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The Psycho-Epistemology of Religious Maturity: Heuristic Faith as a Matrix for Growth

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PREFACE

Any endeavor of mankind can be viewed in the light of (or at times in the shadow of) the "eternity in [his] heart" [Ecclesiastes 3:11 (New American Standard Version)]. This "transcendent dimension to human experience" (Hood, Spilka, Hunsberger & Gorsuch, 1996, p. 225) sets the stage for the interface between the infinite and the finite in a temporal experience of a timeless reality. Accordingly, this human response to the "holy other"–where the existential push disappears into the transcendental pull—warrants a two-pronged inquiry: one Theological/Metaphysical, which would contemplate the nature of supreme being; the other Psychological/Epistemological, which would calculate both the (internal) tendencies and (external) trappings of the natural apprehensive process. To zoom in on this notional, infinitesimal touch-point between earth and eternity—where a mysterious synergy[2] is all that can span the perceptual gap between man's reach and God's embrace—is the purpose of the current project. In doing so, this investigation will focus on those faculties of the finite mind which *more* or *less* facilitate the fathoming of the infinite as well as foster the holistic preparedness of the individual to faithfully function and further grow. Hence, the paper lays the groundwork for a vision of faith as a "matrix for growth" based operatively on a *heuristic epistemology.*

[2] "Human development toward wholeness is . . . always the product of a certain *synergy* between human potentials, given in creation, and the presence and activity of Spirit as mediated through many channels" (Fowler, 2000, p. 59).

A Note on the Nature of the Project

The research involved in this study serves to assess what is actually the case regarding certain psychological issues within individuals and by inductive observation is, in this sense, *descriptive*. At the same time, the body of literature attempts to deductively suggest preferable psychological functioning and therefore, is *prescriptive* as well. This project, then, assumes a transitional position along this informative-persuasive spectrum, which holds both agendas in balance. In other words, while this paper goes farther than merely presenting unmitigated data, it also stops short of providing a specific plan of action for applying any principles which could be gained there from (see Figure 1). Accordingly, the most helpful context in which to understand the current study is that of a staging point, a place of initial exploration, or an early step in what can and should become a long journey toward the development of a thorough treatise on that function of human nature which effectively knows one's world, appropriately approaches its Sovereign, and makes meaningful sense of one's existence in all of the life's vicissitudes--from one's origin to his destiny.

Following this telescopic progression from general to specific, where the latter flows out of the former and a position somewhere in between houses the specific focus of this paper, is a similar teleological unfolding which shall illustrate the parallel ideological spectrum. In their most generic speculations, the points of this paper qualify for global representation as a secular (even conceivably atheistic) philosophical rendering of man's existential strivings. To the extent that the discussion of epistemological styles contribute to an organizing thought structure which can be referred to as worldview, any human

being is drawn into the scope of relevance regarding the broadest concerns of the study. However, as the discussion zooms in, it begins to incorporate increasingly religious language: as worldviews begin to involve theological considerations, ways of thinking about the world become intertwined with ways of believing about God and intellectual development plays into spiritual formation. Human growth along these lines can now be referred to in terms of religious maturation.

While it is in the vicinity of just such a transition that this discussion emerges, the specification could hypothetically continue on down as one translates these matters of general religious concern to personally relevant and meaningful instances. For example, for most of the readers of this paper, the subsequent conceptual enumerations would move through monotheistic traditions to Christianity on down to Protestantism--even further into Evangelicalism, and eventually all the way to a specific denomination and its expression in a local church. The degree of specificity to which one applies this rather general research will be that to which he is able to relate to or even agree with the thesis. Therefore, while the language of this paper might be too specific for that occasional reader who would prefer to maintain a purely humanistic outlook, it will more than likely suffer criticism for negligent breadth instead of narrow exclusivism. For this majority audience--who is steeped in certain religious traditions--it could be that the reduction of matters of personal faith to those of global *religious* concern (even for purposes of discussion) will not be appreciated. However, by the use of such terms like "religious maturity," it is not the researchers' goal to ostracize either group; to the contrary, the goal is to provide a discussion that, with a little critical thinking and creative application on the part of the reader, could quite easily provide meaningful insight for anyone regardless

of where they happen to be in their pilgrimage through this ideological spectrum (see Figure 2). Notice how neither generality nor specificity precludes the legitimacy of either conceptual rendering; the key then becomes how best to make the transition from one to the other.

By way of illustration consider the present work as "chapter2" in an imaginary three-chapter book on parachuting in the military. The first chapter would talk about the airplane from which one jumps, the preparations and training that take place, and the descent through midair. The last chapter would discuss the territory in which one lands, the mission and challenges that are to take place and the marching forward toward the objective. The middle chapter would then be reserved for the sole topic of landing—one's feet hitting the ground: how to adjust one's speed during the final seconds of descent and prepare for a safe landing, how best to absorb the shock of impact, and how to orient oneself so as to secure one's bearing on the ground.

While the authors of the first and third chapters would argue for the indispensability of their respective contributions, a closer examination would reveal the middle chapter to be of equal, if not ultimate, concern. One may jump out of an airplane. One may charge an enemy bunker from behind their lines. But, if the paratrooper cannot land, then pulling his parachute is in vain and shooting his rifle is moot, for the absence of that connectivity negates the other two actions. In other words, it can be argued that landing—what would seem to be just another detail in the checklist of a host of important issues--is in fact *the crucial element* to the accomplishment of the mission. In a moment, it links sky and earth, idea and reality, even rehearsal and performance as the midair suspension of thought encounters the ground-pounding thrust of action. Likewise,

philosophical speculations are futile unless they find feet, and the deontic trappings of daily faith are defunct unless they depend on deeply fathomed realities. Thus, this "middle chapter" proves pivotal as the point at which abstract essences become concrete examples – where one's philosophical presuppositions are manifested in psychological and sociological functioning, where contemplations of the by-and-by become concerns for the here-and-now, and where floating down through the theoretical air, lands with both feet on the practical ground.

The tension that this causes for the current project should be apparent while author and reader alike find themselves caught between two worlds. The theoretical philosopher will regret moving on too fast, the practical theologian will regret not moving on fast enough and both will more than likely see the other's extended emphasis as either superfluously deep or inadequately superficial. Nevertheless, while some still enjoy the "falling" through the background information and others have long been ready for the "running" toward the horizon, everyone must land. And everyone must land well. True to this analogy is the mingling of science and art in this act of "landing well"—an endeavor which requires knowledgeable skills as well as instinctive finesse, just as this presentation will require both data and discussion, experimentation as well as explanation and the occasional use of technical jargon, yet coated at times with colloquial idiom. Which agenda this paper favors (or to which side it errs) is only as predictable as the personal experiences, exposure and education of the individual reader.

A Note on the Format of this Paper

Unfortunately, the publishing community seems to favor the extremes. Scholars find their sophisticated science suitable for technical journals, which show off their high altitude rhetoric and philosophical "freestyle" in mid-fall, without consideration of the not-quite-so-educated masses who don't keep the latest issue of the *International Journal of Metacognition* on their coffee tables. Just the same, pastors discover that their devotionally inspiring reflections are received warmly among the laity on the ground who appreciate being patted on the back as they stroll along the beaten path with never a glance given toward the corpus of empirical research that remains dormant under the church's curse of extra-Biblical irrelevance. Extending the analogy, a final caricature betrays the tragedy that lurks in the shadows of the exclusive extremes. The philosophic paratrooper can be seen as scurrying up the intellectual ropes of his chute trying to prolong the comforts of conjecture unaccountable by trial; facing equivalent doom is the pragmatic paratrooper who walks around his unexamined world trying his best to imagine why it gets harder to breathe with every step. What he fails to acknowledge are the choking ropes around his chest that (either by arrogance, naiveté or laziness) drag the ignored chute of the intellect behind him through all the tangled mess of narrow-mindededness. While the one doesn't want to come down to face the practical demands and needs of life, the other can't move forward to accommodate them. This failure is fatal on both accounts.

Given such punitive polarization, this paper attempts to accomplish neither strict scholarly science to be filed away in the archives of the ivory towers nor stock sentimental serenades to be sold for "20% off" on the gift-book shelf at the local

Christian bookstore; however, redeemable elements of each format shall be adopted. For example, on account of the possibility of eventual revision and publication of this paper in a scholarly journal within the community of the Psychology of Religion, the American Psychological Association (APA) manuscript style is at least loosely followed. This involves, among other guidelines, general formatting parameters which, on account of its emphasis on empirical research, follow this outline: 1) Title page, 2) Abstract, 3) Introduction, 4) Method section, 5) Results section, 6) Discussion section, 7) References, 8) Author note, 9) Tables, 10) Figures. Because at the core of this study is a body of original empirical data, such a formal research design is justifiable. However, given the unique nature of the project by which the larger context for this research is defined, supplementation of this format does occur throughout the presentation of the material. On account of the possibility of eventual revision and publication as a "Christian book," certain liberties were taken to include more commentary, narration and thoroughness in the exploration of these concepts than would have otherwise been allowed by a strict APA format. By this, the author's hope is to provide a work with versatility of potential applications and viability of present meaningfulness. With this in mind, the business of "landing well"--so as to live well--is at hand.

ABSTRACT

The Psycho-Epistemology Scale used by Desimpelaere, Sulas Duriez and Hutsebaut (1999) is translated to English, reviewed, tested and compared to a measure of Religious Maturity (RM-3) (Leak, 1999). A new measure of psycho-epistemological styles is proposed (the Psycho-Epistemological Style Indicator (PESI) and *Heuristicism* is identified as the more mature style as it reflects William Perry's "commitment." A total of 141 undergraduate students from East Texas Baptist University participated in either the initial or follow-up studies for this project. Religious Maturity correlates negatively with Dualism, yet positively with Relativism, thus contributing to the overall correlation between it and the epistemological spectrum as Perry presented it: from Dualism through Relativism to Heuristicism. These observations promote a reconsideration of the hierarchical, if not developmental aspects of epistemology as it provides the philosophical underpinnings of mature religiosity and contributes to the overall psycho-social well-being of the individual.

The Psycho-Epistemology of Religious Maturity: Heuristic Faith as a Matrix for Growth

"Maturity in any sentiment comes about only when a growing intelligence somehow is animated by the desire that this sentiment shall not suffer arrested development, but shall keep pace with the intake of relevant experience. In many people, so far as the religious sentiment is concerned, this inner demand is absent."

Gordon Allport; from *The Individual and His Religion*

"Only by superintending our cognitive life (the way, for example, we form, defend, maintain, revise, abandon and act on our beliefs about important matters) can we become excellent as thinkers and, ultimately, excellent as persons."

W. Jay Wood from *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous*

INTRODUCTION

Religious Maturity: The Hull[3]

Life implies growth and growth culminates in maturity; this process of maturation can be experienced to varying degrees across several aspects of one's life. Therefore, one can conceivably grow or fail to grow physically, mentally, emotionally or even religiously (Feinsilver, 1960, p.8). Indeed, regarding this last category, the field of psychology has entertained much discussion on what would actually constitute "religious

[3] The section sub-headings will present individual pieces of a metaphorical puzzle. The reader is invited to gather these pieces throughout the paper as the discussion will return to this progressive metaphor in the Epilogue in order to put them all together.

maturity." Despite obstacles, this concept continues to be "provocative and heuristically useful . . . and it currently holds theoretical and practical appeal for theologians, developmentalists, counselors and educators" (Leak, 1999, pp. 83-84). Let us consider then, a sampling of the various attempts at describing this concept.

One author has suggested that the criteria for mature religiousness could be summarized by three terms: reason, responsibility and relatedness. Accordingly, religion would be "an essential part of the individual, operating in harmony with all that he knows and sees, and integrating all of the experiences of life into one comprehensible pattern . . . that sensitizes him to the problems of life [and] fortifies him for surmounting them" and equips him to relate "to the physical universe and to [his] fellowmen—with all the knowledge at [his] disposal, and with all the love [he] can command" (Feinsilver, 1960, pp. 19-20). This is consistent with how Gregory R. Peterson (2001) describes religion as an "orienting worldview" that is "fundamental, explanatory, and global in character" (pp. 8-13).

Zdzilslaw Chlewinski (1998) picks up on somewhat different elements in his five "fundamental criteria of mature religiousness." Yet, even through the "autonomy of religious motivation, non-anthropomorphic conception of God, ability to distinguish elements which are essential in religion from those accidentally connected with it, ability to deal with religious crises, and authenticity of religious beliefs (p.97)," one can recognize a greater enunciation of the underlying thematic complementarity of (a) the coherence of beliefs, (b) congruence with that reality which is spiritually perceived and (c) the consistency of one's actions with both. No doubt Orlo Strunk (1965), in his

classic work, *Mature Religion,* was moving in the same vein when he drafted a "synthetic definition of religious maturity" based on his comparative study of the psychology of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, William James, Gordon Allport and Viktor Frankl:

> Mature religion is a dynamic organization of cognitive-affective-conative factors possessing certain characteristics of depth and height—including a highly conscious and articulate belief system purged, by critical processes, of childish wishes and intensely suited and comprehensive enough to find positive meaning in all of life's vicissitudes. Such a belief system, though tentative in spirit, will include a conviction of the existence of an Ideal Power to which the person can sense a friendly continuity—a conviction grounded in authoritative and ineffable experiences. The dynamic relationship between this belief system and these experiential events will generate feelings of wonder and awe, a sense of oneness with the All, humility, elation, and freedom; and with great consistency will determine the individual's responsible behavior in all areas of personal and interpersonal relationships, including such spheres as morality, love, work, and so forth (pp. 144-145).

This could easily act as an elaboration of H. A. Overstreet's presentation of a "mature mind" which is characterized by the "acquisition of knowledge [in] both the psychological and spiritual spheres, . . . sense of responsibility [and] function, . . . ability to communicate, . . .[and a move] from ego-centricity to socio-centricity" (quoted in Jackson, 1968, p. 92).

Yet, among those who have speculated on these characteristics, it is Gordon Allport who "remains the most influential psychologist to theorize about the essential features of religious maturity" (Leak, 1999, p.84). Responsible for the initial formal operationalization of the term, Allport's work on mature religion has proven to be seminally significant for the objective psychological inquiry and measurement of this phenomenon.

As a basis for his exploration and differentiation of ways of being religious, Allport used his own previous conclusions regarding personality in general[4]. In that context there were three attributes of the mature individual which represented the "primary avenues of development:" the *avenue of widening interests* (that is, concern for those psychogenic values which allow someone to "escape the level of immediate biological impulse"), the *avenue of detachment and insight* (or, the ability for someone to see himself as others see him), and the *avenue of integration* (as in the "possession of some unifying philosophy of life" (Batson , Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993, p.159)). With these three descriptions (the expanding self, self-objectification and self-unification), Allport layed the groundwork for his assessment of a "mature" religious sentiment which is depicted as a "disposition, built up through experience, to respond favorably, and in certain habitual ways, to conceptual objects and principles that the individual regards as of ultimate importance in his own life, and as having to do with what he regards as permanent or central in the nature of things"[5] (Allport, 1950, p. 56).

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[4] For an extended discussion of the nature of Religious Maturity, with particular emphasis on its relationship to general personality theory, see Epilogue: The Dilemma and Duty of Religious Maturity.

[5] While such generic language might not satisfy certain Christian populations, what is of interest here is not the content of one's religious beliefs, per se (which could be measured, for example, in terms of adherence

As an elaboration of the three fundamental aspects of general maturity, the factors of the mature religious sentiment, according to Allport, can be delineated as "(1) well differentiated; (2) dynamic in character in spite of its derivative nature; (3) productive of a consistent morality; (4) comprehensive; (5) integral; and (6) fundamentally heuristic" (Allport, 1950, p.57).

While Allport's theorizing in this direction continues to hold a significant, even foundational role in much of the contemporary instances of this discussion, there has been widespread criticism regarding the discrepancy between his *definition* of religious orientations and the validity of his constructed *measure* of the same. In the process of developing a way to measure these notions of religiosity, Allport abandoned the subjective and evaluative terms of "maturity" and "immaturity" and reclassified the distinction as "intrinsic" versus "extrinsic" orientations whereby an individual is respectively described as either "living" his religion or "using" it (Allport & Ross, 1967, quoted in Batson et al., 1993, pp. 158-164). Unfortunately, Allport's Religious Orientation Scale did not succeed as a complete measure of this variable. For example, Batson et al. (1993) observe that "in most samples the Intrinsic scale probably measures something other than what Allport intended; it probably measures intense, perhaps even rigid, devotion to orthodox religious beliefs and practices. . . . " They further note that this scale probably indicates two independent dimensions rather than two distinct types of religious orientation. "A given individual may be more or less concerned to maintain a devout adherence to his or her religion (measured by the Intrinsic scale) and at the same

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to an orthodox wording of doctrines), but *how* someone processes and holds onto his beliefs, or the *way* that someone is religious. With this as the end, it becomes necessary to tolerate a more generic articulation of religiosity so as to capture the global variances thereof.

time may be more or less willing to admit the personal and social gains derived therefrom (measured by the Extrinsic scale)" (1993, pp. 161-164). For one more particularly betraying example of the scale's inadequacies, consider how certain statements would be affirmed by Allport's "mature" person "who tended to identify with and accept religious dogma, authority figures, or institutions in a rigid, uncritical, and dependent fashion" (Batson et al., 1993, pp. 162-164). While criticism has been offered from many angles (see Leak, 1999, p. 84; Batson et al., 1993, pp.161-164), the most helpful summary of the shortcomings of this measure is offered by Gary Leak.

> Allport may have excised too much in his efforts to operationalize a complex, meaningful, but elusive construct. The rich and heuristic qualities contained within the concept of religious maturity, qualities that have meaning and significance to many, were sacrificed in the development of a scale with too few items to adequately sample the heterogeneous domain of religious maturity (Leak,1999, p. 84).

This "empirical emphasis, wherein the psychometric tail wags the conceptual dog" (Leak, 1999, p.84) focused on the "master motive" aspect of religious maturity while failing to effectively capture the aspects of flexibility, tentativeness, openness to doubt and resistance to absolutistic thinking (Batson et al., 1993,p.161; Leak, 1999, p.84) which were all integral to Allport's original concept of maturity.

Around the same time that Allport was constructing his empirical measure of religiosity, Bernard Spilka and Russel Allen were attempting to measure their own conceptions of different ways of being religious. The two resulting orientations were labeled as "committed" and "consensual;" the former characterized by a "discerning,

highly differentiated, candid, open, self-critical, abstract, and relational approach to religious questions" and the latter by the opposite of each of these criteria (Batson et al., 1993, pp.164-165). One should readily detect the similarities between Allen and Spilka's distinction and that of Allport's; in fact, Spilka suggested the appropriateness of referring to the two orientations as "Intrinsic-Committed" and "Extrensic-Consensual." Although Allen and Spilka's construct showed great potential value, when the

highly differentiated, candid, open, self-critical, abstract, and relational approach to religious questions" and the latter by the opposite of each of these criteria (Batson et al., 1993, pp.164-165). One should readily detect the similarities between Allen and Spilka's distinction and that of Allport's; in fact, Spilka suggested the appropriateness of referring to the two orientations as "Intrinsic-Committed" and "Extrensic-Consensual." Although Allen and Spilka's construct showed great potential value, when the cumbersome interview format was reduced to a more easily administered questionnaire, the scale "suffered a fate similar to Allport's. Much of the emphasis in the initial concept of committed religion on complexity, flexibility, and self-criticism was lost; more emphasis was placed on religion as a central value" (Batson et al., 1993, p.165).

Recognizing the need to reintegrate these aspects (i.e. complexity, flexibility and tentativeness) into Allport's original construct of religious maturity, Daniel Batson drafted an additional scale which would emphasize the roles of doubt and openness in religious maturity that were not accounted for in Allport's measure of either the religion-as-means (extrinsic) or religion-as-end (intrinsic) dimension (referenced in Batson et al., 1993, pp. 166-181). It was through the introduction of this third dimension—religion-as-*quest*--that attention was given to these more existential attitudes[6] (Cole & Wortham, 2000, p.446). In short, the Quest dimension measured "the degree to which an individual's religion involves an open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life" (Batson et al., 1993, p.169).

[6] Actually, Batson developed four new scales in order to capture the full range of relevant factors in his identification of a religious orientations (Batson et al., 1993, pp. 168-175); yet in the end, it was the Quest dimension that emerged as the most notable of his contributions to this discussion. As a result, focusing on this "third dimension" will suffice for our purposes of tracing the development of the current model.

In other words, Batson believed that this revised three dimensional measure of individual religion indicated "more accurately how well a person faces complex life issues; remains open to new ideas; and resists simple, routine answers to religious questions" (Cole & Wortham, 2000, p. 446).

There is no doubt that the complementary role of the Quest element was indispensable to the ongoing refinement of the psychological community's conception of mature religiosity; however, despite its helpfulness, it has not gone without criticism. On account of its emphases, the Quest scale has been accused of over correcting the problematic omissions of Allport's focus on master motive. "While Allport wrote that mature religion knows all the grounds for skepticism, he went on to say that it chooses commitment, gradually strengthening faith and causing doubt to disappear" (Donahue, cited in Dudley & Cruise, 1990, p. 99)). Additionally, the Quest scale, whose functional definition of religion more heavily focuses on the process and not the content of faith, seems to be set up in such a way so as to ensure that it will come out on top. Likewise, it has been argued that this construct ensures that people with orthodox beliefs will be described as rigid and closed-minded (Hood and Morris, as cited in Dudley & Cruise, 1990, p. 99). As a result, some critics have gone so far as to suggest that Batson's (et al.) scale is a more appropriate measure of agnosticism (Donahue in Dudley & Cruise, 1990, p.99) or of religious conflict and personal distress (Finney and Maloney in Dudley & Cruise, 1990, p. 99). While Batson et al. rebut much of the criticism that was aimed at their scale, there remains the inescapable independence of each of the sub-scales of the religious inventory (i.e. Intrinsic, Extrinsic and Quest). Dudley & Cruise (1990) have pointed out the predicament this presents to the truly mature individual (according to

Allport's theorizing) who "would be required to strongly agree with one set of items stressing commitment and the importance of faith while at the same time strongly agreeing with another set stressing religious doubts and uncertainties." They go on to make an important distinction that would eventually lead them to develop their own attempt at rectifying these discrepancies.

> What is needed, in our opinion, is a scale that contains items that measure the complex ideas Allport was presenting in his description of mature religion. Such an orientation requires the individual to *hold contrasting ideas in creative tension* [italics added]. But the contrast is not between faith and doubt. Nothing in Allport's work suggests that doubters are more religiously mature. Rather, the tension is between commitment and tentativeness or openmindedness. Indeed, Allport specified the religious sentiment that "floods the whole life with motivation and meaning" is one where "dogma is tempered with humility" (cited in Dudley & Cruise, 1990). Combining both of these heuristic and dynamic criteria, Dudley & Cruise (1990) anticipate that the mature religionist would confess, ". . . *I want to be ready to progress in my understanding when a new piece of 'truth' becomes clear to me. In the meantime I will live by the light I have* . . .."[7] Both are necessary, and any real measure of religious maturity must find a way to tap both (Dudley & Cruise, 1990, pp. 100-101).

After developing the Personal Religious Inventory (PRI), Dudley & Cruise (1990) described what differentiating characteristics would be accomplished by their construct:

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[7] This sentiment is reflected in the Christian's concept of faith as a "state of relative certainty about matters of ultimate concern sufficient to promote action" (McLaren, 1999, p. 31).

> (1) Religious maturity values clear answers to religious concerns, not merely questions, although it is open to a questioning stance. (2) Religious maturity retains the "master motive" function of religion, thus preserving its integrative role. (3) religious maturity . . . emphasizes open-minded searching rather than religious conflict and personal distress. (4) With religious maturity there is not a contrast between faith and doubt but a creative tension between commitment and open-mindedness. (5) Religious maturity provides for satisfying answers while still searching for better answers . . . (pp. 104-105).

Despite this impressive checklist of theoretical links to the originating concept, the accompanying survey was statistically insufficient to remain a reliable measure. For example, Leak & Fish (1999) have expressed concern for the poor content validity, criterion validity and reliability of the PRI. As a result, these psychologists have sought to develop a scale that would continue in the vein of Dudley & Cruise insofar as it would capture in one scale the multidimensionality of Allport's notion of religious maturity, yet would carry the effort to new heights of statistical reliability and content validity. In their own words, Leak & Fish claim that their research was

> dedicated to the development of a scale to measure an enduring and important trait within the psychology of religion: religious maturity based explicitly on Allport's (1950) influential theory. This project was based on several assumptions. First, the concept of religious maturity is important to both psychology and theology. Second, Allport's theorizing on the psychology of religious maturity is the most fruitful one available, and thus efforts to establish measures of maturity should start with his writings (cf., Kirkpatrick & Hood,

1990). And third, that the two most heavily researched measures of religious maturity (or, more accurately, aspects of maturity) [are inadequate to the task of providing complete or sufficient operationalizations (Leak and Fish, 1999). [8]

Once such a scale had been created and shown to achieve "impressive construct validity" (in the form of the 56-item RM-2) (Leak, 2002, p. 534), Leak continued to "explore the number and nature of the factors within [the] scale" and sought to "develop a modified scale with fewer items . . ." (2002, p. 534). As a result of his exploratory factor analysis, he identified four components that would categorize RM-3's 34 items.

Factor I, what Leak labeled as "master-motive," stresses religion as that from which life's meaning is derived, the source of how one makes sense of the world and that "pervasive influence that directs many aspects of [one's] life . . .." In Factor II, "beliefs are complex and realistic, articulated and coherent, and informed by critical tendencies" which speaks of the comprehensive and differentiated religious sentiment; this is called "complexity of beliefs." Factor III shows the differentiation taking the form of an open, reflective orientation and is thus called "openness." Factor IV, speaks of the "heuristic quality" of beliefs which leaves them tentatively held while doubts are worked through; yet in all of this, the person is able to "act wholeheartedly even without absolute certainty" (Leak, 2002, p. 536).

[8] By making this last point, the authors do not disregard the merit of Intrinsic Religiosity (IR) or Quest (Q), rather they capitalize on the inherent value of these independent dimensions in the religious maturity amalgamate: ". . . the final scale, RM-2, was related to established, although still controversial, measures of mature religious orientations (IR and Q). . . . We were pleased with the magnitude of those correlations because they show that the IR and Q scales are related to the RM-2 scale to a substantial degree, while still allowing the RM-2 scale to contain a great deal of unique and reliable variance (i.e., the RM-2 scale is more than just a mixture of IR and Q)" (Leak and Fish, 1999, p.100).

To conclude, notice the remarkable compatibility between the mature person according to the RM-3 and the one of Allport's theories. Leak and Fish summarily attest that such mature individuals would be characterized by

> religious commitment without dogmatism or inflexibility. They reflect on their self-determined religious beliefs, and those beliefs provide a sense of well-being for these people, without harnessing them to excessively rigid or orthodox beliefs. From a more global perspective, these individuals appear to have met their basic psychological needs . . . and have moved into a level of personality maturity and growth . . . which includes a progression toward a mature value system . . . (Leak & Fish, 1999, pp. 100-101).

***Cognitive Creativity:** The Mast*

The reader should take note of how each element within the preceding description of religious maturity is followed by a qualifying statement (e.g. commitment is made *but "without dogmatism or inflexibility* [italics added]," and beliefs are held *yet "without harnessing [the subject] to excessively rigid or orthodox beliefs* [italics added]." The presence of such caveats discloses the emphasis of this variable on *how* one is religious rather than on *what* someone actually believes. In other words, the religious maturity psycho-metric is not intended to measure the *content* of one's religious convictions [as would a scale of orthodoxy or conservatism (see Hill & Hood, 1999)], but to explain the *way* in which someone holds those convictions.[9]

[9] Given this interest, the discussion finds its more helpful language from the realm of psychology and philosophy rather than from theology. While it would eventually become important for the Christian, for example, to translate these implications into their specific settings of application and would someday,

Similar emphases are apparent in Allen and Spilka's differentiation of committed and consensual religious orientations which were communicated "in terms of five structural components: content, clarity, complexity, flexibility, and importance" (Fleck et al., 1975, pp.160-162). Furthermore, the fulcrum issue on which this distinction pivots is whether or not the "full creed . . . with respect to consequences for daily activities and behavior [has been] meaningfully internalized" (Fleck, et al., 1975, p.160). That religious maturity can be discussed as a function of the effective meaningfulness of one's internalization of values—especially when the effectiveness of this process is attributed to the "complexity" and "flexibility" of one's cognitive structural components—is indicative of the crucial role of the psychological and philosophical factors involved therein. For example, J. Roland Fleck et al. (1975) suggested that the development of religious concepts runs parallel to the cognitive developmental schema of Jean Piaget where the structural components of the more mature religious orientation (i.e. according to Fleck, the "abstract, well differentiated, diversity-tolerant, theoretical, hypothetical, deductive, integrated and internalized" nature of the "committed" style (p.161)) would correlate with the "cognitive thought processes characteristic of Piaget's formal operational stage" (pp. 160-162).[10] Confirming the implications of cognitive development for religion,[11] Batson et al. observes, for example, that a

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therefore, be a legitimate and helpful task to frame these insights into a context of spiritual growth laden with Biblically familiar terms, this study attempts to examine the issue of religious maturity in terms which capture the psychological inner-workings and philosophical underpinnings of one's religious functioning. See the Epilogue.

[10] See Table 1: Characteristics of the Committed Versus the Consensual Religious Orientation in Terms of Structural Components.

[11] For further insight into the developmental aspects of religion, see (Hood Jr., R. W., Spilka, B., Hunsberger, B. & Gorsuch, R. 1996, pp46-59).

> young child lacks the way of thinking necessary to understand or ask the existential questions that . . . are the basis for religion . . . [and] to the extent that religious language is abstract and symbolic, analogic and metaphorical, alluding to a transcendent reality beyond concrete, everyday experience, the young child cannot adequately understand it. To understand this kind of language requires, once again, formal operations (Batson, et al., 1993, p. 59).

Indeed, "the structural changes in how we think that occur as we mature have the potential to create not only important possibilities but also important problems for our experience of religion" (Batson, et al., 1993, p. 62).

Batson, et al. observes that at least one characteristic common to the variety of religious experiences is the involvement of a dramatic change "both in the way the person sees the world and in the person's behavior; each is reality-transforming" (1993, p. 87). Their subsequent discussion of the psychological processes of religious experience is particularly illuminating. Based on the assumption that these same psychological processes at work in religious experiences can be observed in "other, reality-transforming experiences" (p. 88), they employ *creativity* as a model for explaining these developmental phenomena and offer nine propositions to capture the dynamics of this psychological progression. A brief recapitulation of their presentation should be helpful in augmenting the connection between cognition and faith (which shall segue into the second primary variable under investigation: psycho-epistemology).

(1) Reality is constructed; the structure and stability of "reality" come from the meaning (which is very much a human creation) that we attach to our experience. (2) These cognitive structures provide the basis for the reality we construct – they are "the

framework on which reality is woven" (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, quoted in Batson et al., 1993, p. 90). (3) Our cognitive structures are arranged hierarchically; that is, "relatively specific dimensions are grouped under more general organizing principles, which are grouped under even more abstract and general organizing principles." (4) "Creativity involves an improvement in one's cognitive organization;" thus, creative thought can be thought of as "the process whereby one's cognitive structures are changed toward greater flexibility and adaptability through greater differentiation and integration . . . [in which] the old reality is not denied but is transcended; it is seen for what it is, one way of looking at the world that has only a limited range of application." (5) The creative process involves identifiable stages: preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. (8) "A similar stage sequence may be found in many religious experiences . . . [which] involve cognitive restructuring in an attempt to deal with one or more existential questions:" existential crisis, self-surrender, new vision and new life which is marked by a state of assurance including "[a.] a loss of worry, especially loss of those concerns that produced the religious crisis; [b.] a new sense of truth in which mysteries of life become lucid; and [c.] a sense of newness to the objects in one's environment."

Finally, we come to the most significant statement (in terms of implications for our research). (9) Religious experiences can be creative as well as noncreative. In some cases, the new mental form may

> allow the individual to deal more positively and effectively with a wider range of experiences and people. . . . Alternatively, it may restrict one's ability to deal positively with one's environment (1) by encouraging a flight from everyday life into an otherworldly fantasy, (2) by engendering emotional dependence through

> attachment to or infatuation with a religious leader or group . . . or (3) by imposing rigid and arbitrary conceptualizations on one's experience in the from of dogmatic beliefs and rules for conduct (pp. 81-115).

In other words, there is a way of being religious (i.e. a way of processing religious experiences, etc.) that fosters growth and leads to greater maturity (as discussed at the outset of this paper) and, by contrast, a way to be religious that inhibits growth and works against the flux of maturation. Ultimately, what Batson, et al. have been pointing out is that "more or less constructive experiences are not differentiated in terms of *what* [italics added] the individual comes to believe but in terms of the nature of the cognitive restructuring that underlies the experience" (1993, p.108). Recognize here the reiteration of our earlier distinction between the content (*what*) and the process (*how*) of religious beliefs; *the way* someone holds onto their beliefs about God, life, etc. is a matter of psychology on one hand and philosophy on the other. Insofar as the analysis occurs within the parameters of intra-psychic functioning—answering *why* or *how* one has come to believe this or that--the issues remain psychological; to the extent that those functions provide explanatory value as a meta-cognitive heuristic whereby one is equipped with the internal organization (i.e. cognitive structures) that makes increasingly possible various interpretations—as well as analyses of those interpretations--of the external world (which can be evaluated as to their soundness and good-groundedness), the issues infiltrate the field of cognitive psychology and are at base, philosophical in nature (see Hamlyn,1967, p.9; Palmer, 2002, pp. 18-19; Jacquette, 2001).

Specifically, the branch of philosophy that addresses this possibility of achieving

certain knowledge is called epistemology. Formally, epistemology is the "discipline concerned with the nature of knowledge, its origins, *the conceptual assumptions or grounds out of which knowledge arises* [italics added] and is possible at all, methods of attaining knowledge, and the status of knowledge as real knowledge, that is, a concern for its trustworthiness" (Miller, 2000, p.225). Taking note of the emphasized portion of the definition above, one should see that while in the more general sense, this branch of philosophy is defined as the "theory of the origin, nature, and limits of knowledge" (Stetson, 1960, p. 333), it can also be understood as "the systematic analysis of the *conceptions employed* [italics added] by ordinary and scientific thought in *interpreting the world* [italics added], and including an investigation of the act of knowledge, or the nature of knowledge as such, with a view to determine its ontological significance . . .." (Pringle-Pattison, 1960, p.333).

The Concept of Worldview: *The Rudder*

The breadth of this epistemological goal in religion was suggested by William James (1902), "At bottom the whole concern of both morality and religion is with the manner of our acceptance of the universe" (p. 44). This sentiment is often captured in terms of a "worldview." One's worldview not only involves "a perspective of reality, . . .[a] way of thinking about life and the world, . . . or a comprehensive framework of beliefs that helps us to interpret what we see and experience," but also the resulting value system that is set in the context of that way of thinking that forms the basis of and gives direction for lifestyle choices (Philips & Brown, 1991, pp. 28-29). The pervasive and influential nature of this outlook vis-à-vis the integrating and master-motivating nature of

religious maturity should be pondered, for it is in this language of *worldview* that a connection is formed between the mental and spiritual domains.

For example, recall that Peterson (introduced earlier) went so far as to define religion as an "orienting worldview"--that which is arrived at by the orienting function of the "conceptions of a general order of existence . . . about the nature of the world and how it works" (2001, p. 9). More specifically, in their book *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview*, Philips & Brown assert that Christianity, for example, is one such "total world- and life-view," and that "the Bible describes a comprehensive perspective of life and the world." That a religion and its scriptures can be described in such philosophical terms should make (if it's not already) obvious the relation between *ways of believing* and *ways of thinking*. For another telling example, consider Allport's evaluation of the religious sentiment. "When I use the term sentiment, I might equally well for our purpose speak of *interest, outlook,* or *system* of beliefs. All these terms simply call attention to the fact that in the course of development, relatively stable units of personality gradually emerge. Such units are always the product of the two central and vital functions of mental life: *motivation* and *organization"* (1950, pp. 54-55).

Now notice the natural introduction of this philosophical element as we resume Batson's explanation of the psychological process of creativity as relevant to religiosity.

> Even among positive religious experiences an important distinction can be made. One may have a reality-transforming religious experience that invites further transformation or one that forecloses it. In the former case, the new reality is recognized as a tentative and transient construction, one that will probably undergo future change. In the latter case, the new reality is perceived as *true*

> reality. It is assumed that one has been given an insight into the mysteries of life that cannot be improved upon, an insight that has definitively answered one or more existential questions. Although such insight may have dramatically positive effects in infusing life with meaning and direction, it would seem to discourage further religious insight. The rest of one's life becomes a postscript to the insight already attained. Both of these types of religious experience involve new vision and so are creative, *but the former opens the door to further religious growth; the latter closes the door* [italics added] (Batson et al, 1993, pp. 107-108).[12]

As a point of application, consider for example, what this argument sounds like in more explicitly Christian terms; in his book *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous*, W. Jay Wood discusses the relevance of these mental matters for the Christian:

> Exercising care over the formation of our minds is not a purely academic pursuit; it is also a spiritual one. God enjoins us in Scripture to pursue the intellectual virtues. The Bible is unequivocally clear that Christians are to superintend the life of the mind . . . God cares about *how* you think, not just *what* you think. . . .to forge virtuous habits of moral and intellectual character is part of what is required for us to grow to the full stature of all that God intends for humans to be (1998, pp.17-19).

As a more general paradigm, James Fowler's "stages of faith" is a valuable attempt at capturing the harmony of *ways of thinking* and *ways and believing* in a developmental schema. For Fowler, faith is a "way of moving into the force field of life, . . . our way of finding coherence in and giving meaning to the multiple forces and

[12] see also Fromm, 1950, (pp. 1-64, *26).

relations that make up our lives." Furthermore, faith is a person's "way of seeing him- or herself in relation to others against a background of shared meaning and purpose" (1995, p.4). In this proposal for a "sequence of stagelike ways of being in faith that describe a general pattern of development in faith," Fowler describes these stages as trying to

> "describe uniform and predictable *ways* of being in faith, [and] are not primarily matters of the *contents* of faith. [He is] not suggesting that a person goes through a succession of worldviews and value systems, if we mean by those terms substantive beliefs, themes, images, and stories of faith. Rather, [he is] trying to identify and communicate differences in the *styles*, the *operations of knowing and valuing,* that constitute the action, the way of being, that is faith. [The] stages describe in formal terms the structural features of faith as a way of construing, interpreting, and responding to the factors of contingency, finitude, and ultimacy in our lives" (2000, p.40).

In each of these stages [viz., "undifferentiated, . . . intuitive-projective, . . . mythic-literal, synthetic-conventional, . . . individuative-reflective, . . . conjunctive, . . . [and] universalizing" (Fowler 1995, pp.117-214)], "the way in which people construe and relate to transcendent realities is determined by the receptivity and competence of psychological structures that underlie thinking, feeling, and social processes" (Jardine, winter 1992). Here, we catch a glimpse of the union of psychological structures, philosophical presuppositions and theological meaning-making that is of concern for our research. Because this union is consistently involved in organizing knowledge and perception, it is epistemological in nature; because these organizational patterns can be described along a developmental schema, it is maturational. Fromm (1950) saw this

need for a "system of orientation and devotion" as intrinsic to human existence and development[13] (pp. 24-26).

Given this enmeshed relationship between the concepts of mature religion and concepts of worldview based on complex cognitive structures, one would expect that empirical research has indicated and substantiated this correlation. Unfortunately, although "social scientists have developed provocative theories of religious maturity . . . they have not specified highly elaborate and rigorous conceptual frameworks, nor translated their promising theoretical constructs into psychometrically sound measurement devices" (Leak & Fish, 1999).

Batson, et al. utilized a measure of cognitive complexity to show the level of organization and degree of cognitive restructuring at work in the religious domain. Complexity was indicated by the "presence of alternative ways of viewing [certain existential] conflicts, the integrations of these alternatives, and the recognition of the relativity of these integrations" (1993, pp. 113-114). This in itself would quite clearly parallel the formulation of religious maturity. Recall the Committed religious style that was characterized by a "discerning, highly differentiated, candid, open, self-critical, abstract, and relational approach to religious questions;" the flexibility and reflection which are part and parcel of maturity comprise this same openness that is requisite of complexity. Allport himself recognized that the mature religious disposition was the "outgrowth of many successive discriminations and continuous reorganization" (1950,

[13] For more examples of the relationship between cognitive and spiritual processes, see (Lawson, 2000; McCaulfy, 2000; Maslow, 1970; Stenmark, 1999; Barrett, 1999; Chesterton, 1990; Blamires, 1978; Moreland, 1997; Grenz, 2000; Peck, 1997; Loder, 1989; 1998; Fowler, 1996; 2000; Kegan, 1982; 1994; Ammermann, 1995, etc.).

p. 59). As such, his "maturity" described an "orientation toward religion that is the product of a highly complex cognitive organization for dealing with existential questions, an organization that has emerged from repeated creative changes in response to existential conflicts" (Batson, et al., 1993, p. 160).

The true compatibility of these two developmental achievements (i.e. maturity and complexity) is most vividly seen in the characteristics of the creative process in a religious context as delineated by Batson, et al.:

> (1) willingness to admit, tolerate, and even actively seek conflict on existential issues; (2) ability to reflect critically and constructively on one's own earlier religious experiences . . . (3) perception of one's religious development as fluid and open to further change rather than fixed and permanent . . . (4) effect of religious experiences on other areas of the individual's life, including behavior; and (5) increasing interaction with new areas of one's personal and social environment rather than insulation and withdrawal (1993, p. 114).

This remarkable and necessary correspondence of cognition to religious development comprises (perhaps partially, but certainly significantly) the broader constructions of epistemological concepts. What general postures of this larger epistemological concern are more conducive to more developed styles of religious thinking? The primary goal of the second element of our current research is to address this question by measuring epistemological styles (in their full cognitive valuations) and then use them as an overlay of the religious maturity continuum so as to draw conclusions about the correlations there between.

Psycho-Epistemology: *The Sails*

The issue of knowledge conception (i.e. epistemological structures) has been and continues to be an important explanatory tool in the hands of ministers and theologians (Choudhury, 2001; Quinn, 2001), educators (Schommer-Aikins, 2002; Siejk, 1993), developmental psychologists (Pillow, 1999; Johnson, 1976; Klaczynski & Robinson, 2000), philosophers (Jacquette, 2001; Gall, 2001; Rottschaefer, 2001), natural, social, and behavioral scientists (Guelph, 1999; Norris, 2001; MacLennan, 2001), cognitive scientists (Galloway, 2000; Kotsch, 2000; Menssen, 1993; Montell, 2001), counselors and therapists (Erwin, 1999), sociologists and cultural psychologists (Montero, 2002; Baerveldt & Verheggen, 1999; Bergin, 2001), and others. Such a wide array of applicability results in an abundance of conceivable epistemological styles [e.g. "*realism, romanticism, constructionism, empiricism, rationalism, metaphorism, pragmatism, dualism, multiplism, relativism, positivism, humanism, emotionalism, eclectism, transcendentalism, fictionalism,* and *individualism* (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994, pp. 499-500)]. In this sense of accounting for various knowledge beliefs, the application of epistemology remains a traditional philosophical matter; but there are researchers who have been interested in "captur[ing] these epistemological 'isms' as potentially useful sources of human variation." In this context, then, epistemological styles have been identified as "*individual differences* [italics added] in beliefs about what knowledge is and how it is acquired" (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994, p. 500), and as such are often referred to as "psycho-epistemological styles."

The number of scales in existence that are committed to measuring this aspect is rather modest. One of the first uses of this refined label was by Royce who developed the

Psycho-Epistemological Profile (PEP) (Royce, 1964, cited in Desimpelaere, Sulas, Duriez, & Hutsebaut,1999). Detecting the three dimensions of *rationalism, empiricism* and *metaphorism*, the PEP described each style as having "its own value system, affective system, cognitive processes, and criteria concerning justified knowledge" (Deimpelaere, et al., 1999, p. 126).

A few years later in 1968, William G. Perry, Jr. published *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*, which would prove to be one of the most influential contributions to this discussion. His study of the cognitive development and intellectual growth of college students lead him to construct a scheme which would plot the development of certain "structures" through a nine stage progression from simple dualism through multiplicity (complex dualism) and relativity to commitment (Perry, 1999, pp. 45-223). Perry uses the term *structure* to refer to the "formal properties of the assumptions and expectancies a person holds at a given time in regard to the nature and origins of knowledge and value" and still "appropriately extend beyond the purely cognitive assumption to those forms of action, thought, feeling, purpose, and care that are congruent with the assumption and incongruent with any other" (Perry, 1999, pp. 47-48).

Seeking to identify these structures in the interview responses wherein the students were understood to be "making sense" of their world, Perry deciphered from each story "(a) the structure of the earlier expectancies which had proved inadequate, (b) the structure of the new interpretation which resolved the incongruity, and (c) the transitional process by which the new structure was created" (Perry, 1999, p. 47). Reading between the lines of these instances, we re-encounter the twin pillars of

cognitive development upon which Batson, et al.'s model of creativity was built. In Kegan's adaptation of Piaget's terms, these are "*assimilation* [italics added] of new experience to the old 'grammar' and the *accommodation* [italics added] of the old grammar to new experience. This "adaptive conversation . . . [of] differentiation and reintegration" is the activity of "equilibration" (1982, pp. 43-44). Kegan borrows the description of a "'dialectic of limit and possibility.' Were we 'all limit' (all 'assimilation'), there would be no hope; 'all possibility' (all 'accommodation'), no need of it" (1982, p. 45). The epistemological challenge of this "evolutionary truce"(p. 44) is captured in Perry's insightful summary: "the interpretation of life . . . is a creative activity . . . [and the] scheme chronicles the course of an aesthetic yearning to apprehend a certain kind of truth: the truth of the limits of man's certainty" (1999, p. 63).

Unfortunately, Perry's years of research never produced a measure of his developmental positions that would make the scheme available beyond the lengthy and costly interview process (Evans, et al., 1998, p. 133). Even the Measure of Intellectual Development (MID) developed by Knefelkamp (1974) and refined by Widick (1975) and the Measure of Epistemological Reflection (MER) (Baxter Magolda and Porterfield, 1985), though based on the first five of Perry's stages, still involved rather abstruse essays (cited in Evans, et al., pp. 133-134). The Scale of Intellectual Development (SID) (Erwin, 1981, 1983) recorded recognition tasks through Likert scale responses which were categorized into Dualism, Relativism, Commitment and Empathy (cited in Evans, et al., 1998, p. 134). Similarly, a brief Adherence scale (Ryan, 1984) measured the relative presence of Dualism and Relativism in an individual's thinking (cited in Desimpelaere, et al., 1999). The Attitudes About Reality scale (AAR) was later developed "to measure the

implicit causal assumptions about the relationship between people and the social or physical context in which they live" and is depicted on a continuum from Logical-Positivism to Social-Constructivism (Desimpelarere, et al., 1999). Additionally, the Scale of Adult Intellectual Development (SAID) was developed based on a reflective-judgments model that describes seven qualitatively different, while sequentially and hierarchically ordered sets of epistemic presuppositions. Each higher level of this epistemic-cognition "demands more complex and more effective forms of justification" (cited in Desimpelaere, et al., 1999, p. 127). The SAID has also been examined in comparison with other psycho-epistemic concepts (Martin, Silva, Newman, and Thayer 1994; cited in Desimpelaere, et al., 1999) and was found to yield "three underlying and overlapping developmentally related epistemic strategies: Absolutism, Relativism, and Evaluativism" (Desimpelaere, et al., 1999, p. 127).

Although it is a psychometric questionnaire for personality, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) has been included in this list of relevant measures because of the suggested connection between certain personality types (as situated on four bi-polar scales: Introversion/Extraversion, Sensation/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling, Judgement/Perception) and some "cognitive and epistemological variables like Flexibility, Field-Dependence/Independence, Rationalism/Empiricism, and Tolerance for Ambiguity" (Desimpelaere, et al., 1999, p. 127). In like manner, Moore's Learning Environment Preferences Measure (LEP) (1989) identified students' view of knowledge, the role of the instructor and students, ideal learning atmosphere and role of evaluation; responses were shown to correspond to stages 2 through 5 of Perry's scheme (Evans et al., 1998, p. 135).

These attempts to operationalize the concept of psycho-epistemology have given rise to differing speculations as to the nature, number and nomenclature of the involved dimensions (Desimpelaere, et al., 1999). It is not necessary to review all these variations; suffice it to say that "investigators [had] yet to integrate available assessment data, a lack that has resulted in a proliferation of minimally developed inventories potentially measuring redundant styles" (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994). Actually, the purpose of the article in which these researchers identify this gap was to conduct a factor analysis of the prominent inventories which would eventually "synthesize and cohere the efforts of previous researchers [in the] development of a single, comprehensive assessment device" (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994).

Through several phases of validation and reduction, this eclectic scale was made manageable enough for preliminary testing to take place. In their own words, Wilkinson & Migotsky's "goal of [their] investigation was to distill a meaningful set of factors using seven epistemological scales drawn from five existing inventories"[14] (1994). From this analysis, they found that the meanings (behind the labels) of some of the scales' components overlapped, thus allowing for all of the dimensions discussed above to be organized into three general categories. For example, the Dualism (SID) and Logical Positivism (AAR) scales would comprise *Factor 1* which describes a person who "likely believes that every event is caused and that these causal agents exist as facts to be learned, . . . has a 'what you see is what you get' attitude, [and shows] less interest in the context and rationale of information" (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994, p.511). *Factor 2* incorporated the Rationalism (SID), Empiricism (PEP), and Thinking (FT) scales and

[14] See Table 2 for a glimpse at some of the major dimensions that have been identified by these efforts.

describes a person who is "likely to stress systematic processes in knowledge acquisition, being primarily concerned with the process of how knowledge is acquired rather than with the end product" (p.511-512). The third statistically significant factor was captured predominantly by the Relativism (SID) and partly by the Metaphorism (PEP) scales. Individuals with this orientation are "likely to be 'cynical doubters,' who assert that nothing is truly known and that so-called facts are ever changing" (p. 512).

The compilers of this data then assigned labels for each grouping by drawing from philosophically derived descriptors. *Factors 1,2,* and *3* were respectively termed *Naïve Realism* (because of how someone with this belief system would "straightforwardly and simply represent information"), *Logical Inquiry* (given the person's "attention to methodology"), and *Skeptical Subjectivism* (on account of the individual's likelihood to favor an "intuitive, how-it-feels approach to knowledge and to eschew the scientific method and the notion that facts exist") (pp.511-512).

Desiring to consummate Wilkinson's extensive factor analysis and realize the stated goal of his effort, Desimpelaere, Sulas, Duriez and Hutsebaut (1999) have made the first attempt at developing such a "single, comprehensive measuring device" with hopes of presenting "the broadest possible view of psycho-epistemology" (p. 132). They have relied primarily on Wilkinson & Migotsky's factors, pulling from the highest-loading items and complementing them with a few additional items from other psycho-epistemological inventories (i.e. the AAR, the Adherence Scale, the PEP, and the MBTI). One of their criticisms of Wilkinson & Migotsky's construct is that *commitment* as Perry conceived is altogether neglected. Desimpelaere et al. maintain the possibility of a personal epistemology (i.e. one that is based on "personal choices and less influence from

authority") that provides an alternative to the skepticism that had been exclusively associated with subjectivism and relativism. Therefore, they formulated (and included here in this scale) some items from Perry's interviews that supposedly reflected this *personal commitment* (Desimpelaere, et al., 1999). With this fuller picture available, Desimpelaere et al. conducted their research according to the subdivisions of *naïve realism, logical inquiry, skeptical subjectivism,* and *personal commitment.* Afterwards, they ran a factor analysis on the items and found the three dominant factors to align more closely with Perry's original distinctions. Hence the return to his labels, which considers the basic styles in terms of *Dualism* (characterized by a "preference for unambiguity. Knowledge consists of absolutes and can only be guaranteed by authority;" *Relativism* ("characterized by the fact that knowledge is context-dependent and there are no absolutes;") and *Commitment* ("characterized by items capturing more than simple relativism: Although there are no absolutes, choices are made and responsibility is important") (1999, p. 133). Both sets of factors have been used in this study to conduct initial research for the purpose of determining and verifying optimal reliability.

***Developmental Concerns:** Sea-worthiness*

This return to Perry's work is significant, not only for the value of his categories and labels, but also for the concept of development embedded therein. In fact, "a core quality of epistemological style models is how the styles are explained as either developmental phenomena (Perry, 1981) or nondevelopmental preferences (Royce & Mos, 1980)" (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994, pp. 512-513). In the latter approach, individuals may prefer multiple styles to varying degrees whereas in the former, change

of styles occurs in a specific sequence so that at any given time, a single epistemological perspective is adopted (p. 513). This developmental possibility is inherent in the original, general philosophical concept of epistemology, which is put forth as the study of

> . . . our right to the beliefs we have. . . . We start from what we might call our cognitive stances, and ask whether we do well to have those stances. Cognitive stances include both our beliefs and (what we take to be) our knowings; and in another dimension they include our attitudes towards the various strategies and methods we use to get new beliefs and filter out old ones, as well as the products of those strategies and methods. Epistemology, on this showing, is explicitly *normative*; it is concerned with whether we have acted well or badly (responsibly or irresponsibly) in forming the beliefs we have.
>
> In pursuing this inquiry, we do not, of course, ask only about the beliefs and strategies we find ourselves with at the beginning. We also ask whether there are not others which we would do better to have, and whether there are not others which we should have if we have these ones to start off with. The hope is to end up with a full account of how a responsible cognitive agent should behave, with some assurance that we do no fall too far short of that ideal (Dancy, 1995, p. 245).

Beyond this ordinary epistemological concern for the possibilities of knowledge and improvement of the knowledge factory, "genetic epistemology" in particular, is interested in how the *acquisition and growth* [italics added] of knowledge is possible (Hamlyn, 1995, p. 242).

Development is thus implied by the teleological connotations that underlie the prescribed refinement and pursuit of justification of one's beliefs and thoughts; these

hints of maturation in the epistemological domain trickle down into more specific applications of this broad notion, particularly in the work of William Perry. As a biological metaphor, development "consists of an orderly progress in which more complex forms are created by the differentiation and reintegration of earlier, simple forms (Werner, 1948; Witkin et al., 1962)" (cited in Perry 1999, pp. 48-49). Yet, when applied to various aspects of the sphere of human development (e.g. perceptual, intellectual, social, emotional, etc.), the language of "growth" suggests, "it is *better* to grow than to arrest growth or to regress" (p. 48). Perry overtly recognizes the value-laden nature of "any exposition of a presumably maturational development" in this sense, yet in the end embraces such value judgements as appropriate and unavoidable for a scheme concerned with "moral" development (pp.44-45).

Indeed, these categories of development, be they specified as cognitive, intellectual and epistemological, or ethical, moral and religious, involve inherent valuative implications regarding the legitimacy or success of the culminating phases of the scheme. In this case, Perry's schematic teleology taps the existential dimension to describe people's tendency to meaningfully interpret their experiences[15] and thus "make sense." "The 'meaning' of experience consists of some sort of orderliness found in it, and the nature of this orderliness in a given person's experience can often be deduced by . . . the formal properties of the assumptions and expectancies [he/she] holds at a given time in regard to the nature and origins of knowledge and value" which he calls "structures" (pp.45-48). He argues that these structures have been observed to comprise relatively stable and sequential stages of growth (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994, p. 513),

where "the final structures of [the] scheme express an *optimally congruent and responsible address to the present state of man's predicament* [italics added]" (Perry, p.50).[16]

It is in these latter stages where one is able to balance "tentativeness and wholeheartedness, . . . contemplative awareness and action, . . . the courage to be as oneself and the courage to be as a part [of the larger community]" (Perry, pp. 178-181). Furthermore, Perry contends that the committed individual enjoys an "integrity of purpose . . . with freedom from old external constraints . . . [and] a realization of the complexity of growth . . . [that] demands a capacity to tolerate paradox in the midst of responsible action" (pp. 181-184). Thus, the elevated tasks and flexible postures that are inherent in these more advanced instances of *being* suggest the incorporation of more progressive ways of *becoming*.

Perry's SID (the original source of the factors to be used for this variable) does, in fact, maintain a description of this developmental nature; however, the presentation of data from the subsequent factor analyses (i.e. Desempelaere, et al., 1999 and Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994) pursues no such conclusion, thus assuming them to be relatively "stable, enduring dispositions rather than developmental phenomena" (Wilkinson & Migotsky, 1994, p. 513). While the sheer diversity of possible styles makes unreasonable any final claim on a simple developmentalism, resignation to unilateral preferences seems similarly premature in the light of the intuitive confluence of Perry's

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[15] For further discussion regarding man's meaning making, see Hood, et al, 1996, pp. 1-43; Chapter 1: The Psychological Nature and Function of Religion.

[16] For further evidence of the developmental nature of epistemology, see Schommer-Aikins, 2002; Pillow, 1999.

epistemology and Allport's religiosity. Herein lies the research problem: while the conceptual link between epistemological styles and developmental stages is noteworthy when seen in the light of religious maturity, there is not yet sufficient empirical data to confirm this developmental nature nor this connection with religious maturity.

STUDY 1

The purpose of this study is to align epistemological styles (of debatable developmental complexion heretofore) with varying degrees of religious maturity which do, as the name of the variable implies, involve certain adaptive influences.[17] Therefore, any relationship between the two variables that is found in this study could provide valuable insight for the interaction between religious maturity and psycho-epistemological styles as well as to how each scale aligns along a developmental spectrum. Based on the above analysis of each variable, the following relationships were anticipated:

Research Hypotheses:

(1) A positive correlation will exist between Religious Maturity *and the* Committed *psycho*-epistemological *style.*

(2) A negative correlation will exist between Religious Maturity *and the* Dualism *psycho-epistemological style.*

[17] See the Epilogue: The Dilemma and Duty of Religious Maturity?

METHOD

INSTRUMENTS

Religious Maturity Given its value as the most recent and comprehensive measure that incorporates all relevant factors researched heretofore, while preserving relative brevity, the RM-3 was used in this project to measure religious maturity. This 34-item scale is arranged in a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). As mentioned earlier, the scale can be separated into four basically independent dimensions: *Master Motive, Complexity of Beliefs, Openness,* and *Heuristic Quality* (Leak, 2002, p. 536). Each of these account for eight of the total number of items, leaving the remaining two as fillers.

Psycho-epistemology To measure this variable, the Psycho-Epistemology Scale (PES) (Desimpelaere, et al.,1999) was used. Once all the factors had been compiled by Desimpelaere and others, this exploratory scale was translated into Dutch to be used in their home country of Netherlands. Although their research report was published in English in the International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, the actual scale has remained available only in Dutch. Through the work of a professional translator and follow-up work by an independent editor, the current study has made this questionnaire available in English for the first time. The edited translation was then reviewed by the researchers to assess accuracy of language as well as fluidity of thought. If the identity of the original scale items were able to be determined, they were checked against the primary source from which they were originally extracted. When a

discrepancy was discovered (as in the case of items 4,7,10,11,15 & 16), the sentence was changed to match the original scale item. In the case of item 21, a minor grammatical adjustment was made to improve the flow of the sentence. The 32 items are scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*complete disagreement*) to 7 (*complete agreement*). This scale can be subdivided into independent scales of either the four styles *(Naïve Realism, Logical Inquiry. Skeptical Subjectivism,* and *Commitment*), or the adjusted three styles (*Dualism, Relativism, and Commitment*).

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for this study were drawn from the student body of East Texas Baptist University. Eighty five students (29 Freshmen, 20 Sophomores, 21 Juniors, and 15 Seniors) completed the survey. Of this group of students, there was one 17-year-old, two 18-year-olds, twenty-eight 19-year-olds, twenty 20-year-olds, twelve 21-year-olds, fifteen 22-year-olds, five 23-year-olds, one 31-year-old, and one 42-year-old. The participants represented a wide variety of academic majors (including Psychology, Biology, Religion, Chemistry, History, Mathematics, Nursing, Business, Kinesiology, and Education).

RESULTS

Religious Maturity

A Pearson correlation addressed the relationship between *Religious Maturity* (M = 3.55, SD = 0.35) and Desimpelaere, et al's original three psycho-epistemological styles: *Naïve Realism* (M = 3.84, SD = 0.68), *Logical Inquiry* (M = 4.49, SD = 0.53), and

Skeptical Subjectivism ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.67$). In all three cases, the correlations were found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .01 [$r(83) = -.314$, $p<.002$, $r(83) = .252$, $p<.01$, and $r(83) = .374$, $p<.001$ respectively]. Regarding *Religious Maturity,* this indicates a strong negative relationship with *Naïve Realism*, and a strong positive relationship with *Logical Inquiry* and *Skeptical Subjectivism*. When religious maturity was then correlated with the revised psycho-epistemological styles (viz., *Dualism, Relativism*, and *Commitment*), its relation to *Relativism* ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.50$) alone was found to be statistically significant at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .304$, $p<.002$, indicating a strong positive correlation.

Psycho-Epistemological Styles

In addition to its correlation with *Religious Maturity*, *Naïve Realism* was shown by a Pearson correlation to have a statistically significant positive relationship with its revised counterpart *Dualism* ($M =4.24$, $SD=0.39$) at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) =.466$, $p<.001$ as well as a statistically significant negative relationship with *Skeptical Subjectivism* at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = -.472$, $p<.001$. *Skeptical Subjectivism* was also shown to have a statistically significant positive relationship with its revised counterpart *Relativism* ($M =4.04$, $SD=0.50$) at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) =.642$, $p<.001$.

Logical Inquiry had a rather broad and versatile correlative tendency as it was shown by a Pearson test to have a statistically significant positive relationship with *Religious Maturity* at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) =.252$, $p<.01$, with *Skeptical Subjectivism* at an alpha level of .05, $r(83) =.206$, $p<.029$, with *Personal Commitment* ($M =5.05$, $SD=0.79$) at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) =.264$, $p<.007$, with *Dualism* at an alpha

level of .01, $r(83) = .470$, $p < .001$, with *Relativism* at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .536$, $p < .001$, and nearly with *Commitment* ($M = 5.05$, $SD = 0.78$), $r(83) = .179$, $p < .051$.

Although there was no relationship between *Personal Commitment* and the composite score of *Religious Maturity,* relationships did occur between the former and three out of four components of the latter. A Pearson correlation showed there to be a statistically significant positive relationship between *Personal Commitment* and *Heuristic Quality* ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.61$) at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .265$, $p < .007$ and a statistically significant negative relationship with *Openness* ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.73$) at an alpha level of .05, $r(83) = -.229$, $p < .017$ and *Complexity of Beliefs* ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 0.57$) at an alpha level of .05, $r(83) = -.211$, $p < .026$. When compared to the other three original styles, only a relationship with *Logical Inquiry* occurred (cited earlier); however, when *Personal Commitment* was lined up against the revised categories, a statistically significant positive relationship existed with each of *Dualism, Relativism,* and *Commitment* [at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .255$, $p < .009$, at an alpha level of .05, $r(83) = .236$, $p < .015$, and at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .848$, $p < .001$, respectively].

The revised style of *Commitment* paralleled its predecessor against the *Religious Maturity* factors: a Pearson correlation showed there to be a statistically significant positive relationship between *Commitment* and *Heuristic Quality* at an alpha level of .05, $r(83) = .223$, $p < .021$ and a statistically significant negative relationship with *Openness* at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = -.268$, $p < .007$ and *Complexity of Beliefs* at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = -.250$, $p < .011$. Also, *Commitment* correlated positively with *Naïve Realism*

[at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .258$, $p<.009$] as well as *Dualism* [at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .266$, $p<.007$].

Age

Additionally, *Religious Maturity* was found by a Pearson correlation to be statistically significantly related to *Age* ($M = 20.65$, $SD = 2.95$) at an alpha level of .01, $r(83) = .398$, $p<.05$, indicating a strong positive relationship between them.

To further elucidate the relationship between age and these variables, a one-way between-subjects analysis of variance compared the mean assessment of *Religious Maturity* and three designated age groups: *17-19 year olds, 20-22 year olds* and *23 years and older*. At an alpha level of .05, this comparison was found to be statistically significant, $F(2,82) = 5.80$, $p<.05$; the strength of the relationship, as indexed by eta^2, was .12. A Tukey HSD test indicated the mean for *Religious Maturity* was significantly less for *17-19 year olds* ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.26$) than for *20-22 year olds* ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 0.36$); likewise, it was significantly less *for 20-22 year olds* than for *23 year olds and older* ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.42$).

Finally, another one-way between-subjects analysis of variance compared the mean assessment of psycho-epistemological styles with the three age groups. At an alpha level of .05, the test for *Naïve Realism* was found to be statistically significant, $F(2,82) = 5.41$, $p<.05$; the strength of the relationship, as indexed by eta^2, was .12. A Tukey HSD test indicated the mean for *Naïve Realism* was significantly more for *17-19 year olds* ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 0.67$) than *for 20-22 year olds* ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 0.65$). The test for *Skeptical*

Subjectivism was likewise significant, finding that the mean for *20-22 year olds* (M = 4.31, SD = 0.70) was more than that of *the 17-19 year olds* (M = 3.84, SD = 0.57).

DISCUSSION

Religiosity has been recognized to be that "dynamic organization of cognitive-affective-conative factors" (Strunk, 1965, p. 144) which, in its more mature states enjoys a coherence of beliefs, congruence with spiritual realities and consistency of behavior. Benefiting from decades of exploring the nature and "nutrients" of a maturing way of being religious, Gary Leak (2002) has developed what is now the third version of a religious maturity index (RM-3). Relying heavily on Batson and others' (1991) research on the Quest Scale (Q) and the Intrinsic Religiosity Scale (IR), Leak has attempted to rectify the problematic division of what was originally (in Gordon Allport's theorizing (1950)), a naturally unified conception (Leak & Fish, 1999). In other words, the notions of quest (with its appreciation of the complexity of existential questions, tolerance of doubt and maintenance of a changeable stance toward religious conviction (Burris, p.138)) and the intrinsic religious orientation (which enjoys a nonmundane religion-derived, self-denying motivation toward seeing religion as ultimate instead of instrumental, central instead of peripheral, and master instead of servant (Burris, p. 144)) have been viewed and tested as uniplanarly independent dimensions heretofore. However, the presently reported research seeks to reunify the complementary components into a spherically holistic construct that would encapsulate the strengths of both dimensions. To the extent that a scale could accomplish such a fusion, it would present a complete picture of mature religion.

Running parallel to this development is the concept of psycho-epistemological styles – the idea that there are identifiable tendencies of individuals to cognitively order and perceptually organize the world around them. In the earlier formations of this theory, it was observed that, not only could individuals be characterized by the prominence of one style over another, but the transition from one style to another followed a recognizable pattern (Perry, 1999). However, the three decades which followed saw the ensuing research level any developmental implications of these stages and reinterpreted them as merely preferential styles.

At the point of convergence in this paper, the cognitive criteria for psycho-epistemological styles can be seen to compare with and possibly contribute to the formation of the concept of religious maturity. The literature reviewed in this paper does indeed indicate the theoretical feasibility and likelihood that the qualities which are esteemed as virtuous within a more mature religiosity would necessarily be those that encompass the epistemological styles which reflect a movement beyond simple Dualism and through Relativism. Specifically, the motif is a greater incorporation of flexibility, complexity, responsibility, and serenity. What Perry describes as "personal commitment in a relative world" (p. 38) and what Leak describes as "religious commitment without dogmatism or inflexibility" (1999, p. 100) are prima facie similar; and as a more elaborative comparison would clarify, are truly and remarkably congruent concepts. In fact, it was hypothesized that the spectrum of psycho-epistemological styles would line up (with age) in Perry's originally observed hierarchy, moving from Naïve Realism (or Dualism) through Skeptical Subjectivism (or Relativism) to Personal Commitment (or Commitment). It was further predicted that Religious Maturity would overlay this

schema in such a way that a negative correlation would occur with the dualistic styles and a positive correlation would occur with greater relativism and higher still with the commitment.

In order to graduate the variable of Religious Maturity, we compared its means with the mean ages of our subjects.[18] A positive relationship surfaced between these two factors: as Age increased from the 17-19 year old group to the 20-22 year old group, Religious Maturity increased. To compare psycho-epistemology across the same template, individuals' mean score for each style was compared and it was observed that the younger age group was more associated with dualistic thinking while the older group showed more relativistic influences.

Unfortunately, neither of the Committed sub-scales emerged as meaningful factors or as being significantly correlated with any other variable. Foregoing momentarily any speculative accounting for the seeming invalidity of those factors, the general, yet significant progression from dualism to relativism suffices as an explanatory paradigm for our developmental hypotheses. In summary, then, the data indicate that the younger person (17-19 years old) espouses a psycho-epistemological style more influenced by dualism and scores lower on Religious Maturity while the older (20-22 years old) college students' psycho-epistemological style is more typically relativistic in nature and would be expected to score higher in Religious Maturity.

[18] Age is admittedly an insufficient gauge of development, but it should nevertheless suffice as a preliminary assumption and intimation of basic development.

STUDY 2

The literature review in Study 1 revealed how Religious Maturity and Psycho-Epistemology run parallel to each other. While positions of maturation regarding the former have not been differentiated, discussion of the latter has resulted in the recognition of dominant trends of influence and can be referenced in terms of distinguishable "styles." Despite this difference between a fluid spectrum and a demarcated one (i.e. a *gradual* progression on the one hand and a *graduated* one on the other[19]), a parallel pattern of conceptual concern is nevertheless apparent (see Figure 3). Furthermore, epistemology and its individualized versions – being the more general concept – could more helpfully be depicted as a field in which any more particular instance (in this case "religious maturity") is understood as flowing "with (or within) the grain" (see Figure 4). Accordingly, it is here implied that these psycho-epistemological styles provide rather broad interpretive frameworks by which many dimensions of one's life (including the religious) are characterized.[20]

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[19] Bear in mind, comment on the nature of this developmental phenomenon--that is, how such progression actually occurs--is beyond the scope of the current inquiry. The researchers speculate that the distinction between "gradual" and "graduated" would be an artificial one and should be superseded by a more elaborate model of growth (a la Kegan's (1982) helix of transformation). In this sense, all development could be described as gradual; yet for the immediate context, this term and its intended contrast are used as mere introductory descriptors.

[20] The diagonal shading of the field in Figure 4 represents a process of development that is not only "gradual" (i.e., not uniformly incremental) but varied (i.e., not simply linear, from right to left). This means that one person could feasibly function simultaneously under the influence of various styles to varying degrees of transitional overlap, depending on the issue. Rather than Hulmet Reich's distinction between "hard" and "soft" stages (quoted in Hood, et al., 1996, pp. 63-64), this model would more likely land somewhere between Batson et al.'s independent/unrelated dimensions and sequential types (1993, pp. 181-183). One might function under the dominance of one style for now, yet experience a shift in this influence to other styles as one "grows up," all the while tolerating any residual effects (hopefully those beneficial qualities) of eclipsed epistemic positions. Accordingly, the evolution of variative

Based on this arrangement, it becomes understandable why the elements of the earlier epistemologies were explained as emulous of the immature religious disposition. More elucidatory still is the congruence between the more highly developed intellectual patterns of the later epistemological styles and those of the more mature religious sentiments. Recall that in Gordon Allport's initial presentation of his characterological paradigm, the three attributes of the mature individual which represented the "primary avenues of development" (the expanding self, self-objectification and self-unification) were also seen in Allport's construction of the mature religious sentiment which was "(1) well differentiated; (2) dynamic in character in spite of its derivative nature; (3) productive of a consistent morality; (4) comprehensive; (5) integral; and (6) fundamentally heuristic" (Allport, 1950, p.57).

Can not these same six factors function as the very pegs on which William Perry hangs his assessment of the young adult through the latter third of his journey? Consider the following excerpt from Perry's description of just such a person who has emerged into the stages of Commitment.

> The assumption is established that [his] knowing and valuing are relative in time and circumstance, and that in such a world [he] is faced with the responsibility for choice and affirmation in his life. The drama of development now centers on this theme of responsibility. The hero makes his first definition of himself by some engagement undertaken at his own risk. Next he realizes in actual experience the implications of his initial Commitments. Then, as he expands the arc of his

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epistemological patterns (with their relative presence or absence of the diverse styles) flows with the developmental current to find greater fulfillment (i.e. maturity) in the *Commitment*-dominant set-up.

> engagements and pushes forward in the impingements and unfoldings of experience, he discovers that he has undertaken not a finite set of decisions but a way of life. . . . Internally he experiences a relief in settled purpose, and at the same time he feels strongly *defined by* the external forms typifying the role he has chosen . . . [He] has developed an experience of "who he is" in his Commitments both in their content and in his style of living them. At the same time that his experience has "settled" him, it has left him aware that, to a degree that is partly his own to determine and partly in the hands of fate, he is to be forever on the move. His past decisions may have settled to some degree what he is doing, what he may do, and what he can never do; but how he does it emerges from himself in the particulars of each moment. He will be far too busy, of course, to contemplate each moment in these terms, but the fact that he takes many of his responsibilities for granted does not reduce them for him. Indeed the very degree to which he will balance his emersion in action with times of contemplation will express in itself one of his Commitments to "the kind of person [he is]" (Perry, 1999, pp. 170-171).

Given this conspicuous linkage (and whatever of this relationship cannot be accounted for by common sense is surely completed by logic), the researchers' were confident that whatever the empirical research in Study 1 failed to show was due to error introduced at a point beyond the theoretical impetus. The background presentation is admittedly not exhaustive, nor is the demonstrated understanding complete; rather, what is intended by this charge is the justification for questioning the *construct* before jettisoning the *concept*. Furthermore, on account of the thorough validation and proven

reliability of the RM-3, the fault-finding task was focused on the PES, which, especially in regard to *Commitment*, was still in the embryonic stages of its establishment. While it is quite certain that what has been inferred about the connection between thinking and believing is but the tip of an amazingly complex and immense iceberg, the researcher must ensure the reliability of the patches of ice to which he does presently have access. Herein lies the goal for Study 2 (which is in essence a follow-up or continuation of Study 1): to reexamine the method for assessing psycho-epistemological styles and *Commitment* in particular.

First of all, the susceptibility to error inherent in the translation process which this scale underwent must be taken into account. Having acquired the PES in its original draft language of Dutch, then having it translated and edited in English, the researchers faced from the beginning a language barrier to the optimal presentation of the scale items. However, they felt that this obstacle had been sufficiently overcome and that adequate reflection of the original authors' intent in our final wording of the statements was accomplished. Be that as it may, the chief challenge remained unmet: that of determining whether those original words were the most accurate and appropriate for the given task. This calls into question not only the words the drafter chose to use, but the format for those wordings as well.

Admittedly, Perry's (1999) concept of Personal Commitment (drafted in 1968) and other positions of intellectual and ethical development (like any complex intra-psychic characterization) are optimally assessed through the extended one-on-one interview process. While this presents a challenge to the development of an abbreviated, valid and reliably objective measure, it does not necessarily preclude it. The researcher

who attempts such a recapitulation thus faces the difficult (but feasible) task of *capsulizing in the concrete an instance or expression of the abstract.* His goal is to develop scale items that are ideologically refined and that preserve the validity of the measure, yet at the same time are linguistically fluent and remain reliably tangible to most persons.

In the end (with less than satisfactory results in hand), Desimpelaere, et al. (1999) felt it "necessary to start with extensive interviews," admitting that it might be too ambitious to classify participants according to an epistemological profile because of the problem of operationalizing psycho-epistemological dimensions--especially for the factor "commitment." When they reached the foregone conclusion that "psycho-epistemology may well be impossible to capture fully, even in a good questionnaire . . .", they assume too much credit for the quality of their contribution in this one area. No doubt, the balance between completeness and conciseness is a fine one to maintain, but this was not accomplished in the scale items meant to measure Perry's climactic epistemological position of "commitment." Alas, the potential validity of that newborn construct appears to have been sacrificed prematurely on the altar of brevity.

Desimpelaere, et al. (1999) effectively captured the concepts of *Dualism* and *Relativism* in the 8-items of each of the respective scales; for in each of these cases, decades of previously published attempts were available for fine-tuning revision. What that team quite adeptly identified as the missing factor in psycho-epistemological measures theretofore was William Perry's (1999) notion of *Personal Commitment.* To incorporate this factor, they included 8 statements that supposedly reflected Perry's "commitment." These items had allegedly been "derived from the interviews with

students that Perry shows in his book . . . [which] are to be interpreted as commitments" (D. Hutsebaut, personal communication, August 13, 2002). Unfortunately, the selection of these statements was evidently arbitrary,[21] resulting in over-simplified phrases that would prove to be insufficient for articulating the complexities of that culminant stage.

For example, one of the suspect statements read "I feel at home in this world." While it is true that the committed individual experiences a sense of *settledness* in his/her life circumstances and a sense of *belonging* to his/her groups (Perry, 1999, p.181, 190), this is at best only one side of the coin. Such insufficiency is proven problematic when one considers that most anyone at virtually any stage of growth could identify with such a claim. Could not the student at very early stages (marked by dualism) also "feel at home in this world" on account of the comfortable environment provided by the hegemony of truth preserved in the heteronymous knowledge of the authorities? Could not even the students in the middle stages (marked by relativism) experience contentment with their ambivalent state (vis-à-vis the absence of the call from, or search for other-worldly realities) to a degree that, while probably intending something different than the authors original phrase, could nevertheless agree with the expression?

Rather, for this concept to accurately and exclusively reflect a phenomenon of Personal Commitment as Perry construed it, it would have to entail the complex balance between one's defined role and felt place within a community, while experiencing the feelings of loneliness that accompany the increasing responsibility for one's own decisions and beliefs. Such persons are exploring how to integrate the reality of being

[21] Two members of that team were unable to provide any rationale behind why these exact statements were chosen (D. Hutsebaut, personal communication, November 5, 2002; B. Duriez, personal communication, November 9, 2002).

defined by the relationships from which they emerged with the increasing freedom from external constraints (pp. 179-182). Indeed, almost every issue of one's life – by the time one gets to these latter stages of development – involves this complex integration: the *balancing of the paradoxical aspects of life's vicissitudes*. Some of these elements-in-tension, as Perry labels them, are "inclusiveness vs. intensity, . . . choice vs. external influence, . . . intrinsic values vs. external symbols, . . . certainty vs. doubt, . . . faith vs. external reasons, . . . gains in focus vs. loss in alternatives, . . . idealism vs. realism, . . . settledness vs. growth, . . . stability vs. flexibility, . . . confidence in identity vs. confusion, . . .dualism vs. relativism in choice, . . . own values vs. others' values, . . . certainty vs. doubt, . . . tolerance vs. contempt, . . . self-trust vs. self-doubt, . . . action vs. contemplation" (pp. 187-197).

While some of these pairs, as reflected in the student interviews, were indicative of a move from less of one to more of another, others emerged as an actual dilemma of fluctuating priority from one context to another. In any case, any measure of this maturation must be able to account for these concurrent characteristics without forsaking one for another; the example given failed to do just this. The eight statements selected by Desimpelaere, et al. altogether suffered this failure to capture and communicate the full range of complementary components; hence, the researchers felt that a more complete construction was needed before the theoretical baby is justifiably thrown out with the psychometric bathwater.

Pilot Test, the First

Upon examination of the dialectic issues involved in commitment, several of them appeared to take the form of a synthesis of two components: one that would seem to resonate with a more dualistic stance and another that would be more in tune with relativism. Yet when aspects of both are integrated into the whole of this transcendent stage, a gestalt phenomenon occurs whereby commitment is not the simple combination of dualism and relativism – in fact such would be logically impossible – but reflects something altogether greater. What is accomplished is a phase of growth wherein one is able to incorporate what is valuable from the dualist's perspective, filter it through a relativist's framework and emerge with a sense of *personal commitment to something real and meaningful in the midst of a pluralistic (or at least multiplistic) and complex world*. Note here, it is both the strictness of the purely (i.e. simplistically) dualistic worldview as well as the looseness of the thoroughly relativistic one that inhibits both from embracing the synthesized "committed" perspective.

Assuming the verity of this situation, the researchers found it conceivable to construct statements that would involve two major clauses: one representing the dualistic stance, the other representing the relativistic stance; yet the overall wording of the statement still allowing the full flow of the thought to represent the committed stance (see Figure 5). The hope was that through eight statements of this order, the complexity that is necessary for the agreement of the "committed" individual could be captured in a compound sentence. But, at the same time, this could hopefully provide an indication – albeit preliminary – of the epistemological leaning (viz. dualistic or relativistic) of those who would not quite comprehend the perspective that makes sense of holding both

components in reasonable balance. After the development of the eight statements based on Perry's discussion of the characteristics of Positions 7, 8 and 9, there were still some important factors of these stages that did not lend themselves to this "A-B-Whole" format. Therefore, a paragraph was also constructed that reflected the response of a student speaking from a "Commitment" position to which the participant would indicate the degree of his/her agreement on a 7-point Likert scale. The material for this addendum was essentially Perry's own words, translated to the 1st person and then put together in an intelligible paragraph.

This pilot test was distributed to ten individuals (of varying gender and classification). After each question, a space was included for participant comments on self-assessed comprehension of the concepts in the statement as well as an opportunity to provide their own suggestions for rewording any part of it. Regarding the paragraph, everyone (except the two who answered "neutral") at least "somewhat agreed." While the Likert scale response was a bit vague for trying to assess such a deep characterological quality, it was surmised that the core of the culpability came from the wording of the paragraph itself. After further review, it was realized that merely "personalizing" Perry's description of a "committed" student subjected the chain of ideas to artificiality and "choppiness." Furthermore, the sheer length of the thought may have exhausted the reader to a point of confused compliance – forcing a generalized recollection by the time they got to the end – which may have aided the paragraph's "agreeability." Before its inclusion in the survey, a complete syntactical overhaul was performed in which a paraphrase (in the dynamic equivalence tradition) of Perry's concept was used instead of a word-for-word rendering. While this did nothing to solve

any problem of length, the awkwardness of the linguistic fluidity was overcome by a more natural, conversational introspection. Regarding the statements, an analysis of the answers, as well as a consideration of the participant's comments for each, communicated the paramount need for revision and improvement of the scale; this warranted a follow-up pilot study to ensure that tools were within range of the researchers' intentions.

Pilot Test, the Second

All indications seemed to suggest the need for, not just a few grammatical editions, but a better format of statements altogether. The length of the two-part statement together with its juggling of seemingly disparate clauses confused the participants beyond their ability to answer honestly. However, the researchers were still convinced that somehow providing for the union of complementary concepts as well as the opportunity to select one of those concepts over another would provide the surest method for ascertaining "commitment" in particular and all three basic psycho-epistemological styles in general. The new format presented a topic that was phrased in each of the three mental postures (see Figure 6).

A total of eight items addressed various broad, theoretical outlooks (like the example in Figure 6); four additional items used similar distinctions of perspective to address specific social issues (viz. capital punishment, the "War on Terror," abortion, and homosexuality) in order to provide more practical instances of application for these epistemological frameworks. The fear was that, even with a refined presentation, the "commitment" item might elicit more agreement because it would stand-out as a "healthier balance" between the other two extremes. However, among the twenty

students to whom this second pilot test was distributed, the series of statements (save two) achieved a satisfactory level of diversity. The two statements in question averaged 90% identification with the "committed" item and thus underwent major revision. After some semantic tinkering in just a few other places, the survey was ready for the field. In its final form, the tool was labeled the *Psycho-Epistemological Style Indicator* (PESI).

METHOD

INSTRUMENTS

Primary Variables

Psycho-epistemology This study introduced the researcher's original *Psycho-Epistemological Style Indicator* (PESI)) with *Statements* (PESI-S) and *Paragraph* (PESI-P) subscales. The PESI-S includes 12 sets of three statements, each reflecting the dominant influence of one of the three basic psycho-epistemological styles: *Dualism, Relativism* or *Commitment.* The PESI-P presents a paragraph that embodies a position influenced by the *Commitment* style. Three sets of responses indicate the degree to which this paragraph describes the participant [version 1 (v.1)], the participant's readiness to identify with the paragraph [version 2 (v.2)], and the participant's agreement with the paragraph's outlook on "life, the world and the future" – with disagreement being described from either a dualistic or relativistic perspective [version 3 (v.3)]. In all 15 cases (12 sets of statements and 3 sets of responses), the participant simply chose the "one best answer."[22]

[22] See attached survey for complete instructions.

Religious Maturity RM-3 was used again to assess *Religious Maturity* in accordance with Gary Leak's (2002) compilation of the theories and measures employed heretofore. This 34-item scale is arranged in a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Secondary Variables[23]

Empathy To measure empathy, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) was used. The IRI includes the *Perspective Taking* (PT), *Fantasy* (F), *Empathic Concern* (EC), and *Personal Distress* (PD) subscales, each including 7 Likert scale items ranging from 0 ("Does not describe me well") to 4 ("Does describe me well").

Helpfulness Each participant was given a narrated scenario (less than 400 words) to which they were asked to provide a written response as to how they would handle what was presented as an ethical dilemma.

Administration The combined 93 items (plus the open-ended response) together with the biographical information items were all computerized. The participation occurred in three waves (Tuesday at 7:00 p.m., and 7:45 p.m.; and again on Thursday at 7:00 p.m.) so as to make use of a computer classroom at the students' university.

[23] The secondary variables in Study 2 are those researched by this researcher's collaborator; while the thorough review and analysis of these variables lie in his domain, their significance to the project at hand remain within the scope--albeit the periphery--of my project. These variables will be discussed in the Epilogue, but for a more complete understanding of the nature of these factors, the reader should refer to Derek Hatch's (2003) unpublished paper.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for this study were drawn from the student body of East Texas Baptist University. A total of 56 students (17 males, 39 females) volunteered from a variety of upper and lower-level classes (20 Freshmen, 16 Sophomores, 11 Juniors and 9 Seniors). The participants once again represented a wide variety of academic majors (eg. Behavioral Sciences, Theological Studies/Ministry, Business, Education, Nursing, Mathematics/Computer Science, etc.).

RESULTS

INTERNAL VALIDITY

PESI-S

First, the researchers were interested in determining if they had achieved continuity between the previous measure (PES) and their own (PESI). A Spearman rank-order correlation addressed the relationship between rank scores for the *Dualism* items of the PESI-S and the items of the *Dualism* factor of the PES for the 56 participants. For an alpha level of .05, the observed correlation was found to be statistically significant, r (56) = .253, p <.03, suggesting that as one's score on the older scale items increases, so does one's score on the new scale. This correlation held true for the *Relativism* items as well, r (56) = .290, p <.015.

It was considered necessary to determine if the new *Commitment* items could at least be distinguished according to content from either of the two other styles. Indeed, for an alpha level of .05, the observed correlation between *Commitment* (PESI-S) and *Dualism* (PESI-S) was found to be statistically significantly negative, r (56) = -.668,

p <.001, as was its correlations with *Relativism* (PESI-S), r (56) = -.356, p <.004. This indicates that whatever the *Commitment* items on the new scale measure, it is something quite different from either *Dualism* or *Relativism*. The fear of a tendency to "over-commit" in the paragraph, was realized to some extent with the statements. On the whole, more people selected *Commitment* items than *Dualism* or *Relativism* [*M*=5.77, *SD*=1.72; *M*=3.75, *SD*=1.71; *M*=2.46, *SD*=1.36, respectively].

Interestingly, there were no significant relationships between any of the PESI-S(issue) and the PESI-S(general) items.

PESI-P

Regarding PESI-P, neither of the response spectrums correlated significantly with any of the PESI-S styles. A possible explanation for this is the general tendency among respondents to agree/identify with the paragraph [Response category 1: 75% of participants said "This REALLY describes me well" or "This somewhat describes me well;" Response category 2: only 12.5% of the participants said they "can't imagine ever identifying with this statement . . ."; Response category 3: 67.9% of the participants claimed to "identify with what this statement says about life, the world, and the future."]. In any case, the continuity of the scales (how versions 1,2, and 3 scored against each other) is verified by the consistency of participant responses. A Spearman rank-order correlation addressed the relationship between rank scores for the three versions of the scale; for an alpha level of .05, the observed correlation between versions 1 & 2, 2 & 3, and 1 & 3 were respectively: r (56) = .766, p <.001; r (56) = .531, p <.001; r (56) = .521, p <.001.

EXTERNAL VALIDITY

Regarding *Religious Maturity*, no relationship was observed with *Relativism,* however a Spearman rank-order test showed a statistically significant negative correlation with *Dualism* at an alpha level of .05, r (56) = -.238, p <.039. There was a positive correlation, though non-significant, between *Religious Maturity* and *Commitment* [r (56) = .200, p <.069]. The primary contributor to this relationship seemed to be *the Heuristic* component (Factor IV) of RM-3 as it alone correlated—rather strongly--with *Dualism* and *Commitment* [r (56) = -.413, p <.001; r (56) = .343, p <.005, respectively]. To gain further insight into the relationship between RM-3 and PESI-S, a series of Spearman rank-order tests were conducted between the two composite scores. To obtain a composite score for PESI-S that reflected ordinal significance pertaining to the three styles under investigation, all six possible permutations were tested where the composite score equaled the sum of each participant's responses for the three styles – each having been assigned a value of 3, 2 or 1. As predicted, of the six possible orderings, only the one which placed *Commitment* at peak, followed by *Relativism* and finally *Dualism* at base emerged significantly correlated with *Religious Maturity*, at an alpha level of .05, r (56) = .261, p <.026. Implied in this exclusive significance is that an increase in religious maturity is only meaningfully compared to psycho-epistemological styles when they are viewed as progressing from *Dualism* through *Relativism* to *Commitment.*

There appeared to be no relationship between *Religious Maturity* and any of the responses to the paragraph (PES-P). To our satisfaction, results from Study One were verified as scores on RM-3 correlated negatively with PES *Dualism*, r (56) = -.418, p <.001; and positively with PES *Relativism*, r (56) = .430, p <.001.

DISCUSSION

Preliminary satisfaction in the results is available on account of the fact that the new measure of *Commitment* at least measures something substantially different from either *Dualism* or *Relativism*. This may be, in fact, the most one could hope for from statistical data at this point; since labeling of content is obviously not at the disposal of numerical communication, it is a welcome implication that the third category – whatever it proves to be - is distinguishable from the other two. The researchers were disappointed, yet admittedly not surprised (based on the pilot findings) to find the paragraph less then valid. Though the concepts expressed in it are important to the overall portrait of *Commitment,* the paragraph-response method (with its requirement of critical reading, expectation of introspection, and assumption of comprehension) seemed cumbersome and suspect from the beginning. Future attempts at constructing this scale should consider alternative internal validity checks.

The PESI seems vulnerable to participants' tendency to identify with the "commitment" elements. This may be due to somewhat of a therapeutic effect of the survey itself (where such a previously unconsidered perspective all of sudden seems tenable or even preferred from having simply been introduced and exposed to it). In fact, the label seems a bit loaded when one considers how "commitment" carries with it a virtuous connotation while "dualism" and "relativism" are neutral of value if not negatively associated with misunderstood philosophies. There also might be an attractiveness of the "balanced" view when seen in the immediate context of two extreme versions of the same statement. How to compensate for this trend without forfeiting the heretofore-unavailable benefits of having all three basic styles available in such

convenient proximity (i.e. within a brief tool) deserves attention in future revisions of this measure.

There is still hope for naming the distinct but disguised third category. There might even be substantial enough correlations with other variables to glean an insight into the nature of this "other" factor that assumes an intellectual posture similar to William Perry's *Commitment*. And while his research on this phenomenon of development through the college years has undoubtedly laid the foundation for the current study, the appropriateness of summarizing the latter stages of this growth as just "commitment" is doubtful. Of course, these stages do involve a sense of personal commitment, but it could be argued that in a general way, individuals at every stage of development and functioning within the other epistemological categories also operate with a sense of commitment to whatever their framework makes available to them.[24] Even if this is debatable, one cannot miss the fact that personal commitment is but a partial representation of what is involved in epistemological maturity with all of its intricate implications. As such, the researchers felt the need to more accurately articulate what is the core of such transcendent intellectual and ethical styles.

This new label should recognize that: the sense of settledness is void of stagnation, the derived identity is nevertheless dynamic, the set of reliable beliefs is admittedly not exhaustive, diverse perspectives (including those of authorities) are tolerated and respected but without the risk of absorption into them, a local purpose is set against a global context, contemplative action guards against complacency, and

[24] In fact, Perry himself felt the need to make this qualification when explaining his stages (pp. 37-39); this inferred admission of "commitment's" inadequacies seems to legitimize the liberty that is taken to determine an improved label.

responsible agency does not forsake one's humility of role. A word that describes this "stability in motion" wherein can be found all the necessary components that enable strength for today and still growth for tomorrow is "heuristic." This is "said of idea or method that is justified by its capacity to stimulate further discovery" (Wulff, 1997, p. 654). Such a firm, yet flexible capacity implicitly assumes an already existent organization by which *further* exploration is facilitated. For something to have such a capacity and for it to be meaningful, it must retain *explanatory value* of past stimuli while maintaining *assimilatory power* for future input.

The choosing of this word to capture the concept is bolstered by the *Heuristic Quality* (Factor IV) of *religious maturity* which emerged as the most correlative. Consider again that Leak's description of this (heuristic) notion as it pertains to matters of faith sees "beliefs tentatively held while working through doubt, but the person can act wholeheartedly even without absolute certainty" (2002, p. 536). Hence, the term *Heuristicism* was coined to summarize (or at least represent) all that is meant in this "epistemological style beyond." Given the veracity of this paper's presentation of the parallel principles that permeate the concepts of *Religious Maturity* and *Commitment,* the ordering of the three epistemological postures over against the maturation of one's religious frame of reference could prove to be theoretically significant. With that relationship, it can imaginably be stated that as one's psycho-epistemological style moves away from *Dualism* and beyond *Relativism* to incorporate what lies beyond them in *Heuristicism,* so does one's *Religious Maturity* increase.

This evolution of epistemological styles (dualism→relativism→heuristicism) actually runs parallel to a number of other such ameliorative patterns. For example, in

what are perhaps the most general terms which could be applied to this discussion, the following statement—traditionally attributed to Oliver Wendell Holmes—intimates the same cycle, "I don't give a fig for the simplicity of this side of complexity, but I would die for the simplicity on the other side" (quoted in Peck, 1997, p.13). Imagine how a movement from "simplism" through complexity to an altogether different simplicity "on the other side" mirrors the movement of the epistemological dance. There is a simplicity inherent in the dualistic world that is shattered by relativism, but *reintegrated into a holistic heuristicism which enjoys all the robustness afforded by the simple with all the resilience afforded by the complex.* Perry even claimed a similar process as one of the two major contributions of his study to the understanding of human development. He spoke of this "transformation which takes the form of exploiting a complex structure, first learned as a subordinate part of a more simplistically structured context, by transposing it to become the structures of a larger context which then subsumes the simpler structure that once was context" (1999, p. 233).

This same pattern is also evident in Wulff's attempt to "construct an heuristic model where he orders the different approaches in the psychology of religion" (Hutsebaut, 1996, p. 50), in which he organizes the scheme along the intersecting axes of literal-symbolic interpretation of religious language and inclusion-exclusion of transcendence (Wulff, 1997). He employs the language of Paul Ricoeur to describe a process whereby one's monolithic belief structure shall undergo a "moment of reduction" followed by a "process of restoration" if one is to experience a "second naiveté," which in Wulff's thinking is "the most mature way of believing and perhaps best adapted to

modern society and modern way of thinking" (Hutsebaut, 1996, p. 50). It is so, according to Hutsebaut, because at center is

> the fundamental process of symbolic thinking and the process of putting the given data into a historical context as a possibility of meaning, the fact that belief can only be possible with a dimension of quest, knowing that not everything is clear and that questions can be asked about religious belief contents and religious personal convictions (1996, p.53).[25]

That this brings us full circle in the harmonization of religiosity and metacognition should be obvious at this point as wave after wave of shared language reiteratively crashes upon the ideological shore. And what is to be gained from the readers' privileged "beach front" beholding of this rising tide of research?

Concluding Remarks

At the very least, there is something to be said for the initial pause one might take upon finishing this report. Indeed, the reader should look up to engage the vast seascape long enough to "think about his thinking about it:" he should be patient enough in considering the subject of epistemological styles to admit that he has one, and while perceptive enough to know that it has been shaped by his presupposing faith, also be

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[25] Interestingly, what Hutsebaut develops here as the post-critical belief scale to measure religious-cognitive styles, he (and the rest of Desimpelaere's team) later correlates with the proposed psycho-epistemological styles in the source article for this variable. They found that "Orthodoxy" correlated with Dualism while "Historical Relativism" (introduced above) correlated with Relativism and Commitment—a result they claimed to be expected since this religious-cognitive style incorporates both dimensions. "On the one hand, historical relativists are aware of the relative aspect in believing but on the other hand they have a certain 'commitment' which helps them to cope with these doubts" (Desimpelaere, et al., 1999, p. 136).

honest enough about his faith to notice that it—like everything else—has been influenced by his epistemology. If this were to take place, then there is hope for him to be able to enjoy this life more like the humble, adventurous surfer than the barnacled, beached driftwood.

One day, further tests might help specify the distinct roles of epistemology's postures and faith's frames of reference in the development of the whole person; but for now, the parameters of the current statistics insist on the inter-variable relationship's expression be one of mere correlation. The relationships that were able to be observed and documented in this study, even as correlative, still hold promise of significance—both statistical and theoretical. In fact, the preliminary empirical confirmation of the researchers' hypotheses should stimulate the continuing investigation into these matters from all perspectives philosophical, psychological, and theological. With increased understanding of this highly involved juxtaposition of characterological elements will come better insight into individual needs for growth as well as how to foster such individual growth within a community through leadership training, educational strategies, program development, and peer activities. Communities of faith will especially be interested in the benefit of a more informed perspective on the particularities of personal growth as these applications are translated into current church programs like discipleship training, Sunday school and evangelism. Furthermore, such a revolutionized outlook on how man engages his world could reform the entire enterprise of organized believers: from the rewording of doctrines and creeds, to the renovation of how they "do church" altogether. And this is just one instance of how these issues impact human behavior. In actuality, all of life's activities are affected by people's attitudes: " . . . action will involve

the attitudes of consciousness, characteristic points of view, [and] ways of thinking, which shape the subjective world. These shape the experience of motivation and the significance of any anticipated action and in that sense are the final determinants of action" (Shapiro, 1926, p. 9). In short, ideas have consequences. Hence, the importance and importunity of the message that, in the end, one's "lifestyle" is inextricably linked to one's "worldview" and warrants man's responsible introspection and pursuit of that "heuristicism" which makes growth possible, for ". . . as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, New King James version).

EPILOGUE: The Dilemma and Duty of Religious Maturity

Religious Maturity is a dilemma because of its supposed verbal obscurity; it is a duty because of its serviceable volitional opportunity. Hence, this epilogue shall submit to these two premises: 1) As an idea, it must be understood, but more importantly 2) As an ideal, Religious Maturity must be undertaken. Based on the first, it is crucial that this compound term not only be statistically valid as a variable (which has been demonstrated already (Leak, 2002, 1999)), but also logically valid as a concept. To address this concern, two questions will be answered: A) Is Religious Maturity really *maturity*? and B) Is Religious Maturity really *religious*? Returning to the second premise, a third question will be explored, C) Is Religious Maturity something that concerns the *Christian*? If it can be shown that one is justified in answering all three questions affirmatively, then the fourth and final question will be of utmost importance.

A) Is Religious Maturity really *maturity*?

Recall that at the outset of the literature review, Gordon Allport's theorizing—from which this concept is born—was itself an outgrowth of general personality theory. In other words, religious maturity takes what is established as more mature ways of "human be-ing" and translates it into a typical religious context. This applied maturity is no less substantiated than the original, broader idea and is in fact quite consistent with it. For example, Joseph Browde (1976) has identified some traits of the mature self as a result of his comparative study of the theories of Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, Robert J. Havighurst, and Erik Erikson. These traits include "well integrated, . . . assurance of

the presence of order, which is associated with both meaningfulness and purposefulness, . . . [openness] to experience, . . . creativity, . . . ability to be comfortable with the fact (or idea) of relativity" and the enjoyment of change as it "involves both newness and challenge" (p. 187). Another author writes in his aptly titled book *Forever Becoming: The Search for Maturity* about experiencing this maturity as "freedom, . . . openness, . . . search, . . . growth, . . . risk-taking, . . . being made new, . . . integrity, . . . reconciliation, . . . sensitivity . . . [and] serving" (Gilbert, 1970). Are not these virtually the same traits that Allport and others after him have harped on?

Gary Leak simply states that "religiously mature individuals have certain salutary personality characteristics" (1999, pp. 93-94). This terse tally is not without empirical support; in his initial validation of RM-3, he threw in a number of well-established "personality, value and need" measures and in the end was able to conclude, based on several significant correlations, that "from a more global perspective," individuals who score high on religious maturity

> appear to have met all their basic psychological needs [e.g., safety, security, belongingness, affiliation and esteem] . . . and have moved into a level of personality maturity and growth [e.g., in terms of self-actualization: adjustment, flexibility and openness to experience] . . . which includes a progression toward a mature value system [e.g., self-transcendence through both independence and interdependence] (1999, p. 101).

A classic context in which this subject of optimal psychic functioning is brought up is David Shapiro's treatment of autonomy. Given the doubtless concurrence of autonomy with maturity, consider the value of his statement that "its general

development . . . reflects [that] of the mind . . . and the changing relationships between the individual and the external world . . . ;" he further clarifies that "the development of self-direction and individual autonomy is at the same time the development of the capacity for abstract thought." But, note the qualification, " the capacity for abstraction should not be regarded as a capacity of thought or of the intellect *alone* [italics added]. It is . . . an 'attitude,' a 'capacity level of the total personality'" (pp. 36-37). This is because "abstract thought and its opposite, stimulus-bound or concrete thought, actually imply different relationships between the individual and the external world" (p. 37). Hence the importance of one's "development of thought and imagination and of an objective attitude . . . [which] liberates him from the impact of his present environment and fundamentally changes his whole relationship to it. . . . This is the key to human flexibility." At this point, three main thrusts of autonomy have become clear: *abstraction, objectification* and *flexibility*. Consider Shapiro's elaboration of the interplay between them in the light of the current inquisition of maturity:

> The absence of an objective sense of the external world makes impossible the imaginative manipulation of circumstances and the protection of possibilities that make up conscious aims and plans. Hence, the "concrete attitude" cannot give rise to consciously purposive, volitional action but allows only immediate, passive, or habitual reaction. One cannot imagine self-direction or volitional action in the absence of an objective relationship to the world.
>
> Conversely, the "abstract attitude"—the capacity to regard a thing conceptually, as a member of a class or of various possible classes, and to consider it from various points of view, without regard for its incidental context—

> implies a detachment from that thing and an objective attitude toward it. Such an attitude toward what is external also implies a sense of the self's separateness from it and therefore an *objective sense of self* [italics added]. Such objective experience of the world permits one to imagine things in other-than-their-existing contexts and to imagine oneself in other-than-one's-present circumstances. It implies a sense of possibilities and ultimately of the possibilities of action (p. 38).

The virtual mirroring of language between Shapiro and William Perry is remarkable. With both authors admittedly relying on Piagetian concepts, their mutual expressions serve to substantiate the correlations suggested in this work. Compare the preceding excerpt from Shapiro with the following thoughts from Perry. In speaking on responsibility as the operative factor in the fostering of *Commitment* at liberal arts universities, Perry notes that

> . . .what is required is a capacity for detachment. One must be able to stand back from oneself, have a look, and *then* go back in with a new sense of responsibility. . . . With some moving, flowing equilibrium, some kind of style, among all these issues, the senior in our records tends to look more outward . . . and has learned to think about even his own thoughts, to examine the way he orders his data and the assumptions he is making, and to compare these with other thoughts that other men might have. . . . he has realized that he thinks this way . . . because this is how the world "really is," this is man's present relation to the universe. From this position he can take responsibility for his own stand and negotiate—with respect—with other men. . . . The movement [through the scheme] is away from a naïve egocentrism to a differentiated awareness of the environment. This

> awareness reflects back to create a new and differentiated view of the self and to make possible a complex dynamic equilibrium between self and environment. [His] scheme traces such a process, in the assimilations and accommodations that mediate it, with particular emphasis on the structural changes in a person's assumptions about the origins of knowledge and of value [and] the impact on [the one who is] bringing to bear upon his ideals his new capacity to think not only of what "is" but of all that "might be." [Finally,] the powers of objectivity and detachment consequent on the ability to meta-think . . . make it possible for the person to address an entirely new environment" (pp. 33-44; 228-229).

Such responsible, volitional activity is likewise found in Allport's "intention"—that all-important "forward thrust in all desires emanating from mature sentiments" as depicted in the dynamic operation of faith which he claims is basically

> man's belief in the validity and attainability of some goal (value). The goal is set by desires. Desires, however, are not merely pushes from behind (drive ridden). They include such complex, future-oriented states as longing for a better world, for one's own perfection, for a completely satisfying relation to the universe. (1965, pp. 130-131),

Keeping up with this flow of thought (from Shapiro, Perry and Allport) may require a process of accommodation in itself, but if the reader is able to connect all the dots along these parallel premises, then an image begins to emerge. This is the image of a developed individual who is able to function maturely in his social and (as we are arguing,) spiritual world.

Daniel Batson and others (1993), also help fill in the holes of this image as they spend the last third of their book addressing both the inner life of the individual as well as the individual's relationship to others. Their address of the consequences of religious orientations on issues of personal freedom, mental health, view towards others as well as concern for them, strengthen the current argument that what has been established as religious maturity (incidentally, a concept heavily dependent on Batson, et al.'s work) has everything to do with other types of maturity; in fact a review of a previous Religious Maturity Scale claimed that is was "sensitive to developmental changes in personal maturity experienced throughout the lifespan" (Cole & Wortham, 2000, p. 450). Dudley & Cruise remind the reader that when it comes to religious orientations, there are basically two: those that *fail* to "contribute to either individual psychological health or to the betterment of society" and the other which *is* "an integrating force in the personality . . . and a positive and beneficial influence in society" (1990, p. 97). Finally, the universality of the factors that comprise maturity is evident in the parallel gleanings of Julian Huxley's "organization of thought " from his own atheistic, Darwinian orientation and that of "the New Testament concept of religious and spiritual maturity." This status, according to Jackson (1968) is "oriented toward the future, . . . non-static and would be ever-growing and developing, . . . transcend national and cultural differences, . . . [and] emphasize individual meaning and maturation" (p. 91). So, this variable is inseparable from its generally maturational nature. But what about its religious situation?

B) Is Religious Maturity really *religious*?

While it was demonstrated that Religious Maturity is congruous with more universal notions of human maturity, be they intuitively or empirically verified, the question remains as to whether its qualification as "religious" is appropriate, or at least legitimate. Referring back to Figure 2, the reader should recall that given the current paper's suggested position along that spectrum, one's literary criticism could come from one of two directions. Approaching it from the more general frames of reference, the religious caveat might seem too *specific*; on the other hand, reaching back from a more highly specified system, the "religious" designation could seem far too *broad* for any acceptable relevance. Take the first possible line of questioning.

If this question is due to one's assumption that the general interest in human growth (i.e. physiological, mental or emotional) is nullified once it incorporates specific spiritual language, then the question is easily answered by an appeal to the artificiality of the distinction presupposed in the asking. In his address of "psychic and pneumatic maturity," Basil Jackson offers that people head toward "complete spiritual maturity" wherein they are "constantly participating in an on-going process much of which is [their] own responsibility, and which very frequently overlaps with the purely psychological realm" (1968, p.84). More direct still is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's idea that "maturity is closely correlated with the religious dimensions of life" and that "'man must transcend himself' in the upward striving for maturity" (quoted in Jackson, 1968, p. 84).

In discussions of human behavior, it is only the strictest voice of materialistic, secular humanism that could protest the reference or appeal to anything beyond the

"natural" subject, whether that's in religious, spiritual, or moral terms. To take note of such numinous categories of knowledge is not to deny the knower; to the contrary, it is quite acceptable in these contexts to acknowledge the relevance of the subject's appetite for all things supernal.[26] Consider Brusselmans, for example, who in her opening lines as the convenor of *The First International Conference on Moral and Religious Development*, mentions the need for "learning about *how* people develop . . .and how in that development the questions of meaning and morality get shaped, dissolved, transformed, and regenerated at potentially deeper levels" (1980, p.3). William Perry also speaks of the "ultimate welding of epistemological and moral issues in the act of Commitment" (p. 226). This is to say that it is not at all unnatural to examine the "religious" (either in general ethical terms or in specific ecclesiastical terms) as part of the whole human experience. In fact, it should be reiterated that religion is truly an integral part of the anthropological whole.

> Religion is a constitutive part of man's consciousness: the cognitive search for the pattern of the 'general order' of existence; the affective need to establish rituals and to make such conceptions sacred; the primordial need for relatedness to some others, or to a set of meanings which will establish a transcendent response to the self; and the existential need to confront the finalities of suffering and death (Daniel Bell, quoted in Fowler, 2000, p. 63).

[26] "It must be emphasized that the whole question of the evaluation of maturity versus immaturity . . . is intimately tied to personal value systems . . . and when we [use] such, in some degree at least, we leave the fields of the behavioral sciences and are more clearly in the fields of ethics, moral philosophy and theology . . . for science deals exclusively with what is so, never with what ought to be so" (Jackson, 1968, p. 84). So, while the discussion at this point must pick up an empirical script, it is still "on stage" conceptually.

Referencing once again the spectrum of Figure 2, the reader will detect the slippage from purely global descriptions to pointedly local ones. Hence the thinning veil of words as the research moves toward the religiously particular; the researchers' and expected audiences' religious affiliation reveals an unembarrassed Christian face from behind that veil. Therefore, the ensuing discussion of maturity vis-à-vis religious orientation, while ultimately available to most any worldview, shall in this piece admittedly bear a Western, monotheistic, Judeo-Christian ethic, and even an Evangelical Protestant bent. The researchers feel that this places the purported benefit of the current research within grasp of the immediate audience while not eliminating future applications to a wider one.

What are these so-called religious factors that are associated with maturity? One is "concern for others" accompanied with "personal activity on behalf of others" which is not only a universally identified trait of the mature self (Browde, 1986, p. 187), but is incidentally prescribed in all major religions through some version of the Golden Rule (Batson, et al., 1993, p. 331). Though this concern might manifest itself differently depending on the cultural setting, the researchers measured one's inclination toward helpfulness as the ethical behavior that naturally flows from (and is indicative of) a genuine interest in the welfare of others. The study indicated that persons with greater emotional and cognitive capacities for empathy [as indexed by the Empathic Concern and Perspective Taking sub-scales of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)] demonstrated more *Helpfulness* and greater *Religious Maturity* than those with less *Empathy*.[27] Additionally, *Perspective Taking* correlated positively with a measure of *Relativism*. To put all these relationships in the context of the current developmental hypotheses, it

[27] Refer to Derek Hatch's (2003) unpublished paper for a full discussion of *Helpfulness* and *Empathy*.

would appear that as one's epistemology "relativizes" and one's religious orientation matures, his capacity for empathizing with others also increases and his inclination to help them improves. Recall that Feinsilver maintains that mature religion involves both responsibility and relatedness to one's fellowmen (1960, p. 20), just as Jackson stresses that

> maturity is related to the capacity to relate intimately with other human individuals without doing violence to their inner dignity. This includes the ability and the willingness to be compassionate toward all men, while at the same time expressing a respectful understanding and appreciation of the human condition *per se* and demonstrating a propensity to bestow love rather than to await its reception (1968, p. 86).

This connection is also seen, by way of contrast, through the inverse relationship between *Religious Maturity* and *Authoritarianism*.[28] "Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)" is said of one who is "prone to aggress against unpopular or unconventional groups (Altemeyer, 1988:114-120), feel morally superior and self-righteous (157-161), possess a mean-spiritedness that is coupled with vindictiveness and a 'secret pleasure' when others experience misfortune (154-157, 203), and appear prejudiced toward out-groups (187-188)" (quoted in Leak & Randall, 1995, p. 245). That a "mature approach to religion is antithetical to authoritarianism" (Leak & Randall, 1995, p. 246) is not only

[28] Refer to Derek Hatch's paper for a fuller discussion of this variable.

theoretically inferable from the discussion above, but has been empirically confirmed in this study and others (Leak & Randall, 1995; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992).[29]

Not only did the researchers find significant relationships between RWA and RM-3, but with the original epistemological styles from Study 1. RWA, as would be expected, shared directionality with Naïve Realism, but was divorced from Skeptical Subjectivism. What's more is that Rigidity--as a personality style—was correlated with RWA but ran opposite to the Openness Factor of RM-3. "Rigidity" and "authoritarianism" are pejorative terms in any reasonable man's mind; worse, they are debasing qualities in any reasonable assessment of maturity. In fact, these rigid, dualistic attributes fly right in the face of the more hopeful, growth-oriented nature of that *firm but flexible commitment* which is the parallelizing force between the fraternally twin vectors of Heuristicism and Religious Maturity. All of this speaks of the concentricity of psycho-social maturity and religious maturity and thus justifies the placement of the target variable within the larger context of human development.

Yet, on the other hand, there are readers who might feel that it is unfitting to examine the merely "religious" phenomenon as sharing any ground with the *Christian* experience. This brings the reader back to the second possible approach to this issue (i.e. Specificity's objection to the General) and thus takes him forward to the third question of the present agenda.

[29] Interestingly, many measures of religiousness that fall short of the full representation of the more mature sentiment have been shown to positively correlate with Authoritarianism, thus proving the premise that there is a way of being religious that is unhealthy, and thankfully, a way that is good.

C) Is Religious Maturity something that should matter to the *Christian*?

It is likely that for some readers to have made it this far in a paper of this scope and length, they may have had to postpone their innate aversion to all things "psychological." While it is by no means available within this survey to give full treatment to this dilemma of how a Christian can scientifically study his faith (i.e. engage in the "psychology of [his] religion)," the issue must come into play as this question is answered. The researchers affirm that "the empirical examination of healthy religious experience can but prove to be positive and worthwhile, and if some aspects of such experience can be shown to be related in some way to antecedent influences or to other psychological parameters, this in no way minimizes the value of healthy spiritual experience or proves its falsity" (Jackson, 1968, p. 85). Therefore, what the researchers have tried to curb along the way through the occasional advisory footnote (4 and 9), is now more fully defended.

One of the benefits of using psychology as a tool for this investigation is the assistance it provides the inquirer in hewing out an image of a religiously mature individual. By drawing correlations between different aspects of attitude and behavior, one is able to identify those factors that contribute to or detract from the variable in question. For the present task, one would expect that if Religious Maturity was shown to be associated with various conditions or consequences that were noticeably Christian, then the variable might not be discarded simply because it wasn't labeled with familiar language.

Indeed many such relationships exist and many of these have already been reported in the previous section (viz., empathy, helpfulness, authoritarianism). Upon

reviewing the list of personality and social behavior factors that Religious Maturity has been tested against and shown to be correlated with (Leak, 1999), the reader can hardly object to its relevance for personal faith. There are many ways that the researchers could make the point that Christians ought to be concerned with the call toward a mature religion. The method of choice for this context shall be to explore what is perhaps the main tributary of Christian living and see if it leads us back to the conceptual spring of religious maturity.

The Apostle Paul challenges Christians in his letter to the Romans, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments . . . are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (13:8-10, NIV). If one doubts the legitimacy of Paul's superlative admonition, or argues that it was only the second greatest commandment in the Gospels, he should recall Christ's single command to "love each other" as that which is to be obeyed in order to remain in His love, bear much fruit and by doing so, glorify the Father (John 15:1-17, NIV). Bypassing any lengthy exposition of Scripture, suffice it to say that social-affective action is a good thing: Christ loved others and in every way, therefore, loving others is a Christian thing. Loving others is also a mature thing. And, to repeat Jackson's assignment,

> maturity is related to the *capacity* to relate intimately with other human individuals without doing violence to their inner dignity. This includes the *ability* and the *willingness* to be compassionate toward all men, while at the same time expressing a respectful *understanding* and *appreciation* of the human condition

> per se and demonstrating a *propensity* to bestow love rather than to await its reception [italics added] (1968, p. 86).

Paying special attention to the emphasized qualifications, notice that there does seem to be certain postures and predispositions that enable one to more effectively and appropriately love. Might these be indicative of the role of religious maturity and its associated psycho-epistemological position?

With one's psychological needs having been met (reaching down like a good root structure), and the continual honing of one's thoughts and feelings through adequate intellectual and emotional security (reaching up like eagerly unfurling leaves), then can there be the subsequent loving of others (reaching out like the blossoming of a flower). Jackson said as much when he suggested that this "propensity" to love only comes about when one's emotional security is sound enough to allow for a genuinely altruistic focus on others' needs (Jackson, pp. 86-87). Otherwise, in the absence of this sense of sufficiency, one's interpersonal activity will inevitably be marred by the subtly selfish ulterior motive which seeks the obligatory reciprocity of the debtor's ethic. The unstable lover must prop himself up by the response of the loved (and worse, the beloved is trapped in an endless cycle of returning favors as though love were a business transaction) (Piper, 1995). Erich Fromm's discussion of humanistic ethics is most helpful here.

> Love is a phenomenon of abundance; its premise is the strength of the individual who can give. . . . To love another person is only a virtue if it springs from this inner strength, but it is a vice if it is the expression of the basic inability to be oneself. . . . Not only others, but we ourselves are the "object" of our feelings and

> attitudes; the attitudes toward others and toward ourselves far from being contradictory, are basically *conjunctive*. Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between "objects" and one's own self is concerned. Genuine love is an expression of productiveness and implies care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge. It is not an "affect" in the sense of being affected by somebody, but an active striving for the growth and happiness of the loved person, rooted in one's own capacity to love (1947, pp. 125-129).

The researchers remind the Christian reader at this point that he should not have had to jettison any doctrinal baggage—if anything, one might be seeing the x-ray image of the contents of some of that luggage for the first time! The Christ-love is made magnificent in the light of this psycho-analysis. Calvary did not occur to fill some void in the character of God or in the life of Jesus; rather, it was an overflowing of his grace, bestowed freely upon his people as a testimony of his aseity.[30] Jesus admits that "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life . . ." (Matthew 20:28, NIV) and this is the very love he called his followers to emulate (John 15:7-13; I John 3:11-4:21 NIV).

So, how is a self-sufficient,[31] others-satisfying love possible? Here the discussion stumbles into a prime instance of religious maturity dancing to the rhythm of one's

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[30] "God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things . . ." (The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1990, p. 10)

[31] "Self-sufficiency" in this sense is not a term of causation and does not suggest the source of one's sufficiency (i.e. in oneself); rather, it is a description of effect and reports the resulting state of sufficiency regarding oneself. Therefore, the reason for one's "self-sufficiency" could conceivably (and hopefully would) be Spiritual.

psycho-epistemology. Consider the previous discussion of maturity's requisite self-objectification, a prevalent part of David Shapiro's process of "becoming an independent agent in the world" (1986, p. 61). Toward this autonomy, "the further development of thought, particularly the further development of the capacity for symbolization of external reality, will free him from the limitations of his circumstances and of his own actual experience." Through this "continually diminished egocentricity, or subjectiveness," one's thinking "becomes more flexible" and as other perspectives or relationships between the different aspects of something are able to be imagined, this further development will "ultimately endow him with great power to *affect* his environment." In other words, "they simply become less concerned with measuring themselves and more interested in activity and life" (pp.51-64).

Is this not how one is able to love his enemies and give to them without expecting anything in return (Luke 6:35). In the absence of such expectations, the subjective grasp on that which is to be responded to objectively is loosened; one hand can freely give without the other one applauding itself (Matthew 6:1-5). This is an open-armed / hands-off kind of love. The arms are open--not to get one's needs met, but because his needs are already met; the hands are off--not because one doesn't care, but because he doesn't care about what's in it for him. This is the self-fulfilled – and therefore the self-less – love that alone can satisfy the call of this psycho-spiritual virtue.

> This is precisely the life of love afforded us by Christ's.
>
> By removing eternal risk, [He] calls his people to continual temporal risk. . . .[the Christian] is free to love no matter what. . . . The crucified Christ calls His people to live and die for their enemies, as He did. The only risks permitted by Christ are

> the perils of love. With staggering promises of everlasting joy, Jesus unleashed a movement of radical, loving risk-takers (Piper, 2002, p. 103).

To put it in other terms, there is within the growing, a "capacity for intimacy and a readiness, based on a firm sense of identity, to risk the self in relations of closeness to others, without a paralyzing fear of a loss or compromise of the self" (Fowler, 2000, pp. 19-20). This is one of the characteristics of Erik Erikson's scheme of Identity development. Continuing with this model, the mature individual, in the final generative state, has a sense of identity that can "incorporate the full range of personal relationships, roles, and aptitudes, as well as limits, into an integrated configuration." This is derivative of his vocational competencies that allow him to effectively carry out the responsibilities and roles as a "productive contributor to society." This is also based on the mature adult's "capacity for initiative and purpose" along with a sense of independence that allows him to "stand alone, if necessary, on matters of principle." This is marked by "clear identity boundaries" that make it possible to say "yes" or "no" without undue coldness and distance on the one hand or excessively compliant closeness on the other hand." Finally, "this is the adult who has formed and reformed a strong foundation of basic trust, expressed and grounded in a religious faith or a philosophical confidence that life has meaning" (Fowler, 2000, pp. 19-20). Erikson's classic description of generative adulthood (which effectively represents both religious and epistemological maturity) is Biblical. Review his list alongside the following passages of Scripture to catch a glimpse of their compatibility [Matthew 16:25; Psalm 112; Philippians 1:21; Ephesians 4:1-28; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Galatians 6:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 10:22,23).

The converse is also evident in the resulting immaturity of an inadequate development of ideational and perceptual processes.

> A most common evidence of spiritual immaturity is spiritual incoordination, immobility and paralysis. Many never pass the early psycho-pneumatic levels characterized by [them]. They remain "babes" (I Cor. 3:1) and will never be able to say with Paul, "When I became a man" (I Cor. 13:11). They never make the Johannine progression of "little children" to "young men" to "fathers" (I John 2:12-14). They remain forever at a spiritual level at which they can only ingest and digest "milk" rather than "meat" (Jackson, 1968, p. 89).

This immobility reflects the rigidity which runs contrary to the adaptability of autonomy, the malleability of maturity and altogether contradicts this paper's paradigm of a "stability in motion."[32]

It is this dynamic durability that drives Erikson's subject in the development of identity, Shapiro's in the development of autonomy and Fromm's in that of a productive love. But, how has this dissection of proactive affection been relevant to religiously mature epistemology? Precisely at this point: the process of overcoming the debilitating egocentricity of one's life involves the objectification of one's world, whereby he is able to treat as object that which is in his field of concern. In letting go of oneself in this sense, one is free to take on the perspective of other people. This is putting oneself in another's shoes so as to imagine the world from that alternate vantage point. This is the

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[32] The reader was gradually introduced to the image of a ship through the paper's section sub-headings (the hull, the mast, the rudder, the sails and the criterion of sea-worthiness). By employing this analogical template, the researchers hope to construct an effective picture of the mobile stability, firm flexibility, tentative tenaciousness, open-minded resolve and dynamic durability that allows the sea-fairing vessel to stay afloat while navigating the oceans and is the very heart of "heuristic faith."

person who treats others according to *their* needs without a thought of how such treatment or even the appearance of such treatment (Batson, et al., 1993, pp.331-364) will make up for something that is lacking in himself. This is the personal awareness that is available to the more cognitively advanced structures of the mind and the more emotionally altruistic sentiments of the heart. This is the "empathetic: perspective-taking" quality of an epistemologically mature religiosity that allows one simply to love others. Demonstrating the threefold nature of advanced development (i.e., detachment, widening interests, and integration), this one instance of beneficial social potential embedded in these concepts explains why maturity quickly becomes religious in nature. And in these cases, where one's spirituality is contributing to the world's betterment, religion is seen to be truly "on our side" (Batson, et al., 1993, pp. 367-370), and therefore Religious Maturity can be embraced as an ally in the Christian's pilgrimage.

D) So, what's next?

Is proving the acceptable nature of Religious Maturity enough for it to become useful for the readers' lives? Unfortunately, while the preceding treatment of the target variables should convince the reader of the worthwhileness--even the vitalness--of *pursuing a more heuristic psycho-epistemological style and a more mature religious orientation*, the virtue of something does not automatically inspire the volitional quest for it. Hence, the concluding paragraphs of this segment seek to inspire the reader to a place of deeper apprehension of the holy and a fuller taste of all that life has to offer. Put simply, the researchers hope to encourage greater growth in the life of the reader. In the future, there will be deep pedagogical challenges to face as subsequent research

strategizes a form of discipleship that mentors and educates toward this end and as other contributions address the "how to" of this development; the present focus has been on establishing the "need to" and hopefully along the way, inspiring the "want to."

For the reader who is interested in going farther in this growth process, there are two potential obstacles that the researchers feel the need to illuminate. The first is stated plainly in that statement: that *growth is a process*. Though obvious to some, this reality is fatally overlooked by many. As quoted earlier, Batson makes a distinction between

> a reality-transforming religious experience that invites further transformation [and] one that forecloses it. . . . In the former case, the new reality is recognized as a tentative and transient construction, one that will probably undergo future change. In the latter case, the new reality is perceived as *true* reality. It is assumed that one has been given an insight into the mysteries of life that cannot be improved upon, an insight that has definitively answered one or more existential questions. Although such insight may have dramatically positive effects in infusing life with meaning and direction, it would seem to discourage further religious insight. The rest of one's life *becomes a postscript to the insight already attained* [italics added]. . . . the former opens the door to further religious growth; the latter closes the door (Batson et al, 1993, pp. 107-108).

Fowler records two models of adult development that will be helpful in making this distinction. The first is the image of a tent which began being assembled in young adulthood with the erection of certain "ideological tent poles." The individual "binds them together in an often tacit, or unexamined, unity. Then a covering is stretched over the structure, and [he] enters this ideological hut to dwell, never needing to come out

again" (Fowler, 2000, pp. 6-8). The second model borrows its imagery from Greek mythology and speaks of Proteus, the god who could change his form easily. Hence, proteanism

> involves a quest for authenticity and meaning, a form-seeking assertion of self. The recognition of complexity and ambiguity may well represent a certain maturation in our concept of self. The protean self seeks to be both fluid and grounded, however tenuous that combination. . . . [It], then, is a balancing act between responsive shape shifting, on the one hand, and efforts to consolidate and cohere on the other (quoted in Fowler, 2000, pp. 8-10).

Rather than viewing life as a plateau upon which one is catapulted at conversion, one's life in Christ ought to be seen as just that – a *new life* and one that "is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator" (Colossians 3:10, NIV) in order to embrace all the vicissitudes of the disciple's epoch journey. This pilgrim's progress recognizes that "change is normative, continuous and consequenial" (Fowler, 2000, p. 116), and thus hopes for that on-going transformation by the renewing of his mind in order to go on apprehending the will of God (Romans 12:2). And if the patient perseverance implicit in the ongoing call to pursue the abundant, excellent life was doubted, one need only realize his discipular duty to be reminded that one's faith must go on toward greater maturity if it is to be able to reproduce and multiply itself. Actually, Erikson argues that mature adulthood even means

> to have found a way . . . in our love and work and care to contribute to the maintenance of the strength of the human soul, and to extend the conditions in

> social life that will make it possible for the next generation to have optimal opportunity to develop their full measure of human strength (Fowler, 2000, p. 21).

If such generativity is uncommon (i.e., if there is a discrepancy or deficiency in the church's discipleship program), it is probably explained by that description of adult maturity wherein a "capacity for intimacy carries over into a readiness to engage in conflict without withdrawing or needing to destroy one's opponent . . ." (Fowler, 2000, p. 20). If the growth process is realized and engaged, then life becomes the freedom to explore and adore the Truth; but if it is denied and neglected, then life is bondage to the hand-me-down beliefs which must be preserved and conserved.

This leads to the second predicted obstacle to growth, which is a response to the first: fear. There is a sense of safety, security and solidarity that accompany the static life, but these are merely smoke-screen sentiments that distract from the stench of stagnation. Gregory Bateson's tautologous epistemological concern for homeostatic systems must not be missed: "All changes can be understood as the effort to maintain some constancy and all constancy as maintained through change" (quoted in, Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2000, p. 12). Enduring existence (whether of individual or corporate entities) requires movement and growth. This requires viewing life, and for that matter Christianity, as a direction to be retained instead of a destination to be retired in, and a proper orientation in the present rather than some premature occupation of the future (Jackson, 1968, p. 93). Yet existential honesty admits the fright of constant change, so one's expedition through maturation will take faith and "faith, in view of the investment, requires courage" (Perry, 1999, p. 197). Such daunting deontology demands a daring determination to entertain the complex in order that one might enter into the simple.

"Mature religion is characterized by courage and conviction, not by cowardice and confusion" (Feinsilver, 1960, p. 15) and will thus, in Fowler's mind, avoid both the defensive ditch of withdrawal as well as the offensive one of destruction (2000, p. 20). In this case, one will not "be satisfied to cloister . . . in a creed or use the church as an escape from challenge" (Feinsilver, 1960, p. 15), neither will the resilience of his "rightness" be dependent on the rebuttal of others' "wrongness." Only when this is true will it not be said of Evangelicals, "when faced with a crisis situation, . . . [they] usually do one of two things: . . . either mount a public crusade, or . . . retreat into an inner pious sanctum" (quoted in Moreland, 1997, p. 187).

Tillich's "courage to be" includes "temperance in relation to oneself as well as justice in relation to others" (1952, p.7) and is both the ground for maturity's tentative parallactic perspective as well as the goal of its tolerance of paradox. This is evident in the tension of the "stylistic balances" that occur in the foreshadowing of a mature epistemology. "The qualitative experience of Commitment in polarities . . . [describes] an equilibrium in a complex matrix of many vectors: . . . narrowness vs. breadth, stability vs. flexibility, sureness vs. tentativeness, analysis vs. synthesis, detachment vs. involvement, and continuity with one's origins vs. breaking with one's past" (Perry, 1999, pp.161-165).

But courage is not only at work in being able to recognize diversity and risk complexity, but in the eventual transcending of them as well. James Fowler, in his treatment of "becoming adult" with "becoming Christian," speaks of the inherent uneasiness of the constructive-developmental perspective.

> Development means undergoing a qualitative change in the operations of knowing, committing, and valuing, by which one constructs . . . narrative meaning . . . In this perspective, we reconstruct our *ways* of being of being in faith when we encounter disruptions or sources of dissonance in our personal or collective lives that our previous ways of making meaning cannot handle. The emergence of a new stage means the altering of previous ways of believing and understanding; it means constructing more inclusive, more internally complex, and more flexible ways of appropriating the content—the substance and narrative power—of one's religious tradition (2000, p. 114).

Lest one succumb to the downward pull of anxiety in the face of such dissonance, courage must propel one to endure whatever stress accompanies the growing pains of a well-lived life. One can master "the art of being" if he has "the will and the determination to loosen the bars of his prison of narcissism and selfishness, [and] when he has the courage to tolerate the intermittent anxiety, he experiences the first glimpses of joy and strength that he sometimes attains." It is here that "a decisive new factor enters into the dynamics of the process. This new experience becomes the decisive motivation for going ahead and following the path he has charted" (Fromm, 1989, p. 120).

In heeding the command to "love your God with all your mind" Moreland confesses on behalf of Christians,

> we get into a rut in our thinking and develop habits of thought that can grow stale after a while. This is where the renewed mind comes in. A life of study can give us a constant source of new categories and beliefs that will lead to fresh new insights and stave off intellectual boredom. Many people become bored with the

> Bible precisely because their overall intellectual growth is stagnant. They cannot get new insights from Scripture because they bring the same old categories to bible study and look to validate their old habits of thought (1997, p. 80).

In fact, "God usually exerts that power in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favourable conditions for the reception of the gospel" (quoted in Moreland, 1997, p.63) or for the comprehension of anything, for that matter. If this is the case, than does the Christian—or any responsible human being—have any excuse for not marching on down the path toward maturity in both thought and belief? The only thing one stands to lose by embarking on this journey toward heuristic faith is his "old self," and he only stands to gain a broader community with others, fuller conformity to Christ, and deeper communion with the Father. So, come--let us grow!

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Table 1: Characteristics of the Committed Versus the Consensual Religious Orientation in Terms of Structural Components*

COMMITTED	CONSENSUAL
CONTENT	
Refers to the way the individual conceptualizes the topic area	
Abstracts-Relational: Religiosity seems to be largely anchored in abstract principles and relational expressions. There is use of general categories, philosophical notions, or formulated theology.	*Concrete-Literal:* Religiosity seems to be rooted in concrete, specific, or literal statements and judgements.
CLARITY	
Refers to the precision and coherent structure of the beliefs of the individual. The relative ability to perceive meaning and implications clearly	
Discerning: Tends to order religious concepts and to express ideas in discerning manner. Answers to questions or discussion of topics is clear and exact in meaning and reference.	*Vague:* Tends to give nonreferential or routine answers. Discussion of topics is vague, obscure or unclear in meaning and reference.
COMPLEXITY	
Refers to the number of categories, elements, or aspects of religiosity which the individual uses. The degree to which there is a differentiation among and between various aspects of religion.	
Differentiated: Religiosity tends to be composed of a relatively large number of categories or elements. Ideas tend to be multiple rather than simple, global, or over-generalized.	*Monopolistic-Dichotomous:* Religiosity is composed of a relatively small number of categories or elements. Ideas tend to be typologized and global. May make repeated reference to a single concept or think in terms of diametrical opposites.
FLEXIBILITY	
Refers to the adaptable or accommodating quality of ideas, beliefs, or attitudes when the individual compares his beliefs with others; or his own belief-disbelief components.	
Candid-Open: A relatively greater tolerance for diversity. A tendency to examine or thoughtfully consider in a frank straight-forward manner different opinions, beliefs, or feelings.	*Restrictive:* Relatively inaccessible or closed to differing ideas. Apparently tries to narrow or encapsulate religiosity by rejection, distortion, or a "screening out" of different ideas and practices.
IMPORTANCE	
Refers to the strength, importance, or value of religious beliefs in the everyday functioning of the individual.	
Relevant: Religiosity is a matter of personal concern and central attention. Ideals and values incorporated in the religious beliefs seem to account for or be relevant to daily activities.	*Detached-Neutralized:* Religion is considered thoroughly important, but is mainly severed from substantial individual experience or emotional commitment. Religion is primarily an emotional "clinging," a magical or encapsulated feeling tone which is not meaningfully related to daily activities.

*(Adapted from Allen, 1965, pp. 30-32; Allen & Spilka, 1967, pp. 199-200; as cited in Fleck, Ballard & Reilly, 1975, p.162).

Table 2: Pscho-Epistemological Dimensions and Definitions*

Authors	*Dimensions or Factors*	*Definitions*
Royce (1964, PEP)	Rationalism	Knowledge si obtained through logical, conceptual, and analytical thinking.
	Empiricism	Knowledge is born of structured Observations and data.
	Metaphorism	Knowledge is subjective; true knowledge is personal, involving integration and the use of symbols.
Perry (1970, SID)	Dualism	Knowledge equals facts, the facts being stable and absolute.
	Relativism	Knowledge is context dependent, and there are no absolutes.
	Commitment	Choices are made, responsibility is important. Knowledge is not absolute but there is more than naïve relativism.
Unger, Draper & Pendergrass (1986, AAR)	Logical-positivism	Knowledge is stable and irreversable and beyond our control.
	Social-constructivism	Knowledge is dynamic and context dependent.
Gold & Reimer (1974, T-F)	Thinking	Knowledge is the result of logic and intellectual reasoning.
	Feeling	Knowledge is defined through feelings, emotion, and affect.
Martin, Silva, Newman &	Absolutism	Knowledge can be apprehended either through one's senses, through algorithmic calculation, or through the experts who possess them.
	Relativism	Knowledge is an arbitrary choice and context dependent.
	Evaluatism	The knower is assumed to be an agent who has access to the world, but not a fully determined or explicit access. Responsibility and value-judge-ments are important.
Wilkinson & Migotsky (1994)	Naïve-realism	Knowledge consists of facts, doubts are annoying, and one right answer exists for all questions.
	Logical Inquiry	Knowledge is based on logic, reasoning, understanding, and, to a lesser extent, empirical observation.
	Sceptical-subjectivism	Knowledge is the antithesis of Naïve Realism and gives a perspective of uncertainty, reflection and complexity.

*This table is based on the scale-definitions Wilkinson and Migotsky (1994) used in their article (as cited in Desimpelaere, 1999).

Figure 1. **Introducing the Telescopic Spectrum**

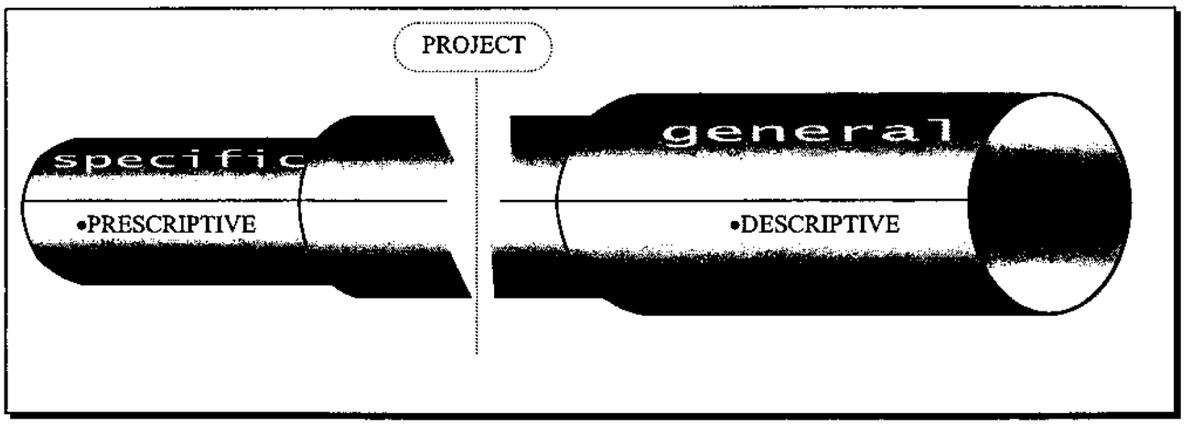

Figure 2. **Elaborating on the Telescopic Spectrum**

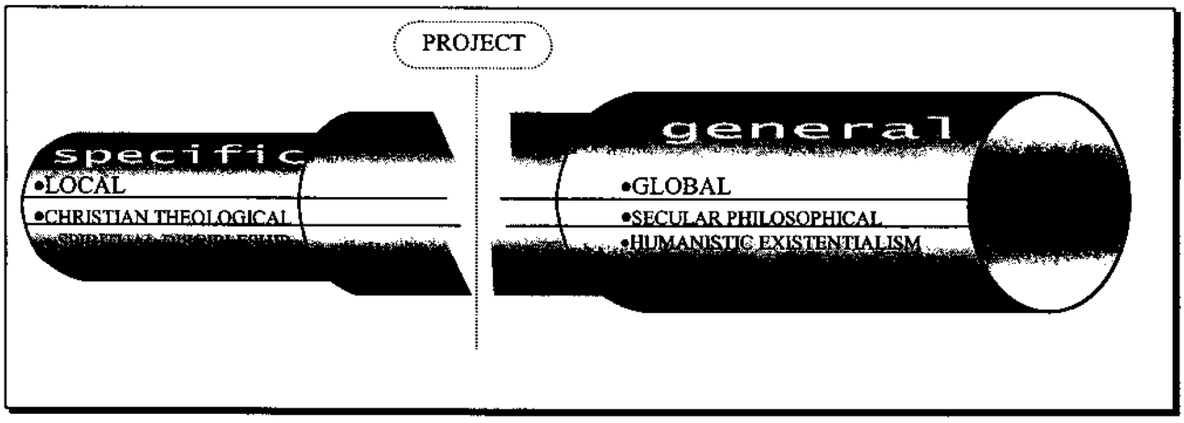

Figure 3. **Variable Spectrum: Model 1**

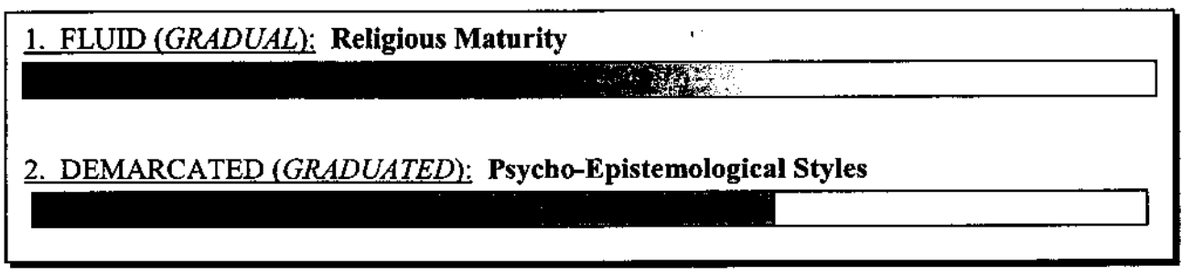

Figure 4. **Variable Spectrum: Model 2**

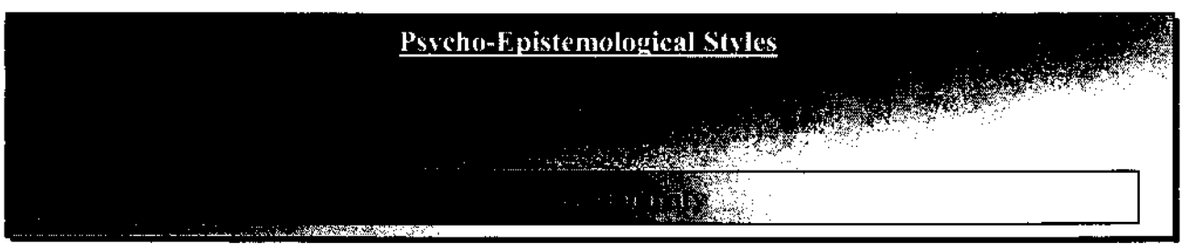

Figure 5. Pilot Test Example Item: Version 1

IV. (A) In my life, many things have been decided on and it's important to me that I am able to say "I stand here" regarding those issues,
but **(B)** I am aware that the merit of alternatives might not be clearly understood yet or that even more alternatives have not yet been discovered.

☐
0. I don't agree with either statement / I'm not sure
1. I agree more with statement A
2. I agree more with statement B
3. I agree with both statements A and B and therefore with the sentence as a whole

Figure 6. Pilot Test Example Item: Version 2

11.

A. I don't have a lot of questions about the things I believe in because life's absolutes just seem obvious and appear to be clearly understood and agreed on by those who are truly in authority.

B. It's important to me to be able to take a stand and know why I believe certain things, but that's not to take away from the merit of alternatives that haven't been heard or understood yet.

C. I have a lot of questions about things that I'm supposed to believe in because I'm sure that there are a lot of other perspectives out there that are just as good as mine and could just as easily be right.

☐ **Please indicate which of the statements you agree with the most**

APPENDIX 1: The Religious Maturity Scale (RM-3)

Answer all the questions below. Use the answer choices to reflect your degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement. Please be as honest as you can.

1. Compared to most people I know, I have quite a wide range of interests.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

2. My values have changed or evolved quite a bit in the past few years.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

3. I perceive shortcomings in many traditional religious teachings, yet I still appreciate the value of religion in my life.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

4. I owe my present religious attitude in part to having experienced a deep doubt about the validity and value of my earlier religious beliefs.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

5. My religious orientation is useful in helping me understand and deal with many aspects of my life, not just the strictly "religious" ones.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

6. I can't, "in theory", know with total certainty that my beliefs are correct, but I still act and live my life assuming they are true, even if I can't be tottally sure.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

7. I don't feel much need to reflect on my religious orientation to life; my religious questions have already been answered to my satisfaction.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

8. My personal religious development has required me to struggle with certain issues in religion.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

9. Religion is the major framework or perspective I use in ordering my life.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

10. I hold my religious beliefs because they help me understand all existence, even though I realize their ultimate validity cannot be proven.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

11. Like it or not, there are grounds and reasons for religious skepticism, but I am comfortable in acting on my beliefs nevertheless.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

12. I have developed, or am now developing, an independent religious conviction based on my experiences in living.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

13. To me, it is more important to believe and follow the teachings of my church than to develop and follow my own personal view of God.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

14. I am in general agreement with many of the teachings of my church; however, I am still able to be critical and questioning about some of the specific things my church tells me.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

15. I consider myself religious, but I am still struggling with, and working through, certain religious issues.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

16. Religion is the most important factor I use in deciding how to live my life on a daily basis.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

17. I am quite satisfied with my current religious beliefs and values; I don't feel a need for any change in my religiousness.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

18. I realize my religious beliefs aren't "The Truth", yet I still accept them as the best means available to arrive at the ultimate meaning of life and the universe.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

19. Given my lack of complete knowledge of the deep complexities of religion, I feel it is not my place to question the teachings of my church.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

20. I would not be able to live the good life I live now if not for the daily influence of my faith.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

21. I would be opposed to attending a talk that I suspected was critical of my religious beliefs.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

22. I feel the need to avoid people or situations (e.g., lectures, readings) that might challenge or criticisms my beliefs.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

23. My personality and sense of self (who and what I am) is strongly related to my religious orientation.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

24. I am very satisfied with my current religious orientation. I don't expect it to change much for many years to come.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

25. During the past few years, I have found myself fighting through or struggling with important personal religious issues.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

26. My whole life is more significant and meaningful because of my religious orientation.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

27. It would be wrong for me to admit doubts about the teachings I have received over the years.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

28. My religious orientation influences how I see the world: how I react to the beauty in nature, the behavior of others, etc.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

29. The religious orientation has given way to a reflective examination and questioning.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

30. God exists, but I'm not sure of His precise nature.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

31. I sometimes feel anger toward those who refuse to believe in God.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

32. While it may sound corny or dramatic, I truly believe my faith is a way of life that affects many aspects of my existence.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

33. My religious orientation could be summarized by the phrase: "Commitment to a religious orientation without certainty about that religious orientation".
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

34. It is important for me to maintain religious beliefs similar to those of my family.
O Strongly Disagree O Disagree O Unsure O Agree O Strongly Agree

APPENDIX 2: The Psycho-Epistemology Scale (PES)

Below are a number of statements that relate to various aspects of life. After reading each statement, choose the answer that best reflects your opinion about the statement.

1. The people who know the most are those who read many different things and listen to what different people have to say.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

2. Higher education should place more emphasis on art and literature.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

3. The most valuable people in today's world are those who can gather and understand the facts.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

4. You would learn more from lessons if professors would stick more to the facts and less to all kinds of theories.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

5. I see myself as a logical person.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

6. I have found that it is usually better to refrain from firm viewpoints.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

7. Teachers have to know what the best method is: teaching or holding group discussions.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

8. It is better not to know too much about things that cannot be changed anyway.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

9. Higher education should place more emphasis on mathematics and logic.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

10. The best thing about science is that most problems have only one correct answer.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

11. It is annoying to listen to a speaker who does not seem to take a concrete position in what he believes.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

12. When I participate in a competition, I try to win by following a strategy planned in advance.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

13. The problems in today's world are so complex that a person should only rarely limit oneself to a single viewpoint.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

14. A country that wants to make the best of the lives of its citizens will certainly support the work of its artists and writers.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

15. It is a waste of time to work on problems when you know there are no clear, unamiguous solutions to them.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

16. Most social problems are solved by a small number of capable people.

○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree

17. Most major discoveries came about by starting to think about the phenomenon in a new way.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

18. Society must protect itself against those who do not accept its rules.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

19. I always question the reasons why I believe something.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

20. It is a greater wrong to be unreasonable than to be unpleasant.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

21. I would prefer it if teachers would just tell me the facts.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

22. Uncertainty is pretty much the only thing one can be certain of.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

23. Unconscious motivations are extremely important in understanding human behavior.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

24. I would love to be a geologist.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

25. A really good viewpoint is one that includes the option to (partially) abandon that viewpoint.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

26. You always have to take into account various matters, but at some point you still have to make a clear choice and then bear the consequences thereof.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

27. I know my own qualities and abilities well.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

28. Many people are not the citizens that they should be, but I cannot condemn them all because there are no absolute moral laws.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

29. I am just one of the many billions of people on this Earth, but I can certainly live with that.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

30. I feel at home in this world.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

31. I determined for myself which values I deem important.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

32. I have concrete ideas about what I want to become and how I want to achieve that.

Absolutely Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Absolutely Agree
O	O	O	O	O	O	O

APPENDIX 3(a): The Psycho-Epistemological Style Indicator – Statements (PESI-S)

These statements are supposed to reflect general trends of life-stages, so your response should reflect the overall state of things over the last year or so, not merely a single incident or how you would like to be someday.

Please read the following sets of statements, then indicate which of the statements (A, B, or C) that you agree with the most.

1.

O A. I like the fact that the world is the way that it is since I can't do anything about it and its predictability provides me with security and confidence in actually knowing the truth about the universe.

O B. I accept the way things are in the world and find stability in my understanding of it, but it's comforting to know that the universe isn't completely figured out yet and that there's flexibility in any one view.

O C. I like to see the world as open-ended since no one view has it all figured out; in fact, since there is still a lot more knowledge to be discovered, my ideas could be just as good as anybody else's.

2.

O A. I recognize that I've been shaped by people and experiences and so I value belonging to a community, but since I don't always know exactly what I believe, I feel that I'm free to differ from the group.

O B. I don't feel the need to go along with the crowd just for unity's sake because groups make a lot of mistakes and there always seems to be leaders who pretend to know things that can't be known.

O C. I like the sense of security I get from remaining in unity with the groups that I'm part of because everyone needs to be plugged in somewhere to keep them from just believing or doing any old thing.

3.

O A. Regarding the "War on Terror," it bothers me that people try to complicate the issue by bringing up all sorts of things that shouldn't matter and lose sight of what's really important.

O B. Regarding the "War on Terror," I appreciate that the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of so many different people probably mean that no one will ever figure out the "right" answer.

O C. Regarding the "War on Terror," I want to consider all the different perspectives and all the ways that everyone will be affected, and yet I've still been able to form and express my own opinions.

4.

O A. These days, I am realizing that no one place can provide all the answers to my questions, and so, I try to somehow tolerate the uncertainties of life.

O B. These days, I am quite confident in my decisions because I still know the only place that'll provide me with the right answers to my questions everytime.

O C. These days, I am finding more reasons to be unsure about many things, yet I am usually ready to say "yes" or "no" when the time comes to make a decision.

5.

O A. I feel the need to challenge people's expectations of the way things should be or what they think I should do because not everyone understands that I get to make my own choices and opinions.

O B. The whole world seems full of legitimate options that are available for me to pursue, and I find this helpful as I continue to make choices based on what I understand my strengths and skills to be.

O C. I don't want to rebel against what's already been determined as the right thing to do because if I did, that's when I would run the risk of compromising my decisions or doubting my strengths.

6.

O A. When it comes to the issue of capital punishment, I want to consider all the different perspectives and all the ways that everyone will be affected, and yet I've still been able to form and express my own opinions.

O B. When it comes to the issue of capital punishment, I appreciate that the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of so many different people probably mean that no one will ever figure out the "right" answer.

O C. When it comes to the issue of capital punishment, it bothers me that people try to complicate the issue by bringing up all sorts of things that shouldn't matter and lose sight of what's really important.

7.

O A. There's value in seeing theological truths as trustworthy and valid, but because religious issues are so complex, I try to understand everyone's beliefs, even if they're really different from mine.

O B. When it comes to religion, unless people understand what true theology is and that it must be accepted as authoritative for everyone, all sorts of wrong beliefs could be introduced.

O C. I find that religious matters are so complex and involve such a diversity of perspectives that no one should claim to have the "right" beliefs, especially since it's something that's left up to each individual.

8.

O A. It's helpful to consider as many perspectives from as many different sources as possible, but I don't mind making a decision based on what I know when the time comes to take action.

O B. Life is full of input from so many different sources that there's no real telling whose perspective is "right," so making sure everyone's voice is heard is more important than just doing something.

O C. A lot of time is wasted by too much reflection on everyone's opinions about problems and not enough action to solve them, especially since it's usually clear what the right solution should be.

9.

O A. When it comes to the question of abortion, I want to consider all the different perspectives and all the ways that everyone will be affected, and yet I've still been able to form and express my own opinions.

O B. When it comes to the question of abortion, I appreciate that the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of so many different people probably mean that no one will ever figure out the "right" answer.

O C. When it comes to the question of abortion, it bothers me that people try to complicate the issue by bringing up all sorts of things that shouldn't matter and lose sight of what's really important.

10.
O A. When it comes to my future career, I feel bombarded by so many different things that I could do, and it often confuses me to try to figure out what I will do tomorrow, much less down the road.

O B. When it comes to my future career, I have a very clear idea of what the right thing for me to do is and I understand what is expected of me to be able to accomplish this.

O C. When it comes to my future career, I feel comfortable with how things are looking and have a fairly settled idea of what I want to do, but I'm glad that there's still a lot more out there to be considered.

11.
O A. I don't have a lot of questions about the things I believe in because life's absolutes just seem obvious and appear to be clearly understood and agreed on by those who are truly in authority.

O B. It's important to me to be able to take a stand and know why I believe certain things, but that's not to take away from the merit of alternatives that haven't been heard or understood yet.

O C. I have a lot of questions about things that I'm supposed to believe in because I'm sure that there are a lot of other perspectives out there that are just as good as mine and could just as easily be right.

12.
O A. When it comes to the issue of homosexuality, I want to consider all the different perspectives and all the ways that everyone will be affected, and yet I've still been able to form and express my own opinions.

O B. When it comes to the issue of homosexuality, I appreciate that the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of so many different people probably mean that no one will ever figure out the "right" answer.

O C. When it comes to the issue of homosexuality, it bothers me that people try to complicate the issue by bringing up all sorts of things that shouldn't matter and lose sight of what's really important.

APPENDIX 3(b): The Psycho-Epistemological Style Indicator – Paragraph (PESI-P)

Please read the following paragraph and answer the questions below. This paragraph is supposed to reflect general trends of life-stages, so your responses should reflect the overall state of things over the last year or so, not merely a single incident or how you would like to be someday.

"I feel like I've come to a place in life where I can accept that the world is full of lots of different people with different beliefs and different ways of doing things. This means that the way I perceive and evaluate all that's around me is influenced differently from one situation to another. Since all these outside forces are constantly at work and have been shaping me from the beginning, there are parts of my life that are beyond my control; it's kind of like how my past decisions have somewhat determined certain things that I'll probably never do. At the same time, though, I am making my own decisions with each new situation and so there are probably some things that I'll be doing someday that I'm not doing now. This makes the world seem to be on the move and so I feel like what I've committed to is more a way of life than a fixed set of decisions. With this comes a great sense of responsibility to stay true to who I understand myself to be and to make choices that carry this through, and yet to remain flexible enough to change so I can continue to grow. I guess what I'm saying is that I feel settled by how I've defined my existence -there's a sense of relief and contentment and even comfort in the forms and styles of the role that I have chosen. But, that's not to say that I feel content with where I'm at, as though I've already figured out all the answers - it seems like there are always more things to learn and new ways to grow, while constantly improving how I apply myself. Likewise, it seems like I'll forever be on the move - balancing my new ways of thinking about things with what I continue to do about them."

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1. To what extent does the paragraph above describe you?

O This does NOT describe me well at all.

O This doesn't really describe me well.

O I am not sure whether this describes me well or not.

O This somewhat describes me well.

O This REALLY does describe me well.

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2. Choose the statement that describes you the most.

O I can't imagine ever identifying with this statement; there's too much of it that I can't relate with.

O I can imagine identifying with this statement someday; I'm just not there yet.

O This statement really seems to put into words how I view my life these days.

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3. Choose the statement that describes you the most.

O I don't identify with this statement, but probably could if it were more certain about life, the world, and the future.

O I don't identify with this statement, but probably could if it weren't so certain about life, the world, and the future.

O I don't identify with this statement, but I'm not sure why.

O I identify with what this statement says about life, the world, and the future.
