

University of Groningen

## Phaenomenologie der religie en complexe psychologie

Sierksma, Fokke

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*

1950

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Sierksma, F. (1950). *Phaenomenologie der religie en complexe psychologie: een methodologische bijdrage*. Groningen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum.

**Copyright**

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

**Take-down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

## SUMMARY

Apart from the work of an occasional investigator, comparative religion has not been in contact with the psychology of the unconscious in general, and with the complex or analytical psychology of Jung in particular. In the foregoing study the author has endeavoured to prove that there is no methodological reason whatever to justify this aloofness, and that on the contrary comparative religion, on the strength of its own presumptions, ought to establish this contact. The relation between these two branches of science has been studied especially in the work of the two great pioneers, G. van der Leeuw and C. G. Jung.

A historical introduction emphasizes the fact that comparative religion, which originated as a factor and as a symptom of the conflict between natural religion and revealed religion during the „Aufklärung”, still participates in the process of spiritual fermentation of the twentieth century. As comparative religion sprang from theology, thus psychology originated from philosophy. Both branches of learning have drifted away from their origins, along rational and empirical lines, and as specialisms they attempt to give an objective account of a part of reality. Finally, however, they both end in a doctrine about man trying to find „le sens de la vie”. (P. Diel); for in both of them man is subject as well as object.

Chapter IIA outlines Van der Leeuw's methodology which is based on the theory of „Verstehen”, as elaborated by Jaspers and Spranger. On these grounds Van der Leeuw criticises psychoanalysis, largely rejecting it, while leaving complex psychology out of consideration. Therefore it must be investigated into whether „Verstehen” is actually inconsistent with the methods of depth psychology.

To this end Chapter IIB contains a critical examination of Jaspers's absolute distinction between „Verstehen” and „Erklären”. Like Roffenstein, Van der Hoop, Walter Schweizer and others, the

present author imagines he can demonstrate the essential similarity of the two methods, which differ only relatively, and points out the direct connection between Jaspers's methodological dualism and the dualism of his „Philosophie“. Like the „Erklären“, the „Verstehen“ tries to establish the unity and regularity of phenomena, and therefore also abstracts those phenomena, and needs induction as well as intuition. Then the concept „Sinn“ is discussed, which Jaspers, but especially Spranger and Anna Tumarkin consider to be constitutive. However, the element of finality implied in this concept does not in itself constitute any difference between „Verstehen“ and „Erklären“: final relations also occur in biology, in cases where it is impossible to speak of „Verstehen“. The concept „Sinn“, however, implies the „inner contact“ between the knowing subject and the known object, which is a result of what Van der Leeuw calls „l'insertion du phénomène dans notre vie propre“. Man can never objectify himself completely, and therefore he can never completely „erklären“ himself. Therefore the „Erklären“ gradually changes into „Verstehen“ when one passes upwards from one psychic layer into the other. „Erklären“ is finally defined as „demonstration of causal and final relations in phenomena“; „Verstehen“ is described as „the demonstration of final relations, inserted into one's own life, in human phenomena“.

In Chapter IIC the author criticises Spranger for repeatedly disregarding „l'insertion du phénomène dans notre vie propre“ in order to be able, for the sake of objectivity, to speak of „Verstehen“ also in connection with e.g. a machine. The consequences of carrying in this way teleology into the metaphysical field, culminating in an „objektiver Geist“, are rejected as untenable Platonic and neo-Kantian postulates: „die Metaphysik des Quasi-Seins einer begrifflichen Ideenwelt“ (Paul Hofmann). In this connection Spranger's thesis, that psychology of religion is possible only when it has been established „worin der ewige Sinn der Religion besteht“, is emphatically rejected. Spranger's philosophy is found to lead to a methodological Eleatism. The author, on the other hand, imagines he can prove that the „Verstehen“ does not gain its object by means of metaphysical abstractions, but through the concrete human phenomena which become part of the individual life before one starts abstracting. The phenomenological

object lies in between the pure subject and the pure object. By means of the concept „phenomenological distance” (both in space and in time) the author then endeavours to demonstrate that „Verstehen” means „realisation”: bringing into consciousness. In this way the point of contact between phenomenology of religion and psychology of the unconscious becomes obvious. This thesis is illustrated by examples from the history of religion. From them it appears that the Western investigator must descend to the common foundation of the human psyche: the unconscious, and from there follow the course of development taken by e.g. the Buddhist (as distinct from the Christian). Finally there is a digression on the importance of the stratification theory in biology, as elaborated especially by Nicolai Hartmann, for psychology. „Einer Stufung der Prinzipien nach Sinngebieten stehen keine prinzipiellen Schwierigkeiten entgegen.” (Magdalena Aebi).

Chapter III discusses the relation between Freud’s psychoanalysis and the study of religion. The main objection to Freud — without whom, indeed, all psychology of the unconscious is inconceivable — is that with him phenomena have to yield to theory, as Freud has no eye for the stratification of the psyche and the autonomy of the different layers. Freud „does not explain the world, he explains it away”. After generally comparing the psychological systems of Freud and Jung and opposing Carl Clemen’s „Die Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf Mythologie und Religionsgeschichte”, the author views the methods of phenomenology of religion (Van der Leeuw) side by side with those of psychoanalysis (Ernest Jones) and complex psychology (Jung), with the help of a concrete example from the study of religion, viz., rebirth. Finally, in order to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding, the distinction between psychoanalysis as a negative Jewish psychology, and complex psychology as a positive, „Aryan” psychology — a distinction of which several representatives of complex psychology have been guilty — is unconditionally rejected.

A lady love will be found to possess certain categories which will be looked for in vain in a Protozoon. Nobody has the right to call a castration complex real, as against the unreal character of a rebirth, as the Freudians do, just as little as it is permissible to call the former organism unreal as compared with the latter.

This is the line taken in Chapter IV, which deals with the relation between complex psychology and comparative religion. Jung has a phenomenological respect for psychical phenomena and their stratification. For this reason his work is very important to the study of religion. The intrinsic and historic connection between psychotherapy and certain forms of religion is pointed out, and in this connection Jung's dream theory is discussed; the symbol is not determined by the unconscious censor only, but is equally the original expression of the psyche. „Das Symbol ist älter als der latente Gedanke" (P. R. Hofstätter). Secondly it is pointed out that Jung does justice to religious phenomena as focused on an objective reality. In this connection the hypothesis of the collective unconscious, which, for that matter, is still debatable, is upheld as the only hypothesis in psychology which does not denature religious phenomena, and yet places them in a comprehensible relation. Further, it is shown that in connection with Rudolf Otto's famous study, the ambivalent character of „das Heilige" shows to full advantage in complex psychology. Eliade's opinion that this ambivalence lies outside the reach of psychology is contested. In the third place it is demonstrated that not only do Jung's ideas about myth comply with all conditions of phenomenology, but they also offer an opportunity to understand the great variety of myths which so far had remained an unsolved problem in the study of religion. With a view to this question the archetypes are discussed. In doing this the author emphasizes the fact that again and again Jung tackles the problem of the archetypes because there are *facts* compelling him to do so. As long as Freudianism cannot account for those facts without a *metabasis eis allo genos* and with respect for the autonomy of religious phenomena, Jung's doctrine of archetypes, which certainly should be studied more closely, is a valuable working hypothesis, giving numerous phenomena a comprehensible relation.

Herbert Silberer's investigations with regard to material and functional symbolism have been used to provide the theoretical background to Jung's phenomenological attitude; in this connection mention is made of such concepts as introversion, sublimation and finality, i.e. in connection with the investigations of Dalbiez, Binswanger, Baynes and Jung. They are discussed against the

background of the stratification theory: „In stepping up from one level to the other we always gain in qualities, because the whole is always more than its parts . . . We must know where we are, which level we are talking about, and not draw unwarranted conclusions either upwards or downwards.” (Szent-Györgi). Ernest Jones' and Otto Hoffmann's objections against Silberer's work are critically discussed.

In doing this we are faced with the question whether the transition from material to functional symbolism occurs only with consciously directed introversions — as might be concluded from Silberer's investigations — and is therefore a late cultural phenomenon, or if this transition also occurs unconsciously in more recent stages of development. It appears from a study of primitive thought and religions, for which the work of Van der Leeuw, Lévy-Bruhl and John Layard had been used, that functional symbolism may also be observed in early stages of the human race. In this connection much attention has been paid to Erich Neumann's important work, „Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins”. Meanwhile a closer study of the correlation between ontogeny and phylogeny from a psychological point of view appears to be most desirable.

Mircea Eliade's criticism of the psychology of the unconscious is opposed in a separate part; his arguments are metaphysical, and have no connection with psychology. After surveying the work done by „complex psychologists” in the field of the history of religion, the author endeavours to prove that complex psychology, as a synthetic psychology, creates the possibility of a synthesis in the well-known controversies and tensions of the history of religion: animism—manism, history of religion and phenomenology of religion (referring to Neumann's archetypical „sequence-dating”), objective religion and subjective religiosity, rite and myth.

Finally, Chapter V deals with some marginal questions between psychology and anthropology (as *logos* of man about man). The author distinguishes between descriptive and designating anthropology, and emphasizes the fact that psychology only provides one aspect of descriptive anthropology. For this reason biology, ethnology, medical anthropology, etc. must not be neglected. Philosophy can summarize these aspects as much as possible,

and in this summary it may accentuate and deepen the image of man. An important step in this direction is „Die drei Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch“, by Helmuth Plessner. Jung's archetypes are important from the point of view of descriptive anthropology. There is a curious connection between Plessner's concept of human „Positionalität der exzentrischen Form“ and Jung's „Selbst“, which opens remarkable perspectives.

Meanwhile all descriptive anthropology passes into a project, for the description of any aspect of humanity shows man to be an incomplete being. As no one can scientifically survey and master all aspects of anthropology, and as, moreover, the project is a matter of the future, all projectional anthropology is in essence literature. Anthropologists are often unsuccessful poets, who build a skeleton where true poets created a „flesh and blood image“.

Two anthropological concepts, „play“ and „freedom“, are next discussed. A consciousness of freedom means a consciousness of possibilities, „Verstehen“ appears to be an attempt by man to realise undeveloped possibilities, to complete himself, directly or indirectly. This brings us back to our starting point of Chapter I, which has now been explained. In the „verstehende Religionswissenschaft“ the West tries to cure itself of its oneness, in order to attain human completeness.

It would seem as if this totalitarian character of the „Verstehen“, which uses not only the ratio but all human cognitive qualities, imperils the scientific character of science. In the first place, however, the psyche is not rational per se, but „vieldeutig“. Secondly, psychic facts are experiences, and as all knowledge is derived from experience, and all science is based on experience, science will have to subordinate ratio to experience in stead of vice versa.