INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGION

-- George Williams

One reason for studying traditions other than our own is to break out of the cement and stone of our imprisoned views of the world. This book will explore what it means to experience reality according to some of the major Asian religious traditions: Confucianism, Daoism,[2] Buddhism, Shinto, and Hinduism.

Eastern spirituality is *lived, felt, practiced, intuited,* and *cognized*. It is not enough to detail beliefs and analyze them, to catalog scriptures, to observe rituals and to explain their functions for the individual and community. While all of these further our understanding of any religion, there is the component of inner experience which moves religion beyond an acquired social behavior and set of beliefs. Religion then becomes something lived, breathed, felt and imaged. But this is more than just practice. There is also an experience of the *numinous* (or "other-ness"); something which comes to stand for or even to be identified with the *holy* or *sacred*. One is often "grabbed" by that something. It happens. And when it happens, ordinary living breaks up into something higher and nobler; or the opposite happens--a breaking down into something lesser and ignoble.

We will not deal with the “religious breakdowns” even though they constitute a part of the study of religion. This study is interested in the transcendent element in religion–that part of human experience which ennobles and presses beyond. The *ideal* will be emphasized to grasp what is sought as the best in each tradition.

THE STUDY OF RELIGION

There are many reasons to study religion. It develops the mind to work reflectively and reflexively: we must reflect from our answer to the very questions which we ask about any subject and know reflexively the methods employed in finding, selecting, judging, analyzing, and synthesizing data into our answers.[3]

"Religion" is so complex and multi-dimensional that it is like a test case for the way we study things. How we study any phenomenon is called methodology. By using specific methods we try (1) to select from a chaos of information what is probable, adequate, representative and pertinent to our question, (2) to fit things together so that they clarify a region of study, and finally (3) to bring forth a presentation of our particular "subject" from the point of view or perspective which our question has determined. If the organizing question does not determine the shape of the answer, then our method is faulty. So we can say that the question both foreshadows and entails the answer.

There have been at least six methods of approaching the study of religion upon whose shoulders this study depends. Some have been rejected completely while others have opened significant avenues of understanding. Both rejected methods and those modified have made it possible to formulate a new synthesis to study religion experientially. We are in their debt as all

learning is indebted to efforts of the past.

Methods in the Study of Religion

Until two centuries ago the only approach was confessional. It was either an affirmation of one's own religion or its antithesis: so-called "atheistic" or agnostic negations. If we truly wish to understand another's religion, the confessional approach is rejected as not being useful for our purpose. Later, the discussion of the "truth question" will make this clearer.

In a university building in Szeged, Hungary, there are a series of busts of those who have contributed to Hungarian culture. The following list acknowledges pioneer "methodologists" and their most characteristic "organizing question." (The ordering is random.)

Methodologists	**Organizing Question**
Rudolf Otto	What is the nature of the Holy?
Max Mueller	What does the scripture of this tradition say in its original language?
Max Weber	How does religion function in society?
Sigmund Freud	How is man's psyche projected on the universe?
Karl Marx	How does religion function economically and politically?
Carl Jung	How does religion function psychologically?
Mircia Eliade	How does the structure of the Sacred manifest in the world?
Wilford Cantwell Smith	What is the faith of other humans?
Robert Baird	What is the pattern of ultimate concern of an individual or a group?
Victor Frankl	What is meaningful and purposeful in life?

These organizing questions and their methods involve theological, psychological, phenomenological, sociological, religio-historical, textual (literary), and economic analyses of religion and its expressions. To some degree all approaches are *reductive* simply because they reduce the subject to a smaller and more manageable study. But some methods are *reductive* in the sense that they *reduce* the subject to what is *really true* or important about the subject. This book will try to pick from each of these methods elements would allow the possibility of *something more* or *greater than* religion's expressions in human scriptures, practices, and institutions. Over a decade ago (1979) I named this approach *experiential phenomenology*. While religion might just be only what it is reduced to in history, psychology and the like, the religions universally claim to point to something more. Experiential phenomenology works with evidence from social and psychological functions, historical incidents, textual expression, economic determinations and so on *as if* these might point to what some testify they have experienced: something *transcendent*.

Dialectical Tensions in the Study of Religion

Even if there is a transcendent dimension which can be experienced, its expression and interpretation is human. Four dialectical tensions help illustrate how religion as expressed

distorts or differentiates whatever is experienced as "the transcendent, holy or sacred." First, there is Wach's *action – belief – community* triad. Overemphasis on any one of these distorts or differentiates in specific ways. Second, the *horizontal – vertical* tension manifest its own distortions if there is too much emphasis on vertical elements of religion. It is too other-worldly and, if too much emphasis is on the horizontal elements of religion, then it becomes too this-worldly, merely realizing its socializing aspects. Third, there is the dialectical tension of *experience – practice – articulation*. Western religion has emphasized articulation in beliefs and dogmas. Pure action and practice are almost inarticulate. Altered states such as trance and "divine rapture" also have state specific logic which affect the perception of reality and possibility. Any overemphasis here also distorts. Fourth, *ethical attitudes* have extremes such as "strict obedience to [Divine] Law" versus "freedom within [the Divine] Life". Overemphasis on either side of the dialectic distorts "the religious" in particular ways.

These four are not exhaustive, but they point to the major problem of oversimplification and generalization about religion. Our study will focus more on those elements in scripture, life story, practice and so on that evidence experience of the sacred. Such an approach is an addition to the many other ways of studying religion. Reducing religion to human experience is not the aim--but its opposite. Religious experiences may point to that something which transcends ordinary humanity.

Lets turn to the problem of defining religion, proceed to clarify what has been borrowed from various methods and then suggest some goals of experiential phenomenology as it pertains to our study of Eastern Religions.

Problems in Defining Religions

The "Pitfalls." There are some common pitfalls in defining religion. First of all, to define religion means that it must be captured by language, reduced to words which both describe and circumscribe. The very activity of defining anything divides us into those who think that defining things is good and useful and those of us who think that language only approximates its objects and often confuses us with its metaphors. But the practice of clarifying definitions of "religion" may prove beneficial to this study.

Another problem arises when we make judgments about some specific religion or religions and about "all religion." These judgments reflect our point of view or perspective. While your "religion" might be judged by you to be good, true, scientific, etc., you might not be so generous with others. But it is not necessary to become a believer to study another's religion *for understanding*: the goal of understanding does not have to include higher philosophical or theological judgments about truth. The study of religion can offer an intriguing insight into the culture, customs, traditions, beliefs, and attitudes of other peoples as well as into ourselves and our own ways of life.

It is most important before beginning a non-confessional study of religion to throw out

the "truth question." Asking "is this religious belief true?" or "is any religion true?" provides endless grounds for debate, but there may never be a satisfactory conclusion. So we will suspend the truth question. If for no other reason, it is worthwhile to accept or understand people from their own point of view and their own values to see what religion means to them. We will therefore proceed as if the religion is true and useful, allowing it to retain its own integrity.

What is Religion? It is actually easier to answer the question: What are Religions? Semantics has warned us about the "be" verb--the "is" promises what it cannot deliver!

The question "What is Religion?" can be attempted from many viewpoints: linguistic, philosophical, legal, epistemological, ect. "What are religions?" is more often answered socially, historically, legally, etc. Let us examine a few of these and see what difference this makes.

Linguistically, human languages designate "religion" differently. The territory is not exactly the same. *Shūkyō* [Shinto Japanese], *Dharma* [Hindu Sanskrit], *Dhamma* [Buddhist Pali], *religio* [Christian Latin] do not entail the same notions. Religion may or may not emphasize "experience of or belief in God" depending upon whether or not the language used or the tradition using that language emphasize the horizontal or vertical dimensions of religion.

Philosophically, the answer to the question "What is religion?" has often reduced to what is reasonable and therefore justified by reason's judgments. Discussions once tend to focus on religion's irrational or supra-rational nature. More recently the analytic schools have reduced religious claims to what they could possibly mean or not mean.

Legally, religion is not the same in the different countries of the world. National constitutions and law codes often have remarkably differing definitions and assumptions about religion. The issue of the conscientious objector's religious rights is a good example. In the United States such a person must be a member of a "peace religion" or "peace church" to be recognized by the government. If one is not a member of a "peace church", one must establish his or her objection to war and bearing arms on other grounds than religion. This begs the question about what is religion. Most U.S. law and Supreme Court decisions assume some overlap of religion and church membership.

Epistemologically, is religion "faith" rather than "knowledge"? What is known when one knows "religiously" or "through the eyes of faith"? This issue directs most studies to detailing facts which can be marshaled about who founded the religion, what was done and said, what the scriptures of the religious tradition reveal, what the founder taught, what the beliefs and practices of the religious group are, or how the religious community functions. This is certainly useful knowledge about religion. It fills many books. But when devotional religionists speak about knowledge *from* God and mystical religionists imply knowledge derived from *union* with the One, then it becomes clear that what is known about religion begs the question about what religion might be. At least it prejudges religions' claim what there may be something *transcendent*.

What are Religions? Religions as such are self-conscious, accepting the categories of

"Christianity," "Buddhism," "Hinduism," and so forth as if these categories are self-evident. Worse, these categories set into motion an exclusionary process of the human mind that is especially primitive. It is the model from which the modern, binary computer works--yes/no, on/off. It is just plain old exclusionary logic. Because our minds work so well in this primitive mode does not mean anything more than at a gross level of functioning we are able to say that this is "Christian" or "Buddhist" and that is not. Intellectual performance at this level is not admirable but it is quite common. This is not our topic but it anticipates questions which are from this "comfort zone" of mental functioning.

Sociologically, religion manifests in personal and group relationships. While these are complex and fascinating, membership and social functions of religion once again beg the question of what is being studied when religions are studied.

Historically, the study of religions dominates the pages of some histories. Religions are seen as influencing life and culture, building institutions, leading or opposing intellectual movements, and even causing wars and persecutions. While is it possible to study the histories of religions without knowing what religion is, it seems less helpful to study Eastern religious experience without defining religion.

Legally, religions can be assigned constitutional rights and subjected to laws according to membership or by historical institutions. But courts and legislatures must act as if they know what religion is in order to write legislation for religions or address grievances in court.

The circularity of our dilemma is obvious: how can we define religion without knowing the religions and how can we study the religions without knowing what to study that is religious?

DEFINING RELIGION

Three general approaches have been used–the "essential-intuitional," the descriptive and the stipulative.[4] In the first, the essence of religion is revealed to a religious founder or has been received from ancient scriptures. This becomes normative. The problem of these confessional understandings of religion is that there are so many and they are so different. Whose norms can we use? To chose one or two or combine these confessional definitions of religion would require that we know which is true. That is the old problem of knowing the answer before studying the problem. So, if we cannot decide on the answer before we study religion, we had best not adopt confessional answers at the beginning of our study.

Another version of the "essential-intuitional" approach is found in Mircea Eliade.[5] People who study the phenomena of religion, said Eliade, must begin without any preconceived notion of the essence of religion. They simple observe and allow the phenomena to present themselves to the sensitive observer. Then from the multiplicity of phenomena studied, these observers make an intuitive leap to conclusions about what religion is. This becomes the norm for understanding religious expressions in whatever form or context they are found. While this approach encourages comparative study, many suspect it of merely hiding its theological agenda

and presuppositions.

A second approach is descriptive. Its definitions are a product of a list of characteristics derived from studying how religion has been referred to historically, linguistically, or by believers themselves. But whose list will be chosen? Each item still includes specific *norms*. Joachim Wach tells us that the presence of religion can be deduced from *actions* (such as worship, ritual and even some forms of dance, etc.), from *beliefs* (which range from simple animism to notions of exquisite complexity and beauty), and from *community* (which manifests in "religious" organizations and structures, etc.)[6] But no one has been able to construct a list of religious actions, beliefs and community which does not favor one religion nor exclude others.

Most definitions of religion describe characteristics which give direction and meaning to life, offering belief in a higher being or beings, relief from fear of death and dying, surrender to a higher will, help in time of trouble and an outlet for emotions. Religion is associated with "ultimacy," the absolute, or God.

Walt Capps assembled a list for a definition of religion which includes:

(1) belief in a deity

(2) a doctrine of salvation

(3) a code of conduct

(4) the use of sacred stories

(5) religious rituals.[7]

Yet one or more of these beliefs or activities can be missing from a specific religion, especially from Asian religions. Buddhism is often without a personal deity but has a different kind of "ultimate concern." Mystical Daoism[8] speaks paradoxically against codes of conduct, saying that one must learn to act without acting.

Is a religion with more of the chosen features better, more adequate or truer? How many features can be left out before something is not a religion? Shouldn't notion of religion be comprehensive enough to "net" everything which might be religious? This means that those forms of Buddhism which are without God or a personal deity should still be captured for study. Religion as a concept must not exclude what other cultures and traditions experience as religious.

While avoiding actually defining religion, Wilfred Cantwell Smith pointed to a way out of our dilemma: studying religion as the "faith" of persons, and, only secondarily, as a "cumulative tradition."[9] "Religion" is what the worshipper said it was for him or her or their cumulative tradition. Smith discarded the question, "What is the nature or essence of religion?" and chose as his goal, "What is the faith of this man or community of believers?" Smith substituted his implicit definition of religion as "the faith of persons."[10] Smith's non-approach to defining religion actually contributed to a new procedure.

This third approach defines religion by using a *stipulative* or *functional* definition of religion. The field of study will be limited without imposing alien norms upon the object of study. In other words, we want to define religion without involving the "truth question" or even

aspects of it. Our definition follows Robert Beard's suggestion which stipulates that *religion is "that which concerns a person or community ultimately."*[11] It was originally formulated by the Christian theologian, Paul Tillich, and was first used normatively to determine true *ultimacy*. But Beard stipulates that the ultimate concern which he attempts to study derives from the individual or religious group under investigation. Therefore, such a definition of religion works for that individual or group based on their *norms*. This approach is quite helpful for studying a religion *in its own integrity* but makes comparison difficult if not impossible.

Religion, stipulatively and for our study, is that which concerns an individual or group ultimately according to their own norms and experiences.

Methods and Study of Asian Religious Experience

Defining what we want to study, avoiding norms or truths which might be foreign to any of our Asian religions, and suspending the "truth question" at least until after we have actually and thoroughly studied each religion sets the stage to begin our study. But first there is one more task: articulating how we will proceed and what constitutes our organizing question or questions.

The "religio-historical method" as formulated by Professor Baird[12] has as its goal the accurate description of the ultimate concern of a person or group as a part of the human past. Statements about religion are verified according to their accuracy by historical evidence, in order to answer the question, "To what degree of probability did this happen, was this said or done?" In this approach, one must limit oneself to statements which are verifiable by documentation. The religio-historical method must exclude the historian's notions and evaluations of ultimacy while presenting the subject's truth system according to the data gathered. Religio-historical understanding, as practiced by Baird, does not attempt to penetrate the realms of non-verbal communication, psychic states, and emotional or religious experiences except as they are articulated and valued by the subject.

"Experiential phenomenology" studies religious phenomena in *its own integrity*, as modeled by Baird, but is interested in realms which are more immediate and direct than the secondary representations which the "experiencer"[13] articulates. The religio-historical method captures beliefs and observable practices well. But when less verbal evidence of religious phenomena is available, the religio-historical method should leave it alone because of its low probability to meet the canons of historical accuracy. It is the attempt to be accurate to the available historical data that necessitates our use of this method to some extent.

The interest of experiential phenomenology is understanding religious experience. An added dimension is the desire to study configurations which point to any transcendent element which might be evidenced therein. For the purposes of this study, we will adopt the category of *spiritual experience* in order not to be reductive of something which understands itself, *in its own integrity,* to be more than human experience, projections or functionings.

What is religious experience? The central concern of this text is the study of human

experience, especially those experiences which directly perceive ultimacy, meaning, purpose, the transpersonal, the transcendent. These kinds of experiences transform us in multitudinous ways and inform us about the range of human possibility as can little else. Religious experience suggest the possibility of spiritual experience. But it neither proves or comprehends it. If spiritual experience were to be or point to transcendence, it must be *beyond* religious experience. A non-reductive approach will recognize the possibility of spiritual experience of that something more even as it knows its subject of religion is ordinary, historical, human and limited.[14]

There are certain recognized categories in Asian religious experience. Over twenty centuries ago in India a discovery was made concerning different modalities of experience which perceive life in contrasting patterns--known as *samskaras* (from the Sanskrit meaning "tendencies"). First written down in the *Bhagavad Gita,* these four specific patterns (*samskaras*) were likened to paths or disciplines. These patterns encompassed every possible approach to the divine.[15]

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) used this classification of personality and the corresponding variety of spiritual paths in his teachings. Vivekananda believed in teaching each person according to his/her tendencies or points of view. Each was seen by him as a path, a practice, a way of knowing, a set of teachings, a way of experiencing the Absolute.[16]

Western thinkers became aware of this model for interpreting personality differences at the end of the nineteenth century. Pioneering psychologist Carl Jung made use of a four-fold system; (he was no doubt indirectly indebted to Vivekananda, but this concept had become so popular and watered-down in certain circles that Jung did not ever acknowledge Vivekananda as the source of his own theory).

Vivekananda's and Jung's classifications of spiritual tendencies and personality functions can be viewed in the following table:

Saṃskāras	**Practice & Path**	**Tendencies (Vivekānanda)**	**Functions or Types (Carl Jung)**
Jñāna - ज्ञान	*yoga & mārga* योग - मार्ग	Intellectual	Rational (thinking type)
Rāja - राज	*yoga & mārga*	Mystical	Intuitional (intuiting type)
Bhakti - भक्ति	*yoga & mārga*	Devotional	Emotional (feeling type)
Karma - कर्म	*yoga & mārga*	Practical	Sensate (sensing type)

In each person, according to Jung, one dominant center of experience becomes the final arbiter of all experience. If this were not so, the person would be divided--schizophrenic,

purposeless, etc. The various ways of interpreting life experiences must be prioritized. One way of knowing becomes the superior function for that personality or "ego" and allows a unified experience of life.

Jung's model can be briefly summarized as follows:

1) the *thinking* function - organizes, establishes order, classifies, identifies and makes plans. Its notion of causality is linear--from cause to effect.

2) the *feeling* function - connects the experiencer personally with life. It is the "liking and disliking function." Whatever is happening is given an emotional tag. This function is principally past-oriented as some time is required to become joyful, angry, sensitive to the experiences involved.

3) the *sensing* function - operates directly from the "five" senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling. This is an active and present function; it is the experience of seeing and not the feelings or thoughts about it. Its one time frame is the present.

4) the *intuiting f*unction - sees the whole from parts. It sees the entire situation from one fragment. Intuition synthesizes the other functions' "data" into a coherent whole or "unitive order." Its time frame is totally different from either the thinking ("linear"), feeling ("past") or sensing ("now") experiences of time. Once a pattern or outline is "seen/intuited" it leaps to the conclusion. It arrives at the "future" as already here and now.

Some concurrence with these concepts can be found in modern neurophysiology. From this field we learn that the brain has three regions: neo-cortex, mammalian, and reptilian.[17] If the cerebral cortex's two lobes or hemispheres are properly noted, then four neurological or brain systems organize and make sense of all stimuli; these brain systems generally correspond to the four *samskaras*--the rational, emotional, actional (or Jung's sensate and Vivekananda's practical), and intuitive centerings of human experience.[18]

Experiential phenomenology utilizes this fourfold model of experience heuristically. It is already based on centuries of observation. The categories are modified slightly and renamed. The four religious modalities are the cognitional, devotional, mystical and actional. These correspond with Vivekananda and Jung as follows:

Experiential Phenomenology	**Vivekananda's Tendencies**	**Jung's Psychological Types**
Cognitional	Intellectual	Rational
Devotional	Devotional	Emotional
Mystical	Mystical	Intuitional
Actional	Practical	Sensate

Organized religions tend to bring like-minded persons together with a coherent way or modality of experience to make sense of meaning and to find purpose in life. Many religions condition their adherents to find the holy or sacred within a particular function. Then everyone in that tradition can see and experience meaning and purpose in the same religious modality or in

the same type of religious representations of the spiritual. Most religions are devotional but not all. Too often, one group's religious path is experienced as *the* avenue of the holy, the sacred, the true. But this is an extension of the personal conclusion: what I experience *is* reality, and what my group experiences *is* truth.

There have been efforts at unifying persons of different religious tendencies within the same religious tradition (i.e. the Christian Ecumenical Movement) and between different faiths, as in the long history of dialogue between the Christians and Buddhists. Intra-religious and intra-denominational conversations have developed into inter-religious and interfaith dialogue, yet the complexities have been surprising.[19]

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) taught that any of the four religious tendencies (*samskaras*) could bring one to the center. Each path is true. He taught that all religions lead to God, since each path is like a spoke leading to the hub or to God-consciousness. Without deciding whether or not all religions are equally true prior to our study, we can work with the premise that all of the types of religious experience have their own integrity and must be studied as they present themselves.

A final distinction must be noted here between *spiritual experience* which is seen as direct, often private, immediate, therefore primary, and *religious experience* which occurs in an organized religious setting, (i.e. the church). According to followers of Eastern spiritual paths, religious teachers in Asia (who are often cast in the role of "religious heroes") are listened to because their teachings are based on special experiences. Yet, historians of religions tend to focus on an examination and analysis of teachings and beliefs, while remaining silent about religious and spiritual experiences. This avoidance of such a central concern might seem surprising were it not for the fact that the entire discipline of the history of religions, for the most part, avoids addressing the issue of spiritual experience to any significant degree. In fact, interest in religious experience has been seen primarily as the domain of the true believer and the defending theologian; it has yielded few insights into the problems of understanding religions and their adherents.

Comparative religions, as a discipline, was initially locked into the mindset of theological concerns, so questions about the variety of religious experience were ignored. Feuerbach and Freud began to turn the study of religion toward a study of need fulfillment. At that point the scientific study of comparative religious experience became lost in the epiphenomena of psychopathology, and other distinct psychological subjects.

It was not until the emergence of the work of William James and Carl Jung that scholars of religious studies found any direction from the works of psychological theorists. Yet, while the psychology of religion can look to Jung and James as mentors, specialists in the history of religions have not used psychological categories to pursue the study of texts, rituals, symbols, or belief systems. Thus, a blind-spot has developed in the range of phenomena treated by historians of religions. The lack of study of religious experience as if it might point to something

transcendent limits an adequate presentation and understanding of a person as human and religious.

THE STUDY OF EASTERN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

Eastern Paths will present a picture of religious experience occurring in moments of Asia's past. It will paint word pictures *as if* the spirituality portrayed is *true*, *meaningful* and *ultimately purposeful*. Judgments about *factuality* or *truth* are suspended, even though great care has been exercised to present the tradition accurately. "The truth question" about a religion will not be asked nor is it somehow hidden from view. This study does not wish to provide any answer at all as to whether Buddhism or Shinto are *true* or not *true*. The goal of understanding the religious experiences of these traditions is sufficient for our purposes here.

The following general assumptions are set forth as a useful basis for making sense of Asian religions. Asian religion takes life seriously--as if things matter and life has value, meaning and purpose--even when one is laughing with the universe.

Asian religions seem to assume that:

(1) Life involves some relation to energy/matter and they are co-dependent.

(2) Life involves an energetic hierarchy (*qi* or *ch'i* as the ancient Chinese called it[20]).

(3) Life is experienced as having higher and lower forms, such as:

a. cosmic life energy
b. human life energy
c. animal life energy
d. plant life energy
e. inanimate object's life energy

(4) Human experience is developmental (life stages govern the quality and focus of the experience), and environmental (one's experience is affected by his/her language, culture, historical moment, etc.)

(5) Religion is human experience; humans experience, interpret, project and understand in human likeness, metaphor and simile.

Several religious traditions and many religious critics are currently debating the "hierarchy issue." (Is there a hierarchy of values, beginning with inanimate objects and moving *upward* to a culmination in humankind?) Until this issue is put to rest, we must consider the logical possibility that the spiritual types which we find or infer are merely beginning evolutionary stages.

In this work we will explore religious experience in China, Japan and India. This is not the usual order, since the historical study of Buddhism dictates that we begin with India. A glance through the table of contents of textbooks on Eastern Religions demonstrates that the India-China-Japan route is followed by most. But a study of religious experience can begin with China simply because of India's complexity. Buddhism need not be studied chronologically in order to understand it phenomenologically and experientially. So we will begin with Chinese

religions.

Since descriptions of and studies about religious experience are found in a variety of resources, our method will rely on religio-historical procedures to weigh their accuracy and adequacy. We will rely on sources from sacred literature as well as in the biographies of founders, saints, and organizational leaders. Autobiographies are useful but have many specific problems, including one of timing. It is important to know if the religious experience referred to is written down immediately or some time later. If later, have there been any shifts in beliefs or are there organizational or cultic needs which lead the experiencer to "reformulate" the experience to serve these needs?[21] But we are not looking to history for historical markers but for evidence which points beyond itself or which reflects the possibility of *transcendent experience*. Since we already know that there is a variety of religious experiences, we will both test the *samskara* (four religious tendencies) theory while using it to organize our data. While we will use the *four religious tendency theory* heuristically for its teaching value and functionally for its economy, some testing of its adequacy, coherence and logic can be attempted. The four path theory should further our understanding of Asian religion in its own integrity.

End Notes

* George M. Williams, *Eastern Paths* (1993). Chapter One title changed from "Introduction to Eastern Paths."

[1]Quoted in "Four Basic Archetypal Ways Found in Shamanic Traditions, by Angeles Arrien. *ReVision - The Journal of Consciousness and Change,* Vol 13, 2. Fall, 1990. Original source not given.

[2]*Pinyin* transliterations of Chinese will be used. This will be further explained in Chapter 2.

[3]For a highly informative introduction to religious studies methodology, see an article by Hans Penner, *Religious Studies Review* (Autumn, 1979).

[4]Baird, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-16.

[5]See Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1959), *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954), *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed & Ward, Ltd., 1958). It is interesting to note that Eliade found that all humans are religious *sui generis*. Humanity's essence is religious and he named us *Homo religiosis*. Yet many either do not feel themselves to be religious or do not want to be for whatever reason. Eliade's phenomenological results is one extreme. The other is that religion is rare and depends on innovators, inventors, founders, special persons, or deviants.

[6]Joachim Wach, *The Comparative Study of Religions* edited by Joseph M. Kitagawa (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

[7]Walter Holden Capps, *World Book Encyclopedia*. World Book, Inc. 1989

[8]Daoism is the pinyin transliteration of the Chinese character, while Taoism is the older spelling. See the language section on Chinese Religion.

[9]Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Faith of Other Men* (New York: New American Library, 1963)

[10]*Ibid.*, especially chapter seven.

[11]Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 7-8: "Religion, in the

largest and most basic sense of the word, is ultimate concern," and *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 4: "Religion is the state of being grasped by an ultimate concern, a concern which qualifies all other concerns as preliminary and which itself contains the answer to the question of the meaning of life." Tillich presupposes the element of grace in his usage. He is further able to judge both Fascism and Communism "quasi-religious," pp. 5ff. and 18ff.

[12]Robert Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), especially p. 32

[13]"Experiencer" is coined because the Asian religionist is often more than a mere practitioner or believer. There is something which is prior to belief and practice.

[14]Two order epistemologies as suggested here are suspect or rejected in modern thought but have been reintroduced in post-modern approaches. Cf. Huston Smith, *ibid.,* and **Gregory Bateson**

[15]**Arvind Sharma,** *Textual Studies in Hinduism* (Chico: New Horizons Press and Delhi: Manohar, 1980)

[16]George Williams, *The Quest for Meaning of Svâmî Vivekânanda* (Chico: New Horizons Press, 1974).

[17]"Paul MacLean's Model of the Triune Brain," *The Tarrytown Letter* (November 1982), 4-5.

[18]For a discussion of Vivekananda and Jung's use of these categories see George M. Williams, "Methodologcal Problems in Documenting Religious Change When Change is Denied: Svami Vivekananda's Early Years" in Madhu Sen (ed.), *Studies in Religion and Change* (New Delhi: Books and Books, 1983), pp. 219-230; "Swami Vivekananda's conception of karma and rebirth," in Ronald Neufeld (ed.) *Karma and Rebirth: Post-classical Developments. New York: SUNY Press, 1986; "*Svami Vivekananda: From the Apostle of Hinduism to Vedanta to the Religion Eternal, the Unity of All Religions" *Religious Traditions (in press).*

[19]The Third Buddhist-Christian International Conference was held at Berkeley in 1987. Its proceedings indicate just how extensive this dialogue has become. But Buddhism seldom insists that one follows only one path. If, for example, an individual feels the need to meditate, he or she simply goes to a Zen master and practices *zazen*, while remaining a Pure Land Buddhist centered in devotional religion. Parts of one's spiritual life may be strengthened without fear of losing anything. This lesson from Buddhism is valuable to remember.

[20]Life/energy in Daoist [Taoist] terminology was the "breath" or life-force.

[21]See my discussion of this problem and its implications in *The Quest for Meaning, Ibid.*