Detachment and Engagement in the Study of "Lived Experience"

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*I*n the context of theological education, the study of spirituality and related questions of spiritual formation have assumed particular prominence in recent years. The emergent study of spirituality and efforts to constitute it as a new theological discipline have been caught up at the center of discussions about the role of practice in theological education. The tendency among scholars of spirituality has been (1) to make a distinction between the study of spirituality and spiritual practice or formation and (2) to define spirituality. [1] In what follows, I want to suggest that that if we regard the decision of whether to define spirituality or not as the critical boundary, we will discover that the traditional distinction between theory and practice takes on a new and, in my view, more interesting shape. [2]

More generally, we can say that the question of whether or not to define key terms marks the boundary between the inside and the outside of a discipline. Choosing to define, in other words, locates us within a discipline. Thomas Tweed embraces the challenge of definition explicitly in his efforts to theorize religion. In fact, he argues that "scholars have a role-specific obligation to define constitutive disciplinary terms: *art* for art history, *music* for musicology, *literature* for literary studies, *culture* for anthropology, *space* for geography, and *language* for linguistics." Scholars of religion, he insists, have a role specific obligation to define "religion," the constitutive term in the study of religion. [3] So, too, he would undoubtedly argue, scholars of spirituality, in so far as they view the study of spirituality in disciplinary terms, have a role-specific obligation to define their constitutive terms. Choosing not to define locates us outside the discipline in question.

For the purposes of this essay, I will designate the first role, which defines its constitutive terms, as "engaged" with the discipline in question (in the sense of engaged in constituting). I will designate the second role, which eschews definitions of the constitutive terms, as "detached" from the discipline in question (in the sense of observing the efforts of others to constitute a discipline from some other vantage point such as history or cultural studies). Both roles, I will argue, have value. In the former role, we argue as insiders to the discipline—i.e. as definers and theoreticians—over the direction the discipline

ought to take; in the latter role, we examine the constitutive terms as discursive categories, asking how the terms are used by whom and for what purposes. Through shifts in "voice" or "posture," we can switch between these roles.

Here I want to argue for the value of cultivating both the engaged and detached roles relative to the study of spirituality and for the value of learning to move back and forth between these roles.[4] I have found that cultivating the ability to move self-consciously between these two roles sharpens the distinction between them, while at the same time allowing me to take on each more fully. As with learning a new languages and culture, I have found that cultivating the ability to switch roles has enhanced my students' and my ability to move between the humanistic and theological disciplines while reflecting on them as distinctive, albeit sometimes overlapping, communities of discourse and practice.

This argument grows out of the various roles I have assumed in my own life and work, including the roles of cultural historian, scholar of religion, theological educator and Buddhist-Christian practitioner. This particular essay is shaped by my interest in religious practice and by the different sets of presuppositions that I bring to religious practice when I shift between the role of a cultural historian and that of a (Buddhist-Christian) theological educator.

DETACHMENT VS. ENGAGEMENT

In a nice reshuffling of the terms I am using here, Robert Neville has identified the desire on the part of some scholars of religion to "cultivate a peculiar combination of distance from and engagement with the religious matters under study" as the mark of a distinctive form of secular spirituality.[5] Neville, however, uses objectivity, critical distance and historical consciousness as markers of academic "distance," rather than the issue of definition, as I want to do here. I think that using the latter way of marking the distinction provides a clearer line of demarcation between the two postures and, thus, a more fruitful basis for framing the distinction between the two approaches than the traditional distinctions between theological and religious studies approaches, subjective and objective, or theological and social scientific approaches. At the conclusion of this essay, I will return to Neville's claim that the movement between distance and engagement is a distinguishing mark of a form of "scholarly piety," assessing his claim in light of the distinction I am making between detachment and engagement.

By detached, I mean to suggest a genealogical approach that attempts to analyze and observe the making (and unmaking) of phenomena (experiences, movements, traditions, etc.) that have been deemed religious or spiritual. Such an approach does not begin with its own definition of religion or spirituality, but works with the definitions of those who claim to be religious or spiritual

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(or anti-religious, etc.). It is, thus, "detached" in the sense that it does not attempt to define (or "make") religion or spirituality, even if only for heuristic purposes. This is a posture of ascesis or restraint, which should not be confused with objectivity, as if the scholar had no commitments or social location. Susan Harding has described what I am calling a posture of restraint in terms of "standing in the gap between conscious belief and willful unbelief."[6] Detachment, in this sense, signals the intention to cultivate a posture of non-alignment that brings serious, sympathetic and critical attention to claims that may be described by their proponents as religious or anti-religious, spiritual or secular, or some combination thereof. It is an ideal to be pursued not a state to be achieved.[7]

The engaged approach, by way of contrast, does define religion (in religious or secular terms). In doing so, it engages, however minimally, in "making" (or "unmaking") religion or spirituality. It may do so only for heuristic or disciplinary purposes (i.e., conceptually or strategically) or with the more robust goal of "making" (or "unmaking") persons through processes of formation. Most scholars of religion, especially those in departments of religion, invest a certain amount of energy building up "religion" as a field or discipline. Journals, such as *Spiritus*, and most of its contributors are actively involved in this process of creating a field of spirituality studies. Many of the scholars who are most invested in creating such a discipline teach in theological schools and wrestle with the relationship between spirituality studies and spiritual formation. Engagement, however, may be non- or anti-religious as

well as religious. Scholars may actively or passively promote secularity by reducing religion or religious experience to non-religious terms. Engaged approaches, thus, may be informed by religious or secular definitions and/or theories of religion.[8] In an engaged posture, whether religious or non-religious, our concern is with what *we* think about religion or spirituality; in a detached posture, our concern is with what *others* think about religion or spirituality.

My recent book, *Fits, Trances, and Visions* was, for the most part, an experiment in writing from a detached vantage point about a type of experience that was (and is) highly contested. Specifying the kind of experiences I wanted to discuss posed challenges precisely because of their contested character. Not only did Protestants variously characterize the experiences in question positively as "religious experiences" and negatively as "enthusiasm," but academic disciplines designated similar sorts of experiences as "dissociation" (psychiatry); "trance," "spirit possession," and "altered states of consciousness" (anthropology); and "visions," "inspiration," "mysticism," and "ecstasy" (religious studies). These designations are not simply descriptive, but reflect the various historical and explanatory commitments of the disciplines themselves. Adopting any one of them would have tacitly positioned me in relation to disciplinary subject matters (e.g., religion, culture, or psychopathology) and explanatory commitments. Adopting any of these designations would have constituted the experiences I wanted to discuss in a particular theoretical way and, thus, would have entailed taking an engaged stance.[9]

What I chose to do instead was to move away from single terms to a more extended descriptive statement that was simultaneously intelligible across disciplines—religious, anthropological, and psychotherapeutic—and workable in terms of designating comparable subject matters at the level of lived historical experience. The key was to find a language that allowed me to compare phenomena across traditions of interpretation without unduly violating the lived experience of persons within those traditions.[10] In the end, I characterized the experiences I wished to discuss as "involuntary experiences," that is, experiences in which the subjects did not feel that they were the agent or cause of their own experience.[11] I specified that such experiences might include the loss of voluntary motor control, unusual sensory perceptions, and/or discontinuities of consciousness, memory or identity. Experiences that fit this description can be found in numerous places, including the New Testament (see, for example, Paul's descriptions of life in Christ [Gal. 2:20, 2 Cor. 12:2] and the account of his conversion in Acts 22:6–9), and the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (see, for example, the descriptions of Conversion and Dissociative Disorders). My intent in subsuming such disparate experiences under one descriptive heading was not to equate them, but to specify the feature that these experiences held in common in order

to say what the book was about, define the parameters of a comparative field, and identify relevant instances in the context of historical research.[12]

This approach allowed me to construct a narrative space in which I could surface the contentious dialogue between the various interpretive traditions. As one reviewer observed, "this theoretical emphasis upon intersection and interstitial space provides an excellent model for cultural historians tracking multiple systems in conversation with one another, particularly those who take seriously the ideological systems in place."[13] Adopting a detached posture not only allowed me to create an interstitial space for writing about the past, but also positioned me interstitially in relation to scholars and disciplines in the present. The book, as I have had to insist to some scholars in religion, is not about religious experience per se. It is about involuntary experiences that some deemed religious, while others did not. By positioning religious studies as a subset of cultural studies, both in terms of subject matter and methodology, I was able to explore the way in which the boundary between the religious and the not-religious was constructed and deconstructed in different historical contexts.

In the book's conclusion, I shifted voices, albeit briefly. In elaborating a "naturalistic theory of involuntary acts," I tacitly positioned myself in the "natural religion" camp along with William James and others, rather than as a supernaturalist or non-religious secularist. In doing so, I adopted an engaged posture and gave the more astute readers of the book a clue as to where I stand personally. I was only partially conscious of what I was doing at the time and didn't signal the shift as forthrightly as I might at this point. In an essay I am currently preparing for a largely Methodist audience, I am building on this naturalistic theory in an explicitly engaged posture in order to explore how we (now meaning "we Christians") might reflect theologically on these forms of experience. Cultivating a clear distinction between detached and engaged postures (as in the distinction here between "we cultural historians" and "we Christians") undercuts the usual distinctions between secular (humanistic, reductionistic, explanatory) and religious (theological, constructive, phenomenological). Writing in a detached mode, we can allow a full-range of competing voices religious, spiritual, and secular on to the page. Our role as author in this mode is to chair the debate, to interrogate and to clarify without taking sides. Writing in an engaged mode, we take a stand and make a case.

Since the book was written, I have been exploring the distinction between detached and engaged postures in the context of teaching as well. I am convinced that both the detached and engaged postures can be developed, albeit never fully realized. Both are the product of processes of formation. Either or both can be cultivated within religious and secular contexts. Clarifying—indeed, cultivating—this distinction allows us to approach our subject matter

in a way that maintains the integrity of both the detached and engaged approaches within a dialogical context. Doing so demands a high degree of reflexivity from both teachers and students and requires teachers, if not students, to develop an ability to switch voices or postures self-consciously within the classroom. The payoff of such an approach, I want to maintain, is a degree of clarity with respect to processes of academic and spiritual formation that can benefit students with either secular or theological interests. I have found the distinction particularly useful in mixed classes with students from both a theological school and a university-based school of religion.

CONSTITUTING AN OBJECT OF STUDY

What then would it mean to take a detached approach to the study of spirituality? Doing so, I would argue, means accepting up front that the study of spirituality (like the study of religion and most everything else) does not have a stable object of study. As scholars we have to take responsibility for constituting the objects we study. Those interested in the study of spirituality (again, like scholars of religion) usually begin by defining their object of study. If, as I would contend, a detached approach to the study of spirituality should allow us to track the making and unmaking of spirituality, that is the contestations over what it is and is not, then we cannot start by defining it. Instead, we need to locate that which others deem spiritual in relation to a larger comparative universe or, to paraphrase William James, we need to consider the place of spirituality in a more general series. This can be done in any number of ways depending on the scholar's comparative interests.

I will illustrate one way of doing this using the definition that Ewert Cousins and his coworkers used to launch the multi-volume series on World Spirituality:

> This series focuses on that inner dimension of the person called by certain traditions 'the spirit.' This spiritual core is the deepest center of the person. It is here that the person is open to the transcendent dimension; it is here that the person experiences ultimate reality. This series explores the discovery of this core, the dynamics of its development, and its journey to the ultimate goal. It deals with prayer, spiritual direction, the various maps of the spiritual journey, and the methods of advancement in the spiritual ascent.[14]

Spirituality is defined here in terms of depth, transcendence, and ultimacy. All of these terms could be contested in actual practice—is this really my or your deepest center or are we fooling ourselves? Is this dimension really transcendent or simply personal? Is this experience ultimate or merely contingent and circumstantial? Even though we would expect what counts as spiritual to be contested in actual practice, it is clear that this definition presupposes a process

of formation (the discovery and development of this core) and a set of practices (prayer, spiritual direction, maps) designed to foster this process. In addition to the many competing processes of spiritual formation, which not all would agree eventuate in knowledge of the same "ultimate reality," there are also many processes of formation (e.g., child-rearing, language acquisition, apprenticeships, or schooling) each with its own associated practices, which make no claim to being "spiritual." Locating the study of spirituality within this wider spectrum of processes of formation is one way to approach the study of spirituality in a more detached way.

To do so, we would have to specify what we meant by processes of formation. Assuming a detached stance does not mean that we do not define anything. It simply means that we use our definitions to define the boundaries of our topic and avoid imposing definitions on the discourses we want to investigate. If, to continue this example, we wanted to constitute the study of spiritually as a subset of the larger study of processes of formation, we might define formation as the processes whereby traditions of practice and the worldviews embedded therein become the lived experience of individuals or groups.

This formulation has certain features. First, there is a widespread consensus among scholars that spirituality should be defined in relation to "lived experience."[15] Generic definitions specify this experience in relation to a "religious ideal" (Principe) or to the "spiritual life" (Schneiders). Christian definitions typically specify the object of study as, for example, "lived Christian faith" (Schneiders) or "the lived experience of life in the Spirit" (Principe) or "the lived experience of Christian belief" (McGinn).[16] Defining processes of formation in relation to "lived experience" neatly encompasses what many want to call spirituality under this larger heading. Second, specifying "lived experience" in relation to "traditions of practice and the worldviews embedded therein" shifts the primary focus of study away from worldviews to the practices within which such worldviews are embedded. As the definition formulated for the World Spirituality series illustrates, most who study spirituality presuppose some sort of link between spirituality and spiritual practices. In this broad formulation, however, "practice" does not simply refer to religious or spiritual practices, but would include secular practices as well.

If, when approaching the study of spirituality (or religion) in an engaged mode, we typically, if not always self-consciously, signal our intent by offering a definition of spirituality (or religion), we can signal our interest in spirituality (or religion) without defining it by referring to experiences deemed religious or spiritual rather than "religious or spiritual experiences." Thus, I would argue that in a detached mode, the study of spirituality could focus on the processes whereby spiritual persons or groups are made, that is, the processes whereby

traditions of practice and the worldviews embedded therein, which are deemed religious or spiritual by their practitioners, become the "lived experience" of individuals or groups.

Focusing on traditions of practice that are deemed religious or spiritual by their practitioners highlights the fact that what counts as religious, spiritual, or sacred is contested both within and between traditions. Processes of formation typically take place in dialogue (often hostile dialogue) with both insiders and outsiders to the tradition regarding what should count (if anything) as authentically religious or spiritual. This means that we cannot study processes of formation apart from ideas about the process of formation. Attention to ideas about the process of formation proffered by both promoters and critics, is crucial if we are to understanding what is at stake for various players with respect to any particular way of "making" spiritual or religious persons. If we, as scholars, constitute experiences as religious, we lose sight of key questions regarding the speaker, the audience, and the aims and consequences of particular ways of constituting experience and forming religious persons.[17] In doing so, we obscure the process whereby particular persons or groups constitute their experience as religious or spiritual (or not); we lose sight, in other words, of the other.

DISCOVERING AN OBJECT OF STUDY

If we always refrain from constituting experiences as religious (or not) and attend exclusively to the ways that others do so, we risk losing sight of ourselves and, at the same time, lose the chance to reflect on what it feels like to experience something as religious (or not) from the inside. While some scholars may offer definitions of religion and spirituality for purely heuristic reasons, I think it is fair to assume that, in most cases, particular definitions appeal to scholars on multiple levels and for various reasons, not all of them rational and conscious. In fact, I would suggest that whenever we are involved subjectively with our object of study—positively or negatively—we don't normally feel like we constitute the object of our study, as much as we find or discover it. As one of the reviewers of this essay commented, contributors to *Spiritus* are not only creating, but also "discovering a field of spirituality studies, since that is really what it feels like most of the time, groping one's way forward in search of language and methods to enable one to adequately express a particular way of seeing things."[18]

Although I constructed the object of my study so to avoid defining the discourse I wanted to examine, I too experienced this process subjectively as one of discovery, in this case the experience of discovering a language and method that would allow me to express a particular way of seeing things ("indeterminately" in my case) after a long period of groping in the dark.

Looking back on the process, I imagine that my subjective feeling of discovery was only partially the result of my conscious desire to come at an academic problem in a way that respected the voices of others. It was undoubtedly informed as well by my unarticulated desire to break out of the rigidities of a particular voice and to allow myself the freedom to move between the various voices or postures that I could identify with internally. My ability to identify with various voices or postures (and conversely my inability to identify with just one) is undoubtedly a product of the divergent and undoubtedly partial processes through which I have been formed—secular, academic, and religious.

If these experience can be generalized, it suggests that in so far as we are "formed," whether as academics or religious or secular persons, we bring our own lived experience, i.e., the internalized traditions of practice and the worldviews embedded therein, to the objects of our study.[19] Since this process of formation, even in academia, is only partially conscious and intentional, its contours are only partially available to us. Reflection and analysis can bring it more fully into view, but even then much that we simply take for granted undoubtedly remains hidden from us. Whether in religious or secular or academic contexts, this process of discovery takes place through engaging in the practices that make up a particular way or ways of life. We discover an academic object of study through the practices of research, writing, and discussion. These practices have become second nature to us through years of participating in the tradition first as students and then as teachers. Similarly, religious persons discover the object of their quest (whether God, Enlighten-ment, salvation, etc.) through the practices of worship, meditation, prayer and so forth inculcated by the tradition. "Spiritual but not religious" persons, while rejecting traditional practices, typically are involved in other practices, e.g. reading books or attending workshops, conferences, or retreats, that provide an alternative formation process.

There are various ways we might think about this seeming contradiction between making and finding an object of study (or the object of a religious or spiritual quest). At this point I simply want to indicate that in working through the process of constituting and discovering of an object of study in two different voices (detached and engaged), we have identified four different aspects of the process of formation: the study of processes of formation (1A), the study of ideas about formation (1B), the actual process of formation itself (2A), and the task of reflecting on that process from inside the tradition (2B). Each of these processes can involve different methods of study and/or practice.

METHODS OF STUDY

The study of processes of formation (1A) and ideas about formation (1B) can be distinguished from the actual process of formation (2A) and the task of

reflection on that process from inside a tradition (2B), but not, I want to suggest on the basis of the usual distinctions between "study" and "practice" or even "theory" and "practice." Three of these activities (1A, 2A, and 2B) necessarily involve study; the fourth (2A) may involve study (e.g., the study of sacred texts). All can be construed as involving both theoretical and practical knowledge and all can be implicated in processes of formation. 1A/B and 2A/B, however, are typically embedded in different processes of formation. The study of processes of formation (1A) and ideas about formation (1B) may be pursued by anyone open to formation in the practices of the academy. Students may pursue studies of this sort within a doctoral program in a secular university that has no connections to processes of religious or spiritual formation. In doing so, they would enter into a process of academic formation under the direction of academic insiders whose insider status is established by academic traditions (i.e., degrees, promotions, tenure) rather than through their participation in specific religious or spiritual traditions. Conversely, the task of forming persons religiously or spirituality (2A) may be taken up by the traditions and reflected on by persons formed within those traditions (2B) independent of processes of academic formation. Theological schools that aim to combine processes of academic and religious or spiritual formation occupy a complicated institutional middle ground. Faculty in secular institutions, whether they are personally religious or not, confront an equally complicated task when faced with classrooms of students with various religious commitments or none at all. In both cases, I think the ability to make and demonstrate the distinction between detached and engaged postures can help cut through that complexity.

Sandra Schneiders' influential "hermeneutical approach" to the study of spirituality can be assessed in light of this argument. Her three-fold method (description, critical analysis, and constructive interpretation) unites what I am calling the study of the process of formation, the study of ideas about formation, and reflection on the process of formation under the rubric of the study of spirituality as distinguished from its praxis (what I am calling spiritual formation). Given the distinction I want to make between detached and engaged postures, I find Schneider's notion of "constructive interpretation" problematic. The problem lies not in the word interpretation, since we are inevitably involved in interpretation in both detached and engaged postures. Interpretation in a detached mode interprets the phenomena studied using the definitions of religion or spirituality offered by those being studied. Interpretation in an engaged mode interprets the phenomena studied in light of one's own definition of religion or spirituality, whether idiosyncratic or traditional. Schneider's insistence that the study of spirituality should encompass more than the methods of history (broadly conceived) suggests to me that what she

calls "constructive interpretation" corresponds with what I am calling interpretation in an engaged mode.

Indeed, Schneiders indicates that she developed the hermeneutic model in an attempt to overcome what she took to be the limits of the purely historical approach to the study of spirituality advocated by scholars such as Bernard McGinn and Walter Principe. A strictly historical approach is limited, she argued, because "many realities in the sphere of spirituality . . . are essentially transhistorical or outside the proper sphere of the discipline of history."[20] I agree with Schneiders on this point; much that appears as reality from an engaged point of view lies outside the proper sphere of the discipline of history. Although neither McGinn nor Principle adopt a fully detached posture vis-à-vis their sources (both define spirituality at the outset), the conventions of historical study do limit the study of spirituality in certain ways. While historians have (or should have) no problem making the transhistorical claims of their subjects the object of their study, it is generally considered poor form for historians to make transhistorical truth claims in their role as historians. As Schneiders indicates elsewhere, it is "precisely because the historian cannot engage with the subject matter of the discourse *as such* [that] the historical approach to spirituality, if used exclusively, does limit what can count as [the] object of study."[21]

In order to engage the subject of the discourse as such, however, the scholar must assume an engaged posture. The scholar must have his or her own views, in other words, as to what those transhistorical realities are. Constructive work in spirituality studies, I am arguing, presupposes this knowledge. This knowledge is typically specified by defining what the scholar means by "spirituality." This does not mean that historians must foreswear constructive interpretation of the sort that Schneiders advocates; it simply means that historians qua historians typically do not transgress the boundaries of time and space. As scholars or as persons of faith (or not), we can always make claims that transcend the discipline of history; we should do so, I am suggesting, in a way that openly signals that we are stepping outside our role as historians and adopting a more engaged posture.

Frohlich's recent radicalizing critique of Schneiders, offered from a vantage point within spirituality studies (2B), parallels the one I have just offered from without. Following Schneiders and others, she specifies that "the material object—the actual thing that we study when we study spirituality—consists of constructed expressions of human meaning." She recognizes that, like the indeterminate object I specified above, virtually "everything human beings have ever made or done potentially fits this definition." Then, signaling her engaged posture, she supplies a definition of spirituality, arguing that "the formal object, which names the particular aspect under which the material object is studied, is the human spirit fully in act." She concludes with the

methodologically significant insight that "when we select, claim understanding of, or evaluate something as 'having to do with spirituality,' we do so based on our own living of spirituality—that is, our own spirits 'fully in act.'"[22] Spiritual persons and, by extension, scholars of spirituality "make spirituality" based on their own internal understanding of what spirituality is. If Frohlich is right, and I think she is, this means that we have no objective grounds on which to define spirituality (or religion) and thus no grounds for constructing a discipline of spirituality studies that will allow non-spiritually minded persons to approach the actual object of their study (or, in Schneiders's words, "the subject matter of the discourse as such") in the positive way that Schneiders envisions. Since the non-spiritually minded person has not actually experienced the actual object, they must either approach it skeptically, i.e., in a negatively engaged posture, or on the basis of the claims that others make about it, i.e., in a detached mode.

Scholars have also discussed the role that actual practice should play in the study of spirituality. While Schneiders has reservations about "the inclusion of any kind of mandatory practice or the direct use of such personal practice in the construction or persecution of research projects," Elizabeth Liebert argues that "practice provides one of the constitutive elements of our discipline's approach." Like Schneiders, Liebert sees the move from a detached to an engaged posture as integral to spirituality studies; indeed, she views it as the distinctive feature that spirituality studies brings to theological disciplines that may focus on the same content, such as systematic theology and history. For Liebert, however, practice, understood as "a matter of doing always what it is that we study (as well as studying what we do)[,] . . . offers a possible context for access to the immediate experience of the spiritual life, the subject matter of the discipline."[23] Spiritual practices do offer access to the "immediate experience of the spiritual life," in so far as they promote a shift in our inner world or worldview or, in plain language, call us, in some sense, to conversion. Engaged scholarship, as Liebert makes clear, aims at transformation. Detached scholarship may also lead to transformation, but such transformation as does occur is not normatively driven. There are, in other words, few if any expectations regarding transformation—and the direction that such transformation takes, when it does occur, is open-ended.

Although Liebert writes as a Christian working from within the tradition, she argues that outsiders to a tradition can also make "practices constitutive of their scholarly work." Given that for Liebert, "'[p]ractice' is the intentional and repeated bringing of one's lived spirituality into the various theaters of one's scholarly work and attending to what happens when one does,"[24] she seems to be assuming that all who are engaged in spirituality studies are insiders in the sense that they have a "lived spirituality" to bring to their scholarly work even if they are outsiders to the particular tradition being

studied.[25] If Liebert is assuming that all students of spirituality understand themselves as spiritual and possessed of a "living spirituality," I would find this claim problematic. If she means that all scholars, if they want to be transformed by their scholarship, can bring their lived experience (religious, non-religious, or anti-religious) to bear on their scholarly study (whether they are studying spirituality or something else) and attend to what happens when they do so, I would agree completely. Anyone may adopt an engaged posture with respect to their scholarship on the basis of their lived experience; scholars may be transformed in one-way or another through this engagement. Liebert, however, promotes engaged scholarship at the expense of a more detached approach. She associates the latter with false claims to objectivity and disparages it for "keep[ing] the teachers and students disconnected from what they know and what they want to know."[26] I would argue that detached scholarship, like engaged scholarship, allows us to see some things, while obscuring others. The method we pursue, at any given time, should reflect what we actually want to know.

THE FRUITS OF DETACHMENT

In studying both the process of formation and the interpretations of it proffered by both promoters and critics, the detached approach promises a way beyond the frequently opposed phenomenological and social scientific approaches to the study of religion. While the former makes lived religious experience central to the study of religion, Eliade and others associated with this approach argued that such study had to be done "non-reductively."[27] They understood such experiences as inherently religious and argued that interpreting them in other terms was illegitimate. Their critics charged that the phenomenological focus on religious experience masked a crypto-theological agenda and argued that the task of the study of religion was to explain religious phenomena in non-theological terms. A detached approach starts from the premise that experiences are not inherently religious or spiritual, but that we constitute them as such (or not) through formal processes of definition and reflection and informal process of recognition in practice.[28] Such an approach assumes that the meaning of experience is always contested and makes this process of making and unmaking the focus of scholarly attention.

Such an approach, it is true, does not establish clear boundaries between the study of religion or spirituality and the study of human behavior and culture more generally. It has the advantage, however, of allowing (or forcing) us to recognize that the boundary between the religious and the non-religious, the sacred and the profane, the study of religion as lived and the study of human life in general is fluid and contested. When we leave the problem of defining spirituality up to those we are studying, we position ourselves in such

a way as to seek what was or is at stake for others in this regard. Methodologically, this move is analogous to defining the history of Christianity in terms of the self-understanding of self-professed Christians. As a historian, I am content to leave the definition of "spiritual" and "religious" or "Christian" to the "makers" of the religion: broadly defined, in this case, to those that are being studied. When approaching the study of religion from a detached perspective, our task is largely descriptive and analytical. Our primary task is to examine what does and does not "count" as religious or spiritual or sacred at the level of lived experience for those we are studying. As such, our work should analyze rather than attempt to adjudicate these contestations and constitute our subject matter in such a way as to make this possible.

THE FRUITS OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement, by way of contrast, allows us to give voice to our point of view with respect to religion or spirituality and in the process illuminates where we are standing and reveals the formative processes that have shaped us. If, as a cultural historian, I prize and cultivate detachment, in other roles—as religious practitioner, skeptic, theological educator, amateur theologian, and occasional theorist of religion—I do more than simply describe or analyze religion or spirituality. In these roles I create, destroy, embody, and am transformed by processes that I take to be religious or spiritual.

As faculty at a theological school, my colleagues and I are all positioned as insiders with respect to the process of Christian spiritual formation, whether or not we fully assume that voice or role. As theological educators, our task is not simply to study traditions of practice deemed religious or spiritual by (other) Christians. In so far as we see ourselves as Christians (i.e., "makers" of the tradition), we are called upon to have opinions about what constitutes or would enhance Christian practice in our specific context. As such, our task is not only to analyze, but also to adjudicate between competing views as far as necessary in order for us to continue to practice what we deem to be a Christian way of life.[29] Scott Cormode's work on the formation of religious leaders is congruent with the approach to the study of spirituality that I have been advocating. He challenges us as Christians and theological educators to engage in a process of *constructing* faithful action, which is precisely what I take to be the task of insiders to a tradition. In fact, he argues that the fundamental task of religious leaders is to "define spiritual reality;" that is, to remind "a congregation or other religious organization that each activity is laden with theological importance regardless of its deceptively secular appearance."[30]

As a scholar of religion, as a historian of American religion (as opposed to simply a cultural historian), and as a faculty member in a school of religion in a secular university, my colleagues and I use the term "religion" strategically to

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construct both fields of inquiry (e.g. the study of religion or American religious history) and institutional structures (e.g., a school or department of religion). When we offer definitions of "religion" or construct theories of "religion," we are making constructive contributions to the study of religion as insiders to that academic tradition. While the academic study of religion might be construed by some as itself a religious tradition, it is definitely a tradition committed to the study of religion, arguing about what "religion" is, and debating how best we might study it.

As a religious practitioner with a secular upbringing and subsequent history of involvement with a variety of Christian and non-Christian traditions, I have been shaped in fragmentary and partial ways by a variety of traditions and yet remain mindful of the differences, and indeed contradictions, between them. Cultivating a sense of detachment through academic work is undoubtedly one of the ways that I keep these competing worldviews in perspective and, at the same time, allow myself to enter into them more fully. A desire for depth, balance, and movement in both my academic and spiritual life lead me to emphasize voice, role, and posture, rather than fixed notions of identity.

POSTURE, VOICE, ROLE AND IDENTITY

While we might assume that scholars who are themselves religious will approach the study of religion or the study of a particular tradition from a religious perspective, I see no reason why this should necessarily be the case.

All scholars can or should be able to step back, when appropriate, to allow others to define spiritual reality (or religion) and take what others deem to be religious or spiritual as the object of their study. All scholars, religious or secular, can take an ascetic approach to the study of religion if they so choose. Scholars who are religious can also, if they so desire, define spiritual reality and incorporate those definitions self-consciously into their scholarly work. Scholars of religion who are not themselves religious can also, if they so desire, make the case that what others take to be spiritual or religious realities are better understood or explained in secular terms. (Religious persons, of course, regularly do this as well in relation to religious or spiritual claims that they take to be false.)

Many scholars of religion have argued that the study of religion should be distinguished by a stance that is, in so far as possible, neutral or impartial toward its object of study, especially in the context of state-funded universities. While I have used the term "detached" rather than "neutral" or "impartial," the net effect is similar. A detached posture, while appropriate at some times in the context of a theological school classroom, is certainly not appropriate at all times. Theological educators must be free to argue for particular understandings of a religious or spiritual tradition in a manner that is self-evidently engaged and constructive. If, as I have argued, constructing a theory of religion or simply adopting a definition of religion signals at least a strategic engagement in the making of religion, then it is hard to see how a consistently detached posture is any more appropriate in a religious studies classroom in a secular university than in a theological school.

If we think of engagement and detachment as fixed postures or identities then their practical utility is limited. There are few contexts where we would want to be consistently engaged or detached. Some scholars of religion, however, have suggested that the best way to think about neutrality or impartiality is as a matter of role or voice, which is the approach I have adopted here. Peter Donovan, for example, argues that the best way to conceive of neutrality in the study of religion is by analogy to the role neutrality expected of a committee chair, judge, or umpire. David Huffort argues that impartiality is a matter of voice. This would imply that our "detached voice" might simply be one in a repertoire of "voices."[31] The idea that "neutrality" is a matter of role or voice suggests that it would be possible for scholars to shift between detached and engaged roles or voices in the context of teaching and writing. Just as a committee chair can step out of the role of chair and address a question as a faculty member, so too we may want to cultivate our ability to switch roles or voices in the classroom or in our written work. Doing so, in fact, could allow us to clarify the distinction between detached and engaged postures and in doing so model a more reflexive approach to scholarship.

If scholars who are religious and those who are not can both practice detachment, can the same be said for engagement? Are these processes fully reciprocal? Certainly, as already indicated, anyone may engage with an idea or practice deemed religious or spiritual by others in terms of their own lived experience or by comparing it with their own ideas and practices. This is what we might call engagement at the level of dialogue (i.e., mainly at the level of ideas and ideas about practices). The more interesting question is whether it is possible to try out a religious or spiritual practice, to find out something of how it feels physically and emotionally to engage in a practice and assume, to some extent, the worldview of committed practitioners, without actually becoming a committed practitioner? Is it possible to engage, in other words, at the level of practice while at the same time maintaining a degree of distance or detachment? While Buddhist and Christian monastics have been engaging in dialogue at this level for some time,[32] monastic dialogue is probably not the most appropriate model for the academic classroom. A more apt model, as Victoria Rue has suggested, is that of an actor assuming a role in a theatrical performance.[33] Anyone whose religious tradition is not ideologically opposed to theater can assume an engaged posture in the way one might take on a theatrical role, empathetically studying the mindset and life situation of the character and then entering as fully as possible into the character's life world. Religious persons could in this way enter into traditions other than their own, both religious and secular, while secular persons could enter into a variety of religious traditions. The performance model brings a sense of detachment into the process of deepened engagement. Even if performers lose themselves in their parts, they will be brought back to themselves when the performance is over.[34]

THE VIRTUES AND DANGERS OF PRACTICE

As Victoria Rue points out, "conventional teaching stresses analysis and critical thinking" through lectures and class discussion, while "enactment offers somatic learning." Processes of religious or spiritual formation typically place greater emphasis on what we usually take to be somatic learning than do processes of academic formation. This may be what Leibert and others have in mind when they stress the importance of doing what we study rather than just studying what we do. Incorporating exercises that promote somatic learning into the academic classroom under the rubric of *acting* religious or secular rather than *becoming* religious or secular, allows students to try things out without having to adopt them. The consequences of such an approach would be unpredictable. Some might be drawn to an enacted practice tradition and choose to adopt it fully (i.e. convert). Others might find that the enactment of various practice traditions fostered an increased sense of detachment from all traditions of practice or sparked a desire to blend one or more traditions, or

confirmed them in their previous commitments. Whatever the student's response, the practice of moving between detached and engaged postures, whether lived or enacted, would tend to promote reflexivity and heightened self-awareness.

If, however, we concede that even the most conventional academic teaching involves both practices (e.g. the writing of papers) and processes of somatic learning (e.g. the ability to sit still through a lecture or type for hours at a computer), then we can interpret the efforts of an undergraduate or a seminarian to write a credible history paper for a history class as an exercise in acting like a historian (i.e. like one who creates histories as opposed to just reading them) rather than becoming a historian. Students who want to become historians would have to apply to graduate programs in which they would be formally trained as historians, just as those who want to participate deeply in a religious tradition would have to do more than try out a few practices. If this parallel makes sense, then most academics know something about somatic or experiential learning even if we are not conscious of what we know.

Pierre Bourdieu's insights into the difficulties involved in describing the "two-fold truth" of all "social games" provides a way to think about engagement and detachment in relation to both academic and religious practices. If we understand both sorts of practices as "social games," those who observe the game from afar are in a detached posture, while the players (and, at another level, their fans) are engaged. Such games, Bourdieu argues, have a "two-fold truth," one based on objectification (as opposed to objectivity) and the other on participation. Social games are "very difficult to describe in their two-fold truth," he says, because "[t]hose who are caught up in them have little interest in seeing the game objectified, and those who are not are often ill-placed to experience and feel everything that can only be learned and understood when one takes part in the game." The result, he says, is that the descriptions of those who watch from afar "fail to evoke the enchanted experience of the believer" and, as such, usually "strike the participants as both trivial and sacrilegious."[35] Cultivating our ability to move in a disciplined and reflexive way between detachment and engagement provides a promising way to enhance our ability to describe the "two-fold truth" of both the academic and religious "games" that human beings play.

When we adopt an engaged posture that involves our body and our emotions in deep ways—when we throw ourselves into the game——we run the risk of being so caught up in the game that we can no longer step back and observe. We can use the cerebral practices of the academy to avoid this danger, but in doing so run the risk of being so caught up in the academic game that we lose any visceral sense of the emotional or bodily knowledges that the academic game downplays. The ability to move between detached and engaged

postures—the ability to play various games and stand back from them—has to be cultivated or developed over time. With practice, we can allow ourselves, if we so desire, both to move more deeply into these games and objectify them more fully.

Doing so has potential benefits from both the engaged and the detached perspectives. From an engaged perspective this movement allows us to enter more deeply into traditions by incorporating an awareness of both somatic and emotional as well as intellectual knowledges and opens up, although it does not press, the possibility of transformation at these levels. From a detached perspective, tapping into somatic and emotional knowledges by acting religious or acting secular might well give students a more visceral sense of how "systems of symbols," to quote Clifford Geertz, are clothed "with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations [established by those symbols] seem uniquely realistic."[36]

A SECULAR PATH TO SPIRITUAL DEPTHS?

As indicated at the outset, Robert Neville has argued that the cultivation of "a peculiar combination of distance from and engagement with the religious matters under study" marks a particular style of "scholarly piety." In his words:

> Some scholars with deep attainments in this spiritual discipline are alienated from and perhaps hostile to organized religion, although others live traditional religious lives while also cultivating the peculiar piety of scholarship. The distinguishing mark of this scholarly piety is its combination of distance and engagement.[37]

Although I did not write this with that idea in mind, the movement between detachment and engagement can certainly be understood in that way from an engaged perspective. Neville's argument rests on a particular definition of spirituality. Building on that definition, Neville constructs a new form of secular, scholarly piety that reframes distinctions such as the ones I have been making from a spiritual perspective.[38] From an engaged vantage point, whether we see the movement between detachment and engagement as a form of secular spiritual practice depends on how we define spirituality. From a detached vantage point, the cultivation of the ability to move between detachment and engagement is simply a practice that some may want to construct as spiritual, others as secular, and still others as a form of "secular spirituality."

I have no particular need to define either religion or spirituality in the context of this essay, and hence, no particular stake in deciding if what I have been arguing for here is indeed a secular path to spiritual depths or not. Clarifying the two postures—detached and engaged—based on whether one defines religion or spirituality *is* important to me. As I have tried to stress,

these two postures do not map neatly on to conventional distinctions between theory and practice, secular and religious, or theological studies and the study of religion. Both detached and engaged postures involve some sort of practice. Both secular and religious persons can and do assume either a detached or an engaged stance. Either a detached or engaged posture may be assumed in the context of theological studies or the study of religion. Recognizing this, I have found, enhances my ability to move between the humanistic disciplines of the university and the theological disciplines of the seminary without stereotyping either and provides my students, who come from both worlds and in many cases are also trying to move back and forth between them, a language to talk about both their experience and the experience of others at greater depth.

NOTES

1. Walter Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," *Sciences Religieuses / Studies in Religion* 12/1 (1983): 139–41; Walter Principe, *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), s.v., "Spirituality, Christian"; Elizabeth Leibert and Andrew Deeter Dreitcer, "The Spirituality of the Teacher," *The Way Supplement* 84 (August 1995): 40–42. Bernard McGinn, "The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 1/2 (Fall 1993): 4–6.

2. In this essay, I am drawing on comparable discussions among scholars of religion regarding the problems of definition. I will be using these discussions to argue for a different approach to the study of spirituality in which the need to define spirituality is not assumed, but rather chosen depending on what the scholar wants to know. Because the conceptual problems besetting the study of religion and the study of spirituality are similar, I will refer to both in tandem at a number of points in this essay. This does not mean, however, that I am equating the two in terms of definition or assuming that spirituality is simply or necessarily a subset of religion. For further reading on the debate within the field of religion, see: Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993); William E. Arnal, "Definition" in *Guide to the Study of Religion,* Willi Braun and Russell T. McCutcheon, eds., (London & New York: Cassell, 2000); Timothy Fitzgerald*, The Ideology of Religious Studies* (New York: Oxford, 2000); Kathleen Sands, "Tracking Religion: Religion Through the Lens of Cultural Studies," *CSSR Bulletin* 31/3 (Sept. 2002); Gustavo Benavides, "Religious Studies between Science and Ideology," *Religious Studies Review* 27 (2001); Benavides, "Power, Intelligibility and the Boundaries of Religions," in *Retrofitting Syncretism?* ed. William Cassidy, *Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 27/3 (2001); Thomas Tweed, "Sacroscapes: Toward a Theory of Religion," unpublished manuscript will appear as a chapter in *Crossings: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, forthcoming); John H. Gagnon, "The Self, Its Voices, and Their Discord," *Investigating Subjectivity: Research on Lived Experience*, Carolyn Ellis and Michael G. Flaherty, eds., (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992).

3. Tweed, "Sacroscapes," 2–4.

4. Some might argue that the relationship between the theological schools and religious communities is such that one cannot simply switch in and out of one's role as a theologian, any more than one can switch in and out of one's role as a religious practitioner. In so far as the study of spirituality finds itself at home in the theological schools and amongst the theological disciplines, does it not differ in significant ways, we

might ask, from the study of religion as it is pursed in secular universities? Rather than minimize the obvious connection between theological schools and religious communities, I am making the perhaps controversial assumption that participation in communities of various sorts, including religious and ethnic communities, is also a matter of assuming a role. I will assume it is possible—though not all would consider it legitimate—to move in and out of our roles in relation to specific communities.

5. Robert Cummings Neville, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," in Peter H. Van Ness, ed., *Spirituality and the Secular Quest* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 129.

6. Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), xi–xii.

7. As interior disciplines, we can fruitfully compare detachment in this sense with the detachment that Jesuits cultivate by means of the Ignatian spiritual exercises or Buddhist meditation practices that cultivate the ability to simply observe the thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations that arise. Although they are embedded in different traditions and cultivated for different ends, all three forms of practice seek to cultivate the ability to distance oneself from one's personal needs, desires, or views in service of some larger goal (i.e. to understand others [academic], to glorify God [Jesuit], or to escape suffering [Buddhist]). In none of these three instances does the ability to distance oneself from one's needs, desires, or views imply that one is not aware of those needs, desires, or views. The cultivation of detachment in the academic sense progressively expands our ability, and thus our freedom, to explore positions other than our own.

8. In lumping together those secular scholars who employ stipulative or taxonomic definitions of religion for heuristic purposes with those who espouse explicit theological commitments, I am taking sides with Arnal (see above) in a current debate among the more secularly oriented scholars of religion. Disagreement focuses, to a large extent, on how these scholars assess the implications of Talal Asad's work *(The Genealogy of Religion)* for the study of religion, cf. Arnal, 30–33 and Russell McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 133–34.

9. Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 7–9.

10. Pierre Bourdieu points to the difficulty here, when he writes: "Since one cannot be content either with the primary vision or with the vision to which the work of objectification gives access, one can only strive to *hold together*, so as to integrate them, both the point of view of the agents who are caught up in the object and the point of view on this point of view which the work of analysis enables one to reach by relating position-takings to the positions from which they are taken" (*Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000], 189).

11. This statement, as Tom Tweed noted, functions as a working definition of "involuntary experiences." As I indicate in the section on "Constituting an Object of Study," assuming a detached stance does not mean that we do not define anything. It simply means that we use our definitions to define the boundaries of our topic (e.g. involuntary experiences) and avoid imposing definitions on the discourses (e.g. religious experience) we are trying to track historically.

12. Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions,* 9.

13. Marilyn J. Westercamp, "Review of *Fits, Trances, and Visions*," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 33/1 (Summer 2002): 96–97.

14. Van Ness, *Secular Spirituality*, xii.

15. The term "lived experience" as opposed to just "experience" emphasizes the subjective dimension of experience as it is lived as opposed to experience as an abstract philosophical concept. See, for example, Ellis and Flaherty, *Investigating Subjectivity*. Within the study of religion, David Hall credits both French sociology and recent interest in the "cultural and ethnographic approaches to the study of religion" for the recent stress on

"lived religion" (David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), vii.

16. Bernard McGinn surveys a range of definitions of Christian spirituality in "The Letter and the Spirit: Spirituality as an Academic Discipline," *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 1/2 (Fall 1993): 4–7; see also, Principe, "Spirituality, Christian"; Principe, "Toward Defining Spirituality," *Sciences Religieuses/Studies in Religion* 12/2 (1983): 135; Principe, "Pluralism in Christian Spirituality," 54; Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach," 9; Schneiders, "The Study of Christian Spirituality: Contours and Dynamics of a Discipline," CSB 6/1 (Spring 1998): 1; Sandra M. Schneiders, "Spirituality in the Academy," *Theological Studies* 50 (1989): 678. Mary Froelich agrees with Schneiders that "on a practical level, what we study is lived, experiential spirituality," but she reframes this as "constructed expressions of human meaning" ("Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," *Spiritus* 1/1 [Spring 2001]: 65, 71).

17. See Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method," in Braun and McCutcheon, ed., 395–98.
18. Reader's comments, September 16, 2002.
19. For a parallel discussion of traditions as both "made" and "given," see Terrence W. Tilley, *Inventing Catholic Tradition* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 13–65.
20. Schneiders, "A Hermeneutical Approach," 12.
21. Schneiders, personal correspondence (emphasis added).
22. "Spiritual Discipline, Discipline of Spirituality: Revisiting Questions of Definition and Method," *Spiritus* 1/1 [Spring 2001]: 71, 73 (emphasis in original).
23. Schneiders, "A Hermeneutic Approach," 13; Elizabeth Liebert, "The Role of Practice in the Study of Christian Spirituality," *Spiritus* 2/1 (Spring 2001): 37, 41.
24. Liebert, "The Role of Practice," 45, 37
25. The question of who counts as in insider (or native) is actually quite complex. See, for example, Kirin Narayan, "How Native Is a 'Native' Anthropologist?" *American Anthropologist* 95 (1993): 671–686.
26. Liebert, "The Role of Practice," 39.
27. Rosalind Shaw, "Feminist Anthropology and the Gendering of Religious Studies," in McCutcheon, *Manufacturing Religion*, 105. Shaw cites Douglas Allen, *Structure and Creativity in Religion: Hermeneutics in Mircea Eliade's Phenomenology of Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1978) and Guilford Dudley, *Religion on Trial: Mircea Eliade and his Critics* (Philadelphia: Temple, 112).
28. In assuming that "the sacred is simply whatever is *deemed* sacred by any group," I am assuming that "sacredness is a value placed on objects rather than a power that shines through objects because of their intrinsic, extraordinary qualities." This, William Paden has argued, is the key difference between the way Durkheim and Eliade understood the sacred. In the latter case, the sacred is reified; in the former case, it has "no content of its own. It is purely relational [relative to that which is deemed "profane"]" (William A. Paden, "Before 'the Sacred' Became Theological: Rereading the Durkheimian legacy," in Thomas A. Idinopulos and Edard A.Yonan, eds., *Religion and Reductionism* [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994], 202–3). This is also a presupposition of a reflexive approach to the study of experience; see David Hufford, "Reflexivity in Belief Studies," in *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion*, ed. Russell T. McCutcheon (London & New York: Cassell, 1999), 294–95.
29. As Daniel Patte has argued, adjudicating between views does not require us to reject views we do not personally choose to adopt as inauthentic or illegitimate. We can acknowledge the legitimacy of a variety of views of what constitutes authentic Christian practice without viewing any of them as absolute or universally binding on all Christians. Doing so, however, leaves us with the task of specifying why we deem certain approaches of sufficient value for us (in our time and place) that we are willing to commit to living by them (in his *Discipleship According to the Sermon on the Mount:*

Four Legitimate Readings, Four Plausible Views of Discipleship, and their Relative Values (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 56.

30. Scott Cormode, *Forming Christian Leaders: A Vision for Theological Education as Leadership Education* (unpublished manuscript), ch. 2, p. 17.

31. Peter Donovan, "Neutrality in Religious Studies," in McCutcheon, *The Insider/ Outsider Problem,* 238–43; David Hufford, "Reflexivity in Belief Studies," in McCutcheon, *The Insider/Outsider Problem*, 297–98.

32. Cf., for example, Donald W. Mitchell and James Wiseman, eds., *The Gethsemane Encounter: A Dialogue on the Spiritual Life by Buddhist and Christian Monastics* (New York: Continuun, 1999) and Patrick Henry, ed*., Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of St. Benedict* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2001).

33. Victoria Rue, "Acting Religious: Theatre as a Pedagogical Tool for Religious Studies," Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Toronto, November 2002.

34. For an interesting comparison of theatrical performances and rituals, see Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3–33, 117–50.

35. Bourdieu*, Pascalian Meditations*, 189.

36. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 90. I should add that, while I think a case can be made for students exploring religious or secular practices at greater depth by "acting religious" or "acting secular," I think that academic formation processes should encourage this only in so far as it serves the agreed upon and advertised purposes of the formation process in question.

37. Neville, "The Emergence of Historical Consciousness," in Van Ness, *Secular Spirituality* 129–56.

38. Neville outlines a number of qualifications that scholarship must meet in order to be considered a "secular spirituality." While what I have presented here is developed enough in the ways that he specifies to meet his criteria, others could undoubtedly make this approach conform more fully to his understanding.