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Xie Fuya as a Contributor to Religious Studies in China in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

CHRISTIAN MEYER

Abstract

While Xie Fuya has always been regarded as a philosopher of religion, this article wants to demonstrate his contribution to early religious studies in Republican China (1912–1949). For this purpose it analyses his book *Zongjiao zhexue* from 1928. Although clearly being a "philosophy of religion," this book draws heavily on theories of Western religious studies and thereby serves as an important vehicle for transmitting concepts of this new Western discipline. It proves that Xie Fuya, who sometimes called himself not only a philosopher of religion but also a scholar of religious studies (*zongjiaoxuejia*), can be seen as an important contributor to the field in this time.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Early Religious Studies in China

As the discipline of "religious studies" is a newly developed field which emerged only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the West,[1] it is somewhat surprising to see how early Western concepts of this new discipline were already adopted, translated, and applied by Chinese scholars to Chinese religious traditions in the early twentieth century. The adoption of Western ideas took place not in a vacuum, but during the period of transformation after the collapse of the old imperial system—between the revolution of 1911 and the beginning of the Republican period (1912–1949). In the discourses about social and political renewal and self-strengthening in this period, religion also played an important role, in some cases perceived as a constructive moral force, in others as a hindrance to progressive development of "science and democracy."[2]

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[1] For the most recent general accounts of the early history of "religious studies" or so-called "science of religion" (Max Müller, Cornelis Petrus Tiele) in the West, see Hans Kippenberg, *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Arie L. Molendijk and Peter Pels, ed., *Religion in the Making: The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); cf. also Arie L. Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (Leiden: Brill, 2005). What is meant here by "religious studies" is the tradition of non-confessional, non-philosophical scientific research about religions with an emphasis on comparative, systematic, and theoretical questions as it was coined in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This period also functions as our reference point for the Chinese case. A comparison with more recent models and approaches would be anachronistic—at least for our approach which attempts to reconstruct the history of reception in Republican China. For a broader analysis of the reception of religious studies in this time, see also my forthcoming article: "Scholars of Religious Research as Observers or Participants: Were there 'Religious Studies' in Republican China?" in *Chinese Religions in the Age of Globalization, 1800–Present*, ed. Thomas Jansen, Thoralf Klein and Christian Meyer (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming in 2010).

[2] For the most recent research on discourse about religion in modern China, see Vincent Goossaert, "The Beginning of the End for Chinese Religion?" *Journal of Asian Studies* 65, no. 2 (2006): 307–35; and Chen Hsi-yuan, *Confucianism Encounters Religion: The Formation of Religious Discourse and the Confucian Movement in Modern China* (PhD dissertation, Harvard University, 1999); or Chen Hsi-yüan (Chen Xiyuan) 陳熙遠, "Zongjiao: Yige Zhongguo jindai wenhuashi shang de guanjianci" 宗教——一個中國近代文化史上的關鍵詞 [Religion: A Keyword in the Cultural

It was in this discursive context—when the Western notion of "religion" had already entered Chinese vocabulary and modern thinking—that the concepts of early Western religious studies were adopted. Various scholars from different disciplines contributed to the emerging field of research on religion. The interest in religion as a subject matter justifies our investigation of early religious studies in China at this time, although most contributors to the field did not hold academic positions in a "department of religion" and there were only a few positions dedicated expressively for the study of religion in general or religions other than one's own (other than Christian theology, for example).[3]

By presenting the example of a prominent Christian scholar and philosopher of religion, Xie Fuya 謝扶雅, this article introduces insights from ongoing research[4] on how, by adopting various Western concepts, the field of religious studies emerged as a discipline in China.

2. *State of the Field and New Perspective on Xie Fuya: Xie as a Contributor to Early Chinese Religious Studies*

Recently Xie has again become an object of interest and new research. Most scholars approach him from a Christian theological perspective, treating him correctly as a representative of indigenous Chinese theology which started in the 1920s.[5] More specifically he may be best

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History of Modern China], *Xinshixue* 新史學 [New History] 13, no. 4 (December 2002): 37–65.

[3] It seems that this kind of non-theological positions were only found in the department of religion at Yenching University and Lingnan University, which aside from theological positions included also positions for the study of other religions. For Yenching University see Ng Tze Ming, Peter (Wu Ziming) 吳梓明, "From Theological Education to Religious Studies: The Case of Religious Education at Yenching University," *Journal of the History of Christianity in Modern China* 2 (1999): 49–66. For instance, one of the teachers was Xu Dishan 許地山, an expert in Indian religions who paid more attention later to Chinese indigenous traditions, including Daoism and Buddhism.

[4] In a wider study I plan to look at other scholars in the field of religious research at the same time and some of them will be mentioned in the third section.

[5] Examples for this kind of research include the following works: Jiang Ryh-shin (Jiang Rixin) 江日新, "Xie Fuya de Zhongguo bense shenxue ji Ruxue quanshi: Cong zongjiao duihua de lüling lai qiecuo" 謝扶雅的中國本色神學及儒學詮釋——從宗教對話的律令來切磋 [The "Chinese Indigenous Theology" of Xie Fuya (N. Z. Zia) and His Interpretation of Confucianism], *Ehu xuezhi* 鵝湖學誌 [Legein Semi-Annual Journal] 26 (June 2001): 127–58; Ruan Chengguo 阮成國, *Xie Fuya de bentu shenxue*

characterized as a Chinese-Christian religious philosopher. This characterization is supported by his publications as well as his own statements:[6] Xie not only wrote the first Chinese book on philosophy of religion (*Zongjiao zhexue* 宗教哲學), but also produced what is probably the earliest Chinese translation of a Western book on philosophy of religion.[7] Also characteristic was his deep involvement in discussions of Western and Chinese philosophy and contact with major representatives of modern Confucianism. For example, as early as the Republican era, he sided more or less with Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (Carsun Chang, 1887–1969) in the "Debate between Science and Metaphysics" (*kexuan lunzhan* 科玄論戰) between Hu Shi 胡適 and Zhang Junmai as main opponents, himself supporting the position of a life philosophy (*ren-*

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lilun 謝扶雅的本土神學理論 [Indigenous Theology of Xie Fuya] (M.Th. thesis, Alliance Bible Seminary, 2000).

See also Ho Hing-cheong (He Qingchang) 何慶昌 and Lai Pan-chiu (Lai Pinchao) 賴品超, "A Chinese Christian Intellectual in Diaspora: A Case Study of Xie Fuya," *Monumenta Serica* 56 (2008): 427–58. This article further interprets Xie Fuya's later thinking after 1949 "against the backdrop of diasporic Chinese" (427), which did not neglect and even included the interest "in the local political and social situations" and the "identity crisis of overseas Chinese" (451). In reply especially to the criticism of Leung Ka-lun (Liang Jialin) 梁家麟 of Xie's writing as an example of indigenous theology that "merely made cross-references between the bible and Chinese classics" (428) they show that Xie in fact never uncritically embraced "the whole set of traditional Chinese cultural norms" (451), and that he wanted to complement both traditions. See also Ho's thesis, "Chujing shenxue: Xie Fuya de bensehua lijie" 處境神學——謝扶雅的本色化理解 [Contextual Theology: Indigenized Interpretation of Xie Fuya], *Jidujiao yu Zhongguo shehui wenhua: Dier jie guoji nianqing xuezhe yantaohui lunwenji* 基督教與中國社會文化——第二屆國際年青學者研討會論文集 [Christianity and Chinese Social Culture: Collections from the Second International Symposium for Young Scholars] (Hong Kong: Chung Chi College of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2006), 117–40. Note that Lauren Pfister has already pointed to Xie's broader vision of a global order. Lauren Pfister, "From Western Studies to Global Order: Reflections on the Writings of Xie Fu-ya," *Ching Feng* 34, no. 4 (December 1991): 245–62.

A most recent comprehensive work on Xie's religious thinking is that of Tang Xiaofeng 唐曉峰, *Xie Fuya de zongjiao sixiang* 謝扶雅的宗教思想 [Religious Thoughts of Xie Fuya] (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua, 2007).

[6] Although Xie occasionally called himself a scholar of philosophy of religion *and* religious studies, the former always stood in the first place while the latter appears as secondary and subordinate. See Xie Fuya, *Xie Fuya jiaoshou bailing shi wenji* 謝扶雅教授百齡詩文集 [Collected Writings of Prof. Xie Fuya on the Occasion of His 100th Birthday] (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 1991), 344, cf. 161.

[7] Josiah Royce 魯一士 (1855–1916), *Zongjiao zhexue* 宗教哲學 [The Religious Aspect of Philosophy: A Critique of the Bases of Conduct and of Faith], trans. Xie Fuya (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1947; Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1971).

shengguan 人生觀).[8] Later he had much contact with leading intellectuals such as Chinese philosopher Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978) in the 1950s when both of them were in Hong Kong. Especially after World War II, he propagated a Christian philosophical faith and the vision of a new "world culture" which integrated rational Greek, prophetic Hebrew, mystical Indian, and Chinese tradition with its concern for centrality (*zhong* 中, the harmonious middle Way).[9] Xie was a figure so prominent and intellectually active until old age that he was not only read and discussed in Chinese Christian circles, but also by Chinese non-Christian philosophical readers. Therefore, as generally represented in recent literature Xie served as a cultural broker, playing the dual role of an indigenous theologian and a Chinese philosopher. His approach to indigenization was basically through philosophy, adopting new ways of understanding Chinese philosophy through Christianity and Christianity through Chinese thought.[10]

While this is true for his later life, Xie Fuya as he appears in his early major work *Zongjiao zhexue* from 1928[11] seems to have a

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[8] However, he was also on good terms with the main opponent of life philosophy, Hu Shi. See for example Xie, *Xie Fuya jiaoshou bailing shi wenji*, 249. For recent research and bibliography about this debate see Thomas Fröhlich, *Staatsdenken im China der Republikzeit (1912–1949): Die Instrumentalisierung philosophischer Ideen bei chinesischen Intellektuellen* [Political Thought in Republican China (1912–1949): The Instrumentalization of Philosophical Ideas among Chinese Intellectuals] (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2000).

[9] See Pfister, "From Western Studies to Global Order," 245–62. For his emphasis on *zhong* as Chinese contribution see for example: Xie Fuya, *Weizhong lunji* 唯中論集 [On Centrality] (Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1969) and *Zhongyong yu daoli: Zhongxi lidai zhexue bilun* 中庸與道理——中西歷代哲學比論 [The Doctrine of Mean and Logic: Chinese Thought and the Western Counterparts] (Hong Kong: Centre for Educational Development of Hong Kong Baptist College, 1986); cf. Chen Kaixin 陳凱欣, "Xie Fuya de 'weizhonglun / jiaoyishuo' tanxi" 謝扶雅的「唯中論 / 交依說」探析 [Analysis of Xie Fuya's Centrality], *Zhongxuan wenji* 中宣文集 [CMS Journal] 5 (January 2005): 177–201; or Chen Te 陳特, "Zhong de fenxi: Yu Xie Fuya xiansheng taolun *Zhongguo zhexue de tezhi* shu hou" 中的分析——與謝扶雅先生討論《中國哲學的特質》書後 [Analysis of Centrality: After a Discussion with Mr. Xie Fuya on the book *Characteristics of Chinese Philosophy*], *Rensheng* 人生 [Life] 26, no. 5 (July 1963): 7–10.

[10] Cf. Ho and Lai, "A Chinese Christian Intellectual in Diaspora," 450; and Jiang, "Xie Fuya de Zhongguo bense shenxue ji Ruxue quanshi," 136, 140. See also Lauren Pfister who called him a "cross-cultural bridge-builder" and Tang Xiaofeng. Pfister, "From Western Studies to Global Order," 246; Tang, *Xie Fuya de zongjiao sixiang*, 234–66.

[11] Xie Fuya, *Zongjiao zhexue* 宗教哲學 [Philosophy of Religion] (n.p.: Qingnian xiehui shuju, 1928; Hong Kong: Tuhong yinshua, 1959). Paradoxically it is this book with the explicit title "Philosophy of Religion" which conveys major conceptions of Western religious studies of his time. As far as I can see in later works Xie uses

slightly different orientation: he refers to religious studies mainly as a tool for his philosophy of religion and as an intermediary field in which Christianity and Chinese religious traditions could be related to each other. Therefore, Xie's work may also exemplify the early role of religious studies in China, an aspect of his thought which has been neglected so far.[12]

I. BIOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL-INTELLECTUAL CONTEXT

Let me begin with a sketch of Xie's background and the context of his *Zongjiao zhexue*. Xie Fuya (Xie Nairen 謝乃壬,[13] 1892–1991) was born in Shaoxing 紹興 prefecture the son of a Confucian father and a Buddhist mother. He received classical training in canonical Chinese classics. In 1911 he went to Japan, where he became a Christian in 1916 before he returned to China in the same year. Starting from 1918, he worked for the Chinese YMCA. In 1925, he went to the United States to study theology at the University of Chicago, and then study

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slightly similar conceptions in dealing with the problem of Western Christian and indigenous Chinese philosophical tradition, but he never deals with the phenomenon of religion again in such a fundamental and systematic manner by thorough evaluation of religious studies, as he does in this early study with 272 pages. A later study "The Common Ground of Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism" looks like a study in comparative religion at first glance (and it does apply some general concepts like pantheism, magic, etc.). More thoroughly analyzed it reveals itself as focusing on an indigenous theology in which Xie refers to the way of the middle (*zhongdao* 中道) as the "common essence" (*benzhi* 本質) of three Chinese religions. See Xie Fuya, "*Zhongguo sanjiao de gongtong benzhi*" 中國三教的共同本質 [The Common Ground of Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism], in a book with the same title (Hong Kong: Christian Study Centre on Chinese Religion and Culture, 1966), 12.

[12] Its importance becomes clear by the fact that this work, first published in 1928, was republished later in Shanghai in 1939 (cf. Pfister, "From Western Studies to Global Order," 259, footnote 6), in this version in Hong Kong in 1959 as well as recently in the mainland (Jinan 濟南市: Shandong renmin, 1998; also in electronic format). My citations are to Hong Kong edition which is a reprint version of 1939.

[13] Fuya 扶雅 was his penname. He was also known as N. Z. Zia in his English publications (for example, *The Chinese Recorder*), that is, Zia Nai-zing according to the local pronunciation of his personal name Xie Nairen. Cf. Pfister, "From Western Studies to Global Order," 249; Ho and Lai, "A Chinese Christian Intellectual in Diaspora," 427.

philosophy at Harvard in 1926. There he was deeply influenced by a philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead (1861–1947), and his process theology.[14] In Chicago he attended courses taught by A. Eustace Haydon on comparative religion and in Harvard those taught by George Foot Moore on history of religion.[15] In 1927 Xie wrote two books, among them *Zongjiao zhexue* (published in 1928), and in 1928 he was hired as professor of a Christian institution, Lingnan University 嶺南大學 in Canton (Guangzhou 廣州), for the departments of philosophy and religion. Before that Lingnan University had been offering regular courses on "comparative religion" since around 1917/18,[16] which was later complemented in the academic year 1922/23 by a course on "religious history of China" (*Zhongguo zongjiaoshi* 中國宗教史) taught by Alexander Baxter, a missionary from London Missionary Society. However, around the time when Xie arrived at Lingnan University the curriculum was much further expanded. Probably Xie mostly taught courses on "philosophy of religion" (*zongjiao zhexue*), "Christianity

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[14] For the influence of Whitehead's process theology on Xie, see Dong Fangyuan 董芳苑, "Xie Fuya 'guocheng shenxue' de tantao" 謝扶雅「過程神學」的探討 [A Study on Process Theology of Xie Fuya], *Shenxue lunji* 神學論集 [Collectanea Theologica] 34 (1977): 517–34.

[15] Xie Fuya, *Zi bianzi zhi dianzi* 自辮子至電子 [From Pigtail to Electron] (Hong Kong: Chinese Christian Literature Council, 1992), 45; cf. Xie, *Xie Fuya jiaoshou bailing shi wenji*, 344. On Albert Eustace Haydon see W. Creighton Peden, *A Good Life in a World Made Good: Albert Eustace Haydon, 1880–1975* (New York: Lang, 2006). Haydon is misspelled by Xie as "A. Hayden." (Xie Fuya, *Zi bianzi zhi dianzi*, 45; Tang, *Xie Fuya de zongjiao sixiang*, 9 mistakes him then as "Augustus Hayden.") Two titles by George Foot Moore (1851–1931; Frothingham professor of history of religion, Harvard University, 1904–1928) are also mentioned in the bibliography of his *Zongjiao zhexue*, namely, *The History of Religions* (1914/1919) and *The Birth and Growth of Religion* (wrongly as *The Origin and Development of Religion*). The second title had been translated shortly before. See Mo'er 摩耳 (George Foot Moore), *Zongjiao de chusheng yu zhangcheng* 宗教的出生與長成, trans. Jiang Shaoyuan 江紹原 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1926; Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1969).

[16] In 1926 the title was changed to "history of religions" and a more comprehensive Chinese title "Zongjiao bijiao ji gejiao lishi" 宗教比較及各教歷史 [Comparative Religion and History of Religions]. See for example Canton Christian College, Bulletin No. 10, Catalogue of the College of Arts and Sciences, 1917–1918, Canton 1917, p. 45; Bulletin No. 34, Catalogue of the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Agriculture, Academic year 1923–1924, Canton 1923, pp. 88–89; Lingnan University (Canton Christian College), Bulletin No. 38, Catalogue, Academic year 1926–1927, p. 78. These three documents are from the Archives of the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia, 1882–1974 (microfilm) (UBCHEA), series IV (China Colleges Files), box 181, folder 3246–3251 (Catalogues, bulletins 1899–1946).

and Chinese culture," and "introduction to the study of religion."[17] The program largely overlapped with that of the department of philosophy.

After World War II and the civil war, Xie went to Hong Kong for almost ten years (1949–1958) and then to the United States, where he became chief editor of a series of Christian classics in Chinese.[18] In 1986, after the opening of Mainland China, he went back to Guangzhou, where he died in 1991.[19]

Besides the above biographical background, especially his study in the United States, an event was crucial for writing *Zongjiao zhexue* in 1927 and influenced its outline and style. As Xie was an active Christian especially in the YMCA in the early 1920s, he faced a strong anti-religious—especially anti-Christian—movement initiated by intellectuals which turned out to be violent in some extent. Besides this anti-religious / anti-Christian sentiment in general, there was also a more intellectually challenging "Debate between Science and Metaphysics," as it became known. This debate revealed the tensions between representatives of different intellectual groups in Republican China:[20] On the one hand, there were people like Hu Shi (or Ding Wenjiang 丁文江) who promulgated liberalism and pragmatism (especially influenced by Dewey who stayed in Peking from 1919 to 1920), proposing to rely solely on "science," and those who rejected any positive role of religion or speculative philosophy (metaphysics, *xuanxue* 玄學) in general or so-called "life philosophy" (*rensheng zhexue* 人生哲學) in particular as well as any attachment to Chinese tradition and traditional philosophy. On the other side there were people like Zhang Junmai, a modern Neo-Confucian who had studied idealistic philosophy in Germany and opposed to Hu Shi in this struggle. This group promoted "life philosophy" and pinned their hopes on a partial conti-

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[17] See Lingnan University, Bulletin No. 43, Catalogue, Academic year 1930–1931, pp. 70–71; cf. pp. 132–34 (religion), pp. 125–28 (philosophy), or Bulletin No. 42, Announcements for the Academic Year 1929–1930, pp. 48–49, UBCHEA, series IV (China Colleges Files), box 181, folder 3246–3251 (Catalogues, bulletins 1899–1946). For a more thorough analysis of curricula or courses on religion at Lingnan and other universities see my forthcoming article, "Scholars of Religious Research as Observers or Participants."

[18] The series was published as "Jidujiao lidai mingzhu jicheng" 基督教歷代名著集成 [Christian Classics Library] (Hong Kong: Jidujiao fuqiao; Chinese Christian Literature Council).

[19] For biographical information see Ho, "Chujing shenxue," 279–81, biographical table; Ho and Lai, "A Chinese Christian Intellectual in Diaspora."

[20] However, some of them had cordial personal relations. Cf. Fröhlich, *Staatsdenken im China der Republikzeit (1912–1949)*, 80–81.

nuity with traditional Chinese thought. Several Christian thinkers—such as well-known writer and later professor of religious studies at Yenching University, Xu Dishan 許地山, his colleague Xu Baoqian 徐寶謙 as well as Xie Fuya—more or less sided with Zhang Junmai and wrote articles to support a position of life philosophy (*rensheng-guan* 人生觀).[21]

This controversy is an important part of the context of Xie's monograph, *Zongjiao zhexue*, written several years after the zenith of the debate but with fresh insights and inputs from the West, especially from the years at the universities of Chicago and Harvard, drawing on an arsenal of recent publications on philosophy of religion, life philosophy, and other topics. Most interesting of all are Xie's sources from anthropology and religious studies. The following discussion will demonstrate how his work draws on ideas and arguments from these sources.

II. XIE FUYA'S *ZONGJIAO ZHEXUE* AS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO INTRODUCING "RELIGIOUS STUDIES" TO CHINA

When we talk about Chinese religious studies in the first half of the twentieth century, we cannot, of course, apply the standards of current religious studies. We must draw our bearings from religious studies as it presented itself from its early period to the early twentieth century in the West and how it was perceived and used by Xie Fuya. Therefore, as a first step, we should take a closer look at Xie's book as a whole and clarify on the one hand the main argument and the role religious studies plays in it, and on the other hand the ideas Xie adopts from Western sources. As a second step, we will analyze these sources and group them into different categories. Then we will attempt to evaluate to what extent his book draws on theories and concepts originating from religious studies, and which theories he neglects and why, and which are favored by him.

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[21] Both Xu Dishan and Xu Baoqian were also close to Xie Fuya and contributed to indigenous theology as well as emerging religious studies in China.

1. *Overview of* Zongjiao zhexue *and the Role of Religious Studies*

As Xie's book is unavailable in many Western libraries, I would like to give an overview of its structure and argument, emphasizing the role of religious studies. Several topics closely related to religious studies are prominently treated in Xie's *Zongjiao zhexue*. Our guiding question is what role these topics play in comparison to other more purely philosophical ones. The book comprises five chapters, including introduction and conclusion:

i) The introduction (*xulun* 緒論)[22] gives us some hints about the role of religious studies: While the first section deals with the very basic and general question of the definition of philosophy of religion or the definition of religion itself,[23] the second section "Methodology of Philosophy of Religion" (*Zongjiao zhexue yanjiufa* 宗教哲學研究法)[24] is of special interest. It is divided into two parts: history of religion[25] and psychology of religion.[26] Xie calls them "two great tools" (*daliqi* 大利器) for studying philosophy of religion[27] or two "outer aspects" of research on "religious phenomena" (together with "sociological research," the third aspect) contributing to philosophy of religion. In contrast, the "inner aspects" deal directly with philosophical questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. Only the first two outer aspects are further treated in the introduction.

Moreover, we will see that Xie Fuya is much more interested in the *second* "outer aspects," that is, psychology of religion—which he calls the "essence of religion"[28]—that deals with "religiosity" (or religious experience). However, he thinks that the history of religion is important, too, as it can explain the negative historical aspects of religion as opposed to its original essence. These two topics, which clearly repre-

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[22] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 1–40.

[23] Ibid., section I.1, 1–24. The first subdivision defines religious realm in contrast and in relation to science, art, and ethics.

[24] Ibid., section I.2, 26–40.

[25] Ibid., 30–34.

[26] Ibid., 34–40.

[27] Ibid., 29.

[28] "Zongjiao zhi benzhi" 宗教之本質 is quoted in misspelled German as "Religion Sität" (correctly, "Religiosität"). Ibid., 35.

sent religious studies (or, as he also translates, the "scientific research of religions"),[29] are carried on and explored in depth in chapter two and three. Sociology of religion is simply mentioned and is rather neglected in this book.[30]

ii) A closer look at chapter two and three confirms the role of religious studies. Chapter two deals with the "origin[s] and development of religion[s]" (*zongjiao zhi qiyuan yu yanjin* 宗教之起源與演進)[31] in three subdivisions: The first deals with the "origin of religion" in four steps: a) ritual (whose origins, he suggests, lie in the behavior of prehistoric man) with parallels in play and art performance (*youyi* 遊藝);[32] b) myth in relation to ritual and magic in comparison with religion;[33] c) religious faith (*zongjiao xinyang* 宗教信仰), including African faiths, fetishism (*shuwu chongbai* 庶物崇拜),[34] and Chinese ancestor worship (but not Christian faith!); and d) religious thinking in which collectivity (*qunzhongxing* 群眾性) of religion is replaced by individuality (*gebiexing* 個別性). For Xie rationality and individuality are the highest developments and they are treated in a longer subdivision that follows[35]—under "rational religions," including Buddhism, Confucianism[36] and Christianity.[37] The third subdivision[38] depicts these three religions as rational, human-centered, and basing on human-divine contact through insight (*renshi* 認識), though in danger of falling into fundamentalism (and religious authoritarianism). Then the last section de-

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[29] Xie uses these terms in different book titles when he reviews the developments of research on religion in the West. Ibid., 29–39.

[30] Xie does write about "sociology of religion" (*zongjiao zhi shehuixue* 宗教之社會學). Ibid., 29. However, he does not mention any specific researcher. For ignoring or probably not knowing Max Weber and Émile Durkheim see section 3.2. "Sociology of Religion" of this article. Sociological aspects may be included in the historical section (with anthropological background).

[31] Ibid., 43–108. What is meant here is probably *religion* in singular. However, the plural is now preferred in Western religious studies as it is difficult to identify "phenomenon" of religion in contrast to particular religions.

[32] Ibid., section II.1.1, 43–49.

[33] Ibid., section II.1.2, 49–59.

[34] Ibid., 54.

[35] Ibid., section II.2, 59–97.

[36] It includes brief discussions on Daojia 道家 (Laozi 老子 and Zhuangzi 莊子) and Mojia 墨家.

[37] Chosen by him as examples, these are his focus of interest as he mentions in the foreword. Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 1. Coincidentally Karl Jaspers also chose the founding figures of these traditions (among others) for his "axial age."

[38] Ibid., section II.3, 97–108.

scribes this type of religion as principally universal, trans-national, and trans-tribal or trans-clan-oriented.

These sections offer an overview of religious studies, including prominent topics of his time such as "totemism," "religion and magic," and "myth and ritual." Only in the last section are there more interpretive comments (which are often found in typologies of religion in early religious studies). Obviously Xie follows an evolutionist pattern as preferred by most Western scholars of his time.[39] At the same time, this pattern serves his argument that "higher" religions are rational, individual (*geren* 個人), and fitting to modern life, thus responding to the criticisms of Chinese anti-religionists of his time.

iii) Another approach and function can be identified in the third chapter. It deals with "religious consciousness" (*zongjiao yishi* 宗教意識).[40] This chapter is in some way a "systematic" counterpart to the historical section: It is most interesting if we think of religious studies as a systematic-analytical discipline (or as consisting of these two sub disciplines) rather than related to historical studies. This chapter starts with Freud, Leuba, and James[41] on the growing of religious consciousness (*zongjiao yishi zhi shengzhang* 宗教意識之生長), which parallels human development from childhood to adulthood (this section also deals with "conversion" of adults, *gaixin* 改心).[42] The second subdivision, "Religious Consciousness and Rationality," deals with prayer, belief, and a topic very prominent in Western religious studies, mysticism.[43] In the third subdivision, he derives "teachings from psychology of religion."[44]

As we will see from the following analysis of his sources, this part is essential in Xie's understanding of religion. For Xie religion is mainly

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[39] For example, Tiele, Siebeck, or Galloway. Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 41–42. Cf. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 278–79.

[40] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 119–53.

[41] A section mentioning Schleiermacher that was originally published in a periodical (*Zhenguang zazhi* 真光雜誌, June 1927) is attached here (included already in the 1928 edition). Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 110–19. Schleiermacher was also mentioned earlier in section I.3.2. on the development of psychology of religion (*zongjiao xinlixue* 宗教心理學). Ibid., 35.

[42] The whole program draws strongly on William James' classics: *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: The Modern Library, 1902). Typical keywords for James are "conversion" (chapter 9–10) and "mysticism" (chapter 16–17).

[43] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, section III.2, 141–50.

[44] Ibid., section III.3, 150–53.

rooted in religious experience (as its essence), which appears as part of man's natural endowment, though, as we will see, Xie does not conceptualize it as a "religious *a priori*," as Rudolf Otto did.

iv) After two thirds of his book Xie finally turns to his original philosophical interest: The fourth chapter is named "Religion and the Metaphysical Problem" (*zongjiao yu xuanxue wenti* 宗教與玄學問題). This chapter, dealing with the "inner aspects" of philosophy of religion, is probably the farthest from religious studies, and most directly connected to the "Debate between Science and Metaphysics." It shows that one can deal with religion and related metaphysical questions in a rational way. In the subdivisions on "the problem of God," "the problem of evil," and "fate and [last] refuge," issues such as determinism, freedom of will, and death are examined in detail.[45]

v) The conclusion combines all approaches and focuses on the main apologetic interest of Xie. It has two subdivisions, one on the "[deeper] meaning of religion" (*zongjiao de yiyi* 宗教的意義) in which he views religion as an answer to a metaphysical and religious desire ("metaphysisches" or "religioses Bedürfnis," according to Schopenhauer). As Xie argues, Chinese people of his time had a mistaken view of religion as superstition. This impression was based on misused religious practices especially in syncretic religious groups.[46] Thus some criticism of religion may be correct and have a corrective role. However, religion comes from an ultimate "religious desire" (*zongjiao yu* 宗教欲), which in its most progressive form originates from three Schopenhauerian questions—"Where do I come from? Why am I here? Where are we going?" These questions are not inborn, but develop in the process of growing up or by reason in crises, and thus are rational and individual.[47] Accordingly, it does not mean that various religious groups express their religious desire in inappropriate ways, but rather hundred

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[45] Ibid., section IV.1, IV.2 and IV.3, 154–221, 221–31, 231–49.

[46] They were often referred to as so-called "secret societies." For the exemplary case of *Tongshanshe*, which was criticized by the *Guomindang* in 1927 and then forbidden by the new government, as well as the wider background of debates about superstition, see Rebecca Allyn Nedostup, *Religion, Superstition and Governing Society in Nationalist China* (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 2001), 90–102.

[47] Cf. Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue,* 262.

millions of believers of the "rational" religions[48] show that there is (at least) a religious desire (*zongjiao de yuqiu* 宗教的欲求).[49]

While religion, according to Xie, starts with religious desire, it ends with its expression as "(mental) attitude" (*taidu* 態度),[50] which is not equivalent to emotion, consciousness (or perception, *zhijue* 知覺), or will, but has to do with man as a *whole*, including emotion, consciousness, and will. Religion as an attitude is therefore subjective, and not comparable to scientific interest in the "objective" world. The very last subdivision argues—according to the leading intention of the author—for the value of religion.

If we look at the apportionment of the whole book, we can find that most of the book is directly related to typical questions of religious studies or both philosophy of religion and religious studies (for example, the introduction). In addition, chapter four is exclusively dedicated to issues of philosophy of religion, while chapter five (the conclusion) may be counted as Xie's religious philosophical thought. What Xie intends to do is to build a systematic approach to religion from an "outer" and "inner" perspective, which includes and is built on "scientific research on religion." The outer perspective is represented by aspects and theories of religious studies as it had developed at that time in the West.

2. Sources (Second Edition, 1939)

In order to clarify the character of the book it may be useful to analyze the sources used by Xie as listed in his bibliography.[51] Our major

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[48] Or "high" religions, like Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Islam, and Christianity.

[49] In addition, he focuses on the religious desire and experience of individuals, quoting Martin Luther as a standard Protestant example.

[50] A similar definition could be found in the writing of Xu Baoqian, Xie's friend. Cf. Xu Baoqian 徐寶謙, "Taidu yu shishi: Zongjiao de teshu gongxian" 態度與事實——宗教的特殊貢獻 [Attitude and Fact: Special Contribution of Religion], *Zhenli yu shengming* 真理與生命 [Truth and Life] 4, no. 11 (1929): 6–8.

[51] Here I would like to refer to the second edition (Shanghai, 1939; reprint: Hong Kong, 1959) which includes the changes made to the bibliography of the 1928 edition. A large number of titles mentioned in the outline of his then ongoing research (1928 edition, 30–34) are no longer listed in the second edition. As far as I can see in the bibliography of the second edition Xie only lists those titles which are directly quoted. In addition, he has added some Japanese titles. Unfortunately it is not clear if he used them earlier.

question is again the influence of those sources which can be classified as religious studies and their proportion compared to the total. Moreover, it is worth asking how much English-speaking scholarship and non-English European scholarship he uses and through what channels. Finally, as he had stayed in Japan and the United States and knew both Japanese and English, it is worth considering if Japanese translations or other works play any role in conveying ideas of Western religious studies as they do in transmitting other aspects of Western knowledge.

To begin this study a grouping of the sources may be useful. Here I would like to suggest grouping the sources used by Xie Fuya in *Zongjiao zhexue* into six kinds according to their content:[52]

i. Basic works clearly named as dealing with philosophy of religion (except ethics) and philosophical classics in general;[53]

ii. Works belonging to the school of life philosophy (Bergson, Eucken, and also Whitehead);[54]

iii. Works dealing with science as "worldview" (*shijieguan* 世界觀);[55]

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[52] Note that my survey is limited to the titles that are listed in his bibliography and counted as major direct sources. Many more sources mentioned in the main text could be counted as well, for example, Greek or Christian philosophers, or modern thinkers like Schleiermacher, etc. Besides, some works could be grouped into more than one category.

[53] Eight titles deal directly with philosophy of religion. For example, D. N. Edwards, *Philosophy of Religion*; G. Galloway, *The Philosophy of Religion*; Josiah Royce, *The Religious Aspect of Philosophy*. Others are general works of philosophy, including Comte, Hegel, Kant, Leibnitz, Lotze, Russell, Hu Shi's *Zhongguo zhexueshi dagang* 中國哲學史大綱 [Outline History of Chinese Philosophy] as well as two Japanese works: Hoashi Riichirō 帆足理一郎 (misspelled as 帆員理一郎; 1881–1963), *Shūkyo tetsugaku* [*gairon*?] 宗教哲學[概論?] [(Overview of?) Religious Philosophy] (Tōkyō: Hakubunkan, 1925); and Watanabe Hidekata 渡邊秀方, *Shina tetsugaku shi gairon* 支那哲學史概論 [Overview of History of Chinese Philosophy] (Tōkyō: Waseda daigaku 早稻田大學, Taishō 大正 13 [1924]). Maybe this work was known to Xie in its Chinese translation by Liu Kanyuan 劉侃元 (Shanghai: The Commercial Press, 1926). Lots of bibliographical data are misspelled. The publication date and publisher in this and the following footnotes indicate how Xie is not only well informed but also uses very recent works.

[54] Aside from Bergson and Eucken, Whitehead may be counted among these in some sense. Bergson, *L'Evolution Creatrice* (1907); Eucken, *Der Wahrheitsgehalt der Religion* (1901); Whitehead, *The Concept*[*ion*] *of Nature* (1920), *Science and Modern World* (1925), and *Religion in the Making* (1926). Whitehead followed Bergson's philosophy of change and developed his own process theology on this base which also influenced Xie. Besides, there were two Chinese works quoted: Li Shicen 李石岑, *Rensheng zhexue* 人生哲學 [Philosophy of Life]; and Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, *Rensheng zhexue* 人生哲學 [Philosophy of Life]. Shortly later in 1929 Xie wrote a book under the same title.

iv. Works which can be identified as belonging to religious studies, including history of religion(s), theoretical works containing religious psychology, and anthropological/ethnological material and theory;
v. Works about ethics;[56] and
vi. Others.[57]

If we count the titles, thirteen are connected to the "Debate between Science and Metaphysics," twenty three with general topics of philosophy (10), philosophy of religion (8), or ethics (5), and thirty five deal with typical topics of religious studies. This high proportion confirms the high relevance of religious studies for the whole book. While the other groups are general works or deal with the questions in the "Debate between Science and Metaphysics" (ii and iii),[58] it is the fourth group that interests us most. In this group we find works which can be classified as early "religious studies" or classics published before this new discipline evolved. It includes history of religion(s), theoretical works on religious psychology and ethnological/anthropological material and theory. We may divide them into three subdivisions:

i. Works on ethnology/anthropology (*minsuxue* 民俗學 / *renleixue* 人類學) dealing with the evolutionary idea of civilization as well as religion;[59]

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[55] For example, Dewey's *Experience and Nature* or *Shaonian Zhongguo zazhi: Zongjiao wenti hao* 少年中國雜誌——宗教問題號 [Young China (Magazine): Issue on the Problem of Religion].

[56] These include E. S. Brightman, G. A. Coe, R. C. Sorley, Herbert Spencer, and Cai Yuanpei's 蔡元培 *Zhongguo lunlixue shi* 中國倫理學史 [History of Chinese Ethics].

[57] These include dictionaries (Mathews and Smith, *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics*; Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethic*[*s*]), some theological works (for example, A. J. Balfour, *The Foundation*[*s*] *of Belief*), a number of Chinese classics, and the bible.

[58] See also *Yadong tushuguan ban* 亞東圖書館版 [Edition of Yadong Library]: *Kexue yu renshengguan* 科學與人生觀 [Science and Philosophy of Life], ed. Wang Mengzou 汪孟鄒, with contributions of Zhang Junmai, Ding Wenjiang 丁文江 and others (Shanghai: Yadong tushuguan, 1923).

[59] For this category we find eight titles in Xie's bibliography: Karl Beth, *Religion und Magic* [*Magie*] *bei den Naturevolkern* [*Naturvölkern*] (Leipzig: Teubner, 1914); George Burman Foster, *The Function of Religion in Man's Struggle for Existence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1909]); J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*; Irving King, *The Development of Religion*; G. F. Moore, *The Origin and Development of Religion* [should be *The Birth and Growth of Religion*]; L. C. Morgan, *Emergent Evolution*; E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*; and Wilhelm Wundt, *Volker Psychology* [Völkerpsychologie].

ii. Works on religious experience or religious psychology, including the topic of holiness (as a religious feeling).[60] As a sub-category it may also include works about mysticism, which was a major keyword and new concept of religious studies;[61] and

iii. Works on history of religion(s).[62]

This survey verifies not only the high proportion of titles related to religious studies, but also Xie's stress on the psychology of religion or religious experience, and so of what he calls the "essence of religion" in his introduction. Mysticism is well represented with five titles addressing this major topic of religious studies at the time, whereas ethnological sources and works on history of religion provide the material and the evolutionary pattern (chapter two).

Furthermore, the survey also shows that Xie Fuya is quite up-to-date in reading many titles that were published shortly before his work—the importance of his previous stay in the United States is evident. On the other hand, it is clear that religious studies are perceived by him through an American "filter;" non-Anglophone European works such as Otto's *The Idea of the Holy* or Høffding's sociological works are

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[60] Seventeen titles may be counted under this rubric: E. S. Ames, *The Psychology of Religious Experience*; G. A. Coe, *The Psychology of Religion*; G. B. Cutten, *Psychological Phenomena of Christianity*; W. E. Hocking, *The Idea of God in Human Experience*; different works by William James—*Principles of Psychology*, *The Psychology of Belief*, *The Will to Believe*, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longman, 1909); James Henry Leuba, *The Psychological Origin and the Nature of Religion* (London: Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1925); Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of* [*the*] *Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Milford, 1923); J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness*; E. D. Starbuck, *The Child-Mind and Child-Religion*; E. D. Starbuck, *Psychology of Religion*; G. M. Stratton, *Psychology of Religious Life*; Henry Nelson Wieman, *Religious Experience and Scientific Method*; and this title may be counted as well: W. H. Burnham, *A Study of Adolescence*.

[61] There are five titles dedicated to mysticism: J. M. Buckham, *Mysticism and Modern Life*; James Henry Leuba (Louba 樓巴), *Psychology of Religious Mysticism*; Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic* [*and other Essays*] (1918); and two works by Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, and *Mystical Ways*.

[62] There are only six titles, including two Chinese and one Japanese: G. F. Moore, *History of Religions* (see also *The Origin and Development of Religion* under i.); Marx Muller (Max Müller), *The Sacred Books of the East*; C. H. Toy, *Introduction to the History of Religions*; Xie Wuliang 謝無量, *Foxue dagang* 佛學大綱 [Outline of Buddhism]; Wang Zhixin 王治心, *Zhongguo lishishang de shangdiguan* 中國歷史上的上帝觀 [The Concept of God in Chinese History] (1926); Kimura Taiken 木村泰賢 (1881–1930), *Genshi bukkyō shisōron* 原始佛教思想論 [Original Buddhist Thought].

accessible to him through translations. Some listed German titles[63] do not seem to play a major role in his work. Japanese titles, which were probably added to the second edition of 1939 as observed from the book, do not function as important channels for transmitting knowledge about religious studies. Therefore, it is mainly American or English scholarship on religious studies—as presented in works published, translated, or quoted in the United States at his time—which influences Xie and is conveyed to his Chinese readers.

3. Sources and Ideas Not Applied

Beyond this rough survey of sources a closer look at the major topics is needed. As we can see from the overview of his sources, some topics are emphasized in his account of religious studies while others appear to be neglected. We will first focus on those which have a less prominent place in Xie's argument or seem neglected. This may offer different insights: On the one hand there is a question on how the transmission of knowledge is affected by American mediation. On the other hand one may ask what impacts of the shortcomings in transmission are or how far the presentation of some concepts mirrors Xie's approach to religion or philosophy of religion. A mixture of both elements may be the case.

3.1. The Concepts of "Phenomenology of Religion" and "Holiness"

It is at first highly remarkable that Xie mentions both the idea of "religious phenomena" as well as Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy*. However, a question may be asked: How does he perceive them?

First, we will deal with phenomenology of religion, later a key concept in classical religious studies from van der Leeuw to Eliade. As mentioned before, Xie does use the term "religious phenomenon" (*zongjiao xianxiang* 宗教現象).[64] However, this term has been used in various ways even in the West. At that time Husserl (1859–1938) had

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[63] The German titles or English names are often misspelled in Xie's book. Works that are relevant for religious studies include, for example, titles by Karl Beth and Wilhelm Wundt.

[64] For example, Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 29.

already presented[65] his philosophical phenomenology as a new approach to humanities. Thus phenomenology and dealing with "phenomena" was in so far common. Max Scheler (1874–1928), Dilthey's student who was also influenced by Husserl, had also widely used this concept in the context of religion, thereby establishing "religious phenomenology." However, a later school of religious phenomenology as an important branch of "religious studies" had just began to develop. The earliest programmatic work written by van der Leeuw (Dutch) in 1925, *Einführung in die Phänomenologie der Religion* in German, might not have reached Xie when he was in the United States at that time.

Therefore, it may not be surprising that though Xie speaks about "religious phenomena," he never quotes van der Leeuw or Scheler or Husserl. If we look at the relevant passage in his book,[66] we can find two main ideas which characterize his use of the term "[religious] phenomenon" as objects of "empirical method": His starting point[67] is a differentiation of natural (*ziran* 自然) and human (*renwen* 人文) phenomena.[68] To both (not only natural, but also historical phenomena), the "empirical method" (*jingyan de fangfa* 經驗的方法) may be applied. For him, this method consists of two steps: "pure objective observation"[69] and "comparison and systematization (*bijiao fenlei* 比較分類) of observed facts" in order to discover their "inherent general principles" (*yuhu qizhong zhi pubian gongli* 寓乎其中之普遍公理).[70] While the clear distinction between natural science and humanities and the idea of applying hard methods of natural science to distinct units of human/cultural phenomena remind us of Dilthey as well as Husserl, he explicitly associates his description of "empirical method" with Auguste Comte (Kongde 孔德), who used the term "phenomenon" mainly for "social phenomena."

It remains unclear where Xie Fuya's formulation exactly comes from, as he does not name his sources except Comte here. It seems that Xie uses the term in a rather general way (like Chantepie de la Saus-

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[65] For example, after Hegel's different use in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807).

[66] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 28–29.

[67] Ibid., 28.

[68] This is later applied to the sharp distinction between natural science and human science (*renwen kexue* 人文科學).

[69] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 29.

[70] Ibid., 28, 29–30.

saye)[71] to refer to object of objective observation which could include his historical and sociological as well as psychological phenomena (his "outer" aspects) and even "inner" (philosophical) ones.

Even less does he show any strong influence of the concept of "holiness," which was well known and later became a key concept for the phenomenological school of religious studies (van der Leeuw, Heiler, Mensching, Widengren, Eliade). The term as a key concept was first shaped by Nathan Söderblom (1866–1931),[72] and became much more influential through Rudolf Otto's book *The Idea of the Holy*, which Xie quotes in his bibliography. However, the idea of the holy as *a priori* of religious experience or its two aspects according to Otto, the *fascinans* and the *tremendum*, do not appear at all in Xie's book. Otto's idea of the holy as an "irrational" momentum[73] even runs counter to his partly apologetic interest in showing religion to be rational or in accord with reason. Xie's argument is different: He rejects the idea of religious *a priori*[74] and shifts to philosophical argumentation, explaining "religious desire" by appealing to Schopenhauerian existential questions. Xie's own philosophical approach clearly differs from the early theoretical assumptions and developments of the discipline in Europe, which seem to have little influence on him. Judged positively, he differentiates religious studies as one step from his own philosophy of religion as another more clearly than Otto, van der Leeuw, or Eliade. For him, religious studies serve as a more or less useful "tool" and partial discipline for wider examination of religion.

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[71] Chantepie de la Saussaye's *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* is mentioned at least in his bibliographical account on history of religion(s). Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 33. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848–1920) used the term in his first and early editions of *Lehrbuch* (1887) just in the sense of historical phenomena which helped to systematize the field of religion. He deleted the term in later editions.

[72] See Söderblom's article "Holiness (General and Primitive)," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribner, 1913) 6:731–41. This article is not quoted in Xie's bibliography, but in his historical study of *Das Werden des Gottesglaubens*. Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 34. Besides, there is, of course, a more sociological and functional use of "sacred" by Émile Durkheim in *Les formes elimentaires de Ia vie religieuse* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1912).

[73] Cf. the subtitle of Otto's book (English translation): *An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*. See also Steven Ballard, *Rudolf Otto and the Synthesis of the Rational and the Non-rational in the Idea of the Holy: Some Encounters in Theory and Practice* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2000).

[74] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 253. Though it remains doubtful how Xie understands *a priori* (*xiantian* 先天).

3.2. Sociology of Religion

Another concept which is not well conceived or purposely less emphasized by Xie is that of "sociology of religion"; it just partly matches his own argumentation. As said above, Xie does mention "sociology of religion" explicitly,[75] but it is not clear what role this kind of research plays, while historical and psychological researches of religion are largely presented. While Comte, the predecessor of modern sociology, is mentioned in the context of empirical method, his bibliography has missed two names that are now widely regarded as classics of sociology of religion in the early twentieth century: Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and Max Weber (1864–1920). There is at least one partial explanation for this fact: While the influential work of the former was already translated into English,[76] Weber's important works had not reached the English-speaking world (or the United States in particular).[77] However, in the concluding chapter Harald Høffding (1843–1931), a Danish philosopher,[78] as well as his creative reception by the American William K. Wright (1877–1956, Dartmouth College), adherent of the pragmatist William James, are quoted. Xie presents Høffding's idea of religion as "an endeavor to secure the conservation of socially recognized values,"[79] while Wright focuses on the social character of religion (*zongjiao zhi shehuixing* 宗教之社會性): Religion may have to change, adapt to the needs of the time (*shixu* 時需), and develop social functions and use in order to survive. Xie is especially interested in the topic and this interpretation of sociology, as not only are Confucianism and Buddhism weak in this respect, Christianity also responds to the crises of modern society and has developed trends such

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[75] Ibid., 29.

[76] Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Swain (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915).

[77] Max Weber's study on Confucianism and Taoism (which was so influential in China in the 1980s) was not translated into English till the 1950s. See *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans Heinrich Gerth, with an introduction by C. K. Yang (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1951).

[78] His best-known work is perhaps *Den nyere Filosofis Historie* (1894), translated into English from the German edition (1895) by B. E. Meyer as *History of Modern Philosophy* (2 vols., 1900), a work intended by him to supplement and correct that of Hans Brøchner, to whom it is dedicated. His *Philosophy of Religion* (1906) also appears in English and is quoted by Xie.

[79] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 256.

as "social gospel" (*shehui fuyin* 社會福音) or "socialized" religion (*shehuihua zongjiao* 社會化宗教).[80] Interestingly, he turns explicitly *against* this wave, which is represented by some of his close colleagues teaching at Yenching University, such as Wu Yaozong (or partly like Xu Baoqian).[81] For Xie, religion not only has a function for society but is also a means to social reform, grounded primarily in the individual and his/her religious desire.

Therefore, though Xie is not influenced by Durkheim or Weber, he is aware of the importance of social dimension of religion. However, he denies its primary value for understanding religion, giving priority to original religious experience and existential philosophical questions.

4. Most Prominent Topics of Religious Studies

We will now focus on the concepts which have a prominent place in Xie's argument:

4.1. Historical Religious Material

Concerning the historical religious material, it is clear that Xie clings strongly to the evolutionary scheme as propagated by Western theorists of his time. He also follows the "order of knowledge" in chapter two (on history) probably by default of another pattern of understanding. It is interesting that (Chinese) ancestor worship is put in the category of primitive forms of religion (parallel to African tribal belief),[82] while Confucianism and (Chinese) Buddhism are considered basically paralleling with Christianity as rational/high religions. These three are con-

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[80] Ibid.

[81] For Wu Yaozong (Y. T. Wu 吳耀宗) see Chen Chi-rong, *Wu Yao-tsung: Ein Theologe im Sozialistischen China, 1920–1960* [Wu Yao-tsung: A Theologian in Socialist China, 1920–1960] (Münster: Lit, 1993). For Xu Baoqian's more complex and dialectical approach see my discussion in the third section.

[82] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 52–53. This reminds us of Zhou Zuoren's early attacks on Confucian ancestral worship and Confucian *lijiao* 禮教 which he compared with primitive cultures and Shamanism in particular. See Zhou Zuoren 周作人, "Shamanjiao de lijiao sixiang" 薩滿教的禮教思想 (1925), in Zhou Zuoren, *Tan hu ji* 談虎集 [On Tigers] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei jiaoyu, 2002), 219–21. Xie, of course, still defends Chinese "Confucian" practices as a way of commemoration (*jinian* 紀念) in the "period of thinking." Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 56–57.

sciously though somewhat arbitrarily chosen because they are of special interest in the case of China (for Xie including Christianity). Daoism is not treated on this level, though Laozi or Zhuangzi are included shortly in the section about Confucianism as "heterodox" schools (*fan zhengtong pai* 反正統派) and are quoted more often. It seems that popular religions, including religious Daoism (*Daojiao* 道教), are rather neglected; so-called sects or "secret societies" and their religious character or other popular religious movements are treated negatively. That is why "religion" is often despised by many people in China.

This fits well with the anti-superstition movements and attitudes not only of Christian missionaries and Chinese communists, but also of many intellectuals as well as the *Guomindang* since the late nineteenth century.[83]

4.2. Key Topics: Religious Experience, Psychology, and Mysticism in Contrast to Religion as a Socio-Ethical Message

As we have already seen in the analysis of sources used by Xie, the key emphasis of his book lies in the topics of religious consciousness or psychology, religious experience, and mysticism. The question of prayer is subsumed here, while ritual or other religious performances are treated in the historical section, which is consistent with his evolutionary argument.[84]

There are at least two major motives behind his interest: One is surely an open approach to Christianity and its relation to other religions, which he absorbs through liberal missionaries[85] and allows him to combine his new faith with his Confucian (and Buddhist) background into an indigenized Chinese-Christian faith. The other is an interest in presenting religion as ethical teaching, which could serve a constructive role for modern (Chinese) society without losing the *religious* character of religion. One may say there is an apparent contradic-

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[83] Cf. Chen, "Zongjiao," and Nedostup, *Religion, Superstition and Governing Society in Nationalist China*.

[84] Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 43–57.

[85] For the profile of liberal missionaries who saw many positive elements in Chinese culture and religions and who were in contact with other educated Christian neophytes associated with Yenching University or the foreign personnel at this university see Philip West, *Yenching University and Sino-Western Relations, 1916–1952* (Cambridge, MA / London: Harvard University Press, 1976).

tion or, more positively, dialectic in his thinking and his line of argumentation in the whole book: On the one hand aside from the challenges of "modern" intellectual atheist or anti-religious / anti-Christian movements, he himself feels urged to argue in rather general ways with a human-centered, even ethical and social focus. For this reason ethics as well as individuality and rationality play an important role in his book. On the other hand and unlike some other Chinese-Christian liberal thinkers, Xie does not understand Christian faith only as ethical and social teaching, thereby neglecting the religious character of religion or as an answer to individual "religious desire" (parallel to Schopenhauer's metaphysical questions): One major point here is his arguing with the "outer" reasons of scientific research about religion, including psychology and mysticism, an important topic and the highest form of religious experience. Though these are not proofs,[86] they testify for him to the importance of religion.

Our analysis of his bibliography has already shown how Xie is interested in mysticism.[87] To clarify the meaning of "mysticism" in contrast to the word "mysterious," Xie even suggests an alternative translation into Chinese: "*shenqi*" 神契[88] instead of "*shenmi* [*zhuyi*]" 神秘[主義].[89] It is characterized by its content, namely its overcoming of the subject-object gap. He describes different steps[90] and assumes that these or similar phenomena can be found in different traditions (especially the Indian) or even take place in nature or under drugs and alcohol (*yaoji ji jiu* 藥劑及酒).[91] Laozi, Jesus, and Wang Yangming 王陽明 were counted as the "great mystics" (*da shenqijia* 大神契家)[92] and so witnesses of this potential experience. Xie had a constant interest in the topic of mysticism as the most intensive and highest form of religious experience also in later times.[93] However, as far as I can see, his basic ideas are already presented in this early work.

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[86] Cf. Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 144–45.

[87] Other sources like Rudolf Otto's later and influential work *Mysticism East and West* (English translation; New York: Macmillan, 1932) was not yet translated or had not reached him in his time at Harvard. Moreover, later editions (reprints) of the book are not updated in this respect, as far as I can see.

[88] Suggesting "(mystical) union with God or the Absolute."

[89] Referring to "mystery." See Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 141.

[90] For this, he followed mainly Evelyn Underhill. Ibid., 142–43.

[91] Ibid., 144. Quoting Leuba, *Psychology of Religious Mysticism*.

[92] Ibid., 146.

[93] For later publications of Xie dealing with mysticism see Chen Yongtao, "The Passageway to Enlightenment: On Xie Fuya's 'Mystical Union,'" trans. Lauren Pfister,

III. A BRIEF COMPARISON WITH HIS SCHOLARLY CONTEMPORIES

If we look at Chinese scholarship at that time, Xie's work may be counted as one of the earliest contributions in introducing religious studies to China. Even though it is not the only one, it is probably one of those with the strongest emphasis on systematic and theoretical aspects. Generally speaking there was a wave of publications in the field of religious studies around mid-1920s:[94] Even slightly earlier than Xie Fuya, Xie Songgao 謝頌羔 published two introductory titles on the history of religions, which, however, appear much more superficial.[95] Another contributor to the field is Xu Baoqian, who was a colleague and friend of Xie teaching at Yenching University in Peking. It is interesting to see that both share an interest in mysticism: In 1927, exactly the year when Xie was working on his *Zongjiao zhexue*, Xu published an article[96] which matches Xie's view of mysticism very well.[97]

Chinese Theological Review 9 (1994): 123–46. The original work is Wang Shu 望舒, "Cong miqi de tonglu wuru: Qiantan Xie Fuya xiansheng 'miqi' sixiang" 從密契的通路悟入——淺談謝扶雅先生「密契」思想 [Entering the Mystical Path: "Mysticism" in the View of Mr Xie Fuya], *Jinling shenxuezhi* 金陵神學誌 (Nanjing Theological Review) 16 (1992): 61–69. According to Chen Yongtao, Xie heard Herny Nelson Wieman's (1884–1975) lectures on mysticism. Chen, "The Passageway to Enlightenment," 137; Wang, "Cong miqi de tonglu wuru," 65–66. Later Xie also translated or edited a number of Christian classics on mysticism or religious experience in the Chinese series "Jidujiao lidai mingzhu jicheng" 基督教歷代名著集成 [Christian Classics Library]. Cf. for example his translation *Xugele: Zongjiao de shenmi yaosu* 許革勒《宗教的神祕要素》 [Friedrich von Hügel's *The Mystical Element of Religion*] (1966).

[94] See my forthcoming article, "Scholars of Religious Research as Observers or Participants: Was there a 'Religious Studies' in Republican China?" in Thomas Jansen, Thoralf Klein and Christian Meyer, ed., *Chinese Religions in the Age of Globalization, 1800–Present* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming in 2010).

[95] Xie Songgao, *Zhujiao de yanjiu* 諸教的研究 [Studies About Religions] (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1926); *Zongjiaoxue* ABC 宗教學 ABC [Religious Studies ABC] (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1928).

[96] Xu Baoqian, "Xiuyang buwang nuli, nuli buwang xiuyang" 修養不忘努力, 努力不忘修養 [Self-cultivation without Forgetting to Work Hard, and Vice Versa], *Zhenli yu Shengming* 2, no. 15 (1927): 410–12.

[97] For similar understanding of religion as "attitude" (*taidu* 態度) already mentioned above see Xu, "Taidu yu shishi." It indicates that Xie and Xu were in close contact and exchanging their views on religion.

Like Xie he proposes that Christian belief should be basically dialectical: It should express itself in ethics but originate from spirituality as the deeper root and motivation of ethical behavior. Some of his other short articles also show this concern. However, he never writes a systematic monograph on the topic. In fact, he is more deeply involved in practical questions and social challenges to Christian faith, though his concern for mysticism, religious experience, and self-cultivation (or spirituality, *xiuyang* 修養) shows that he is different from other Christian liberals who tend to preach just "social gospel."

Another scholar Xu Dishan, professor of the department of religion at Yenching University in Peking, was at Columbia University in New York and later in Oxford around the same time when Xie was in the United States (1923–1926). His academic profile was—clearer than Xie's—prominently related to religious studies. However, he excelled rather as historian of religions in this discipline and he never published a systematic work comparable to Xie's *Zongjiao zhexue*.

Other scholars such as the famous "Chens," Chen Yinke and Chen Yuan,[98] are regarded as historians, but they also treat religion.

Earlier than Xie Fuya, the essayist and scholar Zhou Zuoren was interested in anthropological research, which implies and often includes the question of religion. Like Xie he was also influenced by authors such as Frazer and Tylor[99] and applied their thoughts critically to Chinese society especially before 1926/27. Thereby he also popularized Western theories of scientific research of religion. However, as in the case of Xu Dishan, he never published a longer and systematic study of religion.[100]

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[98] Both of them were connected to Christian universities: Chen Yuan taught at Protestant Yenching University as well as Catholic Furen University (both at Peking). Chen Yinke taught at Lingnan University at Canton (Guangzhou) like Xie Fuya. Their relationships during their stay at Lingnan University have to be examined.

[99] He was even influenced by other anthropological classics like Andrew Lang and scholars of classical studies like Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928). Besides, he was deeply influenced by early Japanese anthropological or ethnological research.

[100] Authors just mentioned will be the object of my ongoing research. As far as I can see Xie's *Zongjiao zhexue* is one of the earliest and most systematic book-length publication of this sort.

IV. CONCLUSION: XIE'S CONTRIBUTION IN HIS *ZONGJIAO ZHEXUE*

What Xie writes is not meant to be a systematic treatise of religious studies, but a *philosophy of religion*. However, he creatively summarizes different influences in the field of religious research of his time in the West as he was informed mainly (and quite freshly) during his stay in the United States.[101] Therefore, his contribution lies in transferring and presenting concepts of Western religious studies without extensive adulteration or contortion. He was interested in the justification of religion in general, not only Christian theology in particular.[102] His indigenization approach to Christianity also made him open to two indigenous traditions, mainly Confucianism and Buddhism.

As we have seen, he uses major sources and arguments from the field of religious studies. Major parts of his book are, in fact, devoted to typical topics of "religious studies." The "two great methodological instruments"[103] for the study of philosophy of religion present two major parts of classical religious studies: on the one hand the historical approach and on the other the "psychological" approach with a strong emphasis on "religious experience" (which leads together with the concept of "holiness" to the systematic approach of phenomenology of religion). As in Western religious studies, "mysticism" is for Xie the religious experience par excellence; he calls Laozi, Jesus, and Wang Yangming the "great mystics" (*da shenqijia* 大神契家).[104] Religiosity or religious experience in general is for him the "essence of religion."[105]

There are several possible reasons why the concepts of holiness and religious phenomena on the one hand and sociology on the other do not

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[101] European studies where religious studies flourished reached him only by translations (for example, Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige*) or reference in other works, which is probably the case for most of the non-English titles mentioned in his bibliographical review, including P. W. Schmidt, K. Beth, or N. Söderblom's works. See Xie, *Zongjiao zhexue*, 31–34.

[102] Xie makes it explicitly clear that his *Zongjiao zhexue* was not meant to be a (theological) "religious philosophy" (*zongjiao de zhexue* 宗教的哲學). Ibid., 21.

[103] Ibid., 29.

[104] Ibid., 146.

[105] Ibid., 35.

play an important role in his book, and all of them have been mentioned in the previous sections. One major reason lies in the media of knowledge transmission: Xie took part in Western scholarly discourses through staying in the United States and reading English books and translations. Therefore, not only no works on phenomenology of religion but also neither Émile Durkheim nor Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* or his study of Confucianism and Taoism[106] appear in Xie's bibliography. On the contrary, works on sociology such as those of Høffding and Wright were accessible to him through translation. However, unlike others, Xie thinks that the solution is not to defend religion—or especially Christianity—as constructive moral forces in society. Though rational and individual religions like Christianity, Confucianism, and Buddhism qualify as ethical religion, religion should not be reduced to that. For Xie the essence of religion is religiosity which fulfills a natural and even rational religious desire.

In sum, by using psychological and historical approach in addition to his major philosophical arguments, he demonstrates that a rational approach to religion is possible—and that "scientific" way of studying religion will not lead to negation of religion in a reductionist way. The value of religion for the individual as well as society can be rather positively evaluated. Science and religion should not be seen as irreconcilable rivals. The interest in these issues still reflects the influence of earlier "Debate between Science and Metaphysics" which stands in the background of the book.

[106] Neither of these was as yet translated into English.