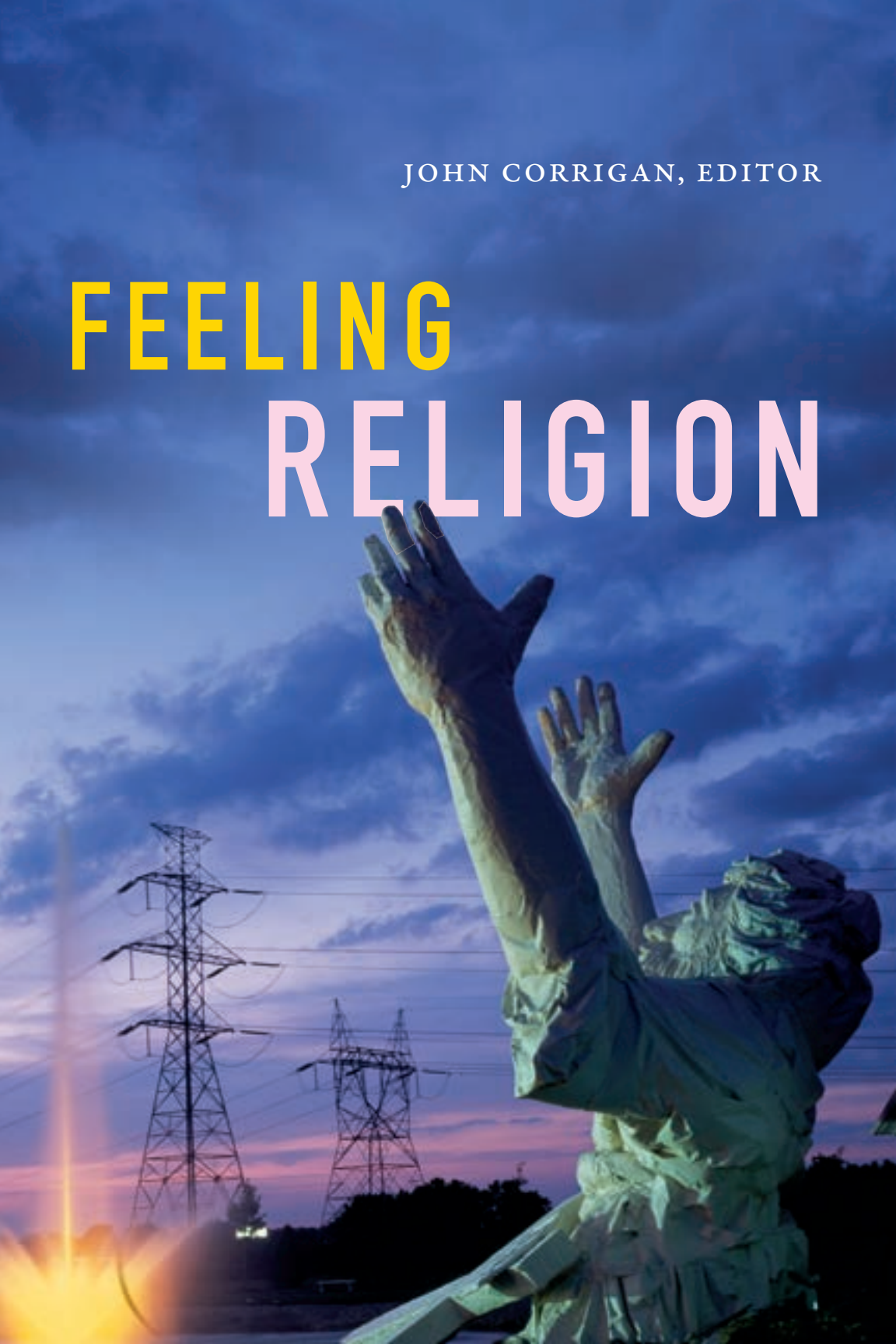
JOHN CORRIGAN, EDITOR

FEELING RELIGION



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TO CARLOS M. N. EIRE

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JOHN CORRIGAN

INTRODUCTION

How Do We Study Religion and Emotion?

Emotion Intertwined with Religion

In the early twenty-first century, much religion is emotional. We know about the scripture-fueled hatred and anger of religious extremists, the joy of the born-again, religious promotions of hope and compassion, theological conceptualizations of care, the feelings of assurance, and also of emptiness, that are daily enacted in religious settings, the religiously inflected love of nature and a religiously driven fear about the imminent end of the world. Such feelings of religious persons often are worn on the sleeve. But that does not mean those feelings are readily understandable by observers. Emotion in religion, in fact, has been defined for a very long time as essentially resistant to critical probings. It has been cast as irrational and, as such, insusceptible to scholarly analysis. There are reasons for that, having to do historically with parochial efforts to protect both the mystery of emotion and the mystery of religion.

Popular pronouncements of emotion as irrational are equally at home in religious publications and the *New York Times*. Columnist David Brooks, for example, in a *Times* op-ed published in early 2015, attempted an argument about morals that was constructed around such an understanding. Opposing what he called the "secularist" approach to morals and community, he hinged his argument against it on his claim that secularists foolishly believe that human

rationality is itself a good enough guide to moral life. We humans, said Brooks, are irrational and emotional: "We are not really rational animals; emotions play a central role in decision-making." Moreover, it is those irrational emotions that are so much needed by all of us as we make our lives together in the world, because they lead us to "self-transcendence" and they make for an "enchanted" world. He concluded by predicting that secularism will never succeed until, in his words, it "arouses the higher emotions."[1]

Ostensibly, there is much in Brooks's piece that resonates with the views of his core readership. Many of them might agree with his characterization of emotions, thinking, "Of course, it's obvious. Emotions *are* irrational. Some *are* 'higher emotions.' An emotional life *is* an enchanted life." For those readers, thinking about emotion, morality, religion, rationality—all those seemingly intertwined topics—presumably takes place within a cocoon of ideological securities and folk wisdom, within a matrix of strongly held ideas about what a person is, what emotion is, and how emotion plays a role in a mysterious process of "transcendence." But conceptualizing the "enchanted life" in such a way is itself a species of magical thinking. Moreover, it is a view that has had its defenders in the academy, as well as its proponents in the popular press. The English anthropologist E. E. Evans-Pritchard, addressing the topic in 1965, criticized some of the best-known scholars in his field—including Émile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Robert Marett, among others—for assuming that the mystery of emotion explained the mystery of religion: "According to Marett, primitive peoples have a feeling that there is an occult power in certain persons and things, and it is the presence or absence of this feeling which cuts off the sacred from the profane, the wonderworld from the workaday world, it being the function of taboos to separate the one world from the other; and this feeling is the emotion of awe, a compound of fear, wonder, admiration, interest, respect, perhaps even love. Whatever evokes this emotion and is treated as a mystery, is religion."[2]

In appreciating both the problems and promise of current research on religion and emotion it is useful to recall that academic investigators until recently tended to protect both religion and emotion from intrusive questions and prying theories. Many scholars who studied religion blanched when their investigation of the role of emotion led them to the doorstep of the question "What is *really* going on here?" They could, after all, be dismissed as *reductionists*, a humanities scare word of the late twentieth century that found particularly good traction within the areas of religious studies and the history of religion. Philosophers, classicists, historians, and literary studies scholars found themselves lost to a similarly discomfiting position, wondering if they could ask "But what

is emotion, *really*?" and escape without being accused of betraying the subject. The human subject, that is.

Such concerns about the subject were not trivial. They were not simply anxieties about style points. As Geoffrey Harpham recently wrote, one of the "foundational concepts" of the humanities is "the primacy of the subjective."[3] How far can we analyze, how finely can we parse, how much can we dismantle and reaggregate, detextualize and retextualize, and, ironically, how many veils can we lift before we lose sight of the subject? And if we do, what then? These are questions that are central to the livelihood of the humanities, and they are present in abundance when we study religion and emotion.

Although scholarly reluctance to fully explore the topic of religion and emotion is abating, it has a long history. For centuries, religious writers joined emotion to religion, characterizing both—and especially in their interwovenness—as ineffable, irreducible, and insusceptible to any analysis that potentially would redefine them. Such a claim rings hollow today partly because to an increasing extent we have chosen to take religion as practice and emotion as performance. Neither are mysterious. Both are analyzable. We have the tools to reduce them. But putting aside for a moment what we know about material and visual cultures, the *sedimenti* of scripture, ritual enactments of religious scripts, political power and social force, brain scans, and embodiment generally, we can glimpse how the investigation of religion and emotion was for a very long time narrowed to one thing: what is called *religious experience*. In fact, keeping in mind the pioneering psychological research of the American William James, and his contemporary, the first president of the American Psychological Association G. Stanley Hall, it could be argued that an initial modern paradigm for the study of emotion itself coalesced as an outcome of the studies of religious experience that those two and their followers undertook. Religion was defined *as feeling* for a very long time in the West—namely, by St. Augustine—and in the early days of professional psychological research in America feeling, in turn, was investigated with reference to religion.

The intertwining of religion and emotion was deeply rooted in a Christian anthropology that commended the power of human emotion.[4] That anthropology was made explicit by the German pastor Friedrich Schleiermacher. In 1799 he published the first of several books that both reinforced the emphasis on religious experience as the center of religious life and defined it as emotional in such a way as to isolate religious experience from culture. He argued that religious people—meaning, for him, Christians—experience a "feeling of absolute dependence" that is qualitatively different from all other emotions. He made that feeling the touchstone of religious life. Radically different from

other emotions, the "feeling of absolute dependence" was—in spite of Schleiermacher's best efforts to propose otherwise—exempted from the kind of scrutiny that might ordinarily be applied to an investigation of feeling. It was, for him, purely a matter between an individual and God. People report it, he said. And they distinguish it from all else they feel. That was all we could know.[5]

In the critically vibrant scene of the Aufklärung, Schleiermacher's writings were an attempt to respond to what he called the "cultured despisers" of religion. He argued that religion was not what philosophes might put under their microscopes and dissect into surprising bits. It was not philosophy, nor natural science, nor doctrine, nor abstract metaphysical systems. It was emotion, and a kind of emotion so different from others that all the science and philosophy and doctrine that previously had been deployed to define emotions was useless in reaching it. It was, in short, a scheme to protect religion by insulating its center, emotion, from the tides and currents of culture.

Anyone who was inclined to be persuaded to the theological niceties of Schleiermacher's theory of religious emotion likely also would have been happy with the claims of the Scottish philosopher Thomas Brown, who held the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh. Brown, son of a clergyman, writing about the same time as Schleiermacher, was an influential thinker in philosophical circles until the late nineteenth century. But more importantly for us, he defined emotion, ostensibly from a philosophical standpoint, as indefinable. "The exact meaning of the term *emotion*," Brown said, "is difficult to state in any form of words." As the historian of emotion Thomas Dixon has observed of Brown's coyness: "Although everyone apparently knew what an 'emotion' was, theorists agreed with Brown that this could not be embodied in any verbal definition. Two hundred years later, we are still living with this legacy of Thomas Brown's concept of 'emotion.'" The Americans James and Hall, in their difficulty defining the emotional experiences of their religious subjects, were psychologists who felt the influence of both Schleiermacher and Brown. They were among the early cohort of what Dixon describes as "psychologists [who] have continued to complain, at regular intervals, right up to the present, that 'emotion' is utterly resistant to definitional efforts. This is hardly surprising for a term that, from the outset, was defined as being indefinable."[6]

While Brown's view remained characteristic of some academic philosophy and psychology, Schleiermacher's theologized take on emotion was more explicitly carried forward by the German historian and theologian Rudolf Otto in the early twentieth century. Otto, writing about "the holy," sought to keep religious feeling, again, out of the laboratories of those who were indisposed to accepting it as ineffable and irreducible. He proposed that feeling involved in

religious experience was a "non-rational" thing, and that all that might be managed were some analogies to it—expressed in Latinate words and phrases such as *mysterium tremendum*. Taking religion as sui generis, like Schleiermacher, he took the emotions felt in religious experience as sui generis as well.[7]

The fact is that, for the majority of the intellectual history of the West and until the last century, theological framings of emotional life—including theological language to describe it—profoundly influenced all discussion of feeling. Then, in late nineteenth-century America, by the time of William James, and later, everywhere, as the claims of Schleiermacher and Otto became less persuasive, scholars looked harder at emotion in religion. While not as pointed or ambitious as the research that scholars have undertaken in this century, the twentieth century nevertheless was a time of growing confidence in the susceptibility of emotional life to serious investigation. No one was willing to argue, as many now do, that genetics, nerves, and hippocampi are determinative. But, bit by bit, the *how* of studying emotion and religion became clearer.

Because language about religion, religious experience, and emotion was intertwined, changes in how scholars approached emotion and shifts in how religion was conceptualized took place alongside each other. French historians in the first part of the twentieth century made important contributions to reframing both the practice of emotion in historical settings and the nature of religious life. Because of Lucien Fevre and Marc Bloch and a stream of *annalistes* who followed in their steps, we began to think differently about religious life. The goal of writing *total history* set the tone, but most significant were the redescriptions of the subject matter of religion. The object of study in late medieval and early modern communities became popular religion, also called unofficial religion, and then vernacular religion, *la religion veçue*, and eventually, in an already shopworn expression, *lived religion*. That was a crucial step in the redefinition of religion, and above all, of Christianity, as an object of study. It challenged the tradition of taking religion only as a matter of doctrines, clerics, houses of worship, official religious rituals, and holy calendars. It offered instead a vastly broader view of what people do that is religious.[8] The harvest festivals, the moonlit devil hunts, local dietary guidelines, astrologies, beliefs about the terrain of afterlives, the fleshly signs of sanctity—including bleeding, tears, and the blush: such things mattered. And on an everyday basis, those things sometimes mattered more than what people did on the weekly Christian day of rest. Historian Carlo Ginzburg's Mennochio, the fifteenth-century Italian poster child for such practice of religion, claimed to be Roman Catholic but reported to his inquisitors that he believed various things that had nothing to do with official Catholic traditions and that he felt things

differently than the systematic theologies said he should. He was certain that he was a good Catholic, appeared shocked that the church might think otherwise, and yet ended his life at the stake. His report of his understanding of the creation of the world, a cosmology that he trusted was unobjectionably Catholic, was telling:

> I have said that, in my opinion, all was chaos, that is, earth, air, water, and fire were mixed together; and out of that bulk a mass formed—just as cheese is made out of milk—and worms appeared in it, and these were the angels. The most holy majesty decreed that these should be God and the angels, and among that number of angels there was also God, he too having been created out of that mass at the same time, and he was named lord with four captains, Lucifer, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. That Lucifer sought to make himself lord equal to the king, who was the majesty of God, and for this arrogance God ordered him driven out of heaven with all his host and his company; and this God later created Adam and Eve and people in great number to take the places of the angels who had been expelled. And as this multitude did not follow God's commandments, he sent his Son, whom the Jews seized, and he was crucified.[9]

The turn to different ways of viewing religion in history took place alongside important developments in philosophical studies about emotion. Emotion was an important part of French existentialist philosophy, and those who were influenced by that philosophy ventured fresh understandings of emotion that challenged previous dichotomies of rational/irrational and emotional/cognitive. In the wake of French existentialists, Robert Solomon and Amélie Rorty, among others, argued for a reconsideration of how feeling and thinking were related, a topic well represented by the title of one of Solomon's many books, *Thinking about Feeling*, which drew together discussion of some themes from his writing over the previous forty years.[10] Solomon, for example, pointed out that persons construct their anger partly out of cognitions about how they were wronged, how awful it was, how the perpetrator was bad. He said, in short, that part of feeling angry was talking oneself into feeling angry. That perspective, as it acquired some academic gravity, was embraced especially by persons working in religious ethics, who were positioned to draw on a deep and rich vein of ethical writing by medieval thinkers, especially Thomas Aquinas, and theologians who followed their leads. In the late twentieth century, scholars such as Diana Cates have interpreted some of those traditions of moral inquiry in ways that demonstrate the reciprocity of emotion and cognition in religious

thought. As such, those studies have made strong contributions toward a larger project of situating emotional life within culture, and joining the analysis of religious ideas to the study of feelings.

In the middle of the twentieth century, another important shift in the study of emotion took place as researchers broached the idea that emotion in religious life was something less private than what many had claimed. Many writers, especially those who thought in terms of feeling as *religious experience*, had taken emotion in religion essentially as something so dear that it could not be truly expressed or publicly shared. Scholars began to consider more seriously the likelihood that such feelings were not too profound or precious to suffer investigation. Their approach was to replace the notion of religion and emotion imagined as sui generis with the claim that emotion itself is a construction. That is, they argued that the way persons feel is a product of a social or cultural setting, and, derived from that, that feeling signifies culture. Clifford Geertz began to press the case for a culturally constructed self, and other scholars migrated that approach to the study of emotions. Michelle Rosaldo and Catherine Lutz, among others, argued that emotion, as an integral aspect of self, was constructed within local social and cultural frameworks.[11] Among sociologists, James Averill and Arlie Hochschild were working toward the same conclusions, Hochschild contributing a term of now-proven durability, "feeling rules," to identify cultural expectations for emotional performance.[12] Lutz's evocative book title *Unnatural Emotions* remains most resonant, however. It pointedly expressed the refusal to treat emotions as *given* in nature and therefore refused to accept that emotions were irreducible. In other words, it directly challenged thinking that resisted the critical investigation of emotion. As this view gathered momentum—even in qualified ways—it affected how researchers imagined the study of religion as well as emotion. For if emotions are not natural, and emotions, according to a colossal historical record, are intertwined with religion, then religion itself might not be so hidden after all. It would not be so "wholly other," as Rudolf Otto would say.

The *how* of studying religion and emotion has also been changing because of the influence of research on the human body. Opposite the radical constructivist approach is one that emphasizes biological processes. Researchers have listened to brain scientists and endocrinologists, thought about biochemistry and neurons, adaptation and evolution, and surmised that things might not be as relative and culture-bound as some have thought. Research in the area of the genetics of human behavior, for example, has developed to the point of offering genetic explanations for a wide range of behaviors, including a recent

argument, based on a study of seven hundred pairs of twins, for the biological basis of political orientation in America.[13] A groundbreaking book by Robert Fuller exemplifies the extent to which body research is specifically entering historical analysis. Fuller's *The Body of Faith: A Biological History of Religion in America* goes so far as to propose that membership in a religious denomination correlates with genes and biochemistry.[14] Whether you join the emotionally expressive Methodists singing happily about "Jesus Coming in the Air," or the Unitarians, whom Methodists have long criticized for being *unemotional*, it might have more to do with who your great-grandparents were than whether the idea of hellfire resonates. Your feelings might have more to do with a calibration of your peptides than a celebration of your Eastertides.

Scholars have sought ways to combine insights drawn from such biological interpretations with what can be drawn from constructivist theories. While pronounced constructivist or biological theories of emotional life did not invite collaborative scholarship, by the end of the twentieth century, researchers nevertheless were beginning to talk about how both culture and biology shaped feeling in religious life. Much of the discussion of that emergent middle ground now takes place around *embodiment*, a term that has a range of meanings.

One kind of approach to studying the embodied subject is a branch of what has been called *cognitive science*. Religion researchers such as the anthropologist Pascal Boyer, together with other scholars loosely connected across a range of disciplines, have suggested a view of religion as a natural outcome of evolution.[15] In such a view, the emotions associated with religion were derivations from human cognitive processes that operate outside of religion itself. So, for example, one of the things cognitive science concerns itself with is what has been named the "hyperactive agency detection device," a mental mechanism that has evolved, according to some researchers, to detect and assess the activity of agents within a person's environment.[16] Because of the potentially serious consequences of failing to detect a local agent, this mechanism generates false positives; in other words, it leads to perception of agents—or we might even say actants—who are not there. The feelings associated with this process of detection can include fear and surprise, among other emotions. Those feelings arise, presumably, from an embodied engagement with the world—one walks down a dark city street late at night and the gears turning in this mechanism produce recognitions of agents, some of whom are there and some of whom are not. The fact of recognition of agents who are not there, however, suggests that a feeling of fear of a mugger, ghost, demon, or zombie is not directly prompted by something physically present in the environment. For the cognitive science of religion, the middle space between the ordinary physical and the seemingly

noumenal in this sort of embodied approach might be further scrutinized for certain things—the spicy smell of ethnic food, the loud clacking sound of elevated trains, the uneven sensation of cobblestones underfoot—in ways that implicate culture. At the same time, this approach would claim that something is going on that is apart from culture. For cognitive scientists, the "hyperactive agency detection device" is one kind of middle ground that might be explored as part of an approach that focuses on embodiment and a potential for the genesis of feelings related to religion.

Another kind of embodiment research in the study of religion and emotion builds on what has been called *affect theory*. Affect theory, simply put, is about what the psychologist Silvan Tomkins and his followers, not surprisingly, call "affects." Notable followers include Paul Ekman, who developed the *facial expression* training sought by police and corporate human resource officers looking for frauds and fakers. The theory asserts that there are nine affects: joy, excitement, surprise, anger, disgust, anguish, fear, shame, dissmell (an impulse to avoid). They are said to be hardwired in all of us. That is, they are viewed, for the most part, as evolutionary adaptations.[17]

Affect theory is not about genes and hormones, and it is not about the mental processes that draw the attention of cognitive science scholars. Rather, in its stripped-down version, it is about bodily postures and movements. It attends to impulsive physical expression. So, affect theorists see in the smile a sign of an affective *fact*, the affect of joy. That joy, displayed on the face, is not something that persons have to talk themselves into. It is a physically embodied emotion, but not one that requires the discourses of culture—however those are defined and displayed—in order to take place (although affect theorists insist that culture matters). As religion and emotions researcher Donovan Schaefer writes in chapter 3 of this book, this approach seeks to discover in affect something of the "pre-discursive materiality of bodies." Or, in the words of affect theorist Brian Massumi, it is an approach which acknowledges that "the skin is faster than the word."[18] This means that, in this kind of research, religious feeling is not necessarily the product of the embrace of doctrines; it is not prompted or formed by cognitions. And yet, such theorists say, it happens oftentimes in collaboration with cultural frameworks that guide feeling. Interpreting writings of affect theorists, feminist film scholar Gail Hamner, in chapter 4, suggests that the shedding of tears, for example, can be "related to but not determined by language and memory," and she offers the neologism "affecognitive" to refer to such events. This is all to say that affect theory, as it has been developing, aims to explore possibilities of speaking about feeling and thinking, biology and culture, together. It is too early to say whether affect

theory will deliver. But the animated conversation about affect now coursing through humanities disciplines suggests that scholars are investing in research that they believe will enable more complicated discussions about what feeling has to do with culture, with important implications for the study of religion and emotion.

Scholars currently debate what is meant by affect and emotion; whether that debate will be fruitful is yet to be determined. It is worth noting, however, that, in general, affect theorists focus on preverbal physical response to stimuli while those who research emotion are more inclined to speak in terms of hypocognized/hypercognized feelings. Affect theory, which is only beginning to coalesce, emerged from psychological (but less so psychoanalytic) research and animal studies and has been taken up largely by literary studies and media scholars. Emotions theories—and there are many of them—currently are more important in fields such as philosophy, classics, history, religion, anthropology, and sociology, but not for the same reasons in each of those fields. That said, affect theory and the theorization of emotion remain open-ended scholarly enterprises and while they have proven their analytical utility, both are still developing their distinctive vocabularies and approaches. Some recent efforts to intertwine them in interdisciplinary analyses have evidenced that such projects are promising, but that more generous conversation among different fields of study will be required in order to advance collaboration.

The relation of feeling to culture, the ways that affects as biological facts are related to culture, is a topic of particular interest at this time because of its place within a broader scholarship that has sought to disrupt the traditional separation of *culture* and *biology* into discrete categories. William Connolly's investigation of brain activity and film, Elizabeth A. Wilson's study of biology, psychoanalysis, and affect in conceptualizing feminism, and Felicity Callard and Des Fitzgerald's call for deeper interdisciplinary collaboration among neuroscientists and social scientists all help frame a potential research agenda for the study of religion and emotion.[19]

Constructivist theory, affect theory, embodiment, cognitive science, the *affecognitive*: much is happening in the study of emotion. Because much is happening in the study of religion as well—new theories of what it is and how we study it—scholars who are interested in religion and emotion are inclined to understand that it is necessary to think about how both of those terms are being continuously redefined. Is emotion biological, or cultural, or something in between and if in-between, then how much and what kind of biology are we talking about, and what aspects of culture matter the most? And is religion basically what people do on Sundays, or on Friday nights, or during Ramadan,

or is it the way they imagine a cosmos built out of cheese and worms? If emotion is a moving target for researchers, so is religion. That makes studying both together a Heisenbergian challenge. Every time one moves, the other changes. And both are moving. Do we experiment with different ways of understanding each of those elements in the hope that we can guess our way to a combination that delivers some reliable understanding about what they have to do with each other? Or are there some pathways that offer more potential opportunity than others?

The problem of how we study religion and emotion is made more complex by the fact that not all religion is emotional, or at least not as emotional as those traditions (preeminently Christianity) that have been the primary objects of study in the West. Buddhists, especially in Japan, would find David Brooks's promotion of emotion as the foundation for an enchanted moral society uninformed and partisan. For many Buddhists, the spiritual goal of emptiness has no place for a privileging of emotion as the pathway to transcendent order. Buddhists, like all persons, feel. But that is not the spiritual goal, and feeling is not imagined, as Brooks claims, to be a *central* part of moral decision making. Studying religion and emotion sometimes means studying its theological de-emphases.

With that caveat in mind, it is possible to identify several key features of the research that has shaped the study of religion and emotion over the last several decades. There is an emerging scholarly consensus that emotion in religion (1) is not mysterious; (2) can be studied; (3) is about the body and not the transcendence of the body; (4) is about culture but not only about culture; that (5) the distinction between rational cognition and irrational emotion in religion is unwarranted; that (6) spirituality sometimes has to do with feeling and sometimes does not; and that (7) what we mean by religion is entwined with what we mean by emotion—and vice versa.

Prospect

The prospect for research on religion and emotion can be improved if it is shaped by several considerations. First, with regard, specifically, to the broader humanities: the study of religion and emotion as a fundamentally interdisciplinary project within the humanities must deepen its engagements with the cutting edges of interpretation *across* the humanities. That means not only continuously incorporating ethnicity, gender, and sexuality into research agendas but seriously engaging the critical literatures in the humanities that have arisen from recent emphases on postcolonialism, capitalism, secularity, and fundamentalisms. Such conversations occasionally have been difficult because much

study of religion and emotion has been framed with respect to specifics of personal experience and the seemingly *private*. The conceptual expansiveness and fluidity required to address widely varying social and cultural contexts has not been as well practiced. Prospective leads for this line of research include analyses of the cultural politics of emotion that have been advanced by scholars such as Ann Cvetkovich and Sara Ahmed, as well as Sneja Gunew whose work critically addresses the role of Eurocentric thinking about cognition in emotions research.[20]

Second, the study of religion and emotion must address strange emotions, including what June McDaniel in this volume terms *dark* emotions. Is there a way to move forward that includes opportunities to respond precisely and productively to previous scholarship that emerged out of parochial interests? In other words, can we speak of brain scans in the same breath as Friedrich Schleiermacher's "feeling of absolute dependence"? Are those approaches truly incommensurate, separated by two centuries but more importantly by different epistemologies? The field of the history of emotions has led most who think about these things to conclude that emotions are historicized. But—unless one appeals to a positivist model of *emotional progress*—we risk losing awareness of differences in emotional experiences when compared over time. If we are going to claim that emotional experiences differ from era to era, we need to continue to think about why Schleiermacher could persuade his audience about the existence of a unique emotion that many today would not recognize. In short, this *how* is about taking seriously reports of strange emotions or unfamiliar clusterings of emotions. It experiments with ways to account for them in the analytical and interpretative schemes constructed for the study of religion and emotions over the last few decades.

Third, research is likely to advance by investigating not only the expression of emotion but also the concealment and repression of emotion in religion. Just as scholars in recent decades have been able to build important interpretations of ethnic communities and nations by focusing on repressed memory, so also might the study of repressed emotion lead to new interpretations of religious life. The repression of anger and hatred is important in many religions, and is linked to what cultural commentators since Sigmund Freud and Norbert Elias have thought of as the *civilizing* influence of religion.[21] The cultivation of sorrowful and guilty feelings in some religions can be associated with the diminishment of feelings of happiness. Such emotional dynamics represent a kind of emotional repression, or forgetting, that should be investigated as part of a developing project of the study of religion and emotion.

Fourth, research can attend more closely to conflict. How we study religion and emotion can be better framed with regard to the emotionality underlying religious conflict. There has been much recent scholarly conversation about what emotion has to do with the construction of *others*. Those who are working in religion and emotion can advance that conversation, given that religion is involved in so much conflict worldwide.

Fifth, there are opportunities to advance the study of religion and emotion through a focus on gender. Research on gender and emotion can fruitfully be applied to the study of religion and feminist scholarship, particularly in connection with antiracist theory, offers some promising pathways for research.[22]

Finally, scholarship on religion can inform the broader study of emotion. Religious rituals, material culture, gender orders, and sexual beliefs, as well as the broader interwovenness of religion with economy and politics, are rich areas of study with important potential insights for the study of emotion.

Ways of Studying Religion and Emotion

The chapters in this book represent a range of approaches to the study of religion and emotion. This research was originally presented at a conference, "How Do We Study Religion and Emotion?," held at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina in 2015. Each article represents the perspective of a participant in that meeting about the *how* of studying religion and emotion. Accordingly, there is a multiplicity of *hows* represented, some of which comport with or overlap with each other, while others stake out new territories for exploration.

Many who write about emotion make reference to *reason*. Sometimes emotion is contrasted with reason. At other times scholars argue for more complex definitions of reason and especially for nuanced analysis that acknowledges that there are different forms of reason and different ways of talking about it. Moreover, it is clear that conceptualizations of emotion and reason change in relation to one another, emotion appearing differently depending on how one locates it in relation to reason. That issue is central to chapter 1, in which Diana Fritz Cates explores conceptualizations of reason and feeling in Seneca and Aquinas, elucidating how they are intertwined in those writers' thinking about moral action. Cates notes that many challenges confront scholars of religion and ethics who wish to develop accounts of the morality of emotion. She writes about how a fundamental challenge must be met, not only in the context of religious studies, philosophical ethics, and moral psychology, but also in the

context of other fields, including the social and natural sciences. That challenge has to do with defining emotion—that is, with communicating to others what scholars mean by the term and understanding what others, in turn, mean by the same or related terms. Her chapter shows, by way of an example from the history of Western religious thought, how difficult it can be to find common definitional ground in the discussion of emotion. An off-kilter exchange that Thomas Aquinas constructed between Aristotelian and Stoic views of the morality of emotion reveals the sort of conceptual mapping that can be required before conversation partners can be confident that, in talking about emotion, they are even talking about the same thing. She demonstrates that there are contexts of scholarly exchange in which deep conceptual analysis cannot always be expected; but *some* attention to definition is always necessary.

The relation of reason—in the form of metaphysics—to emotion likewise is central to chapter 2. For Mark Wynn, a way to bring clarity to the discussion of the place of emotion in religious tradition is to consider how one and the same track of spiritual development may be differently described, depending on whether we adopt the vantage point of metaphysics or experience, including, centrally, emotional experience. To develop his case, Wynn takes John of the Cross and Thomas Aquinas as representatives of, respectively, the perspectives of experience and metaphysics. Wynn argues that if we are to understand the contribution of the emotions to the spiritual life, it is important to see how an account of the trajectory of spiritual development that is cast in emotional terms can be brought into new and deeper focus when it is related to a metaphysical specification of the nature of the spiritual life. Neither vocabulary is reducible to the other. At the same time, neither is entirely detachable from the other: what is said in metaphysical terms in some measure informs and constrains what can be said in emotional terms, and vice versa.

Approaching the topic from a different angle, Donovan Schaefer asks in chapter 3, "What does atheism feel like?" His research is an attempt to address the question asked by Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini in *Secularisms*: What does secularism feel like?[23] Although atheism and secularism define themselves according to the advance of reason—often with specific reference to the Darwinian revolution's overturning of the anthropocentric cosmos—Darwin's actual situation within the tradition of rationalism is less comfortable. According to Schaefer, it is precisely by drawing lines of continuity between humans and other animals that Darwin shows how human reason must be something that springs up from our bodies, rather than descending from above. Drawing on affect theory and in conversation with evolutionary theory and affective neuroscience, Schaefer suggests that rather than mapping belief and disbelief

onto an emotion/reason binary, we see both religions and the various formations of nonreligion as structures of reticulated emotions. As affect theorist Lauren Berlant argues, affect theory points in the direction of a "sensualized epistemology" in which structures of knowledge can be profiled not only in terms of their propositional content, but in terms of what Raymond Williams would call the "structures of feeling" they evoke. This is consistent with recent work in affective neuroscience, such as Antonio Damasio's description of the "passion for reason"—the affective dimension of knowledge production itself. Schaefer demonstrates how, from an evolutionary perspective, a return to Darwin's underattended work on emotion can help us map the specific contours of different atheisms, and he analyzes how early twenty-first-century New Atheism can be studied within this frame. By these lights, disbelief itself impresses as an animal process, animated by clusters of emotions that become the raw material for different configurations of power.

Another utilization of affect theory is demonstrated by M. Gail Hamner. In chapter 4 she attends to the documentary film form in order to examine affect and the space of religious public cultures. Specifically, her chapter sets out to assess the usefulness of affect theory as a tool for analyzing recent (twenty-first-century) U.S. documentary films about religion by (1) explicating how the genre of documentary entails the frame of a particular public culture; (2) examining how the religion documentaries in question pit rules of emotional propriety (structure of the public culture) against displays of emotional impropriety (resistance to this structure); and (3) arguing that the disturbance of the operative norms of emotional display generates circuits of affect that potentially can (work to) alter the very form of the public culture imaged by the film, especially when the film maintains what Trinh T. Minh-ha calls an "interval" between truth and meaning. The chapter recognizes the wide range of contemporary discussions of affect and emotion and situates itself in the line of Gilles Deleuze, Lauren Berlant, and media theorists such as Tiziana Terranova, Adi Kuntsman, Steven Shaviro, and Zizi Papacharissi, all of whom position affect as a pre-emotional intensity that circulates through public media and, through that circulation, produces both common experience and further intensifications of affect. The chapter discusses four documentaries about religion (*For the Bible Tells Me So*, *Trembling Before G-d*, *Jesus Camp*, and *Searching for the Wrong-Eyed Jesus*), and draws on documentary and film theorists such as Trinh Minh-ha, Eugenie Brinkema, and Brian Winston to theorize the cinematographic elements of documentary that both project the boundaries of a specific religious (or national) community and also show the exclusions wrought by those boundaries as affective indices of unexpected disturbance.

June McDaniel, in chapter 5, observes that there are many ways to study religious emotion. One way is through an anthropological and phenomenological approach centered on observing and describing the emotional and religious lives of persons. Cautioning that scholars must understand that not all cultures construct the self and its emotions as do Westerners, and wary of biases embedded in Western scholarship, she reports on religion in Indonesia and the Middle East in a way that seeks to capture something of the ways that persons in those places understand their emotions, including their cultivation and display. In the course of that presentation, she demonstrates how a focus on *dark* emotions—in contrast to a discussion of *positive* emotions typical of most research—yields important insights about the role of feeling in religion. McDaniel asks how a religion is understood within its own cultural context, what it accomplishes for the people who experience it, and whether there is a cultural value to emotional experience. She explores the emotions of sorrow, fear, and anger in two cultural contexts. One is the Shakta tradition of goddess worship in West Bengal, India, and the other is the Shi'ah tradition of Iran. It is easy to see why religions focus on happiness, but it is more challenging to understand why they emphasize sorrow. In both of these traditions, anger and sorrow bring the person close to the deity, and both are paths of salvation in the afterlife. She examines the *rasa* theory of emotion in Indian literature, and looks at the works of two Shakta poets. She then considers literature from Shi'ah Islam, and the virtues of mourning for Husayn. In these religions, the dark emotions unite the worlds, allowing a depth of insight and compassion that cannot be found through happier forms of faith and practice.

In chapter 6, Sara M. Ross, a musicologist, likewise reminds us that in considering the different ways that emotions are constructed, expressed, and altered, we do well to bear in mind the interplay between broad historical tradition and local setting. She points out that Judaism evidences a positive interest in human emotions, and those emotions are portrayed in the scriptures, such as the Hebrew Bible and Talmud. Ross, however, calls our attention to another, overlooked aspect of Jewish emotional culture, namely, the role of music in prompting and channeling feeling. She discusses emotions in Jewish ritual music, while attending to the question of why musicological scholarship focuses only on the representation of sentiment in Jewish music. She asks why there is so much attention to the musical mechanisms employed by composers and performers, but such a shortfall of effort in analyzing the actual emotions felt by human audiences. In this regard, one central question she pursues has to do with feeling and cognition. Since it is undeniable that the cognitive sciences can no longer ignore the bodily, social, and cultural dimensions of

cognition as well as the impact of individual experiences on the same, why is it that the study of emotion in Jewish music still disregards the cognitive part in music experience? And what can be gained by overcoming that neglect? Until recently, little has been written about how emotions are actually perceived by the individual worshipper—as well as by the community—during synagogue services in which music plays a central role. Ross offers examples of how emotions are represented in synagogue music, and discusses several methodological challenges in the study of emotions in Jewish ritual music.

Feelings about nature are often interwoven with religious programs of emotion, but how and for what purposes are open questions. In chapter 7, Islamist and environmental studies scholar Anna Gade points out the expectation, fairly widespread across the field called *religion and ecology*, that the world's religions will provide resources to foster environmental care, concern, hope, and so forth—or the reverse, that they have served as obstacles to normatively sanctioned feelings and attitudes. A latent theory of affect rests at the nexus of scholarly fields of religious and environmental studies in this way. Nonacademic, and often nonreligious, stakeholders also routinely and similarly cast emotion as religious or moral sentiment cultivated for the sake of the environment within a development industry, global or personal. Sentiment is thus a resource to extract from the world's religious systems, one's own or another's, in order to further environmental goals.

In describing the complexity and turns in that process of aligning religion, feeling, and environment, she juxtaposes American, largely Christian-inflected, views of the environment with those of a Muslim community. The romantic American approach essentializes nature-feeling as definitional to religion, and promoters of a view of world-religious pluralism seek to extend that definition to encompass seemingly cognate sentiments that may support the mission of universalizing environmentalist norms. Reporting on her fieldwork in Indonesia with committed Muslims, she explains how they instead apply *environmental* commitments, framed self-consciously as such, in order to further religious goals. Leaning toward apocalyptic, the feelings of those Muslims about the environment are more oriented to a desire for mercy in the next life than to hope for the resolution of environmental issues in this one. For them, environmental care is cast in service of religious ends rather the reverse.

Jessica Johnson approaches the question "How do we study religion and emotion?" by reflecting on the ways that ethnographic fieldwork at an evangelical megachurch affectively troubled her positionality as a researcher and her identity as a non-Christian. In chapter 8, her discussion of her ethnographic engagement with the Mars Hill Church community in Seattle includes

autoethnography that offers a thick description of what she theorizes as the affective labor of coming "under conviction"—an unpredictable bodily process that is difficult to pin down in words and beyond doctrinal understanding. She examines her experience of coming under conviction as social, affective, and embodied, signaling a desire to believe in a pastor with whom she shared no theological or ideological affinity. She subsequently reframes the privileging of language and subject positions of speaker-listener in analyses of the spiritual and political value of conviction. By shifting critical attention from rhetoric and discourse to affect and emotion, she proposes ways for analyzing resonance across hierarchical dichotomies of religious and secular or sacred and profane. The chapter builds on theorizations of affective space, economy, and labor to examine how conviction is manipulated to bodily affect and political effect as emotions such as fear, shame, and paranoia circulate to excite, agitate, and exploit a desire to believe.

Focusing on ritual practice, David Morgan considers in chapter 9 the place of emotion and ritual in social analysis by considering the entangled relationship of religion, sport, and national piety as forms of mediation. The chapter works from Émile Durkheim on emotion and ritual and Benedict Anderson on imagination and cognition toward an integrated treatment of mediation as the aesthetic analysis of thought and feeling. To this is brought an interest in network theory's focus on entanglement as an apt description of social life. Rather than differentiate these three cultural activities as consisting of irreducible essences, the chapter seeks to discern why in fact they so readily overlap and intermingle in practice. Sport, says Morgan, is not modern religion, but a ritual practice that integrates religion and national piety in an amalgam that does cultural work we need to understand better.

Taking as his point of departure a music video issued during the 2012 World Cup, Morgan proposes that a key to understanding some of the emotional dynamics of sport as ritual is to recognize the importance of mediation, which occurs in two different ways: as the ritual itself experienced collectively in person, mediated in the bodies gathered together; and the extended mediation of the event in images, on the radio, on the Internet, or on television. Both forms of mediation make the ritual available to acts of imagination that integrate spectators into social bodies with a keen sense of belonging. The ritual amalgamation of religious faith, fan loyalty, and patriotic sentiment charges competition with a heightened sense of importance. The group's quest for bragging rights, for the right of the superlative, to be *the best*, takes the spectator's experience from ordinary life to a poignant sense of collective consciousness charged with the prospect of exaltation and menaced by the threat of humiliation.

Abby Kluchin returns to affect theory in chapter 10. Bringing a critical eye and a proposal for the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory alongside affect theory, she asks what religious studies has to gain from integrating those two kinds of approaches. For Kluchin, research in the nascent field of affect theory is sometimes constrained by a conceptualization of affect that severely limits possibilities for exploring how affect can be recognized, defined, and discussed in practical, everyday ways. She proposes as a guide to understanding affect Wilfred Bion's classic *Experiences in Groups*, and drawing on that she challenges the emphasis in affect theory on the "the circulation of affects, their hectic Deleuzian traversals of bodies and boundaries," which "seems to preclude the more readily accessible vocabulary of affective contagion *between* subjects, the way that other people's feelings sometimes seem to be 'catching.'" Accordingly, Kluchin resists conceptions of affect as prelinguistic or nonlinguistic or precognitive or noncognitive, or as wholly impersonal. Her central interest is in intersubjectivity, and she argues for a middle ground that does not present an either/or choice between language and bodies. She suggests how religion, considered in affective terms, might look by turning critically to Charles Hirschkind's study of Islamic cassette sermons, and concludes that the Deleuzian strand of affect theory has something to offer religion scholars, but in a qualified way.

Each of these chapters demonstrates an approach to studying religion and emotion. Taken together, they suggest the ways that a great many aspects of religion can be critically explored and creatively interrelated through a focus on emotion. They likewise indicate how research on the emotional aspect of religion generates fresh leads for research into issues that traditionally have attracted the attention of scholars. When we take emotion seriously, metaphysics looks different, and so do ethics, ritual, religious music and poetry, the environment, popular culture, and the secular. We can ask new questions, interweave themes in unexpected ways, and enable innovative critical analysis and theorizing. The study of religion and emotion is an inviting enterprise that already has yielded significant insight into religious belief and practice, and, as it gathers momentum, promises continuing strong returns.

NOTES

While largely written by John Corrigan, this overview is a collaboration among all the authors in this book.

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