies" developed in the last two decades. According to James Nelson, "body theology" is not so much a theological reflection on the body but rather "nothing less than our attempts to reflect on body experience as revelatory of God."[64]

This feminist and postmodern turn to embodied subjectivity should not be confused with a return to former decontextualized, apolitical, and "crypto-theological" phenomenological approaches to religion.[65] On the contrary, postmodern feminism replaces a masculinized, discarnate, and supposedly universal and autonomous *Cartesian mental ego* with a gendered, embodied, situated, and participatory *intersubjective self* as the agent engaged in religious pursuits.

Even more relevant for our present concerns, *the body of contemporary scholarship is no longer "dissolving into language."*[66] Listen, for example, to Lisa Isherwood and Elisabeth Stuart's caveat: "What must be guarded against all costs is the disappearance of the real, lived, laughing, suffering, birthing and dying body underneath the philosophical and theological meaning it is called to bear."[67] Furthermore, in contrast to the received view of religious experience and meaning as linguistically determined, as well as received accounts of the body as a kind of objectifiable text, many scholars argue today for a more intricate and reciprocal relationship between language and embodied experience: *Prelinguistic and translinguistic embodied/erotic experience may significantly shape the visionary imagination, spiritual experience, and language of the religious practitioner, the mystic, and even the scholar of religion.*

It is noteworthy that this still minority but increasingly accepted understanding receives support from important trends in modern cognitive science, which strongly challenge the linguistic determination of human experience and thought usually taken for granted after the linguistic turn.[68] In *The Body in the Mind*, Mark Johnson presents compelling evidence from the cognitive sciences suggesting that linguistic metaphors and categories, as well as the very structure of human thinking, emerge from the rich embodied interactions of the human organism with the environment (for example, the concept of "balance" is rooted in our prelinguistic physical sense of being balanced).[69] Interestingly, Johnson adds that this account calls for a recognition of the creative role of imagination as the epistemic bridge between embodied experience and mental conceptualization.[70] As should be obvious, the bodily basis of cognition for which Johnson, George Lakoff, and many others argue raises at least two serious challenges to the linguistic paradigm. First, it questions the linguistic

sources of symbolic cognition and meaning defended by interpretive and postmodern thinking, resituating such origins in the imaginal elaboration of embodied experience. And second, it challenges the representational paradigm of cognition embraced by analytic philosophy[71]—a challenge that is central to the pragmatic turn in contemporary philosophy, to which we now turn.

The Pragmatic Turn in Contemporary Philosophy

Among the most important events in contemporary philosophy has been the recovery of American philosophical pragmatism, what William Eggington and Mike Sandbothe call the "pragmatic turn."[72] Dismissed after World War II as an overly optimistic episode in the history of philosophy, the pragmatists have been rediscovered as incisive thinkers who anticipate and, in certain respects, surpass the postmodern problematics we more readily associate with philosophers such as Derrida and Gilles Deleuze. Pragmatists such as Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey are especially attractive today because of their decisive refusal of foundationalism and their rejection of the epistemological paradigm of representation, both of which are central aspects of the participatory turn, as well.

One of pragmatism's chief insights—shared not only by the American originators of the movement but also by subsequent sympathizers such as the late Wittgenstein and Habermas—is that linguistic behaviour is a kind of action and its validity is vouchsafed inasmuch as it achieves desired communicative ends.[73] This pragmatist thesis, rooted in the dual abandonment of foundationalism and representationalism, issues a severe challenge to the linguistic turn for it suggests that language needs to be understood in terms of action, and action puts us in touch with the world of events, of ontology beyond just semantics, of transformation beyond mere interpretation. For the pragmatist, truth is an achievement word. To say that the assertion "that *P*" is true is rather like saying that a particular strategy proves true; that *P* is true if it works, in the same way that Odysseus's strategy is true if Troy finally falls.

For the pragmatist, the truth of a proposition, idea, belief, or hunch is not determined by a detached gaze simply surveying and marking the world "as it is," but is rather tested and proved through the fire of action. James repeatedly suggests the following maxim as a guide for pragmatism: "Grant an idea or belief to be true, what concrete difference will its being true make in any one's actual life?" The upshot of James's maxim is the ruin of any lingering philosophical foundationalism that would build systems upon clear, distinct, indubitable ideas. Rather than building upon secure foundations, pragmatist philosophy always begins in the midst of things, colored by sentiments, events, and human needs, a philosophy subject to constant revision and to new demands. Foundationalism, with roots in Locke and Descartes, by contrast, is closely allied to the epistemological strategy of representation. Put

simply, representationalism is, as James characterizes it, "the popular notion . . . that a true idea must copy its reality."[74] Representationalist philosophy, what Richard Rorty calls "the mind as the mirror of nature," sets itself the task of discriminating between those ideas that actually represent the world and those ideas that simply pretend to do so. By identifying these privileged representations, the philosopher provides a foundation upon which all beliefs worthy of the honorific "true knowledge" will stand. The representationalist's mirror is a very different thing than the pragmatist's action. As James comments, "[The] great assumption of the intellectualists [foundationalists] is that truth means essentially an inert static relation. When you've got your true idea of anything, there's an end of the matter. You're in possession; you *know*. . . . Epistemologically you are in stable equilibrium."[75] By contrast, James and his fellow pragmatists hold that "[t]he truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process. . . ."[76] From the outset, the pragmatists rejected the foundationalist strategies so characteristic of modern philosophy and so Robert Cummings Neville is right to see them as pioneering "the highroad around modernism."[77]

Antifoundationalism is central to the work of Rorty, the neopragmatist who may be most responsible for the contemporary pragmatic turn. Rorty inherited antifoundationalism from respectable analytic sources that include Wilfrid Sellars's campaign against the "myth of the given," Willard V. O. Quine's critique of the two dogmas of empiricism (analyticity and sense data) and his consequent turn toward holism, and Donald Davidson's overturning of the scheme-content distinction. In Rorty's hands, the critique of foundationalism leads to the abandonment of ontology, a kind of provocative deflationary pragmatism, rooted especially in a particular reading of James and Dewey, which sees knowledge as a toolbox for the democratically oriented transformation of society and reality.[78] Rorty's, however, is not the only viable pragmatism making rounds in the academy. There are also those, such as Christopher Hookway, Ochs, and Frank M. Oppenheim, who in diverse ways contend for a wider, more robust pragmatism. This realist pragmatism, rooted especially in Peirce and the late Josiah Royce, also sees knowledge as properly crafted by human knowers for the transformation of society and the nurturance of "beloved communities," but sees this effective knowledge in realist rather than nominalist terms. Indeed, despite his pragmatist rejection of foundationalism, Peirce considered nominalism to be among the chief specters that his philosophy was designed to exorcise. A pragmatic nonfoundationalist account of knowledge need not evacuate the world of intrinsic intelligibility or worth. In Peirce's thought, nonfoundationalism is an integral part of a complex theory that sees the entire universe as shot through with a real intelligibility and dignity (inherent goodness), intelligibility and dignity that do not need the guarantee of a foundationalist *cogito*. Anti- or nonfoundationalism, it turns out, is

capable of multiple iterations—the relativism and nihilism of certain avant-garde antifoundationalists is only one extreme within a spectrum that also affords religious opportunities, a space to value and entertain claims about the sacred, and the possibility that creativity and generosity may in fact be the ultimate, though dubitable, constituents of the universe.

At this point, readers familiar with contemporary neopragmatism may balk. All of this mysticism hardly sits well with the dominant naturalism in neopragmatic philosophy. After all, what has the neopragmatism of Quine, Putnam, and Rorty to do with Religious Studies in general and the participatory turn in particular? Indeed, it is true that the pragmatic turn is often associated with a kind of militant secularism or aggressive atheism, at worst, or an ambivalent tolerance of religious belief, at best, and that contemporary pragmatists such as Rorty and Michael Eldridge have done little to amend this view.[79] However, recent work (particularly that which appeals to the Peirce-Royce axis of "Cambridge pragmatism" as opposed to the James-Dewey axis of "instrumentalist pragmatism") has explored the immense fruitfulness of pragmatist approaches in religion and spirituality.[80] Moreover, as Richard J. Bernstein notes, not only Peirce and Royce, but also James and even Dewey "all repudiated 'aggressive atheism.' In differing ways, each of them took the religious life seriously and made vital contributions to understanding what it means."[81] The more nuanced historiography of American pragmatism emerging today locates its roots in explicitly religious thinkers as diverse as Jonathan Edwards, on the one hand, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, on the other. Although it was once fashionable to drive a wedge between the pragmatists' concern to address religious questions (think of James in the *Varieties*, Peirce's "Neglected Argument," or even Dewey's *Art as Experience*) and their work on pragmatism as such, contemporary historians increasingly recognize the constitutive role that religious questions played in the development and articulation of classical pragmatism.[82] Religious themes were not marginal to the founding generation of pragmatists but central to each philosopher in his own way: James's fascination with individual spiritual experience and the paranormal, Peirce and Royce's interest in community as a spiritual locus, and Dewey's nature-based religious sentiment. The religious fecundity of pragmatism is not only an interesting episode in the history of philosophy but continues today. In the contemporary academy, Cornel West and others call for a renewal of "prophetic pragmatism," a pragmatism deployed in concert with its religious roots for the betterment and correction of societal injustices.[83] Pragmatism plays a similarly aleatory role in providing guidance to the ecumenical dialogical practice of Scriptural Reasoning that seeks to open a critical communicative space for robust relations between Muslims, Jews, and Christians.[84] In the field of Religious Studies proper, diverse pragmatist approaches continue to play an important role in the more philosophical considerations of mysticism.[85]

How, then, do the participatory turn and pragmatism jointly challenge the sufficiency of the linguistic turn? Whereas certain forms of the linguistic turn may also abandon foundationalism, both pragmatists and participatory thinkers go farther in their more radical recognition of the simultaneously interpretive and ontological element in all acts of human knowing. Interpretation does not exhaust being, but invites us into the adventure of ontological transformation and relation. As Sanbothe writes, a focus on transformation (e.g., as a goal of philosophical inquiry) is perhaps the central feature in the pragmatic challenge or "twist" to the linguistic turn:

> The pragmatic twist of the linguistic turn can be understood as transformative. . . . Philosophy is then no longer understood as the methodological analysis of present states of affairs or existing linguistic structures. Instead it is comprehended and carried out as a transformative activity that experimentally works toward changes in common-sense in order to develop new knowledge practices.[86]

This is not an abandonment of the linguistic turn, but a deepening of it. Signs and texts are not only human artifacts, but beings thick with their own creational weight. The pragmatism of Peirce and Royce sees the entire world as an interlocking, relational ("synechistic") sphere of signs. Creatures are not simply sign-bearing or sign-interpreting but signs themselves. The universe is semiotic and, therefore, demands interpretation at every level. As Peirce writes:

> It seems a strange thing, when one comes to ponder over it, that a sign should leave its interpreter to supply a part of its meaning; but the explanation of the phenomenon lies in the fact the entire universe—not merely the universe of existents, but all that wider universe, embracing the universe of existents as a part, the universe which we are all accustomed to refer to as "the truth"—that all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs.[87]

Neither Peirce nor Royce reduced this pansemiosis to language and by refusing to do so they arguably afforded human language a greater nobility than contemporary linguistifications of reality and the sacred. If there is nothing beyond the text, as Derrida holds, or if we have to keep silence about whatever exceeds our language, as Wittgenstein thinks, then the play of language itself either begins to look vacuous or betokens a linguistic idealism hardly distinguishable from nihilism. However, if semiotics is ontological and thus exceeds the human languages that are its endlessly varying echoes, then language itself is "saved," as Owen Barfield might say.

Rather than conceiving semantics in terms of epistemology and demanding that our languages impossibly represent a wholly nonlinguistic reality, participatory thought considers that Peirce and Royce made the right move

by attaching semiotics not primarily to epistemology but to ontology. Communicative acts and semiotic exchanges take place, first and foremost, in the sphere of the real, the ontological, a realm of signifying bodies and events upon which the subtlety of human cognition and language may supervene. Truth expressed in language is not, therefore, of a different order than the truth that simply is the processes of the world. Rather than an internal mirroring of an external realm, our language is an event that can resonate more or less with the events of the world. This allows for theories of truth as relational, endlessly hermeneutic happenings, and even for a nonrepresentationalist correspondence theory that discerns the true in a real ontological proportion between being and intelligibility. Such discernment is not a static intellectualist grasping of the "way things are," but the intuiting through body and mind of an aesthetic fit, a musical harmony, or an occult sympathy between knowing and being. In our epistemic acts, we do not passively register being on an internal screen, but rather participate in the dynamic elevation, transformation, and fulfillment of both the knower and the known through the inauguration of a new relationship.

In accord with the later thought of Peirce and Royce, participatory approaches see the adventure of knowing as ultimately a form of openness to the gifted, unanticipated, and even beguiling disclosures that are mediated to us from ontologically thick events through our own cultural, linguistic, and embodied productions. Truth—even truth about the *mystery* out of which everything arises[88]—is indeed "made" through our actions, inquiries, and processes of validation and, yet, this truth is not thereby simply a secular, nominalist product but rather participates in successive disclosures of a sacred reality.[89] Moreover, our properly human constructions of truth involve us in the dangerous business of affirmation—truth elicits our commitment and investment, which is to say truth-making requires the risk of participation and issues in transformation.[90] We give expression to truth not by representing inwardly an outward reality, but through our creative responses in word and deed to the pressure of a transcendent and immanent mystery and the creation it continually bestows. A pragmatist approach to spiritual questions is not merely analytic or interpretive but is rather self-implicating, critical, and transformative—three characteristics that help push the pragmatic theorist beyond the confines of the linguistic turn.

The Resacralization of Language

Going beyond the linguistic turn need not mean leaving language behind, but can rather point us in a direction that accords even greater importance to language—as, for example, when we recognize a self-overcoming or even transcendent drive within language. Indeed, most religious traditions—such as Kabbalah, Hinduism, and Sufism—uphold the sacred nature of their scriptural languages. What this means is that religious tongues are taken as the

expression or the embodiment of divine intentions, possessing therefore a different ontic status than secular languages. In these traditions, the idea of revelation is perforce connected to the sacralization of language. Because such texts are taken to participate in the tongues of angels, as it were, they can offer privileged revelations and ultimate truths about the origin, meaning, and purpose of reality. In some cases, these texts are regarded as ontologically primordial—i.e., they are said to have played a central role in the creation of the world and, therefore, to not have been humanly produced.[91] The Vedas and the Torah, for instance, are not traditionally regarded as human artifacts but are instead taken as "multileveled cosmic realities" or "cosmological principles" that mirror or embody the deepest structure of reality and/or the divine.[92] In theosophical Kabbalah, Moshe Idel writes, "language reflects the inner structure of the divine realm, the sefirotic system of divine powers."[93] In this context, textual exegesis naturally becomes a religious imperative of the utmost spiritual and revelatory significance.

Despite the adamant Enlightenment rejection of the cognitive value and authority of religious texts, the sacredness of religious language is gradually resurfacing in the contemporary study of religion. We have already referred to the process of the linguistification of the sacred brought about by modernity and the linguistic turn. As Habermas notes, such lingustification has even reshaped our notions of the divine: "The idea of God is transformed [*aufgehoben*] into a concept of a *Logos* . . . 'God' becomes the name for a communicative structure that forces men, on pain of a loss of their humanity, to go beyond their accidental, empirical nature to encounter one another *indirectly*, that is, across an objective something that they themselves are not."[94] What neither Habermas nor other modern thinkers could have expected, however, is that the transference of religious meanings onto language is leading today to a renewed and perhaps disconcerting revaluation of the sacred dimensions of religious language (and, indeed, of human language per se).[95] The lingustification of the sacred is paving the way for a resacralization of language.

This tendency is evident in discursive sites as diverse as Taylor's understanding of language as the "divine milieu," Cupitt's view of mysticism as "a kind of writing," and Kripal's suggestion that the hermeneutic study of mystical texts constitutes a genuinely mystical path. In his discussion of postmodern theologies, Grigg suggests that the death of God as a transcendental signifier (i.e., a transcendent divine consciousness, ground, or reality) requires that God becomes the Word now embodied in scripture.[96] In other words, much postmodern theology replaces the metaphysical God by a nonsubstantialist divine milieu whose essential dynamism is the free play of language. In this light, the evolution of premodern to modern to postmodern thinking in religion can be seen to have shifted its focus first from God to word and then, shockingly, from word to Word-as-God. The detranscendentalization of religion gives way to the consecration of immanent language.

The postmodern (re-)sacralization of language is not a tidy affair but instead explodes in many directions releasing a series of diverse strategies for overcoming reductionist linguistification. Among the most common of such strategies are the deconstructionist projects of those such as Cupitt and Taylor, who discover a kind of divinity in the sheer unencumbered *différance of* language itself. Such maneuvers restore sacrality to language but arguably do so at a high cost: the nominalism of many deconstructive efforts threatens to cut resacralized languages off from the body, the depths of spiritual experience, the natural world, and mundane human history.

Alternatively, a number of approaches to the postcritical transfiguration of language do not seek to untether language from the natural world, but instead see language as all the more sacred precisely to the degree that they discover it as all the more natural. Early on, thinkers such as Giambattista Vico, Johann Georg Hamann, Johann Herder, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge pioneered an overcoming of modernity through a deepening regard for language as expressive of a profound naturalism. It is not language as a free play alone that deserves to be called sacred, but instead language as constitutive of human thought and inherently expressive of a sacred creation to which humanity and culture likewise belong.

This alternative tradition continues to be an important source for a participatory overcoming of linguistification through a rediscovery of language's most profound springs. Language-wielding humanity stands in what Barfield calls a "directionally creator" relationship to the world. Language does perhaps unleash a kind of divinity, as Cupitt and Taylor recognize, but our creative and even divine linguistic powers are not divorced from a weighty materialism that alone allows our language to ever emerge. In our poetic powers, we do not leave the world behind but create after the manner that nature herself creates. "The world, like Dionysus, is torn to pieces by pure intellect," writes Barfield, "but the Poet is Zeus; he has swallowed the heart of the world; and he can reproduce it in a living body."[97] Participatory approaches to language see human poiesis as a creative manifestation of life or the spirit in the human realm—a swallowing the heart of the world—and they thus radically overcome the modern split between language and ontology. We suggest that it is in the particularities and constraints of nature, culture, and history that language becomes truly revelatory, a stance that affirms the immanence of the mystery without in any way repudiating its transcendence.

The Renewed Interest in the Study of Spirituality

Any sensitive observer of North American and European culture will have noted the explosion of the use of the word *spirituality* in recent decades. On bookshelves and in the broadcast media, in places of worship and places of learning, in the workplace as well as at vacation destinations there is an

unmistakable upsurge in the popularity of spirituality. Although the hackneyed distinction between being "spiritual" and being "religious" is largely specious, the currency of the term *spirituality* does point to an authentic hunger on the part of many for deeply lived religion rather than a simply confessed or routinely performed religiosity. Moreover, this yearning and the cultural phenomena associated with it are not confined to popular culture but have had an effect within academia as well. Indeed, today spirituality is not only a cultural preoccupation, but has emerged as an academic discipline in its own right.

Although the discipline of Spirituality has deep roots, it first solidified into an academic field during the 1990s. During this decade, the discipline established the necessary guild structures for an authentic field of study including societies (e.g., the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality), journals (e.g., *Spiritus* and its predecessor the *Christian Spirituality Bulletin*, *Mystics Quarterly*, and *Studies in Spirituality*), book series (e.g., the Paulist Press *Classics of Western Spirituality* or the twenty-five volume *World Spirituality: An Encyclopedic History of the Religious Quest*, edited by Ewert Cousins), doctoral programs (e.g., at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley), research agendas, a critical methodology, a common terminology, and so forth. Although the field has thus far largely coalesced around the study of Christian spirituality there are signs that this exclusive focus is changing and that a broader field hospitable to differing religious stances is emerging.[98]

The field has largely succeeded in defining itself by delineating its formal and material objects of study. According to Schneiders, the *material object* or the *what* that is studied in the discipline of Christian Spirituality is "lived Christian faith." The *formal object* of study—what Schneiders calls "the particular aspect under which this lived experience of the faith is studied"—is experience:

> Spirituality as a discipline does not seek to deduce from revelation what Christian spirituality must be, or to prescribe theologically its shape, character, or functioning, or even necessarily to promote pastorally its exercise. It seeks to understand it as it actually occurs, as it actually transforms its subject toward fullness of life in Christ, that is, toward self-transcending life-integration within the Christian community of faith.[99]

Arguably, even though it is addressed to Christian Spirituality, Schneiders's programmatic formulation can be adopted for other traditions (with necessary modifications, of course). Thus, for example, Cousins speaks of the study of Global Spirituality as

> a distinct discipline which can be distinguished from other disciplines by the nature of the religious experience on which it reflects. . . . Such a discipline would study spirituality not in one tradition alone, isolated from all

> others, but in a comprehensive geographic and historical context in which it would view the spiritual wisdom of each tradition in relation to that of all the others.[100]

Two of the most distinctive methodological features of the emerging discipline of Spirituality are self-implication and transformation and these features raise serious challenges to the hegemony of the linguistic paradigm within Religious Studies. The focus on experience (despite the term's many aporias) already propels the discipline some distance beyond linguistification, for while experience may not be entirely divorceable from language and interpretation, it is always more than just semantics, and more even than epistemology. Experience subverts our established categories and resists capture by our languages. A robust account of experience introduces to our thought an "eventual" site, a happening with ontological stakes that cannot be collapsed, a happening that also calls the putative observer into question.[101] In the first issue of the journal *Spiritus*, Mary Frohlich argues for the "self-implicating" character of the study of lived spirituality. Frohlich amends Schneiders's definition in order to contend that, in its formal aspect, Spirituality is not the study of "experience" alone but the study of "the human spirit fully in act." Scholars of spirituality are fascinated by those phenomena that point toward human persons living and acting according to their highest (i.e., spiritual) potential. But, Frohlich says, "We cannot know 'the human spirit in act,' except *as* the human spirit in act. We cannot recognize the constructed expressions that radically engage the human spirit except on the basis of our own radical engagement."[102]

Our own radical engagement, according to Frohlich, involves us participatively in the objects of our study and implicates us in our academic conclusions. Although such self-implication has been traditionally looked at as contaminating inquiry, a number of notable scholars within Religious Studies (from Robert A. Orsi to Kripal) would join hands here with those pioneering the field of Spirituality in recognizing the futility of excising one's own religious journey from scholarly endeavor. As Orsi notes in *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*, academics are necessarily haunted by their own religious histories: "[T]he halls of religious studies departments are thick with ghosts—the minister father, the tongue-speaking mother, the nuns and priests who taught us, the born-again brother. . . ."[103] Such self-implication is inevitable but too rarely acknowledged. As Orsi writes, "If sexual relations in the field is the great taboo subject of anthropology, our own religious histories is the great taboo of religious studies."[104]

Frohlich goes so far as to recommend that attending honestly and critically to our self-implication requires that we return to the language and practice of interiority—not interiority as the kind of private language Wittgen-

stein prohibited, but instead, following Bernard Lonergan, interiority as the self-attentiveness without which we cannot be present to one another.[105] Such a vision refuses to reduce spirituality to a private interior affair while also insisting that some concept of interiority or self-awareness is necessary for a full account of the human life—public, personal, moral, and relational life in both its dejection and its exultation. The cultivation of this kind of self-awareness requires something more than reading or the manipulation and evaluation of texts. Indeed, argues Frohlich, it requires something akin to spiritual practice on the part of the scholar. Although we need not jettison the tools and insights offered by the linguistic turn, Frohlich's methodological move takes us fully beyond any linguistic reductionism and back into the tempestuous, risky, transformative field of lived and embodied relationship to the mystery, to ourselves, and to others. Here, in fact, participatory thinkers may want to push Spirituality scholars to go a bit farther still. We welcome the return to a language of interiority but understand, beyond even Lonergan, that interiority has a paradoxical externality to it. It is not only our self-awareness that allows us to be present to one another, but also (and simultaneously) our ecstatic interiority that is the very potential of our dwelling, as it were, outside of ourselves *in* the consciousness of the other (and vice versa). Interiority, thus conceived, is not an ethereal subjectivity, but an ontologically thick ubiquitous reality; it is not a private fortress but the potentially dangerous site of intimate relationality, exchange, and presence.

To return to interiority without falling into the errors of Enlightenment representationalism and ontotheology means rescuing a concept of interiority as an event of vulnerable relationality—an event, therefore, of nearly inevitable transformation. Of course, the importance of transformation has not gone unnoticed by Spirituality scholars. Indeed, Philip Sheldrake reflects a disciplinary consensus when he writes that, as self-implicating, academic spirituality is also self-transforming: "What distinguishes the discipline of Christian spirituality in its fullest sense is that it is not only *informative* but *transformative*."[106] The artifacts of such a discipline are not just books, journal articles, conferences, and lectures, but the changing lives of both professors and their students, scholarly authors and their readers, clerics and religious communities.

Still, a caveat is necessary at this point, for the discipline of Spirituality is acutely aware that self-implication brings dangers of its own. Therefore, Spirituality strives to cultivate both the detachment necessary for the *critical* side of the study of lived religion and the engagement necessary to do justice to the *lived* side of this equation.[107] In this regard, scholars of spirituality are very close to advocates of the participatory turn, who likewise argue that a critical understanding of spirituality, mysticism, and religion can be enhanced by a certain scholarly vulnerability to the phenomena studied. On the one hand, because ontologically real religious happenings are not built up around

us but are rather put forth through us, participatory scholars understand that their bodies, souls, and spirits are part of that contested field they are called upon to study. To bracket themselves out of the inquiry (as the "science of religion" partisans would advocate) runs the severe risk of misplaced concreteness, that is, the substitution of an easy academic abstraction for the categorial recalcitrance of lived religion. On the other hand, both Spirituality and the participatory turn recognize that a critical, self-implicating study rebounds upon the spiritual practices and communities of faith thus engaged. Whether or not they share the faith of those they study, scholars are not in an absolutely different ethical, semantic, or religious universe than those they study but in a moral, ontological, and continually rearticulated relationship with the persons, beings, and communities about whom they write.

The Question of Religious Truth in Postmetaphysical Thinking

Perhaps the most universal trope in modern and postmodern approaches to religion is the claim that supposedly metaphysical claims should be more properly understood as statements about language. In the opening essay of a modernist collection on the study of religion, Willi Braun writes: "The 'transcendent' beyond-human beings, such as gods, spirits, ancestors, or whatever else one would name to this class, have their lives not in the some ontic selfhood, but as discursive entities."[108] Similarly, postmodern scholars persistently exploit Derrida's infamous contention that "[t]here is nothing outside the text" in order to discard the extralinguistic cognitive value of religious utterances. Apart from certain confessional or theological works, current academic thinking on religion displays an intense skepticism toward any metaphysical referent or transcendental signifier in religious discourse.[109] Postmetaphysical thinking, in short, deprives religious truth of any ontological significance beyond language.[110]

The implications of this postmetaphysical ethos for our understanding of religious truth are especially evident in Flood's work. According to Flood, religious truth is necessarily discursive because "it is impossible to get behind language and its reference system."[111] Therefore, he continues, religious truths should be valued and assessed in terms of their "intertextual" coherence: "Metaphysical truths proclaimed by a religious tradition . . . can be understood in terms of coherence within given frameworks and their significance within those frameworks."[112] Once freed from its metaphysical weight, that is, the question of religious truth becomes simply one of coherence and representation within each tradition's narrative practices. To support this claim, Flood points out that, since notions such as *nibbana* and *theosis* only have meaning within their respective soteriological frameworks (i.e., Buddhism and Christianity), any attempt to establish their truth value outside these narrative contexts is both futile and misguided. Flood's formulation leads,

internally, to a contextualist account of religious truth in terms of linguistic coherence, and externally, to functionalist approaches: from the perspective of the outsider, "it becomes meaningless to ask about the truth of these concepts outside of their cultural function."[113] Here advocates of the participatory turn may want to challenge Flood to go farther. Granting the indisputable holism of religious meanings, we suggest that this holism is not logically inconsistent with the possibility that such meanings *may* possess ontological or metaphysical referents. If we allow for the plausibility of a multiplicity of actual religious worlds capable of referentially anchoring a number of religious meanings, we can coherently affirm both the contextuality *and* the supratextual import of many significant religious notions.

Although the contemporary split between religious language and ontology is generally taken as normative, it is, in fact, unwarranted and even potentially distorting. One of the best accounts of the possible distortions implicit in the postmetaphysical deflation of religious truth claims with which we are familiar is Jeremy Northcote's critique of the widespread scholarly practice of bracketing claims of supernormal causation in the study of religion.[114] Briefly, Northcote argues that the methodological suspension of the validity of supernormal claims (e.g., about metaphysical entities or levels of reality), far from warranting objectivism or scholarly neutrality, may actually constitute a bias against "the possibility that people's thinking and behaviour are indeed based on various supernormal forces." "In this scenario," he adds, "a bracketing approach will falsely attribute mundane sociological explanations to behaviour that is in actuality shaped by supernatural forces."[115] Accordingly, Northcote issues a call for dialogue between Western and alternative perspectives in the appraisal of supernormal claims. The point here is that unless one subscribes ideologically to a materialistic natural metaphysics, it may be prudent, and perhaps heuristically fertile, not to reject a priori the possibility of effective causation from the various supernormal sources described in religious utterances.[116]

The methodological agnosticism problematized by Northcote seems largely rooted in the strong allegiance within Religious Studies to neo-Kantian frameworks that either bracket or deny the existence of supernatural and metaphysical sources of religion. On the one hand, scholars as different as Ninian Smart and Peter Byrne, among others, have forcefully defended for decades that the study of religion should take an agnostic (and supposedly neutral) position regarding the reality of metaphysical or transcendental referents.[117] At the heart of this apparently temperate stance rests the Kantian belief that innate or deeply seated epistemic constraints in human cognition render impossible or illicit any knowledge claim about such metaphysical realities. Though more metaphysically eliminationist than agnostic, Caputo eloquently articulates this intuition: "We cannot, by science, philosophy, or religion, situate ourselves safely in some privileged spot above the mortal fray

below having gained the high ground of a Privileged Access to the Way Things Are."[118] On the other hand, many postmodern authors endorse today a "linguistic Kantianism" that often results in the epistemological obliteration of such realities. Giving voice to this view, Taylor states: "Consciousness . . . deals only with signs and never reaches the thing in itself. More precisely, the thing in itself is not an independent entity (be it 'real' or 'ideal') to which all signs refer, but is itself a sign. . . . There is no logos to be revealed, no secret to be uncovered, no truth to be discovered."[119] Nevertheless, to deny that religious phenomena can ever have extralinguistic substance is to make a metaphysical claim, even if a negative one—a claim that arguably undermines the professed postmetaphysical status of these versions of the linguistic paradigm. Neo-Kantian skepticism not only traps many students of religion in a kind of epistemic box hermetically sealed by its critical presuppositions, but also requires the arguably ethnocentric dismissal of the participants' cognitive claims. The ethnocentric core of this skeptical stance becomes apparent in the way it dismisses all ontological and metaphysical claims made by religious practitioners as precritical, ingenuous, dogmatic, or even primitive and superstitious. As Donald Evans once remarked, however, who are the philosophers to decide what mystics can or cannot do?[120]

Clearly, one of the central issues at stake here is whether some kind of personal engagement or even transformation—such as the overcoming of mental pride, the integration of body and mind, the purification of the heart, or the development of contemplative competences—may be required for both the apprehension and the assessment of certain religious truth claims. After all, most contemplative traditions hold that, in order to ascertain their most fundamental truths, practitioners need to develop cognitive competences beyond the structures of linguistic rationality. This question is, of course, at the heart of the conflict between tradition and modernity—and arguably between religion and science—with adherents to the former worldviews claiming such need and proponents of the latter vigorously rejecting it. In the eyes of their respective antagonists, religionists appear epistemologically naïve, elitist, and authoritarian, and the modernists look cognicentric, prejudiced, and even cut off from essential dimensions of their being. Naturally, both camps denounce the rampant dogmatism they sincerely perceive in their opponents' stance.

Whereas we believe that the emphasis on transformation as a primary goal of human inquiry brought about by the pragmatic turn in contemporary philosophy may eventually relax this tension, this issue is profound and real and needs to be faced squarely. We do not claim to have any magical solution to the quandary, but we want to propose that the direction forward calls for a kind of alchemical mixture between intellectual humility and ruthless criticism. Can our mind be humble enough to recognize that its rational structures may not always have the last word in the evaluation of truth claims, and

yet maintain and even sharpen its critical look toward oppressive, repressive, and self-deceptive religious dogmas and ideologies? Can the modern mind admit that the epistemic competences fostered by Western education may not be the final or necessarily superior cognitive plateau, and simultaneously denounce authoritarian tendencies possibly emerging from the elitism intrinsic to highly specialized cognitive endeavors such as the contemplative one? In the end, as Kripal reminds us, "Rationalism and reductionism . . . are also state-specific truths (that is, they are specific to highly trained egoic forms of awareness), but their states of mind are more easily reproduced and communicated, at least within our present Western cultures."[121]

Let us have now a closer look at the nature and problems of the neo-Kantianism typical of the contemporary study of religion. Cultural-linguistic approaches usually maintain that religious knowledge is constituted by language, doctrinal beliefs, and soteriological expectations. It is true that religious practitioners generally "discover" the knowledge already cultivated by their traditions, and cultural-linguistic approaches should be credited for recognizing this and having emphasized the contextuality and ensuing diversity of spiritual knowledge claims (even though proponents of these approaches have not always as clearly acknowledged the contextuality of their own analyses). As we have seen, however, from this valid insight these approaches go on to deny or bracket the ontological and metaphysical import of religious truth claims. Although it would probably be unfair to charge *all* contextualist programs with psychologism, subjectivism, or reductionism, it is fair to say, we believe, that they typically operate under the spell of what Karl Popper called the "myth of the framework."[122] Adapted to our present context, this myth suggests the idea that *mystics and religious practitioners are prisoners of their conceptual frameworks and that spiritual knowledge must always be shaped by or screened through them*.

In the study of mysticism, this neo-Kantian stance has been forcibly articulated by Katz: "My view—and it's important that it be understood—is that while such transcendental realities or Reality may well exist, it (or He, She or It) can only be known by us in the way such metaphysical realia become available to us given the sort of beings we are."[123] In other words, metaphysical realities *may* exist, but the only thing we can access is our situated phenomenal awareness of them. Contra mystical claims, no direct knowledge of spiritual realities is therefore possible.[124] One way to challenge the myth of the framework is to show that mystics report insights that their doctrines and beliefs could not have prepared them to "expect" or allowed them to contextually "constitute."[125] Although mysticism does tend to be "conservative" in its reaffirming of previous doctrinal beliefs,[126] neoperennialists are right in noting the emergence of novel and truly "revolutionary" mystical events that cannot be fully explained by ordinary constructive variables or acquired conceptual frameworks. Nevertheless, there is still a more

fatal stroke to be given to the myth of the framework. The crucial flaw of the contextualist logic is not the denial that mystics can transcend their conceptual frameworks, *but the very postulation of a dualism of conceptual framework and uninterpreted reality*.

The dualism of framework and reality is not only alive and well in the study of mysticism, but extends throughout the entire discipline of Religious Studies. For instance, both Hick and George Lindbeck have provided influential defenses of religions as interpretative schemes of an ultimately unknowable reality.[127] Likewise, Joseph Runzo's work illustrates how the view of religions as conceptual schemes (which he endorses) places a noumenal spiritual reality out of reach from human consciousness, which then becomes "trapped" in a "merely" phenomenal world. Since all religious truth claims are relative to conceptual frameworks, Runzo argues, religious skepticism can only be avoided by resorting to an exhausted "absolute commitment" to faith.[128] Note also how much the seminal work of Smith perpetuates this dualism. In his often quoted essay, "Map is Not Territory," after rightly critiquing the idea of a pregiven territory (the notorious myth of the given), Smith concludes: "'Map is not territory'—but maps are all we possess."[129] Contrasting Smith with Eliade, Sam Gill writes, "For Smith there is no objective territory. . . . Distinctions in space, time, shape, and body are the human methods of constructing reality, of engaging the world meaningfully. To recognize something as a center or an originating event is not to locate a hierophany . . . but to participate in a mode of human creativity."[130] The setback of Smith's formulation is that it is built on the false dichotomy of "objective" and "constructed," "discovered" and "created." As many of the contributions to this volume show, however, from a participatory perspective the perceived presence of a religious event in the world can be seen as neither a purely objective discovery nor a merely human construction. As is the case with the cocreated nature of a rainbow, an ontologically rich religious event emerges in the world precisely through human perceptual and cognitive participation.

The dualism of framework and reality is widely regarded as implausible, especially in the wake of Davidson's classic essay "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme."[131] Taking the translatability of languages as a paradigmatic case, Davidson argues that the idea of alternative conceptual frameworks necessarily presupposes a larger common ground that makes these frameworks truly "alternative" and whose existence belies the idea.[132] According to Davidson, the dissolution of this "third dogma of empiricism" (after Quine) not only undermines the existence of conceptual frameworks (and its related self-defeating conceptual relativisms), but also renders the idea of an uninterpreted reality (the myth of the given) unintelligible.[133] Once we give up the dualism of framework and reality, we can, with Davidson, "re-establish *unmediated touch* with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences true or false."[134] It is crucial to realize that since the overcoming of this dual-

ism implies not only dropping ideas about conceptual frameworks, but also the concept of an uninterpreted reality, these "objects" can no longer be taken to mean the pregiven objects of positivism, empiricism, or naïve realism. On the contrary, giving up this dualism calls us to move beyond objectivism and subjectivism, and thus to redeem our participatory, connected, and direct relationship with reality as the source of our being.[135]

In sum, the legitimacy of the postmetaphysical deflation of religious truth is contingent on the validity of neo-Kantian assumptions and dualisms. On the one hand, this approach requires either the denial of any extralinguistic religious reality or its reification as an inaccessible noumenon about which we must necessarily remain silent. On the other hand, it posits a phenomenal consciousness that is overdetermined by cultural-linguistic variables and constructive cognitive mechanisms. In their various fashions, Kantian epistemological skepticism, phenomenological bracketing, and metaphysical agnosticism all lead to the same practical outcome: the systematic refusal of any possible translinguistic referent for religious truth claims. It seems obvious, then, that the linguistic paradigm in the study of religion led the way out of the Cartesian philosophy of consciousness but not out of the Kantian epistemological pessimism. In lieu of this, we propose that, at least in this fundamental respect, *the linguistic turn has not fully overcome the Cartesian-Kantian paradigm of classical and modern approaches to the study of religion*. But it is worth asking: How genuine a *post*modern and *post*colonial approach can we have so long as we remain bound to Kantianism? In the next section, we consider certain developments in the contemporary discussion about religious pluralism that suggest the need to entertain the ontological bases of the plurality of religious forms while at the same time avoiding the reification of static essences, spiritual hierarchies, or universally paradigmatic metaphysical realities.

The Irreducibility of Religious Pluralism

A few marginal voices notwithstanding, the search for a common core, universal essence, or single metaphysical world behind the multiplicity of religious experiences and cosmologies can be regarded as over.[136] Whether guided by the exclusivist intuitionism of traditionalism or the fideism of theological agendas, the outcome—and too often the intended goal—of such universalist projects was unambiguous: the privileging of one particular spiritual or metaphysical system over all others. Furthermore, modern scholarship shows that inclusivist and even so-called pluralist models of religious diversity also tend to conceal claims for the supremacy of one or another religious tradition, thereby collapsing into the rigid exclusivism of dogmatic stances.[137] In a way, the standard responses to religious diversity—exclusivism, inclusivism, and ecumenical pluralism—can be situated along a continuum ranging from

more gross to more subtle forms of "spiritual narcissism," which elevate one's favored tradition or spiritual choice as superior. The religious superiority of one's preferred tradition is normally conceived in terms of its conveying a more complete or accurate picture of a purportedly single religious ultimate or "the way things really are." The dogmatically apologetic nature of these approaches arguably limits their effectiveness to facilitate a genuinely symmetrical, dialogical, and mutually enriching encounter among religious traditions in which deep transformation and even the risk of conversion are real possibilities.

Whereas the search for interreligious parallels continues to be a valid and important scholarly enterprise—especially as guided by the so-called new comparativism[138]—most scholars have wisely given up explaining the differences among religions through open or concealed hierarchical rankings of spiritual insights or traditions. This sensibility is at work in some of the most interesting recent pluralist accounts of religious diversity, such as Mark Heim's "soteriological pluralism" or Stephen Kaplan's proposal of "different paths leading to different summits."[139] Though both authors remain agnostic about the metaphysical status of their proposals, Heim envisions a multiplicity of irreducible religious salvations associated with the various traditions, and Kaplan postulates three independent but equiprimordial religious goals and conceptually possible ultimate realities: theism (in its various forms), monistic nondualism (à la Advaita Vedanta), and process nondualism (exemplified by Yogacara Buddhism).

This combination of radical pluralism and metaphysical agnosticism is a chief feature of the cultural-linguistic solution to the problem of conflicting truth claims in religion. The translation of religious ontologies into culturally mediated discursive artifacts and/or soteriological ends allows scholars to coherently explain interreligious differences as the predictable upshot of the world's various religious beliefs, practices, vocabularies, or language games. As we have seen, this move requires the denial or bracketing of the ontological status of the referents of religious language, which are usually seen as analytically meaningless, hermeneutically obscure, or parasitic upon a despotic metaphysics of presence. After the linguistic turn, the recognition of a genuine plurality of religious goals comes at the cost of either stripping religious ontological claims of any extralinguistic veridicality or denying that we can know such truths even if they exist.[140]

It is interesting to note that the problem of religious pluralism (that is, the exclusivity and incompatibility of religious claims about metaphysical realities) significantly contributes to the modern and postmodern incredulity toward their ontological status. Discussing the need for naturalistic explanations in Religious Studies, J. Samuel Preus writes: "For how can such an enterprise [i.e., the study of religion] proceed without any theory of causes, especially when its primary data, provided by the representatives of specific

religious traditions, are routinely authenticated by references to a divine origin of some sort—especially *when such references function as explanations that are mutually exclusive?*"[141] Against the background of modernist assumptions about an objectively singular reality, it is understandable that the presence of a plurality of mutually exclusive accounts leads to the confident dismissal of religious explanations. It is as if contemporary scholarship had succumbed to the Cartesian anxiety behind what W. E. Hocking called the "scandal of plurality," the worry that "if there are so many divergent claims to ultimate truth, then perhaps none is right."[142] Nevertheless, both the underlying anxiety and the persuasive force of this intuition fade away if we consider the possibility of a plurality of culturally mediated but existing religious worlds capable of anchoring the various religious languages. Once we drop objectivist and universalistic assumptions about a single pregiven spiritual reality or metaphysical ultimate, the multiplicity of religious truth claims stops being a source of ontological incredulity or metaphysical agnosticism and becomes entirely natural, perhaps even essential.

In this regard, we should pay special attention to the work of a number of contemporary scholars who in various ways stress or reclaim the ontological sources and import of religious knowledge while reinforcing pluralistic and contextualist intuitions. For example, Michael Stoeber's "experiential constructivism" affirms the culturally mediated nature of religious experiences, and simultaneously maintains that spiritual realities can have a creative impact on the content of religious knowledge, which explains the emergence of novel spiritual insights and mystical heresies.[143] Jess Byron Hollenback proposes that one of the main effects of many recollective and meditative practices is the "empowerment" (*enthymesis*) of the mystic's conscious and unconscious thoughts.[144] This process of empowerment transforms the mystics' imagination into an organ of supranormal perception and knowledge capable of not only obtaining paranormally veridical information, but also shaping different spiritual landscapes according to the metaphysics, anthropology, and soteriology of their traditions. It is crucial to stress that Hollenback is not proposing any type of solipsistic or projective psychologism whereby mystics merely "create" their spiritual universes by exerting the faculty of their empowered imagination. On the contrary, Hollenback believes that the empowered imagination can actually transcend the mystic's cultural-linguistic context and become a source of novel revelations and creative spiritual insights. In the context of Jewish mysticism, Elliot R. Wolfson offers a thoroughly contextualist and pluralistic *but* ontologically substantial account of visionary religious imagination. According to Wolfson, the visions of the Jewish mystic are not entirely constituted by his or her subjective imagination, but actually reflect "ontological realities that have the capacity of being seen within the imagination of the visionary." This is so because "the imagination is . . . the organ that puts one in contact with spiritual realities that

are perceptible to each individual according to the dominant images of one's religious and cultural affiliation."[145]

The appeal of these highly participatory proposals lies in their being able to offer epistemological bases for a contextually sensitive religious pluralism that overcomes the linguistic deflation of religious ontology or metaphysics. In the context of the dilemmas posed by religious pluralism, one of the many advantages of a participatory account of religious knowing is that it frees religious discourse from the Cartesian-Kantian presuppositions (e.g., about a single pregiven or noumenal ultimate reality) that bind it to reductionistic, exclusivist, or fideistic formulations. Once we do away with the dualism of framework and reality, on the one hand, and recognize the ontologically creative role of spiritual cognition, on the other, the idea of a multiplicity of metaphysical religious worlds becomes not only plausible but perhaps also indispensable. In its most radical version, a participatory perspective does not contend that there are two, three, or any limited quantity of pregiven spiritual ultimates, but rather that *the radical openness, interrelatedness, and creativity of the mystery and/or the cosmos allows for the participatory enaction of an indefinite number of possible self-disclosures of reality and corresponding metaphysical or religious worlds*.[146] These worlds are not statically closed but fundamentally dynamic and open to the continued transformation resulting (at least in part) from the creative impact of human visionary imagination and religious hermeneutical endeavors. Although this may at first sound like a rather "anything goes" approach to religious claims, we hold to the contrary that recognizing a diversity of cocreated religious worlds in fact asks us to be more perspicuous in discerning their differences and merits. Because such worlds are not simply given but involve us as agents and cocreators, we are not off the ethical hook where religion is concerned but instead inevitably make cosmopolitical and moral choices in all our religious actions.

We close this section drawing attention to a potentially significant anomaly within the cultural-linguistic explanation of both religious knowledge and religious pluralism. Modern consciousness research suggests that human beings may be able to access a multiplicity of apparently "given" religious motives and spiritual worlds. The psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, for example, describes how subjects employing different technologies of consciousness modification—such as entheogens or methodical hyperventilation—report having direct experiences of a rich variety of spiritual cosmologies, revelations, and even ultimate principles.[147] What is most striking is that, according to Grof, subjects repeatedly testify to not only having access but also to understanding spiritual insights and cosmologies belonging to specific religious worlds *even without previous exposure to them*. In Grof's own words:

> In nonordinary states of consciousness, visions of various universal symbols can play a significant role in experiences of individuals who previously had

> no interest in mysticism or were strongly opposed to anything esoteric. These visions tend to convey instant intuitive understanding of the various levels of meaning of these symbols.
>
> As a result of experiences of this kind, subjects can develop accurate understanding of various complex esoteric teachings. In some instances, persons unfamiliar with the Kabbalah had experiences described in the Zohar and Sepher Yetzirah and obtained surprising insights into Kabbalistic symbols. Others were able to describe the meaning and function of intricate mandalas used in the Tibetan Vajrayana and other tantric systems.[148]

Though Grof's research awaits the more systematic replication necessary to achieve superior scientific status, his data suggest the limitations of the contextualist account of religious diversity and, if appropriately corroborated, constitute an empirical refutation of the cultural-linguistic overdetermination of religious knowledge and experience. Let us remember here that, for contextualist theorists such as Katz, religious phenomena are always entirely constructed by doctrinal beliefs, languages, practices, and expectations.[149] As Peter Moore puts it, "[T]he lack of doctrinal presuppositions might prevent the mystic not only from understanding and describing his mystical states but even from experiencing the fullness of these states in the first place."[150] Whether or not Grof's subjects experience "the fullness" of mystical states and attain a complete understanding of traditional spiritual meanings is an open question. But even if this were not the case, the evidence provided by Grof's case studies is sufficient, we believe, to render the cultural-linguistic "strong thesis of mediation" questionable on empirical grounds. Grof's subjects report experiences that should *not* take place if the "strong thesis of mediation" is correct.[151]

This anomaly raises serious challenges to the cultural determination of religious knowledge and the associated linguistic account of religious pluralism. The participatory account of a plurality of historically enacted religious worlds introduced above, however, turns the anomaly constituted by Grof's data into a solved problem that the prevailing cultural-linguistic research tradition cannot explain—a key feature of conceptual advance in understanding according to Larry Laudan's theory of scientific growth.[152]

In this section we have seen how the movement away from the essentialism, universalism, and Western colonialism of the classical approaches to religion brought about by the linguistic turn paved the way for the emergence of a plethora of more contextualized, pluralist, and non-Western perspectives. These developments reveal a fundamental paradox at the heart of the linguistic paradigm in the study of religion. On the one hand, linguistic approaches insist on the need to translate religious metaphysical claims into

statements about language. On the other hand, many of these approaches stress the centrality of human faculties and perspectives—embodied, erotic, gendered, emic, and so on—that persistently point to extralinguistic sources of meaning and ways of knowing in religious practice and experience.[153] In other words, there is an unresolved tension between the linguistification of the sacred and the emphasis on the nonlinguistic that characterizes important areas of contemporary scholarship on religion. In the next section, we suggest that this tension can be relaxed, and perhaps dissolved, through a more participatory approach to religious phenomena.

THE PARTICIPATORY TURN

Can we take religious experience, spirituality, and mysticism seriously today without reducing them to either cultural-linguistic by-products or simply asserting their validity as a dogmatic fact? In the last section, we identified a number of ways the linguistic turn fails to account for some important issues and developments in the contemporary academic study of religion. As we have already suggested, we believe that an effective exploration of, and possible answer to, these questions calls for another "turn" in Religious Studies—one that incorporates postmodern and pragmatic concerns with the renewed interest in different ways of knowing (embodied, gendered, imaginal, contemplative, and so on), the self-implicating study of spirituality and mystical transformation, and the increasing willingness to consider emic understandings without falling into either uncritical confessional stances or the reductionistic essentialisms and universalisms of most classical approaches. In other words, we want to propose that there is a third way possible, an alternative to both, on the one hand, today's fashionable linguistification of the sacred and, on the other hand, a more conservative precritical fideism.

We are calling this alternative approach the "participatory turn" in the study of religion, spirituality, and mysticism. Briefly, the participatory turn argues for an *enactive* understanding of the sacred, seeking to approach religious phenomena, experiences, and insights as cocreated events.[154] Such events can engage the entire range of human epistemic faculties (e.g., rational, imaginal, somatic, aesthetic, and so forth) with the creative unfolding of reality or the mystery in the enactment—or "bringing forth"—of ontologically rich religious worlds. Put somewhat differently, we suggest that religious and spiritual phenomena are "participatory" in the sense that they can emerge from the interaction of all human attributes and a nondetermined spiritual power or creative dynamism of life.[155] More specifically, we are advancing the admittedly bold hypothesis that religious worlds and phenomena, such as the Kabbalistic four realms, the various Buddhist cosmologies, or Teresa's seven mansions, come into existence out of a process of par-

ticipatory cocreation between human multidimensional cognition and the generative force of life and/or the spirit.[156]

Our account of participatory knowing as essentially creative, transformative, and performative (versus objective and representational) should not be confused with a rejection of realism or the endorsement of a mentalist or idealist worldview. Although the lines of the philosophical divide are often traced between "representationalist realists" and "antirepresentationalists constructivists" who tend to reject realism,[157] this generally valid polarization becomes fallacious if taken to be normative. As Steven Engler shows in an instructive essay, constructivism, though challenging the correspondence between linguistic signs and independent facts, is not necessarily antirealist or relativistic.[158] In Religious Studies, for instance, Katzian constructivism does not necessarily deny the reality of religious referents or metaphysical entities, but maintains that, in the case that such entities do exist, we can only enjoy access to our contextually mediated phenomenal awareness of them. The adoption of an enactive paradigm of cognition in the study of religion, however, frees us from the myth of the framework and other aporias of the Kantian two worlds doctrine by holding that human multidimensional cognition cocreatively participates in the emergence of a number of plausible enactions of reality. Participatory enaction, in other words, is epistemologically constructivist and metaphysically realist.[159]

This participatory understanding allows a bold affirmation of spiritual realities without falling into a reified metaphysics of presence, nor into the naïve essentialisms of dogmatic certainty. On the one hand, a participatory account of religious worlds overcomes the static and purportedly universal metaphysical structures of the past because it holds that culturally mediated human variables have a formative role in their constitution. Whereas the openness of religious worlds to the ongoing visionary creativity of humankind entails their necessary dynamism, the contextual and embodied character of such creative urges requires their plurality. On the other hand, the turn we are advocating allows the advance of religious inquiry without the danger of falling into a precritical stance because it draws explicit attention to the constitutive role of human creative participation in all religious phenomena and truth. We stress, however, that embracing the constitutive role of the human in religious matters need not bind us with a (quasi-Kantian) epistemic straitjacket. Such human participation need not reduce religious and spiritual phenomena to mere products of a culturally or biologically shaped human subjectivity. As Capps explains, religious inquiry after the dawn of modernity has been conducted with a "Cartesian-Kantian temper" that considers religious worlds to be either "objective" or noumenal realities that are cognitively inaccessible (or available only in dubiously "pure" intuitive states) or artifacts of "subjective" imagination and cultural-linguistic fabrication.[160] Questioning this Cartesian-Kantian legacy, the participatory turn calls us to move *beyond*

objectivism and subjectivism toward the recognition of the interpretive and therefore largely constituted but nevertheless immediate nature of spiritual and religious knowledge. Speaking about the spiritual dimensions of nature, Richard Tarnas eloquently captures the gist of this post-Kantian formulation:

> This participatory epistemology . . . incorporates the postmodern understanding of knowledge and yet goes beyond it. The interpretive and constructive character of human cognition is fully acknowledged, but the intimate, interpenetrating and all-permeating relationship of nature to the human being and human mind allows the Kantian consequence of epistemological alienation to be entirely overcome. The human spirit does not merely prescribe nature's phenomenal order; rather, the spirit of nature brings forth its own order through the human mind when that mind is employing its full complement of faculties—intellectual, volitional, emotional, sensory, imaginative, aesthetic, epiphanic.[161]

As the essays of this volume illustrate, in the academic study of religion such a participatory understanding can help to dissolve previous antinomies, such as those between contextualist and neoperennialist accounts of mysticism, "cultural-linguistic" and "expressive-emotional" models of religion, scientific and religious epistemologies, or, more generally, modern and traditional worldviews.

Modes of Participation: Archaic, Romantic, and Enactive

It might be reasonably objected that by championing the importance of the category of participation in the study of religion we are merely returning to Romantic or archaic styles of participatory knowing. We contend, however, that we are not simply "going back" to a participatory mode of thinking, but also modernizing the concept of participation. We are calling for a participatory modernity, even a participatory postmodernity. While we cannot offer here a systematic comparison of pre-Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment modes of participation, it may be important to offer at least some general distinctions between them.[162]

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the French philosopher Lucien Lévy-Bruhl introduced the term *participation mystique* to designate the type of mentality that characterized so-called "primitive" people. In contrast to the logical intelligence of the modern West, Lévy-Bruhl suggested that native mentality can be described in terms of an "affectational participation" based on a prelogical, mystical interconnectedness with others, nature, and things.[163] In his posthumously published *Notebooks* (*Les Carnets*), Lévy-Bruhl relaxed the contrast between logical and participatory mentalities indicating that, instead of being exclusively associated with modern and primitive modes of thinking respectively, both cognitive styles coexisted to some

extent in all human beings.[164] For the late Lévy-Bruhl, participation became the universal affective-analogical dimension of the human mind.

Half a century after Lévy-Bruhl's death, the anthropologist of religion Stanley J. Tambiah proposed that these two coexistent modes of thought—which he calls "participation" and "causality"—represent two different "orientations to the world" that are perfectly appropriate in their respective arenas of human inquiry and activity.[165] According to Tambiah, the discourse of causality is proper in science, analytic reasoning, and technical and biomedical sciences, and the discourse of participation in religion, empathic understanding, aesthetics, ritual, and meditation. In a recent reformulation of Tambiah's proposal, Wouter J. Hanegraaf suggests that whereas the human tendency toward participation derives from a feeling-based insight into the nonlocal interconnectedness of all beings, the human tendency to instrumental causality is guided instead by the intuition that all world events are the result of material causation.[166] Hanegraaff also points out that instrumental causality became the privileged mechanism to discern objective truth in the Western world, and that such epistemic supremacy precipitated a counterculture eminently based on participation that can be traced from the Romantics to the contemporary New Age movement.[167]

Indeed, German Romanticism was a richly participatory movement. In their revolt against the Enlightenment's apotheosis of logic and reason, the Romantics affirmed the participatory role of imagination and feeling, intuition and inspiration, volition and spiritual insight, in the elaboration of human knowledge.[168] Romanticism not only rescued the epistemic value of all human attributes, but also forcibly maintained—perhaps most visibly in the writings of Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Schelling, and Coleridge—that it is precisely through such multidimensional cognition that human beings can share both effectively and creatively in the ongoing self-understanding and self-perfection of both the spirit and nature.

Despite the strongly pluralistic spirit of many Romantic proposals,[169] classical phenomenologists of religion—from Nathan Söderblom to Rudolf Otto to Friedrich Heider to Gerardus van der Leuw to Eliade—blended the Romantic fascination with religious intuition and feeling with certain universalistic and objectivist assumptions of the Enlightenment project. On the one hand, religious scholars heavily influenced by the Romantics, such as Eliade, developed a view of "the sacred" as a Kantian-like category or universal element embedded in the innermost structure of human consciousness.[170] Though Eliade prudently avoided essentialist or transcendentalist understandings of the sacred and maintained that "hierophanies" emerge from the dialectical relationship between human consciousness and a "constituted given" reality, his research program was firmly guided by the structuralist search for invariant, nonhistorical essences—such as "patterns," "archetypes," or "fundamental religious experiences"—behind the variety of historical religious manifestations.[171] In addition to this

structuralist agenda, Eliade's universalistic view of religion, as well as his strong allegiance to what is known today as the "philosophy of consciousness," reveals his commitment to philosophical ideals and paradigms characteristic of the modern episteme.[172] On the other hand, when Van der Leuw, the father of the phenomenology of religion, wrote that the study of religion needs to adopt a participatory subjectivity, he had in mind a kind of "Enlightened" participation in the universal essences of religious forms—essences thought to possess invariant transcultural features that only the phenomenological method could uncover.[173] As Arthur McCalla points out, Romantic phenomenologists regarded "religious experience as an autonomous, irreducible and universal intuition or feeling of the Infinite . . . [and] the various religions of the world as the positive forms in which the essence of religion manifests itself."[174] These assumptions have rightfully raised severe criticisms toward Romantic and neo-Romantic approaches to religion both from postmodern thinkers, who mistrust their essentialist and universalistic motives, and from naturalistic scholars, who are quick to denounce their cryptotheological agendas.[175]

Archaic and Romantic modes of participation share significant features with the participatory turn we are advocating in this volume. Specifically, these participatory proposals not only affirm the import of multidimensional cognition for a richer apprehension of reality, but also eschew the Kantian two worlds doctrine and its associated epistemological skepticism regarding the possibility of direct knowing of reality. Nevertheless, there are also critical differences between the present project and prior participatory formulations. First, whereas archaic participation (as articulated by Lévy-Bruhl) avoids the subject/object divide through a prereflective mystical fusion with the other and the natural world, emerging modes of participation overcome Cartesian dualism self-reflexively by preserving a highly differentiated though permeable individuality or *participatory self* as the agent of religious knowing. Moreover, in contrast to the precritical paradigm of cognition linked to archaic participation, the participatory turn adopts an enactive view of knowledge that allows a critical assessment of religious claims but free from the demand of testing the correspondence between facts and propositions, or between facts and ideas. Secondly, while most types of Romantic religious participation made essentialist and/or structuralist assumptions, the recognition of religious forms as participatory enactions emancipates religious inquiry from not only the dualism of essence and manifestation, but also of "deep" structure and "surface" expression. In other words, whereas the "Enlightened" participatory subjectivity of Romantic phenomenology of religion seeks an intuitive and empathic grasping of the universal, invariant, and, at times, pregiven essences of religious manifestations, enactive participation avoids such modernist (as well as ancient) assumptions, and instead approaches religious forms and worlds as the dynamic sites of genuine plurality and cocreated emergent realities.

The last point deserves further elaboration. From a participatory perspective, the Romantic reduction of all religious manifestations to expressions of a univocal spiritual reality—however transcendentally or phenomenologically conceived—comes at a high price. The conflation of the rich variety of religious manifestations into a limited number of Procrustean phenomenological essences or structures of human consciousness not only undermines the genuine plurality of religious realities, but arguably constrains the scope and possibilities of the role of human creative imagination in their formation. The multiplicity of religious worlds cannot be forced into the reductive molds of being mere reflections of a monochromatic spiritual reality without damaging their autonomy and integrity. The introduction of Enlightenment dogmas into the Romantic fascinations of classic scholars of religion, thus, hindered the complete "liberation of images" with which Barfield evocatively characterizes more creative and self-reflexive forms of participation, forms to which this anthology is devoted.[176]

Participatory Knowing as Creative Multidimensional Cognition

In *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Tarnas explains how both Romantic and Enlightenment sensibilities shaped modern life in a dualistic and ultimately unintegrated manner. Whereas Romantic values continue to guide our appreciation of art, culture, religion, and everyday relationships, the principles of the Enlightenment became paradigmatic in the rational search for valid knowledge.[177] Religious Studies, heir to both Romanticism and the Enlightenment, inherited this Janus-faced disposition. As Flood points out, classical phenomenology of religion was shaped by the "cognitive perspective" of the Enlightenment—i.e., belief in a unitary human nature and the epistemic privilege of reason—and the "affective perspective" of Romanticism—i.e., fascination for the mysterious, as well as an emphasis on feeling, intuition, and aesthetic experience.[178] In a similar vein, Daniel Gold characterizes the modern interpretive study of religion—from Eliade to Clifford Geertz to Dumézil to Wendy Doniger—as a blend of the Romantic empathic allurement for the religious and the Enlightenment cognitive conviction that reason and science should be the preferred means for establishing truth. "Interpretive writers," he tells us, "tend to suffer from an uncomfortable modern dilemma: They *like* religion . . . but they *believe* in science."[179] Though such an ambivalent approach is not free from potential tensions, Gold suggests that what defines the work of the most successful interpretive writers of religion is *precisely* a synthesis of a "soft heart," characterized by empathic imagination and intuition, and a "hard mind" capable of penetrating analysis through the use of the critical intellect.[180]

This synthesis of a Romantic heart and an Enlightenment mind is central to the multidimensional, integrated cognition advanced by the participatory

turn in the study of religion. Religious Studies, we suggest, must be neither exclusively guided by a "participatory heart," which feels deeply but lacks critical rigor, nor by a "cognicentric mind," rightfully critical of religious dogma and ideology but out of touch with the person's intuitive powers and the world's mysteries. Multidimensional cognition, however, is not exhausted by a fusion of head and heart. In addition, it needs to incorporate the knowing of the body, the erotic, the imagination, and the mystical. The "gnostic epistemology" outlined by Kripal is an example of a contemporary approach to the study of religion that relies not only on reason and the critical intellect, but also on the symbolic and contemplative, the mystical body and its erotic energies.[181] In this spirit, we propose that a deeper and broader study of religion can emerge from the integration of our Romantic hearts (intuition, feeling, imagination), Enlightened minds (reason and critical inquiry), sensuous bodies (somatic and erotic knowing), and contemplative consciousness (mystical knowing). True, as Gustavo Benavides insists, the linguistic turn needs to be overcome by a return to cognitive considerations, but such cognitivism should not be mentalistically reduced to the causal and naturalistic explanations of the rational intellect.[182] We need to develop, in Stoller's words, a "sensuous scholarship in which writers tack between the analytical and the sensible, in which embodied form as well as disembodied logic constitute scholarly argument."[183]

Incorporating the whole of human attributes into the study of religion is not only personally edifying (e.g., in the sense of fostering postconventional cognitive competences and perhaps human integration), but may also be vital for the attainment of more reliable or comprehensive knowledge about religious phenomena. The potential epistemic significance of multidimensional cognition can be illustrated by reference to the widely transcultural contemplative insight into the existence of a micro-macro homology between human nature, the cosmos, and the divine. Virtually all major religious traditions hold that there is an isomorphism or deep correspondence between the embodied human being, the universe, and the mystery out of which everything arises. In addition to its central role in ancient rituals and cosmogonies, this *cosmotheandric resonance*[184] is captured in the esotericist dictum "as above so below," the Platonic, Christian, Taoist, Islamic, Kabbalistic, and tantric understandings of "the person as microcosm of the macrocosm," or the Biblical view of the human being made of dust and "in the image of God" (*imago Dei*).[185] This account, of course, has tremendous implications for both religious practice and attitudes toward the human body. For the Bauls of Bengal, for example, viewing the body as the microcosm of the universe (*bhanda/brahmanda*) issues in the belief that the divine dwells physically within human embodiment.[186] If there is any truth to the consubstantiality of body and cosmos, or of the body and the divine, then it follows that the more human attributes participate in the study of reality or the mystery,

the more complete the ensuing knowledge will be. In our view, this "completion" should not be understood quantitatively but rather in a qualitative sense. In other words, the more human faculties participate in spiritual knowing, the greater the *dynamic congruence* between inquiry approach and studied phenomena and the more grounded in, coherent with, or attuned to the ongoing unfolding of reality and the mystery will the gained knowledge potentially be.

In addition, multidimensional cognition is connected to the participatory emphasis on spiritual creativity. Whereas the mind and consciousness arguably serve as a natural bridge to subtle spiritual forms already enacted in history that display more fixed forms and dynamics (e.g., specific cosmological motifs, archetypal configurations, mystical visions and states, etc.), we propose that attention to the body and its vital energies gives us access to the more generative power of life or the spirit. Against the background of Johnson's cognitive theory regarding the role of the imagination as the link between embodied experience and mental conceptualization, we hypothesize that the energies that "empower" (after Hollenback) the mystic's imagination are thoroughly embodied and quite possibly of erotic nature.[187] Though admittedly speculative, this proposal is in accord with many mystical teachings, such as those regarding the creative role of the primordial *shakti* or *kundalini* in Hindu tantra, the generative power attributed to the chi energy in Taoism, or even the motivation behind *virginae subintroductae* in the early church.[188] If we accept this approach, it becomes plausible to conjecture that the active participation of embodied dimensions in religious inquiry may lead to an increased plurality of creative visionary and existential spiritual developments. Contemporary participatory approaches, we suggest, seek *to enact with body, mind, heart, and consciousness a creative spirituality that lets a thousand spiritual flowers bloom*. As the next section stresses, however, the pluralistic spirit of most contemporary participatory approaches does not entail the uncritical or relativistic endorsement of all past or present religious understandings or forms of life.

Toward A Participatory Critical Theory of Religion

The embodied and integrative thrust of the participatory turn is foundational for the development of a participatory critical theory of religion. Briefly, from a participatory standpoint, *the history of religions can be read, in part, as a story of the joys and sorrows of human dissociation*. From ascetically enacted mystical ecstasies to world-denying monistic realizations, and from heart-expanding sexual sublimation to the moral struggles (and failures) of ancient and modern mystics and spiritual teachers, human spirituality has been characterized by an overriding impulse toward a liberation of consciousness that has too often taken place at the cost of the underdevelopment, subordination, or

control of essential human attributes such as the body or sexuality. Even contemporary religious leaders and teachers across traditions tend to display an uneven development that arguably reflects this generalized spiritual bias; for example, high level cognitive and spiritual functioning combined with ethically conventional or even dysfunctional interpersonal, emotional, or sexual behavior.[189]

Furthermore, it is likely that many past and present spiritual visions are to some extent the product of dissociated ways of knowing—ways that emerge predominantly from accessing certain forms of transcendent consciousness but in disconnection from more immanent spiritual sources. For example, spiritual visions that hold that body and world are ultimately illusory (or lower, or impure, or a hindrance to spiritual liberation) arguably derive from states of being in which the sense of self mainly or exclusively identifies with subtle energies of consciousness, getting uprooted from the body and immanent spiritual life. From this existential stance, it is understandable, and perhaps inevitable, that both body and world are seen as illusory or defective. In contrast, when our somatic and vital worlds are invited to participate in our spiritual lives, making our sense of identity permeable to not only transcendent awareness but also immanent spiritual energies, then body and world become spiritually significant realities that are recognized as crucial for human and cosmic spiritual fruition. This account does not seek to excoriate past spiritualities, which may have been at times—though by no means always—perfectly legitimate and perhaps even necessary in their particular times and contexts, but merely to highlight the historical rarity of a fully embodied or integrative spirituality. At any rate, we suggest that a reinvigorated participatory study of religion needs to be hermeneutically critical of oppressive, repressive, and dissociative religious beliefs, attitudes, practices, and institutional dynamics.

In *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Eliade makes a compelling case for the "re-enactive" nature of many religious practices and rituals, for example, in their attempt to replicate cosmogonic actions and events.[190] For Eliade, Gill writes, "[r]ather than freedom and creativity, the human modes of engaging reality and meaning are repetition and participation."[191] In other words, essential elements of the participatory engagement promoted by religious traditions were largely "reproductive." Expanding this account, we could say that most religious traditions can be seen as reproductive insofar as their practices aim to not only ritually reenact mythical motives, but also replicate the enlightenment of their founder or attain the state of salvation or freedom described in allegedly revealed scriptures. Although disagreements about the exact nature of such states and the most effective methods to attain them abounded in the historical development of religious practices and ideas—naturally leading to rich creative developments within the traditions—spiritual inquiry was regulated (and arguably constrained) by such predetermined unequivocal goals.

The participatory approaches introduced in this volume, however, overcome the traditional dualism of repetitive participation and creative freedom. Participatory enaction entails a model of spiritual engagement that does not merely reproduce certain tropes according to a given historical a priori, but rather embarks upon the adventure of openness to the novelty and creativity of nature or the spirit. If repetition is involved (and it seems that the conditions of finitude may require some repetition), then it is a nonidentical repetition, a creative improvisation of themes and inheritances potentially capable of both fidelity to traditions and bold uncharted explorations.[192] Grounded on current moral intuitions and cognitive competences, for instance, a participatory religious inquiry can undertake not only the critical revision and actualization of prior religious forms, but also the cocreation of novel spiritual understandings, practices, and perhaps even expanded states of freedom.

In closing this section, we should stress that we are mindful of the rather sketchy way in which we have introduced the participatory turn. If we have not offered, for example, any generic definition of the concept of *participation*, it is only because the purpose of this anthology is not to advocate for the adoption of any particular participatory framework, but to allow a multiplicity of participatory approaches to emerge.[193] In other words, our main intention is not to artificially construct any grand participatory theory of religion, but rather to foster a kind of academic sensibility, so to speak, in the study of religious phenomena. We believe such an approach to be both academically and religiously relevant. In addition to its heuristic potential to open new avenues of inquiry and give birth to novel insights, a critically informed participatory articulation of spiritual knowing can help relax the abiding tension between Theology and Religious Studies, as well as between their respective methodological standpoints of "engaged participation" and "critical distance." In other words, we want to lay down a path between and across confessional and secular styles of scholarship, one that, in Orsi's words, can perhaps enter the space "between heaven and earth."[194] It is now time to introduce the contents of this volume and start exploring the various vistas that walking such a path discloses.

THIS VOLUME

The Participatory Turn is the first in-depth exploration of participatory spirituality in the context of contemporary Religious Studies. The book is divided into two sections. Developing a number of the themes begun in this introduction, the chapters of the first section of the anthology offer wider perspectives and are more theoretical in tone, situating the participatory turn in

the context of contemporary philosophy and Religious Studies, and tracing the concept of participation from its inception in Greek philosophy through its permutations, occlusion, and contemporary redeployment. The chapters in the second section of the anthology consist of a series of applications of the participatory approach to the particularities of spirituality and mysticism within various global traditions, both ancient and contemporary. Not only do these chapters explore participation within the context of the major religious traditions, such as Christianity, Hinduism, or Judaism, but certain chapters also address important spiritual and religious perspectives often overlooked in the standard anthologies on mysticism—thus, we are pleased to include chapters dealing with Western esotericism, for example, or with mystical philosophies such as Henri Bergson's intuitive vitalism.

The contributors assembled for the anthology are not only scholars but also religious practitioners of one sort or another, who engage both contemporary academic discussions and spiritual phenomena with equal rigor. Nearly all of them couple the concept of participation with a robust vision of creativity that does justice to the modern discovery of the centrality of cocreative construction in human knowledge and experience, along with a special accent on the involvement of the total human—body, heart, mind, and consciousness—in the emergence of spiritual events. We believe that this creative and integral hermeneutic approach to human spiritual endeavors is one of the outstanding features of the anthology.

This approach leads us to characterize the scholarly style of the present volume as performative rather than merely descriptive. Most innovative proposals about spirituality and mysticism consist in the introduction of an interpretive model or epistemological framework, followed by the theoretical attempt to validate or show the superiority of such framework through the analysis of religious figures, texts, or traditions. By contrast, the present anthology does not attempt to describe or prove the participatory turn so much as it seeks to bring it forth. Although a number of our contributors illustrate how a participatory sensibility can be found in many religious traditions, no attempt is made to advance any kind of unified participatory theory or paradigm. The integral, creative, and relational logic of participation is not imposed upon but rather transpires through the particularities of traditional and emerging religious identities, practices, and communities, as well as through the scholarship that engages such communities.

Such a participatory logic can, moreover, be deployed in many ways, as is evident from the diversity of the contributions to this volume, including the ways that some of us may disagree (perhaps even strongly) amongst ourselves. To reiterate, we in *The Participatory Turn* do not seek to legislate what constitutes a participatory approach to Religious Studies, so much as we intend to adumbrate a participatory sensibility and invite others to explore its value and perhaps engage with us in this manner of pursuing our scholarship.

Summary of the Chapters

The first section of the anthology, "Participation and Spirit: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives," consists of a series of essays that seek to give a historical or theoretical context for the use of the term *participation*. In the opening essay of the section, "A Genealogy of Participation," Jacob H. Sherman explains that the concept of participation was once prominent to the point of ubiquity throughout classical, antique, and medieval philosophy, and he argues that the contemporary participatory turn has much to learn from the previous forms of participatory philosophy. In his genealogy, Sherman identifies three previous iterations of participatory thought: the idea of formal participation most regularly associated with Plato, a kind of participation in existence that Sherman finds especially in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, and participation in creativity itself, a mode of participation that Sherman sees as having emerged through certain Baroque and Romantic forms of thought. Sherman's explications intend to show how these three modes of participation (formal, existential, and creative) are of continued relevance to the contemporary participatory turn, situating it in a robust philosophical lineage and providing it with crucial conceptual tools for further developments.

Chapter 2 consists of Sean Kelly's essay "Participation, Complexity, and the Study of Religion." Kelly draws from the work of the French systems thinker Edgar Morin to explore the implications of the paradigm of complexity for the participatory turn in Religious Studies. Although little known in the Anglophone world, Morin is one of France's leading public intellectuals and his work bears directly upon many of the immediate themes of the participatory turn. Kelly begins the essay with a discussion of the distinction between embedded and enactive participation, citing illustrations from the history of religious and philosophical ideas, before turning to Morin for indications of how to honor the complexity of participation, especially as it relates to the question of method in the study of religion. In the remainder of the essay, Kelly argues that the reorganization of knowledge resulting from the knowledge of living self- or "auto-eco-re-organization" has relevance not only for our understanding of the study of religion or spirituality, but for the wider participatory turn advocated in this volume.

In chapter 3, "Spiritual Knowing as Participatory Enaction: An Answer to the Question of Religious Pluralism," Jorge N. Ferrer proposes that spirituality emerges from human cocreative participation in an always dynamic and undetermined mystery, spiritual power, and/or creative energy of life or reality. This understanding of spiritual knowing in terms of participatory enaction not only makes hierarchical rankings of spiritual traditions appear misconceived, but also expands the range of valid spiritual choices that we as individuals can make. Ferrer articulates a participatory account of the nature

of spiritual knowing that brings forth a pluralistic understanding of not only spiritual paths, but also spiritual liberations and spiritual ultimates. Illustrating how such participatory understanding can shed new light on the question of religious pluralism, Ferrer explores the implications of his version of the participatory turn for interreligious relations, the problem of conflicting truth claims in religion, the validity of spiritual truths, the nature of spiritual liberation, and the dialectic between universalism and pluralism in Religious Studies.

The second section of the anthology, "Surveying the Traditions: Participatory Engagements," begins with Brian L. Lancaster's articulation of Judaism as offering a strongly participatory world view. In chapter 4, "Engaging with the Mind of God: The Participatory Path of Jewish Mysticism," Lancaster argues that Jewish teachings and practices aim to establish a partnership between human beings and God through which they participate in furthering the goals of creation. In the Jewish mystical tradition, distinctive practices actively deepen this sense of engaging directly with the divine. Lancaster delineates two complementary strands in such engagement: linguistic and theurgical. Through the first strand, mystics enter into an esoteric world of language, in which God is portrayed as creating by means of constructively playing with the Hebrew letters. Mystical texts establish the practices through which the mystic enters into this divine playfulness, thereby encountering the mind of God. The mystic is enjoined to reach a higher state of consciousness, in which emulation of the divine praxis of creation becomes the route par excellence to an intimate encounter with God. The second strand, that of theurgy, establishes the parameters through which the mystic participates in the divine quest to unify His attributes. Lancaster explains how the teachings of Kabbalah—despite the absolute perfection of the ineffable, transcendent divine essence—give rise to a paradoxical tension between the intradivine principles in the process of emanation. Kabbalah asserts that this tension may be resolved only through human agency. From this point of view, Lancaster concludes, Kabbalah may be seen as a set of teachings designed to promote human participation in the very processes of divine manifestation. Exemplifying the revisionary dimension of participatory scholarship, Lancaster brings evidence from modern consciousness studies, transpersonal psychology, and cognitive neuroscience to creatively envision (and catalyze) the future evolution of the Kabbalah.

Chapter 5 consists of Lee Irwin's essay, "Esoteric Paradigms and Participatory Spirituality in the Teachings of Mikhaël Aïvanhov," which explores the theoretical aspects of participatory spirituality as they relate to the religious thinking and transformative spirituality of Mikhaël Aïvanhov (d. 1986), a highly respected Bulgarian-French esotericist. After a discussion of the question of metaphysics in Religious Studies and an introduction to the nature of participatory spiritual inquiry, Irwin explains how Aïvanhov integrates Kabbalah, Yoga, Alchemy, and esoteric Christianity into a develop-

mental paradigm of magical practices based on his own personal transformative process. Irwin argues that Aïvanhov's East-West synthesis and creative spiritual philosophy is a fascinating story of cocreative explorations that result in a highly enactive paradigm consistent with many of the premises of the newly emerging participatory understanding of human spirituality. Central to this paradigm is an emphasis both on the need for personal integration and transformation, and on the formative cognitive role played by human imagination and intuition in spiritual knowing. Irwin explains how this enactive approach to spiritual knowing led Aïvanhov to challenge dogmatic religious teachings and to lay down a truly creative spiritual path centered upon his own spiritual individuation.

In chapter 6, "Wound of Love: Feminine Theosis and Embodied Mysticism in Teresa of Avila," Beverly J. Lanzetta brings together a number of vital participatory insights regarding the centrality of the body, the role of the imagination, and the gendered nature of knowledge in an illuminating and novel reading of Teresa of Avila's mysticism. Lanzetta considers the way that Teresa's life and thought confront us with a boldly integral spirituality based on the inseparable unity of the inner and outer life. As Teresa writes, "For in the active—and seemingly exterior—work the soul is working interiorly. And when the active works rise from this interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers." To an extraordinary degree, Lanzetta maintains, Teresa works out an embodied and participatory mysticism through her struggles to dignify herself as woman and gain a feminine understanding of knowledge, language, spiritual practice, and God. The centrality of gender is evident in Lanzetta's essay. Because knowing the divine is not a timeless disembodied act of representation, but is instead a holistic, socially situated, corporeal, and relational event, Teresa's spiritual growth involves her in a process that is peculiar to her location as a woman in her own society. Lanzetta uncovers what she calls "the dark night of the feminine" in Teresa's spiritual itinerary. In this dark night, Teresa is led by God into the dismantling of repressive cultural stereotypes that would otherwise bar women from the kind of spiritual advance and transformation to which Teresa is called. A participatory reading of Teresa's life unveils the way that the mystical endeavor is not only personal, but also political and cultural, a holistic journey of transformation and liberation.

William C. Chittick's contribution in chapter 7 focuses on the work of Ibn al-'Arabī, known in Sufism as the "Greatest Master," who wrote an unprecedented and unsurpassed exposition of the scriptural, theological, metaphysical, cosmological, and psychological underpinnings of the Islamic tradition. In "Ibn al-'Arabī on Participating in the Mystery," Chittick argues that the work of this Sufi erudite explicates the unlimited range of human participation in the divine infinity with unmatched detail and profundity: Every trace of human life, knowledge, desire, and speech participate in the Mystery's self-disclosure. Human beings alone, among all the participants—

so far as we know—share in the very creativity of the One, for we alone have a say in how the divine attributes and qualities unfold in themselves and the world. Chittick explains that, for Ibn al-'Arabī, human beings are cocreators of our own selves and of the world, for every act we perform and every choice we make shapes the direction in which the Mystery unfolds. Ibn al-'Arabī's teachings about the Mystery might be therefore a model for all who appreciate the breadth and depth of the participatory approach to spirituality and religion.

Chapter 8 consists of Bruno Barnhart's account of the Christ-event as a participatory revolution. In "One Spirit, One Body: Jesus' Participatory Revolution," Barnhart contends, from within the Christian tradition, that the mystery of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection inaugurated a new participatory reality within the universe. According to Barnhart, the New Testament writings are everywhere concerned with investigating this new participation understood vertically as the institution of a new divine-human identity and horizontally as the birth of a new communal relationality among human beings. Barnhart proceeds to trace the history of the progressive extinction of participatory consciousness in Western Christianity and points to a contemporary reawakening of the Christian sense of participation, particularly as manifested in the Second Vatican Council. This reawakening, he concludes, may hold the promise of an even wider participatory retrieval—a global, ecumenical, and personal retrieval that may extend beyond Christian theology or practice.

Chapter 9 continues to explore the relationship between various spiritual traditions and the participatory paradigm. In "Participation Comes of Age: Owen Barfield and the Bhagavad Gita," Robert McDermott uses Owen Barfield's understanding of participation to illuminate the way that three early twentieth-century spiritual teachers variously engage the Bhagavad Gita. McDermott argues that Mohandas K. Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, and Rudolf Steiner all considered the Gita a supremely important text but that none of the three read the Gita as, for example, one of Arjuna's contemporaries might have. Instead, standing at the far end of a sort of participatory evolution, these teachers had to approach the Gita as a self-implicating text that unveils itself diversely to various sorts of participatory sensibilities. McDermott considers the diachronic participatory distance between these three thinkers and the Gita's *sitz im leben*, as well as attending to the important synchronic differences in the ways that Gandhi, Aurobindo, and Steiner each participatively engage the Gita.

In chapter 10, "Pulsating with Life: The Paradoxical Intuitions of Henri Bergson," G. William Barnard directs our attention to the turn-of-the-century French philosopher Henri Bergson as an important source for developing a participatory philosophy of religion. Interest in Bergson has exploded in recent years prompting a number of important engagements with his work, but Barnard's essay is refreshing in that it emphasizes the important spiritual

dimension to Bergson's philosophy. Like William James, perhaps his closest philosophical compatriot, Bergson is deep enough to be read in a number of ways. Rather than following Deleuze in retrieving a proto-poststructuralist Bergson, Barnard looks at how the rich spiritual insights that issue from Bergson's analysis of *durée* (lived time) can contribute fruitfully to the discussion on participatory spirituality. Focusing on Bergson's crucial early works *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*, and *Creative Mind*, chapter 10 outlines Bergson's understanding of the dynamic, interconnected, ever-new nature of consciousness; his attempts to demonstrate how the structure of consciousness is reflected in the world around us; his emphasis on the value of intuitive, embodied knowledge; his investigations into the evolutionary impetus of a conscious cosmic life-force; and his stress on the crucial value of mystical awareness in the development of humanity. Bergson's processive vision of the universe is everywhere self-implicating and transformative, recognizing that the knowledge of both philosopher and mystic requires a participatory relationship, an adventure of becoming for both the knower and the universe that is known.

In chapter 11, "Connecting Inner and Outer Transformation: Toward an Extended Model of Buddhist Practice," Donald Rothberg argues that, in the modern Western world, there are strong tendencies to understand spirituality as primarily subjective and private. In contemporary Buddhist practice, as well as in most other modern traditions and approaches at this time, the "inner" is typically split off from the "outer." Rothberg presents a Buddhist training framework, grounded in traditional practice, which has emerged out of his and others' "socially engaged" efforts to connect inner and outer transformation, identifying a number of guiding principles, each linked with a number of both traditional and potentially novel practices. This framework makes clearer the need for an expanded vision of spiritual practice, the importance of the intermediate "relational" domain as a bridge between the individual and the collective, and the great creative participation invited of us at this time in imagining and enacting awakening in all the parts of our lives. Rothberg's essay illustrates powerfully how a participatory approach that engages dimensions of human life often previously excluded from spiritual practice leads to the exploration of uncharted spiritual territories and the cocreation of innovative spiritual practices and understandings.

NOTES

1. A broad presentation of the nature and early developments of the linguistic turn (the term was coined by Gustav Bergmann) in Anglo-American philosophy can be found in Richard Rorty's edited anthology, *The Linguistic Turn: Essays in Philosophical Method* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). See also Michael Dummet's account of the origins of the linguistic turn in Gottlob Frege's logical semantics

(*Origins of Analytic Philosophy* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996], esp. 4–14). In addition, the expression *linguistic turn* has been associated with Jürgen Habermas's dialogical reconstruction of German philosophy; see Richard J. Bernstein, "Introduction," in Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1985), 14ff, and Cristina Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1999). In the preface to the English edition of her book (ix–xviii), Lafont clarifies the differences between the Anglo-American and German versions of the linguistic turn. On this account, see also Habermas, "Hermeneutic and Analytical Philosophy: Two Complementary Versions of the Linguistic Turn," in *Truth and Justification*, trans. Barbara Fultner (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003), 51–81.

2. Rorty, "Introduction: Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy," in *The Linguistic Turn*, 1–39.

3. Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 7.

4. Furthermore, in contrast to previous understandings of the origins of human subjectivity as either divinely given (i.e., as a feature of the soul) or emerging in relation to the objective world, linguistic philosophy, following the work of George H. Mead and others, situates the birth of selfhood within the structure of language and intersubjective communication (Habermas, "Individuation through Socialization: On George Herbert Mead's Theory of Subjectivity," *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, 149–204). Tim Murphy, for example, tells us that: "Unlike Cartesianism, discourse [theory] sees the subject as located in language, not in consciousness, and so the structure of language determines the nature of subjectivity" ("Discourse," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, ed. Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon [New York: Cassell, 2000], 402). In his many works, Jacques Derrida also argues for the linguistic origins of self-identity. These accounts, however, are challenged by modern neuroscientific research on the (nonlinguistic) embodied sources of subjective consciousness; see, e.g., Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (New York: Harcourt, 1999).

5. Fultner, "Do Social Philosophers Need a Theory of Meaning? Social Theory and Semantics after the Pragmatic Turn," in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory: Essays in Honor of Thomas McCarthy*, ed. William Rehg and James Bohman (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001), 148. Cf. Sheila Benhabib: "Whether in analytical philosophy, or in contemporary hermeneutics, or in French poststructuralism, *the paradigm of language has replaced the paradigm of consciousness*. This shift has meant that the focus is no longer on the epistemic subject or on the private contents of its consciousness but on the public, signifying activities of a collection of subjects" (*Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992], 208; emphasis in original). The Italian scholar Giorgio Agamben describes this shift as the Copernican revolution of our times: "Thus we finally find ourselves alone with our words; for the first time we are truly alone with language, abandoned without any final foundation. This is the Copernican revolution that the thought of our time inherits from nihilism: we are the first human beings who have become completely conscious of language" (*Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen [Stanford: Stanford

University Press, 1999], 45). See also Rorty's early proposal for a shift from epistemology to hermeneutics in his influential *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 315–56. In contrast to Benhabib, Dummet, and many others, however, Rorty does not see the philosophy of language as a "first philosophy" capable of providing epistemic foundations.

6. See Wayne Proudfoot: "The turn to religious experience was motivated in large part by an interest in freeing religious doctrine and practice from dependence on metaphysical beliefs and ecclesiastical institutions and grounding it in human experience. This was the explicit aim of Schleiermacher's *On Religion*, the most influential statement and defense of the autonomy of religious experience" (*Religious Experience* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985], xii). For Schleiermacher's "turn to the subject" in the study of religion, see Thomas M. Kelly, *Theology at the Void: The Retrieval of Experience* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 11–49. For critical perspectives of conceptualizing religion and spirituality in terms of inner experience, see Robert Sharf, "Experience," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 94–116, and Jorge N. Ferrer, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory: A Participatory Vision of Human Spirituality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 15–39.

7. See Jacques Waardenburg, *Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion: Aims, Methods, and Theories of Research* (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999 [originally published: The Hague: Mouton, 1973]); Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1986, 2nd edition); Walter H. Cupps, *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995). One does not need to agree with McCutcheon's political views or naturalistic metaphysics to appreciate his meticulous deconstruction of the very idea of a sine qua non or sui generis element in religion in his *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse of Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

8. Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1987), esp. Lecture XI, 294–326. See also Bernstein, "Introduction," in *Habermas and Modernity*, 11–25.

9. Capps, *Religious Studies*, 6. Cf. Carl Olson: "The field [Religious Studies] is a product of Enlightenment thought, and it is especially a combination of Cartesian and Kantian perspectives" ("Introduction," in Olson, ed., *Theory and Method in the Study of Religion: A Selection of Critical Readings* [Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thompson, 2003], 5). On the Cartesian-Kantian assumptions of the "philosophy of consciousness" underlying classical phenomenological of religion, see Gavin Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion* (New York: Cassell, 1999), 9–10. Discussing the modern conceptualization of mysticism, Grace M. Jantzen denounces the androcentricism of this approach: "Feminists . . . have demonstrated the extent to which the Cartesian/Kantian 'man of reason' is indeed male" (*Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995], 343–44). On the masculinized character of Cartesian thinking, see also Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

10. See, for example, George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984); George Kilcourse,

ed., *The Linguistic Turn in Contemporary Theology* (United States: The Catholic Theological Society of America, 1987); Dan R. Stiver, *The Philosophy of Religious Language: Sign, Symbol, and Story* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology*; John Callaghan, *Thomist Realism and the Linguistic Turn: Towards a More Perfect Form of Existence* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

11. Flood, ibid., 7. Flood's narrativist metatheory is one of the most clear and cogent linguistic proposals for the study of religion. For a critical review of Flood's work, see Matthew Day, "Anything You Can Do, I Can Do Meta: High Theory and Low Blows in Contemporary Religious Studies," *Religious Studies Review* 27 (2001): 333–36. In a subsequent work, Flood suggests that his narrativist approach can be seen as "a return to the ideal of phenomenology," which replaces the deceptive claim of detached empathy of classical phenomenology with a more socially and historically situated dialogical reading of texts. See *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory, Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20ff.

12. Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Moshe Idel, "Universalization and Integration: Two Conceptions of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism," in *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. Moshe Idel and Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1996), 25–57; Don Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 10. Cupitt is paraphrasing here the title of Rorty's famous essay on Derrida, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida" [*New Literary History* 10 (1978–79): 141–60], where he suggests that philosophers should abandon their deceptive search for epistemic foundations and objective truth and regard philosophy as a literary genre. For the textual nature of mysticism, see also Macario Ofilada Mina, "The Textuality of Mystical Experiences," *Studies in Spirituality* 11 (2001): 28–46.

13. Taylor, "Introduction," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 6.

14. Besides linguistic models, the other major paradigm contesting for disciplinary supremacy is the social-scientific study of religion, theoretically developed by such authors as Robert Segal, Donald Wiebe, Ivan Strenski, J. Samuel Preus, or McCutcheon. Though we value the empirical knowledge gained by scientific approaches (see, for example, the ongoing series *Volumes of Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion: A Research Annual*, published by E. J. Brill, 1989–2002), their allegiance to causal reductionistic explanation, a naturalistic epistemology, and/or methodological agnosticism renders this paradigm philosophically and ideologically suspect. First, to claim that causal reductionism provides the only or the best explanation of religion assumes—in an exhausted positivistic fashion—the superiority of science to account for all human knowledge. It is worth pointing out here that important contemporary trends in complexity theory, nonlinear science, and neuroscience not only postulate diverse forms of downward causation, but also challenge the epistemic superiority of reductionistic explanations. See, for example, Peter Bogh Andersen, Claus Emmeche, Niels Ole Finnemann, and Peder Voechmann Christiansen, *Downward Causation: Minds, Bodies, and Matter* (Aarhus, Denmark: Aarhus University Press, 2000). The nonlinear scientist Alwyn Scott gets to the heart of the matter: "Reductionism is not a conclusion of science but a belief of many scientists" ("Reduc-

tionism Revisited," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 11 [2004]: 66). Second, the authoritativeness of a naturalistic epistemology is contingent upon the validity of a naturalistic metaphysics arguably based on the same kind of unverifiable normative axioms as the theological approaches naturalistic thinkers critique. And third, methodological agnosticism—or the bracketing of truth claims that are not empirically testable—presupposes the exclusivity of sensory empiricism and the scientific method to establish the epistemic value of all knowledge claims. Moreover, as Timothy Fitgerald points out, methodological agnosticism reinforces the view of religion as sui generis because its methodological stance emerges precisely from its skepticism regarding the existence of, or possibility of knowing, a transcendent referent (e.g., God, "the sacred," etc.) for religious language (*The Ideology of Religious Studies* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2000], 56).

15. See Morton White, *The Age of Analysis* (New York: Mentor Books, 1955) and Morris Weitz, *Twentieth-Century Philosophy: The Analytic Tradition* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

16. James Harris, *Analytic Philosophy of Religion* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Press, 2002).

17. See, e.g., Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1955); Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Michael Peterson, William Hasker, Bruce Reichenbach, and David Basinger, *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963); D. Z. Phillips, *Faith after Foundationalism* (London: Routledge, 1988) and *Wittgenstein and Religion* (Houndmills, U.K.: St. Martin's Press, 1993); Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, eds., *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983); Joseph Runzo, *Reason, Relativism, and God* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). For a thorough critical analysis of the "framework model" in the study of religion, see Terry F. Godlove, *Religion, Interpretation, and the Diversity of Belief: The Framework Model from Kant to Durkheim to Davidson* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997).

18. Caroline Frank Davis, *The Evidential Force of Religious Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); William P. Alston, *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Keith E. Yandell, *The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

19. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Pailin, *God and the Process of Reality: Foundations of a Credible Theism* (London: Routledge, 1989).

20. See, e.g., Richard E. Palmer, *Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969); Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction, and the Hermeneutic Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); David R. Hiley, James F. Bohman, and Richard Shusterman, eds., *The Interpretive Turn: Philosophy, Science, Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Maurizio Ferraris, *Historia de la Hermenéutica*, trans. Jorge Pérez de Tudela (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2000).

21. See, e.g., Waardenburg, *Significados Religiosos: Introducción Sistemática a la Ciencia de las Religiones*, trans. Támara Murillo Llorente (Bilbao, Spain: Desclée De Brouwer, 2001); Philip Sheldrake, "Interpreting Spiritual Texts," in *Spirituality and History: Questions of Method and Interpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1992); Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Jorge J. E. Gracia, *How Do We Know What God Means? The Interpretation of Revelation* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Andrew P. Tuck, *Comparative Philosophy and the Philosophy of Scholarship: On the Western Interpretation of Nagarjuna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Murphy, "Discourse," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 396–408; John Grimes, *Problems and Perspectives in Religious Discourse: Advaita Vedanta Implications* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Louis Dupré, "Unio Mystica: The State and the Experience," in *Mystical Union in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, 3–23; Elliot Deutsch, ed., *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophical Perspectives* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); and Gerald James Larson and Elliot Deutsch, eds., *Interpreting Across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

22. Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*; Barbara A. Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Hendrik M. Vroom, *Religions and the Truth: Philosophical Reflections and Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1989); Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*.

23. As Ursula King once remarked, "There are probably as many different hermeneutics as there are conscious hermeneuticists" ("Historical and Phenomenological Approaches to the Study of Religion," in *Theory and Method in Religious Studies: Contemporary Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Frank Whaling [New York: Mouton de Gruyer, 1995], 120).

24. For various accounts of classical and modern interpretive approaches to the study of religion, see Donald A. Crosby, *Interpretive Theories of Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1981); William E. Paden, *Interpreting the Sacred: Ways of Viewing Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); King, "Historical and Phenomenological Approaches to the Study of Religion"; and Daniel Gold, *Aesthetics and Analysis in Writing on Religion: Modern Fascinations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

25. Eliade, *The Quest: History and Meaning in Religion* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Schüssler Fiorenzza, "Method in Women's Studies in Religion: A Critical Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Methodology in Religious Studies: The Interface with Women's Studies*, ed. Arvind Sharma (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002); Panikkar, *Myth, Faith, and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach to the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 2 (1994): 9–14; Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987); Kripal, *Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom: Eroticism and Reflexibility in the Study of Mysticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Timm, *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Lopez, ed., *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988).

26. See, e.g., Lisa McCullogh and Brian Schroeder, eds., *Thinking through the Death of God: A Critical Companion to Thomas Altizer* (Albany: State University of

New York Press, 2004); Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Taylor, *Erring: A Postmodern A/theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Caputo, *On Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Cupitt, *Mysticism after Modernity*; Masuzawa, *In Search of Dreamtime: The Quest for the Origins of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

27. Jantzen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 1998); Anderson, *A Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998); Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy, and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002); Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Lanzetta, *Radical Wisdom: A Feminist Mystical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005); Sharma, *Methodology in Religious Studies*. For two introductory accounts of the interface between feminism and religion, see Rita Gross, *Feminism and Religion: An Introduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) and Majella Franzmann, *Women and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

28. King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and "The Mystic East"* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Lopez, ed., *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism under Colonialism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Chidester, *Savage Systems: Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Donaldson and Pui-Lan, eds., *Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Religious Discourse* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

29. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993); McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*; Fitgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies*; Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion: Myths, Knowledge, and Ideology*, trans. William Sayers (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003); and Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). For several discussions about the etic nature of the construct "Hinduism," see Gunther-Dietz Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke, eds., *Hinduism Reconsidered* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001). See also Brian K. Pennington's *Was Hinduism Invented? Britons, Indians, and the Colonial Construction of Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) for a nuanced argument regarding the heuristic value of concepts such as "Hinduism" or "religion" so long as we avoid their reification and affirm their multivalent character. For a recent defense of the use of the term *religion*, see Segal, "Classification and Comparison in the Study of Religion: The Work of Jonathan Z. Smith," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 73 (2005): 1175–88.

30. Urban, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998) and *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 2003); Kripal, *Kali's Child: The Mystical and the Erotic in the Life and Teachings of Ramakrishna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

31. This generalized statement is problematic. Whereas an emphasis on language pervades analytical, hermeneutic, and poststructuralist works, it should be obvious that, as we elaborate below, important sections of postcolonial and feminist studies escape linguistic dungeons and pave the way for more embodied and participatory understandings.

32. See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol. II. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 77–111. Also see Eduardo Mendieta, "Introduction," in Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*, ed. Mendieta (Cambridge: The MIT Press), esp. 11–24.

33. Cupitt, *op. cit.*, 74. In *After God: The Future of Religion*, Cupitt adds: "the supernatural world of religion turn out to have been in various ways a mythical representation of the truly magical world of language" (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 47.

34. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

35. The postmodern account of Western thinking as ontotheological is rooted in the writings of the two prophets of postmodernity: Friedrich Nietzsche and Heidegger. On the one hand, it stems from Nietzsche's equation of the "death of God" with the collapse of the possibility of objective truth, including scientific truth—what is "truth," after all, if there is not a complete and absolute God's eye view of the world? On the other hand, "onto-theology" is most explicitly associated with Heidegger's critique of the Western tradition that confuses the thought of being as such (ontos) with the entitative notion of the highest being (theos) and equates both with rationality (logos). Heidegger famously charges that such ontotheology is not only metaphysically destitute because it is incapable of really thinking being, but also religiously bankrupt because it gives us a God before whom one can "neither dance, nor sing, nor pray." Whereas the Nietzschean course can lead to postmodern forms of nihilism and perspectival relativism (though relativism is not a necessary corollary of perspectivism), the Heideggerian one is the main source of much of today's postmodern constructive theological reflection, which attempts to reimagine God without traditional metaphysical baggage. Two key anthologies on postmetaphysical theology are *The Religious*, ed. Caputo (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), and Mark A. Wrathall, ed., *Religion after Metaphysics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

36. Vattimo, "The Trace of the Trace," trans. David Webb, in *Religion*, ed. Derrida and Vattimo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 84.

37. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology*, 139–42. Also see Flood's recent plea for the inclusion of traditions' self-inquiry within the scholarly study of religion: "Reflections on Tradition and Inquiry in the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 47–58.

38. See, e.g., Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*; King, *Orientalism and Religion*; and Morno Joy, "Postcolonial Reflections: Challenges for Religious Studies," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 13 (2001): 177–95.

39. King, ibid., 175–86.

40. One of the most compelling accounts of the need for an adequate conceptual understanding as the foundation of direct spiritual knowledge can be found in Anne Klein's detailed study of the Gelukba order of Tibetan Buddhism (*Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience* [Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1986]). Robert K. C. Forman names this mediated path to immediacy "catalytic constructivism"; see his "Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting," in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Forman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 10.

41. Forman, "Paramartha and Modern Constructivists on Mysticism: Epistemological Monomorphism versus Duomorphism," *Philosophy East and West* 39 (1989): 393–418.

42. King, 183.

43. Saler, *Conceptualizing Religion: Immanent Anthropologies, Transcendent Natives, and Unbounded Categories*, with a new preface by author (New York: Berghahm Books, 2000), 263 (originally published in Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1993). For an early argument on the importance of a "mutual modulation" between Western academic and cross-cultural religious categories in the study of religion, see Smith's classic essay, "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in his *Imagining Religion*, 36–52.

Saler's proposal has been harshly criticized by McCutcheon in "'We Are All Stuck Somewhere': Taming Ethnocentrism and Traditional Understandings," in *Critics Not Caretakers: Redescribing the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, 73–83). Using the work of David Couzens Hoy, McCutcheon argues that the study of native religions through Western lenses is inescapable, and that what is truly ethnocentric is to expect that native interests and self-understandings must coincide with our own. Then he goes on to characterize Saler's research program as ethnocentric insofar as it commends the appropriation of native categories for *our* Western goal of transcultural understanding—a goal that may not be shared by the native traditions. McCutcheon's conclusion is that we should continue using exclusively Western categories for our Western purposes, i.e., to seek cross-cultural generalizations—and that we should not regard emic notions as descriptive or analytical tools but merely as data.

Formulated this way, there is no way out of what we might call a self-imposed "ethnocentric double bind": *Either* we use Western categories to describe, analyze, and assess non-Western traditions, *or* we appropriate non-Western categories at the service of our Western research agendas. Though we appreciate McCutcheon's concerns, the problem with this dichotomizing articulation is that it does not exhaust all the possibilities. For example, does the selective use of local categories as methodological tools *necessarily* require that we force them into the molds of our research interests? Can we not entertain, to the contrary, that the very goals of our research programs might be revised in our encounter with non-Western understandings and folk categories? Should not a truly postcolonial scholarship be open to be transformed *at depth* by transcultural methodological interactions? Does the arguably Western origin of a global collaborative inquiry render such endeavors inevitably *ethnocentric* in the pernicious sense of the term? And so forth.

44. Rothberg, "Spiritual Inquiry," in *Transpersonal Knowing: Exploring the Horizon of Consciousness*, ed. Tobin Hart, Peter Nelson, and Kaisa Puhakka (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 175–76.

45. Ochs, "Comparative Religious Traditions," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 126.

46. For a critique of the residual positivism involved in importing empiricist standards to evaluate religious knowledge, see Ferrer's "The Empiricist Colonization of Spirituality," in *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, 41–70. Ferrer writes: "In addition to sensory reductionism, positivism holds both that there exists a single method for all valid knowledge (methodological monism), and that the natural sciences represent this methodological ideal for all other sciences (scientism). . . . The problem with positivism, then, is not only the reduction of valid knowledge to sensory evidence, but also . . . the assimilation of all human inquiry (aesthetic, historical, social, spiritual, etc.) to the methods and aims of the natural sciences (experimentation, replication, testing, verification, falsification, etc.)" (57). Of course, the problematic importation of empiricist standards into religious inquiry needs to be sharply distinguished from the entirely valid and crucially important empirical study of religion.

47. José Ignacio Cabezón, "The Discipline and Its Other: The Dialectic of Alterity in the Study of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 74 (2006): 32–34.

48. For the most comprehensive collection of essays on the insider/outsider distinction, see McCutcheon, ed., *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion* (New York: Cassell, 1999), and for a helpful typology of insider/outsider positions based on the participant observer roles of the social sciences, see Kim Knott, "Insider/Outsider Perspectives," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. John Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2005), 243–58. Our position on this question is germane to Kripal's "methodological nondualism," which intends to "challenge the dichotomy between insider and outsider and not assume *either* that the historian, psychologist, or anthropologist who seem to be outside . . . does not also know and appreciate something of the shimmering truths of which the insider so passionately speaks *or* that the insider, however devoted to an ideal, cannot also see clearly and bravely something of the actual of which the scholar tries to speak" (*Roads of Excess, Palaces of Wisdom*, 323). Cf. McCarthy: "The key to avoiding both a pure 'insider's' or participant's standpoint and a pure 'outsider's' or observer's standpoint is . . . to adopt the perspective of a critical-reflective participant" (in David Couzens Hoy and McCarthy, *Critical Theory* [Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1994], 81).

Closely related to the insider/outsider problem is the issue of "participation versus distance" in the study of religion. Here we also find valuable to walk a "middle path" that benefits from the merits of both orientations. In this regard, see Robert Cummings Neville's early proposal to combine the virtues of the dao (i.e., participatory engagement and existential access to religious phenomena) and the daimon (i.e., critical distance and vulnerability to correction) (*The Tao and the Daimon: Segments of a Religious Inquiry* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982]). Such a combination, which for Neville shapes a secular or scholarly spirituality, can prevent both the "blindness of uncritical participation" and "the projection of one's methodologi-

cal, theoretical, and more broadly cultural assumptions onto the religious path being studied" ("Religion and Scholarship," in *Religion in Late Modernity* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002], 109). Similarly, in her recent essay "Detachment and Engagement in the Study of 'Lived Experience,'" Ann Taves writes: "I would argue that detached scholarship, like engaged scholarship, allows us to see some things, while obscuring others" (*Spiritus* 3 [2003]: 198). For an illustration of a "critical-participative approach" to the study of ancient sacred texts, see Douglas Burton-Christie, "The Cost of Interpretation: Sacred Texts and Ascetic Practice in Desert Spirituality," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 2 (1994): 21–24; and for important discussions of the participatory nature of the study of spirituality, see the essays collected in "Part Two: The Self-Implicating Nature of the Study of Spirituality," in *Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Elisabeth A. Dreyer and Mark S. Burrows (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 61–151.

49. See Ferrer (this volume), for a suggestion of two pragmatic tests. This discussion raises at least two issues that would require further discussion. The first concerns the possibility of intersubjectively testing deeply experiential or even supernatural claims through a radical empiricist epistemology (after William James) that challenges the scientistic attachment of "empirical validity" to "sensory evidence." After all, contemplatives from the various traditions following similar religious techniques generally reach intersubjective agreement about spiritual insights and realities, even if the falsification of those claims is not possible (on the nonfalsifiability of contemplative claims, see Ferrer, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, 62–65). The second relates to our defense of the cognitive status of religion, which is at odds with contemporary neopragmatist proposals to understand religion as a noncognitive enterprise which, like art, does not require intersubjective agreement in contrast to cognitive endeavors such as science or law. In this regard, see Rorty, "Pragmatism as Romantic Polytheism," in *The Revival of Pragmatism: New Essays on Social Thought, Law, and Culture*, ed. Morris Dickstein (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

50. For two recent anthologies on feminism and the study of religion, see Darlene M. Juschka, ed., *Feminism in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York: Continuum, 2001), and Sharma, ed., *Methodology in Religious Studies*.

51. See, e.g, Carol Christ, "Toward a Paradigm Shift in the Academy and in Religious Studies," in *The Impact of Feminist Research in the Academy*, ed. Christie Farnham (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 53–76; Alice M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo, eds., *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); and Gross, *Feminism and Religion*.

52. Richard Griggs, *Gods after God: An Introduction to Contemporary Radical Theologies* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 128.

53. Taylor, *Erring*, 104.

54. Caputo, "Introduction: Who Comes after the God of Metaphysics?" in *The Religious*, 15. Cf., Aldo Gargani: "Religious transcendence achieves its meaning in the fold of a reflection that reconstructs the immanence of its terms. *Transcendence immanences itself*" ("Religious Experience as Event and Interpretation," in *Religion*, 115; emphasis in original).

Note here that the postmodern avowal of sacred immanence and denial of transcendent spiritual sources retains the very hierarchical relationship between binary oppositions (e.g., immanence/transcendence) that so many of these authors claim to overcome. In deconstruction, let us remember here, the reversal of the hierarchical relationship between binary oppositions is an important but provisional step toward the final (but ever deferred) goal of total emancipation from binary hierarchies. Whereas the rejection of the transcendent is a natural consequence of the attack upon the metaphysics of presence, we suggest that a more consistent move may be to deconstruct the immanence/transcendence polarity *nondualistically*, that is, overcoming their hierarchical relationship without aprioristically obliterating any of the two poles.

55. William R. LaFleur, "Body," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 36–54. See also Robert C. Fuller's review of a number of recent works stressing the importance of the body in the study of religion: "Faith of the Flesh: Bodily Sources of Spirituality," *Religious Studies Review* 31 (2005): 135–139.

56. See Paula M. Coaley, *Religious Imagination and the Body: A Feminist Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Jane Marie Law, ed., *Religious Reflections on the Human Body* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); Coakley, ed., *Religion and the Body* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Meredith B. McGuire, "Why Bodies Matter: A Sociological Reflection on Spirituality and Materiality," *Spiritus* 3 (2003): 1–18; and Ferrer, "Embodied Spirituality: Now and Then," *Tikkun* 21 (2006): 41–45, 63–64. See also Lawrence E. Sullivan's review article, "Body Works: Knowledge of the Body in the Study of Religion," *History of Religions* 30 (1990): 86–99.

57. Kripal, *The Serpent's Gift: Gnostic Reflections on the Study of Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 139.

58. Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Hunt Overzee, *The Body Divine: The Symbol of the Body in the Works of Teilhard de Chardin and Rāmānuja* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

59. See, e.g., Thomas P. Kasulis, Roger T. Ames, and Wimal Dissanayake, eds., *Self as Body in Asian Theory and Practice* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Geoffrey Samuel, "The Body in Hindu and Buddhist Tantra," *Religion* 19 (1989): 197–210; Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Holdrege, "Body Connections: Hindu Discourses on the Body and the Study of Religion," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 2/3 (1998): 341–86; Patrick Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body in Indian Asceticism," in *Asceticism*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 188–210.

60. Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987) and *The Body, Self-Cultivation, and Ki-Energy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993). On the existential transformation of the mind-body dualism into its supposedly original oneness, see also Shigenori Nagatomo, *Attunement through the Body* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

61. Kripal, *Roads of Excess*, 22–23.

62. Virginia Burrus, *The Sex Lives of the Saints: An Erotics of Ancient Hagiography* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

63. Jantzen, *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*; Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy*; Lanzetta, "Women's Body as Mystical Text," in *Radical Wisdom*, 155–73. See also Dorothee Soelle, "Eroticism," in *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 113–31.

64. Nelson, *Body Theology* (Louisville: Westminster/John Know Press, 1998), 50. See also Lisa Isherwood and Elisabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Sheffield, U.K.: Pilgrim Press, 1998).

65. Segal, *Explaining and Interpreting Religion* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academia* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*.

For two recent presentations of the phenomenological method that take into account these criticisms, see Douglas Allen, "Phenomenology of Religion," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 182–207, and Thomas Ryba, "Phenomenology of Religion," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. Segal (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 111–21. The dominant tendency today is to regard phenomenological approaches as an element of, or complement to, social-scientific explanation or hermeneutic understanding. The ongoing tension between hermeneutic/phenomenological, naturalistic, and critical approaches to religion is evident in the recent anthology edited by René Gothóni, *How to Do Comparative Religion? Three Ways, Many Goals* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005).

66. The expression "dissolving into language" is borrowed from Caroline Walker Bynum's essay, "Why All the Fuss About the Body?: A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995): 1–33.

67. Isherwood and Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology*, 151.

68. We are developing here an argumentative line advanced by Fuller in "Faith of the Flesh." Interestingly, Johann Georg Hamman, the first and in many ways still the most powerful critic of Kant, foreshadowed not only the modern recognition of the linguistic basis of reason, but also the embodied (and sensuous) foundations of human language and thought. See Garret Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics, and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 62ff. See also Terence J. German, *Hamman on Language and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

69. Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). See also George Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), for a provoking exploration of the philosophical implications of the notion that human language, thinking, and metaphorical conceptualization are shaped by the body's inner structures and sensory relationships with the world. See also Warren G. Frisina, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: Toward a Nonrepresentational Theory of Knowledge* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002) and the compendium on "body in mind" recently published in *Daedalus*

(Summer 2006), including essays by Damasio, Johnson, Carol Gilligan, and Jerry Fodor, among others.

70. What Johnson perhaps does not realize (understandably since he is a cognitive scientist, not a student of religion) is that his cognitivist account of imagination as an epistemic bridge between the embodied and the mental is strikingly similar to many esoteric and mystical views on the role of the Imagination. For many mystics, the epistemic function of the noetic faculty known as the active Imagination (which is sharply distinguished from "imagination" or merely mental fantasizing) is precisely to raise sensual/perceptual experience to an imaginal level in that isthmus between physical and spiritual realms that Henry Corbin calls *mundus imaginalis*. See Corbin, "*Mundus Imaginalis* or the Imaginary and the Imaginal," in *Swedenborg and Esoteric Islam*, trans. Leonard Fox (West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), 1–33, and "A Theory of Visionary Knowledge," in *The Voyage and the Messenger: Iran and Philosophy*, trans. Joseph Rowe (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1998), 117–34. Also see William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabī and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

Francisco J. Varela and Natalie Depraz offer a contemporary account of the imagination as being "at the core of life and mind" in "Imagining: Embodiment, Phenomenology, and Transformation," in *Buddhism and Science: Breaking New Ground*, ed. B. Alan Wallace (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 196–230. Weaving together threads from modern neuroscience, phenomenology, and Buddhism, Varela and Depraz provide a nonreductive view of human imagination and explore its centrality in promoting human transformation.

71. Note here that both the hermeneutic and postmodern wings of the linguistic turn also challenge the representational paradigm of cognition. For the narrativist challenge, see Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology*, 99–104, and for a general account of postmodern antirepresentationalism, see Pauline M. Rosenau, *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences: Insights, Inroads, and Intrusions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 92–108.

72. Eggington and Sandbothe, eds., *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy: Contemporary Engagements between Analytic and Continental Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004). See also Dickstein, *The Revival of Pragmatism*.

73. Habermas initially learned his pragmatism from Karl Otto-Appel and the influence of American pragmatists on Habermas's thought has remained strong, as seen, for example, in essays such as "Peirce and Communication" (Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, 88–112). For Wittgenstein's pragmatist sympathies, particularly as mediated through Frank Ramsey's *The Foundations of Mathematics*, see *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

74. See James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, in *William James: Writings 1902–1910*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: The Library of America, 1987), 572–73.

75. Ibid., 573.

76. Ibid., 574.

77. Neville, *The Highroad around Modernism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

78. Eggington and Sanbothe use the expression "deflationary pragmatism" to describe the discursive strategy of those neopragmatists who narrow or deflate the concept of pragmatism "in order to distinguish it from the professional self-image of academic philosophy in a marked and even provocative way." See "Introduction," *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy*, 1–2.

79. Rorty has, however, begun to explore the possibilities of religious language in a more open way, redirecting his ire not so much at religion in general as at monotheism and clericalism in particular. Rorty's new appeal to religious rhetoric remains reductively humanistic (even Feuerbachian), but at certain times does seem to invite a dialogue with religious practitioners and scholars. For instance, when Rorty defines God as "all the varied sublimities human beings come to see through the eyes that they themselves create," participatory theorists may want to correct Rorty's reductionism (he explicitly forbids God any excess beyond what human beings may see), but may also see in this formula a suggestive insight about cocreativity that is worthy of further exploration. See Rorty, "Pragmatism and Romantic Polytheism," 34.

80. For the distinction between Cambridge pragmatism and Instrumentalist pragmatism (or what is sometimes called Chicago pragmatism), see Oppenheim, *Reverence for the Relations of Life: Re-Imagining Pragmatism via Josiah Royce's Interactions with Peirce, James, and Dewey* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 48. For a similar distinction, see Kucklick, *A History of Philosophy in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 95. James himself is too protean to fit neatly, once and for all, into either of these two pragmatisms, some of his writings leaning much more strongly toward Dewey's Instrumentalism than others.

81. Bernstein, "Pragmatism's Common Faith," in *Pragmatism and Religion: Classical Sources and Original Essays*, ed. Stuart Rosenbaum (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 129–41.

82. See especially Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

83. See West, *Prophesy Deliverance!: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), and *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism, Wisconsin Project on American Writers* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

84. For an introduction to the practice of Scriptural Reasoning see the articles collected in *Modern Theology* 22, no. 3 (2006). Nicholas Adams explores Scriptural Reasoning through a development of Habermas's pragmatics in Nicholas Adams, *Habermas and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 234–55.

85. For a variety of different uses of pragmatism in order to approach the phenomena of mysticism and religious experience, see G. William Barnard, *Exploring Unseen Worlds: William James and the Philosophy of Mysticism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997); Nancy K. Frankenberry, ed., *Radical Interpretation in Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*; Sandra B. Rosenthal, "Spirituality and the Spirit of American Pragmatism: Beyond the Theism Atheism Split," in *Pragmatism and Religion*, 229–43; Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell

University Press, 1995); Robert Westbrook, "An Uncommon Faith: Pragmatism and Religious Experience," in *Pragmatism and Religion*, 190–207.

86. Sandbothe, "The Pragmatic Twist," in *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy*, 68.

87. Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931–1958), 5:448n.

88. Our use of the term *mystery* does not entail any kind of essentialist reification of an ontologically given ground of being, as expressions such as "the sacred," "the divine," or "the eternal" often conveyed in classic scholarship in religion. It is also unrelated to Rudolf Otto's account of the human experience of the divine as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. In contrast, we deliberately use this conceptually vague, open-ended, and ambiguous term to refer to the nondetermined creative energy or source of reality, the cosmos, life, and consciousness. Thus understood, the term *mystery* obstructs claims or insinuations of dogmatic certainty and associated religious exclusivisms; more positively, it invites an attitude of intellectual and existential humility and receptivity to the Great Unknown that is the fountain of our being.

89. Bracketing the more theological uses of the category "the sacred," we use the term *sacred* as an adjective to refer to the ultimate value, beauty, and arguably inherent "goodness" of reality or the mystery. For a recent discussion of the problems with the use of the category "the sacred" in Religious Studies, see Terence Thomas, "'The Sacred' as a Viable Concept in the Contemporary Study of Religions," in *Religion: Empirical Studies*, ed. Steven J. Sutcliffe (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 47–66.

90. On which, see Josiah Royce, John J. McDermott, and Ignas K. Skrupskelis, *The Basic Writings of Josiah Royce* (Chicago,: University of Chicago Press, 1969).

91. See, e.g., Timm, ed., *Texts in Context*.

92. Holdrege, *Veda and Torah*, 5.

93. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 13.

94. Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), 121.

95. On the divine origins of human language, and in addition to well-known Vedic, Biblical, Platonic, and Kabbalistic formulations, see David Crystal's *Linguistics, Language, and Religion* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1965).

96. Griggs, *Gods after God*, 31–32. Also see Taylor, "Writing of God," in *Erring*, 97–120.

97. Barfield, *Poetic Diction: A Study in Meaning*, 2nd ed. (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1964), 88.

98. Thus, for example, Judith A. Berling, a scholar of Chinese and Japanese religions, argues that to the two generally accepted constitutive fields of Spirituality (i.e., competence in the history and scriptures of the particular tradition in question), we ought to add Comparative Religions as a third constitutive field. See Berling, "Christian Spirituality: Intrinsically Interdisciplinary," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in Honor of Sandra M. Schneiders, I.H.M.*, ed. Bruce H. Lescher and Elizabeth Liebert (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2006), 38–41.

99. Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," 5–6.

100. Cousins, "Spirituality in Today's World," in *Religion in Today's World*, ed. Whaling (Edinburgh, U.K.: T and T Clark, 1987), 323–24. Quoted in Ursula King, "Is There a Future for Religious Studies as We Know It? Some Postmodern, Feminist, and Spiritual Challenges," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 (2002): 380–81.

101. We are borrowing the word *evental* from Peter Hallward, who uses it to translate Alain Badiou's *événementiel*. Badiou's *evental* refers to something characterized by radical irruptive novelty, something that cannot be accounted for by received categories and yet makes universal demands upon those who subject themselves to it. Indeed, Badiou argues that subjects are created through fidelity to such events. Cf. Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001); Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

102. Reprinted in Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," in *Minding the Spirit*, 73.

103. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 14.

104. Ibid.

105. Frohlich, "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality," 70.

106. Sheldrake, "Spirituality and Its Critical Methodology," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality*, 23.

107. Taves, "Detachment and Engagement in the Study of 'Lived Experience.'"

108. Braun, "On Religion," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 11.

109. For two recent anthologies exploring the implications of postmetaphysical thought for Religious Studies, see Wrathall, ed., *Religion After Metaphysics*, and Jeffrey Bloechl, ed., *Religious Experience and the End of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003). Early discussions appeared in *Religion, Ontotheology, and Deconstruction*, ed. Henry Ruf (New York: Paragon House, 1989).

It may be important to distinguish here between two related but independent meanings of the term *metaphysics*. On the one hand, the notion of metaphysics in Western philosophy is generally based on the distinction between appearance and reality, with a metaphysical statement being one that claims to portray that "Reality" presumably lying behind the realm of appearances (Peter van Inwagen, "The Nature of Metaphysics," in *Contemporary Readings in the Foundations of Metaphysics*, ed. Stephen Laurence and Cynthia Macdonald [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998], 12ff). In addition to this use, on the other hand, many religious traditions also speak about "metaphysical worlds" to refer to levels or dimensions of reality existing beyond the sensible world or within the subtle ontological depths of human consciousness. The first usage is the main target of Derrida's attack on the metaphysics of presence. On a strong reading, this critique leads to the a priori denial of the ontological status of any transcendent or metaphysical reality. The weaker reading

simply requires a declaration of metaphysical agnosticism. As we will see in this volume, participatory understandings of religion not only eschew the dualism of appearance and reality, but also endorse modern and postmodern critiques of traditional metaphysics of presence. It is possible, we believe, to consistently drop the mentalist dualism of appearance and reality, and simultaneously entertain the plausibility of a deep and ample multidimensional cosmos in which the sensible world does not exhaust the possibilities of the Real.

110. Perhaps nobody articulates this postmetaphysical *Zeitgeist* more cogently than Habermas in his *Postmetaphysical Thinking*. Though by no means endorsing its metaphysical import, it is noteworthy that even a champion of modernity such as Habermas questions the possibility of a full assimilation of religious meanings into secular language: "Philosophy, even in its postmetaphysical forms, will be able neither to replace nor to repress religion as long as religious language is the bearer of semantic content that is inspiring and even indispensable, for this content eludes (for the time being?) the explanatory force of philosophical language and continues to resist translation into reasoning discourses" (*Postmetaphysical Thinking*, 51). For a discussion of this intriguing sentence, rather anomalous in Habermas's *corpus*, see "A Conversation about God and the World: Interview with Eduardo Mendieta," in *Religion and Rationality*, 162ff.

A perplexing paradox of our times is that we seem to live in a cultural milieu that is as postmetaphysical as it is increasingly postsecular. Vattimo succinctly describes the origins of the contemporary revival of religion: "By now, all of us are used to the fact that disenchantment with the world has generated a radical disenchantment with the very idea of disenchantment. In other words, demythification has finally turned against itself, thereby acknowledging that the ideal of the elimination of myth is myth" ("After Onto-Theology: Philosophy between Science and Religion," in *Religion after Metaphysics*, 30). See also John D. Caputo's "How the Secular World Became Post-Secular," in *On Religion*, 37–66. It is likely that this paradox is the source of the many proposals for a postmetaphysical religion and immanent spiritualities spawning today.

111. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology*, 15.

112. Ibid., 171.

113. Ibid., 172.

114. Northcote, "Objectivity and the Supernormal: The Limitations of Bracketing Approaches in Providing Neutral Accounts of Supernormal Claims," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 19 (2004): 85–98.

115. Ibid., 89.

116. Note here how a naturalistically minded scholar such as Strenski chastises McCutcheon for his commitment to a naturalistic metaphysics: "Ironically, and in effect, such assertions of a naturalistic foundation to the study of religion as McCutcheon sees it, in effect, reintroduces [*sic*] metaphysics into the field" (*Thinking about Religion: An Historical Introduction to Theories of Religion* [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006], 339–40). For distinctions between scientific and religious types of naturalism, see the essays by David Ray Griffin and Jerome A. Stone in the sec-

tion "Naturalism: Scientific and Religious," *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 37 (2002): 361–94.

117. Smart, *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); Byrne, "The Study of Religion: Neutral, Scientific, or Neither"? *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 9 (1997): 339–51. As we have seen, Fitgerald argues that Smart's methodological agnosticism hides theological agendas in its implicitly positing a transcendental referent about which scholars need to remain agnostic (*The Ideology of Religious Studies*, 56).

118. Caputo, *On Religion*, 20.

119. Taylor, "Deconstruction: What's the Difference?" *Soundings* 66 (1983): 397, 400. Cf. Cupitt, "The [postmodern] mysticism of secondarieness is mysticism *minus* metaphysics, mysticism *minus* any claim to special or privileged knowledge, and mysticism without any other world than this one" (*Mysticism after Modernity*, 8). It is worth pointing out here that linguistic Kantianism is also surpassed by the pragmatic turn in philosophy. The pragmatization of Kant in contemporary philosophy, however, does not seek or entail the resurrection of metaphysical referents, but rather a detranscendentalization of the conditions for knowledge onto historically originated immanent structures embedded in communicative practices. See Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, 17ff.

120. Evans, "Can Philosophers Limit What Mystics Can Do? A Critique of Steven Katz," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989): 53–60.

121. Kripal, *The Serpent's Gift*, 141–42. The expression "state-specific truths" derives from Charles Tart's original proposal of "state-specific sciences," in "States of Consciousness and State-Specific Sciences," *Science* 176 (1972): 1203–10.

122. Popper, "The Myth of the Framework," in *The Myth of the Framework: In Defense of Science and Rationality*, ed. M. A. Notturno (New York: Routledge, 1994), 33–64.

123. Katz, "On Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56 (1988): 754.

124. For several papers challenging the adequacy of Katz's neo-Kantian account of mystical knowledge, see J. William Forgie, "Hyper-Kantianism in Recent Discussions of Mystical Experience," *Religious Studies* 21 (1985): 205–18; Anthony Perovich, "Does the Philosophy of Mysticism Rest on a Mistake?" in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 237–53; James Robertson Price III, "Mysticism, Mediation, and Consciousness: The Innate Capacity in John Ruusbroec," in *The Innate Capacity: Mysticism, Psychology, and Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 111–20; Martin T. Adam, "A Post-Kantian Perspective on Recent Debates about Mystical Experience," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 (2002): 801–17. Of related interest is the essay by Larry Short, "Mysticism, Mediation, and the Non-Linguistic," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 (1996): 659–75.

Note that perennialist accounts can also be neo-Kantian. In *An Interpretation of Religion*, for example, Hick defends the thesis that the different spiritual ultimates "represent different phenomenal awarenesses of the same noumenal reality" (15). For a critique of Hick's neo-Kantianism, see P. R. Eddy, "Religious Pluralism and the

Divine: Another Look at John Hick's Neo-Kantian Proposal," *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 467–78. A more recent Kantian-like defense of perennialism is offered by Paul O. Ingram in *Wrestling with the Ox: A Theology of Religious Experience* (New York: Continuum, 1997).

125. Perovich, "Mysticism and the Philosophy of Science," *The Journal of Religion* 65 (1985): 63–82; Forman, "Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting," in *The Problem of Pure Consciousness*, 3–49; Michael Stoeber, "Constructivist Epistemologies of Mysticism: A Revision and Critique," *Religious Studies* 28 (1992): 107–16.

126. Katz, "The 'Conservative' Character of Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 3–60.

127. Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion*; Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine*.

128. Runzo, *Reason, Relativism, and God*.

129. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1978), 309. Cf. Jean Baudrillard: "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory—*precession of simulacra*—that engenders the territory" (*Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser [Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994], 1). Therefore, all we can have access to are our constructions, or, as Nelson Goodman puts it, our "versions" of reality and never reality itself (*Ways of Worldmaking* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978]). This postmodern move, however, far from dissolving or transcending the dualism of framework and reality (or map and territory), reinforces it by fatally obliterating one of its poles (reality) and then ontologically inflating the other (frameworks, maps, or versions of reality). The tragic consequence of this move is unequivocal: "The world well lost," as the title of Rorty's classic essay glossed (in *Journal of Philosophy* 69 [1972]: 649–65).

130. Gill, "Territory," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 305.

131. Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 183–198. In what follows we do not mean to suggest that Davidson himself would have agreed with the participatory argument we are drawing from his classic essay. Nevertheless, we believe that one of the consequences of his dismantling of the scheme-content division is to open the space for such participatory implications.

132. In *Religion, Interpretation, and the Diversity of Belief*, Godlove proposes that once the dualism of scheme and content is deconstructed (after Davidson), we need to give up the idea of religions as conceptual frameworks.

133. For a critique of aspects of Davidson's essay, see Nicholas Rescher's "Conceptual Schemes," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy. Vol. V. Studies in Epistemology*, ed. P. A. French, T. E. Uehling Jr., and H. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 323–45. Although rejecting the myth of the given, Rescher questions that linguistic translatability is an adequate ground for refuting the existence of alternative conceptual schemes. In particular, he suggests that the proper judge of the presence of alternative conceptual schemes is not translatability but interpretability. Rescher's essay is especially helpful in showing how any plausible retention of the idea

of a conceptual scheme needs to let go of both its original Kantian moorings and the notion of a pregiven world. Free from these specters, Rescher continues, potentially different conceptual schemes are no longer seen as alternative or competing a priori interpretations of a ready-made world, but simply diverse a posteriori creative innovations stemming from our empirical inquiries and ontological commitments. Also see Quine, "On the Very Idea of a Third Dogma," in *Theories and Things* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981), 38–42.

134. Davidson, 198; emphasis added.

135. Thinkers as diverse as Bordo, Drew Leder (in *The Absent Body* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990]), Nagatomo, Varela, and Yasuo suggest that the process of increasing dissociation between mental and somatic worlds that characterized important strains of the modern Western trajectory was an important source of both the postulation and the success of the Cartesian mind-body doctrine. The definitive overcoming of Cartesian dualism, therefore, may not be so much a philosophical but a practical, existential, and transformative task. In a similar spirit, we propose that the Kantian two worlds doctrine (and its associated epistemological skepticism) is parasitic on the estrangement of the human mind from an embodied apprehension of reality. As contemporary cognitive science tells us, "Our sense of what is real begins with and depends crucially upon our bodies. . . . As embodied, imaginative creatures, *we never were separated or divorced from reality in the first place*" (Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 17, 93; emphasis in original). If this is correct, then it becomes entirely understandable that the decline of embodied conscious participation in human inquiry, arguably precipitated by the disconnection between mind and body, may have undermined the sense of being in touch with the real, engendering the Kantian mentalist dualism of a merely phenomenal world and an always inaccessible noumenal reality.

136. These "marginal voices" belong to the group of scholars known as traditionalists or perennialists—such as Frithjof Schuon, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Huston Smith, or James Cutsinger—who in various ways affirm the transcendent or esoteric unity of religions. For two recent accounts of this movement, see the partisan study by Harry Oldmeadow, *Journeys East: 20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004) and the far superior *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), by Mark J. Sedgwick. In addition to being textually unwarranted, esotericist universalism has been intersubjectively challenged (refuted?) in the contemporary intermonastic dialogue. Buddhist and Christian monks, for example, acknowledge important differences in both their understandings and their experiences of what their respective traditions consider to be ultimate; see, e.g., Donald W. Mitchell and James Wiseman, eds., *The Gethsemani Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics* (New York: Continuum, 1997); Susan Walker, ed., *Speaking of Silence: Christians and Buddhists on the Contemplative Path* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987).

The most nuanced defense of a qualified version of the "common core" theory is due to Forman, who presents compelling evidence for the occurrence of a "pure consciousness event" in many, though by no means all, contemplative traditions; see Forman, ed., *The Problem of Pure Consciousness* and *The Innate Capacity*. For two general critiques of traditional and modern varieties of perennialism, see Paul J. Griffiths, *An*

Apology for Apologetics: A Study in the Logic of Interreligious Dialogue (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 36–39, 46–59; Ferrer, *Revisioning Transpersonal Theory*, 71–111, 135–40.

137. See, for example, the work of Wilhelm Halbfass for neo-Hindu inclusivism (*India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], 403–18); and Gavin D'Costa for Hick's neo-Kantian and the Dalai Lama's Tibetan Buddhist pluralisms (*The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000], 24–40, 72–95).

138. More self-reflexive and contextually sensitive than prior comparative scholarship, the new post-Eliadean comparativism emphasizes the search for both commonalities and differences, is critical of past theological agendas, and recognizes that cross-cultural patterns may not be necessarily universal. For discussions, see Luther H. Martin, Paden, Marsha E. Hewitt, Wiebe, and E. Thomas Lawson, "The New Comparativism in the Study of Religion: A Symposium," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 8 (1996): 1–49; Kimberly C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, eds., *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2000). For a sophisticated recent comparative project, see the three volumes edited by Neville on *The Human Condition*, *Ultimate Realities*, and *Religious Truth*, all published by State University of New York Press in 2000.

139. Heim, *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995); Kaplan, *Different Paths, Different Summits: A Model for Religious Pluralism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

140. A notable exception to this trend is the metaphysical pluralism advocated by the process theologians John B. Cobb Jr. and Griffin (after Charles Hartshorne). See Cobb, *Transforming Christianity and the World: A Way Beyond Absolutism and Relativism*, ed. Paul F. Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999); Griffin, *Reenchantment without Supernaturalism: A Process Philosophy of Religion* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001); Griffin, ed., *Deep Religious Pluralism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

From some participatory standpoints, Cobb-Griffin's dipolar "deep pluralism" is not deep *enough*. In addition to operating within a theistic framework inimical to many traditions, its dipolarity forces all religious ultimates into the arguably Procrustean molds of God's "abstract essence" (unchanging Being) and God's "concrete states" (changing Becoming). Nevertheless, the process-theological challenge to linguistic Kantianism and its postulate that the Divine (at least Its "concrete states") can be influenced by human affairs is harmonious with the cocreative participatory epistemology endorsed in many contributions to this volume.

141. Preus, *Explaining Religion: Criticism and Theory from Bodin to Freud* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), xviii; emphasis in original.

142. Hocking, *The Coming World Civilization* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956). The wording cited here comes from John James Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 134.

143. Stoeber, *Theo-Monistic Mysticism: A Hindu-Christian Comparison* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

144. Hollenback, *Mysticism: Experience, Response, and Empowerment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

145. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 39, 119.

146. Of related interest is the increasing concern with polytheistic religions, which constitute a largely more pluralistic spiritual canvas than the one portrayed by monotheistic faiths. In polytheistic religions, Jordan Paper writes, "[p]eople with differing personalities and experiences meet different deities. Without an enforced monotheistic creed, people are open to an abundance of numinous possibilities;" in *The Deities Are Many: A Polytheistic Theology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 13.

147. Grof, *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), and *The Adventure of Self-Discovery: Dimensions of Consciousness and New Perspectives in Psychotherapy and Inner Exploration* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988). Dan Merkur distinguishes twenty-four types of psychedelic unitive states, many of which clearly relate to particular religious traditions, and states that what characterizes the psychedelic state is that it "provides access to all" (*The Ecstatic Imagination: Psychedelic Experiences and the Psychoanalysis of Self-Actualization* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], 155).

148. *The Adventure of Self-Discovery*, 139.

149. For an updated summary of Katz's contextualist views, see Katz, "Diversity and the Study of Mysticism," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Volume 2: Textual, Comparative, Sociological, and Cognitive Approaches*, ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, and Randi R. Warne (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 189–210.

150. Moore, "Mystical Experience, Mystical Doctrine, Mystical Technique," in Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 112.

151. Of course, the modern mind may be tempted to explain away the phenomena reported by Grof in terms of cryptoamnesia (i.e., the subjects had forgotten their previous exposure to those symbols and the special state of consciousness simply brings these memories to consciousness). In our opinion, however, this explanation needs to be ruled out because Grof's subjects not only can see the form of these religious and mythological symbols, but also gain detailed insight into their deeper esoteric meaning. Furthermore, although the "cryptoamnesia hypothesis" may account for some of the cases reported by Grof (e.g., the self-identification of some Japanese people with the figure of Christ on the Cross), it would be very difficult to explain in these terms reports of subjects accessing detailed knowledge of mythological and religious motifs of barely known cultures such as the Malekulans in New Guinea (*The Adventure of Self-Discovery*, 19–21). In these cases, the possibility of previous intellectual exposure to such detailed information of a barely known culture is remote enough, we believe, to rule out the cryptoamnesia hypothesis as a plausible general explanation of these phenomena. The other alternative is to interpret Grof's data as supporting the existence of something like C. G. Jung's collective unconscious, but in our view such an option is not necessarily incompatible with ontological explanations, for example, if one were to grant a "psychoid" status to metaphysical religious worlds. For an extended discussion, see Ferrer, "The Consciousness Research of

Stanislav Grof and the Study of Mysticism," in *Festschrift for Stanislav Grof*, ed. Richard Tarnas (Albany: State University of New York Press, forthcoming).

152. Larry Laudan, *Progress and Its Problems: Towards a Theory of Scientific Growth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 26–31.

153. "The deepest dogma of the linguistic turn in both analytic and Continental hermenutics," writes Richard Shusterman, is the "premise that all understanding and meaningful experience is indeed linguistic" ("Beneath Interpretation," in *The Interpretive Turn*, 117). In this important essay, Shusterman provides a variety of examples of prereflective and nonlinguistic comprehension, such as the way that dancers understand "the sense and rightness of a movement or posture proprioceptively, by feeling it in [their] spine and muscles, without translating it into conceptual linguistic terms" (ibid.). Shusterman distinguishes between "interpretation," which necessarily involves language, and "understanding," which does not require linguistic articulation, and argues that the failure to recognize nonlinguistic sources of meaning stems from the disembodied nature of Western philosophical practice.

154. Our use of the term *enactive* is inspired by Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch's pioneering articulation of a nonrepresentational paradigm of cognition in *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991). Note, however, that Varela et al. understand *enaction* as an embodied action that brings forth a domain of distinctions as the result of the mutual specification of organism and environment, limiting therefore the scope of their proposal to the perceptual cognition of the natural or sensoriomotor world. Our participatory formulation adapts and extends the enactive paradigm to account for the emergence of ontologically real religious realms (or subtle domains of distinctions) cocreated by human multidimensional cognition and the generative force of life or the spirit. For extended discussions of spiritual knowing as enactive, see the essays by Sean Kelly, Ferrer, and Lee Irwin (in this volume). Also see Caputo's *On Religion* (139–40), for a linguistic usage of the term *enactive* as the performance of the *meaning* of God.

155. In their conviction that the participatory turn can reinvigorate the creative partnership between human beings and spirit, many of the contributors to this anthology can be reasonably seen, and perhaps dismissed by some, as religionists. It is important to emphasize, however, that to embrace a participatory understanding of religious knowledge is not *necessarily* linked to confessional, religionist, or supernaturalist premises or standpoints. On the one hand, as many of the contributions to this volume show, participatory approaches often lead to critical assessments and even radical revisions of traditional religious beliefs, practices, and understandings. Most fundamentally, on the other hand, virtually all the same participatory implications for the study of religion can be practically drawn if we were to conceive, or translate, the term *spirit* in a naturalistic fashion as an emergent creative potential of life, nature, or reality. Methodologically, the challenge to be met is to account for a process or dynamism underlying the creative elements of religious visionary imagination that cannot be entirely explicated by appealing to biological or cultural-linguistic factors (at least as narrowly understood by proponents of reductionist approaches). Whether such creative source is a transcendent spirit or immanent life will likely be always a contested issue, but one, we believe, that does not damage the general claims of the participatory turn.

156. See John Heron's *Participatory Spirituality: A Farewell to Authoritarian Religion* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Press, 2006) for a related account of human spirituality in terms of participatory cocreation with transcendent and immanent spiritual sources. The subtitle of Heron's book intends to convey a "respectful departure" from the authoritarian tendencies he perceives in most past and present religious schools and institutions. A powerful vision of the human, the divine, and the cosmos as participating cocreatively in the unfolding of reality is articulated by Panikkar in *The Cosmotheantric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. with intro. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993). Also see Philip Hefner's "The Evolution of the Created Co-Creator" for a Christian account of human beings "as participants and co-creators in the ongoing work of God's creative activity" (in *Cosmos as Creation: Theology and Science in Consonance*, ed. Ted Peters [Nashville: Nashville, 1990], 232).

157. See, e.g., Rorty, "A Pragmatist View of Contemporary Analytical Philosophy," in *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy*, 131–44.

158. Engler, "Constructionism versus What?" *Religion* 34 (2004): 291–313.

159. In contemporary philosophy, a robust "constructive realist" stance has been eloquently articulated by Joseph Margolis. Though Margolis holds that realist stances are human symbolic constructions (doing away with the disjunction between epistemology and metaphysics), the integrative power of his proposal is undermined by Kantian gestures: "We cannot know the independent world as it is 'absolutely' independent of cognitive conjecture, but we can construct a reasonable sense of what to characterize as the independent-world-as-it-is-known-(and knowable)-to-us" ("Cartesian Realism and the Revival of Pragmatism," in *The Pragmatic Turn in Philosophy*, 238). More attuned to participatory standpoints, Robert Minner offers an account of knowledge as "true construction" that takes human creative pursuits to be participating in divine knowledge and creation; see *Truth in the Making: Creative Knowledge in Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

160. Capps, *Religious Studies*, 2–12.

161. Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas that Have Shaped Our World View* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), 434–35.

162. For other contrasts between premodern, modern, and postmodern modes of participation, see the chapters by Jacob H. Sherman, Kelly, and Robert McDermott (in this volume).

163. Lévy-Bruhl's *How Natives Think*, trans. Lilian A. Clare (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926); *Primitive Mentality*, trans. Clare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923). For a classic critique of Lévy-Bruhl's participation, see Smith, "I Am a Parrot (Red)," *History of Religion* 11 (1972): 391–413. For a sophisticated discussion of Lévy-Bruhl's participation in the context of the "rationality debate" in the study of religion, see Saler, "Lévy-Bruhl, Participation, and Rationality," in *Rationality and the Study of Religion*, ed. Jeppe S. Jensen and Luther H. Martin. Acta Jutlandica LXXII: 1, Theology Series, 19 (Aahars C., Denmark: AARHUS University Press, 1997), 44–64. See also Segal, "Relativism and Rationality in the Social Sciences: A Review Essay of Lucien Lévy-Bruhl's *How Natives Think*," in *Religion and the Social Sciences: Essays on the Confrontation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 167–80.

164. Lévy-Bruhl, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality*, preface by Maurice Leenhardt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

165. Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 84–110. Readers should also consult Kasulis's nuanced identification of two different cultural orientations, "intimacy"—i.e., an affective dimension of knowledge characterized by personal objectivity, no sharp distinction between self and other, and psychosomatic integration—and "integrity"—i.e., a cognitive/mental dimension of knowledge characterized by public objectivity, strict differentiation between self and other, and disconnection between the somatic and the psychological. See *Intimacy and Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002).

166. Hanegraaff, "How Magic Survived the Disenchantment of the World?" *Religion* 33 (2003): 357–80.

167. For two well-informed analyses of the New Age movement, see Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998) and Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

168. M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973); Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *The Proper Study of Mankind: An Anthology of Essays*, ed. Henry Hardy and Roger Hausheer (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 243–68; Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 366–96.

169. Romantic pluralism received its most powerful and cogent articulation in the hands of Herder. See, e.g., Berlin's inspired essay, "Herder and the Enlightenment," in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, 359–435.

170. In a famous passage, Eliade writes: "It suffices to say that the 'sacred' is an element in the structure of consciousness, not a stage in the history of consciousness" (*The Quest*, i).

In a way, Eliade's view of the sacred owes as much to Otto as it does to Kant. For Otto's influence, see Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1959), 8–10. For a contemporary attempt to rethink the sacred within a (non-Eliadean) Kantian framework, see *The Sacred and the Profane: Contemporary Demands on Hermeneutics*, ed. Jeffrey F. Keuss (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), especially Keuss's "Introduction: The Sacred and the Profane in Hermeneutics after Kant" (1–8).

171. The use of the phenomenological expression "constituted given" to characterize Eliade's view of the sacred comes from Allen's superb *Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade* (New York: Garland, 1998), 75–76. For an account of Eliade's morphological structuralism, see Norman J. Girardot, "Introduction. Imagining Eliade: A Fondness for Squirrels," in Girardot and Mac Linscott Ricketts, *Imagination and Meaning: The Scholarly and Literary Works of Mircea Eliade* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1982), 3–5. In contrast to Claude Lévi-Strauss's rationalistic structuralism of binary oppositions, Eliade's "Romantic structuralism" incorporates universalistic suppositions of the Enlightenment project into a Goethean imaginal reconstruction of primordial

essences. On the influence of the Romantics on Eliade, see also Rachela Permenter, "Romantic Postmodernism and the Literary Eliade," in *Changing Religious Worlds: The Meaning and End of Mircea Eliade*, ed. Bryan Rennie (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 95–116.

172. In *Reconstructing Eliade: Making Sense of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), Rennie creatively interprets Eliade as a postmodern constructivist who viewed the sacred phenomenologically (i.e., as the intentional object of the human experience of the sacred) and whose work is therefore basically free from ontological and metaphysical assumptions. On Eliade's putative postmodernism, see Olson's critique of Rennie's thesis in "Mircea Eliade, Postmodernism, and the Problematic Nature of Representational Thinking," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 11 (1999): 357–85; and Rennie's response in *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 12 (2000): 416–21. In our view, Allen achieves a fine balance when he suggests that the Eliadean corpus contains *both* modern ontological and metaphysical assumptions (e.g., on the universal structure of the sacred), *and* postmodern themes such as the (admittedly ambiguous) rejection of the myth of the given in religious inquiry and the pioneering of the kind of transformative "creative hermeneutics" that is increasingly in vogue today. In a passage with highly participatory overtones, Allen writes: "Mythic and symbolic structures are 'given,' but as unfinished and 'open'; given to us in such ways that require our active participation as constituting subjects" (*Myth and Religion in Mircea Eliade*, 299–300). Unfortunately, space does not allow us to explore here the parallels and differences between Allen's rendering of Eliade and the participatory turn.

173. See especially the "Epilegomena" to van der Leew's *Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 669–95.

174. McCalla, "Romanticism," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, 378.

175. See Wiebe's "Phenomenology of Religion as Religio-Cultural Quest: Gerardus van der Leew and the Subversion of the Scientific Study of Religion," in *The Politics of Religious Studies*, 173–90, where he unveils the cryptotheological agenda of the classical phenomenology of religion. According to Wiebe, this agenda is most apparent in the phenomenologist's search—often shaped by Christian categories—for an essence of religion indicative of a single divine reality, ground of being or "the sacred." Cf., Dubuisson: "[T]he diverse essences that these phenomenologists discovered never represented more than the sublimated, disincarnated expressions of an admittedly provincial, northern European [Lutheran] spirituality in search of the absolute and the universal" (*The Western Construction of Religion*, 172). For related critical accounts, see McCutcheon's *Manufacturing Religion* and Fitzgerald's *The Ideology of Religious Studies*. Addressing these criticisms, Allen proposes a softer phenomenology of religion that affirms the "value in uncovering religious essences and structures, but as embodied and contextualized, not as fixed, absolute, ahistorical, eternal truths and meanings" ("Phenomenology of Religion," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, 206).

176. Barfield, *Saving the Appearances: A Study in Idolatry* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 132. Neither Lévy-Bruhl nor the Romantics offered systematic discussions of the various degrees of conscious will, creativity, and self-reflexibility available

in participatory knowing. By contrast, though in arguably problematic unilinear evolutionary terms, Barfield postulates three different levels of participation: "original" participation (archaic or unconscious *participation mystique*), loss of participation (characteristic of the modern self), and "final" participation (self-reflexive and volitional). For a reformulation of Barfield's proposal in the context of indigenous studies, see Jürgen Kremer, "The Dark Night of the Scholar: Reflections on Culture and Ways of Knowing," *ReVision* 14 (1992): 169–78. Also see Peter Reason's use of Barfield's proposal in his presentation of a participatory worldview as framework for participatory research methods in the human sciences ("Participation and the Evolution of Consciousness" and "Future Participation," in *Participation in Human Inquiry*, ed. Reason [London: SAGE Publications, 1994], 16–39), and McDermott's application of Barfield's participatory scheme to situate and critically engage anthroposophical and neo-Hindu accounts of the Gita (in this volume).

177. Tarnas, "A Divided World View," in *The Passion of the Western Mind*, 434–35.

178. Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology*, 104–105.

179. Gold, *Aesthetics and Analysis in Writing on Religion*, 5.

180. Ibid., 236–38. Highlighting its spiritual and transformative dimensions, Kripal suggest that such an integrated academic approach—one that is "capable of forging a tensive mystical-critical practice out of the discipline's dual Romantic/Enlightenment heritage"—can be seen as a modern mystical tradition (*The Serpent's Gift*, 108).

181. Ibid., 117–20, 136–42. Following Ludwig Feuerbach's anthropologization of theology, Kripal endorses a "mystical humanism," which, agnostic about the epistemological status of mystical knowledge claims, "prefer[s] a human referent for these ontic claims" (*Roads of Excess*, 338n71). Clearly, there is a residual Kantianism lurking behind Kripal's metaphysical agnosticism—a Kantian motive claimed to be transcended by many of the participatory approaches presented in this volume. Kripal's modernist agnosticism, however, is balanced (problematized?) by his openness to accepting the consubstantiality of human body and cosmos. In this regard, he tells us that "although we must insist on the intrahuman and even biological nature of mystical experiences, this does not necessarily mean that such experiential patterns or structures may not actually reflect something about the objective, nonhuman universe" ("Debating the Mystical as the Ethical: An Indological Map," in *Crossing Boundaries: Essays on the Ethical Status of Mysticism*, ed. Barnard and Kripal [New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002], 57).

182. Benavides, "Postmodern Disseminations and Cognitive Constraints," *Religion* 27 (1997): 129–38. The Enlightenment enthroning of logic and reason clearly shapes the emphasis that modern higher education places on the development of the rational mind and its intellectual powers, with little attention being given to the maturation of other dimensions of the person. As many developmental psychologists point out, most individuals in our culture reach their adulthood with a conventionally mature mental functioning but with poorly or irregularly developed somatic, emotional, aesthetic, intuitive, and spiritual intelligences. The greatest tragedy of cognicentrism, however, is that it generates a vicious circle that justifies itself. Because

modern education does not create spaces for the autonomous maturation of the body, the instincts, and the heart, these worlds cannot participate in an inquiry process unless they are mentally or externally guided. Yet, insofar as they are mentally or externally guided, these human dimensions cannot develop autonomously, and thus the need for their mental or external direction becomes permanently justified. For an extended discussion, see Ferrer, Marina T. Romero, and Ramon V. Albareda, "Integral Transformative Education: A Participatory Proposal," *The Journal of Transformative Education* 3 (2005): 306–30.

183. Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship*, xv.

184. The term *cosmotheandric* is borrowed from Panikkar's *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness*, ed. with intro. Scott Eastham (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993).

185. See, for example, Bruce Lincoln, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European Themes of Creation and Destruction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Alex Wayman, "The Human Body as Microcosm in India, Greek Cosmology, and Sixteenth-Century Europe," *History of Religions* 22 (1982): 172–90; Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Chittick, "Microcosm, Macrocosm, and Perfect Man," in *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-'Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 31–38; Overzee, *The Body Divine*, 112–14, 146–50; Michael Saso, "The Taoist Body and Cosmic Prayer," in *Religion and the Body*, 230–47; Shimon Shokek, *Kabbalah and the Art of Being* (London: Routledge, 2001), 6; Gunnlaugur A. Jónsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26–28 in a Century of Old Testament Research*, trans. Lorraine Svendsen (Lund, Sweden: Almqvist and Wiskell, 1988).

186. June McDaniel, "The Embodiment of God among the Bāuls of Bengal," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 8 (1992): 27–39.

187. One could argue that human sexuality is an embodiment of the mystery's creative power. In any event, with Origen, we do not reduce the erotic to the sexual, but rather propose that erotic or vital energies may function as both the fountain and the channel for the generative urges of life or the spirit in human embodied reality.

188. The *virginae subintroductae* (also known as the *agapetae*) refers to those women who entered into committed but celibate arrangements (as "sister and brother") with a male partner in the early church for the purpose of "spiritual consolation" (as Jerome, no fan of this arrangement, says). This fascinating episode, which often included sharing the same bed, is cloaked in a great deal of mystery. Some believe that such arrangements were present already in the earliest churches and lie behind Paul's comments in 1Cor. 7:36. By the middle of the third century, the practice was widespread and began to provoke the ire of certain church fathers including Cyprian, Jerome, and John Chrysostom, who felt that such arrangements were too dangerous and gave license to sin. Charles Williams contends that the practice was more than just social but intended to raise and subsequently to sublimate erotic energies in order to make them available for spiritual endeavors and growth. See Williams, *Descent of the Dove: A History of the Holy Spirit in the Church* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1987), 11.

189. Anthony Storr, *Feet of Clay. Saints, Sinners, and Madmen: A Study of Gurus* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Kripal, "Debating the Mystical as Ethical," in *Crossing Boundaries*, 15–69; Thomas A. Forsthoefel and Cynthia Ann Humes, eds., *Gurus in America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Georg Feuerstein, *Holy Madness: Spirituality, Crazy-Wise Teachers, and Enlightenment*, rev. ed. (Prescott, AZ: Hohm Press, 2006).

190. Eliade, *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*, ed. Robin Winks (New York: Garland Publishers, 1982).

191. Gill, "Territory," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, 302.

192. See, e.g., the essays by Brian L. Lancaster, Lanzetta, Bruno Barnhart, and Rothberg (in this volume).

193. We cannot conclude this introduction to *The Participatory Turn* without mentioning the work of a number of diverse thinkers who have pioneered the recovery of participatory thinking in modern times. We think here of David Abram's ecological phenomenology in *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996); Morris Berman's participatory worldview in *The Reenchantment of the World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Martin Buber's articulation of a participatory relationship with others, the world, and the divine in *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970); Charlene P. E. Burns's participatory Christology in *Divine Becoming: Rethinking Jesus and Incarnation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); Evans's reflections on human openness in terms of participation in life energies in *Spirituality and Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Gadamer's account of understanding in terms of human situated participation in codetermined meanings in *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, 2d rev. ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1990); Heron's proposal of a cooperative participatory spirituality in *Sacred Science: Person-Centred Inquiry into the Spiritual and the Subtle* (Ross-on-Wye, U.K.: PCCS Books, 1998) and *Participatory Spirituality*; Kremer's approach to indigenous studies in *Looking for Dame Yggdrasil* (Red Bluff, CA: Falkenflug Press, 1994); Miner's theological participatory revision of constructivism in *Truth in the Making*; Panikkar's vision of human, divine, and cosmic interrelated participation in *The Cosmotheandric Experience*; Reason's participatory research methods in his edited *Participation in Human Inquiry*; Henryk Skolimowski's and Tarnas's participatory theories of knowledge in *The Participatory Mind: A New Theory of Knowledge and of the Universe* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994) and *The Passion of the Western Mind*, respectively; and Tambiah's anthropology of religion in *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality*, among others.

See also the two recent monographs on "The Participatory Turn, Part 1 and 2," edited by Gregg Lahood (2007) in *ReVision: A Journal of Consciousness and Transformation* 29 (3–4), which address the implications of the participatory turn for spiritual cartographies, indigenous studies, Native American religion, the anthropology of consciousness, and relational models of spiritual development.

194. Orsi, *Between Heaven and Earth*.